Perpetuating Precarity in Theory and in Practice: A Case Study of Work-Integrated Learning in the Non-Profit Sector in Northern Canada

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ABSTRACT

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a process of curricular experiential education within a workplace or practical setting and is believed to give students "the skills and experiences they need to start a well-paying career after they graduate" (Trudeau, 2017). WIL is portrayed as a win-win, yet this research suggests that WIL perpetuates precarity and deepens inequalities between students, between different types of employers, and between geographic regions.

Using the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA), this study investigated how eight diverse non-profit organizations (NPOs) in northern Canada are positioned to support students to develop personal agency through WIL. Most WIL research is urban-centric, focused on for-profit industries and framed within Human Capital Theory (HCT), making this study an outlier.

Using a case study approach underpinned by critical and social realism to inform research methods, this study explores the ways in which WIL enables and constrains the development of agency at individual, social, and institutional levels. The role of learning partners, the structure of WIL and the presence of social actors (industry associations, regulatory bodies, and unions) were examined as conversion factors.

The research is based on semi-structured interviews with twelve non-profit staff and volunteers, ten faculty and administrators, and institutional document analysis. Content analysis was implemented by organization to identify themes.

The research shows inconsistencies in current approaches to WIL. While NPOs are committed to student development, theoretical fragmentation within non-profit contexts combined with constraints in the post-secondary environment compromise student learning. Students and learning partners are poorly prepared and equipped for WIL. Furthermore, the increasingly precarious positioning of NPOs within the labour market threatens their ability to offer students (future) decent work. The institutional and policy environments that undergird WIL do not acknowledge the distinctness of non-profit organizations within a neoliberal economy and this makes invisible other dimensions that affect decent work, such as the regulatory environment, collectivization, and the "contracting regime." To ensure well-paying jobs, these factors must be addressed. This research also recommends that WIL be evaluated with greater emphasis on social and institutional conversion factors, and that future studies of WIL use HDCA, rather than HCT.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the unceded ancestral land of the Lheidli T'enneh, where I live, work and learn. I also acknowledge that both work and education, the subjects of this dissertation, have been used as tools for domination and oppression of the Lheidli T'enneh and other First Nations in Canada. Decent work is a human right and reflects the quality of relationship between people and with the land; but many of the ways work is distributed in modern Canada reflect deep and persistent inequalities and injustices. While the focus of this dissertation is not about Indigenous education or work directly, by being more clear about visible and invisible factors that enable people and communities to flourish, I hope this research will in some small way, contribute towards reconciliation.

DEDICATION

When I began my PhD six years ago, I committed that my PhD would be a joyful expression of my professional curiosity. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Leesa Wheelahan for making that a reality. I remember when I first stumbled upon Leesa's words, I was shocked. How could she suggest that experiential learning reproduced inequality? (Wheelahan, 2015). As a first-generation student of (hard) working class parents, experiential learning enabled me to climb out of precarity so I was pretty sure experiential learning was good for everyone! Leesa is an exceptional scholar, educator and learning partner and with such beauty and grace she navigated between roles in ways that enabled me to flourish . . . and enabled me to change my mind. I couldn't be more fortunate than to have a supervisor who puts her theories into practice. Thank you Leesa! I am also grateful to Dr. Kiran Mirchandani and Dr. Peter Sawchuck who posed challenging questions and observations, offered great articles and gave expert guidance throughout this process.

I'd like to offer BIG TIME appreciation to the good people at the non-profits I interviewed. I am humbled by your commitment to your work, to students and to your communities. After I interviewed you I really dove into the literature about the non-profit sector in Canada and I became angry . . . it seems cruel and unfair that good people like you are working so hard in a system that allows little room to breath. When grants end unexpectedly or the reporting expectations change, you keep high spirits and stay motivated – often on the fumes of hope and resilient friendships. This research has taught me that it's time the non-profit sector to push back and speak up. You deserve more than good feelings for your hard work – you deserve job security, a pension and a good living wage!

I would also like to thank the faculty and administrators who taught me so much during our interviews (and often made me laugh, too!). Your continual focus on student learning when the economy shifts, COVID-19 changes the format of learning or new policy directions come into play is evident. Your brazen willingness to go the extra distance for your students, even when the systems for promotion and tenure do not account for it or your institutional resources can't cover it, is worthy of note. I hope that in some small way this research will provide impetus to

change resourcing models and promotion and tenure systems so that we can better value and support post-secondary institutions to contribute to their local communities and to citizenship through teaching and scholarship.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Capabilities are what people are able to be and do. These are real opportunity and process freedoms, which enlarge opportunities and enable people to make decisions aligned to preferences, wishes and expectations. Capabilities form sets that can be converted to functioning.

Co-educators are staff and volunteers at host-organizations who support students through work-integrated learning. They understand that their role is to provide a structured learning experience and create conditions, which support intentional learning, alongside faculty, teachers, and professors.

Conversion Factors are factors that determine to what degree a person can transform resources into functionings *(see below)*. Conversion factors can be considered at individual, social, or environmental/institutional levels. Personal conversion factors are internal to the person, social conversion factors are influenced by the society one lives in, whereas environmental conversion factors reflect physical and built environments.

Epistemic agency is the increased capacity to make informed judgements based on access to informational materials and the ability to interpret their meaning in a shared social world.

Functionings are the achievements or the outcomes of capabilities. While there are a few universalized functionings, what constitutes a reasonable functioning is negotiated within existing social structures.

Host-organization are the corporations, companies, non-profits, grass-roots organizations and government agencies that facilitate work-integrated learning at their workplace. Many words are used to describe the people who facilitate work-integrated learning at host-organizations, for example: co-educator, host, learning partner, practicum supervisor, supervisor, etc.

Learning Partners employ a specific approach as co-educators. They validate the student's ability to know, situate learning in the learner's own experience and demonstrate that learning is mutually constructed. Many host-organizations are resistant to this kind of orientation.

Resources are the material and immaterial assets, which are available to persons for use. This includes income and wealth, marketable goods and services, psychological, physical, social and intellectual assets. Conversion factors can impact the ability for people to make use of resources.

ACRONYMS

BHER	Business + Higher Education Round Table
CEWIL	Cooperative Education and Work-Integrated Learning
HDCA	Human Development and Capabilities Approach
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
PSE	Post-Secondary Education
PSI	Post-Secondary Institution(s)
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, the Canadian government has "invested" more than $1 billion dollars in work-integrated learning (WIL). Though Canada has among the highest rates of post-secondary education attainment within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD, 2021), only 44% of millennials have found fulltime employment following graduation (Martin & Lewchuk, 2018) and the unemployment rate of young people (15 – 24) is disproportionately higher than the average (16.7% vs. 9.5%) (Jeudy, 2021). To address this labour market conundrum, "leaders of some of Canada's largest companies and top post-secondary institutions" (V. Walker, 2017) lobbied the Federal Government to invest in WIL. WIL is "a model and process of curricular experiential education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization and a student . . . and includes the development of learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency and life-long learning" (CEWIL, 2018).

While non-profits are an integral part of the Canadian labour market and employ more more than 2.4 million people, non-profit organizations are largely invisible in Canada's approach to WIL. This study investigates the role that non-profit organizations currently hold and can play in WIL. Using the Human Development and Capabilities Approach, this research asked how non-profit organizations are positioned with respect to individual, social, and institutional conversion factors to support the development of personal agency through WIL. Using case study methodology, this research investigated the experiences of eight northern Canadian non-profit organizations and two-post secondary institutions who participated in WIL.

This study represents a context that is relatively unknown within WIL and is an outlier. This chapter describes the context and significance of this study, and outlines the personal rational and the scope of research. This chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of this dissertation.

1.1 Context of the Problem

To learn is to be human. Habermas said that "subjects capable of speech and action cannot help but learn" (1975, p. 15; 1992, p. 165). Learning is essential to human existence and comes in a variety of forms: formal, informal, developmental, structured, collective, hands-on, self-directed, competency-based, experiential, place-based, arts-based, virtual, kinesthetic, transformative, auditory, and liberatory, to name a few. To learn is to be human, but to be educated is political.

Education is a systematic process of learning, which requires decisions: on the purposes of learning, on the content, transmission and dissemination of learning, about the learner and about the resources required to deliver learning (Wheelahan, 2010). These decisions are negotiated and have an impact on people, communities, and nations. This study is focused on work-integrated learning (WIL), a relatively new phenomenon in the field of post-secondary education (PSE) in Canada. The massification of PSE has triggered debates about the purpose of education in contemporary Canadian life (Elias-Cartwright, 2021). Governments, post-secondary institutions, businesses, parents, and students are asking to what extent post-secondary education offers "knowledge for knowledge sake," how it develops citizenship, and also how it serves the economy to prepare Canadians for the labour market (Spooner, 2022). These debates are the foundation of WIL.

Michael Young suggests that the purpose of education is "to enable students to acquire knowledge that: (i) is not accessible to most people in their everyday lives, and (ii) enables those who acquire it to move beyond their experience and gain some understanding of the social and natural worlds of which they are a part" (Young, 2008, as cited in Wheelahan, 2010, p.164). While contested, knowledge offers students more reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world; and with greater intellectual power, students have greater agency over their lives (Young, 2008, p.14), including their careers. If they are to be agential in their occupations and in society more broadly, students need to have access to the contested knowledge that underpins their intended fields of practice, and the debates and controversies within their fields as well as in society more broadly. This research explores how education in the form of WIL is structured and delivered to impact student agency, so that students have greater capability to enter and contribute to their occupations in ways that they have reason to value. Contextual understanding of how different occupations are positioned within the graduate labour market is important.

The labour market has changed significantly over the last three decades and has become increasingly polarized in terms of quality of jobs and income (Brown, 2013). The guarantees that post-secondary education once promised are no longer available and students are entering a highly competitive and precarious labour market (Martin & Lewchuk, 2018; Purdon & Palleja, 2017). In 2001, Bourdieu described the labour market: "thus has come into being an economic regime that is inseparable from a political regime, a mode of production that entails a mode of domination based on the institution of insecurity, domination though precariousness: a deregulated financial market fosters a deregulated labour market and there the casualization of

labour that cows workers into submission" (p.20). The changes to the labour market have immense material consequences on Canadian society, impacting income inequality, structural poverty, health, mental health, trust, and quality of life outcomes (Brown & James, 2020). Furthermore, the labour market increasingly dominates public space and has become the dominant vehicle for social inclusion and participation (Dif-Pradalier et al., 2012; Putnam, 2000). To be excluded from the labour market is to be excluded from society.

The scarcity of good jobs and polarization of incomes have led to heightened competition where individuals take on greater risks and there are bigger losses and fewer winners (Brown & James, 2020; Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). Benefitting from the precarious labour environment, employers have shifted responsibilities for training to employees and post-secondary institutions. Annual expenditures by Canadian employers on learning and development have declined by over 40 %, from $1,207 per employee in 1993 to $705 per employee in 2013 (Stuckey & Munro, 2013). While firms are often more willing to invest in the development of specific skills for their businesses, they generally underinvest in portable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and persistence. Compared to past generations, young people feel they have less access to paid skill-building opportunities when they enter the labour market (Cordeaux, 2017). Students (and their parents) are expected to pay the ever-increasing costs of training on their own, prior to entering the labour market and take a gamble on what is the "right learning" for a future, unknown job. In this trend, learning has become a commodity and post-secondary institutions have been rendered "supplicants that supply industry what it needs" where customers can "'purchase' the specific skills that they want" (L.

