

**Finding Community in Community Service Learning**

**by**

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# Abstract

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Many universities are strengthening their relationships with communities. Universities recognize that they need to work in partnership with communities to address social and economic problems. The University of British Columbia (UBC) is beginning to utilize community service learning (CSL) as one strategy to connect the university to the community while achieving its educational objectives.

CSL refers to a student experience that combines community service and learning, and can be either curricular or co-curricular. Often there is an effort to distinguish CSL from traditional student volunteerism by emphasizing the importance of connecting the service to specific learning objectives, such as learning about the societal context or political conditions that necessitate the service through reflection.

Documentations of CSL cases have primarily focused on the experience of the student. Some scholars are now beginning to consider how CSL impacts faculty and its relationship to roles and rewards within academia. The broader literature on community-university partnerships addresses how CSL impacts the university as an institution. Yet, in the vast body of literature on CSL, little attention is paid to the community organizations in which the service and learning occurs.

To gain some insight into the community experiences and perspectives of CSL, I interviewed representatives of eight community partners of UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program, a program that organizes CSL for UBC in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and three representatives from the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

I propose a five-part continuum for conceptualizing community-university partnerships: caution; testing the relationship; situating it within their broader agenda; partnerships between individuals; and organizational mutualism. Overwhelmingly, the community partners expressed the view that it is inadequate for the university to concentrate on teaching specific skills or educating professionals. Instead, they argued that the university has a responsibility to prepare students to contribute to civil society, and believe that the Learning Exchange Trek Program and CSL can facilitate that aspiration by inviting students to care about the Downtown Eastside. Based on what I heard from the interviewees, I suggest that CSL may facilitate future discussion on the role of the state, voluntary sector, and community in providing social services and support in our communities.

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# Acknowledgements

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Archbishop Desmond Tutu, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his leadership in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, came to Vancouver during the time I was writing my thesis. At one of the public events I attended (April 2004), he referred to what Africans call *ubuntu* or *botho*, which he considered the essence of being human. Curious about this concept, I looked at several of Tutu's books and found it described in greater detail:

We Africans speak about a concept difficult to render in English. We speak of *ubuntu* or *botho*. You know when it is there and it is obvious when it is absent. It has to do with what it means to be truly human, it refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available for others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other persons. And so we search for this ultimate attribute and reject ethnicity and other such qualities as irrelevancies. A person is a person because he recognizes others as persons (Tutu 1994, 125).

Perhaps this is what is happening when people accept the invitation to care about what is happening in the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside; they realize that "a person is only a person through other persons". A very special thank you to those who extend the invitation, and those who are willing to accept. It makes me feel hopeful because I think it brings us closer to this beautiful idea of *ubuntu* or *botho*.

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## Abbreviations

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CCRA	Canada Customs and Revenue Agency
CHIUS	Community Health Initiative of University Students
CSL	Community Service Learning
DTES	Downtown Eastside
MCFD	Ministry of Child and Family Development
MoE	Ministry of Education
NSGRP 2000	<i>2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating</i>
Org.	Organization
Res.	Respondent
Project TAHS	Technical Assistance for Homeland Security Project
UBC	University of British Columbia
VSB	Vancouver School Board
VSI	Voluntary Sector Initiative

# Chapter 1: Why Find Community?

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Stories. In universities, people know through studies. In businesses and bureaucracies, people know by reports. In communities, people know by stories. These community stories allow people to reach back into their community history and their individual experience for knowledge about truth and direction for the future. Professionals and institutions often threaten the stories of community by urging community people to count up things rather than communicate. Successful community associations resist efforts to impose the foreign language of studies and reports because it is a tongue that ignores their own capacities and insights. Whenever communities come to believe that their common knowledge is illegitimate, they lose their power and professionals and systems rapidly invade their social place.

*John McKnight, 1989, 260-261*

## **A. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICE**

### **LEARNING STORY: RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Many universities, including the University of British Columbia (UBC) where I am pursuing my master's degree in planning, are beginning to build and strengthen their relationships with communities. In the *UBC Annual Report of 2001/2002*, UBC President Martha Piper stated:

Never has it been more important for a university to key its work to the problems of the community it serves. Never has it been more important for universities to collaborate with communities, addressing their concerns and working with them to identify and meet their needs (University of British Columbia 2002).

Universities, especially when publicly funded, recognize that they need to work in partnership with communities outside their immediate influence to address social and economic problems such as poverty, homelessness, and high unemployment. Like many other post-secondary institutions, particularly in the United States, UBC is beginning to utilize community service learning (CSL) as one strategy to connect the university to the community while achieving its educational objectives.

While the definitions of CSL are as numerous as the institutions that have adopted this strategy of community engagement,<sup>1</sup> it typically refers to a student experience that combines community service and learning. CSL can be either curricular (within an academic course), or co-curricular (outside academic course requirements). Often there is an effort to distinguish CSL from more traditional forms of student volunteerism by emphasizing the importance of connecting the service to specific learning objectives. Objectives often include facilitating learning about the societal context or political conditions that necessitate the service through reflection or critical thinking. In CSL, for example, a student might “work”<sup>2</sup> a shift at a shelter for women, and join in discussions with shelter staff about impending legislation that would reduce or eliminate welfare payments to some of the women who access the program. For another student, the successful completion of a particular course might entail working a specific number of hours with a particular community organization and submitting a paper about the experience to the instructor. In both situations the student would be encouraged to make the connection between classroom learning and real-life experience. CSL differs from practicums that are generally shorter-term and focused on developing specific skills or competencies.

Studies of CSL, as described in numerous books, journals, and publications, and promoted by organizations such as Campus Compact, have primarily focused on the experience and learning of the student. Some scholars are now beginning to consider how CSL impacts faculty and its relationship to roles and rewards within academia. The broader literature on community-university partnerships addresses how CSL impacts the university as an institution. Yet, in the vast body of literature on CSL, little attention is paid to the experiences and perspectives of the community organizations in which the service and learning occurs. Without understanding the experiences and perspectives of community organizations engaged in CSL, it is possible that CSL will only assist students, faculty, and

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<sup>1</sup> Campus Compact, an American coalition of more than 900 college and university presidents “committed to the civic purposes of higher education”, has compiled a list of some of the definitions of CSL. For additional information, please see: <http://www.compact.org/publication/s-l-toolkit/definitions.html>.

<sup>2</sup> I have used the word “work” instead of “volunteer” (although students are not paid for their involvement) for lack of a more appropriate verb to describe what students contribute to the community organizations. Although many of the interviewees in this study referred to the students as volunteers, I will distinguish between volunteerism and CSL experiences, especially since representatives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program have indicated they are hoping to move away from the “volunteer” terminology.

the university to meet their objectives without satisfying the needs of community. CSL will be dismissed by the community as inadequate, or possibly damaging, if the role of community continues to be ignored. Parts of the community may become reluctant to participate if they suspect CSL is driven by students building their resume, faculty seeking to publish, or the university hoping to bolster its public image.

A good story includes all the characters. While some characters may be more dynamic or central to the plot, they all contribute in some way to the tale being told. If we look at the story being told about CSL,<sup>3</sup> we quickly discover that the characters of students, faculty, and universities are vivid and well-developed. The role played by the community is passive, or non-existent. Discovering this absence prompted me to speak to eight of the community partners of the UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program, where they are beginning to utilize CSL, so we can better understand and appreciate their role as community in the story of CSL at UBC. What follows is the story the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and inner city neighbourhoods told me about their experiences with CSL.<sup>4</sup> Understanding the perspectives and experiences of community will benefit all of the characters involved: students; faculty; the university; and community.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will define the key concepts (community, community members, community partners, community service learning/service-learning, and traditional volunteerism), before exploring the relevance of CSL to community planning. The research questions will then be presented, followed by a brief introduction to the research design and methods: a case study of CSL focused on the perspectives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I will discuss the Learning Exchange Trek Program, before closing this chapter with a summary of what can be expected in the remainder of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> Although I refer to "the story of CSL" throughout this paper, I recognize that this is an oversimplification as there are many stories by many people whose experiences and perspectives may differ from the ones shared with me for the purposes of this study.

<sup>4</sup> I provide a detailed overview of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and inner city neighbourhoods in the third chapter (Section A). Please also see Appendices A and B for a map of the Downtown Eastside and the city of Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

## **B. DEFINITIONS: A WORD ON SOME WORDS**

Below, I present my definitions of five key concepts central to this study:

**Community** includes both individual community members (individuals who are citizens, clients, consumers, service recipients, etc.) and community partners (schools and nonprofit, charitable organizations) outside the university. Although the university is also part of the community, for the purposes of this study I will differentiate between the two to allow us to carefully consider their separate and overlapping roles in the CSL story.<sup>5</sup>

**Community Members** are individual citizens. In the context of this thesis, community members may access services, programs, and opportunities offered by community partners. Consequently, community members may have direct contact with students engaged in CSL initiatives. For example, a student might offer computer tutorials for community members using the community partners' facilities and equipment.<sup>6</sup>

**Community Partners** include nonprofit, charitable organizations and schools that work with a CSL program, such as the Learning Exchange Trek Program. The Learning Exchange Trek Program, for example, divides its community partners into six categories: health/mental health; inner city schools; adult education; community centres; social services; and urban agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> While this is an oversimplification of the concept of community (e.g. it does not account for the fact that there is not one singular community, but rather multiple and contested communities), it is beyond the scope of this study to enter this debate.

<sup>6</sup> I chose to focus on the experiences and perspectives of community partners, despite being curious about the experiences and perspectives of community members, because I thought that it would be easier to begin with community partners' experiences and perspectives as the Learning Exchange Trek Program has not yet discussed CSL with community members in a systematic way. This choice is not intended to devalue the participation of community members, but rather an admission of the difficulties of looking at a phenomenon in its formative stages.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that while the term "community partners" is useful for capturing the relationship between the schools and community organizations and the Learning Exchange Trek Program, the interviewees' conceptualization of partnership varied, suggesting that the relationship between each community partner and the Learning Exchange Trek Program is unique, rather than meeting some predefined or specific criteria of community partner. This will be discussed further in the fifth chapter (Section D).

**Community Service Learning** (or sometimes **Service-Learning**), as defined in the opening section of this thesis, refers to a student experience that combines community service and learning, and emphasizes reflection and critical thinking. I will use CSL throughout this study as it emphasizes the role of community partners; only referring to service-learning if it is a direct quotation or might misconstrue the meaning of a particular idea or concept.

**Traditional Volunteerism** differs from CSL in that it does not require volunteers to connect their volunteer activity with specific learning objectives.

## **C. WHY DOES THIS PLANNER-TO-BE CARE?: EMERGENCE OF THE QUESTIONS**

### **Relevance to Planning**

Over the last few months, several people have asked me what my thesis has to do with planning. I have responded that the field of community planning is not only about design guidelines and land use by-laws; it is also about encouraging community development, community involvement, and social change. Most generally, research on community planning expands knowledge useful to decision-making by public institutions, whether these are governments, community organizations, or educational institutions. When a large institution, like UBC,<sup>8</sup> commits to using CSL in its strategic plans (University of British Columbia 2004, 6) and promotes learning that teaches community engagement (Piper 2003, 10)<sup>9</sup>, it should attract the attention of planners—in particular, social planners who work on many of the issues addressed in CSL (poverty, homelessness, high unemployment, etc.). If CSL offers a new approach for institutions working collaboratively

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<sup>8</sup> According to *UBC Facts and Figures 2002/2003*, there were 32,376 undergraduate students and 7,045 graduate students registered in day programs in the winter session 2002/03. There are 1,883 full-time faculty and 4,695 full-time staff. For more information, please see: <http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/ubcfacts/index.html#economic>.

<sup>9</sup> In a speech at a meeting of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services held at UBC in June 2003, UBC's President Piper outlined three kinds of learning: learning for its own sake; learning to acquire specific competencies; and "learning that leads to a sense of community engagement, learning that builds in each student a sense of responsibility to the social and environmental world. We must serve students in a way that helps them contribute to a civil society that creates competent and productive graduates who are also dedicated global citizens". Please see: [http://www.president.ubc.ca/president/speeches/16jun03\\_cacuss.pdf](http://www.president.ubc.ca/president/speeches/16jun03_cacuss.pdf).

with people living in marginalized communities, such as the Downtown Eastside, as welfare state programs (e.g. non-market housing) are downloaded to community organizations, planners in such organizations, and in the governments they collaborate with, can benefit from assistance in the form of CSL.

## **My Story of Community Service Learning**

I first encountered CSL when I worked as a community development worker at a Community Resource Centre in Calgary, Alberta between 1998 and 2000. One of my responsibilities involved supporting a junior high school (grades 7-9) in a lower income, culturally diverse community. The school had partnered with the local Lions' Club to implement Lions-Quest,<sup>10</sup> a life-skills, character education, positive prevention, and service-learning curriculum. Shortly before I left the position to return to graduate school, I became "Lions-Quest certified" after attending a training program geared to teachers. I subsequently worked with students from different grades to complete their service-learning projects. The resulting bake sales and carwashes were a success (although I do remember washing a couple of cars on my own because students had disappeared!), despite marginal interest by the teachers and the administration. Looking back, I think these experiences were examples of traditional volunteerism rather than CSL. I recall remarking to one of the teachers during the student evaluation that I felt it was unfair to give students poor marks for a lack of enthusiasm because most of the projects were not connected to anything in particular, other than satisfying the teacher's demands. In our haste to implement the program, and a number of other factors,<sup>11</sup> I thought we had failed to demonstrate why community service was valuable and meaningful. Unfortunately I left the position before I could be involved with further versions of CSL in Calgary, and am uncertain as to what happened next.

A couple of years later, I came across the concept of CSL when I was examining the role of charitable organizations and advocacy in a planning course at UBC.<sup>12</sup> I found the

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<sup>10</sup> The Lions Club is an international service club that started in the early twentieth century in the United States. Lions-Quest Canada is now known as Thrive: The Canadian Centre for Positive Youth Development. For additional information, please see: <http://www.thrivecanada.ca/>.

<sup>11</sup> These included a lack of resources and a change in leadership for both the school and the Community Resource Centre.

<sup>12</sup> The paper I wrote for this course was called "'True Generosity'?: A Closer Look at Service-Learning and its Implications for Volunteerism".

CSL literature helpful because scholars critical of CSL raised concerns that paralleled my concerns with the increased reliance on volunteers in community organizations. Critiques of CSL initiatives suggested that many CSL programs failed to look at the broader social, political, and economic conditions that created the need for services, and overlooked the value of social change and activism in such programs. I wondered if these criticisms of CSL were also applicable to volunteerism. Through this research, I learned that UBC was involved in CSL and that the Learning Exchange Trek Program was organizing a Canadian conference on the topic in June 2003.

After I worked on a small project on community involvement with the Community Health Initiative of University Students (CHIUS)<sup>13</sup> in the summer of 2004, I became more interested in how UBC worked with marginalized communities. I had been initially drawn to looking at issues in the Downtown Eastside when I started my graduate program, but ignored this curiosity because I felt that too many researchers had studied the community with little improvement or change, and I did not want to add myself to the list. The idea that UBC students were actually *doing something*, instead of just *studying* familiar problems, was intriguing. CSL seemed like a suitable topic for me to consider for several reasons. First, UBC is one of the communities I belong to as a student, employee, and volunteer with several committees. In addition, I was familiar with community organizations from working and volunteering in the voluntary sector for many years before returning to graduate school. Finally, I wanted to learn more about Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in a respectful and non-intrusive way. When I discovered that much of the focus in the existing body of CSL literature was on the experience of students and the university with little attention being paid to the community side, I decided that I could contribute to the CSL story by asking the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners in the Downtown Eastside about their experiences and perspectives.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about CHIUS, please see: <http://www.chius.ubc.ca/>. For this project, I interviewed community organizations in the Downtown Eastside about how they involve community members in their decision-making processes (e.g. board of directors, steering committees, focus groups, informal consultation, etc.).

## **D. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

I formulated five research questions to guide my inquiry into the experiences and perspectives of Downtown Eastside community organizations with CSL. The first two questions provide context for understanding the community organization's encounters with CSL. The next three questions more directly address the community organizations' experiences and perspectives. The last question addresses the relationship between the Learning Exchange Trek Program and the community organizations.

- 1.) How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program work with community partners to provide CSL opportunities?
- 2.) What does the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL?
- 3.) What do the community partners working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL?
- 4.) What opportunities and constraints have the selected community partners encountered when they are in the early stages of collaborating with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to develop CSL? What do the community partners require to enhance their experience with CSL?
- 5.) What are the guiding principles or philosophies (values, beliefs, concepts, and/or attitudes) of the selected community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program that affect CSL initiatives?

## **E. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

My research design for answering the above questions can be described as an exploratory, single-case study (Yin 2003, 5)<sup>14</sup>, where the Learning Exchange Trek Program and its community partners are the case, or "the situation, individual, group, organization, or whatever it is that we are interested in" (Robson 1993, 51). Case study "is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 1993, 52). In Robson's view, a case study is a strategy (a stance or approach) rather than a

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<sup>14</sup> Yin proposes that case studies can be either single- or multiple-, and either exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (causal).

method (such as observation or interview); it focuses on the particular rather than what is generalizable about the case; and it uses multiple methods of evidence.<sup>15</sup> I concur with Stake that case study researchers need to describe their case properly and capture its uniqueness because case studies “may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalizations” (Stake 2000, 19). Like Flyvbjerg, I would suggest that “the case study produces precisely the type of context-dependent knowledge which makes it possible to move from lower levels to higher levels in the learning process” (Flyvbjerg 2001, 71). Further consideration of case studies will be explored in the fourth chapter.

To answer my research questions, I conducted eleven semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews that lasted between forty-five minutes and two and a half hours in March and April 2004. I met with three UBC staff members working either directly or indirectly with the Learning Exchange Trek Program.<sup>16</sup> All three interviews were held at the staff members’ offices on the UBC Campus. In addition, two of the interviewees have contributed to additional discussions about my thesis through phone calls, email correspondence, and working group meetings,<sup>17</sup> both in conjunction with my thesis committee and separately. To ensure confidentiality, I will refer to the interviewees as *UBC A*, *UBC B*, and *UBC C* and use feminine pronouns throughout this study.

One of the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff members provided contact information for their community partners. We selected eleven of thirty community partners<sup>18</sup> whose relationship with the university varied in terms of activities, length, and intensity to encourage a diverse discussion in the interviews. Although I contacted all of the organizations suggested, I heard back from eight community partners and met with them at their offices between March and April 2004.<sup>19</sup> As the conversations with the eight

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<sup>15</sup> Despite its popularity in many fields of social inquiry, case study research is not standardized, resulting in much debate as to whether the case study is an approach/methodology, or a method. Yin calls it “the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context” (Yin 2003, 4). As I accept Travers’ suggestion that research methods are techniques used to collect data, and that methodology refers to the epistemological or political assumptions I have as a researcher that explains my view of the world, I will refer to the case study as an approach (Travers 2001, vi).

<sup>16</sup> Please see Appendix C and D to review the Interview Guides used.

<sup>17</sup> My working group included both my thesis committee (research supervisor and second reader), plus two staff members from the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

<sup>18</sup> As listed on the Learning Exchange Trek Program’s website [3 May 2004].

<sup>19</sup> Please see Appendix E to review the Interview Guide used.

community partners were rich and informative, I did not contact the people who did not respond to my initial request a second time. Three of the community partners were employed at schools; the other five were staff members of nonprofit, charitable organizations. All of the community partners provide services in the Downtown Eastside. Throughout the study, rather than identify organizations and interviewees, I will refer to *Organization A* through *Organization H*, and use feminine pronouns for all interviewees to ensure confidentiality.

In addition to the interviews I conducted for this thesis, I reviewed the Learning Exchange Trek Program's promotional materials and reports, and UBC's strategic planning documents. I also observed two workshops offered by the Learning Exchange Trek Program: the first was geared to students participating in the intensive activities during Reading Week (February 2004); the second was one of the mandatory orientation sessions and tour of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for students participating in the Learning Exchange Trek Program (February 2004).

This study is limited to investigating the experiences and perspectives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners as they begin to collaborate in CSL initiatives with UBC. Their experiences may differ from other various community organizations that are also involved in CSL at UBC,<sup>20</sup> and may be dissimilar from community organizations involved with other educational institutions. The research design and specific methods will be described in more detail and discussed further in chapter four.

## **F. UBC'S LEARNING EXCHANGE TREK PROGRAM**

*Trek 2000*, published in November 1998, articulates UBC's mission and outlines the university's goals and strategies under five pillars: people, learning, research, community,

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<sup>20</sup> For example, there are many parts of UBC that are also developing or already running a CSL initiative. Health professional students have organized the Community Health Initiative of University Students (CHIUS), an interprofessional health clinic in the Downtown Eastside. Some faculty, including one of my committee members, offer courses that utilise CSL without the formal support or involvement of the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Investigating the experiences of community partners working with these initiatives—as well as community members, students, and faculty—is outside the scope of this study, unless commented on by the interviewees.

and internationalization.<sup>21</sup> One of the strategies under the community pillar led to the creation of the Learning Exchange, UBC's community outreach initiative: "Establish a strong downtown presence with store-front accessibility and visibility. This presence should focus on our ability to meet the social, cultural, and economic needs of the Vancouver region through educational programs, policy analysis, research consultation and expertise, student placements, and outreach programs".

Located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the Learning Exchange's role is "to foster connections between people at UBC and people in the Downtown Eastside and other inner city communities who share common interests".<sup>22</sup> It offers computer access and a drop-in area to people who live and work in the neighbourhood, as well as such courses as Music Appreciation 101, lectures, discussions, films, and other events. The Learning Exchange also supports a Peer Support Program in collaboration with another organization for women in the community who are pregnant or who have children 18 months or under, maintains an inventory of educational resources in the Downtown Eastside and an inventory of research done in the Downtown Eastside, and is piloting a Business Education and Development Program that involves students from the British Columbia Institute of Technology working with businesses in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The Trek Volunteer Program,<sup>23</sup> an initiative of the Learning Exchange, "provides opportunities for UBC students to do community service in a variety of schools, nonprofit organizations, and community centres in inner city neighbourhoods of Vancouver". The program "gives students real-life experience in the community while raising their awareness of health, social, economic, and political issues".<sup>24</sup> Community organizations benefit from human resources that can contribute to the success of existing programs, or work towards developing new ideas with Trek students. For example, Trek students can apply for a Chapman Service Award; if successful, the student—in collaboration with a community

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<sup>21</sup> For additional information on *Trek 2000*, please see: <http://www.vision.ubc.ca/index.html>.

<sup>22</sup> For additional information on the Learning Exchange, please see: <http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> In 1922, UBC students marched in the "Great Trek" to persuade the provincial government to proceed with its plans to move ahead with its plans for a new university at its current location on Point Grey. It is this event that is captured in the title of UBC's strategic plans: *Trek 2000* and *Trek 2010: Green Paper* (draft proposal). Both documents state the university's commitment to building and strengthening relationships with the community.

<sup>24</sup> For additional information on the Learning Exchange Trek Program, please see: [http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek\\_program/index.html](http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek_program/index.html).

organization—can receive funding to implement a project they created.<sup>25</sup> Trek students can choose to work with the following types of organizations: health/mental health (four community partners); inner city schools (thirteen community partners); adult education (five community partners); community centres (two community partners); social services (five community partners); and urban agriculture (one community partner). Student activities are diverse, and may include tutoring children in classrooms, painting murals, responding to front desk queries at a shelter, writing grant proposals, and helping with a community garden. While students can participate in the Learning Exchange Trek Program year-round, there is also an intense program during Reading Week that attracted nearly 200 students in February 2004.

In October 2003, UBC circulated a discussion paper entitled, *The Future of Trek and UBC's Long-Term Planning*. Based on the responses to this document, UBC released *Trek 2010: Green Paper* in spring 2004.<sup>26</sup> This document builds on *Trek 2000*, with new goals and strategies for furthering the university's vision: "The University of British Columbia, aspiring to be one of the world's best universities, will prepare students to become exceptional global citizens, promote the values of a civil and sustainable society, and conduct outstanding research to serve the people of British Columbia, Canada, and the world." In this new proposal, there is a continued emphasis on enhancing community involvement and collaboration, including a commitment of developing CSL opportunities for at least ten percent of UBC students.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The Chapman Service Awards are awarded annually to students who demonstrate outstanding citizenship and leadership while participating in the Learning Exchange Trek Program. In the Summer Project Award, students work with community organizations to create and implement a short-term project that benefits the community. As an example, one student in the summer of 2004 will help a community organization set-up their computer lab and design tutorials for peer-teaching computer skills. For more information:

[http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek\\_program/chapman/summer.html](http://www.learningexchange.ubc.ca/trek_program/chapman/summer.html).

<sup>26</sup> For additional information on *Trek 2010: Green Paper*, please see:

<http://www.vision.ubc.ca/greenpaper.html>.

<sup>27</sup> According to *Trek 2010: Green Paper*, one of UBC's goals is to "develop more opportunities for community involvement and collaboration". One strategy for realizing this goal includes: "develop community service learning programs, whereby experience in the field will complement academic study or be integrated with academic credit courses, and aim for participating in such programs by at least ten percent of our [UBC] students" (UBC 2004, 6).

## **G. THE STORY TO COME**

If we are to understand the story of CSL, it is essential that we find out the experiences and perspectives of the community partners. Their input is especially important to UBC as it embarks on its strategic plan to have its students have a CSL experience, through the Learning Exchange Trek Program and elsewhere (UBC 2004). The community partners I spoke with over the course of this study have many valuable insights and ideas they can contribute to the discussion about the university's role in creating global citizens.

In the second chapter of this study, I present an overview of the literature relevant to the perspective of community organizations. This will include three sections: Community-University Partnerships; an Overview of CSL; and Community Organizations and CSL. In the third chapter, I introduce the specific context and setting of the case: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and inner city neighbourhoods; Community Partners—Their Role in the Voluntary Sector; Community Partners—the Vancouver School Board; and introduce the interviewees. In the fourth chapter, I discuss my research methodology and provide a more detailed description about the structure and nature of the interviews. The fifth chapter presents the five main themes and seventeen sub-themes that emerged in the interviews. The themes explored include the role of organizational climate in determining CSL outcomes; the contributions of students in community-university partnerships; the community partners' responses to the introduction of CSL; the evolution and maturing of partnerships; and the university's role, as perceived by the community organizations, in introducing students to the Downtown Eastside. The final chapter of the study brings the themes and sub-themes together, and suggests implications for structuring future CSL partnerships at UBC and elsewhere. In addition, I will identify some of the challenges I faced over the course of the study before offering some concluding thoughts.

A complete bibliography and appendices—including a map of the Downtown Eastside and Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (Appendix A and B), Interview Guides (Appendices C, D, and E), a summary of findings (Appendix F), a summary of themes and sub-themes (Appendix G), and a thematic map (Appendix H)—conclude this study.

## **Chapter 2: Social Needs and University Responses**

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In this chapter, I examine the literature that provides background to the research questions posed in the previous chapter. In the first section, I discuss community-university partnerships as CSL is recognized as one strategy for developing such relationships. Next, I present highlights of the extensive literature written on CSL before concluding with a more specific look at community organizations and CSL.

### **A. COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS**

In their critical examination of Canadian universities, Pocklington and Tupper argue that “universities more so than any other Canadian institution sail on seas of unwarranted deference” (Pocklington and Tupper 2002, 4). They cite a number of challenges that face the university today: rising tuition, student debt, access, political correctness in the classrooms, employment prospects for graduates, relevance of education, upcoming retirement of large numbers of professors, the use of tenure, balanced budgets, and relationships with businesses. Pocklington and Tupper note that Canadians generally know little about the university, even though it is publicly funded, because of its complexity and their willingness to accept that independent universities are central to democracy. Consequently, many of the issues they identified are not debated, or are left to universities which “skilfully argue their case” without public involvement (Pocklington and Tupper 2002, 4).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, one response of the universities to these challenges is to build and strengthen their relationships with communities. A movement is emerging where university presidents emphasize community in their agenda, and universities allocate resources to building partnerships with community organizations (Maurrasse 2001). Ernest Boyer—whose roles included dean, chancellor, commissioner, and foundation president in the US—is often credited with popularizing the idea that higher

education must go beyond valuing the generation of knowledge (traditional scholarship), to supporting the application of knowledge through community-based research, teaching, and service for community improvement.

The scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities...I have this growing conviction that what's also needed is not just more programs, but a larger purpose, a sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation's life as we move toward century twenty-one (Boyer 1996, 19-20).

To date, universities have engaged the community in a number of ways, including: cooperative extension and continuing education programs; clinical and pre-professional programs; top-down administrative initiatives; centralized administrative-academic units with outreach missions; community access to facilities; and cultural events (Bringle and Hatcher 2002, 503). While some believe that the partnerships developing today are part of a tradition of university outreach and assistance (Rubin 2000, 219), others suggest that the growth of CSL over the last decade is "one of the clearest indicators of a renewed emphasis on campus-community partnerships" that differs from earlier models (Bringle and Hatcher 2002, 505). In *Partnerships for Service-Learning*, Jacoby and Associates use the definition provided by Community-Campus Partnerships for Health: partnership "is a close mutual cooperation between parties having common interests, responsibilities, privileges, and power" (Jacoby and Associates 2003, 7). Community-university partnerships are varied in terms of funding, initiation, activities, duration, and fields, yet are "built on overlapping interests that converge on the aim of improving community conditions" (Baum 2000, 235).

For a community-university partnership to develop, let alone succeed, both the community and the university must believe that it is beneficial. Historically, some segments of the community have viewed the university with scepticism and suspicion—and sometimes animosity—for conducting research and implementing programs that fail to consider the impact on individuals, organizations, networks, and structures (Reardon 1998). Hutchinson and Loukaitou-Sideris propose that a shift in community organization theory in the last decade has made it possible for community organizations to overcome their hesitation. The authors suggest that in the past, many community organizations used what they call a "political activist approach" to mobilize neighbourhoods. This approach relied on battling the existing power structures for what they felt they were lacking, and focused on problems and injustices. Today, there is more emphasis on assets, competencies, and resources in a

more collaborative and holistic approach, and it is now “quite common to see community groups forming partnerships with these formerly vilified external actors (government, universities, and corporations) and creating shared agendas that aim at comprehensive revitalization of inner city neighbourhoods” (Hutchinson and Loukaitou-Sideris 2001, 293). The rise of a model based on consensus—rather than the more conflicted and confrontational approach of Saul Alinsky<sup>28</sup> and others—makes partnerships possible.

A word of caution: although references to community-campus partnerships are extensive in the literature on higher education and CSL, it is somewhat misleading as it includes both true partnerships and what could be more accurately called placements (Pearson 2002, 183). Pearson proposes that a partnership includes a common plan, resource sharing, and an investment of time with each other. From her experiences as both a faculty member who uses CSL and as a coordinator of a community organization, she maintains that few community organizations or universities think in true partnership terms and worries that “community partner” is being loosely used instead of “community placement” (Pearson 2002, 189). Similarly, Baum also argues that the sometimes uncritical enthusiasm for partnerships results in fantasy:

Talk of cross-pollination offers a clue to unrealistic expectations. The language is metaphorical, not literal. Yet its common usage expresses a widely shared belief or wish reminiscent of early life fantasies: if only two bodies came together in just the right way, they could give birth to abundant new resources. This is a satisfying metaphor, but differences between flowers and bees and universities, community organizations, and business firms are signals of possible confusion between fantasy and reality (Baum 2000: 235).

Baum suggests that the fantasies develop instead of realistic efforts in response to the need to balance the two inherent tensions of partnership: while partnerships should have clear purposes, with targets of action, goals, and a means to achieve the goals, they must also respond to the ambiguities and differences in the partners' identities and purposes. The first principle requires structure and planning, the second necessitates flexibility, adaptability, and accommodation (Baum 2000, 234).

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<sup>28</sup> Saul Alinsky is a well-known radical community activist who started organizing in Chicago's giant Union Stockyards in the 1930s. He is known for saying: “I tell people the hell with charity, the only thing you'll get is what you're strong enough to get.” For additional information, please see: <http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/story.html>.