Wheelahan, 2016, p. 190). Employment outcomes are increasingly being tied to the assessment and evaluation of post-secondary education (Elias-Cartwright, 2021).

Situated between the systems of education and the systems of the labour market, WIL has come into focus in Canada and has become a critical draw for many post-secondary institutions (McRae, 2015). Positioned as a win-win opportunity for students and employers and neutrally mediated through post-secondary institutions, WIL is seen to offer clear metrics that demonstrate the value of a post-secondary education. For example, the University of Waterloo, a champion of WIL, boasts that their co-op students can earn almost $20,000 per work term and that within two years of graduation 82% of students are earning more than $50,000, compared to 45% across the rest of the province (University of Waterloo, 2021). Similiarly the University of Toronto's Engineering Career Centre entices students to become "full-time employees with a competitive salary" through their Professional Early Years (PEY) program (Engineering Career Centre, 2020). Better than the University of Waterloo, PEY Co-op students earn approximately $50,000 per year and can reach salaries of $90,000 in *just one* year. The co-op program claims that their graduates earn 15% more than graduates without the "same quality of experience" (Engineering Career Centre, 2021). The rhetoric is clear: WIL is the right education needed to ensure the necessary skills and experience to earn a well-paying career, yet this rhetoric makes invisible the costs for participation, which are often only available for elite students and organizations.

WIL has become top of mind for students, post-secondary institutions, and large-scale and urban employers. However, rural, remote and Indigenous communities, small and micro-businesses, and non-profit organizations have not had the same access to participate (BHER,

2021a; BHER, 2021b; Riipen, 2020). There are more than 150,000 non-profit organizations in Canada that contribute 8.5% to the GDP and represent a significant labour force, yet non-profit organizations are largely invisible in WIL. Furthermore, the mechanisms and models that currently frame WIL naturalize structural inequalities and neglect the disparities of power, wealth, and knowledge within the labour market. It is within this context that this research explores the role of non-profit organizations in the delivery of WIL.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is two-fold. The first is to examine work-integrated learning (WIL) as a tool within a non-profit labour market strategy. Recognizing the particular needs of non-profits to recruit and retain staff who are able to think the unthinkable (Gelman & Tosone, 2010; Kaiser et al., 2015; Miller & Hayward, 2014), this research asks what is required so that non-profit organizations are able to provide meaningful and quality WIL experiences. This research explores how non-profit organizations are currently taking up their role in WIL and what more can be done to support non-profit organizations as co-educators and future employers of students.

Second, this research expands the theoretical discourse that underpins WIL. Young (2008b) suggests that "without an explicit concept of knowledge acquisition, policies that give priority to widening participation and student choice could well be the basis for new, albeit less visible, inequalities" (p. 10). The rhetoric to support WIL often presents a win-win proposition, yet significant actors within the Canadian labour market are excluded from participation; and the design and discourse that supports WIL is largely framed upon the experiences of large employers in urban settings. Recognizing that outliers are frequently excluded from the

researcher's gaze "in an effort to tie up loose ends and improve statistical power" (Gibbert et al., 2021, p.172) it is anticipated that this research will improve theoretical understanding and "shed new light" (Lieberson, 1992, p. 174) on WIL, revealing inconsistencies, boundaries and contingencies (Gerring, 2007) to current approaches.

As a means to expand theories of WIL, this research is framed around an outlier: non-profit organizations in a non-metropolitan northern context, and focuses on just one of the learning outcomes prioritized by Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, the lead organization for WIL in Canada (CEWIL, 2021a): personal agency. Using the Human Development and Capabilities approach, this study explores how non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions in northern Canada are positioned with respect to individual, social, and institutional conversion factors to support students' development of personal agency so that they have the capability to enter and contribute to their occupations in a manner that they have reason to value. Three questions laid the foundation for this investigation:

1. How are non-profit organizations positioned to support students' development of personal agency through WIL?
2. How do stakeholders reflect on the strengths and limitations of WIL within a non-profit context?
3. How should non-profit organizations be equipped to support personal agency through WIL?

1.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Like post-secondary education more broadly, work-integrated learning (WIL) is premised on human capital theory which suggests that the more you learn, the more you earn. However,

human capital theory over-simplifies the relationship between education and the labour market and makes invisible a multitude of factors that contribute towards labour market outcomes at the individual, social system, and ideological levels. The human capital theory makes invisible the role of regulation, access to collective bargaining, protection from discrimination, and the concentration of industry—all of which impact access to well-paying careers. With these invisible factors in mind, this study uses the Human Development and Capabilities (HCDA) approach.

The HDCA approach is a normative theory about human flourishing which focuses on well-being and agency, and asks how social policy and programs enable people "to be and do in their lives what they choose" (Walker, 2018, p.119). As opposed to the human capital theory, which prioritizes economic output, HDCA suggests that well-being without choice is not flourishing, and neither is agency without well-being. Agency and well-being are considered across the spectrum of life roles.

Fundamental to HDCA is that human experiences are diverse, in terms of access to resources and also the contextual conditions in which lives are lived (Bonvin, 2006a; Nussbaum, 2011; Walker, 2019). This diversity shapes opportunities, preferences, and human flourishing, and it cannot be assumed that what constitutes a good life is universal or similar (Robeyns, 2017). It is for this reason that the HDCA focuses on *capabilities*—the real choices available to people, rather than their *functionings*—the achievements or outcomes of their lives. Framed within a perspective of human flourishing, HDCA examines how factors at the individual, social, and environmental levels determine to what degree a person can transform their resources into capabilities and functionings.

This study also draws on theories of liberatory education (Brookfield, 2005; Freire, 1993) which include transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991) and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Baxter Magolda, 1998; Pizzolato et al., 2012). Liberatory education is concerned about the reproduction of unequal structures and it asks, "how people learn to challenge beliefs and structures that serve the interests of the few against the well-being of the many" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 31). Transformational learning is about "deep learning" that can become a catalyst for future consideration and informed action (Mezirow, 2000), while self-authorship is defined as "the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments" (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Each of these adult learning theories recognizes the socio-cultural dimensions of learning and considers power, knowledge, experiences of disequilibrium and reflection.

To conceptualize the role of non-profits, this study considered size (in terms of budget and staffing), levels of independence and the role of formal regulation within operating environments. The explicit theoretical foundations of these organizations, as described by core documents and non-profit staff and volunteers, was also considered.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The first draft of this dissertation was written in July 2021 from Ashcroft, a dry rural town in British Columbia. One hour south was Lytton, the town that broke the record for highest-ever recorded temperature in Canada at 49.6° Celsius and then burned to the ground on June 30, 2021. As I typed out my findings late into the night, the Ashcroft Volunteer Fire Department was working to provide structural protection and a "ring of fire" burned around us. We remained on evacuation alert for three weeks. One hour east was Kamloops, the town that

broke Canada's silence on our violent history of residential schools. The remains of 215 children were found at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and organizations like the Indian Residential School Survivors Society continue to assist survivors with litigation and provide essential services to deal with intergenerational traumas. Five hours north was Prince George, a town that broke news for the alarming rates of death due to toxic drug use. In the first six months of this year, 27 people died of drug overdose (BC Coroners Services, 2021) and in response, the Pounds Project, a local harm reduction initiative advocated for drug users, offered safe consumption services for people who use substances, and provided training and distribution of naloxone.

What connects each of these vignettes is the important role that non-profit organizations play in the survival and quality of life that Canadians enjoy, particularly those in non-metropolitan areas. Non-profit organizations provide important services and support for not only fire prevention, litigation, and advocacy, but also education, recreation, the arts and entertainment, well-being and health, faith, culture and, Indigenous services. Non-profit organizations are critical to the Canadian economy (Emmet, 2016) and without a vibrant non-profit labour force, all Canadians will suffer. In 2007, the first-ever labour force strategy for the Canadian non-profit sector was developed and in 2017, young workers were identified as crucial to the sustainability of non-profit organizations (Cordeaux, 2017). Almost half of non-profit employers say that it is difficult or very difficult to recruit employees and almost a quarter struggle to hire professionals (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008) yet young people are "unaware of the full set of non-profit employment opportunities available to them, and inadvertently constrain their options" (Cordeaux, 2017, p. 7).

This study is significant because it will examine WIL as a tool within the workforce strategy. Through an analysis of individual, social, and institutional conversion factors, this study will explore to what extent WIL is able to support students entering and contributing to the workforce in ways that they find valuable. It will also allow an assessment of whether WIL is a viable strategy for the recruitment of graduates into non-profit organizations. This analysis will **contribute to the evolution of the non-profit workforce** and is significant for non-profit organizations, for students looking for work, and for Canadians who enjoy a quality of life that is currently only possible because of the work of non-profit organizations.

This study will also **contribute to theorization about WIL**, extending the debates within WIL in four ways. First, it provides an alternative approach to the human capital theory, which is most often used to underpin WIL. This study offers the Human Development and Capabilities as an appropriate theoretical option and in doing so, expands the ways of evaluating WIL beyond a narrow view of employment outcomes. Second, non-profits are under-represented in WIL (CEWIL/ECAMT Canada, 2019; Sattler & Peters, 2012) and this study contributes towards a more fulsome understanding of the strengths and limitations of non-profits as they participate in WIL. This understanding can provide a foundation for policy and funding decisions and can broaden the kinds of organizations that can participate in WIL in the future. Third, this study expands the resources to prepare host-organizations as they take up their role as co-educators. Though it is widely acknowledged that workplace supervision plays a significant role in creating meaningful WIL experiences (Hardie et al., 2018; Rees et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2012), there is little research to understand employer attitudes towards WIL (Sattler & Peters, 2012) and there has been an underinvestment in research and theories to support host-organizations

performing this role (Hardie et al., 2018; Hays & Clements, 2011; Rees et al., 2019; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016). This research seeks to address that gap. Finally, this study stretches the discourse on personal agency and asks, what are the limits to WIL in terms of developing agency and can those limitations be stretched through education? What other factors are at play?

This study is also significant because it **complicates our theories about the relationship between education and the labour market**. The Prime Minister of Canada claims that through WIL, "more young Canadians will be able to get the skills and experiences they need to start a well-paying career after they graduate" (Trudeau, 2017). The federal government's investment into WIL is changing the role and function of post-secondary institutions; however, minimal attention has been paid to the theories that underpin WIL, including human capital theory and neoliberalism. This study makes visible a range of factors that prevent well-paying careers, at personal, social, and institutional levels, and suggests that while education can contribute towards labour market outcomes, it is insufficient to solve the current crisis of graduate under- and unemployment.

In Canada, post-secondary education falls within the provincial mandate, yet WIL has become a national priority and is funded federally through national and provincial mechanisms, such as the Student Work Placement Program, Business + Higher Education Round Table (BHER), Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL), and Riipen, a market-based technology platform that connects students to employers (CEWIL, 2021b; Government of Canada, 2019; Riipen, 2020); as well as through the Provincial Ministries of Advanced Education and Skills training (or counterparts) and to post-secondary institutions as part of strategic

mandate agreements. The focus of this research is a non-metropolitan region of northern Canada, and this is important to note, as WIL policies and social arrangements are largely focused on profit-based industry in urban centres and most northern post-secondary institutions are drastically under-resourced to effectively deliver WIL. It is hoped that this study will **contribute to federal and provincial policy and funding discussions** and lead to more equitable resourcing across Canada.