## **Chapter 2: Social Needs and University Responses**

In his study of a community-university partnership between the University of Maryland's Urban Community Service Program and a Southeast Baltimore education organization, Baum found that one of the community partners identified three stages of partnership development: altruism; exchange; and mutualism. The first stage was *altruistic*, where one party gave to another to address a moral issue and felt good about their contribution. The altruistic partner often wanted to move to a second stage of *exchange* where each partner would give the other something serving its interests. The partners might move to *mutualism* where together they identified and worked toward common interests (Baum 2000). Adin and Chadwick propose another way of considering community-university partnerships by identifying four models. In the *Ivory Tower Model*, universities remain isolated from the community and avoid opportunities to engage in community outreach. The *Charity Model* is premised on the belief that some people are unable to help themselves and require the intervention of others. This results in inequality and limits opportunities for meaningful community involvement. A third model evolved in response to the weaknesses of these first two approaches: the *Community Service Model*. While this is moving toward greater community involvement, it is generally restricted to opportunities that enhance the learning of students and therefore replicates the power imbalances of the *Charity Model*. The fourth, and most equitable model, is identified as the *Co-Learning Model*. Co-Learning relationships are fully collaborative, promote mutual learning, and consider all forms of knowledge as valuable (Adin and Chadwick 2000, 2-4).

As UBC values collaboration and working with the community, as articulated by President Piper and cited in the first chapter, true partnerships must be moving toward or rooted in mutualism and co-learning. Many of the community partners I spoke with described their relationship with UBC in ways that did fit these models, however, a few hesitated to call their relationship with the university a partnership, or found it necessary to differentiate between their relationship with the university and with individual Trek students. More discussion of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners' ideas around community-university partnerships, and the role of CSL, will occur in the fifth chapter in the section on the evolution and maturing of partnerships (Section D).

## **B. AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING**

Although I first heard about CSL a couple of years ago when I was working with a junior high school in Calgary, few Canadians know about CSL to date: according to a survey conducted in 1999, less than one-third of respondents from either the education or voluntary sectors were familiar with the concept, or its practice and study in the United States. Some schools, like those in Ontario, have made it compulsory for students to fulfill community service requirements for graduation; although this differs from CSL in that it is generally quite separate from students' academic program or learning objectives, and does not include reflection (Faris 1999).<sup>29</sup> Survey respondents expressed an interest in learning more about the concept, and there is already evidence five years later that the education and voluntary sectors in Canada have begun to adopt the model. In addition to CSL programs at St. Francis Xavier, the University of Guelph, the University of Alberta, and UBC, a national group, including UBC and nine other Canadian universities, have joined together to promote CSL and seek funding for CSL initiatives after meeting in June 2003 at UBC (Cook 2003; and Charbonneau 2004).

Although I would like to be able to describe a specifically Canadian evolution of CSL and compare it to the model that arose in the United States, such documentation does not exist at this time and is beyond the parameters of this study. Instead, I will consider the highlights of its establishment in the United States. With CSL being connected to citizenship and democracy—which I acknowledge are valuable and often underdeveloped concepts that I would also like to see encouraged—it is easy to get swept away by the enthusiasm and passion of CSL proponents. To balance this trend, in this section of the thesis, I will also discuss the work of several scholars who are uncomfortable with some aspects of CSL, and consider their suggestions for creating a more appropriate CSL model before examining community organizations and CSL at the end of this chapter (Section C).

The phrase “service-learning” is believed to have been first used in 1967 to describe an internship program organized by the Southern Regional Education Board where

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<sup>29</sup> Forbes et al. consider the irony of mandatory volunteerism. Their concerns with “punishing pedagogy” include: volunteerism being presented as an opportunity to ‘save’ the underprivileged; volunteerism reinforcing relationships of domination and subordination; volunteerism creating a burden for busy agencies; and volunteerism being perceived as passive observation rather than activism (Forbes et al. 1999).

American college students gained academic credit and remuneration from the federal government for their involvement in community projects. It is rooted in a number of traditions: democratic participation; Deweyan progressivism; civic republicanism; and ideals of public service (Abowitz 2001, 64). In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville traveled to United States from Europe to study penal institutions. He observed that Americans, unlike Europeans, were overly individualistic and proposed that relationships between individuals and social commitment to one another would address this potential problem (Kraft 1996, 132). Scholars continue to cite de Tocqueville's enthusiasm in *Democracy in America* (1835) for voluntary associations as a solution to America's individualism today: "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations", preventing democracy from "becoming powerless" (Rotolo 1999, 199). Like de Tocqueville, early twentieth century educational philosopher John Dewey felt that it was critical for a competitive and individualistic society like the United States to emphasize community work to ensure the functioning of democracy. Dewey also favoured experiential education as a method for ensuring that students would contribute more to society if they gained both life experience and learned the traditional curriculum while they were in school (Kraft 1996, 133). John Goodlad in *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future* (1984) claimed that schooling in the United States must encourage students "to develop a willingness to participate in the political life of the nation and community" (cited in Seigel and Rockwood 1993, 65). By the late 1980s, CSL was distinguished from community service by combining service with academic study, and by the late 1990s, its use was widespread, with two scholars referring to it "as the vital force in educational change" (Kenny and Gallagher 2002, 15-18).

In the mid-1980s, *Campus Compact: The Presidents' Initiative for Public and Community Service* was established by university presidents at Stanford, Georgetown, and Brown in response to student apathy and disengagement from public and community service.<sup>30</sup> They felt that universities had a role in preparing citizens to actively participate in a democracy, and wanted to provide institutional leadership. This initiative—to the worry of some of the early CSL pioneers—focused on voluntary action, and made no mention of the learning that could occur and was necessary for it to be effective (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz 1999, 167). President Bush Sr. established the White House Office of National Service in 1989, and passed the National and Community Services Trust Act, which led to the creation

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<sup>30</sup> For more information on Campus Compact, please see: <http://www.compact.org>.

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of the non-partisan, nonprofit Points of Light Foundation in 1990 to expand youth service initiatives. Three years later, President Clinton expanded these programs and provided funding for schools and universities to engage youth in community projects. In addition to university administration and government enthusiasm, the private sector encouraged these initiatives as a more affordable remedy for social ills such as poverty, crime, and homelessness than government programs.

Service is being entrenched as a civic responsibility of American young people to give back to their communities (Kenny and Gallagher 2002, 20-22). In 1984, 81,000 American high school students participated in CSL programs; in 1997, nearly three million students were involved, in addition to more than five hundred university and college programs (Faris 1999, 12). Today, Campus Compact is a national coalition of more than 900 college and university presidents "who are committed to fulfilling the civic purposes of higher education". They "promote community service initiatives that develop students' citizenship skills, help campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provide resources and practical guidance for faculty seeking to integrate civic engagement into their teaching and research". According to the 504 schools that responded to their annual member survey (a response rate of sixty percent), thirty-three percent of their students engaged in community service in 2002. More than half of respondents reported an increase in student involvement, with twenty percent reporting an increase of ten percent or more (Campus Compact 2002). Today, calls for volunteerism, as well as a commitment to experiential learning, contribute to the increasing popularity of CSL in the American school system (Schutz and Gere 1998, 129). Many feel that volunteering can be "cultivated or taught", especially if the opportunities are interesting and "positively affect the young person's attitudes toward civic engagement, personal responsibility, and contributing to a common good" (Reed 2000).<sup>31</sup> The alleged benefits of CSL are extensive: students become interested in future volunteer opportunities; community organizations fulfill their needs for human resources; students contribute their talents and learn new skills; and instructors respond to this challenging work creatively and enthusiastically (Herzberg 1994, 308; and Kraft 1996, 142-153).

Despite this enthusiasm, CSL is not without critics. Several educators have identified several shortcomings in existing practises. Bickford and Reynolds recounted the

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<sup>31</sup> Page number unavailable; article retrieved from the World Wide Web.

story of a high school English student who happily picked up litter on the beach to satisfy her CSL requirement. When the instructor asked the student why she did not approach some of the businesses on the beach to target the source of pollution, she announced, "it would go against my beliefs" (Bickford and Reynolds 2002, 229). Bickford and Reynolds concluded that while the student was comfortable with community service, she felt that environmental activism was inappropriate. In his work with college students in a literacy project at a homeless shelter, Bruce Hertzberg argues that such projects can generate a social conscience, "if by that we understand a sense of the reality and immediacy of the problems of the poor and the homeless along with a belief that people in a position to help out should do so" (Hertzberg 1994, 308). He wonders if this is enough:

I don't mean to belittle the kind of social awareness fostered by service learning, especially with middle class students. ... But what are they learning about the nature of the problems that cause these organizations to come into existence? How do they understand the plight of the people who need these services? I worry when our students report, as they frequently do, that homelessness and poverty were abstractions before they met the homeless and the poor, but now they see that the homeless are people 'just like themselves'. This, they like to say, is something that could happen to them: They could lose their jobs, their houses, even take to drink. Here, perhaps ironically, is a danger: If our students regard social problems as chiefly or only personal, then they will not search beyond the person for a systemic explanation...I don't believe that questions about social structures, ideology, and social justice are automatically raised by community service (Hertzberg 1994, 308-309).

These two examples suggest that CSL may be "infused with a volunteer ethos, a philanthropic or charitable viewpoint that ignores the structural reasons to help others" (Bickford and Reynolds 2002, 230-231). A potential risk with CSL is that it remains focused on the individual: students learn how to help an individual with their illiteracy, but they might not learn how political, economic, and social conditions influence illiteracy in their community, especially since many community organizations also focus on the individual.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Exceptions to this generalization exist: for example, the Arusha Centre in Calgary, Alberta, is a registered charity that engages in anti-oppression work in the schools, focusing on the education system and curriculum, not individuals impacted by racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression in their daily lives. I was involved with this organization between 1993-2000. For more information, please see: <http://www.arusha.org>.

Through her analysis of the field of critical pedagogy,<sup>33</sup> Abowitz argues that CSL as it is currently practised in some settings perpetuates a myth that needs to be deconstructed: "Instead of the service-learning's holy trinity of progressivism, 'citizenry, participation, democracy', critical pedagogues evoke a holy trinity more resembling 'oppression, struggle, justice'" (Abowitz 2001, 64). CSL discourse is "more conservative, less political, less critical of economic and political structures", while critical pedagogical discourse is "radical, less apt to be of a directly 'applicable' variety for educators, sweepingly critical of social structures, and oftentimes, extremely grim" (Abowitz 2001, 71). According to the critical pedagogy tradition, the solution to homelessness is not to find more spaces in shelters, but to determine the causes of homelessness and challenge these structural issues: How have government policies corrected and contributed to homelessness? How is homelessness affected by local, national, and global economic trends? How have our notions of the homeless and the causes of homelessness been shaped by the media? Questioning is essential to a successful service-learning experience:

Part of democratic citizenry is learning all our ideological traditions, not simply those that are most digestible. Teaching kids not only to *participate* in democracy but to *critique* the spectrum of ills, both cultural *and* structural, of our democratic society is both extremely important to our democratic future and a much more complex intellectual exercise than simply 'helping' (author's emphasis) (Abowitz 1999, 75).

Abowitz's argument suggests that students, educators, and community organizations will have a more enriching experience if CSL projects address structural issues.

Maybach's effort to create an alternative model of service-learning is attractive in its application to school and university CSL programs. Her first suggestion is to change our nomenclature from service provider and service recipient to "partners in service". While some might dismiss this change as mere political correctness, partners in service emphasizes that everyone contributes to the relationship by stressing the importance of cooperation, and reduces the imbalance between the dominant participant, or the provider, and the subordinate participant, or recipient. While language provides an entry point, such a transition also requires commitment and effort by both the community and university to develop a more balanced understanding of roles. This is critical, as Freire reminds us, if we hope to avoid further marginalizing people:

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<sup>33</sup> Critical pedagogy, the educational tradition that emerged from the fields of critical theory and cultural studies, includes the work of Paulo Freire, H.A. Giroux, P. McLaren, and I. Shor.

So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing, and are incapable of learning anything – that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive – that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness (Freire 1970, 45).

Instead of perpetuating this negative self-image, partners in service empowers participants to recognize their strengths and assets, not just their deficiencies and needs. Secondly, Maybach proposes that the goals, outcomes, and research reflect the interests of both partners, and that the partners publicly acknowledge the relationship as one of mutual benefit and reciprocation. To move toward this more equitable model, Maybach suggests that both partners engage in reflective activities such as journaling, which students have typically completed and submitted to their instructor for grading. Like Maybach's other modifications, this adaptation would equalize the partners, and create a partnership rooted in mutualism and co-learning. Finally, Maybach advocates that CSL be rooted in social change: rather than addressing the symptoms of need, the partners in service would strive to alleviate the structural causes of the problem. Instead of ensuring that space in a housing shelter is available for a homeless person, partners in service would look for ways to encourage property owners to provide affordable housing through mechanisms such as rent control, or lobby the government to increase its spending on affordable housing initiatives. This would result in CSL focused on good effects, not just good causes: "ultimately the service ethic should focus on praxis that embraces mutual empowerment of people in the process of addressing the root causes of need to lead to a more just society" (Maybach 1996, 231). Maybach recognizes that this alternative approach will take time to implement, but insists that we need to create a CSL model grounded in activism.

Bickford and Reynolds, Abowitz, and Maybach, in addition to providing examples of how CSL can be more transformative for the community organizations and broader society, offer a critique of a trend that is becoming difficult to question. I believe that their hesitation and scepticism is a valuable contribution, whether you agree or disagree with their emphasis on activism and social change, because much of the literature I encountered makes it seem as though the adoption and promotion of CSL is proceeding without debate. Even without knowing the community partners' experiences and perspectives, the number of institutions adopting CSL is growing. CSL is seen as the answer to many problems, including security issues following 9/11, according to two emails that came across a higher education service-

learning listserv hosted by the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse in March 2004.<sup>34</sup> Both emails detailed how the American Corporation for National and Community Service—the funder of the national CSL initiative Learn and Serve America—offered resources to grantees that wanted to participate in Project TAHS (Technical Assistance for Homeland Security), a program that will strengthen efforts to make their communities secure (Corporation for National and Community Service 2004a and 2004b). Although this might be a somewhat sensational example of how CSL can be used to advance a specific political agenda, it does suggest that CSL must be examined closely if it truly is to make our communities stronger and more inclusive. Like any new initiative, CSL needs to be carefully scrutinized, particularly when large universities like UBC commit to offering a significant proportion of their population a CSL experience.

## **C. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING**

As I mentioned in the first chapter, I participated in a CSL training workshop offered by one of the local Lions' Clubs in Calgary. Although the material was interesting, and it both enabled me to appreciate how teachers might approach CSL and strengthened my relationship with one of the participating schools, it did not address how the community organization I worked for could partner with the school. My inquiry as to whether there was another workshop for community organization staff, like myself, puzzled the workshop facilitator. In preparing for this study, I discovered an abundance of training opportunities, websites, academic publications, mentor organizations, and manuals geared to educators and schools who want to learn more about CSL. However, I quickly found that there is a lack of "similarly helpful and supportive material for community-service organizations or agencies approached as potential service-learning partners or that may even want to initiate a relationship with the school" (Abravanel 2003, 2).

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<sup>34</sup> The National Service Learning Clearinghouse provides materials, references, and information as part of Learn and Serve America, an America organization that supports CSL in higher education, kindergarten through grade twelve, community-based initiatives, and tribal programs. For more information, please see: <http://www.servicelearning.org>.

In the last few years, a number of researchers have lamented the lack of information about CSL and the community. While there is a sense that getting students involved in community activities has both short-term and long-term benefits, "concrete information about existing relationships between higher education and community organizations is slim" (Brisbin and Hunter 2003, 468), and data that exists tends to focus on whether community members appreciate the work of students and not what community organizations contribute to the partnership itself (Billig and Eyler 2003, xi). Although Ferrari and Worrall claim there are benefits to everyone involved: "students learn to create, plan, and prepare a course of action in real-life situations with a sense of care for others; schools build stronger links with their local communities; and agencies have active citizens better prepared to tackle future problems as well as address current dilemmas", they also acknowledge that "little research exists that focuses on the agency's views of the student service provider or the college-partner institution" (Ferrari and Worrall 2000, 35). Vernon and Ward conclude that "if the community continues to be overlooked in service-learning research, then service-learning may become yet another example of an 'ivory tower' approach to community 'partnerships' in which the community is merely an educational laboratory and not a true partner" (Vernon and Ward 1999, 30). Although CSL promises win-win-win relationships between the faculty, students, and community members, the research to date "has overwhelmingly tended to emphasize impacts related to student learning and pedagogical issues at the expense of community impacts" (Vernon and Ward 1999, 30). Recognizing the limitations of this approach, they caution:

If service-learning researchers continue to ignore the community perspective, then we are perpetuating the hierarchical and potentially destructive relationship between campuses and their surrounding communities that service-learning implicitly seeks to remedy. By failing to look at communities as active partners, those involved in service-learning risk maintaining the status quo in campus-community relationships (Vernon and Ward 1999, 30).

In their extensive annotated bibliography (one-hundred and twenty pages) of published CSL literature between 1993-2000, Eyler et al. found only fourteen studies that addressed community outcomes or impacts (Eyler et al. 2001, 10). Of these fourteen, many focused on the community as a secondary interest and appeared to have little to contribute to our understanding of community experiences and perspectives. This gap has been identified as one of the "top ten unanswered questions in service-learning research" (Giles Jr. and Eyler 1998, 65).

## **Chapter 2: Social Needs and University Responses**

Yet while our understanding of how CSL impacts the community is limited, “advocates continue to urge its practice on the basis of its intended value to communities” (Cruz and Giles Jr. 2000, 29). In their study, Cruz and Giles Jr. suggest there are political, intellectual, and practical explanations that explain why there has been so little research focused on the community. In response to criticisms of CSL’s academic value, and because research falls within the purview of universities, the research has focused on both student learning and faculty perceptions of the pedagogy. Intellectually, researchers have avoided studying CSL from the community perspective because the concept of community baffles scholars: is community the agency personnel; clients or consumers of services; a particular geographical area or neighbourhood; or an intentional community? In addition, researchers struggle with the methodological problem of generalizability because it is difficult to control variables within a complex construct such as community. Universities—who are conducting the research—tend to prefer work that has general applicability. Practically, the community has not insisted on or initiated the research, and as community outcomes or impacts research requires considerable time and knowledge, both newcomers and veterans of CSL have avoided asking about the community’s experience (Cruz and Giles Jr. 2000, 28-29). We know that our understanding is limited, at best, or perhaps inaccurate if we do not appreciate the role of community organizations in CSL: “The organizations and agencies that act as community partners are equal stakeholders to the school in the success of the service-learning experience. Strengthening the community partner will enhance the whole partnership. Attention to the preparation, training and development of support for the community partner demands additional consideration by all service-learning advocates” (Abravanel 2003, 14).

There are, of course, exceptions: Ferrari and Worrall asked how the other side sees CSL when they used quantitative and qualitative analysis to find out how community organization supervisors perceived the students who worked at their agency (Ferrari and Worrall 2000, 35-40). A total of 135 students enrolled at a medium-sized, Midwestern, private, urban university participated in a variety of community service projects to complete course requirements in spring 1999. Activities included preparing and distributing meals for homeless persons; tutoring adults in English or young children in reading, writing, or math; preparing immigrants for citizenship exams and other related processes; assisting people with AIDS; instructing job ready skills to welfare recipients; and providing daycare for children. Students were involved at their agency site between six to eight weeks, working

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approximately 20-25 hours over the course of the term. Agency supervisors at 30 community-based organizations completed rating scales and open-ended items about the performance of students, after students received their final course grade. While the organizations varied in their mission, all were nonprofit, private agencies receiving federal, state, or local financial assistance. Nine dimensions on a five-point rating scale were examined: attendance; punctuality; appearance appropriate for organization and project; attitude; level of respect; working relationships; dependability; work quality; and importance of work. Supervisors were also encouraged to make comments or explain their ratings. Overall, the responses to students were very favourable: supervisors reported that the students were helpful, sensitive, friendly, compassionate, acted appropriately, interested, dedicated, worked independently of supervisors, handled difficult situations, and showed an ability to resolve conflicts and solve situation problems that arose (Ferrari and Worrall 2000, 38). The authors conclude that their study "provides a useful instrument as a component of assessing community-based service-learning programs" because it takes little time for agency supervisors to complete yet obtains reliable information about their experiences with students (Ferrari and Worrall 2000, 38). They admitted the limitations of their study: the five-point scale might have been too narrow; responses may have been high, even if the agency had concerns about the student, because they did not want to jeopardize the relationship with the university or negatively impact the partnership; and neither the faculty who taught the classes, nor the agency supervisors were involved with creating the measurement tool (Ferrari and Worrall 2000).

I would suggest that although Ferrari and Worrall's efforts represent a better effort at telling the story of community partners, it still primarily focuses on the student and their accomplishments. It neglects the nature of the partnership, or the relationship between the community organization and the individual student, and whether or not they are conceptualizing CSL in the same way. As the fifth chapter illustrates, while community partners are interested in talking about the types of students who work in the Learning Exchange Trek Program, they also are thinking about the role of organizational climate, the contributions of students, their responses to the introduction of CSL, the evolution and maturing of partnerships, and the university's responsibility to bring students into the Downtown Eastside. I found that the community partners I spoke with are thoughtful, reflective, and insightful individuals whose experiences and perspectives—if considered—

## ***Chapter 2: Social Needs and University Responses***

will contribute to a better understanding of CSL and its potential. We just have to ask them to tell their story.

## Chapter 3: Setting the Scene

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To situate the story of CSL as told by the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners, it is essential to consider the community where the community partners deliver services and supports. In this chapter, I begin by describing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside<sup>35</sup> and inner city neighbourhoods. Next, I present an overview of the voluntary sector nationally and provincially as many of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners are either nonprofit or charitable organizations. An introduction to the Vancouver School Board (VSB) will also be included, as my interview sample also included three schools. While schools are not formally included in the voluntary sector, they face similar social problems, and are increasingly adopting some of the strategies of the sector, including fund-raising, grant writing, and setting-up volunteer programs. I have provided considerable detail about the voluntary sector because it helps us to understand the community partners' experiences and perspectives. As an example, several community partners mentioned that their concern about the declining number of volunteers in Canada motivated them to become involved with UBC. Other community partners referenced that working with students allowed them to respond more creatively to their mandate, which was becoming increasingly challenging to meet because of diminished support by either the state or private sector. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will more fully describe the implications the debate over the provision of services through the voluntary sector has for CSL. To conclude this chapter, I will provide some background to the creation of UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program before introducing the interviewees.

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<sup>35</sup> I am hesitant to describe the Downtown Eastside as I am aware that it is a complex community that has been stigmatized and marginalized by many individuals, organizations, and levels of government. Although I have worked in the Downtown Eastside for short periods of time with two community organizations, and spent a lot of time walking in the area as part of my "informal" research for this study and interviewing individuals at organizations located primarily in the Downtown Eastside, my experience and knowledge of the community is limited to that of an outsider who has tried to acknowledge both the strengths and struggles of this community.

## **A. VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE**

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the heart of the third largest city in Canada in the province of British Columbia. It is a community that enriches the city with its vibrant history, beautiful architecture, and incredible diversity of people. It is often said that many within the Downtown Eastside experience a real sense of community in the neighbourhood, and the community is well-known for its political activism. There are five very distinct areas that make up the Downtown Eastside, plus a park and industrial area: Chinatown; Gastown; Victory Square; Strathcona; and Oppenheimer.<sup>36</sup> Chinatown was established by the many Chinese immigrants who came to Vancouver in the 1880s, and continues to be a vibrant business and cultural centre. Gastown, a provincial historical district like Chinatown, began in 1867 when "Gassy Jack" Deighton built a saloon, and was restored to a cobble-stoned street with such features as vintage lighting to attract tourists beginning in the late 1960s. Victory Square, named for its war memorial cenotaph, contains businesses, downtown campuses of post-secondary institutions, and a number of single room occupancy hotel rooms housing approximately 1500 people. Strathcona, earlier the site of the Hastings Mill in 1865, was known before European settlement by First Nations as "Kumkumalay" and was frequently used as a camping spot. Public outcry in both Strathcona and Chinatown prevented the building of a freeway through the area in the 1960s. Today, Strathcona is a diverse area with light industry, wholesale storage, and many forms of housing (apartments, public housing, converted housing, and rooming houses), with nearly sixty-one percent of residents speaking Chinese as a first language. Beginning in the late 1800s, Oppenheimer was home to many Canadians of Japanese descent. This community was devastated as businesses and assets were closed or confiscated when Canada decided to intern all ethnic Japanese and move them to camps in the interior during the Second World War. Today it includes a court house, a police station, retail, restaurants, a Buddhist temple, a theatre, social services, and some light industrial facilities (City of Vancouver 2003b).

Yet the Downtown Eastside is a community whose members also struggle with poverty, mental illness, substance use and addiction, drug dealing, prostitution, crime, inadequate and insecure housing, high incidents of HIV and Hepatitis C infection, high

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<sup>36</sup> Please see Appendix A and B to view a map of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the city of Vancouver.

unemployment, and decreasing legitimate businesses. While these are challenges that face other urban centres in big cities, this part of Vancouver is notorious for being known as the poorest postal code in Canada. Beginning in the late 1950s, a number of developments led to a decrease of 10,000 fewer visitors per day in the area and the gradual marginalization of this community: the streetcars stopped running in the area; the main library moved to a location outside the Downtown Eastside; and, in the late 1960s, the City began building a new centre for Downtown Vancouver that enticed Eaton's, one of the large department stores that had previously been in the heart of the Downtown Eastside, to relocate (City of Vancouver 2003b). The lack of affordable housing in nearby areas drove low-income people to the Downtown Eastside, as did the deinstitutionalization of thousands of psychiatric patients in the 1970s who found no other community willing to accept them. By the late 1980s, the drug situation became more troublesome as more people started using cocaine—a drug that is more addictive and less expensive than heroin—but still led people to theft to pay for their drugs, leading to an excess of second-hand stores, pawn shops, and illegitimate businesses. In 1992, the remaining established department store, Woodward's, went out of business, leading many nearby stores and businesses to close their doors, and resulting in the area becoming less of a destination for people from outside the community.<sup>37</sup> Today, all three levels of government, as well as the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Coalition for Crime Prevention and Drug Treatment, the Vancouver Police Department, and the Vancouver Park Board are working together on the Downtown Eastside Revitalization Program. The Vancouver Agreement, signed in March 2000, commits the federal, provincial, and municipal governments to develop and implement a coordinated strategy to promote and support sustainable economic, social and community development in the Downtown Eastside. In addition, many community groups—nonprofits, charities, religious organizations, and schools—are working closely with community members to address the issues facing the community and promote a liveable, safe, and viable community for all (City of Vancouver 2003b).

The issues confronting the Downtown Eastside are not constrained by specific geographic boundaries, and can be found throughout other parts of the city. The Learning

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<sup>37</sup> The Woodward's Building, having sat vacant for more than ten years, was the site of protests and squats by individuals and organizations frustrated by the lack of affordable and secure housing in the Downtown Eastside in 2002 and 2003. Currently the City of Vancouver and others are considering how to redevelop the space for housing, retail, and services in the community. For more information, please see: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/corpsvcs/realestate/woodwards/>.

Exchange Trek Program uses the phrase “inner city neighbourhoods” to describe their work in communities outside the physical boundaries of the Downtown Eastside that face similar issues of poverty and marginalization. Other organizations, such as the Vancouver School Board (VSB), have established an “Inner-City Program” that provides support and services to children who face obstacles to success at schools for economic, social, or other reasons, such as meal programs and additional support personnel (VSB 2004b). The Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners work with people in both the Downtown Eastside and inner city neighbourhoods, including many of the schools recognized by the VSB program. While the concept of inner city neighbourhoods helps us to focus on particular social and economic factors (poverty, instability, homelessness, etc.), rather than a geographical area, I primarily use “Downtown Eastside” throughout this study to refer to the location of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's efforts. Most of the community partners I interviewed referred to their work in the Downtown Eastside—rather than inner city neighbourhoods—even when they were working outside the actual geographical boundaries of the Downtown Eastside.

## **B. COMMUNITY PARTNERS: THEIR ROLE IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

Canada's voluntary sector is increasingly noticeable because of its vast scope: we hear of food bank campaigns on the evening news; participate in runs to raise money for cancer research; and buy popcorn from the Boy Scouts. The voluntary sector engages in disparate activities in the space between the state and the market to provide public benefit. Some refer to these groups as community organizations, charities, nonprofits, citizens' organizations, the third or independent sector, associations, or civil society, and frequently use the terms interchangeably. Examples include hospitals, community associations, homeless shelters, art galleries, social clubs, and religious organizations. According to the terms of Canada's *Income Tax Act*, nonprofit organizations are legal entities exempt from income taxes and other taxes because they do not distribute profits or surpluses to owners or shareholders. Some nonprofit organizations register as a charitable organization with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), allowing them to issue receipts to their

donors for tax credits.<sup>38</sup> Together nonprofits and charitable organizations comprise the voluntary sector.

In June 1999, Canada's voluntary sector included 77,926 registered charities and an estimated 100,000 nonprofit organizations.<sup>39</sup> According to the CCRA, the number of registered charities has grown for the last ten years by approximately three percent a year, with the largest category being places of worship (36 percent), followed by social service (14 percent), and community benefit (7 percent). Canadian charities received an estimated \$90.5 billion in revenues in 1994, with the majority of funding going to charities, hospitals, and teaching institutions. Researchers estimate the sector contributes between four and thirteen percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product, and employs nine percent, or 1.3 million people, of Canada's labour force (Hall and Banting 2000, 10-15). In addition, many Canadians volunteer in the sector: more than one in four Canadians aged 15 and over (27 percent of the population or 6.5 million people) volunteered at a charitable or nonprofit organization according to the *2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating*, or *2000 NSGVP* (Hall, McKeown, and Roberts 2001, 31).<sup>40</sup> Volunteers contribute to society in important and multiple ways: they answer phones in crisis centres; join their community association's board of directors; coach soccer; present workshops on international development issues; and raise money selling Girl Guide cookies. In total, volunteers contributed over 1.05 billion hours to charities and nonprofit organizations in 2000 (Hall, McKeown, and Roberts 2001, 11).

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<sup>38</sup> CCRA relies on the *Statute of Uses*, a law that originated in England in 1601, and the decision by the House of Lords in *Pemsel* three hundred years later to determine what qualifies as a charity: charities include "trusts for the relief of poverty; trusts for the advancement of education; trusts for the advancement of religion; and trusts for other purposes beneficial to the community not falling under the preceding heads". There is much debate about whether this common law definition of charity reflects contemporary public sentiment. For more information, please see the Charities and Democracy Project of the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS): <http://www.impacs.org>.

<sup>39</sup> Unlike charities, there is not a centralized registry for nonprofits (unless they are also charities), which makes it difficult to describe them with any certainty (Hall and Banting 2000).

<sup>40</sup> The *2000 NSGVP*, is the result of a partnership between federal government departments (Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Human Resources and Development Canada, and Statistics Canada) and voluntary sector organizations (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Volunteer Canada). First completed in 1997, Statistics Canada conducted the *2000 NSGVP* as part of the Labour Force Survey in October, November, and December 2000. It asked 14,724 Canadians aged 15 and older about their involvement as donors, volunteers, and members of charitable and nonprofit organizations.