1.5 Personal Rationale

For almost two decades, I worked at a large, international, child-focused, community-based non-profit organization in both Indonesia and Laos. Though I worked with incredibly talented people, our work suffered because of two staffing challenges. The first was the difficulty to recruit and retain people and the second was the ability to equip staff to "think about new ideas" and to "think the unthinkable" (Wheelahan, 2007, p.25). Post-secondary education was not a condition for employment, but I wondered what it would take to create a stable workforce of people who are able to think critically. Could wider access to post-secondary education address this challenge? In our context, post-secondary education was still a privilege reserved for elites. In Laos, the first university opened in 1996, and in both countries, education was financially impossible for many.

After eight years in Asia, I returned to Canada and began a new role as the Director for Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto (U of T). Graduates from U of T are among the most employable in the world (U of T, 2020) and I was eager to see how Canadian employers sustained a stable workforce of critical thinkers. I was confident that my prior staffing challenges were behind me. I was wrong! I quickly learned that worldwide

employers perceived a shortage of critical thinking (Gray, 2016) and based on my own experience as an employer of graduates, it was difficult to recruit and retain a stable workforce. The rising importance of work-integrated learning (WIL) as a mechanism to address both critical thinking and labour market challenges intrigued me.

As a first-generation working-class student, WIL changed the trajectory of my working life. My family did not have the resources to explain the dimensions of professional life and after spending $30,000 on my education, I did not understand the pathways to employment. In the weeks after graduation, I remember going through the Yellow Pages phone book and cold calling companies to ask if they had vacancies. Fortunately, before I lost hope, I applied for an internship funded by the Federal Government through the Canadian International Development Agency and I was accepted for a one-year paid internship at World Vision International - Indonesia. Through my internship, I discovered a professional path that eventually led to a fifteen-year career at World Vision, culminating in the role as the National Director in Laos. When I reflect back, I realize that WIL not only offered an entry to work that I loved, but it also offered me a fertile environment to engage with, critique, and extend knowledge. This gave me agency as a professional. I also had the good fortune of beginning my career in a large organization with over 40,000 staff across over 100 countries. I was supported by an exceptional governance structure, a remarkable organizational commitment to staff well-being, and a means to engage in collective deliberations. Acknowledging the role that WIL played in my own life and also understanding the value that WIL can play to support the non-profit labour market was the impetus for this research.

1.6 Scope of Research

Work-integrated learning (WIL) falls under the umbrella of experiential learning (McRae, 2015) and is pedagogically complex because many aspects of learning are beyond the control of post-secondary educators (Stirling et al., 2016). To add to its complexity, WIL takes on many forms, such as internships, placements, co-ops, and applied research; and in Canada, it is being encouraged across all academic disciplines and post-secondary institutions. While much research has been devoted to specific forms of WIL, like co-op (Durham Board of Education, 1990; Fergusson et al., 2021; Nevison & Pretti, 2016), or in specific academic disciplines, like nursing (Jarrell et al., 2014; Slemon et al., 2018), this research was interested in how non-profit organizations experienced WIL, making the host-organization the focus of observation. For this reason, all forms of WIL regardless of academic discipline were included in this study.

Recognizing that WIL is a partnership between academic institutions and workplaces to support student learning (CEWIL, 2018; McRae, 2015), the experiences of both non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions that participated in WIL were included. In many cases a single non-profit organization held active partnerships with multiple post-secondary institutions and several faculties. However, the reverse was also true: post-secondary education institutions held active partnerships with multiple non-profit organizations.

Using a case study methodology, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts were collected, analyzed, and triangulated for meaning (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In total, eight non-profit organizations—six of which were currently involved in WIL, one of which had stopped WIL, and one that had never conducted WIL—one college and one university were the focus of study. Ten post-secondary

faculty and administrators and twelve non-profit staff or volunteers participated in semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Within the Human Development and Capabilities approach, attention was paid to how factors at the level of the individual, social, and environment/ institution enabled or constrained the ability of non-profit organizations to support students to develop agency. At the level of individual conversion factors, this study explored how non-profit organizations were positioned to support students to engage in career exploration, access professional pathways, or options to escape "from the constraints of valueless work" (Bonvin, 2006b). To address social conversion factors, focus was directed to the curricular and pedagogical context in both the non-profit setting and the formal academic setting to explore how students accessed knowledge of the practice and systems of disciplinary knowledge (Wheelahan, 2010). Finally, to understand the impact of environmental and institutional conversion factors, location, concentration, and the conditions of the non-profit labour market were considered. This scope reflected the policy and regulatory environment as well as the ideological contexts within which non-profits operate.

1.7 Summary of Chapter One

The federal government's investment into work-integrated learning (WIL) is shifting the landscape of post-secondary education in Canada. Currently the policies, social arrangements, and resources to support WIL are largely based on the experiences of profit-driven industries aligned to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences (Peacock, 2017), and are urban-centric. Yet the political decisions that shape how education is designed and delivered have an impact on students, communities, and nations, therefore should reflect Canada more broadly. The invisibility of non-profit organizations within the practices and

discourse of WIL flag concern. This research is intended to investigate the experiences of non-profit organizations within a northern Canadian context in order to expand the theories that support WIL, and to strengthen WIL as a mechanism for social change towards a more just and equitable Canada. How non-profit organizations are positioned to support the development of student agency, the strengths and limitations of non-profit organizations as they deliver WIL and what more can be done to support non-profit organizations as co-educators of students are the questions of concern.

This dissertation is structured in 11 chapters. **Chapter 2** explores work-integrated learning (WIL) and agency. The context, history, and strengths of WIL as a pedagogical approach are explored alongside three critiques: that WIL is underpinned by human capital theory, that there is a lack of diversity of organizations that participate in WIL, and that the research and theories to support co-educators are insufficient. This chapter also delves into the concept of agency from an educational framework, exploring individual, proxy, and collective agency and how self-efficacy influences agency (Bandura, 2001).

The current context of non-profit organizations is discussed in **Chapter 3**. This chapter considers the role that non-profits play in Canada today and describes the non-profit sector. The influence of neoliberalism within the current non-profit context is explored.

Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. It explains why the human capital theory is rejected and replaced by the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA). In this chapter, the difference between agency and well-being, capabilities and functionings, as well as individual, social, and institutional conversion factors are described. The informational basis of judgement by which WIL is evaluated is explained.

This chapter also includes a brief overview of liberatory education, which is used to complement HDCA in the interpretation of findings.

In **Chapter 5,** the justification for a theory-led case study of an outlier is provided. Acknowledging that this research was conducted within a critical and social realist worldview, the legitimacy of the primary instrument for research—the researcher—is presented. Sources of data and analytical processes are described, as are the limitations of this study.

Chapter 6 introduces the research findings beginning with an overview of the "Fort," and an account of the eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions who are the subject of this study. **Chapters 7** presents findings related to individual conversion factors, while **Chapters 8** and **9** explore social and institutional conversion factors, respectively.

These findings are discussed in **Chapter 10** where a re-evaluation of WIL based on this outlier case study is offered. This case study advances the theoretical discourse of WIL and provides insight into WIL as a labour market strategy for non-profit organizations. Finally, **Chapter 11** returns to the original research questions and considers the implications of the research and offers recommendations for policy and practice. Limitations of the study, areas for future research and a summary of research insights conclude this chapter and the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2. WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

2.1 Introduction

The system of education and the system of the labour market are two complex, distinct but inter-dependent, systems brought into relationship in part through work-integrated learning (WIL). This relationship is partial, unclear, multiple, context-bound, fragmented, uneven and continually in need of analysis. In this chapter, I will attempt to provide an analysis beginning with an examination of WIL using the definition of the Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (CEWIL), the lead organization for WIL in Canada. In the following chapter (Chapter 3), I will introduce the non-profit sector as a distinct workforce within the Canadian context. I will articulate the role, scale, and services of non-profits in Canada and examine the debates about the inclusion of non-profits within labour market analysis.

2.2 Work-Integrated Learning

WIL is a form of experiential learning and as a pedagogical approach it is held as a key strategy for student learning and development (Kennedy et al., 2015) leading to personal growth and awareness of self (Stirling et al., 2016). It is also a tool in Canada's national strategy to invest in the middle-class (Morneau, 2019) and "drive economic growth by giving Canadians the skills they need to succeed" (Vandeville, 2019, para. 4). As such, in 2019 the federal government made a $798 million dollar investment to increase the number of students engaged in WIL (Government of Canada, 2019). It is expected that within ten years students who want to will have the opportunity to participate in WIL through their academic program of study. Provincial governments, post-secondary institutions and business leaders have made commitments to follow suit (Business Higher Education Round Table, 2019; Innovation, Science

and Economic Development Canada, 2019; MacKenzie, 2019; Morneau, 2019; Peacock, 2017; RBC, 2020; Toronto Finance International, 2019; Vandeville, 2019; Watts, 2019).

Acknowledging the rising importance of WIL, CEWIL Canada, a network of 1100 members from approximately 50 post-secondary institutions across Canada and one of Canada's authoritative sources on WIL, agreed on a common definition of WIL. WIL is defined as "a model and process of curricular experiential education which formally and intentionally integrates a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and includes the development of learning outcomes related to employability, personal agency and life-long learning" (CEWIL, 2018)[1]. In the section that follows, I will provide a review of literature on WIL in Canada, outlining its strengths as an approach to learning and development. I will then review the CEWIL's definition for "quality WIL" and explore the multiple forms of WIL in which "quality" applies, commenting on the forms in which non-profit organizations participate. From here, I will examine the concept of "personal agency" as described by CEWIL and draw attention to the limitations of this definition. Finally, I will propose three challenges to Canada's goal for universal access to WIL: 1) that WIL is framed within a marketized human capital approach

1 In November 2021 CEWIL revised the definition of WIL to: Work-integrated learning is a form of curricular experiential education that formally integrates a student's academic studies with quality experiences within a workplace or practice setting. WIL experiences include an engaged partnership of at least: an academic institution, a host organization, and a student. WIL can occur at the course or program level and includes the development of student learning objectives and outcomes related to: employability, agency, knowledge and skill mobility and life-long learning (CEWIL, 2021a).

which naturalizes employability, 2) the lack of diversity of organizations currently participating in WIL, and 3) that research and theories to support host-organizations are insufficient.

2.3 Strengths of WIL as an Approach to Learning and Development

Learning within the workplace has ancient roots (Billett, 2014) and co-operative education dates back nearly 100 years (Linn et al., 2004). The first introductions of WIL as an educational option emerged in the 1960s, and today WIL draws on a number of learning theories including human capital theory (Khampirat et al., 2019), experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), workplace pedagogy (Billett, 1996), situated learning theory (Lave, 1991) and action learning theory (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), to name a few. In this section, I will describe the benefits that are attributed to WIL; however, this should not be perceived as an uncritical homage to WIL. WIL has constraints and limitations, which will be further articulated in sections 2.5 through 2.8.

WIL is valued as a complement to classroom-based education because of its ability to address the perceived gaps in skills and knowledge that many employers say impact graduates' employability readiness (Coulter & Willers, 2017). This includes the ability to think critically and engage in complex problem solving (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2013; Gray, 2016). Recognizing that the academic problems students face in traditional classroom settings are often "removed from the individual's experience and are characterized by the presence of all the information necessary for a successful solution" (Torff & Sternberg, 1998, p.115), WIL provides environments in which students are exposed to live problems (Bamber & O'Shea, 2009) where competing priorities, insufficient or flawed information, emotions, power, and politics influence decision making. In these real-world settings, students are expected to

deepen their knowledge and understanding through the combination of theory and practice (Cooper et al., 2010) and learn to engage in contemporary debates (Wheelahan, 2015). Workplace communities provide students a curriculum (Bamber & O'Shea, 2009) where they learn to appraise knowledge, weigh evidence, make autonomous decisions, and sometimes question authorities and previously held theories (Del Prato, 2017).

For some students, the financial benefits of participating in WIL are a draw. The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) states that through WIL, students are able to generate "earnings to help offset tuition costs" (Sattler & Peters, 2012, p.12) and some post-secondary institutions entice students to become "full-time employees with a competitive salary" (Engineering Career Centre, 2020, para.1). Not all WIL opportunities are paid, however, and in many disciplines, tensions are escalating around the implications of financial renumeration (Gair et al., 2018; Peritz, 2018; The All Work Is Work Campaign Team, 2019).

Beyond the potential financial benefits, WIL contributes to personal growth, stimulating awareness of the self, personal agency, self-management, spiritual growth, personal and social responsibility, and has been shown to increase retention rates and psychological well-being (Jacoby, 2014; Stirling et al., 2016). WIL can also support students' as citizens, developing empathy, intercultural competence, communication skills, commitment to service, leadership, and collaboration (Brabazon et al., 2019; Jacoby, 2014). Through WIL, students have been reported to gain an understanding of the complexity of social issues and reduce stereotypical thinking (Brabazon et al., 2019). Finally, WIL supports students to become workers, offering them opportunities for practical and applied learning, skills and professional development, networking, and career exploration (Stirling et al., 2016). It eases the transition into the

workplace and provides an edge in the job market (Brabazon et al., 2019; Sattler & Peters, 2012; Stirling et al., 2016). Given the potential benefits of WIL, Canada's goal for universal access is laudable; nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that not all WIL opportunities are created equally. Yorke and Vidovich (2014) suggest that WIL is often overlooked with respect to advancements in quality standards in post-secondary institutions. In the next section, I will describe some of the distinctions of "quality" WIL across nine forms, and discuss specific forms of WIL that relate to non-profit organizations.

2.4 Quality WIL and the Participation of Non-Profits

In their review of quality in higher education and the field of WIL, McRae, Pretti, and Church (2018) urge that "it is critically important to ensure that attention is also paid to the quality of WIL experiences for key stakeholders" (p.1). In 2018, they presented a framework to describe quality WIL (McRae et al., 2018), which was adopted by CEWIL in that same year. Using the acronym P.E.A.R., the framework suggests that quality WIL experiences should include four elements: pedagogy, experience, assessment, and reflection[2] and that these four elements should be evaluated during three phases: pre-WIL experience, during the WIL experience, and post-WIL experience. Curriculum and the knowledge from which curriculum is designed are separate from quality WIL and remain within the domain of educators. Curriculum is said to be for students and "educators need to develop and deliver the curriculum and resources needed to support students in the pre-experience phase" (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016, as cited in McRae et al., 2018, p. 11), yet how curriculum is assessed or to whom it is

2 See Appendix 1 for a diagram of the P.E.A.R. framework.

accountable remains unspecified. Furthermore, there is an absence of overarching "career readiness" or "employability" curriculum.

While CEWIL's quality framework does not directly address curriculum, it does reference the relationship between theory and practice and states that WIL enables "students to connect theory to practice" and apply classroom theory and skills to workplace settings, thus increasing student engagement and motivation (McRae et al., 2018, p. 8). McRae and colleagues (2018) also explain that WIL can "provide educators the opportunity to stay current with issues or practices within an industry or profession . . . and strengthen their community engagement" (p. 8). The deliberate mention of theory is notable, but it is incomplete and fails to recognize how theory prepares a workforce and creates workplaces equipped with "powerful knowledge," capable to adapt to changing contexts (Wheelahan, 2007, p.637). The learning inputs that produce "autonomous workers who exercise judgement, creativity and discretion in the workplace, or 'directed workers' who have little autonomy" (Wheelahan, 2016, p.43) remain invisible.

When individuals (or workplaces) only possess knowledge relevant for a particular context, they can become fixed on individual practices and reproduce existing systems (Brookfield, 2005); and when the context changes, they are less able to judge or imagine other options (Wheelahan, 2016). Wheelahan (2016) contends that WIL often fails to provide students "with systematic access to disciplinary knowledge that informs practice in their field," and while practical and applied learning is crucial to professional learning, if

> Curriculum eschews systematic access to the disciplinary knowledge that underpins practice, then it could reinforce social hierarchies by not providing students with the tools they need to contribute to developing knowledge in their field. It could also be at

> the expense of providing students with access to the knowledge they need to support educational and occupational progression. (p.44)

When students (and workplaces) are unable to recognize the boundaries between theoretical and everyday knowledge and between different forms of theoretical knowledge and its disciplinary divisions, they are less able to evaluate knowledge claims, to engage in current debates within their work environments, to transfer their learning into other contexts, and/or to transform the conditions of their work (Wheelahan, 2016). Wheelahan (2016) argues that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are "less likely to have had access to this form of knowledge, and that they need to be supported to gain the 'recognition rules'" so that they can make these distinctions (p.44). In these contexts, students are "are denied access to the control of knowledge because they are only given access to contextually specific knowledge and not the principled system of meaning that they can use to determine when and how to apply that knowledge" (Wheelahan,2016b, p. 186).

It is for this reason that theoretical knowledge, which reflects disciplinary systems of meaning, is critically important for WIL. While always contested, theories are the "collective representations of a society" that allow it to "transcend the limits of individual experience to see beyond appearances to the real nature of relations in the (natural and social) world" (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 2). Theoretical knowledge creates connections within the social and natural world, across time and geography, and is "secured by the social practices of a community of enquirers" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 21). Disciplinary knowledge equips students with systems of meaning and enables them to understand how knowledge is used and to evaluate the validity of arguments. With this powerful knowledge they are able to "think the unthinkable" and transform the limits of the present (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 639). While CEWIL's

quality framework mentions theory, the role of theory and its relationship to disciplinary knowledge remain unspecified and should become more central.

Students need access to theoretical knowledge, the contests about knowledge, and the disciplinary conventions that are used to evaluate knowledge claims if they are to make judgements about theory or practice or both or if they are to participate in debates and controversies within their field. The purpose is not to give students access to "the truth," but to provide access to the conceptual tools needed to make judgements (Wheelahan 2010, p.70). In the absence of such access, the risk is that knowledge for work becomes proceduralised, and this can contribute to the reproduction of existing power relations within organizations where things are done because "this is how things are done," rather than allowing for a debate on *why* things are done in that way (Wheelahan 2010).

The quality framework should reflect how students access and examine workplace theories against a disciplinary lens, how employers or host-organizations engage theoretically through WIL, and how theoretical concepts of the classroom influence the workplace environment or vice versa. It could be debated that without a T (theory), the P.E.A.R. model can serve to reinforce existing social inequalities and maintain the existing industrial regime.

In addition to the P.E.A.R. framework, McRae et al. (2018) advise that quality WIL experiences should be evaluated by their impact on stakeholders including students, employers and host organizations, educators, academic institutions and governments, and the perspectives of each stakeholder should be incorporated to ensure the quality of WIL outcomes (p. 7). Host organizations have a responsibility to "provide resources such as equipment, space, supervision, cooperative team members and a role that is suited to the learner's capabilities"

(McRae et al., 2018, p. 6). While “advocates” are mentioned, their contribution is vaguely defined as “supporting one or more of the primary WIL stakeholders” (McRae et al., 2018, p. 7) and there is no explicit reference to the role that social actors, like industry associations, unions, or regulatory bodies, play with regards to quality WIL. Certainly, in the world of work, every profession has “created a liturgy about the importance of specialized knowledge” (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004, p. 62) and social actors play a critical role in creating, legitimizing, and disseminating theoretical knowledge which are critical to WIL. The omission of social actors is particularly surprising given the profound influence of the co-op model on WIL. In the realm of engineering co-ops, Engineers Canada and each province’s engineering organization (i.e. Professional Engineers Ontario or Engineers and Geoscientists BC) has had significant impact on the design of workplace learning (Madsen, 2018). It can be argued that without the resources such as specialized knowledge, the national code of ethics and powerful lobby and networking technologies which are made available through Engineering Canada and provincial organizations, engineering co-ops, as they are currently designed would not be possible.

Undoubtedly, in some disciplines and industries, social actors provide regulations, guidance, or controls to ensure more appropriate scaffolding of experience and safety across the workplace. In many workplace settings, however, there are fewer controls to ensure appropriate scaffolding and to confirm what students have learned (Wheelahan, 2010). To address this gap, in 2018 CEWIL created a taxonomy to describe nine distinct forms of WIL: applied research projects, apprenticeships, co-operative education, entrepreneurship, field placements, internships, mandatory professional practicum/clinical placements, service learning; and work-experience (CEWIL, 2018). While all forms of WIL require academic credit,

each form is distinctive in terms of pedagogy, experience, assessment and reflection with several having competitive recruitment processes, many being paid, full-time or mandatory as shown below. Due to the particular requirements of some forms of WIL, for example, the requirement to pay or the requirement for a specific form of supervision, non-profit organizations are frequently excluded from some forms of WIL.

Table 1.

Comparing Across Nine Forms of WIL

	Competitive recruitment process	**Paid**	**Full-time**	**Mandatory**	**In Non-Profits**
Applied Research Project	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Rarely
Apprenticeship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rarely
Co-operative Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes / No	Rarely
Entrepreneurship	No	Self-Funded	Yes	Yes / No	No
Field Placement	No	No	No	Yes / No	Yes
Internship	Yes	Yes / No	Yes	Yes / No	Rarely
Mandatory Professional Practicum/Clinical Placement	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Service Learning	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Work Experience	Yes	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Rarely

Note. Adapted from CEWIL's Resource Hub (CEWIL, n.d.c).

When non-profit organizations participate in WIL, it is more likely that they participate in service learning, mandatory professional practicum/clinical placements or field placements. These are described as follows:

Table 2.

WIL definitions

Field Placement: Provides students with an intensive part-time/short-term intensive hands-on practical experience in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements may not require supervision of a registered or licensed professional and the completed work experience hours are not required for professional certification. Field placements account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, clinic, practicum, and internship. **Mandatory Professional Practicum / Clinical Placement:** Involves work experience under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional (e.g., preceptor) in any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Practicums are generally unpaid and, as the work is completed in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload. **Community Service Learning:** Integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and critical reflection to enrich the learning experience and strengthen communities. In practice, students work in partnership with a community-based organization to apply their disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the community.