A search on CCRA's *Charities Directorate* identifies 10,854 registered charities in the province of BC.<sup>41</sup> According to the 2000 NSGVP, the situation in BC's parallels the national picture: 26 percent of the population (about 845,000 people) volunteered for 142.6 million hours, the equivalent of 74,000 full-time jobs. Although residents with a university degree are more likely to volunteer (40 percent) than those with high school diploma or less (19 percent), individuals with some post-secondary education volunteered more hours than those who had a certificate or degree (212 hours/year vs. 180 hours/year). These hours advance the mission of many organizations in BC, including: Arts, Culture, and Recreation (29 percent of hours); Social Services (20 percent); Education and Research (9 percent); Religion (7 percent); and Health (5 percent) (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy 2003b and 2003d). Nearly nine out of ten British Columbians made financial or in-kind contributions to charitable and nonprofit organizations in 2000, a slight decrease since the last survey in 1997. The size of annual donations increased with the donor's level of education: individuals with a university degree annually donated an average of \$511, while those with a high school education or less annually donated \$154. British Columbians, like many other Canadians, donate because they feel compassion toward those in need and believe in the organization. They are less motivated by religious obligations or beliefs and tax credits than Canadians as a whole (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy 2003a and 2003c).

Observers of the voluntary sector note two challenges: first, the sector relies on a small and somewhat exclusive sector of the population—people who are older, married, and with a high level of religious involvement—as their volunteers and donors (Hall, McKeown, and Roberts 2001, 9); and secondly, the number of volunteers and the hours this group volunteers are decreasing. A greater number of people volunteered more hours in 1997 than in 2000: 7.5 million Canadians (31 percent of the population) volunteered 1.1 billion hours in 1997 (Hall, McKeown, and Roberts 2001, 11). In BC, the number of individuals volunteering in 2000 decreased eight percent from three years earlier (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy 2003b). In recognition of the voluntary sector's importance, the government and voluntary sector are strategizing how to improve volunteerism through the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). The government's commitment of \$94.6 million over five years to the VSI, a joint undertaking between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada, "is to

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<sup>41</sup> This number, current as of 8 May 2004, does not include the number of nonprofits in BC. For additional information, please see: [http://www.c CRA-adrc.gc.ca/tax/charities/online\\_listings/canreg\\_interim-e.html](http://www.c CRA-adrc.gc.ca/tax/charities/online_listings/canreg_interim-e.html).

strengthen the voluntary sector's capacity to meet the challenges of the future and to enhance the relationship between the sector and the federal government and their ability to serve Canadians".<sup>42</sup> I will explore how CSL initiatives, such as the Learning Exchange Trek Program, connect to these two challenges in final chapter of this thesis.

## **C. COMMUNITY PARTNERS: THE VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD**

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) provides educational programs for 60,000 elementary, secondary, and adult students in 109 schools and six adult education centres. Elementary schools (kindergarten to grade seven), Annexes (kindergarten to grade three), and secondary schools (grades eight to twelve) fall into one of four administrative areas: Jericho, Fraserview, Marineview, and Sunrise. Schools follow the *School Act* and the curriculum developed by the provincial Ministry of Education (MoE), and adhere to all policies set out by the elected Vancouver Board of School Trustees.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the funds provided by the MoE, the provincial government, through the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), provides funding for Inner City school programs. Inner City school programs provide school meal programs, special staff, safety programs, community schools, and other supports in 18 elementary and 5 secondary schools "to overcome some of the obstacles of transiency, sub-standard housing, and poverty associated with inner city neighbourhoods" (VSB 2004c). Started in 1988 by the VSB, the program provides schools with additional support to assist students whose social, economic, or other circumstances may inhibit their learning. Recently the government threatened to cut funding to the program by nearly \$3 million, but public pressure led them to restore the funding to the level received in 2002/2003 (VSB 2004a). While this is a relief to many people in Vancouver, the VSB still faces impending cutbacks in staff and a reduction of supplies and services. The VSB Finance and Legal Committee Chair Angela Kenyon stated: "We know, and our community knows, that the cuts we are being forced to make will contribute to the further erosion of desperately needed educational services and

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<sup>42</sup> For more information on the Voluntary Sector Initiative, please see: <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/about.cfm>.

<sup>43</sup> For additional information about the VSB, please see: <http://www.vsb.bc.ca>.

programs for our students" (VSB 2004b). Like the voluntary sector, the VSB must do more with less, motivating it to rely on assistance provided by Trek students.

## **D. MEET THE STORY'S MAIN CHARACTERS**

As mentioned earlier, one group of interviews was conducted with eight community partners from schools and nonprofit organizations.<sup>44</sup> The second group included three UBC staff members working either directly or indirectly with the Learning Exchange Trek Program.<sup>45</sup>

Organization A provides direct service to adults with serious and persistent mental illness. In Respondent A's role as the program coordinator, she is responsible for a one-to-one volunteer program. Organization A recognizes that many community members who access their services are isolated, and see their program as an opportunity to assist them connecting with other people and services in the community.

Organization B has 167 students in kindergarten to grade 4. The school reflects Vancouver's cultural diversity with many students of First Nations descent, as well as a large number of students who have English as a Second Language. Respondent B is one of the school's administrators.

Organization C has 165 students in kindergarten to grade 7. The school is very multicultural: many students are either First Nations, Chinese, or Vietnamese descent; students speak thirteen different languages at home; and approximately sixty percent of students have English as a Second Language. Respondent C is the school's administrator, and has been involved with university students in a number of different ways over the past five years. One of her goals was to have at least fifty volunteers (Learning Exchange Trek Program and otherwise) in the school this year; she is pleased that they have exceeded their goal by twenty volunteers.

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<sup>44</sup> Please see Appendix E to review the Interview Guide used.

<sup>45</sup> Please see Appendix C and D to review the Interview Guides used.

Organization D is a nonprofit society operating a twenty-four hour nursing care and assisted living residence with 24 private suites, as well as a Day Health Program with over 1,700 health visits per month. The organization serves those most at risk of deteriorating health due to HIV/AIDS, other illnesses, disabilities, and disadvantaged life circumstances. Respondent D is the coordinator of the volunteer program, and first learned about the Learning Exchange Trek Program when she was looking to participate in a volunteer fair in the fall of 2001.

Organization E is a charitable nonprofit organization providing a number of services in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for more than forty years. Organization E works with people who face multiple challenges including: poverty, crime, chronic mental and other illnesses, IV drug use, illiteracy, homelessness, and the sex trade. Respondent E is the coordinator of residential services for Organization E, and has been in her position for several years.

Organization F is a community elementary school (kindergarten to grade seven) with 670 students. The school is a diverse community with students of Chinese, Vietnamese, Central American Spanish, European, and First Nations descent. There are both English and French immersion programs, as well as a large number of students who have English as a Second Language. Respondent F is responsible for focusing on the school's vulnerable students and families, and divides her time between Organization F and one other school in the area.

Organization G is a charitable nonprofit organization that provides health and social services to pregnant women and women and their children in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. A variety of programs are offered to support the women through their pregnancies and in parenting their children, including housing, nutritional programs, counselling, and advocacy. Respondent G is the coordinator of the program and has been involved for four years.

Organization H is a charitable nonprofit organization providing emergency shelter, food services, long-term housing, outreach services, and financial services to people with mental health issues and/or substance abuse issues. Respondent H manages the emergency shelter, including human resources, client care, volunteers, and programming.

UBC A and UBC C are direct employees of the Learning Exchange Trek Program, while UBC B is an administrator responsible for a number of university initiatives and programs. All three have been involved with UBC for a number of years in a variety of roles including student, faculty, staff, and administration. UBC A has also worked with a number of community organizations outside the university.

## Chapter 4: Making Sense of the Madness of Methodology

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One of the more challenging—and at times frustrating—aspects of this study has been my struggle to understand the nature of research. I found myself uncertain and confused about research design, despite many research papers throughout my post-secondary education and working as a researcher for two organizations. It was insufficient to find something interesting and try to make sense of it: instead, I needed to situate my research questions within the broader field of social science enquiry and be prepared to defend my choices. It was a relief to find that others found it complex too: “The task of carrying out an enquiry is complicated by the fact that there is no overall consensus about how to conceptualize the doing of research” (Robson 1993, 18).

In this chapter, I will describe the “doing” of my research, beginning with how this study differs from my previous research projects. For a significant part of the chapter, I will answer some of the questions that surfaced throughout the process and the decisions I made, including: *What was I trying to accomplish?; What is my role as the researcher?; How do I believe knowledge is created or used? / How is what I am doing contributing to knowledge?; What are my biases as the researcher?; What theoretical influences determined my interest in this research area?; What research tradition shapes my methodology?; Does situating my work within a qualitative tradition make my work less valuable, illegitimate, or less “scientific”?; Where does theory fit in my methodology?; What is my approach for answering my research questions?; How do I generate data to answer my research questions?; and Would my findings be true for other community partners? / How would I know if my findings were accurate?* The answers to these questions inform my methodology: the attempt to answer what research procedures do we employ to determine “how do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it” (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 13), or “how can the investigator find out whatever he/she believes can be known?” (Shumer 2000, 76). My methodology is an expression of my worldview or paradigm, which both directly and

indirectly shapes every aspect of this study.<sup>46</sup> As I do not believe that I approach this work neutrally, without preconceived ideas, or an understanding rooted in my experiences, I want to be open and explicit about what I bring to this study. After presenting my methodology, I will describe the data gathering, analysis, and interpretation process. This will lead into the fifth chapter where I will share my actual findings from the interviews.

## **A. THE TRANSITION: FROM PAPER-WRITER TO RESEARCHER**

Prior to this thesis, a lot of my research was straightforward: I would come up with an area of interest, read some books and journal articles, mull it over, and write it all up. Generally it was under considerable time constraints (albeit self-induced!), and once it was completed, it was over. I often felt quite distant from what I had written, perhaps because the voices of “experts” dominated my discussion rather than my own thoughts and feelings. And for the longest time with this project, I imagined that it would unfold similarly, only on a grander scale, and with a defense at the end to mark its completion. I acted the same way with this paper for quite a long time: *if only I recalled this one book from the library, or ordered this obscure journal through inter-library loans, I would be able to finish my thesis.* This resulted in a large collection of CSL literature.

I also tried for the longest time to avoid topics that involved talking to people, convinced that I would be wasting their time for an inconsequential project that would contribute little to our understanding, or lead to change. And it seemed somewhat selfish to know, particularly in my areas of interest, that I would likely experience the greatest benefit as it would enable me to graduate. After years of education where it was reinforced that more sources equalled better grades, I could not imagine why suddenly I was expected to articulate my own findings. *What could I have to say that had not been said?* I resigned myself to conducting primary research after repeatedly asking my advisor if I could just use secondary sources and finding out that it was generally an unsuitable approach for planning-thesis research. It began to make sense when one of my working group members

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<sup>46</sup> Patton defines worldview/paradigm as “a way of thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world” (Patton 2002, 69).

emphasized that the potential for learning when you talk with other people—rather than just reading article after article—was both extraordinary and worthwhile. I agree: eleven interviews later, I feel very privileged to have spent some time with each of my interviewees. Their insights, wisdom, and thoughtfulness were central to this study, and certainly contributed to my learning. And while a lot of research can be conducted in the library, the greatest learning for me came from spending a couple of hours with the interviewees, reflecting on the interviewees' transcripts, and trying to understand what they had shared, both for what it told me about the Learning Exchange Trek Program and community-university partnerships elsewhere.

## **B. QUESTIONING TO MAKE SENSE**

I found many sources on methodology that mystified research or added to my confusion. Here, I will attempt to make my research efforts clear. I am motivated by four reasons: first, I need to “make sense of the madness” as I found establishing my methodology a challenging aspect of writing a thesis; secondly, my choice of a qualitative methodology (instead of quantitative) differs from most other CSL studies (Shumer 2000); third, and related to the first two, I want to avoid getting hung up on techniques and concentrate on my research questions and the community partners' stories; and finally, I hope that this study will be valuable in both academic and community settings.<sup>47</sup> This final motive, to make it relevant and useful for diverse readers, is critical:

We must effectively communicate the results of our research to fellow citizens. If we do this, we may successfully transform social science from what is fast becoming a sterile academic activity, which is undertaken mostly for its own sake and in increasing isolation from a society on which it has little effect and from which gets little appreciation. We may transform social science to an activity done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our on-going efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future. We may, in short, arrive at a social science that matters (Flyvbjerg 2001, 166).

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<sup>47</sup> I have also written a condensed version of this thesis to share with community partners. I wanted to provide more information than what is contained in abstract, but realize that many of the respondents have limited time for reading the full study. Please see Appendix F.

In this chapter, I focus on eleven questions about my research that emerged as I embarked on this study. Although I have presented the questions as if they were logical and coherent steps in the process, their emergence was actually quite chaotic.<sup>48</sup> My responses varied, depending on where I was in the thesis making and writing process.<sup>49</sup>

### **1.) What was I trying to accomplish?**

I was seeking to understand some aspects or “truths” of something I found interesting. For this thesis, I wanted to learn about the experiences and perspectives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program’s community partners so I could share their story. While the desire to understand “truths” in itself is not unique, as humans do this every day to make sense of the world, this undertaking differed because I wanted this to be transparent, compelling, believable, trustworthy, systematic, and shared publicly. I find Stake’s suggestion that research does not intend “to necessarily map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it” appealing because it captures its expansiveness while acknowledging its limitations (Stake 1995, 43). The purpose of this study is exploratory—rather than explanatory—because I wanted to understand and tell the story of the Learning Exchange Trek Program’s community partners as I felt such accounts were lacking in the literature. A descriptive study provides a profile of persons, events, or situations, whereas an explanatory study would endeavour to establish causal relationships (Robson 1993, 42). My research questions, presented in the first chapter, articulate specifically what “truths” I hoped to contemplate in my thesis.

### **2.) What is my role as the researcher?**

As the researcher, my first role was to determine through various methods (primarily interviews, with some document review and personal observation) what was happening with some of the Learning Exchange Trek Program’s community partners and to recount their experiences and perspectives collectively by identifying common themes. Additionally, I

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<sup>48</sup> Palys stresses that qualitative research is an iterative spiral-like process that is cyclical but not repetitive (Palys 1997, 288). That is far too tidy to represent my process—it felt more like a spiral with shoots out of it in every direction emphasizing the wrong turns and chaos that I encountered. And there was often repetition.

<sup>49</sup> I realized in conversations with other graduate students that the “writing” of my thesis reflects only part—and a rather small part—of what I learned in this process. The “making” included all the topics I rejected, literature consulted and discarded, ramblings in my journal, conversations with family and friends, and just general busyness that did not result in a tangible product, but was critical to my growth as a researcher and planner.

interpreted these themes, based on my understanding of what I heard from all eleven interviewees, in conjunction with the literature review, document review, and observations. As these are two separate roles, I am careful throughout the study to differentiate between analysis and interpretation of the data. Being a researcher is a challenging undertaking if one agrees with Stake: "All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention to what they consider worthy of attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients" (Stake 1995, 49). I believe it takes creativity, sensitivity, responsiveness, precision, and openness to be a thoughtful, careful researcher that produces trustworthy studies (see question 11 below). As part of this process, all interviewees were given the opportunity through what is known as "member checks" to comment on my analysis to ensure that I accurately and fairly represented what they shared during the interview, and that my interpretation reflected their experiences and perspectives. Interviewees received a draft of the chapter that contained my findings and interpretation; I subsequently incorporated their feedback into this thesis.<sup>50</sup>

As the researcher, I was also required to submit an application to UBC's Office of Research Services in conjunction with my Research Supervisor. My research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, and I complied with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on 'Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans'.<sup>51</sup>

### **3.) How do I believe knowledge is created or used? How is what I am doing contributing to knowledge?**

I believe that all knowledge is socially and historically constructed, and that it is political, value-laden, interpretive, subjective, embedded in power relations, and consequently, complex. Knowledge is created, not discovered, reflects the dynamic and changing nature of society, and is highly context-specific. I accept that there are multiple perspectives and that it is impossible (and unnecessary) to establish the "best" perspective. Therefore, I am contributing one interpretation of CSL and community partners' experiences and perspectives that exists, or could exist. The questions I asked the interviewees, the

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<sup>50</sup> This is not the only role for a researcher. As an example, in Participatory Action Research (PAR) the researcher and the community work together to define the problem and develop solutions. This requires the researchers to act more as facilitators than the approach I have described. While it would have been interesting to adopt a more participatory approach in this study, it was not suitable given my time constraints and inexperience with traditional methodology.

<sup>51</sup> For more information about UBC's ethical review process, please see:  
<http://www.ors.ubc.ca/ethics/index.htm>.

analysis I conducted, or any other component of this study, could lead me to different conclusions one year from now, or lead someone else in another direction than what I followed in this study. Having acknowledged this does not diminish the value of my contribution; rather, it underscores its partiality and the need for other researchers to ask similar questions so together we can piece together a more complete understanding of the phenomenon considered in this study.

#### **4.) What are my biases as the researcher?**

First, I recognize that certain groups in society are privileged in relationship to others, and that a university education (particularly graduate school) is often one of the reasons individuals or groups of people are bestowed more privilege than others. As an example, my status as a graduate student allowed me to enter a community where I am an outsider—both among community partners and community members. I am uncertain how this may have affected the study because I did not ask the interviewees whether this influenced their decision to meet with me, and cannot discern whether their answers to particular questions were a response to my background. Four of the interviewees voluntarily referred to their own experiences as graduate students: this information may have been offered to let me know they were familiar with the research process; or that we could use certain concepts or vocabulary in our interview that might be more common in a university setting (or perhaps they wanted me to know that it is possible to survive graduate school!). I know that I mentioned to many of the interviewees that I worked and volunteered for similar community partners—both community organizations and schools—before returning to school to establish a connection with them, and suggest that my knowledge and experience was enriched by these experiences outside of academia. While it was not noticeable with community partners whether this helped or hindered the study, I imagine that it could have been more relevant if I had been talking with community members. My experience in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside suggests that community members respond in many ways to "university types": they may openly inform you that they find your education overvalued (as it would not guarantee you would survive in their community); they may recognize difference but not be bothered; or they might be intimidated and feel unable to contribute at the same level, creating an imbalance in power.

Secondly, I was drawn to examining the Learning Exchange Trek Program because I thought its work was valuable. I liked that UBC students were learning more about the

social issues facing the Downtown Eastside as I believe that we will develop better responses and solutions when more people understand what is happening in this community. While this can be interpreted as a bias, it also motivated me to be critical in my interpretation so I could meaningfully contribute in some way to the Learning Exchange Trek Program's efforts in introducing CSL. This pursuit was also encouraged by the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff who sat on my working group—rather than my supervisory committee—to avoid any conflicts of interest or inappropriate influence.

### **5.) What theoretical influences determined my interest in this research area?**<sup>52</sup>

My decision to research this topic was influenced by my interest in community development and experiential education as pioneered by individuals like Myles Horton<sup>53</sup> and the Highlander Research and Education Center. I define community development as a process that people engage in together to plan and create a better society. It is a democratic, participatory, and locally controlled process that is driven by an awareness of community strengths, capacities, assets, issues, and challenges. It is about collaboration and cooperation, not coercion or competition. It seeks opportunities within the liberal democratic tradition, where capitalism and the market predominate, to change attitudes and structures that will ultimately result in a more equitable redistribution of wealth. This social change is characterized by local capacity building, participation, self-help, building networks, developing local leadership and initiative, addressing a community's economic, social, cultural, and ecological situation, and tends to favour a bottom-up approach.<sup>54</sup> I believe that CSL offers everyone participating—students, university, community partners, and community members—an opportunity to learn together and realize the goals of community development as outlined here.

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<sup>52</sup> I like Sandercock's broad definition of planning theory proposed in *Towards Cosmopolis*: "[F]irst it is important to distinguish different meanings and uses of the term *theory*. If planning theory is defined simply as reflection on planning practice, then the writers/voices I am about to discuss don't have anything **directly** to contribute. But if we think of theory in planning as being receptive to and applying the intellectual currents within the humanities and social sciences, where they seem relevant to planning concerns, then these writings can be seen as addressing issues of central importance to us. And if theory is seen as synonymous with practical philosophy—that is, thought crafted to guide action—then we can see even greater relevance" (author's emphasis) (Sandercock 1998, 110).

<sup>53</sup> More commonly, CSL is connected with the experiential learning ideas of John Dewey.

<sup>54</sup> I developed this definition while writing a paper on Myles Horton for a community development class.

#### **Chapter 4: Making Sense of the Madness of Methodology**

Myles Horton's (1905-1990) love of learning led him to found the Highlander Research and Education Center, originally known as the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee in 1932. With two former classmates, Horton set up a school for the most marginalized people of the southern US, believing education would lead to democracy. Fifteen to forty adult participants attended the residential workshops that lasted between two days and eight weeks. The unconventional format surprised students: there were no prerequisites, textbooks, lectures, or course outlines. Instead, people learned through storytelling, music, dance, and individual and group reflection. Realizing they were in charge of their experience, not Highlander, further surprised participants.<sup>55</sup> Horton preferred a more indirect approach than some community development theorists: believing that action, not talk mattered, we learn about community development and education from his activities. To Horton, "it became clear that there had to be a place where people could learn how to make decisions by actually making real decisions. That's how you learn anything – by doing it. I believed then and still believe that you learn from your experience of doing something and from your analysis of that experience" (Horton 1990, 57). Like advocates of CSL, Horton maintained that education started with people's experiences and built on their existing knowledge, rather than sitting in a class and memorizing a periodic table:

My job is to try to provide opportunities for people to grow (not to make them grow, because no one can do that), to provide a climate which nurtures islands of decency, where people can learn in such a way that they continue to grow. I grew up on a farm, so I know about growing things. And I still work in my garden. Gardening helps remind me how growing happens. Your job as a gardener or as an educator is to know that the potential is there and that it will unfold. Your job is to plant good seeds and nurture them until they get big enough to grow up, and not to smother them while they are growing. You

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<sup>55</sup> In the 1930s and 40s, Highlander supported organizer training, unions, and labour and economic justice issues. In the 1950s, Highlander initiated literacy programs for blacks, known as Citizenship Schools, so that everyone could learn to read and then vote (as voters needed to be able to read text according to the South Carolina constitution). It was closed down in 1961 because it was allegedly "a communist training school", but because Highlander was an idea, not a place it moved to Knoxville and later to New Market in 1971. With the heightened awareness of class issues during the Civil Rights Movement, Highlander responded by offering anti-poverty workshops. In the 1970s, and continuing today, it became involved with issues of strip mining, nuclear energy, toxic dumping, and land use disputes (Horton 1989, 3-42). According to Highlander's website, "The founding principle and guiding philosophy of Highlander is that the answers to the problems facing society lie in the experiences of ordinary people. Those experiences, so often belittled and denigrated in our society, are the keys to grassroots power. Today, that philosophy is reflected in the educational programs and services offered by the 21st-century Highlander Center. Highlander serves Appalachia and the South with programs designed to build strong and successful social-change activism and community organizing led by the people who suffer most from the injustices of society. Highlander helps activists to become more effective community educators and organizers, informed about the important issues driving conditions in communities today." For more information, please see: <http://www.hrec.org>.

shouldn't overwater them, overfertilize them, or overwork them. And when bugs get on the plants, you've got to get rid of them so the plants can continue to grow. People have a potential for growth; it's inside, it's in the seeds. This kind of potential cannot guarantee a particular outcome, but it is what you build on. What people need are experiences in democracy, in making democratic decision that affect their lives and communities. The educational programs at Highlander have been called experiential-based education. Our interpretation during the first fifty years of Highlander's functioning was that the experience referred to was not the staff's but that of the people we were working with. This was the starting place (Horton 1990: 133).

The simple lessons I have learned from reading about Horton and the Highlander School are simple and straightforward, and many seem applicable to seeking an understanding of CSL.<sup>56</sup>

## **6.) What research tradition shapes my methodology?**

Research is generally divided into two traditions, although the line is often blurry: a positivistic, deductive, hypothesis-testing, or quantitative tradition starts with theory; whereas an interpretive, inductive, hypothesis-generating, or qualitative tradition begins with observations and may lead to theory, and does not focus on separating data collection and analysis (Robson 1993, 18-19).<sup>57,58</sup> Quantitative research seeks to provide explanations (how an effect is related to a cause), in contrast with qualitative research that seeks to understand (Stake 1995, 35-48). Yet "research is a creative act we cannot and should not fix into firm categories" (Krathwohl 1998, 27) and "this distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods is a matter of emphasis—for both are mixtures" (Stake 1995, 36). My research questions suggested that looking to qualitative traditions would be more fruitful to describe the complexity and uniqueness of a select group of community partners'

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<sup>56</sup> The following statement by Horton also seems particularly relevant for thinking about CSL: "I had to turn my anger into a slow burning fire, instead of a consuming fire. You don't ever want the fire to go out—you never let it go out—and if it ever gets weak, you stoke it, but you don't want it to burn you up. It keeps you going, but you subdue it, because you don't want to be destroyed by it. When I talk about a slow burning fire, I mean a fire that is banked for the moment. All the fire it ever had is still there. I can uncover a little bit at a time, and if it flames up too high, I can throw more ashes on it so it won't come up and burn me, and everybody around me. But I don't want to put it out, I want it to stay there, it's there, it could flare up, and there may be times when it should flare up. What you need is a good backlog going all the time" (Horton 1990, 80).

<sup>57</sup> Patton suggests the debate is between positivism (discover facts and causes of social phenomena) vs. phenomenological (understand social phenomenon from actors' perspective) (Patton 2002, 69).

<sup>58</sup> Some suggest that a third tradition—critical science—emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century. Critical scientists believe that historical economic, social, and power relationships affect human behaviour and must be considered. This tradition asks the "how to" question typical of positivists, but also "what ought to be?", and "why?" (Shumer 2000, 76-81).

experiences, rather than seeking the responses of a large number of community partners' through more quantitative methods such as a survey.

This is not true for all CSL research. According to Rob Shumer there is a trend in the existing scholarship to favour quantitative research for what is perceived as the important questions because of its "rigor" and to rely on qualitative research for less significant issues, or audiences perceived as less consequential. As an example, researchers use quantitative data for accreditation documentation or peer-reviewed research, but qualitative data for persuading students to participate in CSL and publicity materials. He attributes this pattern to the dominant role of positivism in higher education research historically, and contends a new paradigm is needed to encompass the uniqueness of CSL (Shumer 2000, 78-81). He identifies three characteristics of CSL to support his argument: first, CSL is more of a philosophy than a method, and therefore inconsistent with the goal of value-free research espoused by the quantitative tradition; second, he maintains that CSL is complex, multi-faceted, and precludes universal understanding, making the precision typical in positivism evasive; and finally, he notes that there is so much individual variation and idiosyncrasies in activities, programs, roles, and assignments, that it is difficult to compare one experience to another (Shumer 2000, 79). He concludes: "For service-learning research, given its character as a value-laden, dynamic, change-oriented, and often idiosyncratic phenomenon, paradigms that address issues of context, values, change, and personal understanding seem not only most appropriate, but in fact, necessary" (Shumer 2000, 81).

### **7.) Does situating my work within a qualitative tradition make my work less valuable, illegitimate, or less "scientific"?**

When qualitative social sciences are compared to the standard of the natural sciences—which emphasize the universal, context-independent, and cumulative—they often fall short and are dismissed as less useful. Bent Flyvbjerg argues that these "Science Wars" result from an overemphasis on one form of knowledge. In his book *Making Social Science Matter*, Flyvbjerg re-examined the ancient Greek writers, including Aristotle, and found that many distinguished between three types of knowledge: *episteme*, universal, scientific, context-independent knowledge; *techne*, practical, technical, or instrumental knowledge; and *phronesis*, a deliberative, context-dependent, and value-laden knowledge. He proposes that with *phronesis* "the social sciences are strongest where the natural sciences are weakest: just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and

predictive theory [*episteme*], neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is a prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic, and cultural development in any society" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 3). Flyvbjerg's argument for a contemporary emphasis on *phronesis* in qualitative social sciences is compelling in that it values the particular, making the case study an advantageous approach (see question nine below). While some social scientists choose to embark on more epistemic undertakings such as theory building, universal laws, quantification, or large-scale surveys leading to explanation and prediction, Flyvbjerg cautions that qualitative social sciences cannot emulate the models of the natural sciences successfully, and argues that phronetic social science is both necessary and valuable: "The task of phronetic social science is to clarify and deliberate about the problems and risks we face and to outline how things may be done differently, in full knowledge that we cannot find ultimate answers to these questions or even a single version of what the questions are" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 140).

### **8.) Where does theory fit in my methodology?**

Often "theory" is daunting and off-putting because it sounds too academic and grandiose. But I understand it as "a general statement that summarizes and organizes knowledge by proposing a general relationship between events" (Robson 1993, 18). Although my conclusions will primarily emerge from the data,<sup>59</sup> I concur with Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw: "We insist that data do not stand alone; rather analysis pervades all phases of the research enterprise—as the researcher makes observations, records them in fieldnotes, codes these notes in analytic categories, and finally develops explicit theoretical propositions. Viewed in this way, analysis is at once inductive and deductive, like someone who is simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle, or like a carpenter alternately changing the shape of a door and then the shape of the door frame to obtain a better fit" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, 144). There is great debate as to whether you should approach a topic naively so you can be more open to an emic perspective (that of the participants), or with some grounding in the literature to benefit from the research done before (Krathwohl 1998, 238). While I am not actively and consciously seeking to verify pre-existing theory, I familiarized myself with the existing literature, as illustrated in the second chapter when I

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<sup>59</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967) made the term "grounded theory" famous in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. My research can be considered a variation on grounded theory; however, I did not generate a theory from my findings, as most "pure" grounded theorists would aspire.

provided an overview of CSL and its connection to community organizations. I decided to start with some background information because that made me feel more comfortable as an inexperienced researcher, before returning to the literature after determining the themes in the transcripts. This gave me a balance between direction and openness, although a couple of times I had to back off from some of my ideas because I found I was trying to either prove or disprove someone else's findings, rather than relying on my own data to come to an understanding of the community partners' story.

### **9.) What is my approach for answering my research questions?**

I decided to use a single-case study approach where the Learning Exchange Trek Program and its community partners as they introduce CSL in the Downtown Eastside are the case. A case is "a specific, complex, functioning thing" and includes both people and programs; a case is not characterized by its generality, and therefore is less likely to include events and processes (Stake 1995, 2). Using a case study approach seemed appropriate because I wanted to understand a particular expression of CSL in a specific setting, rather than examining the large-scale impacts of CSL. Two statements illustrate the strength of case studies:

A case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case. A single leaf, even a single toothpick, has unique complexities—but rarely will we care enough to submit it to case study. We study a case when it itself is of very special interest. Case study is the look for the detail of interaction with its contexts. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake 1995, xi).

The qualitative research exemplified in the case study usually brings us closer to real human beings and everyday life. Rather than assuming a world of simplicity and uniformity, those who adopt the qualitative approach generally picture a world of complexity and plurality. It is the richness and subtle nuances of the social world that matter and that the qualitative researcher wishes to uncover. Thus, instead of adopting a set of standardized questions and categories with which to characterize—indeed, one can even say, to construct—social action, the qualitative researcher wishes to permit as much flexibility into the judgements made about the world as possible. Thus, the qualitative researcher typically will tend to undertake different kinds of research (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991, 23).

Importantly, "we do not study a case to primarily understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case" (Stake 1995, 4). It is chosen for its ability to maximize what

we can learn, as well as our time and access to the case (Stake 1995, 4; and Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991, 2). Surprisingly, even when readers come across a case very different from their own, they find it relevant to their own situation: "Most find a commonality of process and situation. It startles us all to find our own perplexities in the lives of others" (Stake 1995, 7).

### **10.) How do I generate data to answer my research questions?**

While there are many methods or techniques for generating data—including experiments, surveys, participant observation—I chose to focus primarily on interviewing, with some document review and personal observation.<sup>60</sup> Interviewing emphasizes the researcher's influence, while observing falls outside the researcher's control (Stake 1995, 66). To balance this tension, I used Patton's "conversational strategy with an interview guide approach" which combines the spontaneity of an informal conversation with a detailed set of questions to guide the discussion and function as back-up if the conversation lagged (Patton 2002, 347). I hoped this would allow the interviewee more influence than a more rigid and structured interview setting, and in some situations I was pleasantly surprised with new ideas and directions that I had not anticipated. The difficulty with this style, however, is that some parts of the interviews—while engaging and interesting—were less relevant to my research questions. This was likely a consequence of my inexperience with the method.<sup>61</sup> The interviews were challenging and I soon learned that "getting a good interview is not so easy" (Stake 1995, 64): I needed to balance my initial motivations for meeting with the interviewees as outlined in my research questions, with being fully present for the interviewees' unique stories, while imagining how it would all come together as a unified account. The interviews were valuable because not everyone sees the case the same: "The interview is the main road to multiple realities" (Stake 1995, 64). I also reviewed the Learning Exchange Trek Program's promotional materials and reports, and UBC's strategic planning documents. As mentioned in the first chapter, I attended two workshops: the first was geared to students participating in the intensive activities during Reading Week (February 2004); and the second was one of the mandatory orientation sessions and tour of

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<sup>60</sup> Travers suggests there are five main methods employed by qualitative researchers: observation; interviewing; ethnographic fieldwork; discourse analysis; and textual analysis (Travers 2001, 2-5).

<sup>61</sup> For Stake: "One of the principal qualifications of qualitative researchers is experience. Added to the experience of ordinary looking and thinking, the experience of the qualitative researcher is one of knowing what leads to significant understanding, recognizing good sources of data, and consciously and unconsciously testing out the veracity of their eyes and the robustness of their interpretations" (Stake 1995, 50).

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for Trek students (February 2004). While perhaps observation is a less intrusive method, I wanted to hear the voices of the community partners and place them in the literature, alongside the voices of students, universities, and faculty. In addition to interviews, document review, and observation, a lot of information was picked up through informal impressions throughout the process, particularly from the Learning Exchange Trek Program respondents (Stake 1995, 49).

**11.) Would my findings be true for other community partners? How would I know if my findings were accurate ?**

Often these questions are linked to what is known as rigor, without which research is considered "worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility" (Morse et al 2002, 2). For a long time, both quantitative and qualitative researchers demonstrated how their work met the standard of reliability and validity.<sup>62</sup> Qualitative researchers broke with this trend in the mid-1980s. Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba concluded that reliability and validity were appropriate only in the quantitative tradition, and that qualitative researchers were better positioned to look at trustworthiness, which included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.<sup>63</sup> They proposed specific strategies, including: the audit trail; member checks when working with the data; peer debriefing; negative case analysis; structural corroboration; and referential material adequacy (Morse et al. 2002, 2).<sup>64</sup> Morse et al. argue that the significant difference with Lincoln and Guba's proposition—and what necessitates reliability and validity in qualitative research—is that while the old tradition looked at rigor at the beginning of a study, Lincoln and Guba's emphasis comes at the conclusion of the research (Morse et al. 2002, 4). Some critics "are concerned that introducing parallel terminology and criteria marginalizes qualitative inquiry from mainstream science and scientific legitimacy" (Morse et al. 2002, 8). Others, including myself disagree:

If there is only one case, how then does one communicate results that carry a degree of verisimilitude? How does the writer convince the reader what he or

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<sup>62</sup> Reliability "implies that repeated observations of the same phenomenon should yield similar results and that different observers following the same procedures should arrive at the same conclusions" while validity "means that we're measuring what we want to measure. The logic is this: *If* our measures are indeed measuring what we think they're measuring, and *if* behaviour is *not* random and chaotic, but is rather governed by 'causal laws' or principles that are *not* ephemeral, transient entities (as we assume), *then* repeated measurement of a phenomenon should yield consistent, enduring 'truths'—scientific 'facts'" (author's emphasis) (Palys 1997, 3-4).

<sup>63</sup> Earlier work listed the criteria to establish "trustworthiness" as credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln 1981).

<sup>64</sup> Lincoln and Guba published several books and articles in the 1980s.

she is saying is the undistorted truth? There is no magic formula here, for it is just as easy to be dishonest and uncommunicative in presenting quantitative data as is presenting qualitative data. However, in qualitative presentations one does have the advantage of the literary or narrative style of communication. Somehow, for more than six decades in social science, the "scientific" and the "literary" have been seen as opposites. But we, like earlier generations of social scientists need to get this idea out of our heads. The literary-narrative approach can be precise and disciplined – and at the same time graphic, readable, and imaginative. As with the novel, the narrative form permits the sociological researcher to tell a story, a story with actors, action, and a background, even one that may possess a compelling plot. Vivid description is not the less scientific because it is descriptive. (No one has accused great scientists like Charles Darwin of being less than scientific because of their naturalistic descriptive data). (Feagin, Orum, and Sjöberg 1991, 20).

I do not feel compelled—and actually am disinclined—to justify my research in the language of the quantitative traditions, mostly because I think it is useful to have two traditions to appeal to based on the nature of the research questions.

My sense of generalizability minimizes my felt need to engage in the rigor debate. Generalizability suggests that a study sets forth "findings that are expected to be true in samples of persons and situations beyond those being studied" (Krathwohl 1998, 71). With Stake, I agree that case study does not lend itself to generalization as well as more traditional comparative and correlational studies: "We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is an emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself" (Stake 1995, 8). In the end, Stake maintains that he puts forward his interpretation:

It is my integrity as a researcher that I beg to be recognized, that my interpretations be considered. In my analysis, I do not seek to describe the world or even to describe fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case by watching as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can. It is greatly subjective. I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of the case. I recognize that the way I do it is not "the right way" (Stake 1995, 76-77).

The object of my study is to understand the particular experiences and perspectives of the community partners working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to introduce—in varying ways and levels of intensity—CSL initiatives with Trek students to the best of my abilities.

## **C. CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH: DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION**

Where thoughts come from, whence meaning, remains a mystery. The page does not write itself, but by finding, for analysis, the right ambiance, the right moment, by reading and rereading the accounts, by deep thinking, then understanding creeps forward and your page is printed (Stake 1995, 73).

Even once I realized this thesis was different, and not just longer than other research papers, I began with what I was most comfortable doing: I spent a lot of time looking for secondary data in books and journal articles, and found that it was readily available at UBC and elsewhere. Some of my research with this project was aided by the fact that I had examined similar issues in two earlier papers on charities and nonprofit organizations, and CSL and volunteerism. With the assistance of my working group, I created an interview guide, first sharing it with two community partners for feedback before conducting eleven semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews between March and April 2004. I taped and transcribed all of the interviews immediately after completing each one before setting them aside while I focused on writing the first four chapters of this thesis.

I came back to the transcripts after consulting a book about ethnographic field research. While this study is not an ethnography, given that I relied on interviews rather than participant observation, I found the emphasis on trying to understand an unfamiliar social world helpful for thinking about my interactions with the Learning Exchange Trek Program and CSL.<sup>65</sup> I shared the same goal as suggested by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw: "to produce a coherent, focused analysis of some aspect of the social life that has been observed and recorded, an analysis that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world at issue" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, 142). While this task seemed initially quite daunting, I used a systematic and organized approach for analyzing the data before moving into my interpretation of the findings. Keeping the research questions in mind, I began with open coding, by reading very carefully and listing the ideas, concepts, and words that stood out in the transcripts. To move into the next

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<sup>65</sup> One definition of ethnography suggests that it "involves the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday activities". The ethnographer enters the environment and gets to know the people involved as he or she is generally unconnected before beginning the research, and later writes all of his or her observations and experiences as fieldnotes. I adopted the process Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) propose for analyzing these fieldnotes to understand a particular setting for my research.

stage of focused coding, I reviewed my research questions and began to see if I could arrange the open codes into themes. I found this easier to do visually, so I put all of the open codes for one organization on the same colour of paper before cutting them up so I could play with hundreds of strips of paper on my office wall. At this level of emic analysis I found five main themes: the role of organizational climate; the contributions of students in community-university partnerships; the community partners' responses to the introduction of CSL; the evolution and maturing of partnerships; and the university's role, as perceived by community organizations, in introducing students to the Downtown Eastside. I then further broke down these broad categories into seventeen more specific and descriptive sub-themes. I followed Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's suggestion for writing initial memos, or responses to my focused codes, before moving into integrative memos that brought a more etic perspective to my analysis, and shifted me from analysis (telling the interviewees' stories by bringing them together and comparing them in one account) to interpretation (how I as the researcher understand and respond to their stories). According to Palys, there are eight ways of sorting qualitative data: identifying patterns, themes and clusters; using metaphor; compare and contrast; examining relations among concepts and variables; drawing pictures; counting; and constructing explanations (Palys 1998, 299-302). It is important to note that I did not employ coding to "count" the frequencies of words, phrases, or ideas, but instead used the codes to identify themes and relied on narrative as outlined in the following chapter (Stake 1995, 29).

## **D. THE STORY TO COME: METHODOLOGY TO FINDINGS**

Reflections on my methodology—its strengths and weaknesses, and what I would repeat or alter if I was to conduct a similar study—will be considered throughout the following two chapters. Now that I have outlined the "doing" of my research and introduced the interviewees, it is time to hear the stories of the community partners. How does CSL play out in nonprofit, charitable organizations and schools in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and inner city neighbourhoods? What are the insights and reflections of UBC's community partners? The experiences and perspectives of the community partners are rich and interesting. Like Shumer, I anticipate that "it is eventually the robust stories about the

#### ***Chapter 4: Making Sense of the Madness of Methodology***

lives of those who participate in service-learning that will ultimately provide the substantive data that makes the case about its value and effectiveness as both a philosophy and a method" (Shumer 2000, 81).

## Chapter 5: The Community Partners' Story

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The preceding four chapters have established the context necessary to understand the experiences and perspectives shared by the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners. In this chapter, I present my findings from the interviews with representatives of the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff, plus my interpretations and reflections on the findings. Using the process outlined in the previous chapter, I identified five main or overarching themes when I reviewed all of the transcripts: the role of organizational climate (Section A); the contributions of students in community-university partnerships (Section B); the community partners' responses to the introduction of CSL (Section C); the evolution and maturing of partnerships (Section D); and perceptions of the university's responsibility (Section E). Next, I searched for sub-themes within each broad theme based on the community partners' interviews that met two criteria: first, they had to reflect the community partners' experiences and perspectives as they responded to the interview questions; and second, they helped answer the research questions posed in the first chapter. The result of my search is seventeen sub-themes which I categorized into one of the five overarching themes.<sup>66</sup> As I was working with the data, I kept hoping for an epiphany: I wanted to see some unexpected and exciting themes or sub-themes jump out of transcripts, rather than ones that were somewhat predictable. Perhaps I asked all the right questions, leading to the "right" themes and sub-themes. However, I cannot help wondering if I would see different patterns in the data if I looked at it several months from now, or if I was a more experienced researcher.

In this chapter, I will address each of the five main themes in Section A through Section E. In each section, I will first relay the theme-relevant stories told to me by the community partners and then will present the more general theme-relevant thoughts and feelings expressed by the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees.<sup>67</sup> As I intended to showcase the experiences and perspectives of the community partners, the seventeen sub-themes emerged in the interviews with the community partners only; the comments from

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<sup>66</sup> Please see Appendix G for a summary of themes and sub-themes.

<sup>67</sup> Please see Appendix H for an overview of the eleven interviewees' responses to each of the five overarching themes.

the Learning Exchange Trek Program will more broadly focus on one of the main themes and bring the related sub-themes together. My interpretation and reflections on each overarching theme—based on what I heard in all eleven interviews and what I read in the literature—will conclude each section, again synthesizing the sub-themes expressed by the community partners. I have made a concerted effort to distinguish three voices in this chapter: the community partner respondents; the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees; and my interpretation and reflections. This structure reflects my commitment to sharing the community partners' stories, convinced that the fundamental shortcoming of the existing scholarship on CSL is its lack of attention to the community's contribution. Eight of eleven interviewees reviewed and commented on this chapter; I incorporated their feedback to ensure it fairly and accurately represented our conversation. Throughout each section I will also demonstrate how the theme and related sub-themes connect to my research questions. In the final chapter, I will discuss the implications of these findings for structuring future CSL partnerships, and focus on the interviewees' emphasis on the university's responsibility to invite students to care about what is happening in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

## **A. THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE**

I wondered if it was possible that we could get UBC students involved rather than having the [local, as opposed to UBC] teachers take on one more load in what is already a very high stress school emotionally. They're doing far more than teaching here: they're social workers, mothers, librarians, they're everything to these kids. They're providing five hours of a very safe environment for kids who may be in a very unsafe environment the other nineteen hours. They take it very seriously. I felt that if someone could provide help that would be great.

*Respondent B*

This first theme and three related sub-themes bears on the environment that students encounter when they arrive at the community organization, and the conditions community partners work within daily. In speaking with the community partners, there seemed to be three aspects of organizational climate relevant to the Learning Exchange Trek Program: limited organizational resources; the centrality of community members; and

the community partners' intentional efforts to create a hospitable and welcoming atmosphere for the Trek students.

## **Community Partners**

### **Sub-Theme #1: Community Partners Face Climate of Constraint**

Many community partners expressed feelings similar to Respondent B: they need help. Students help community partners to meet their missions, whether they befriend an individual with a mental illness, help community members learn how to use the computer, or help a woman care for her young child while she cleans up her apartment. All eight community partners emphasized their struggles for resources—both financial and human—in the interview. The reality for community partners is that they have more work to do with less: “our problem is that we have reduced resources but increased need” (Res. C). Other respondents noted: “there is no money for supplies” (Res. B); “we are maxed and stressed because of limited resources” (Res. H); “we cannot take on more” (Res. B); “we cannot make it without outside help and have limited options (Res. F)”. Hearing the community partners' struggles, and remembering my own frustrations in similar organizations, I was not surprised that one of the respondents remarked that they only take “low-maintenance volunteers” (Res. H).

### **Sub-Theme #2: Community Partners Dedicated to Community Members**

While the lack of resources appeared overwhelming to some, and more matter-of-fact to others, community partners do not allow this to compromise their dedication to their community members, and respond by being resourceful and creative in how they meet their needs. Community members are their first priority: “At the end of the day, our women count the most. And while we need to bring in people from outside, they cannot overwhelm the women. As it is, we avoid tours or anything else during the drop-in because they asked for a safe, private space” (Res. G). For community partners like Organization G, community members help define the role of Trek students.

**Sub-Theme #3: Community Partners Create Hospitable Climate for Trek Students**

The community organizations are also very concerned with the Trek students' experience, and direct a lot of energy to ensuring that they are welcomed and accommodated. As an example, one respondent stated: "We need to ask who's going to gain from the experience—it's not just about what the volunteer can give, but also what we give to them" (Res. A). All three representatives of the schools hosting Trek students indicated that they had a program where they matched Trek students with a designated person to ensure that they were connected to someone in the organization. This individual was responsible for finding out what the Trek student wanted, and shaping their experience in response (Org. B, C, and F). Some organizations also had the capacity to ensure there was always someone to greet them when they arrived for their shift. The consistency this offered was beneficial because often Trek students might be working with different community partner staff or community members over the course of their involvement (Org. F). As we learned in the second theme, community members are often central to defining the activities of Trek students. At others, the community partners' union(s) can be quite influential in determining the role of such non-employees as Trek students. Unions can make the climate less hospitable to non-employees if there is a dispute with the employer or contract negotiations (Org. C and E).

Overall, the community partners suggested they are committed to providing a positive experience for the students: some because they are aware that volunteers are on the decline in society (Res. E); others because they figure this opportunity has the potential to reduce stigma and increase knowledge about their organization's community members (Res. A). One community partner suggested that it is her organization's responsibility, as much as the university's, to work toward social, political, and economic change (Res. H). As community partners suggest in Section E, community organizations also want to facilitate Trek students caring about the Downtown Eastside; ensuring a hospitable, friendly environment can contribute to this outcome by ensuring that students want to spend time at community organizations. With these reasons in mind, community partners adopt specific strategies, including: remembering what students want to achieve and accomplish, and coming up with suitable and multiple opportunities (Res. A and C); recalling what it is like to be in school, and accepting students' scheduling constraints (Res. C); protecting Trek students from situations that might make them feel unappreciated by community members

(Res. E); ensuring that Trek students are safe by always having someone else around (Res. F); and including Trek students in their organizational culture where they encourage dialogue and asking questions (Res. G and H). It was a natural extension of "an ethos of community involvement" that the community partner built over a number of years, making it easier to facilitate (Res. C).

### **Learning Exchange Trek Program: Thoughts on the Role of Organizational Climate**

There was a sense expressed by the Learning Exchange Trek Program representatives that the community partners operate in "different professional cultures and we [Learning Exchange Trek Program staff] try to be accommodating" (UBC C). As an example of the difference, the Learning Exchange Trek Program is not as challenged by a lack of resources as the community partners, and is consequently able to devote its attention to other matters, such as long-term planning. UBC C stated that these differences "do not mean we're higher", but that when the Learning Exchange Trek Program wants to focus on developing a vision for working together, and items such as partnership agreements, it can be challenging. This was confirmed by one community partner who mentioned that over the last couple of years her organization was working on developing a strategic plan, but it was not finished because so many other issues were a bigger priority and required their attention (Res. H). This frustrates the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff: "We need to learn their goals. I've sat here and talked about OUR goals, vision, and strategic plan—when community partners see these they panic because it is a lot to swallow for a small organization. But we want to know THEIR goals and hopes...One of our new community partners has a strategic plan that they sent us. I wish everyone had one, but it is not my place to say they should have one" (UBC C). UBC C also mentioned that she would like to see students, especially fourth year and graduate students, work with community organizations to build these capacities, but recognizes the risks inherent in such an undertaking: "Our students would likely be overly idealistic. They would come up with a plan, but I would worry that the community partner would respond negatively by saying we have this funding challenge, or these type of clients, and it might not be that helpful. But who knows? Sometimes these ideas just come out of the sky and they work" (UBC C).

The Learning Exchange Trek Program staff believe these ideas can work because they have confidence, respect, and admiration for the community partners:

I have a real commitment and passion for community knowing what it knows, and knowing a lot they don't get credit for, especially in an academic environment. So for me to be in a position where I am telling students to go hang out in this place and try to learn as much as you can makes total sense for me because I believe that is where there is so much to be learned. People who live and work in communities are living with the issues, and have a tremendous wealth of knowledge, although it may not be academically transferable (UBC A).

All three Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees also recognized the constraints facing community partners, and were aware that the community partners perceive the university as having deeper pockets. Knowing that community partners are working with minimal resources, prompted me to ask how UBC was going to realize its goal of having ten percent of students enrolled in CSL and how the university would allocate its resources. I was told "resources are always a challenge, from day one and throughout history" for the university. "However, if CSL features in the latest iteration of *Trek 2010*, it is a powerful signal to the leaders at the university that this is what the community regards as important, and we need to put the resources there to be able to achieve that. We can't work with the community with nothing—it may not be a lot—but nothing is not going to happen" (UBC B). Knowing that a lack of resources can hinder the partnership, the Learning Exchange Trek Program is trying to think of innovative and creative responses. Building on the notion of exchange, one idea includes having community partners come to the university as adjunct professors and share their experiences, while university staff and faculty could spend some of their time with the community organizations. For example, students would benefit from lectures in harm reduction from a professional who knows what it entails from a very practical perspective, and community organizations could gain from the expertise of an individual from the university's fundraising office. Plus it might be refreshing for both individuals to utilize their skills in a different setting. The advantage of such an exchange is that it would be mutually beneficial to both the community partner and the university (UBC A and C).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For two years, the Learning Exchange Trek Program has been working towards including UBC staff in their partnerships with community organizations. The Learning Exchange Trek Program recently received funding to pilot a project to demonstrate the value of staff involvement in community service. A Learning Exchange Trek Program staff person will be working in fall 2004 to develop opportunities for exchanges between staff at UBC and staff in community organizations.

## **Interpretation and Reflections: The Role of Organizational Climate**

For the Learning Exchange Trek Program to work successfully with its community partners, I heard in the interviews that it needs to understand, respect, and respond to their organizational climate. Respondent E was pleased that staff from the Learning Exchange Trek Program spent some time at her organization. She suggested that even a brief visit better prepared the Learning Exchange Trek Program for recommending students who would be comfortable working with their community members.

In reviewing the transcripts, I noted a difference between how community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program described the community partners' organizational climate. The community organizations tended to focus on what they lacked, which the Learning Exchange Trek Program also acknowledged, but it was not their main focus. The Learning Exchange Trek Program respondents tended to emphasize the unique, valuable, and relevant experience the community partners offered Trek students. The Learning Exchange Trek Program stressed the capacities and skills of the community partners—while the community partners identified what they needed to do to ensure students would have a valuable experience, rather than presuming that what they could offer would enhance students' learning.

I realize that a lack of resources is a primary concern for many nonprofits, perhaps even an obsession, because they know firsthand the devastation that occurs when they must reduce their services. Additionally, many funding and grant opportunities require that a community organization focuses on their problems and shortcomings to receive financial support, rather than identifying their capacities and strengths. It seems to me that perhaps these two factors, combined with the recognition that the university is a powerful institution, leads community partners to downplay their successes and accomplishments. Another possibility is that my questions led the community partners to be more critical of their activities. While this was not my intent, perhaps community partners saw this as an opportunity for internal exploration before they could examine their external relationships more closely. One interviewee remarked that she appreciated the opportunity to meet with me because she was often too busy responding to crises to spend as much time reflecting on her work as she would like (Res. F).

Apart from this difference, I learned that community partners feel that the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff directly working with the community partners have a sense of their organizational climate, and are able to communicate this understanding to students in the orientation. While Trek students may be impatient when leaving phone messages with community partners—perhaps forgetting how busy they are (Res. D)—the community partners also felt that, overall, the students are sensitive to their situation. Regular and open communication with community partners, visits to community organizations, and previous experience working for similar organizations have enabled this understanding to develop. The Learning Exchange Trek Program, according to the community partners, must continue to nurture and expand these efforts, especially as UBC strives to involve more students in CSL experiences. The idea of more exchanges, as described by UBC A, will support this endeavour while also providing an opportunity for the community partners to learn more about UBC's organizational climate. For the community partners, mutual understanding will contribute to maturing the partnership between the Learning Exchange Trek Program and community organizations (see Section D below).

## **B. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDENTS**

It is a good connection with the Learning Exchange Trek Program because they are willing to match their student group with the needs of our context. That makes it a lot easier. I would also say that the Trek students are very conscientious. I am not sure what they are doing around orientation, but they are exceptional with punctuality, follow-through, and so on. We'll all get an email from a student when they are unable to make it—they are great at keeping those links in place. I think what tilts the use of volunteers is when it is more trouble than helpful. We're not even close to tipping. It's really positive.

*Respondent C*

Our residents love the students. Especially the ones teaching the computer. They're very compassionate. I think they're enjoying getting to know our community members, they call them by their first name, they explain things very well, and they have a lot of patience. I watched one of our residents on the computer. It took him an hour to type one little letter that was about two sentences. I thought, wow, I don't know how the Trek student has the patience. I don't have the patience. So I really do admire them.

*Respondent E*

Although my research questions did not focus on who worked with the community partners, I decided to include it as a theme because the community partners tended to emphasize their relationship with individuals (both Trek students and Learning Exchange Trek Program staff), rather than the university. This finding was unexpected as it was contrary to much of the literature that stressed the importance of community-university partnerships, and I will discuss it further in Section D. Identifying students as a theme is also important as community partners concluded that student involvement is one of the benefits they have encountered in the early stages of collaborating with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to implement CSL. Community partners found the students "phenomenal" and observed that Trek students differed from other students they encountered, particularly those in practicums. The conversations with the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees did not lead to as much discussion about students, likely because I suggested that I wanted to avoid concentrating on the student experience (as it features prominently in the literature). Consequently, the corresponding section from the university perspective is quite brief.

## **Community Partners**

### **Sub-Theme #4: Community Partners Find Trek Students "Phenomenal"**

Other community partners echoed the enthusiasm of Respondent C (stated above) as well. "We have had phenomenal UBC students come and do phenomenal things. And continue to come, even if they go away for the summer, they come back and reconnect. Trek students have donated more than 1600 hours since the program started" (Res. D). Some characteristics of Trek students according to the community partners are: open-minded and idealistic (Res. A); enthusiastic, committed, and non-judgmental (Res. D); patient (Res. E); open to learning (Res. F); and can "fit in" and be very sensitive (Res. H). Students "do not act haughty or better than community members" (Res. E), and their positive attitude is attributed to their choice to participate (Res. C). They are independent, do not have a lot of needs, and are not blind to the issues in the Downtown Eastside when they arrive (Res. H).

**Sub-Theme #5: Community Partners Find Trek Students Different From Other Students**

Several community partners also stressed that Trek students differ from other students, such as those satisfying their practicum requirements, because they want community experience, rather than employment, or employment-related skills (Res. A and H). "Trek students are interested in volunteering in the community as opposed to a career focus. They are giving to the community, volunteering, getting more involved, or taking a break from the academic stuff—it is more altruistic" (Res. A). "A lot of students have course loads geared to this kind of work—it is kind of a set-up. They want job experience. And that is very different from Trek students. They want experience, but community experience, not necessarily job experience. Their expectations are lower, if you want to quantify it. Trek students want to experience what our organization is about, whereas practicum students want experiences they can translate into their resume" (Res. H). Respondent F also noted that Trek students differ from community volunteers (excluding parents) who might come to their school: "The Learning Exchange Trek Program is a better model, and we give preference to those volunteers because we know they have already gone through some orientation, screening, and they understand a bit of the dynamics of the inner city. So to us it is a higher level of volunteer" (Res. F).

**Learning Exchange Trek Program:  
Thoughts on the Contributions of Students**

The Learning Exchange Trek Program knows that students are integral to the university's desire to develop partnerships with the community: "The advice we were given was along the lines that if we wait for faculty to implement CSL we will wait a long time. But that is only one way—to get faculty to buy in and incorporate it into their classes. Another way—and the one that others recommended to us—was to get the momentum from the students. The idea is that if you get students interested, it will drive interest on campus, and will lead to the faculty involvement...Our experience has shown us that this was a very strategic and intelligent way to go about it" (UBC A). The Learning Exchange Trek Program considers its students as "customers": "They are paying for a service at the university. They need to have calls returned, packages sent on time. If they are mistreated, or we make a mistake, an apology goes out from me. We want to protect and preserve our reputation for

doing good work" (UBC C). The effort is felt to be worthwhile because participation in the Learning Exchange Trek Program can affect how the students look at the world, and increase the likelihood of them doing things differently when they become the CEO of a large company: "They'll ask what are we doing for corporate responsibility, what is our donations program, why don't we focus on this, how can we support CSL in our community?" (UBC C).

### **Interpretation and Reflections: The Contributions of Students**

According to the stories the community partners shared, Trek students are exceptional. Several mentioned that they admired the students, especially when they compared what they were doing at the same point in their lives with that of the Trek students (Res. D). The community partners also recognized that many of the Trek students were putting themselves in very unfamiliar—and often uncomfortable situations—as they primarily come from relatively privileged backgrounds (Res. B). Although I anticipated that the community partners would speak highly of the Trek students, the depth of their appreciation and esteem surprised me. I cannot recall one situation where the community partners complained, or even expressed frustration, with the Trek students. They are very pleased with their contribution, and look forward to welcoming more students to their organization. Suggestions for maturing the partnership were predominantly directed to a higher level; either the Learning Exchange Trek Program or the community organizations, not the individual students.

There are a number of reasons that community partners speak so highly of the Trek students. First, students choose to participate and must apply. They must also attend an orientation run by the Learning Exchange Trek Program and, with some organizations, commit to working for an entire school year. The orientation, along with resource materials provided, encourages the students to think about the community partners and community members in a very thoughtful and compassionate way. The Learning Exchange Trek Program supports the students to find an opportunity that both meets their needs and utilizes their skills, and offers on-going assistance throughout their involvement in the program. In addition, and directly relevant to this study, the community partners play a significant role by creating meaningful opportunities and making the students feel welcome.

Their success at establishing a relationship with each student, plus the student's relationship with Learning Exchange Trek Program staff and the Leadership Network,<sup>69</sup> encourages the student to make the commitment required. This is also reinforced by community members who, according to the community partners, value and appreciate the students. In a couple of the interviews I asked whether community partners felt that it mattered to community members whether the students came from UBC. While some community members were impressed that students would be involved, what counted more was that someone was paying attention to them (Res. D and H). One of the schools' respondents commented that it is magical for an adult to witness a child begin to read. Some Trek students have experienced this excitement firsthand, likely making them want to continue their work because they can see the difference their time, commitment, and relationship makes with the schoolchildren (Res. B).

It is commendable that Trek students voluntarily choose to take time away from the demands of post-secondary education. While it is beyond the scope of this study, it is interesting to consider what motivates students to participate: Was it a glossy poster that caught their eye, or are they seeking to enhance their resume? Do they have personal connections to the area, or religious convictions that made the opportunity desirable? Are they new to Vancouver and wanting to meet people? Have they always volunteered in the community, and just thought it made sense to join the Learning Exchange Trek Program while a UBC student? It would be also useful to understand what facilitates their involvement: Are some of their friends participating, making it easier to join? Do they not need to hold down a part-time job because they have adequate resources (through savings, family, student loans, or scholarships)? Do they have childcare responsibilities, or elderly parents to consider when they determine how they will allocate their time? Have their professors encouraged them to balance their theoretical knowledge with practical activities? Whatever their motivations, the students attracted to the Learning Exchange Trek Program are—in the eyes of the community partners—one of the most valuable advantages of their involvement with UBC.

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<sup>69</sup> The Trek Leadership Network includes approximately 30 student leaders who, in addition to developing leadership skills through workshops, public speaking, and reflection, also coordinate, train, and orient Trek students.

The importance of Trek students—while perhaps obvious—cannot be overstated when thinking about why community partners are inclined to work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program clearly recognize that the Trek students are instrumental in determining whether CSL succeeds, and are working to ensure students' involvement is fulfilling personally and helpful for the community partners. As we will see in Section E, both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program are hopeful that Trek students will have impacts more far-reaching and broader than helping an individual child with their homework, making a school look more welcoming because of a mural, answering questions at the front desk in an emergency shelter, or offering a computer tutorial.

## **C. RESPONSES TO THE INTRODUCTION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING**

I think it is a great partnership to bring the university and the community together. In my cynical state, I refer to the university as the ivory tower. I speak from experience as I went through it a few times. Look where ours is in particular—beautiful, but totally removed. Where I attended [the University of Toronto], as soon as you stepped out of the grounds you were hit in the face with a city, a community, and downtown. The benefit of CSL is that the ten percent of students who participate will not experience a disconnect between school and the community they want to go out and work in. No matter where they work, even if they end up on Wall Street, they still have to drive through a certain part of town to get there. And maybe we can adjust their values through this...if we support the university educating its students—our future politicians, voters, business owners—we can share what is really meaningful.

*Respondent G*

In this section, I will outline what the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL, and identify challenges to its implementation. As defined in the first chapter, CSL typically refers to a student experience that combines community service and learning, and can be both curricular and co-curricular. It is important to remember that the community partners are in the early stages of collaborating with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to develop CSL. Although the Learning Exchange Trek Program intended to adopt CSL from its inception, it began as a traditional volunteer program. The transition is occurring gradually, and it is more apparent in some aspects of

the program than others. Consequently, while many community partners and students are familiar with CSL, some learned about it for the first time when I met with them. As an example of how this transition is occurring, during the Reading Week Program in February 2004 community partners provided both the setting for the projects and more than forty educational workshops. Faculty, community partners, and Learning Exchange Trek Program personnel, who led these workshops, expose Trek students to a diversity of topics and perspectives, and encourage reflection and critical thinking. This aspect is not as formally available to students who are involved with the program throughout the year outside their classes, although one respondent reported that one of her Trek students diligently prepares a learning goal for each shift and reflects on it in their journal immediately following their session (Res. D).

I decided to describe all of the community partners' experiences with the Learning Exchange Trek Program as CSL because, as I will discuss below, CSL is an iterative and evolving concept that includes a broad spectrum of activities and relationships. To date, the majority of the community partners' experiences are co-curricular CSL; they have mostly encountered individual Trek students who applied to participate in the Learning Exchange Trek Program, rather than curricular, or course-based CSL, which may result in stronger faculty involvement.