Note. This is reproduced based "What is Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)?" (CEWIL, n.d.b)

Research and scholarship to further refine the nine forms of WIL are emerging. CEWIL uses a number of mechanisms to generate new knowledge and best practices—for example, they have an annual WIL research prize and host conferences and workshops to test and disseminate ideas. However, rural and northern regions are rarely the subject of research and due to resource constraints, they are also often under-represented at national conferences and workshops. This underrepresentation has contributed to a more urban-centric lens within WIL

policies and practices and has meant that national WIL resources, like the taxonomy, are inadequate to address the specific contexts in rural and northern regions.

Non-profit organizations are usually the exclusive focus of Critical Service Learning (CSL); CSL positions itself as distinct from service learning but is not included in CEWIL's definition of quality WIL. CSL emerged more robustly in the literature in 2008 following Mitchell's provocative article "Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models" (2008). According to CSL practitioners, service learning is a "depoliticized practice" and can perpetuate inequalities, preserve unjust structures and "normalize and civilize radical tendencies" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51). The goal of CSL, conversely, is to "deconstruct systems of power so that the need for services and the inequalities that create and sustain them are dismantled" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 50). In this, CSL has an explicit and unifying curricular focus on social justice and the redistribution of power. As stated by Mitchell (2008), one of the pioneers of CSL, "merely assigning students to work in a particular agency or program is not enough, faculty, students, and staff must all be involved in a dialectic and responsive process that encourages analysis and action to address issues and problems facing communities" (p. 54). Many CSL practitioners would argue that CSL is a form of experiential learning and resists inclusion with WIL frameworks, stating that WIL is an "act of dominance and exclusion and that it is attempting to colonize other forms of experiential learning" (Peacock, 2021).

2.5 The Limitations of "Personal Agency" within CEWIL's framework

I have discussed CEWIL's framework for quality WIL, the nine forms of WIL, and I have depicted the forms of WIL and experiential learning in which non-profit organizations

participate. Now I will turn to an exploration of "personal agency" as described by CEWIL[3]. Taking a normative approach, CEWIL (2018) states that WIL should support students to develop personal agency. To define personal agency, CEWIL references Bandura's 1977 article entitled "Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change" and McRae's 2015 articled entitled "Exploring conditions for transformative learning in Work-Integrated Education." In this section, I will provide an overview of personal agency with reference to Bandura's and McRae's articles, and then I will articulate the limitations of this definition, providing additional ways to consider the conception of agency as it is related to WIL.

2.5.1 Agency according to Bandura 1977 and McRae 2015

Bandura, an American psychologist, introduced Social Cognitive Learning theory in the 1960s, which posited that learning occurs in social contexts and reflects dynamic and reciprocal interactions between people, environments, and behaviors. A decade later he wrote his seminal article on self-efficacy, connecting the concept of agency with self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). He described efficacy as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcome" (Bandura, 1977, p.193). Bandura (1977) was clear that self-efficacy was about "explicit types of performances" (p. 151) and while "expectations of personal efficacy do not operate as dispositional determinants independently of contextual factors" (Bandura, 1977, p. 203), he also noted that "once established, enhanced self-efficacy tends to generalize to other situations in which performance was self-debilitated by preoccupations with personal inadequacies" (p. 143). Bandura's research was based on the

3 In response to my written concerns about CEWIL's use of the term "personal agency," in November 2021 CEWIL eliminated the word "personal" and changed their definition to "agency."

experiences of people overcoming phobias and his research demonstrated that self-efficacy beliefs were a stronger predicator of behavior compared to past performance (1977). Self-efficacy contributed to sustained efforts, even when faced with obstacles.

Bandura (1977) identified four sources of information that affect the expectations of personal efficacy: 1) Performance accomplishments, 2) Vicarious experiences, 3) Verbal persuasion, and 4) Physiological states. These sources of information suggest that self-efficacy is not developed in isolation; there are social and contextual aspects which contribute to self-efficacy. For example, Bandura (1977) recommended that scaffolded instruction, designed "safeguards," modeling, story-telling, a sense of belonging and connection, as well as the removal of fear, anxiety and sorrow can enhance self-efficacy.

Four decades later, McRae (2015) wrote "Exploring conditions for transformative learning in work-integrated education," which built on Bandura's 1977 theory about the enabling conditions for the development of agency. McRae (2015) took the position that academic institutions are "intentional in facilitating the student's shift to workplace through their work-integrated learning programs" (p. 138), and that both educational institutions and workplaces are complex, dynamic activity systems embedded in social-cultural contexts. In this article, Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory is applied to test the conditions in which WIL contributes to "future considered and informed actions" (Mezirow, 2000, as cited in McRae, 2015, p. 138), where students intentionally use critical thinking skills in the process of deep learning.

Based on four case studies that reflect the experiences of students, employer supervisors and coordinators, McRae (2015) established that a supportive environment leads to

increased agency (p. 140) and that when students have quality opportunities to learn, space for assessment and reflection, team support and support from a supervisor, students are more likely to engage in transformational learning. Similar to Bandura, McRae (2015) unequivocally indicated that personal agency is not developed in isolation, but that it is socially and contextually mediated through "healthy dialectical processes" (p. 140) and involved relationships within academic, workplace, and personal domains. Furthermore, time spent in context (i.e., WIL) and time spent to reflect and integrate experiences after the fact were found to impact the type and strength of transformational learning (McRae 2015). McRae (2015) concluded that to illicit transformational learning which includes agency, adequate time must be dedicated to support students before, during, and after WIL experiences, but she cautioned that not all workplaces are prepared for the changes that occur as a result of personal and social transformation (p.142).

2.5.2 Extending Agency and Self-Efficacy

While the articles written by Bandura (1977) and McRae (2015) provide an introductory understanding of personal agency, given the importance of this concept to this research, further elaboration is necessary. To do this, I will describe how Bandura further developed his theories of self-efficacy following his 1977 article, and then I will discuss the impact of collective self-efficacy on career outcomes. Finally, I will explore the shadow side of agency as it pertains to students and work.

Following his 1977 article, Bandara continued to develop his analysis of self-efficacy in important ways. Pivotal to this study, Bandura (1986) qualified his previous work and indicated that self-efficacy was not about generalizable behaviours or attributes, and instead explained

that efficacy reflects “people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain *designated types of performances* [emphasis added]” (p. 391). Samman and Santos (2009) agree with Bandura and suggest that agency is multidimensional in nature (a woman can have reproductive agency but not political agency, a Black man can have heightened political agency but minimal economic agency); agency has relational foundations and that while aspects of agency are internationally comparable, there are aspects which are context specific. In the context of WIL, this suggests that while students can become more self-efficacious to achieve particular tasks and outcomes, to expect students to develop a sense of personal agency that will transfer to all domains of life is unreasonable.

Bandura (2000) also reframed the fourth source of information that contributes to efficacy, combining emotional and physiological states. The specific inclusion of emotional states is important to the analysis of WIL because of the wide-ranging treatment of emotions within both workplaces and academic environments.

Most importantly, Bandura (2001) expanded the spheres of agency and twenty-five years after writing his influential article “Self-Efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change,” he introduced three different spheres of agency: individual, collective and proxy agency. Pertinent to this research, he suggested that at the individual and collective levels, self-efficacy beliefs influence human functioning (Bandura, 2001). Bandura explained that in a collective setting, efficacy beliefs take shape beyond the “sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members,” and that the deeper the collective’s aspirations and motivational investments, “the stronger their staying power in the face of impediments and setbacks, the higher their morale and resilience to stressors, and the greater their performance

accomplishments" (Bandura, 2001, p. 14). He described proxy agency as a form of agency when individuals turn their control to others whom they believe can exert "direct influence when they have not developed the means to do so, they believe others can do it better, or they do not want to saddle themselves with the burdensome aspects that direct control entails" (Bandura, 2001, p.13). I will now explore some of the recent literatures on efficacy and careers at both individual and collective levels.

2.5.3 Collective Agency, Self-Efficacy and Career Mobility

Over the last twenty years, self-efficacy has been well-studied and quantitative research suggests that collective self-efficacy leads to career choices, mediating whether an individual will believe they are suitable to a particular career or not. A study conducted by Hackett and Betz (1981) found that low levels of self-efficacy of women and economically marginalized populations were highly associated with a restricted range of career options, while a study by Bonnet (1994) demonstrated that women (both married and unmarried) had higher levels of career self-efficacy in comparison to men (both married and unmarried), when considering traditional female occupations. Research by Schaub and Tokar (2005) and Williams and Subich (2006) offer evidence that Bandura's four sources of information contribute to career self-efficacy; however, access to the four sources of information are not equally distributed across groups. Williams and Subich (2006) explain that men and women have differential access to efficacy information, which contributes to gendered differences in self-efficacy. Lent, Brown and Hackett suggest that self-efficacy beliefs are affected by learning experiences, and that learning experiences are shaped by the interaction between demographics, individual difference, and background contextual variables (1994, 2002).

How post-secondary institutions contribute to self-efficacy beliefs across diverse student identities largely remains under-examined. Significantly, Livingstone and Sawchuck (2003) suggest that "differential economic power and access to organized education resources tend to shape individual and collective learning activity" (p. 113). Brown identified that those who participate in co-ops and internships, lead clubs, or study abroad are often "those with the personal and family resources who are able to meet the costs associated with an extended competition" (2003, p. 148). Additionally, upper class and middle-class students are more likely to access private education, tutors, counsellors, and career specialists, which parents justify as "an expression of doing the best for one's child, rather than cheating on society" (Brown, 2013, p. 157). Nunez (2014) says that "dynamics of identity, power and history play out to shape educational experiences and outcomes in differential ways" (p. 87), and in this, power and context are not separated from the learning process but are constitutive features of it. Self-efficacy is influenced by an individual's power, access, identity, history, and the design of educational experiences - like WIL - can often unknowingly be complicit in reinforcing and reproducing existing social patterns. In this regard, it is interesting to note that studies appear to suggest that the way a student perceives discrimination towards their group has a more powerful impact on their self-efficacy compared to their material position (Shin & Lee, 2018). In a study of 139 American college students, Shin and Lee (2018) investigated the impact of sex, socio-economic status, classism, modern-sexism, and locus of control on career decision and self-efficacy, concluding that while sex and socio-economic status do not impact career decisions, self-efficacy, classism, and modern sexism do (p.322). With this in mind, the concept

of collective agency has significant implications if WIL is envisioned as mechanism to access middle-class jobs for all WIL participants.

2.5.4 The Shadow Side of Agency

A priority of WIL in Canada is that students develop personal agency and WIL is believed to prepare students for middle-class jobs (Morneau, 2019). While there are many potential benefits for students, employers, and society when agency through self-efficacy is developed, arguably, there is also a shadow side. As demonstrated above, access to self-efficacy information is filtered according to group status and position, and educational opportunities can further mediate self-efficacy information. Yet an uncritical understanding of personal agency often lends to the conception that agency is generalizable and reflects personal characteristics, which are universally accessible. This conception of agency can be used as a tool for the ruling class to maintain their status and mobilize power to enhance or defend their share of rewards or resources (Murphy, 1984). In many post-secondary institutions in Canada there remains a monopoly on entry requirements into educational opportunities like WIL—this is sometimes in the form of exorbitant costs, additional time, or through the enactment of visible and invisible rules that limit those without access to elite networks or social capital. Through these schemes, powerful social groups, including employers, are able to structure competition in ways that favour those with "personal agency" and do not take into account the conditions that exclude many students from being exposed to sources of efficacy information. In these cases, "learning is disproportionately determined by cultural material context, and not primarily by forms of individual capacities" (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2005, p. 117).