As the following three themes suggest, community partners expressed the view that CSL offers benefits to their organizations, community members, broader society, and Trek students. While community partners primarily endorsed CSL, and were looking forward to its development, they also had some hesitations as outlined in the ninth sub-theme in this section.

## **Community Partners**

### **Sub-Theme #6: Community Partners Increase Volunteer Diversity through CSL**

The community partners value diversifying their volunteer base, and see CSL as a method to attract a group of people that they often have a difficult time attracting to their volunteer programs (Res. D, G, E, and H). One of the community partners' responses to

their shortage of resources (Section A) is to depend on unpaid employees, whether they are practicum students, volunteers, or Trek students. Unpaid employees have specific responsibilities: for example, only staff members assist community members with any personal care at Organization D, whereas Trek students spend time visiting and building relationships with the community members. CSL also focuses on the human-side of social issues, which community partners consider as important as learning the skills required to be a successful dentist or doctor (Res. A). Respondent H suggested that the reflection component of CSL can contribute to making Trek students "low-maintenance volunteers" who they could accommodate within their existing structure:

Trek students don't bring a lot here that we have to help them sort out, other than the management of the task at hand or when issues come up in the centre. Those are the type of things staff discuss regardless of whether there is a volunteer or not. They fit very well with the internal processes we have for our staff. This is why we haven't gone beyond them, into other parts of the community. Because I think when people are involved in higher education they have processes in their life to debrief and handle stress. They come well-equipped already to spend four hours down here (Res. H).

Respondent H maintained that while they do a lot of debriefing with the staff team, and that they encourage a culture of dialogue and exchange, her organization is unprepared to accept volunteers, or any other form of involvement, unless she knows the participants have this form of support and supervision elsewhere. Their priority is to support community members (e.g. residents living in the Downtown Eastside) who want to volunteer, and this often requires all the energy that Organization H can spare.

### **Sub-Theme #7: Community Partners See Community Members and Society Benefit in CSL initiatives**

The three schools that were CSL partners of UBC emphasized that CSL meant that their students were introduced to positive role models. One of the schools conducted a study evaluating the impact of their after school and evening programs, and measured academic success, social responsibility, and self-concept of its students.<sup>70</sup> The results confirmed the importance of non-related adults, like Trek students, in the lives of their community members: "the kids that could identify more than one unrelated significant adult measured much higher than those who could not identify one" (Res. F). CSL enables them

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<sup>70</sup> As a community school, Organization F has more activities and programming happening outside traditional school hours than other schools.

to foster more of these connections and relationships (Res. F). Respondent F also feels that a lot of students (and their families) would not even dream about them considering post-secondary education; however, working with university students "goes a long way to broaden their possibilities" and shows that "if it is their dream it is possible" (Res. F). Community members are "grateful" and "admire the students who come—although they might not say so in so many words" (Res. D). It is challenging for Trek students to form a relationship with community members, but when it happens it is incredible:

Our community members are very mistrustful and highly marginalized. Engaging them is very difficult, you have to be present and be assessed as to whether you are trustworthy...It is a big investment. But when you see those light bulbs go off, you are so glad you took those five minutes [to spend with the Trek student]. They have to examine their values, and say, yes, this woman is pregnant and using a substance, but she is making a change just by being here. She still has no place to live, the money has run out, and it is hard to see how she is managing. But the Trek student has been able to do one thing—get them a set of diapers or clothes—that has turned one woman's world around. Or they hold a woman's baby for a half hour so they can eat their lunch. What a difference!" (Res. G).

In addition to the benefits CSL provides community members, community partners also suggested that CSL strengthens and improves society. Organization H suggested that the direct service Trek students provided, while important, was not the most significant contribution of their work in the Downtown Eastside:

I'm a proponent of having different parts of the community involved in what is going on down here. In terms of educating the community at large, and starting with university students or some of the colleges, having them in the Downtown Eastside and seeing firsthand what the issues are is the biggest educational tool that you can bring out to the community at large. So there are the small gains as they assist our staff, but the bigger benefit is the more people you have involved in the organization and the issues in the Downtown Eastside, the more that spreads out to the community at large (Res. H).

The broader societal impact of CSL suggested by the above statement will also be the focus of Section E.

### **Sub-Theme #8: Community Partners Recognize that CSL Benefits Trek Students**

The fact that it is not just the community partners and community members that benefit from CSL is a characteristic that helps to distinguish it from more traditional forms of

volunteerism where the emphasis is on the served. Students receive practical experience, rather than primarily theoretical knowledge: "You can have people who have many levels of education, but unless they have practical, hands-on knowledge of how to communicate with people and the ability to understand where people are coming from, I don't think it matters what degree you have. They won't be as successful" (Res. F). Students can also test the ideas they are learning about in school (Res. C), while developing meaningful relationships with people they might not otherwise encounter (Res. F). It also provides students with a different way of participating in a community setting than traditional practicum programs. For Respondent G, this makes a difference to both the student and herself: "The practicum student usually comes from health or social services, with very targeted and specific learning objectives that need to be achieved within a limited amount of time, whereas CSL is broader and more about working in partnership with the student. With a practicum, my role is as an educator, and I determine if they are able to achieve their tasks. And that is not the way it is with CSL. It is much more mutual—we're in this together" (Res. G). When I asked Respondent F what she thought distinguished Trek students from other volunteers, she thought that the university setting had a role: "They are approaching it from a learning perspective. They are interested in opening themselves to learning" (Res. F). According to community partners, CSL allows students to grow as individuals, gets people outside of the classroom (Res. A), and provides them with a broad experience (Res. F).

### **Sub-Theme #9: Community Partners' Hesitations about CSL**

While community partners were mostly very positive and enthusiastic about their work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program, and the efforts to implement CSL, they did have some suggestions as to how this development could proceed more effectively. Most importantly, community partners want to learn more about CSL. They were curious about the experiences of other universities, and thought it was interesting that there was a whole body of research to consider. One community partner suggested that the Learning Exchange Trek Program could attend a staff meeting to share this information with her co-workers. She anticipated that her organization would have more "buy-in" if they were more knowledgeable about CSL (Res. H).

More information would address some of the uncertainty I heard around the impact on workload and actual benefits to the students. Given the organizational climates as outlined in Section A, there was understandably some concern about the workload that CSL

## **Chapter 5: The Community Partners' Story**

might entail for community partners as it expands. For the most part, it seemed that community partners anticipated the additional effort—if any—would be worthwhile and manageable:

I think we would look at it [CSL] in a different way. We would need to look at providing more support for the Trek students. A specific orientation to what happens at our school, what happens, what are the kids' stories...going a little more in depth. It would be more labour intensive for us, but I think there would also be more of a commitment from the Trek student. And so it might mean they would volunteer with us for longer, or for more hours. There would be a greater connection between them and the kids. It might be more meaningful as well (Res. F).

Another community partner felt that CSL would require more effort from the students, and did not see how it would impact them as "CSL is actually promoting something we would like to promote in the Downtown Eastside already" (Res. H). One community partner was more sceptical about whether the intent of CSL—to think about social issues more broadly—was unique to CSL participants, or students in general. Respondent A:

I think it is naturally happening with students. It is not that they come to the Learning Exchange Trek Program, start questioning things, and become reflective. A lot of our volunteers come through the university anyways, and they are already looking for that type of knowledge and awareness, that kind of wondering and thinking. They are here to get experience with a client who has a mental illness, but they are also asking bigger questions. I find it doesn't matter if someone from a university is coming with that reflective background or wanting to learn more. Some people from the university might think they know it all because they have studied it" (Res. A).

In her experience, students are frustrated and confused as to why they need to go through the Learning Exchange Trek Program to volunteer once they find that they could have contacted the organization directly. While she finds it helpful to work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program because it lessens her workload, she is not convinced that students see it as valuable. However, she also felt that she was relatively new to the program, and was curious to see how it unfolded as more students became involved with her organization (Res. A).

## **Learning Exchange Trek Program: Thoughts on the Responses to the Introduction of Community Service Learning**

The Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees, as initiators of CSL, could directly speak about CSL more readily than some of the community partners. They were familiar with other universities' experiences and the existing literature, and are in the process of forming a national organization with other interested universities to advocate for CSL in post-secondary institutions across Canada. This meant that in our conversations we were able to explore CSL more deeply because it was not the first time they were hearing about the idea, unlike some of the community partners. Although the implementation of CSL had already been determined more or less when the Learning Exchange Trek Program was conceived (UBC A) and the respondents were enthusiastic about its potential, they did express some concern about models elsewhere, and stressed that CSL must be implemented thoughtfully and respectfully to succeed.

The Learning Exchange Trek Program deliberately chose to emphasize community in CSL—rather than just using the more common term “service-learning”—to reflect their commitment to the community (UBC C). This commitment was not as evident when UBC first became involved in the Downtown Eastside. From the beginning of the university's discussions to engage more with communities outside of campus, there was a sense that it was logical to work in the Downtown Eastside because “many felt that it was a neighbourhood that could use some help, intervention, support, or attention” (UBC A). When UBC announced its intentions in the fall of 1998, there was a sizeable negative reaction from the community. Community organizations and residents were upset that the university felt they could come into their neighbourhood without any consultation. Realizing its mistake, one of the strategies UBC adopted was to hire two students to consult the community, resulting in the publication of *Challenge and Promise* (Fryer and Lee 1999). Through this process, ten community organizations expressed a willingness and capacity to have students volunteer, and the Learning Exchange Trek Program recruited approximately 30 students to establish the initiative.

According to UBC A, they focused on volunteerism—not CSL—in the first couple of years of the Learning Exchange Trek Program. They chose this strategy because of their capacity initially: they needed to ask what they could do given their limited staff resources. The Learning Exchange Trek Program worked to institute CSL during Reading Week 2002, and “it blew my mind to hear what the students talked about in terms of the impact of their experience—it was so powerful that I became totally committed to CSL...it took their learning to a whole other level” (UBC A). It became even better, and she recalled that the following Reading Week was “like magic almost” (UBC A). Today, CSL features prominently in the *Trek 2010: Green Paper*, giving UBC a significant advantage over other Canadian universities beginning to develop CSL initiatives (UBC C). CSL needs to be at the forefront as it “will distinguish us from a volunteer clearinghouse” (UBC C). When I asked UBC B to define CSL, she suggested the following:

Looking at the social component in any activity or body of learning, and seeing how that learning component and its relationship to other human beings or other human beings through the objects studied. The reality is all those things impact on human life. Being able to understand social dimensions of what you are studying by working with the people who deal with this, you'll not only learn about the physical thing you're dealing with, you'll also learn about the social structure that lies behind it. And that is as important because it tells you about your humanity. It teaches you something about the relevance of what you're doing and its impact on humanity, and makes you a better citizen of the world (UBC B).

For UBC A, “CSL is a piece of a bigger possibility for the university to integrating knowledge that rests in the community and knowledge that rests in the university. Another piece of the CSL agenda is to get faculty to pay attention to community organizations” (UBC A). When asked how they approach their work, UBC A responded:

The philosophical approach or value base that we try to come from—which comes from my own experience and my own strongly held convictions about this—is we come as learners. I think the university has probably more to gain and learn from these relationships than the community does. But I think most people in the university would see it as the reverse. I don't know that for sure, but I suspect most people at UBC think we're bringing this to the community. I want to get the community coming to the university—either literally or figuratively—to get their knowledge, perspective, awareness, and sensitivities infiltrating the campus. And if it happens by us going to the community, fine. But it's not one way; it's a two way process. And in terms of the transformative potential—if it is possible to transform the university—I'm trying more to transform the university than the community (UBC A).

## **Chapter 5: The Community Partners' Story**

Only a small part of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's efforts at introducing CSL receives funding from the provincial government's education ministry. UBC's president is currently working on securing an endowment so funding cutbacks or a different administrative climate would not impact the program (UBC C). In addition to achieving financial security, the implementation of CSL requires the cooperation and support of many individuals on campus, and the Learning Exchange Trek Program is pleased to see relationships developing between the VP Academic, VP Students, and VP External to promote CSL. Relationships outside of UBC are also central to the adoption of CSL, and as an example, the Learning Exchange Trek Program is presently working with senior administration at the VSB to develop strategies for collaborating at an institutional level. This is a very promising development for two reasons: first, many Trek students are connected to the schools; and secondly, the Learning Exchange Trek Program believes that CSL will be more successful if introduced at an early age, before students enter post-secondary (UBC C). More about the importance of partnerships will follow in Section D.

UBC C is confident that they can contribute to UBC's goal of ten percent of students having a CSL experience as part of their education. She also believes that the community partners—especially the schools—can accommodate the nearly five thousand students. For the Learning Exchange Trek Program, the challenge is to determine “how we do community development and not just place students” in community organizations (UBC C). UBC B also felt their target was reasonable because nearly every course has a social dimension to it, making it a suitable match for curricular CSL. To make the goals of CSL real, “you have to go to all the courses we have—it won't happen overnight—and find the social dimension that somebody will be interested in...you need to find out why they were drawn to the course in the first place”. It is important to remember how this connects to the university's educational goals: “We can't lose sight that it is our primary mandate, not to provide social services, but to actually educate. But to do so, being connected and being involved with the community and learning from that community, and that community learning from us, that is an exchange” (UBC B). One of the advantages is that CSL avoids treating the community like it is part of a study or experiment:

If you go in as a young person, trying to learn about the broader community (instead of your very localized community—family, friends, school), and you're trying to learn about things differently, that empathy, understanding, that I'm giving you something about my background and what I'm about, and why I'm doing what I'm doing but at the same time I am listening to how you

are affected. We're trying to understand how we can work on this together" (UBC B).

She realizes that it will take time to adopt CSL because it will require a cultural shift:

The groups within the university tend to be notoriously conservative. It will take a significant faculty effort. Students are way ahead of faculty on these things. Individual faculty members have a conservatism when it comes to working outside the university. They are so progressive in their discipline—they're at the forefront—that they may not have had a chance to think about such models [as CSL]. To say this is how we view learning, will be a challenge for some (UBC B).

Part of changing the culture will require that faculty adopting CSL are appropriately recognized, which she does not anticipate will present a problem because UBC currently looks at three aspects—the ability to teach, community, and research—when determining promotion, tenure, and merit (UBC B).

Similar to the community partners, I heard the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees express a genuine personal commitment to the goals of CSL: "By having students undergo a transformative experience at university and see the value of getting involved with their community, they take that with them. There could be no greater gift to people than sharing something like that. That is why I am so committed to this—I just think there is great value in it" (UBC C). At the same time, there is some caution: "I know we [UBC] are training lawyers, architects, doctors—not a bunch of environmentalists and social thinkers—so I am not suggesting, nor do I think the university is suggesting, that we overhaul the education system so that all doctors do is CSL. I think we need to give them a taste and let them think about these things. It gives them the ability to think about things differently" (UBC C). And while it cannot be its only focus, there is a sense that the university is the place for this to happen, because it is known for being "strange, eccentric, innovative, dynamic and proposing neat and interesting things" (UBC C). Furthermore, although successful integration with the community has varied over time, "universities have always had to be closely entwined with the community because they are part of the community...I think we're not serving the people who come here to get an education appropriately if we don't understand how they relate to the community and how they need to relate to the community" (UBC B). As they look toward the future, the Learning Exchange Trek Program hopes that their community partners will embrace CSL, and move away from traditional volunteerism: "We want mentors for our students. They are not warm bodies

while a staff member gets a cup of coffee. They're not teachers. They are there because they want to be educated in being a citizen" (UBC C).

## **Interpretation and Reflections: Responses to the Introduction of Community Service Learning**

In reviewing the transcripts and reflecting on the conversations I had with community partners, I found it difficult to discern when people were referring to working with university students generally and university students engaged in a CSL initiative. Although the Learning Exchange Trek Program is committed to moving from more traditional volunteerism to CSL, the distinction is not yet clear to all community partners, nor are they all seeing it as particularly profound. Respondents B and C both speculated that CSL was a "buzzword" that would eventually be replaced with something else. Respondent A, as stated above, remarked that she was uncertain if CSL's goal of reflection and understanding broader social trends came intuitively to university students, and volunteers in general. "On some level, it doesn't matter what you call it", according to Respondent G, "as long as it happens" (Res. G). At the same time, the community partners were overwhelmingly thrilled with the students and enthused with their partnership with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. *What to make of this apparent difference in perspectives? Is it a classic example of a university engaged in an irrelevant dialogue about terminology that is unconnected to the community? Does this illustrate a difference in professional cultures between community organizations and the university? Was I too eager to talk about a concept that is still in its infancy?*

Despite efforts to reduce differences by both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program as described throughout this study, it is not a surprise that they continue to exist. Traditionally, the university emphasizes community and learning/thinking; whereas community organizations stress community and service/doing. UBC is an educational institution, and as such, must ensure that its activities enhance learning. It also maintains that it needs to be connected to the community as it is part of the community: "universities fit in the world; we are part of the world, so we are part of the communities that support us. For UBC, this includes Canada, and more exactly the Lower Mainland, and particularly Vancouver with whom we're in close proximity" (UBC B). CSL encapsulates both of these objectives. Community partners exist to provide services to

community members. To deliver services successfully, community partners must rely on volunteers in the community to supplement the efforts of their staff. Volunteerism is also utilized as a strategy for convincing the community that their services are worthy of their financial support. Bringing people in to their organization—whether it is to volunteer, complete a practicum placement, or as part of UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program—means they are able to get their work done. There is an overlap in the community partners' and the Learning Exchange Trek Program's objectives, explaining the positive responses of the interviewees in this study to CSL. As we will see in the fifth theme there is also a common commitment by both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to invite students to care about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside. Both see it as their responsibility to "grow global citizens" who pay attention to the poverty, homelessness, and other examples of injustice in their community, while also witnessing the capacity and resiliency of a marginalized community (Res. G).

There are some disadvantages to looking at an initiative that is in the early stages of development. As an example, many of my conversations with community partners did not address the role of faculty in implementing CSL. Yet the Learning Exchange Trek Program anticipates that their involvement will be integral to the success of its implementation. I am also concerned that I was unable to provide enough information to the community partners about CSL, or accurately portray what I was learning about the Learning Exchange Trek Program's intentions in the limited amount of time available in the interview. More importantly, I was also apprehensive that community partners would interpret my interest in CSL as evidence of UBC proceeding without their participation. While some community partners have been more involved in the discussion to date, and the Learning Exchange Trek Program communicated to me that they intend to bring more community partners into the conversation, one respondent reminded me of the danger "that things can grow on one-side, and the last thing nonprofits like is to have things forced on them" (Res. H). I consider this a legitimate concern, given UBC's first foray into the Downtown Eastside, and agree that the Learning Exchange Trek Program should include more community partners in the discussion if they are willing, perhaps by attending staff meetings as suggested by Respondent H.

Despite my misgivings of approaching this topic prematurely, I also maintain that looking at CSL as it unfolds can be useful. First, it documents community partners'

experiences with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to date, and their initial impressions of CSL. Hearing of successes, as well as areas for improvement, provides both community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program a common starting point for envisioning how they anticipate moving forward. We can begin to see how students can help community organizations, including: providing an analysis of the situation and/or problems faced by community organizations; developing solutions to the identified problems; advancing policy solutions to the appropriate authorities; and informing the wider community about the nature of the problem and potential solutions. Considering CSL in its formative stages also captures the transition from traditional volunteerism to a more in-depth and integrated method of community involvement that distinguishes UBC from other universities who have adopted CSL, particularly in the United States, from the outset of their community outreach initiatives. I also believe that this evolution will interest nonprofit and charitable organizations that may also consider offering their non-student volunteers a more comprehensive understanding of the circumstances that necessitate their community members requiring services. As CSL is indebted to our traditional sense of volunteerism, so too can volunteerism benefit from the strategies and techniques of CSL. This might be particularly relevant to nonprofit and charitable organizations that feel constrained by Canada's existing legislation that prohibits them from engaging in advocacy.<sup>71</sup> As an example, community organizations could encourage reflection among their volunteers by presenting guest speakers, circulating relevant articles, or initiating discussion groups. While the CCRA frowns on advocacy, education is an acceptable purpose of a nonprofit and charitable organization. Finally, the advantage of examining CSL at this point in its development is that many other universities are also introducing, or considering introducing CSL, and knowledge of the community partners' experiences and perspectives might be instructive. In particular, their sense of the evolution and maturing of partnerships, as outlined in the next section, can be particularly insightful for this undertaking.

## **D. EVOLUTION AND MATURING OF PARTNERSHIPS**

I would like to say it is a partnership, but I think the honest answer is that our resources are too maxed. On our end, we have not put in enough—both time and energy wise—to create it as a real partnership. And that is because of

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<sup>71</sup> For more information about this debate, please see: <http://www.impactcs.org>.

maxed resources. This is according to my definition of a reciprocal relationship—I haven't been to the Learning Exchange [on Main Street] forever, I hardly talk with them, I haven't put a lot of energy into it. This is no fault of the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Our relationship is more with the individual students. That is where we put our time...In a perfect world, I would go to all the community partner meetings, I would know all the Trek students by name, and greet them and hang out with them. Instead I have to rely on my staff to find out who is working, but they know who they are.

*Respondent H*

Yes, I would say this is a partnership...My definition is when two or more groups come together with a common focus, and each group brings their expertise or resources. And when you match it with the other group(s) there is a greater strength or ability to meet the identified need. Sometimes as a partner you are putting in more, sometimes less, but that isn't necessarily an issue. Because when you go into the partnership it has to be very clear that you are going to address this identified need. And that is the purpose. So there is a trust built between the groups.

*Respondent F*

As the two statements above indicate, the community partners disagreed as to whether their interactions with the Learning Exchange Trek Program could be called a partnership. In this section, I will describe the evolution of the relationship between community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program, which has in some cases resulted in a partnership.<sup>72</sup> As defined in the second chapter, partnerships are characterized by "overlapping interests that converge on the aim of improving community conditions" (Baum 2000, 235). While some of the community partners felt they were in partnership with the Learning Exchange Trek Program, others preferred to think of their partnership with the individual Trek students and specific Learning Exchange Trek Program staff. Not surprisingly, the Learning Exchange Trek Program also expressed that their interactions with community partners varied in their depth and intensity. It is useful to think of a continuum for describing the stages that community partners experience: caution; testing the relationship; situating it within their broader agenda; partnerships between individuals; and organizational mutualism. In proposing a continuum to visualize how people described their interactions with the Learning Exchange Trek Program, I am not suggesting that the interactions progress linearly through each component; there might be movement in either

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<sup>72</sup> I have chosen to use "community partner" throughout the study—despite these ambiguities—because it distinguishes the organizations working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program from other community organizations where Trek students are not involved. It is also how the Learning Exchange Trek Program refers to the organizations, although they also recognize that the depth of the partnership varies with each organization.

direction, or community partners may not experience every phase. I will also present some of the challenges that community partners have encountered, and identify suggestions for maturing the partnership.

The relationship between community organizations and the Learning Exchange Trek Program started in one of several ways: the community partner was looking for volunteers and approached the university to see if they held a volunteer fair (and were directed to the Learning Exchange Trek Program); some came after learning about the Learning Exchange Trek Program through colleagues; or the Learning Exchange Trek Program approached the community partners, as part of the community consultation in the summer of 1999. As I identified in the section above, their needs overlapped: community partners needed help achieving their goals by increasing their human resources capacity, and the university was determined to realize its objective (as outlined in *Trek 2000*) of working more closely with the community. The community partners differed in their support and depth of overall volunteer programming: some organizations were in the early stages of including volunteers in their organization, and creating strategies for tracking their contributions (Res. E); others have full-time volunteer coordinators (Res. C and D).

## **Community Partners**

### **Sub-Theme #10: Community Partners Are Cautious about Partnerships**

While some community organizations were delighted to tap into a new source of volunteers, especially as they were just starting their own volunteer program (Res. D), others were more cautious. Respondent B recalled that not everyone embraced the idea when they started:

Volunteers are wonderful but they generally don't stick. And you start to depend on it. And the kids start to depend on it. And suddenly they're not there. And it's very difficult—whether it's parents having to stay home because they have sick kids, or Trek students needing to complete a project. You count on them, and then they're gone. And sometimes that can be more work than not having a volunteer. It depends on your experience: some people have been burned often enough that they don't want volunteers; others have had good experiences and they're lining up for them...But now we don't have any sceptics left (Res. B).

Organization B has a very "collegial staff" and uses consensus to make all of their decisions. Once they decided to work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program, everyone agreed to support it. They have moved from a very tentative beginning to partnership: "This was a completely unique project and we created it together, so how could I criticize it? It is an organic thing. I don't think anything is static when it comes to people, so we do need to keep refining it from both sides...A true partnership exists when both sides have input and create together in equality" (Res. B). Respondent B is looking forward to building on the successes of their projects this past year.

Although Organization B's sceptics are converted, Respondent A remains hesitant. While she acknowledges that she benefits from the Learning Exchange Trek Program conducting the criminal record check, she is not so certain the students see it as advantageous: "it creates confusion, especially since students can also contact me directly and offer to volunteer" (Res. A). She is also uncertain that Trek students differ from any of the other volunteers who approach her organization: "I think we are just good at attracting fabulous volunteers who are really sensitive, really skilled, they just gravitate toward the program. They know they will be working off-site, one-to-one, so there is a sense of confidence, independence, and maturity. They have a certain awareness already, and they know they will be providing a service to someone who is quite disadvantaged" (Res. A). But she also admitted her experience was limited to a few students so far, and was unable to speculate as to whether these students are more knowledgeable about the issues facing her organization's community members because they went through the Learning Exchange Trek Program in comparison to volunteers who become involved through other channels (Res. A).

### **Sub-Theme #11: Community Partners Test the Relationship**

One of the questions I asked all community partners is how they would address any problems or misunderstandings that might arise when working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Although many asserted that they would feel very comfortable talking to the Learning Exchange Trek Program and optimistic that they would generate a solution, it was primarily a hypothetical response as most had not yet encountered such a situation, with one exception. Respondent F recalled her organization's application for a Chapman

Summer Project Award<sup>73</sup> through the Learning Exchange Trek Program. She contacted the Learning Exchange Trek Program upon learning that they were unsuccessful:

I felt their guidelines for the award were not very clear. The feedback we received said that it sounded like it came too much from staff—instead of Trek students—and that it sounded too much like a grant. It would have been really nice to have that money because it was identified as a high need program, and we thought using our staff expertise with the Trek students was how we participated as a partner. Because to us, when you're a partner you bring your knowledge and share with others, and work together. But it needed to sound like it came more from the UBC students" (Res. F).

Despite this confusion, she saw the Chapman Awards as a wonderful opportunity and was pleased that other community organizations and students will benefit from the funding. She was also grateful to have had the chance to have Trek students and staff work on the application together, especially because it allowed Trek students to learn more about their community members' experiences in greater depth. This incident led her to feel that her organization was working in partnership with the Learning Exchange Trek Program because she did not hesitate to contact the Learning Exchange Trek Program, and felt listened to when she outlined her concerns with the process. She hoped the Learning Exchange Trek Program felt she was equally approachable and would contact her if any concerns arose.

### **Sub-Theme #12: Community Partners Situate CSL within their Broader Agenda**

In some situations, the partnership with Learning Exchange Trek Program is part of a broader initiative. At Organization C, they are interested in enhancing community involvement and held a community improvement forum in April 2004. They invited all of their partners to the table, including the Learning Exchange Trek Program, as they work towards their "overall goal to engage more and more people in the school" (Res. C). The forums will be continuing in the upcoming year, with the school's partners (including the Learning Exchange Trek Program) meeting most school months. She proposed that it requires the principal being committed to developing community partnerships, plus a number of staff working toward similar goals (Res. C). When teachers and staff decide to work at Organization C, they are drawn to "the ethos of the school to have a lot of people involved", resulting in no resistance. Organization C intends to continue strengthening their relationships with the community, and plans to involve Trek students. As an example,

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<sup>73</sup> Please see the first chapter for an explanation of the Chapman Service Awards.

Respondent C has organized a meeting to evaluate the homework club. Previously it happened informally, but they are now trying to formalize it and will include the Trek students in this process: "I think this will strengthen the partnership. When volunteers begin to look at the bigger picture of the program—whether it is tutoring or whatever—and think about the criteria as to what makes it successful from various points of view, the partnership becomes stronger" (Res. C).

### **Sub-Theme #13: Community Partners Develop Partnerships with Individuals**

The statement at the beginning of this section by Respondent H illustrates how the interaction with the Learning Exchange Trek Program can result in partnerships with individuals: "our relationship is more with the individual students. That is where we put our time" (Res. H). When I asked her to describe how she saw the university approaching CSL, she replied:

That is a tough question for us because it really has been about individuals coming here. It has been nice that it has always been about that for us—the individual Trek student. It is interesting being in this interview and hearing you talk about the university as this entity. I am trying to put my mind around this because I think of so and so from the Learning Exchange Trek Program. I've never conceptualized it in terms of UBC, despite hearing from you how central this is to their strategic plan (Res. H).

Respondent E also found that their partnership was with the individual: "we look at the Trek students who come in—the volunteer. Other than me, who deals with Learning Exchange Trek Program and UBC, our partnership is non-existent. I haven't been to any of the breakfasts, awards, or other Learning Exchange Trek Program events; it is just too busy for me" (Res. E). The idea of "partnerships with individuals" also captures how some community partners described their interaction with the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff. One community partner was frustrated when she worked with a representative from the Learning Exchange Trek Program because the individual was being too forceful about introducing new opportunities for Trek students. But as soon as she spoke to her regular contact, she felt reassured: "The Learning Exchange Trek Program has become a big organization. I feel mostly connected to two people, and find it hard to communicate with so many others. In this case, I felt the individual was saying the university has this opportunity, you should be grateful...They were great ideas, but we just couldn't do it. Most of my relationships, however, are supportive, positive, and create a lot of opportunities. They trust

our judgment" (Res. D). Another person wondered whether their relationship would be the same without the current people they were working with at the Learning Exchange Trek Program, including UBC's president: "I went to university twice and I never met the president of the university. But I have met UBC's several times—we are on a first name basis...I don't imagine that all universities have the same quality of people...Universities need to be very particular about who is running a particular community service program" (Res. G).

#### **Sub-Theme #14: Community Partners Build Organizational Mutualism**

Other community partners conclude that their relationship with the Learning Exchange Trek Program has already evolved into a partnership: "It is a partnership because it is a mutual working relationship. We both benefit greatly. In some ways I think we benefit more, but they assure us that students benefit too. I respect and trust that the people who run the Learning Exchange Trek Program will continue to hold up their end of the agreement, and that we offer the same. If anything was not working, I could call them and talk about it. When I have had concerns about what we could do, I felt very comfortable saying so. I didn't feel it would hurt our relationship in any way" (Res. D). There is a sense that the Learning Exchange Trek Program has done things the right way: "I like the Learning Exchange. It is not glitzy, it is tucked away, and that is very good. They have done a very good job of becoming a member of the community rather than remaining an outsider" (Res. G).

Many of the benefits community partners enjoy because of their relationships with the Learning Exchange Trek Program are listed under the Contributions of Students (Section B) and the Introduction of CSL (Section C). Wherever their interactions fall on the continuum, community partners also had suggestions as to how to "mature" (Res. H) the relationship. One of the most common challenges—which every community partner mentioned—is the Trek students' schedules. This leads to some frustration on the part of community members, and one stated a preference for older volunteers because "they are more reliable because their schedules are less complicated" (Res. E). Respondent D plans around student schedules: she is careful to hold her training for new volunteers to accommodate students, and asks students to advise her of their availability so she can recruit additional help if they will be away for any length of time. She also mentioned that eventually she might consider condensing her training from two days to one, and offer it on

campus to reduce Trek students' time. Respondent H expressed that she would like the Learning Exchange Trek Program to provide more information—through email—about the orientation process they conduct. To date, it has not been a concern because the process has gone smoothly, but she thought it would help her organization offer better support to students (Res. H). As she learned about CSL in our interview for the first time, she also wanted a representative from the Learning Exchange Trek Program to attend one of their staff meetings and make a presentation, especially since she is concerned about things developing one-sided, as is often the experience for nonprofits: "the last thing nonprofits like is having things forced on them" (Res. H). There was a sense that the pace of community organizations does not correspond with that of the university, and the community partners' preference is to go slowly, especially as they are still getting established (Res. D). Respondent B wishes to restructure their program so the Trek students spend more time with the same community members so they can develop a deeper relationship. While some organizations are anxious to accommodate more students (Res. F), some recognize that they are at capacity (Res. D) and are not prepared to take large groups of students unless it fits with their program and meets their community members' needs. These challenges highlight the uniqueness of each relationship; maturing the relationship will occur through community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program working together.

### **Learning Exchange Trek Program: Thoughts on the Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships**

One of the roles of the Learning Exchange Trek Program is "to facilitate partnership or relationship building between people, and stepping back and acting as a consulting body when we are needed" (UBC C). The university can be confusing and intimidating, and the Learning Exchange Trek Program tries to make it easier by providing support to community partners, as well preparing the student for working in the Downtown Eastside (UBC A). While some community partners insist that all students go through the Learning Exchange Trek Program, others accept UBC students who approach them directly. Community partners determine their preference. When I asked UBC A to describe the Learning Exchange Trek Program's relationships with community partners, she responded:

We try to come from a place of respect, curiosity, and mindfulness of the apparent, perceived, and to some extent, real power differentials. The relationships are all very different, and some have evolved more than others.

Because so much of what we are doing is developmental, it is changing and we are learning as we go—a fair bit of trial and error. We find an organization where there is a shared value base, or places that say “you guys are so much fun to work with”. These are the partnerships where there is life and a shared enthusiasm; they’re further down the road because there is a kindred spirit saying “let’s do more together”. Unlike ones where they’re not returning my phone calls, email, or students aren’t having a good experience, the relationship is slower to develop. Not that they’re bad organizations, it just takes more time to happen (UBC A).

I received a similar response from UBC C: “Let’s face it; we don’t have many partnerships yet. We have a lot of relationships—let’s do the odd thing together, let’s meet. Then there are collaborations—when we are working together—as in Reading Week. And then there are partnerships. Partnerships require the whole organization to be on board...everyone is invested and see it as a partnership” (UBC C). Like the community partners, the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees admit they use the word “partnership” and “community partners” to describe a range of relationships they are developing with community organizations.

According to the Learning Exchange Trek Program, there is a sense that the community partners’ lack of resources inhibits the development of partnerships: “they’re too stretched to return phone calls because they can’t, they don’t have time, or it is just not a priority for them because they are too busy putting fires out to see if a Trek student showed up for an interview” (UBC A). It may also be differences in professional cultures, or a lack of organizational capacity that allows for a volunteer coordinator, or someone to coordinate and track the students (UBC A and C). This is problematic because partnerships require negotiation and communication: “Our best relationships are with good communicators—there are sparks flying on a regular basis” (UBC C).

The Learning Exchange Trek Program has evaluated its work every year since its inception, and plan this year to assess whether each of the community organizations will continue as a partner: “We will need to make some tough decisions. We need to let people know where we are going, and find out if they want to come along with us. We need to ask whether they want to be part of the process. Community partners will make the decision. A lot of them came on at the beginning when there weren’t criteria or expectations. And while we try to be accommodating, we have certain expectations” (UBC C). The Learning Exchange Trek Program would like to develop partnership agreements with the community

## **Chapter 5: The Community Partners' Story**

organizations that want to continue, giving them "some ownership of their role in the vision", and strengthening the connections between the community and university (UBC C). To create a partnership agreement, Learning Exchange Trek Program staff hope to attend their community partners' staff meetings where they can generate a wish list of how they could work together. Together they will draft a one-year plan that outlines their goals for satisfying the wish list. After one year, they can review their goals and draft a three-year plan. Partnership agreements "will allow us to have clear communication, set some good objectives, feel proud, and celebrate our accomplishments at the end" and "ensure that we reach both the community partners' and the university's goals" (UBC C). This development will allow the Learning Exchange Trek Program to appreciate the goals of the community partners, instead of UBC's goals being front and centre, as stated by UBC B in Section A.

The Learning Exchange Trek Program anticipates that partnership agreements will require a lot of time, and is not certain it will develop one with every community partner this year. However, "partnership agreements will be a huge priority in the next year, and I [UBC C] am looking forward to determining what we need to do together. And making sure that we are clear about what we are doing—and not just growing. We need focus" (UBC C). There is a sense that there will be "awkward moments and difficult decisions" as some community partners decide not to continue (UBC C). But the Learning Exchange Trek Program feels it also necessary "to get down to the core that are really excited and just go" (UBC C). Once this is accomplished they can become creative and work on developing reciprocal relationships: for example, "if you give your time to our students, we will send you the director of our fund development department to help you with your fundraising campaigns if that can be helpful" (UBC C). This an example of how the Learning Exchange Trek Program hopes to encourage UBC staff—in addition to the students—becoming more involved in the community. The Learning Exchange Trek Program see partnership agreements as an opportunity to be innovative and genuinely explore what comprises "a learning exchange". The Learning Exchange Trek Program also aspires to explore its connection with businesses. Not just how they might provide funding, but how are they involved in the community in a variety of ways: "we could become a broker of relationships between the schools and businesses" (UBC C).

## **Interpretation and Reflections: Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships**

CSL includes community service and learning. We can interpret community, or community organizations, as the setting or environment where students provide service, or community can be integral to shaping the experience of students providing service. The first results in a weaker form of CSL that looks to the community as providing a location; the second leads to a more robust form of CSL as it acknowledges the community as a partner. There is a sense that universities must choose between models: either it is a volunteer program (utilizing a weaker form of CSL), or a stronger form of CSL program. Pearson, as mentioned in the second chapter, affirmed this dichotomy when she cautioned that we often conflate placements and true partnerships in discussions about community-university partnerships (Pearson 2002, 183). This sharp distinction between weak and strong CSL also framed my interview questions about partnerships: judging from the responses I received, the interviewees felt compelled to say they were either in partnership with the university, or not. In retrospect, I wish I had asked the interviewees to describe situations when they felt both in and out of a partnership. If my questioning had not led to either "yes" or "no" responses, I would be better positioned to describe the nuances of the interactions between community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Given that the Learning Exchange Trek Program is in the early stages of developing CSL, and is moving from a more traditional volunteer/community outreach model to a stronger form of CSL, it is not surprising that some relationships are more evolved than others. The continuum I suggested in the first paragraph of this section captures the unique relationship between each community partner and the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Again, the continuum does not imply that each community partner will proceed from one stage to another, nor even experience all of the stages. In addition, community partners will likely experience aspects of more than one stage at the same time. This is because community partners encounter multiple relationships—which may or may not be partnerships—as they work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Community partners identified the following relationships as relevant to their work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program: relationships with community members; individual Trek students; individual Trek Program staff; faculty members; the university president; the university; and other community partners. Plus all of their internal relationships in the community organization: relationships with community members; the executive director, project coordinators; administrators;

teachers; volunteer coordinators; donors; and other volunteers. By asking community partners to decide if they considered their interactions with the Learning Exchange Trek Program a partnership, I overlooked the complexity and multiplicity of these relationships.

As the Learning Exchange Trek Program begins to establish partnership agreements with community partners, this subtlety is significant. Based on the community partners' emphasis on university responsibility that I heard (Section E), I would suggest that the Learning Exchange Trek Program tailors each partnership agreement to a specific organization so that the agreements encompass the multiplicity of relationships between the community partners and UBC. Although I can appreciate the need to formalize the relationship, and anticipate that it would be beneficial for both the Learning Exchange Trek Program and the community partners,<sup>74</sup> I hope that the criteria to participate will not be too rigid. Certain aspects of organizational climate—which can promote or inhibit partnerships—are beyond the control of the community partners. As an example, one community partner hoped that her inability to attend community partners' meetings would not be interpreted as disinterest, but knows her limited time is better spent coordinating the experience of Trek students directly (Res. F). Several community partners also stated that they would find it difficult, at this time, to accept more Trek students, despite UBC's aspiration to have ten percent of their students experience CSL before they graduate. Organization D has refrained from taking on large groups of Trek students at the same time because they feel it would exceed their capacity and overwhelm community members. This does not mean they do not want to deepen their relationship with the Learning Exchange Trek Program; rather, they would like to examine other possibilities for strengthening their partnership. From the perspective of the community partners, as we will learn in the next section, it is the responsibility and obligation of UBC to support the Learning Exchange Trek Program, or some other community outreach initiative. By extension, this means that the Learning Exchange Trek Program should welcome as many community partners as possible, necessitating partnership agreements that are individualized and reflective of each community organization's unique circumstances.

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<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, I was unable to ask community partners their response to the idea of partnership agreements as I learned about them towards the end of my interviews.

In the second chapter, I suggested that true partnerships must be moving toward mutualism and co-learning, and hinted that CSL can contribute to this undertaking. Both community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program concurred that many opportunities for Trek students could be more accurately described as placements rather than partnerships: however, some community partners used language that suggested there was movement in this direction already. Their interactions were “organic” (Res. B); resulted in “mutual learning”, “reciprocal”, and “collaborative” (Res. C); “an opportunity for learning” (Res. C, G, and H); “respectful” (Res. D); “mutual” (Res. D and G); “trusting” (Res. E and G); and “mutually beneficial” (Res. G). While CSL can enhance mutualism and co-learning, the fact that community partners characterized their interactions with the Learning Exchange Trek Program—despite being in the early stages of implementing CSL—with words that suggested mutualism and co-learning, made me judge that CSL is not the only approach or philosophy that facilitates this model of community-university partnership.

In all three of my interviews with the Learning Exchange Trek Program respondents, they demonstrated how their work was operationalizing UBC's strategic plan. And I would agree; the Learning Exchange Trek Program is ensuring that UBC engages the community as outlined in *Trek 2000* and the *Trek 2010: Green Paper*. And CSL will contribute to the Learning Exchange Trek Program achieving that objective. Yet merely examining UBC's strategic plan and an academic philosophy such as CSL does not explain the success of the program to date. Nor does counting the number of hours contributed by Trek students, or listing their activities fully explain the respondents' satisfaction and enthusiasm with the initiative. However, if these factors are combined with the personal values and convictions of both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program staff (and likely Trek students), it becomes more understandable why everyone is happy with the results of their efforts.

When I was designing the interview guide, I decided against asking both community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to share what motivated and inspired them to work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside because it seemed irrelevant to my research questions. It was a privilege that many respondents voluntarily shared their intimate, and sometimes very emotional, reasons for their work. For some, they were frustrated with society's intolerance of people who are different, or had family connections to people living in the Downtown Eastside. Some saw it as their responsibility to fight for social

justice and advocate for social change for those less fortunate than themselves; others suggested their religious and spiritual beliefs were influential. Other reasons included: a sense that our educational system has lost its way; a commitment to social sustainability; and a conviction that we must start doing things differently if we want to avoid further social disarray. Overall, respondents seemed to express the view that inviting Trek students to care would address many of their concerns. It became evident that what was unfolding in the Downtown Eastside was special because of the individuals involved. These individuals hoped that "caring" would provide a starting point for addressing the social problems faced in the Downtown Eastside. Portraying community-university partnerships as abstract, impersonal, rational, and institutional arrangements diminishes the fact that individuals contribute to their success.<sup>75</sup>

Recognizing that individuals are central to the success of community-university partnerships may seem simplistic and trite. Obviously, it is individuals who meet, come up with ideas, do the work, evaluate programs, and celebrate successes. Yet this was downplayed or non-existent in the literature about CSL. I imagine that this would be better documented if more of the literature looked at CSL from the experiences and perspective of community partners. This perhaps suggests another difference in professional cultures: community partners focus on the concrete and tangible, while academics (who are primarily responsible for the CSL studies to date) use abstractions. Consequently, when I asked about "the university", community partners would come back to individual Trek students and specific Learning Exchange Trek Program staff repeatedly. This difference also surfaced when I tried to ask community partners about the guiding principles or philosophies of their organization that may affect CSL. As suggested throughout this chapter, community partners mostly focused on having students get the necessary work completed rather than worrying about individual Trek students' political orientation. From what I learned in the interviews, the charity vs. social justice debate that featured prominently in the literature was more reflective of the university's interests. I explore this finding further in the next section.

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<sup>75</sup> By referring to Organization A, Respondent A, UBC A, etc., to ensure confidentiality, I am aware that I have depersonalized the stories shared with me. To address this shortcoming, I chose to include many direct quotes so the voices of the interviewees would be maintained as much as possible.

## **E. PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITY**

If we're going to take care of each other in our society, we have to understand where people come from. I was raised on the west side of Vancouver, far away from the Downtown Eastside. A lot of my friends are sixty years old and doing very well. When they talk about welfare, poverty, or drug addiction, they are quite dismissive. And these are intelligent people, some with double and triple degrees! But they have never worked in that kind of environment, or with people long enough to know that global poverty is just that...The Trek students will be the same age as my friends in forty years, and I would like them to be less dismissive. I want them to have a deeper understanding and connection with what our society is all about...And that is absolutely the role of the university.

*Respondent B*

This theme, and its implications, was the one that caused me the most surprise. The certainty expressed by the community partners that UBC had an integral connection to the Downtown Eastside was unmistakable.

### **Community Partners**

#### **Sub-Theme #15: Community Partners Believe the University Has a Responsibility to Community**

For the most part, community partners emphasized their relationships with individuals, rather than their connections to either a program or institution. The exception to this pattern was when I asked whether they felt UBC should be engaged in bringing students into the Downtown Eastside to work with community organizations like themselves. Their responses were definitive: as Respondent B articulated above, community partners insisted that UBC has a role in the Downtown Eastside. Even when I suggested that the university was also encumbered with resource shortages—students were faced with increasing tuition, departments struggled to hire new faculty—the community partners stressed that UBC must continue to prioritize working with community organizations. It was not that they were insensitive to the university's predicament, or that they thought the university could easily dig deeper in their pockets if they were willing; rather, the benefits of the relationship were simply too considerable to discontinue the relationship between the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Still not satisfied with their responses, I asked if community partners' insistence was linked to the university's ability to

connect them to a pool of workers that partially alleviates their chronic labour shortage that necessitates volunteers. Although this was a benefit—especially given the exceptional Trek students they had met—it was not their sole impetus for advocating greater community-university involvement. Perhaps it was because the Learning Exchange Trek Program reduced their workload by conducting the application process, criminal record check, and orientation. Again, while community partners valued this aspect of the relationship, it was an incomplete explanation for their enthusiasm. To answer why the community partners expressed that UBC had a responsibility and obligation to be in the Downtown Eastside, consider the community partners' responses to my questions about the university's role, or when community partners voluntarily offered their opinion on the university's responsibilities and obligations.

Volunteering in general is very valuable. Because you are giving of yourself on your own time. Even when it is part of a course, you still have to give of yourself. So there is a huge personal commitment. It makes you a more rounded person if you are volunteering in any capacity...you learn a lot about people, and it adds to your wealth of knowledge...It is not the university's job to just provide academic training. You want someone in medicine who knows heart disease, but that is not enough (Res. A).

We're not going to the university to learn a craft. That's for carpenters (Res. B).

I know that the current president has gone on record saying that she wants ten percent of students involved in CSL. I think that is an excellent goal. There are a number of advantages: it makes the contribution practical and helpful; it is less cerebral, and more balanced; creates connections for students that might become a workplace; and becomes an exploration ground. I would say it is a very good direction to go (Res. C).

One Trek student has been here since the beginning and has donated more than two hundred hours. They have won awards, and given some of the money back to us. But it isn't the monetary gain that is amazing; it is the growth of young people. You're not sure they will be able to do it, and then wow! You see their growth. Seeing these young people grow and really get it. People who are much older do not get it, so I think it is a wonderful, hopeful thing...I do think they [universities] have a responsibility. Just like teachers have a responsibility to teach students to be more socially active. And we are starting to see that at some schools. If a university is thinking about the future, it needs to be part of their mandate (Res. D).

Yes—it is a great idea [for the university to be developing CSL]. It is not enough to just talk about the issues, or drive-through the community. It is much better to actually meet the community members and understand them. It adds richness to everyone's life (Res. E).

I think it is definitely an important addition to what they should be doing. It makes it a more real experience. One of the things you learn working within the school system is that sometimes people come out of university having gone through elementary school, high school, college, and university, directly into their own classroom, without having been out in the real world. They have a hard time understanding what some families must deal with because it is not their life experience. This type of program is very important for university students to be a part of to ensure they have broad experience. But also because our society benefits from the Trek students spending time with our kids (Res. F).

We all have a responsibility to model what it is like to help others—to be a civil society...That is why I want more Trek students coming down here. There is a saying that we demonstrate how civil a society we are by how we care for our poor, or our children, or something. I think of it in terms of children here. We need to grow these children the best we can grow them. And there are those who have more and can help do that. We need to instill that in the folks outside of the Downtown Eastside—especially since they will be future policy makers and so on (Res. G).

Higher learning has a pivotal role to play in social change, especially if we are looking at class structures. Real change will only happen when there is one hundred percent buy-in, including those with the power, money, and status. The university has an obligation—a responsibility—to have students informed about all of these issues so they can form opinions. And then the students can take their opinions into the community at large...The other reason is that our professionals come from the university—lawyers, social planners, social workers—so there is an on-going relationship between an organization like ours and students. So creating a relationship early is very important (Res. H).

As illustrated by these excerpts from the interviews, the community partners have no hesitation stating that the university has a responsibility and obligation to work with the community as they are doing through the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Overwhelmingly, community partners expressed that it was inadequate for the university to concentrate on teaching specific skills or educating professionals. Instead, they argued that the university must prepare people to contribute to civil society, and see that the Learning Exchange Trek Program and CSL can facilitate that aspiration. In accepting this role, the university: creates well-rounded and committed individuals (Res. A); encourages students to have a deeper understanding and connection so they can care for one another rather than just knowing a craft (Res. B); moves away from strictly rational, skills-based learning (Res. C); fosters students “getting it”, resulting in greater compassion and understanding (Res. D); enriches the lives of community members and Trek students (Res. E); benefits

society because young people spend more time with an adult who cares about them (Res. F); strengthens civil society (Res. G); and influences social change (Res. H).

### **Sub-Theme #16: Community Partners Have a Role, Too**

Community partners also acknowledge their responsibility in this process. When I asked Respondent A if she would feel like she had wasted her time if a Trek student came through her organization's orientation and then changed their mind about participating, she responded:

I don't think of it that way. Even if I do the screening, references, criminal check, set them up with someone, and then they decide they don't have the time, it is okay—it's part of my job. Because they have read our information package. So they learn about mental illness which reduces the stigma and misinformation that is out there. Down the road they might come back and volunteer, or they might go elsewhere. But I like to think that they are more tolerant and understanding. If they have a good experience here—even if it is just one week—you are expanding the volunteer pool and building volunteer capacity in the community so I don't feel that I have wasted my time. Because we have learned from it, and people are further along. The clients learn, too. When that person leaves, the client is disappointed, but they learn over time that it is not about them why the volunteer left. It is a chance for me to help the client learn too. It is a learning process for everyone (Res. A).

Respondent H remarked:

I know your question was about the university's responsibility, but I would also add that we [community partners] have a responsibility to be down here doing that same work. Ultimately social change for the most marginalized people will happen when there is an overall alignment in values. We're all working toward the same goal, so we have the responsibility to make sure all of us lefties aren't pushing the gap in the class system further. And that is a danger when you talk university and grassroots partnerships – it becomes polarized too quickly. But that has not been our experience with the Learning Exchange Trek Program so far (Res. H).

Community partners concurred that both the university and community organizations have a responsibility to continue the work started in the Downtown Eastside.

### **Sub-Theme #17: Community Partners Extend an Invitation to Care**

As I struggled to synthesize the community partners' diverse experiences and perspectives, one concept seemed to explain their commitment: caring. By participating in

the Learning Exchange Trek Program, community partners invite people from outside the community—both Trek students and others associated with UBC—to care about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside. When they extend this invitation, community partners receive help getting the tasks done set out in their vision, plus an opportunity to entice potentially new donors and on-going volunteers to join their organization. These responses to their invitation are beneficial, and certainly make the community partners happy. Yet—as documented in the statements from each community partner—there is a sense that just getting people to see firsthand what is happening in the Downtown Eastside is a success. They just want people to pay attention; what they do with this knowledge is at their discretion.

### **Learning Exchange Trek Program: Thoughts on the Perceptions of University Responsibility**

It is unsurprising that the Learning Exchange Trek Program expressed similar sentiments about the role of the university: “UBC has a role in educating citizens...I think it is a huge injustice to send professionals out of our institution if they don’t have the capacity to think critically of some pretty pressing issues in the world” (UBC C). For UBC A, they are operationalizing UBC’s vision as expressed in *Trek 2000*, and the *Trek 2010: Green Paper*. “We’re not doing anything outside of Trek; we exist to embody the commitment that was made in *Trek 2000*. CSL will likely be more explicit in *Trek 2010*, based on the current *Trek 2010: Green Paper*” (UBC A). All three interviewees acknowledged the educational benefits of Trek students working with community partners, and CSL’s potential to strengthen the university’s learning objectives. While references to learning surfaced in our conversations, and references to its importance appear throughout this chapter, it was not necessarily the most significant reason the interviewees identified as to why the university has the responsibility and obligation to work in the Downtown Eastside. As illustrated in the next part of this section, the Learning Exchange Trek Program is also extending this invitation to care for community to the UBC community—students, faculty, staff, and administration: “A large measure of the Learning Exchange Trek Program is an exchange; the exchange of knowledge as UBC students go out to different segments of society. But it is also about learning about humanity: the ability to care for people and be cared for as well” (UBC B).

For me, we're trying if I think about what the Learning Exchange Trek Program is, and why UBC invented it, it's because we're trying to do something about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside. Which for me, having thought about it a fair amount for the last five years—if not having been obsessed by it—is fundamentally social exclusion. That is the fundamental problem in the Downtown Eastside—people who are mentally ill, drug addicted, poor, they look different, new immigrants, aging hippies that want nothing do with mainstream society, they are people who are outside mainstream society either voluntarily or involuntarily, mostly involuntarily, they've been excluded by mainstream society. If it wasn't a question of social exclusion, there wouldn't be a problem. If we weren't turning our backs on homeless people and mentally ill people they would be in our homes, they would be integrated into our community. The fact that we're not including them and pushing them into one neighbourhood, and saying I don't want to look at you or have anything to do with you, or you're not my problem, that's why we have a problem. The Learning Exchange Trek Program is about not turning our back on what is happening in that neighbourhood. The more we get students, faculty, alumni, and staff paying attention, the more those dynamics around social exclusion will break down (UBC A).

In any city there are a variety of communities with a variety of needs. They have different evocations, and sometimes they cannot meet those evocations. Sometimes they cannot deal with the necessities of life. If we're a caring community, we try to help those people. We think that it is very important that they help us. It's a mutual thing. We care for the community that needs care, and that community enriches us in terms of what our social obligations are as human beings. Our definition of ourselves as human beings. So I see a very rich relationship there, it is a learning relationship, an exchange...We feel at the end of that—that exchange of knowledge and information—will make students better educated and better citizens. And that's what we're here to do (UBC B).

While we are just beginning to talk about this as a team, I personally think of the Learning Exchange Trek Program as a social change process. It is changing the world by getting people to look at how society can function differently. And I think we have reached a point where it has to happen. It may sound grandiose and oversimplified to say this—but by having students have a transformative experience at the university who see the value of being involved with their communities, they will take that with them...That is why I am so committed to this—there is tremendous value in it (UBC C).

These statements from the Learning Exchange Trek Program interviewees, like those of the community partners, suggest that inviting the UBC community to care about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside inspires much of the work described in this study.

## **Interpretation and Reflections: Perceptions of University Responsibility**

I deliberately used the phrase "inviting to care"—instead of "teaching to care"—because neither the community partners, nor the Learning Exchange Trek Program, suggested that it was a specific curriculum or set of skills they wanted Trek students to acquire. Instead I heard the interviewees offer an open-ended invitation that would be shaped by Trek students' experiences in the Downtown Eastside rather than a specific agenda. The interviewees distinguished between two roles: they saw themselves as facilitators and the community members as teachers:

As an organization, we can give students background information on the changing face of HIV. For example, we can share information on HIV and how it has become a disease of poverty and other social issues. The university can provide political and social context in their lectures. But what is most powerful is the real-life experience students gain when they connect with someone living with HIV; the students learn about the challenges that community members face daily and hear their stories. I can't teach that, nor can the university, but the students can come here and gain firsthand knowledge by spending time with our community members (Res. D).

The interviewees want Trek students to spend time in the community, to get to know community members and develop relationships; they do not want the media or stereotypes being the primary source of information about the Downtown Eastside.

An invitation to care suggests checking something out, without too many expectations: there is something happening here, and you are welcome to find out more. There is no force, but choice. You can come as long as you want. You can do what you want with what you learn. You just have to come down and check it out. And how hard is it to care? It is a simple and humbling request that can elicit a range of responses. For some, they might challenge their family members the next time they make pejorative comments about people who access the welfare system; or perhaps they will make an annual financial donation to one of the community organizations where they spent some time. Maybe they will look in the eyes of the next person who asks them for change and see something in common. The impact might not be immediate: it may be in twenty years, or when someone finds out their granddaughter is living in the community. Again, it is an open-ended invitation.

It takes courage, confidence, and patience to extend the invitation, as it does to accept. All of the interviewees know there is something fundamentally wrong in the Downtown Eastside, and believe that if people can experience it themselves, they will also be unsettled. It will affect people to different degrees, and at different times, but there will be a change, however subtle. It also requires trust: trust that the community members have something worth teaching, and trust that the invitees will respond in some way. It means believing that people who come into the Downtown Eastside will no longer be able to ignore the community. The aim of the invitation is not to have everyone who participates in the Trek program vote for a particular political party in the next election, or have identical opinions on Vancouver's housing policy. The aim is to invite Trek students to spend time in the Downtown Eastside thinking and doing; creating an opportunity for personal and individualized responses to their experiences through reflection.

As open-ended as I am portraying the invitation, I do not want to overlook that the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program respondents can also be quite conflicted about this ambiguity. There is tension between wanting the Trek students to merely enter the Downtown Eastside and make their own decisions, and hoping the Trek students will respond in a particular way. As I suggested in Section D, for many of the interviewees, their involvement in the Downtown Eastside is emotional, personal, and political. And it is a very natural response for people who do care—often a lot—to believe that the Downtown Eastside would be a very different place if only more people thought and acted like them. It is difficult to disagree: I found the interviewees' passion and commitment for the community admirable and inspiring. Some organizations were also more politically inclined, which can affect this tension. According to Respondent H, "in our culture we're don't feel good unless we are changing something" (Res. H).

I also encountered this tension as I conceptualized and researched this thesis. I felt drawn to CSL initially because I saw it as more politicized form of volunteering supported by a credible institution. I have worked for too many nonprofit and charitable organizations where increasing the number of volunteers was celebrated, rather than celebrating reducing the needs of your community members so you require fewer volunteers. CSL presented an opportunity to challenge—and improve—our existing notion of volunteerism. I gravitated toward the literature that advocated universities needed to move from a "charitable"

perspective to a "social justice" position (Abowitz 1999; Bickford and Reynolds 2002; Cushman 1999 and 1996; Herzberg 1994; Marullo and Edwards 2000; Maybach 1996; Morton 1995; Robinson 2000; Schutz and Gere 1998; and Vernon and Ward 1999). But I have learned that it is too simple to use this charitable/social justice dichotomy to evaluate community-university partnerships in the Downtown Eastside. If it was, we would have likely solved all the problems in the Downtown Eastside by now. Just convincing more people to think the same might not result in change in the Downtown Eastside: there must be room for new responses and new ideas that come from people's own experiences if we want to address the challenges facing community members in the Downtown Eastside. This will attract a broad spectrum of Trek students, as well as faculty, with diverse interests and ideas about how to address social problems. The invitation to care must be extended to as many people as possible if it is to make a difference.

## **F. SUMMING UP THE STORY SO FAR**

In this chapter, I have explored the five themes that emerged in the interviews with community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program: the role of organizational climate; the contributions of students; the community partners' responses to the introduction of CSL; the evolution and maturing of partnerships; and perceptions of university responsibility. Although I presented the themes, and the emerging sub-themes, as separate sections, it is an artificial distinction that allowed me to recount the experiences and perspectives of the community partners. As an example, community partners are interested in maturing the partnership (Section D) because their relationship with the Learning Exchange Trek Program has allowed them to access a group of people who are making a significant contribution to their organization (Section B). Community partners are also committed to maturing the partnership (Section D) because they feel that both the university and community organizations have a responsibility to be working together (Section E).

In the final chapter, I will examine the implications of these themes for structuring future CSL partnerships at UBC and elsewhere. I will also further explore the significance of the invitation to care by returning to the literature introduced in the second chapter and considering the work of John McKnight on caring citizens. In conclusion, I will suggest that

CSL—especially when expressed as an invitation to care—presents a paradox. CSL is a valuable strategy for addressing the challenges facing the Downtown Eastside and tapping into the community's inherent capacities; however, it also relies on professionals and institutions to mediate caring relationships between citizens, potentially reducing or eliminating the capacity of citizens to initiate and sustain such relationships without intervention from either the state or the professions, creating what McKnight calls a "careless society" (McKnight 1995). I wish that I could resolve this contradiction; instead, I will propose that CSL might provide us with an opening to understand the paradox of care as Canada, and many other countries, struggle to determine the role of the voluntary sector, the state, and community in providing social services and support in our communities.

## Chapter 6: Why Care about Caring?

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We all know that community must be the centre of our life because it is only in community that we can be citizens. It is only in community that we find care. It is only in community that we can hear people singing. And if you listen carefully, you can hear the words: I care for you, because you are mine, and I am yours.

*John McKnight, 1989, 261*

In the previous chapter, I presented the five overarching themes that emerged in the interviews conducted for this study: the role of organizational climate; the contributions of students; responses to the introduction of CSL; the evolution and maturing of partnerships; and perceptions of university responsibility. Under each of the five main themes, I also identified the seventeen sub-themes that community partners expressed in our conversations. The responses of the Learning Exchange Trek Program and my interpretations and reflections on each overarching theme followed the community partners' sub-themes. In this chapter, I will first address two limitations of the study: the absence of attention to individual community members' experiences and perspectives, and the traditional power dynamics between the university and the community (Section A). Next, I will explore the significance and interconnections of the themes and sub-themes (Section B) before considering the implications of the community partners' stories for structuring future CSL partnerships, both at UBC and elsewhere (Section C).

As the community partners' invitation to students to care about the Downtown Eastside connects to some of the literature considered in the second chapter, I will examine its relevance in greater detail (Section D). Much of the CSL literature—and my initial interest in the area—unnecessarily focuses on whether CSL leads to charity or social justice. From what I learned in the interviews with both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program, the approach or philosophy adopted by the Trek students, whether charitable, social justice—or something not yet articulated in the literature—is less important to the community partners than the sincerity and genuineness of the Trek students' encounter in the Downtown Eastside. The opportunity to invite Trek students to care about the Downtown Eastside appears to be central for the community partners seeing CSL—and

consequently their relationship with the Learning Exchange Trek Program—as worthwhile and effective. I will further consider caring as presented by John McKnight in *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits*, and suggest that CSL results in a paradox of care, particularly as we consider the role of the state, voluntary sector, and community in our society (Section E) before concluding the thesis (Section F).