Furthermore, Mirchandani and Brugha (2017) postulate that the way youth unemployment is popularly framed around agency suggests that the citizen is required to take responsibility for their under or unemployment rather than the state taking responsibility for systemic economic reliance on low-wage labour (pp. 48-49). Costea, Amiridis, and Crump (2012) raise concerns that university environment messaging about the labour market often goes unnoticed, creating hegemonic beliefs about work. Employers are brought onto campuses "free from [their] normal organisational obligations and constraints . . . unrestricted by the formal context governing an employment contract" (Costea et al., 2012, p. 27). Mirchandani and Brugha (2017) argue that "the task before us as workplace educators, therefore, is to enlarge the much-established focus on neoliberal entrepreneurialism to include the development of knowledge about the precarity rampant in the labour market" (p. 5).

To conclude, personal agency is a priority of WIL programs in Canada. Based on Bandura (1977) and McRae (2015), personal agency is specific to designated task performance and is developed through reciprocal and dynamic interactions between people, environments, and behaviors, which reflect existing power relations. While four sources of information contribute to self-efficacy—performed experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional state (Bandura, 1997)—these are not equally accessible across groups and individual identities, and this can contribute to the reinforcement of existing social structures. It is for this reason that Bandura's concept of collective agency (2000) has significant implications for post-secondary institutions, particularly as WIL is envisioned as a mechanism to access middle-class jobs. When put into the light of career self-efficacy, collective agency provides one explanation about why although there have been decades of educational reform,

classism continues to be "the most pivotal and powerful variable that acts as a barrier in an individual's career decision-making process and its outcomes" (Shin & Lee, 2018, p. 324). In the next three sections, I will describe three additional challenges to WIL that, if not addressed, can impede WIL as a mechanism for social change.

2.6 The Influence of Human Capital Theory on WIL

As I have shown thus far, WIL can have value for students, host-organizations and employers, educators, academic institutions, as well as social actors and governments. While it can provide a rich learning environment as an emerging educational approach, there are a number of considerations that must be addressed. I have articulated several of these—the lack of specificity about curriculum, the relationship between theory, disciplinary knowledge and applied learning; and the limitations of personal agency and the way this interacts with relations of gender, race, and class. In this next section, I will describe three additional challenges which threaten WIL as a mechanism towards social change in pursuit of access to middle-class jobs for more Canadians. The way WIL is rationalized signals strong alignment to human capital theory (HCT) where post-secondary education is seen primarily as a mechanism for the production of technically skilled human capital in support of national economic prosperity in a neoliberal, global economy.

In March 2017 the Business/Higher Education (BHER) Roundtable, a network which includes some of Canada's largest businesses and schools made a statement to the Standing Committee on Finance which read, "in the face of all this uncertainty, we believe it is time for the Government of Canada to focus on something it can control: helping young Canadians prepare for the skills economy of tomorrow. We believe that the most efficient and effective

way to prepare Canada's youth for the coming skills revolution is to embrace WIL" (Walker, 2017). Through this statement, we are informed that a revolution is unfolding and if young Canadians have skills, Canada will be protected from uncertainty. There is no acknowledgement of other labour market factors that can prepare students for the skills revolution: like fair labour regulations, collective bargaining, living wages, or geographic de-concentration of the workforce away from major urban centres. Furthermore, a myriad of other things that are also gained through post-secondary education and could be useful in the face of uncertainty are obfuscated. For example, the ability to dialogue across differences, better health, increased civil involvement, volunteerism, and higher social capital (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2019; Wheelahan, L. & Lavigne, 2019). Through BHER's statement, the enduring debate on the role of post-secondary education appears to be resolved. Prominent academic leaders, like Gertler, President of the University of Toronto and co-chair of BHER, state that the role of post-secondary education is to efficiently and effectively provide skills, thus rendering institutions of higher education "supplicants that supply industry what it needs," where customers can "'purchase' the specific skills that they want" (Wheelahan, 2016, p. 190). In this, the value proposition of WIL shifts from students to employers. The BC Government is unapologetic to articulate that WIL is "benefiting employers" (MacKenzie, 2019, para.1).

The federal government, under Prime Minister Trudeau also aligns WIL with HCT. In response to the 2017 federal budget, Trudeau said,

> Everywhere I go, young people tell me they can't get a job because they don't have any work experience and can't get any work experience because they don't have a job. It's a vicious cycle and one our Government is working to help break. Budget 2017 introduces an ambitious plan to support up to 10,000 new WIL and co-op opportunities per year. This means more young Canadians will be able to get the skills and experiences they need to start a well-paying career after they graduate. (Trudeau, 2017)

In Trudeau's analysis, it is explained that young people do not have well-paying jobs because they lack skills and experiences. There is no mention of the precarious work conditions in Canada, that in Ontario, 47% of millennials are working in insecure jobs, or that one in ten have worked in temporary jobs for more than three years (Martin & Lewchuk, 2018). We are in a moment in Canadian history where Canada has one of the highest levels of post-secondary education attainment in the world for young people (OECD, 2021). Trudeau does not acknowledge that employers have both the power to offer well-paying contracts and the responsibility to train staff for their specific work context. Neither does he indicate that there are striking differences in employment conditions based on the specificity of industries—for example, non-profit organizations have limited power to offer well-paying careers. There is no recognition that labour deregulation, the dismantling of unions, and lack of social actors have weakened the power of labour with respect to capital. There are other alternatives to the "no job—no experience conundrum," including alternatives that would require changes in the labour market, yet those remain unmentioned.

Recognizing the unrealistic expectations put upon education through HCT, it is reasonable to wonder, who benefits? Bruce (2006) suggests that the human capital rhetoric is largely underpinned by powerful stakeholders in society, such as multinational corporations and big businesses who are able to capitalize on WIL. In Ontario, 47% of employers say that they participate in WIL because of the recruitment advantages, and 82% offered employment to at least one graduate who had completed a WIL program at their worksite (Sattler & Peters, 2012). These statistics suggests that WIL is valuable among businesses with large staff numbers, those with significant recruitment needs, or who experience high turn-over. This,

however, sets up a narrow value proposition for participation in WIL, which potentially excludes organizations who are not able to capitalize on recruitment enhancements. Johnston (2011) cautions that when the political and social dimensions of education are dismissed and the university is heralded for the production of graduates who serve industry needs, questions must be asked about the role of the post-secondary education.

2.7 The Lack of Diversity of Organizations Participating in WIL

Recognizing the narrow value proposition that is currently used to promote WIL, it is unsurprising that there is a lack of diversity of organizations participating in WIL. As demonstrated in the section above, WIL offers recruitment advantages, making it attractive to organizations with significant recruitment needs; however, to participate in WIL requires an investment from host-organizations in terms of time, resources, and risk. Participating organizations need to balance the perceived benefits with the cost. From the limited data available, it appears that for-profit organizations, particularly those in STEM disciplines and businesses, are well positioned to participate in WIL, whereas participation is less tenable for other organizations, like non-profits.

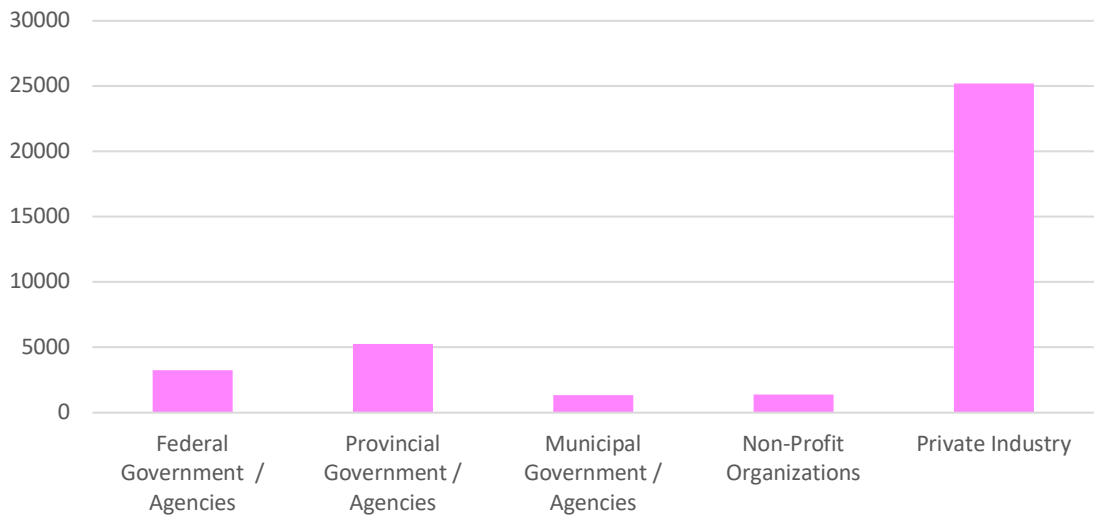
There are no pan-Canadian sources of aggregated data that provide a comprehensive view of WIL. Some provinces, like British Columbia have been reporting on co-ops for twenty-five years (Nilson, 2020), while other provinces are only beginning to develop systems for reporting. Placements have been a critical part of the curriculum in disciplines like social work for over one hundred years; however, due to the complexity of placement environments there are no inter-provincial sources of data that report on the participation of host-organizations (Bradley, 2020). On many campuses, reporting systems are nascent.

CEWIL has the most comprehensive Canadian WIL database. CEWIL's 2019 report indicates that co-op is the most common form of WIL and within co-op, almost 70% of host-organizations are from the profit sector, while less than 4% are from the non-profit sector (in most post-secondary institutions hospitals, colleges and universities are recorded as "government") (CEWIL/ECAMT Canada, 2019). This breakdown is shown in Figure 1. When comparing co-ops across occupational disciplines, 88% of reported co-ops are in STEM and business disciplines, while Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Health, Legal, Technical and Trades, Hospitality, Tourism and Recreation, and Agriculture account for just 12% of reported co-ops (CEWIL/ECAMT Canada, 2019). This is shown in Figure 2. This data compares to a survey conducted by The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) of employers in 2012 (Sattler & Peters, 2012).

In this section, I will not speculate the reasons why profit organizations are more likely to participate in WIL, for there are many possible answers. Rather, in this section I will articulate why it is important to examine the current diversity of organizations who participate in WIL. I propose two reasons: 1) It impacts which students are interested in and able to participate in WIL and 2) It affects how WIL is operationalized.

Figure 1.

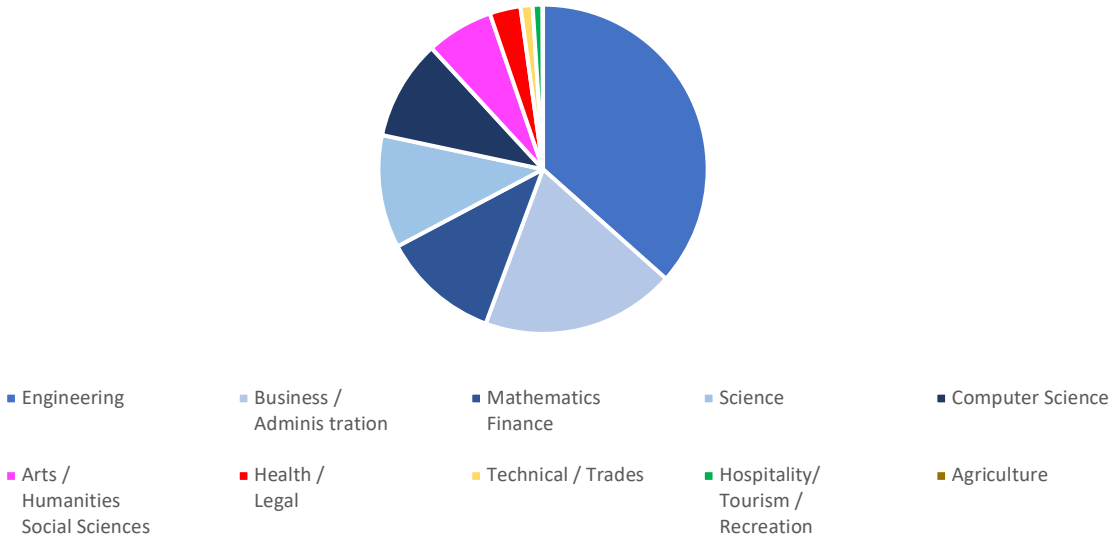
Number of Co-op Work Terms by Organizational Type, 2018-2019



Note. Graph is based on CEWIL's 2018-9 Annual Report "Work terms totals by employer type." Not all CEWIL Member Institutions submitted data prior to the publishing of this report (CEWIL/ECAMT Canada, 2019, pp. 37–38).

Figure 2.

Reported Co-ops by Occupational Discipline, 2018 - 2019



Note. This graph is based on CEWIL's 2018 – 2019 Annual Report "Work terms by occupational discipline" (CEWIL/ECAMT Canada, 2019, p. 39).

The first reason why it is important to examine the types of organizations (profit, non-profit, government/agency) and the diversity of occupations within WIL is that it influences which students are interested in and able to participate in WIL. Peacock, Executive Director of Community Service-Learning at the University of Alberta, posits that WIL disproportionately advantages male-identifying students who are over-represented in STEM disciplines, while female-identifying students who have higher representation in disciplines such as the humanities, social sciences, health and education, have fewer options for WIL (Peacock, 2017). While some might argue that WIL can be used to challenge gender (or racial) divisions within the labour market, the way it is currently operationalized does not suggest this will be the case. Furthermore, recognizing that organizations that work in STEM and business disciplines are

largely in urban centres, I speculate that the lack of organizational diversity could also disadvantage students who are in non-metropolitan communities. While these students may be interested in WIL, if they do not have local access to organizations or cannot afford to travel for WIL, they may be left out.

The second reason why it is important to consider the diversity of organizations that participate in WIL is because it affects how WIL is operationalized. In the last two decades, there has been a shift in the priorities and ways of functioning in post-secondary institutions as a result of massification and changes to funding (Cooke & Kiagawa, 2013; Cooper, L. & Orrell, 2016; Shanahan & Jones, 2007). Post-secondary institutions face pressures to engage a wider range of organizations and agencies to meet both learning and funding needs (Morley & Dunstan, 2013) and in an ecosystem of constraints, many institutions have adopted a pragmatic "if it works use it" principle to design partnerships (Wheelahan, 2007). The dominance of profit organizations within WIL has influenced how WIL is defined, how roles are structured, how organizations are incentivized to participate, how resources are contributed (time, tools, student remuneration), how risks are assessed and mediated, how bureaucratic processes are designed, how metrics for success are calculated and rewarded, and how host-organizations are selected, equipped, resourced, and assessed. Many of the operational practices that are in circulation carry assumptions that could serve to exclude some organizations from participating. Non-profit organizations, for example, cite that their core demands leave little capacity for staff to mentor students or budget to pay modest student wages, leaving them unable to participate (Doel et al., 2007; Hay & Brown, 2015).

2.8 Lack of Research and Theories to Support Co-Educators

Besides the lack of diversity of organizations that participate in WIL, there is also a lack of resources to support host-organizations as co-educators. WIL is esteemed for its perceived ability to deliver future-ready graduates who are prepared to meet industry needs (Business Higher Education Round Table, 2019; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2019; MacKenzie, 2019; Vandeville, 2019; Watts, 2019); and it is widely acknowledged that workplace supervision plays a significant role in creating meaningful WIL experiences (Hardie et al., 2018; Rees et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2012). However, there is little research to understand employer attitudes towards WIL (Sattler & Peters, 2012) and there has been an underinvestment in research and theories to support host-organizations in performing their roles (Hardie et al., 2018; Hays & Clements,, 2011; Rees et al., 2019; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2016).

In 2012, Rowe et al., conducted an extensive literature review of the roles that host-organizations play in WIL and concluded that there are four functions: support, education, administration/managerial, and guardianship. A follow-up study by Winchester-Seeto et al. (2016) demonstrated that while there is greater alignment and understanding around administrative/managerial functions, the role that host-organizations play to support and educate are misunderstood. In practice, providing students a work experience is often "mistaken for a complete learning activity" (Petherbridge, 1996) where "skills and insights are largely expected to be caught or taught on the job without formal supervision and assessment" (Cooper & Orrell, 2016). Winchester-Seeto (2016) cautions that the insufficiency of current research and resources to support host-organizations has the potential to undermine student

learning. Wheelahan (2016b) suggests that workplace learning should enable students to relate concepts within theoretical systems of meaning and students should learn "criteria . . . to evaluate knowledge claims" (p.186). Zopiatis and Constani (2007) suggest that lacking an intentional learning framework, students are vulnerable to exploitation as a cheap form of labour, where the student could have learned the same things just by virtue of having a part-time job or volunteer service activity.

In the absence of resources to support host-organizations, it appears that many default to a human capital approach, influencing how they envision and structure learning. In this, emphasis is placed on "learning to work" rather than "working to learn" (Orrell, 2018), requiring that employers find appropriate work for students where they can acquire essential workplace skills (Wong, 2020). There is a focus on task performance at the expense of disciplinary or theoretical engagement or critical engagement with the problems in the field. More than one-third of surveyed organizations in Ontario reported that they did not participate in WIL because they lacked suitable work for students (Sattler & Peters, 2012). This approach also informs WIL assessment strategies, where the placement hours and salary ranges are the most prominent metrics in circulation (CEWIL, 2018).

2.9 Summary of Chapter Two

Given the expansive learning that is possible through WIL, Canada's goal to provide universal access to WIL for all students who are interested is impressive. Seen as a mechanism to provide access to middle-class jobs, WIL carries a discourse that suggests it is a pathway towards an improved quality of life, particularly for working class students. However, as indicated in the sections above, several impediments could prevent WIL from being an

instrument of social change and, if not addressed, WIL carries the threat of further exacerbating social inequalities along class, gender, and racial lines. The quality of curriculum, the relationship between theory, disciplinary knowledge and practice, the role of social actors, the limitations of personal agency, the lack of diversity of host-organizations, and the lack of resources to support organizations, as well as the underlying presence of human capital theory, are fundamental challenges to WIL as a mechanism for social change. If WIL is expected to create a national workforce who is able to think critically and engage in complex problem solving and enter middle-class work, these demand attention. Understanding WIL as a perceived input towards labour market improvements, I will now turn to the context of the non-profit sector as a significant force within Canada's labour market.

CHAPTER 3. CONTEXTUALIZING THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR

3.1 Introduction

Since the confederation of Canada, non-profit organizations have played a significant role to address the needs and interests of the population. Today, Canada has the second largest non-profit and voluntary sector in the world (as a percentage of the economically active population) (O'Halloran, 2007, p. 343). While an important part of everyday life, non-profit organizations are frequently misunderstood, and the role of non-profits in Canadian society is increasingly scrutinized and debated (The Editors, 2000). In this chapter, I will provide a definition of non-profits and describe three key historical periods that have impacted the non-profit sector: the industrial era, the welfare state, and neoliberalism. I will then comment on the current context of neoliberalism and how that has affected non-profit organizations, particularly looking at devolution, new public management, fragmentation, competition, and the advocacy chill. Next I will explain the emerging concept of the "non-profit industrial complex." This will provide a foundation to articulate the tensions and debates surrounding non-profits as workplaces. The complexities of professionalization, regulation, and the current workforce conditions of the non-profit sector will be discussed. This chapter will conclude with a justification to include non-profits within work-integrated learning (WIL) strategies.

3.2 The Evolution of Non-Profits within the Canadian context

More than 2.4 million people work in non-profit organizations, making non-profits a significant employer in Canada (Emmet, 2016; Imagine Canada, 2019). In fact, non-profit organizations employ more people than finance and insurance, forestry, manufacturing, construction, transportation, information cultural and industries, and professional, scientific

and technical services (StatsCan, 2021). Emmett, who is Chief Economist for Canada's charitable and non-profit sector for Imagine Canada, suggests that non-profits are critical to the quality of life that Canadians currently enjoy, they are vital to our economy and they provide important services and supports (2016). There are more than 180,000 non-profits in Canada (Blumberg, 2018) and collectively they accounted for 8.5% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017 (Imagine Canada, 2019). In the last decade, the non-profit sector has grown faster than the economy as a whole (Emmet, 2016).

Within Canada, non-profit organizations are defined as organizations that meet three key criteria: a) They are private and not controlled by government; b) Their main purpose is to serve a social or public purpose rather than to maximize and distribute returns on invested capital; and c) Engagement in them is voluntary (done by free will and without coercion) (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2003). Additionally, the non-profit sector is independent from the private market, has its own self-governing structure and processes, and non-profits depend to varying degrees on volunteers (Mulé & DeSantis, 2017, p. 11). There are fourteen categories of non-profits, as shown below:

1. Arts and Culture
2. Sports and recreation
3. Education and research
4. Universities and colleges
5. Health
6. Hospitals
7. Social services
8. Environment
9. Development and housing
10. Law, advocacy and politics
11. Grant-making, fundraising and voluntarism
12. International development
13. Religion
14. Business and professional associations