## **A. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Throughout this study, I have identified a number of challenges that surfaced, and suggested opportunities for addressing these difficulties in future work. I want to draw attention to the two most significant: the omission of the voices of community members in this account, and the traditional imbalance of power between the university and community organizations. The community partners contributed greatly to our understanding of CSL; however, this is a partial account of CSL until the experiences and perspectives of community members are included in the story. In his futuristic vision of education, Don Hill imagines that CSL fails and offers a number of explanations. Relevant to this discussion is his “prediction” that “partnerships were often dominated by school people who looked on agencies only as places to send students” (Hill 1998, 30). I am confident that I have made an initial effort to address this potential failure by focusing on the experiences and perspectives of the community partners: however, our knowledge will be enriched when similar conversations are held with community members. As well, although there are many studies that look at the experiences of students in CSL initiatives, it would be beneficial to hear specifically from Trek students about their encounters in the Downtown Eastside with the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

Secondly, it is generally accepted that there is an imbalance of power between the university and community organizations. I do not intend to support or refute this claim, but acknowledge that this inequality—real or perceived—can significantly shape community-university partnerships. For the most part, community partners defined their relationship with the university as with individuals, and felt that these specific individuals (both staff and students) were respectful and appreciative of their skills and contributions. Whether these individuals are representative of the university as a whole, and whether community partners

would feel as valued if they were working with different staff or students, requires speculation beyond the scope of this study. I only mention it because I did question whether the responses I heard were perhaps more favourable and positive because the community organizations are sometimes seen as dependent on the goodwill of the university. I believe that both my status as a student and my ability to draw on my past experience working in the voluntary sector minimized the likelihood of this inequality affecting my findings. I am optimistic, given what I learned over the course of this thesis that CSL, when successfully implemented, promises to further shift this imbalance. By adopting CSL, especially as prominently as UBC does in their strategic planning documents, I see the university acknowledging that it cannot provide education in isolation; it requires the skills, capacities, and experiences of the community organizations, in combination with the knowledge, resources, and experiences of the university, including the talents of both faculty and students.

As stated in the quote from McKnight in the opening chapter of this study, people in communities know through stories. People in universities know through studies. I have tried to bridge story and study because my audience is both community and university, and I am both a community member and a university student. While I have tried to tell a "good story" throughout this study, I hope that others will build on what I have started. When I outlined my methodology, I stated that I was not intending to make broad generalizations; rather, I hoped to understand the uniqueness of the particular case I chose (Stake 1995, 4). Even with this limitation at the outset, I still feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the Learning Exchange Trek Program and admit that there is much more for me to learn about the program, and CSL in general. While it is not too original to claim to have generated more questions than answers, I cannot help but acknowledge that I feel there is more that I left out than I included.

## **B. BRINGING THE THEMES TOGETHER TO TELL THE COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING STORY**

The seventeen sub-themes introduced in the previous chapter reflect the community partners' experiences and perspectives as they work with the Learning Exchange Trek

Program to implement CSL. The sub-themes are valuable: they both document the community partners' stories to date, and provide guidance for shaping future CSL initiatives. For example: by considering community partners' organizational climate, we learn about factors that have affected the introduction of CSL and will continue to influence its implementation. Awareness of the community partners' organizational climate allows the Learning Exchange Trek Program to more effectively think about opportunities to bridge the differences that may exist between community organizations and large educational institutions, such as UBC. According to the interviewees, coming up with ways to address the community partners' lack of resources is pivotal; whether this involves seeking funding together for specific projects, or having UBC staff members contribute services in-kind (e.g. fundraising support) to the community partners. In committing to having ten percent of its students have a CSL experience, UBC is saying that it needs community partners if it is to satisfy its learning objectives. This commitment privileges community organizations and can influence how the community partners negotiate partnership agreements with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. It is also important for the Learning Exchange Trek Program to be aware that community partners must balance satisfying the needs of their community members with creating a welcoming atmosphere for Trek students.

Community partners genuinely value the contributions Trek students make to their organizations. The Trek students attracted to participating in the program, in combination with the orientation and training given by the Learning Exchange Trek Program, are enthusiastic and dedicated to helping community partners fulfill their mandates. From what I learned from the community partners, it may be helpful for university and college programs that require students to complete practicums to consider how some aspects of CSL could be incorporated into each practicum. Community partners enjoy having Trek students in their organization because they approach the work differently than their student colleagues who are completing practicums. As an example, perhaps practicum students—like Trek students—need a general overview to the Downtown Eastside before they begin working with a community organization.

Overall, the community partners are excited about the opportunities presented by CSL. The community partners are attracting new people to their organization. This results in benefits to both their community members, as well as society. As mentioned in the comments on organizational climate above, community partners think about how CSL

serves community members as the organizations exist to fulfil their needs. In addition to considering how Trek students, faculty, and UBC are affected by their CSL experiences, it will also be helpful if the Learning Exchange Trek Program keeps the impacts of CSL on community members at the forefront when they are working with community partners. Community partners also hope their efforts at implementing CSL will contribute to broader societal change; as illustrated by the community partners' invitation to Trek students to care about the Downtown Eastside (Section E). Community partners also see that the real-life, practical experience of working with a community organization benefits Trek students, in ways that are missing in traditional forms of education. However, it is also important to recall that community partners have some questions about CSL, including wondering whether CSL is truly a unique pedagogy or just a passing trend, and whether community partners will have enough of a role in shaping its implementation. These concerns are unsurprising, given that the implementation of CSL is in its infancy; they also suggest the need for community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to continue—and in some cases initiate—a conversation about CSL to ensure its successful implementation.

In the second chapter, I outlined two models for conceptualizing partnerships. Baum suggested that community-university partnerships could be rooted in altruism, exchange, or mutualism (Baum 2000). Adin and Chadwick identified four stages in community-university partnerships: ivory tower; charity; community service; and co-learning (Adin and Chadwick 2000, 2-4). Based on what I heard the community partners describe, I suggested a five-part continuum: caution; testing the relationship; situating it within their broader agenda; partnerships between individuals; and organizational mutualism. All three of these models share similar features; however, I heard the community partners describe a more fluid understanding of partnerships than perhaps Baum or Adin and Chadwick articulated. According to the interviewees, the interactions between the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program do not necessarily move through all aspects of the continuum, and movement in any direction is possible. As the Learning Exchange Trek Program begins to initiate partnership agreements with the community partners, it will be helpful to consider how this might impact such arrangements. As the community partners' stories suggest, somehow the Learning Exchange Trek Program's efforts to standardize and formalize its relationships with the community partners will need to be balanced with the uniqueness of their work with each community partner.

When thinking about the partnership agreements, it is useful to recall that community partners also expressed the view that the university has a responsibility to bring students into the Downtown Eastside. Again, this highlights the necessity of accommodating a broad spectrum of community-university relationships. The community partners did not indicate that they wanted all of their relationships with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to look the same; rather, they emphasized that the university had a role working in the Downtown Eastside, regardless of whether that looked the same across organizations. Although I have endeavoured to tell the community partners' story in this thesis, it would be a mistake to overlook that there are multiple stories within this general overview. Based on what I learned in the interviews, I would suggest that balancing the overarching story of community organizations with the individual stories of community partners will be central to the Learning Exchange Trek Program's efforts to create partnership agreements in the coming year. Community partners also recognize that they have a role to play, and it will be exciting to see how this can be further explored by both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program as together they extend the invitation to students to care.

### **C. STRUCTURING FUTURE COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS: IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE AND ELSEWHERE**

Overall, community partners expressed satisfaction, and often enthusiasm, about their involvement with the Learning Exchange Trek Program. By looking at the program now—in the early stages of implementing CSL—I hope that the themes that arose in conversations with community partners can influence the future evolution of CSL both in the Downtown Eastside and elsewhere. Suggestions by the community partners such as attending their staff meetings and talking about CSL, or coming up with creative responses to resource shortages are great ideas. I will not repeat all of the suggestions sprinkled throughout the study; instead, I will draw attention to a few that seem to be useful to both the Learning Exchange Trek Program and its community partners, and other community-university partnerships that may be adopting CSL as a strategy of community engagement.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> For the purpose of considering CSL in a broader context, I will refer to community organizations and the university in this section. The "university" in other settings may refer specifically to the efforts

First, community organizations expressed that they want to be apprised about what is happening with the university, and be given the opportunity to participate in multiple ways. This could involve the university circulating a newsletter geared to community partners; inviting community partners to participate in the university's strategic planning process, either by hosting forums or asking for written submissions; or any number of possibilities that consider the community partners' capacity and interest. Many community organizations want to work toward organizational mutualism, as stated in the previous chapter of this thesis. I heard the interviewees suggest that community organizations and the university must work together to define what is mutually beneficial for CSL to succeed; importantly, this will not look the same for every community organization, nor do community organizations feel it is necessary to standardize their relationships with the university. A variety of experiences for students, community partners, and likely faculty, is more desirable. Additionally, community organizations require that CSL connects with their existing work so it is not an add-on to an already hectic workload. This is challenging: each relationship is unique and requires unique responses, yet we learned from community partners that their organizational climates inhibit such particular responses because of the time required. In situations where community organizations are more involved with the university already, it will be helpful for universities to determine how to maintain the community's participation; where there is less involvement, universities need to find out why and respond creatively.

Unfortunately, I did not ask the community organizations in this study if they were interested in having more curricular opportunities, resulting in increased faculty involvement. This is not because the community organizations I interviewed do not see the participating students as "learners"; rather, we tended to reflect more on their current experiences, which primarily includes co-curricular CSL. As an example, our conversations about "learning" were connected to caring and experiencing the Downtown Eastside. Significantly, community organizations also acknowledged that they were "learners" in the process, and valued this aspect of their work with the university. While there is likely an overlap between the community's and faculty's expectations, I anticipate that the faculty may also be concerned with more specific learning objectives integral to their course content. From what I heard in the interviews, the impact of increased faculty involvement, whose expectations may differ, should be explored further in conversations between community organizations

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of a university outreach initiative such as UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program, or it may refer to efforts led by faculty or students.

and universities. This is an exciting and promising component of CSL; my lack of attention to this aspect is a reflection both of a shortage of time, and my efforts to keep the interviews rooted in the community organizations' experiences, not abstract or hypothetical situations, rather than a lack of curiosity about the role of greater faculty involvement in CSL as community-university partnerships expand.

Given that reflection both differentiates CSL from a volunteer program and offers a "thicker" expression of CSL, I would advise that both community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program enhance this component. For example, although Trek students in Reading Week have many opportunities for reflection in a variety of workshops, there are fewer opportunities for Trek students throughout the year. The Learning Exchange Trek Program has conducted voluntary reflection sessions for interested Trek students with mixed results; those who have attended, appreciated the opportunity, but not everyone is willing to participate. Perhaps it would be more valuable for the university to work with community organizations to include reflection for students in their regular shifts on-site. From what I heard from several respondents, this would often correspond with the activities and discussion some community organizations already undertake in staff meetings and professional development. Community organizations certainly have the skills and experience to conduct reflection. The challenge would be to find a way to integrate it within their existing mechanisms, working to balance any increased demands with an increase in benefits for the community organizations, as suggested by several of the interviewees.

## **D. COMMUNITY PARTNERS INVITE STUDENTS TO CARE**

On the basis of the CSL literature that I reviewed, the community partners' emphasis on caring that emerged in the interviews was unexpected. This confirms that our understanding of CSL is partial until we rectify the absence of community experiences and perspectives in CSL studies and evaluations. The idea that CSL initiatives, as introduced in the second chapter of this thesis, can be placed on a continuum with charity and social justice at opposite ends resonates with many scholars. Yet the community partners, and also the Learning Exchange Trek Program, saw their work in the Downtown Eastside differently. This finding also challenged my assumptions. After sharing my first reactions to

the charity vs. social justice debate and reviewing the literature introduced in the second chapter, I will suggest that the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program's invitation to care requires a different framework for thinking about CSL. Rather than favouring a particular framework or approach, the interviewees stressed the quality of the Trek students' encounter in the Downtown Eastside. Hearing several students speak about their conceptualization of service also convinced me that the invitation to care—and its focus on the quality of the experience—is likely more constructive than insisting all Trek students progress from charity to activism in CSL programs. The invitation to care expressed by the interviewees in this study resonates more with Morton's conceptualization of service that stresses the depth and integrity of CSL in three distinct paradigms: charity; project development; and social change (Morton 1995).

As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, I was initially drawn to CSL because I felt it might be an effective tool for fostering social change. Because of my past experience in the voluntary sector, I initially worried that CSL was simply another volunteer program perpetuating a charitable model of help in disguise. I now realize that I was too quick to categorize volunteer efforts as either charity or social justice. For me, charitable acts were personal, short-term, fragmented, disempowering, less valuable, and sometimes even dangerous. Charity conjured up an image of the helper feeling good about their contribution at the expense of the person receiving the help. An example would include volunteering in a shelter to increase the number of beds available for people experiencing homelessness by launching a fund-raising campaign. Volunteerism rooted in social justice required understanding structural causes of problems and moving toward social change. Rather than working to increase services, volunteers operating in this model would seek policy changes that increased financial supports to low income people and lobby for an increase in affordable and safe housing programs. I saw this as a more mature and desirable form of volunteering, and continued to hold these same convictions when I began looking at CSL. While some of my past employment was with organizations that had a more charitable philosophy, I often tried to bring a different perspective to my work which was strengthened by my volunteer commitments with more advocacy-focused organizations. Through the process of writing this thesis and learning about the interviewees' experiences and perspectives, however, my outlook has changed. Based on the respondents' experiences, they suggest that it is more important for them to create opportunities for Trek students to participate in the Downtown Eastside that are enriching and appropriate for their own unique

circumstances, rather than forcing them to choose a particular framework or approach. Reflection—an integral component of CSL—can intensify the quality of the Trek students' experiences.

Similar to my preconceived notions of community service, the CSL literature describes charity as a more limited form of involvement because it focuses on immediate problems rather than on more long-term change generally associated with social justice or advocacy approaches. According to Andrea Vernon and Kelly Ward, "if service-learning fails to move toward a social change model, then the 'movement' is at risk of doing exactly what it has intended to avoid: that is, use communities as laboratories where students are sent to serve without reciprocity and personal investment" (Vernon and Ward 1999, 35). Sam Marullo and Bob Edwards agree: "Our goal is not to denigrate charity work but rather to have us move, individually and collectively, from charity to justice" (Marullo and Edwards 2000, 900). Tony Robinson maintains that CSL focuses "mainly on bricks and mortar projects, on working as a hospital aide, on assisting at a homeless shelter or soup kitchen—though they deliver many benefits to individuals in need, [they] silence the citizen and constitute more of a glorified welfare system than a socially transformational movement" (Robinson 2000, 145). While Robinson does not argue that all CSL programs should focus on social change, he believes that more programs should stress this aspect (Robinson 2000, 154). In the second chapter of this study, examples from Bickford and Reynolds (2002), Hertzberg (1994), Abowitz (1999), and Maybach (1996) make similar distinctions between charity and social justice. A different perspective concludes that CSL advocates spend too much time debating this question: "As long as service-learning is described and recommended primarily—let alone exclusively—in terms of moral and/or civic lessons and benefits, the vast majority of academicians will do what many do now: agree that moral and civic growth is indeed important, recognize its place in the undergraduate (and graduate) experience—and deny that such concerns have anything to do with their own professional responsibilities" (Zlotkowski 1995, 126).

Based on my discussions with the interviewees, I would suggest that the charity vs. social justice debate is ill-conceived as it does not capture the aspirations of the community partners, nor the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program are more focused on having Trek students "get it" (Org. D), or pay attention to the Downtown Eastside, than forcing them to choose a particular

philosophical outlook or approach. To better understand the experiences and perspectives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners, we need to move beyond conceptualizations of community service that polarizes CSL into either charity or advocacy and instead seek models that reflect the more open-ended invitation to care articulated in the interviews. In contrast to the proponents of a continuum from charity to justice, Keith Morton argues convincingly for "three related yet distinct paradigms of service". He identifies these paradigms as charity, project development, and social change, and suggests they are based on distinctive worldviews, ways of addressing problems, and long-term visions of individual and community transformation. The paradigms can be defined as follows: charity is the direct provision of services where the provider makes most of the decisions, has a limited scope, and has minimal long-term impact on the people involved; projects define problems and implement well-conceived solutions for those particular problems; and social change builds relationships between stakeholders and emphasizes root causes (Morton 1995, 21-22). Each paradigm has a range of "thin" to "thick" expressions, based on depth and integrity. The consequence for educators is that "rather than moving students along a continuum, we are doing two things simultaneously: challenging and supporting students to enter more deeply into the paradigm in which they work; and intentionally exposing students to creative dissonance among the three forms" (Morton 1995, 21). The "thin" versions are "disempowering and hollow", and can be paternalistic, self-serving, magnify or institutionalize inequalities of power, lead to additional problems that are worse than the original, or create unsustainable dependences. "Thick" versions are "sustaining and potentially revolutionary", and are "grounded in deeply held, internally coherent values, match means and ends, describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world, offer a way of defining problems and solutions, and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like" (Morton 1995, 24 and 28). From what I heard in the interviews, the invitation to care encourages Trek students to engage in any of the paradigms thickly: "at their thickest, the paradigms seem to intersect, or at least complement one another" (Morton 1995, 28). Morton denies that any of the three paradigms are superior:

My sense is that while we can do work across these paradigms, we are most at home in one or another, and interpret what we do according to the standards of the one in which we are most at home...And, done well, I would argue that all three paradigms lead ultimately toward the transformation of an individual within a community, and toward the transformation of the communities themselves" (Morton 1995, 29).

Instead Morton, like the interviewees, focused on the intensity or quality of the CSL experience rather than whether students were engaged in charitable activities or advocacy.

Fortunately, the invitation to care extended by the community partners' and the Learning Exchange Trek Program likely suits the participating Trek students. When I attended one of the Trek student orientations in March 2004, all of the participants were asked to answer "what is community service?" by ranking a list of ten possibilities according to how close they were to their definition of community service. The list was diverse: joining the military; donating \$50 to a charitable organization; giving blood; volunteering in a soup kitchen; voting; starting an after school program for children; tying yourself to a tree to protest logging; tutoring an illiterate person; sitting on the board of a neighbourhood committee; and taking the bus to work instead of driving a car. I was surprised by both the diversity of the Trek students' responses and their certainty that favoured one form of community service over another. Although I realize this was just a small sample of Trek students, and it may not be indicative of the experience of others, it suggested that what constitutes meaningful and valuable community service is unique to each person, and reflects their background, previous volunteer commitments, life experiences, and their political and social views. The invitation to care allows community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to accommodate the Trek students' diverse conceptualizations of service.

With the exception of a few of the interviewees, there was little direct mention of the charity vs. social justice debate surfacing in their work, within their organization, or in their relationship with the Trek students. Instead, community partners emphasized encouraging Trek students to care as having a potential to make a difference in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. For community partners, and from what I recall about my experiences in the voluntary sector, there is seldom enough time to dedicate to worrying about such abstract concepts as charity and advocacy: rather, there is work to do and it must get done. It is strategic for both the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to welcome all students to participate in the program: the greater the number of students accommodated, the more work that can be completed. Such an invitation, however, is more than a means of attracting greater involvement. I believe the interviewees also genuinely hold that gradual social change will happen if more people are exposed to the problems and

capacities of community members living in the Downtown Eastside. The community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program recognize that inviting Trek students to care—regardless of their particular framework or approach—is the first crucial step in this transformation.

For these reasons, Morton's conceptualization of the three paradigms of CSL—rather than a continuum—more accurately depicts the opportunities community partners offer Trek students. Some community partners offer opportunities that fit the charitable model; others are more project, or social change-based. An invitation to care allows Trek students to gravitate toward the paradigm that best incorporates their worldview because it avoids prescription. From what I heard in the interviews, what can distinguish effective CSL is the attention to ensuring that Trek students have “thick” experiences, regardless of whether they choose a charitable, project, or social change approach. Through such CSL strategies as reflection, an invitation to care can facilitate “thick” experiences. In addition to accommodating a diverse group of students, this also allows a variety of community partners to participate in the Learning Exchange Trek Program, regardless of their predominant orientation, because Trek students seek a range of experiences. As one community partner respondent remarked: “Trek students who come to our organization likely know we see everything as political, and are not happy unless we are changing something. They come here because that matches their own outlook” (Org. H). The alternate also holds true: students can go to other community organizations if this particular outlook conflicts with their worldview.

When thinking about the charity vs. social justice debate, I was reminded of a passage in *We Make the Road By Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*; “a speaking book” that records conversations between Myles Horton and Paulo Freire<sup>77</sup> in 1987. When asked about his vision for society, Horton focused more on the process than content in his response:

As for the process of getting there, everybody has to work those things out on their own. I believe that there are many truths, many untruths, and there are many right ways to do things and many wrong ways to do things. Quite often

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<sup>77</sup> Paulo Freire, like Myles Horton, used participatory education to empower the poor and powerless. Freire (1921-1997) was born in Recife, Brazil. One of his most popular books—*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—continues to be well-used today. Freire asked Horton to consider “speaking a book” as both men’s philosophy on education was similar (Horton and Freire 1990).

I've said any kind of problem has five or six good solutions and five or six bad solutions. What I try to get people to do is choose one of the good ways instead of the bad ways, but not influence which one, because that depends on how people function, what people's backgrounds are. The people who grew up after I did, who have a different background, came to their conclusions through different processes, but their processes are as valued as mine. I don't question that (Horton and Freire 1990, 197).

According to the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program, effective CSL allows for those five or six good solutions to surface, and respects the approach that each person operates within. Hearing the community partners' experiences and perspectives forced me, like Morton, "to wonder what I would find out if I elected to take charity and project types of service as seriously as I did social change types of service" (Morton 1995, 24). When I resisted seeing charitable efforts as a lesser form of involvement, and began thinking more about how we can encourage people to care and pay attention to what is happening in their community, I began to feel a lot more hopeful. I also felt somewhat embarrassed by my initial arrogance and self-righteousness that made me feel equipped to determine what was "good" and "bad" service. Other conceptualizations of community service, like the continuum, can result in alienation and division; neither particularly effective strategies for encouraging community engagement. The situation in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is incredibly complex and requires a variety of responses from as many caring individuals as possible. Placing CSL initiatives on a continuum is less helpful than thinking about ways to deepen CSL experiences, regardless of the approach or paradigm chosen. The invitation to care reflects the community partners' experiences and perspectives; the absence of this outlook in the CSL literature highlights the importance of hearing the community partners' stories if we desire a more comprehensive understanding of CSL.

## **E. THE PARADOX OF CARE**

According to Webster's, care means "to feel interest or concern". John McKnight, in *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits* expands on care: "Care is the consenting commitment of citizens to one another. Care cannot be produced, provided, managed, organized, administered, or commodified. Care is the only thing a system cannot produce. Every institutional effort to replace the real thing is a counterfeit (McKnight 1995,

x). This is another reason I stressed "invitation" rather than "teach" through this thesis: according to the respondents, they believe that Trek students have the inherent capacity to care, they just need to have the opportunity. McKnight believes caring citizens are integral to our society: "Those relationships formed by consent and manifested as care are the centre of community. It is this consenting care that is the essence of our role as citizens. And it is the ability of citizens to care that creates strong communities and able democracies" (McKnight 1995, ix). McKnight's emphasis on community and democracy parallels the CSL advocates, although few talk about care or caring in the same way.<sup>78</sup>

McKnight argues that since the Second World War, we have commodified the care of community and called it human services. The result: citizens "have grown doubtful of their common capacity to care, and so it is that we have become a careless society, populated by impotent citizens and ineffectual communities dependent on the counterfeit of care" (McKnight 1995, x). As an example, he describes how individuals used to support one another when they experienced the death of someone dear to them; today, people who have suffered a loss turn to a bereavement counsellor (McKnight 1995, 3-15). He is alarmed that nearly two-thirds of Americans "derive their income for delivering services that are mainly caring", and includes medicine, law, social work, and urban planning in this category (McKnight 1995, 26). This leads to an emphasis on needs and deficiencies as the service system seeks to justify its existence and expansion. He warns: "As the power of profession and service system ascends, the legitimacy, authority, and capacity of citizens and communities descend. The *citizen* retreats. The *client* advances" (author's emphasis) (McKnight 1995, 106).<sup>79</sup> McKnight advocates policies that reduce dependency on

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<sup>78</sup> Some CSL scholarship, however, embraces feminist ethics of care (Keller, Nelson, and Wick 2003; and Foos 1998). Beginning in the 1980s, feminists began looking at care ethics as an alternative to what they saw as a focus on justice, rationality, rights, and individualism in moral outlooks. Some of the prominent scholars include Carol Gilligan (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Nel Noddings (1984) *Caring: A Feminist Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, and Joan Tronto (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. These scholars asserted that caring relationships are primary for women, whereas men are more concerned with rights. Although care ethics successfully articulated that women have different, not lesser, ways of thinking about morality, some argue that they also too readily accepted the power imbalances between men and women by emphasizing women's traditional caretaking roles. Some feminists reject substituting care for justice, and conclude that both models may be useful for understanding morality (Held 1995). Although this is an interesting discussion, I have focused on McKnight's interpretation of care, as it was more relevant to what I heard the community partners talk about in the interviews.

<sup>79</sup> Ivan Illich, who McKnight recognizes as one of his teachers, offers a similar argument: "The professionals appropriate the special knowledge to define public issues in terms of problems. The acceptance of this claim legitimizes the docile recognition of imputed lacks on the part of the layman:

institutions, large structures such as corporations, universities, and government mental health systems, and turn to the community, the social place used by family, friends, neighbourhoods, neighbourhood associations, clubs, civic groups, local enterprises, religious organizations, ethnic associations, local unions, local government, and local media. McKnight also refers to community as the informal sector, the unmanaged environment, and the associational sector (McKnight 1995, 163-164).

According to McKnight's argument, we should resist any efforts to professionalize caring because it can disempower citizens. Following this line of thinking, it could be concluded that the university, by encouraging student involvement in the voluntary sector through CSL initiatives, is legitimizing the professionalization of care. This is what I have identified as the paradox of care. While the community partners—and the Learning Exchange Trek Program—want Trek students to care about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside, McKnight's argument raises the question as to whether CSL is the best strategy for encouraging truly caring citizenship. CSL requires that students work in community organizations staffed by professionals. Certainly the level of citizen participation and professional leadership varies with each community organization, and some community organizations are more controlled by citizens. However, I understand McKnight to be advocating for a more grassroots response to social issues than that provided by most community partners interviewed in this study. As someone who has worked and volunteered in the voluntary sector for many years, and as an aspiring planner who intends to continue working in this sector, I do not mean to diminish the valuable contributions of community organizations, particularly the ones that agreed to participate in this study, by identifying this paradox. Nor, unfortunately, do I presume to have the answer to this dilemma. I raise the paradox of care because it seems critical to thinking about the future of CSL, especially as UBC and other Canadian universities embark on large-scale implementation plans of CSL programs.

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his world turns into an echo-chamber of needs. This dominance is reflected in the skyline of the city. Professional buildings look down on the crowds that shuttle between them in a continual pilgrimage to the new cathedrals of insurance, health, education, and welfare. Homes are transformed into hygienic apartments where one cannot be born, cannot be sick, and cannot die decently. Not only are helpful neighbours a vanishing species, but so are liberal doctors who make housecalls. Work places fit for apprenticeship turn into opaque mazes of corridors that permit access only to functionaries equipped with 'identities'" (Illich 1977, 27).

Like McKnight, I worry when we rely on professionals or the state to address social issues rather than looking to the community. While I believe that professionals and government intervention is necessary in many situations, I also feel that citizens have responsibilities that are too often ignored when we determine how to address social problems such as homelessness, or caring for seniors. As both a citizen and planner, I advocate community engagement because I believe in the strength and capacity of citizens to respond to the needs of marginalized or vulnerable members of our society. For example, I work part-time with an organization that works with individuals with disabilities (known as focus persons) and their families. My small role is to facilitate a network of individuals who care for, and are cared by, the focus person. The network is comprised of family members and friends; not professional or paid service providers. As the facilitator, I coordinate meetings and get-togethers for the network; however, it is the network that truly supports and cares for the focus person. While admittedly this is a hybrid arrangement of citizens supported by a nonprofit organization, my professional contribution is quite insignificant compared to that of the network members.<sup>80</sup> The focus person's connections with his network are very different than the ones he has with professionals in various government or government funded programs. What he receives, and what I have seen him give to his network members is as valuable—perhaps even more valuable—than the programs and support he receives through professionalized channels.

It is not only a question of whether care should be offered through citizens or professionals. For some time, the roles and responsibilities pertaining to the provision of social supports and public goods has been shifting in Canada, affecting institutions, communities, families, and individuals. How we provide collective benefits is changing: what was once the responsibility of the state is increasingly the responsibility of the voluntary sector (Brock 2002: 29-52).<sup>81</sup> This adds further complexity to the paradox of care. While many value the contributions made by the voluntary sector and see the involvement of volunteers as evidence of a vibrant, caring civil society, these developments also generate concern. Advocates of less government intervention argue that the voluntary sector's success justifies the state's retreat, and further entrenches neoliberal policies. For example: by relying on the voluntary sector, the Canadian government lends credence to proponents

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<sup>80</sup> For more information about Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN), please see: <http://www.plan.ca>.

<sup>81</sup> For more background on the downloading of state responsibility to the voluntary sector, please see: Brooks (2002); De Vita (1999); Mishra (1999); Rice and Prince (2000); and Weiss (2001).

of economic globalization who insist that the nation state must cut expenditures and lower taxes to remain competitive globally, even if this requires sacrificing social programs. This transformation is occurring without examining the role of the voluntary sector more closely to determine why our need for volunteers is limitless, and whether we are prepared to accept the voluntary sector as a legitimate and permanent service provider in Canadian society. As I mentioned in the second chapter, and community partners acknowledged in their interviews, the number of volunteers in society is decreasing. While depending on a small segment of society that is volunteering less is worrisome, it is alarming that there continues to be the same amount of work, if not more, for the voluntary sector. No one is asking why so many people and so much money is needed. Instead of addressing the reasons that lead to such an overwhelming demand, the government and voluntary sector are strategizing how to improve volunteerism through such programs as the VSI.

CSL initiatives, such as the Learning Exchange Trek Program, may potentially diversify the volunteers and donors that currently contribute to the voluntary sector, and will perhaps lead to long-term trends that make human and financial resources in the sector more secure. While this could lead to calls to expand the role of the voluntary sector, justifying further retrenchment of the state, participants in CSL initiatives might also start questioning why so many people and so much money is required by community organizations. If a Trek student sees there are more opportunities with community partners than students willing to participate, or that community partners have to turn people away from their services, they might start asking community partners and community members questions. Assisting with providing a bed in a shelter might be dissatisfying, and lead the Trek student to thinking about the structural forces that result in people living in sub-standard housing in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. When CSL emphasizes the importance of connecting the service to specific learning objectives through reflection and critical thinking, including a structural analysis of the context or circumstances that necessitate the service, it has the potential to shape the Trek student's understanding of social issues. This understanding may broadly contribute to the debate of how we can best meet the needs of our most marginalized and vulnerable citizens: through greater state involvement; a stronger response from the voluntary sector; a more grassroots, citizen-led movement; or perhaps some variation of all three. CSL may present an opportunity to address the paradox of care by facilitating more discussion as the participating students

reflect on their experiences with community organizations. In the process, new and creative directions for resolving social problems may unfold.

## **F. THE STORY UNFINISHED**

As Respondent G reminded us, a society can be judged by how it cares for its members. I agree with her, and believe that as the community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program implement CSL they are potentially transforming our society. In this concluding chapter, I have focused on the invitation to care as extended by community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program to Trek students because I am hopeful that we will all accept the invitation to care a little more frequently, with a little more patience, openness, vulnerability, and compassion. But I recognize the complexities in wanting people to care, especially when the caring is mediated through professionals or the state. It is impossible to resolve this paradox without further discussion; I hope that with continued community engagement in the Downtown Eastside by the Learning Exchange Trek Program, the answer, or answers, will become more obvious.

In his talking book with Freire, Horton recited a translation of a poem by Lao Tzu written in 604 BCA that seems a fitting conclusion to this thesis, both in terms of understanding the community partners' story of CSL, and resolving the paradox of care:

Go to the people. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. But [with] the best of leaders, when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will all say we have done it ourselves" (Horton and Freire 1990, 248).

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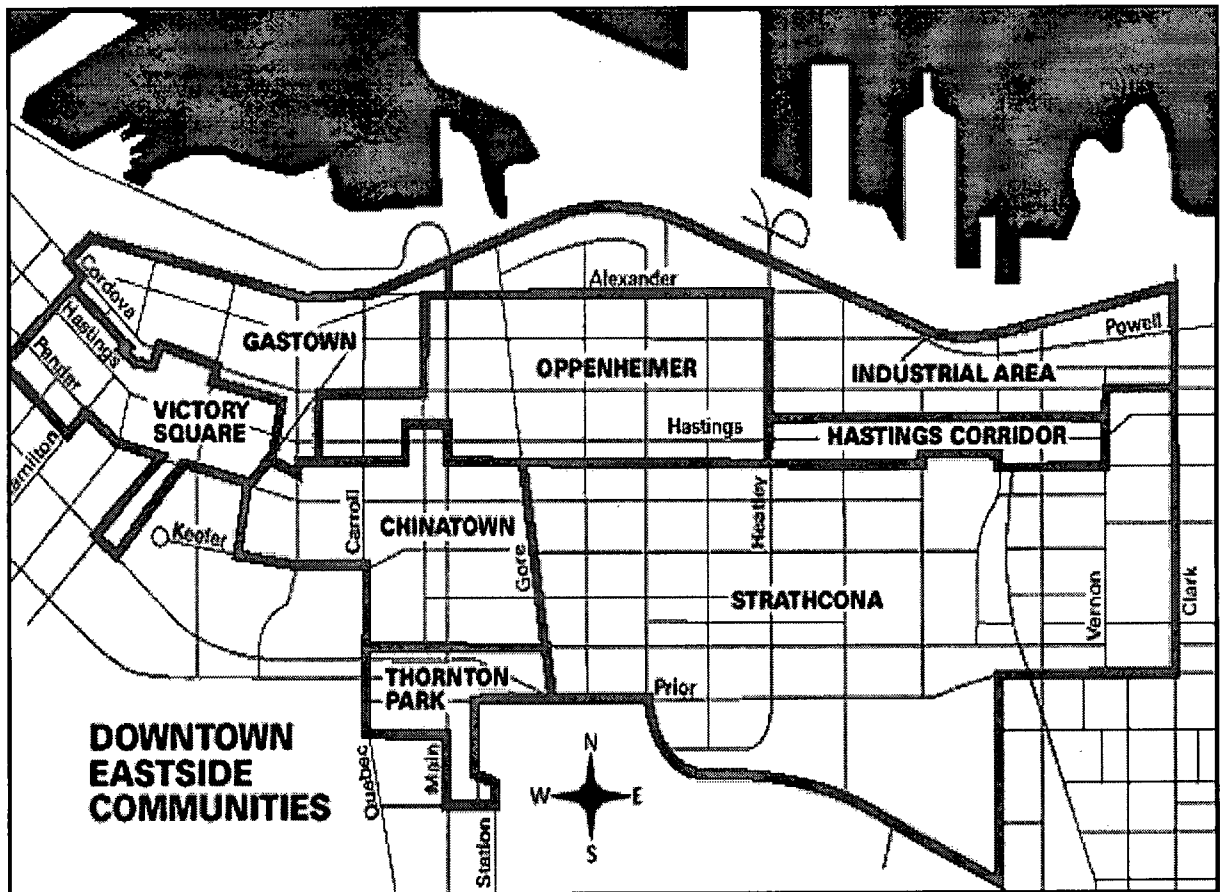
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# Appendix A

**Map of Downtown Eastside**



From: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes/neighbourhoods.htm>

## Appendix B

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### Map of Vancouver and Greater Regional District



From: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/newtovancouver/part1/facts.htm>

# Appendix C

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## **Interview Guide: Learning Exchange Trek Program Staff**

### **1. Overview:**

- Describe the Learning Exchange Trek Program (mission, objectives, history, role, hopes, etc.).
- Does this connect to UBC's mission/objectives?

### **2. Context / Nature of Involvement:**

- Describe your position / the nature of your involvement with the Learning Exchange Trek Program (background, length, type of activities, etc.).
- When did you become involved?
- How are you involved?
- What does the involvement look like?

### **3. Working with community organizations:**

- Describe how you work with community organizations.
- How would you describe the role of community organizations?
- Why do you have students going to community organizations? What do they contribute? Has it changed over time?
- How would you describe the role of the Learning Exchange Trek Program?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Learning Exchange Trek Program and community organizations (e.g. decision-making, communication, public profile, etc.)?
- What makes it easy/hard to form CSL partnerships with community organizations?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working with community organizations?
- When do you know the relationship/partnership is working?
- What would happen if there was a significant challenge that you needed to address?

### **4. Partnerships:**

- What is your thinking on community-university partnerships? How would you describe a partnership?
- Is this a new experience?
- What is necessary to develop a successful partnership? What hinders a partnership?
- Is a community-university partnership similar/different to other partnerships the Learning Exchange Trek Program may have?
- Why is the Learning Exchange Trek Program interested in pursuing this relationship?

- Why do you think community organizations are interested in pursuing this relationship?
5. **CSL:** The Learning Exchange Trek Program sees CSL as one form of community-university partnership.
- How would you define CSL?
  - What does the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL?
  - What were your first reactions to CSL? What made you want to participate? What do you think it can accomplish? Does it make you excited, cautious, nervous, etc.?
  - Would you recommend it to other universities?
  - How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program use CSL to strengthen its connection to community organizations?
  - Do you have a sense of what community organizations regard as effective CSL?
6. **Philosophies affecting CSL initiatives:** In the academic literature about CSL, there are discussions about what values, beliefs, concepts, principles, and attitudes guide CSL. I would like to talk about these issues, and find out whether this has any meaning or relevance to the Learning Exchange Trek Program. As an example, there are articles about whether universities should be engaging from a charitable or a social justice orientation.
- How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard or conceptualize community service?
  - How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program approach its work?
  - Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program have a particular framework or philosophy for its programs?
  - Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program use either of the ones I have mentioned? Both? Something different? Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program make a distinction?
7. **Reflections:**
- What do you need to know about community organizations to enhance your relationship?
  - What do community organizations need to know about the Learning Exchange Trek Program?
8. **Conclusion:**
- Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?
  - Can I contact you again if I require clarification, or additional information?

# Appendix D

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## Interview Guide: Learning Exchange/UBC Administration

### 1. Context / Nature of Involvement:

- Describe your position / the nature of your involvement with the Learning Exchange Trek Program (background, length, type of activities, etc.).

### 2. Overview:

- Describe how the Learning Exchange Trek Program connects to TREK 2000 and 2010.

### 3. Working with community organizations:

- Describe how the university works with community organizations.
- Why does the university have students going to community organizations through the Learning Exchange Trek Program? What do they contribute? What do they gain? Has it changed over time?
- What are the similarities and differences between the Learning Exchange Trek Program and community organizations (e.g. decision-making, communication, public profile, etc.)?
- What makes it easy/hard to form CSL partnerships with community organizations?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working with community organizations?

### 4. Partnerships:

- What is your thinking on community-university partnerships? How would you describe a partnership?
- What is necessary to develop a successful partnership? What hinders a partnership?
- Is a community-university partnership similar/different to other partnerships the Learning Exchange Trek Program may have?
- Why is the Learning Exchange Trek Program interested in pursuing this relationship?
- Why do you think community organizations are interested in pursuing this relationship?
- When do you know the relationship/partnership is working?
- From my experience and what I understand, the university struggles to ensure that it has adequate resources (both from government, donors, and other sources) to achieve all of its goals for students, faculty, staff, etc. How are resources for community partnerships allocated? How much of the budget is directed toward the community goals and strategies outlined in *Trek 2010: Green Paper*?
- What would happen if there was a significant challenge that you needed to address? What level of risk is the university prepared to undertake?

- From what I understand, initially there was concern in the DTES that the university's interest was motivated by efforts to strengthen public relations. What was the university's response to this concern? How would you respond to this concern if it was to surface again?

5. **CSL:** The Learning Exchange Trek Program sees CSL as one form of community-university partnership.

- How would you define CSL?
- What were your first reactions to CSL? What made you want to participate? What do you think it can accomplish? Does it make you excited, cautious, nervous, etc.?

6. **Philosophies affecting CSL initiatives:** In the academic literature about CSL, there are discussions about what values, beliefs, concepts, principles, and attitudes guide CSL. I would like to talk about these issues, and find out whether this has any meaning or relevance to the Learning Exchange Trek Program. As an example, there are articles about whether universities should be engaging from a charitable or a social justice orientation.

- How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard or conceptualize community service?
- How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program approach its work?
- Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program have a particular framework or philosophy for its programs?
- Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program use either of the ones I have mentioned? Both? Something different? Does the Learning Exchange Trek Program make a distinction?

7. **Reflections:**

- What do you need to know about community organizations to enhance your relationship?
- What do community organizations need to know about the Learning Exchange Trek Program?

8. **Conclusion:**

- Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?
- Can I contact you again if I require clarification, or additional information?

# Appendix E

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## **Interview Guide: Community Organization Personnel**

### **1. Overview:**

- Describe your organization (mission, objectives, history, role, hopes, etc.). What does your organization do?
- Describe your position with the organization.

### **2. Context / Nature of Involvement:**

- Describe the nature of your organization's involvement with the Learning Exchange Trek Program (background, length, type of activities, who approached who, etc.).
- When did you become involved? How are you involved?
- What does the involvement look like? What would be a typical interaction?
- Does this connect to your organization's mission/objectives? How?

### **3. Working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program:**

- Describe how your organization works with the Learning Exchange Trek Program.
- Why do you have students coming to your organization? What do they contribute? Has it changed over time? Why does the Learning Exchange Trek Program bring students here?
- How would you describe the role of the Learning Exchange Trek Program?
- What are the similarities and differences between your organization and the Learning Exchange Trek Program (e.g. decision-making, communication, public profile, etc.)? What makes it easy/hard to form CSL partnerships with the Learning Exchange Trek Program? What are the advantages and disadvantages of working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program?
- When do you know the relationship/partnership is working? What would happen if there was a significant challenge that you needed to address?

### **4. Partnerships:**

- What is your thinking on community-university partnerships? Is this a new experience?
- How would you describe a partnership?
- Is a community-university partnership similar/different to other partnerships your organization may have?
- Why do you think the Learning Exchange Trek Program is interested in pursuing this relationship? Why is your community organization interested in pursuing this relationship?

5. **CSL:** The Learning Exchange Trek Program is trying to move toward CSL as one form of community-university partnership.
  - Are you familiar with the term CSL?
  - What does it mean to you?
  - What makes CSL effective?
  - What were your first reactions to CSL? What made you want to participate? Does it make you excited, cautious, nervous, etc.?
  - Would you recommend it to other community organizations?
  - How does it affect your role?
  - Why did your organization decide to become involved with CSL?
  - What would a typical CSL experience look like at your organization?
  
6. **Guiding principles or philosophies affecting CSL initiatives:** In the academic literature about CSL, there are discussions about what values, beliefs, concepts, principles, and attitudes guide CSL. I would like to talk about these issues, and find out whether this has any meaning or relevance to your organization. As an example, there are articles about whether universities should be engaging from a charitable or a social justice orientation.
  - How does your organization regard or conceptualize community service?
  - How does your organization approach its work?
  - Does your organization have a particular framework or philosophy for its programs?
  - Does your organization make a distinction? Does your organization use either of the ones I have mentioned? Both? Something different?
  
7. **Reflections:**
  - What do you think the Learning Exchange Trek Program needs to know about your community organization to enhance the relationship?
  - What do you need to know about the Learning Exchange Trek Program to enhance your partnership?
  
8. **Conclusion:**
  - Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?
  - Can I contact you again if I require clarification, or additional information?

# Appendix F

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## **Summary of Findings: Report to the Community Partners**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many universities are starting to strengthen their relationships with communities. Universities recognize that they need to work in partnership with communities to address social and economic problems. The University of British Columbia (UBC) is beginning to utilize community service learning (CSL) as one strategy to connect the university to the community while achieving its educational objectives through the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

CSL refers to a student experience that combines community service and learning, and can be either curricular (within an academic course) or co-curricular (outside academic course requirements). CSL differs from more traditional forms of student volunteerism as it emphasizes the importance of connecting the service to specific learning objectives through reflection. This often includes learning about the societal context or political conditions that necessitate the service. For example, a student might work in a shelter for women, and join in discussions with shelter staff about impending legislation that would reduce or eliminate welfare payments to the women who access the program. Or students might be encouraged to keep a journal as they get to know someone with HIV/AIDS. CSL also differs from practicums that are generally shorter-term and focused on specific skills. While CSL is relatively new to Canadian universities, many American students have encountered CSL in their education.

### **WHY FIND COMMUNITY? THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

There is no shortage of literature, courses, organizations, and list serves promoting CSL; however, most of it concentrates on the experience of students. There is also some information on faculty experiences, as well as universities in the more general literature on community-university partnerships.

Little attention is paid to the experiences and perspectives of the community organizations where both the service and learning occurs. Without this knowledge, it is possible that CSL will fail to satisfy the needs of the community. For CSL to succeed, I believe we need to understand what all four partners—students, faculty, the university, and community—require. While this is acknowledged by some scholars as important, I found that few had begun to research this area.

To gain some insight into the community experiences and perspectives of CSL, I interviewed representatives of eight community partners of UBC's Learning Exchange Trek Program, a program that is beginning to organize CSL for UBC in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and three representatives from the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

## **UBC'S LEARNING EXCHANGE TREK PROGRAM**

After expressing its intent to work with community in its strategic plan *Trek 2000*, UBC created the Learning Exchange to establish relationships between people at UBC and people in the Downtown Eastside and other inner city communities that share common interests. The most recent articulation of UBC's goals and strategies—*Trek 2010: Green Paper*—includes a continued emphasis on enhancing community involvement and collaboration. In this document, UBC commits to developing CSL opportunities for at least ten percent of its students.

The Learning Exchange offers computer access and a drop-in area, as well as courses such as Music 101, lectures, discussions, films, and other events to people in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The Trek Program, an initiative of the Learning Exchange, is in the early stages of offering UBC students the opportunity to have a CSL experience with community organizations. Trek students are building relationships with community members through CSL. For example, Trek students tutor younger students; paint murals; answer questions in an emergency shelter; and spend one-to-one time with people affected by mental illness. Nearly 200 students participated in the Learning Exchange Trek Program's week-long Reading Week Program in winter 2004. One project involved the UBC Farm. The participating students spent time cleaning up the farm, planting seeds, and designing signage. They also attended presentations on food security, learned about models of community economic development, and were introduced to the idea of food coops.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Canada's third largest city. It is a community that enriches the city with its vibrant history, beautiful architecture, and incredible diversity of people. The Downtown Eastside is a community whose members also struggle with poverty, mental and other health illnesses, substance use and addiction, drug dealing, prostitution, crime, inadequate and insecure housing, high unemployment, and decreasing legitimate businesses.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

I formulated five questions to guide my inquiry into the experiences and perspectives of the Learning Exchange Trek Program's community partners as they begin to implement CSL:

- How does the Learning Exchange Trek Program work with community partners to provide CSL opportunities?
- What does the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL?
- What do the community partners working with the Learning Exchange Trek Program regard as effective CSL?
- What opportunities and constraints have the selected community partners encountered when they are in the early stages of collaborating with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to develop CSL? What do the community partners require to enhance their experience with CSL?
- What are the guiding principles or philosophies (values, beliefs, concepts, and/or attitudes) of the selected community partners and the Learning Exchange Trek Program that affect CSL initiatives?

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

My research design can be described as an exploratory, single-case study where the Learning Exchange Trek Program and its community partners are the case. First, I reviewed the literature on community-university partnerships, CSL, community organizations and CSL, and the voluntary sector. Next, I conducted eleven semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews that lasted between forty-five minutes and two and a half hours. I met with three representatives from the Learning Exchange Trek Program, and eight community partner representatives, including three schools and five non-profit, charitable organizations (referred to as Respondent or Res. A, B, etc. to ensure anonymity). The community partners were involved with such issues as poverty, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, homelessness, and addiction. While some community partners were familiar with CSL, others were just beginning to learn about it. I also reviewed the Learning Exchange Trek Program's promotional materials and reports, UBC's strategic planning documents, and observed two workshops offered to Trek students.

## **THE COMMUNITY PARTNERS' STORY**

I identified five main themes based on what the community partners described in the interviews: the role of organizational climate; the contributions of students in community-university partnerships; the community partners' responses to the introduction of CSL; the evolution and maturing of partnerships; and perceptions of the university's responsibility.

### **A.) The Role of Organizational Climate**

I wondered if it was possible that we could get UBC students involved rather than having the teachers take on one more load in what is already a very high stress school emotionally. They're doing far more than teaching here: they're social workers, mothers, librarians, they're everything to these kids. They're providing five hours of a very safe environment for kids who may be in a very unsafe environment the other nineteen hours. They take it very seriously. I felt that if someone could provide help that would be great.

*Respondent B (elementary school)*

The first theme is the role of organizational climate—the environment that students encounter when they arrive at the community organization, and the conditions community partners work within daily. The community partners emphasized three aspects of their organizational climate: limited organizational resources; the centrality of community members in their decision-making; and their intentional efforts to create a hospitable and welcoming atmosphere for the Trek students.

Being sensitive to the community partners' organizational climate will allow the Learning Exchange Trek Program to think effectively about opportunities to bridge the differences that may exist between community organizations and large educational institutions, such as UBC. For example, coming up with ways to address community partners' lack of resources is pivotal for implementing CSL.

## **B.) The Contributions of Students in Community-University Partnerships**

Our residents love the students. Especially the ones teaching the computer. They're very compassionate. I think they're enjoying getting to know our community members, they call them by their first name, they explain things very well, and they have a lot of patience. I watched one of our residents on the computer. It took him an hour to type one little letter that was about two sentences. I thought, wow, I don't know how the Trek student has the patience. I don't have the patience. So I really do admire them.

*Respondent E (provides a number of services in the Downtown Eastside to people facing multiple challenges)*

Although I had initially wanted to avoid talking about students because it featured prominently in the literature, I included it as the second theme because the community partners tended to emphasize their relationship with individuals—both Trek students and Learning Exchange Trek Program staff. This was quite different from the literature about partnerships that tended to focus on higher level relationships between the university and everything else.

Including students as a theme is also appropriate because community partners concluded that student involvement is one of the benefits they have encountered in the early stages of collaborating with the Learning Exchange Trek Program to implement CSL. Community partners are extremely impressed with the students—motivating them to continue working with UBC.

## **C.) The Community Partners' Responses to the Introduction of CSL**

I think it is a great partnership to bring the university and the community together. In my cynical state, I refer to the university as the ivory tower. I speak from experience as I went through it a few times. Look where ours is in particular—beautiful, but totally removed. Where I attended [the University of Toronto], as soon as you stepped out of the grounds you were hit in the face with a city, a community, and downtown. The benefit of CSL is that the ten percent of students who participate will not experience a disconnect between school and the community they want to go out and work in. No matter where they work, even if they end up on Wall Street, they still have to drive through a certain part of town to get there. And maybe we can adjust their values through this...if we support the university educating its students—our future politicians, voters, business owners—we can share what is really meaningful.

*Respondent G (provides health and social services to pregnant women and their children in the Downtown Eastside)*

In this third theme, I outlined the many benefits community partners believe CSL creates: their organizations attract new and diverse support; community members enjoy spending time with the Trek students; broader society is strengthened when students learn more about the issues facing the Downtown Eastside and other inner city communities; and Trek students gain practical experience rather than primarily theoretical knowledge.

While the community partners primarily endorsed CSL, and were looking forward to its development, they also had a few hesitations. For example, they wanted more information

about CSL so they could determine how it might impact their already very busy schedules.

#### **D.) The Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships**

I would like to say it is a partnership, but I think the honest answer is that our resources are too maxed. On our end, we have not put in enough—both time and energy wise—to create it as a real partnership. And that is because of maxed resources. This is according to my definition of a reciprocal relationship—I haven't been to the Learning Exchange [on Main Street] forever, I hardly talk with them, I haven't put a lot of energy into it. This is no fault of the Learning Exchange Trek Program. Our relationship is more with the individual students. That is where we put our time...In a perfect world, I would go to all the community partner meetings, I would know all the Trek students by name, and greet them and hang out with them. Instead I have to rely on my staff to find out who is working, but they know who they are.

*Respondent H (provides emergency shelter and other supports in the Downtown Eastside)*

Yes, I would say this is a partnership...My definition is when two or more groups come together with a common focus, and each group brings their expertise or resources. And when you match it with the other group(s) there is a greater strength or ability to meet the identified need. Sometimes as a partner you are putting in more, sometimes less, but that isn't necessarily an issue. Because when you go into the partnership it has to be very clear that you are going to address this identified need. And that is the purpose. So there is a trust built between the groups.

*Respondent F (elementary school)*

As defined by Baum, community-university partnerships are characterized by "overlapping interests that converge on the aim of improving community conditions" (Baum 2000, 235). For this theme, I chose two quotes to illustrate that while some of the community partners felt they were in partnership with the Learning Exchange Trek Program, others preferred to think of their partnership with the individual Trek students and specific Learning Exchange Trek Program staff. Not surprisingly, the Learning Exchange Trek Program respondents also expressed that their interactions with community partners varied in their depth and intensity.

I found it useful to think of a continuum for describing the stages that community partners experience when implementing CSL: caution; testing the relationship; situating it within their broader agenda; partnerships between individuals; and organizational mutualism. This does not mean that all the interactions progress linearly through each stage; there might be movement in either direction, or community partners may not experience every phase. How the Learning Exchange Trek Program conceptualizes partnerships is important as it balances wanting to standardize and formalize its relationships in partnership agreements with the uniqueness of each community partner.

#### **E.) Perceptions of the University's Responsibility**

If we're going to take care of each other in our society, we have to understand where people come from. I was raised on the west side of Vancouver, far away from the Downtown Eastside. A lot of my friends are

sixty years old and doing very well. When they talk about welfare, poverty, or drug addiction, they are quite dismissive. And these are intelligent people, some with double and triple degrees! But they have never worked in that kind of environment, or with people long enough to know that global poverty is just that...The Trek students will be the same age as my friends in forty years, and I would like them to be less dismissive. I want them to have a deeper understanding and connection with what our society is all about...And that is absolutely the role of the university.

*Respondent B (elementary school)*

What I learned in this final theme was that the university has a responsibility and obligation to work with the community. Overwhelmingly, community partners expressed that it was inadequate for the university to concentrate on teaching specific skills or educating professionals. Instead, they argued that the university must prepare people to contribute to civil society, and see that the Learning Exchange Trek Program and CSL can facilitate that aspiration.

According to the community partners, by working with the community, the university: creates well-rounded and committed individuals (Res. A); encourages students to have a deeper understanding and connection so they can care for one another rather than just knowing a craft (Res. B); moves away from strictly rational, skills-based learning (Res. C); fosters students "getting it", resulting in greater compassion and understanding (Res. D); enriches the lives of community members and Trek students (Res. E); benefits society because young people spend more time with an adult who cares about them (Res. F); strengthens civil society (Res. G); and influences social change (Res. H). It is these results that make the community partners enthusiastic about their work with the Learning Exchange Trek Program.

#### **STRUCTURING FUTURE CSL PARTNERSHIPS: IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE AND ELSEWHERE**

Community partners offered many suggestions for structuring future CSL partnerships, including the three listed below:

- 1.) Community organizations want to know what is happening with the university and be given the opportunity to participate in multiple ways. For example, the university could circulate a newsletter geared to community partners; invite community partners to participate in the university's strategic planning process; or any other possibilities that consider the community partners' capacity and interest.
- 2.) Community organizations want to work collaboratively with the university to determine what is mutually beneficial. They do not believe this will look the same for every organization. They perceive this as a strength—diverse opportunities will attract a variety of students, faculty, and community organizations to CSL initiatives.
- 3.) Community organizations want CSL to connect with their existing work so it is not an add-on to an already hectic schedule. For example, it would be useful to enhance the reflection component of CSL. Community organizations have the skills and experience to conduct reflection. The challenge is to find a way to integrate it within the organizations' existing mechanisms—such as staff meetings or professional development—to avoid increasing the demands on community partners.

## THE INVITATION TO CARE

Community partners invite people from outside the community—both Trek students and others associated with UBC—to care about what is happening in the Downtown Eastside. When they extend this invitation, community partners receive help getting the tasks done set out in their vision, plus an opportunity to entice potentially new donors and on-going volunteers. These responses to their invitation are beneficial, and certainly make them happy. But what is even more important to the community partners is just getting people to see firsthand what is happening in the Downtown Eastside. They want people to pay attention. I found this emphasis interesting because it differed from what I encountered in the literature. In addition, it challenged my pre-conceived notions of what “good” CSL entailed.

Some scholars propose that CSL initiatives can be placed on a continuum with charity and social justice at opposite ends. Charitable acts are often seen as short-term, disempowering, less valuable, and sometimes even dangerous. This could include a student helping in an emergency shelter. In contrast, social justice requires understanding structural causes of problems and movement toward social change. This might include lobbying the government to increase the number of social housing units to reduce dependency on emergency shelters. I was drawn to CSL because I thought it offered a better opportunity to promote social change than traditional volunteer programs that I had encountered both working and volunteering.

Based on what I heard, I suggest that the charity vs. social justice debate is ill-conceived. It does not capture the aspirations of the community partners, nor the Trek Program. Both the community partners and the Trek Program are more focused on having Trek students “get it” (Res. D), or pay attention to the Downtown Eastside—whether they are drawn to what we might call charity or social justice is a personal decision. Through talking to the community partners, I learned that we need to move beyond conceptualizations of community service that polarizes CSL as either charity or justice. Instead, we should seek models that reflect this more open-ended invitation to care. The emphasis should be on creating deeper experiences so a diversity of students, faculty, and community organizations will participate. The community partners hold that social change will happen if more people are exposed to the problems and capacities of community members living in the Downtown Eastside. The invitation to care is the first crucial step in this transformation. Communities as complex as the Downtown Eastside require a variety of responses: the more people who care, the more varied and creative the solutions may be, regardless of whether we label them charity or social justice.

The invitation to care reflects the community partners’ encounters with CSL. The absence of this approach or philosophy in the CSL literature confirms the importance of listening to the community partners’ stories if we desire a more comprehensive understanding of CSL.

## CONCLUSION

If CSL is to be a successful form of community-university partnership, we must understand the experiences and perspectives of the community partners. I believe that finding community is important for UBC to consider as it expands its efforts through the Learning Exchange Trek Program, and for other universities and community organizations with plans to embrace CSL.

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# Appendix G

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## **Summary of Themes and Sub-Themes**

### **Theme A: The Role of Organizational Climate**

- Sub-Theme #1: Community Partners Face Climate of Constraint
- Sub-Theme #2: Community Partners Dedicated to Community Members
- Sub-Theme #3: Community Partners Create Hospitable Climate for Trek Students

### **Theme B: The Contributions of Students**

- Sub-Theme #4: Community Partners Find Trek Students "Phenomenal"
- Sub-Theme #5: Community Partners Find Trek Students Different from other Students

### **Theme C: Community Partners' Responses to the Introduction of CSL**

- Sub-Theme #6: Community Partners Increase Volunteer Diversity through CSL
- Sub-Theme #7: Community Partners See Community Members and Society Benefit in CSL Initiatives
- Sub-Theme #8: Community Partners Recognize that CSL Benefits Trek Students
- Sub-Theme #9: Community Partners' Hesitations about CSL

### **Theme D: Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships**

- Sub-Theme #10: Community Partners are Cautious about Partnerships
- Sub-Theme #11: Community Partners Test the Relationship
- Sub-Theme #12: Community Partners Situate CSL within their Broader Agenda
- Sub-Theme #13: Community Partners Develop Partnerships with Individuals
- Sub-Theme #14: Community Partners Build Organizational Mutualism

### **Theme E: Perceptions of University Responsibility**

- Sub-Theme #15: Community Partners Believe the University Has a Responsibility to Community
- Sub-Theme #16: Community Partners Have a Role, Too
- Sub-Theme #17: Community Partners Extend an Invitation to Care

# Appendix H

## Thematic Map

The thematic map highlights a sample of responses from all of the eleven interviewees to the five overarching themes I presented in the fifth chapter. If I did not include an interviewee's response to a theme in the main text, I have marked the cell not applicable. The purpose of the thematic map is to present a brief overview of my findings; for a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the respondents' comments on each the five themes, please see Chapter Five.

	The Role of Organizational Climate	The Contributions of Students	Responses to the Introduction of CSL	Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships	Perceptions of University Responsibility
Org. A	Sees including Trek students as a way to increase understanding of issues facing community members	Students are open-minded and idealistic	Uncertain that the emphasis on thinking broadly about social issues is unique to Trek students	Emphasized that it is premature for her organization to evaluate the relationship with the Learning Exchange as they have only been involved for a short period	Believes that it is not sufficient for the university to provide academic training to students
Org. B	Need help; school resources too stretched	Appreciates that Trek students are willing to put themselves in uncomfortable and unfamiliar situations	Believes CSL has the potential to shape how Trek students think about the world	Community partners can be very cautious about using volunteers because it does not always work	University is not for teaching a craft; it is for teaching about the broader issues facing society
Org. C	Reduced resources but increased needs	Students are conscientious, punctual, and follow-through; really positive to use students	Believes that the principles of CSL match her own philosophy	Actively seeking new ways to expand and deepen the partnership with UBC	Agrees that UBC is headed in the right direction, as expressed in its strategic plans
Org. D	Responsive to Trek students (e.g. scheduling training)	Students phenomenal and enthusiastic; linked to their choice to participate	Brings new people and new ideas into organization	Prefers to work slowly with UBC; success is more complex than just counting the number of students involved	Believes that making sure that students "get it" is the responsibility of the university
Org. E	Concerned that volunteers are on the decline and see Trek students as an alternative	Community members "love" the Trek students; lots of patience	N/A	Sees the partnership with the individual Trek student; not UBC	Need to have individuals meeting community members; Learning Exchange creates this opportunity
Org. F	Match student with staff person for additional support	Students open to learning; "higher level of volunteer"	Trek students benefit from practical, hands-on experience	Sees relationship with the Learning Exchange as a partnership	Trek students and society benefit from spending time with community members; everyone needs this practical, real-life experience

	<b>The Role of Organizational Climate</b>	<b>The Contributions of Students</b>	<b>Responses to the Introduction of CSL</b>	<b>Evolution and Maturing of Partnerships</b>	<b>Perceptions of University Responsibility</b>
<b>Org. G</b>	Community members influence role of Trek students	Staff and Trek students work together (mutual); unlike practicum	Need to adjust our values – there is potential because Trek students are future politicians, voters, business owners	Stressed that universities need to carefully choose who is responsible for their outreach programs	University has a role in creating a civil society
<b>Org. H</b>	Maxed, stressed because of limited resources	Trek students are less focused on getting a job than practicum students	Trek students "low maintenance" because of reflection component	Not a partnership – have not had the time or resources to pursue	Higher education has a pivotal role to play in social change
<b>UBC A</b>	Sees strengths but acknowledges the limitations of community partners (e.g. resources)	Recognizes that student interest is key to the implementation of CSL	Believes that CSL will bring the missing voices of community at UBC	Suggests that Learning Exchange is working on building partnerships; some relationships are more developed than others	Believes UBC has a role in getting people to pay attention to what is happening in the DTES
<b>UBC B</b>	Realizes that UBC must contribute resources to continue work in DTES	Believes CSL can contribute to UBC's educational priorities	Feels that CSL can be a part of most courses offered at UBC	N/A	Suggests that UBC's commitment is clearly outlined in its strategic planning documents
<b>UBC C</b>	Aware that UBC is perceived as having deep pockets	Must meet the expectations of Trek students who are the Learning Exchange's "customers"	The Learning Exchange is making a gradual transition from volunteerism to CSL	Hopes that establishing partnership agreements will result in more mature relationships	Thinks that the Learning Exchange is part of a social change process that has to happen

N/A means not applicable

"Learning Exchange" refers to the Learning Exchange Trek Program