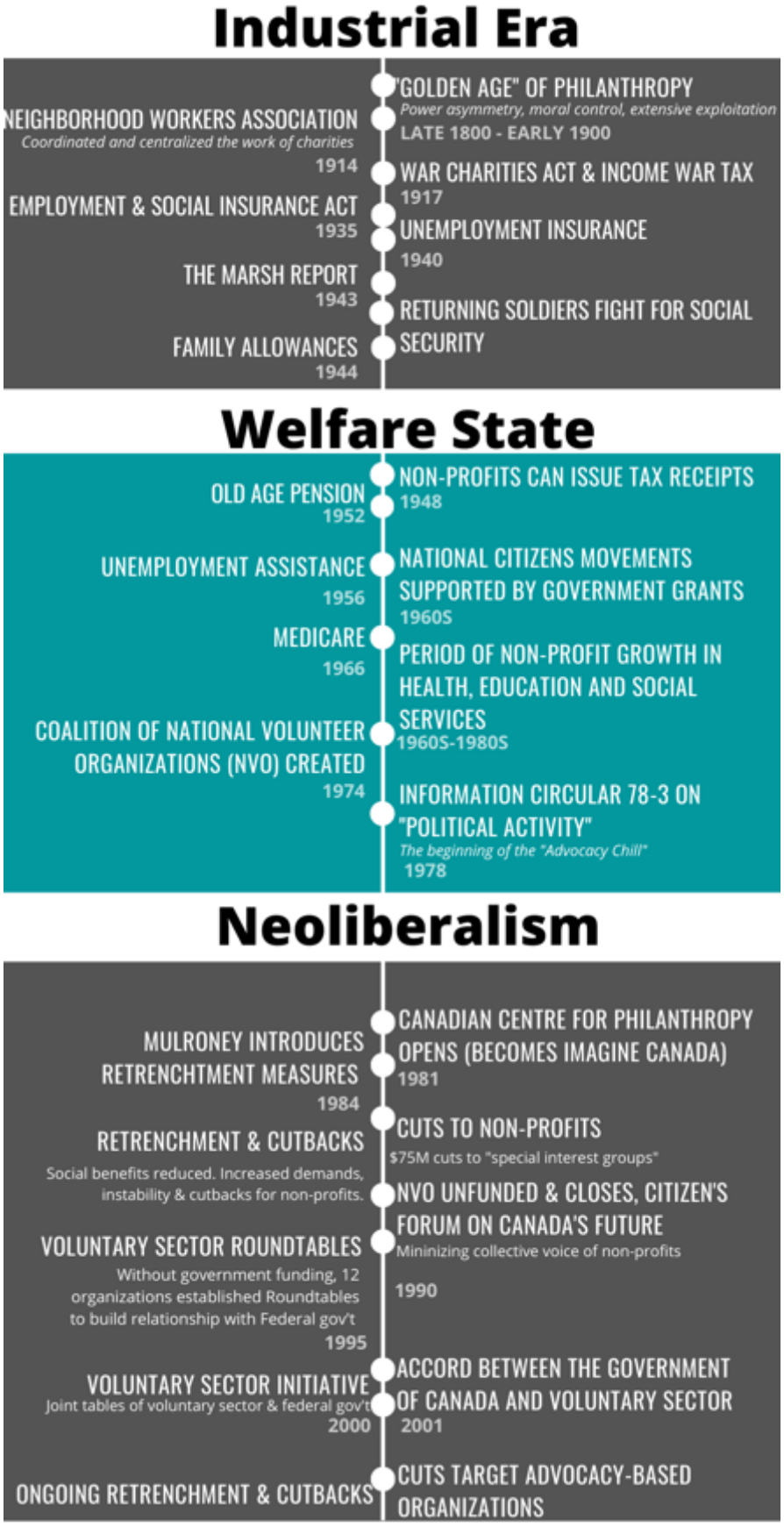
Within the non-profit sector, there are a number of distinctions: between voluntary and paid work; between community, government and business non-profits (Imagine Canada, 2019); and between service delivery organizations, those with "expressive" or advocacy mandates, and

philanthropic organizations (Elson, 2007). Hasenfeld and Gidron (2005) suggest that the purposes of non-profits fall into three categories: grassroots or volunteer-based organizations that are said to foster collective trust and strengthen democracy, social movements that challenge the state; and non-profit organizations that "legitimate and reinforce state regimes and policies" (p. 101). The latter are most likely to receive tax-exempt status and receive a significant portion of their funding through government transfers. In Canada, for taxation purposes there are also distinctions between charities and not-for-profit organizations (Government of Canada, 2016).

Since Canada's inception, the role and landscape of non-profits has changed considerably, responding in dynamic and reciprocal relationships to economic, political, and social trends. In the next section, I will describe three particular periods within the non-profit context: the industrial era, the welfare state, and the current period of neoliberalism. Figure 3 outlines these historical periods.

Figure 3.

A Brief History of Canadian Non-Profits



Note. Adapted from "A short history of voluntary sector-government relations in Canada" (Elson, 2007)

3.2.1 Industrial Era (1867 - 1944)

Prior to confederation, public aid and social services were administered through First Nations, municipalities, churches, and special interest groups (O'Halloran, 2007; Elson, 2007). When the first Prime Minister took office in 1867, health, welfare, and education were made Provincial responsibilities and the regulation of non-profit organizations was designated to the provincial level. Practically speaking, this had minimal impact on organizations that were already operating, and financial contributions from the government were meager. Little changed until the economic boom in the late 1800s (Elson, 2007).

As industrialism took off, the Canadian economy was marked by both significant economic growth and severe inequalities (Nielsen & Alderson, 1995), and this contributed to the proliferation of charities. Some refer to this as the "golden age" of philanthropy (Elson, 2007). During this era, non-profits were characterized by significant power asymmetries between donors and those served, and lines of social distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor were maintained through moral controls according to partisan and religious values (Elson, 2007; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Service delivery was fragmented, and this prevented the creation of comprehensive approaches to systems change and also concealed the depth of social and economic problems (Elson, 2007). In urban centres, attempts were made to coordinate and centralize non-profit organizations, for example through the Social Service Commission in Toronto (1912-1914) and the Neighbourhood Workers Association (Lucas, 2018).

Many non-profits remained localized until the *1917 War Charities Act* and *Income War Tax Act* were passed. The needs of veterans and their families were extensive and in order to regulate the charitable field and discourage fraud, the federal government established the Act

to provide unlimited income tax deductions for donations to designated war charities (Elson, 2007; Glassford, 2007; O'Halloran, 2007). This act enabled the scaling up and systematization of several national non-profit organizations that still exist today, including the Canadian Red Cross and the YMCA.

There were several other important milestones in this era, particularly the introduction of government safety nets. Responding to social unrest from mass unemployment and drought in the 1930s, the Employment and Social Insurance Act was passed in 1935, setting the stage for a national unemployment scheme, which was secured five years later. As World War II took hold, soldiers fought for social security, and in 1944 the Family Allowances Act was passed. These social securities provided the foundation for non-partisan social protections for all Canadians and signaled the responsibility of the government to ensure basic welfare.

3.2.3 Welfare State (1945 – 1979)

The end of World War II marked the beginning of the Welfare State. This era was defined by significant changes in the distribution of wealth and was the period with the most equitable incomes in Canada's history (Green et al., 2017). Between the late 1940s to the 1980s, Canada saw the lowest share of market income held by the top 1 percent earners and the highest rates of marginal income tax. This is shown in Figures 4 and 5 below. Effectively speaking, the rich had a smaller portion of the total economy, and those who were rich were taxed more than in previous and future eras. This meant that a substantially larger share of financial resources

were allocated to the common good and this impacted the size, functions, and nature of non-profit organization during this period.

Figure 4.

Share of market income held by the top 1 percent earners

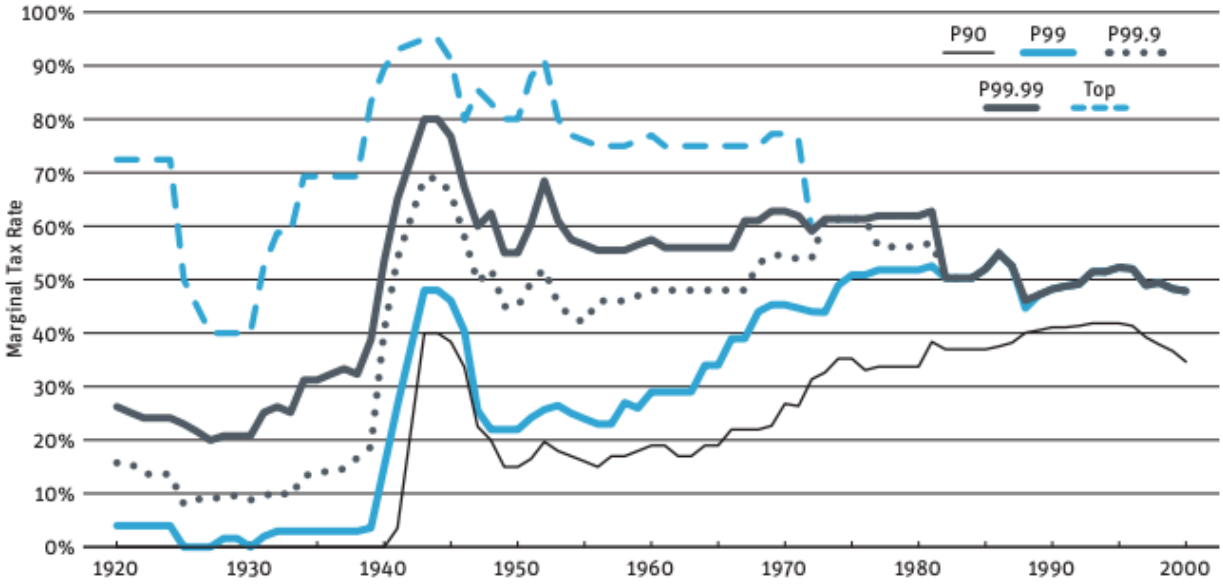
Note. Top 1% earners in Canada and the United States, 1913 – 2012. Copied from "Income inequality in Canada" (Green et al., 2017, Fig.3)

With greater funds available for the common good, there were significant increases in government funding to non-profit organization. For example, in 1946, the government contributed 76% of the budget for humanistic services within the voluntary sector; however, by 1969 the government accounted for 90% of funding (The Editors, 2000). The increases in funding facilitated the emergence of non-profits across the country and in some cases, enabled the creation of networks of organizations (Dominique, 2021). Government funding also

supported national citizens' movements, such as gender equality campaigns, disability rights, and human rights (Elson, 2007). The powerful and collective voice of Canadian citizens led to achievement of additional welfare provisions: Old Age Pension in 1952, Unemployment Assistance in 1956, and Medicare in 1966. The welfare era was the period with the highest growth of health, education, and social services, often provided through non-profits. Elson (2007) suggests that during this period, the relationship between non-profits and government social policy was synchronous and fostered interdependent partnerships.

Figure 5.

Marginal Income Tax Rates in Canada for Various Percentiles



Note. Copied from "How much income tax could Canada's top 1% pay?" (Osberg, 2005, p. 11)

While the number and role of non-profit organizations expanded, the government had limited information about the sector and did not make this information publicly available.

There were no national data sources and in the 1970s, non-profits had limited access to information, few opportunities to meet to discuss common concerns, and little in the ways of skills training (The Editors, 2000). Furthermore, there were no national organizations or mechanisms that enabled non-profits to formally engage with the government, and this resulted in ongoing concerns about government consultation processes (The Editors, 2000). As a result, the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO) was established in 1974, largely funded by the federal government (Elson, 2007). However, the organization structure and mandates never took off and the organization made little impact (Elson, 2007). Furthermore, things began to shift just a few years later when in 1978 Revenue Canada attempted to define "political activities" and issued Information Circular 78-3. Up until this point, "there was considerable leniency in allowing charities to engage in political activities" (Elson, 2007, p. 22); however, through this Information Circular, Revenue Canada appeared to forbid comment about public issues, including "writing letters to the editor" (Elson, 2007, p. 22). While the circular was later withdrawn, since then Revenue Canada has been more stringent about political activities and stipulates that charities must spend less than 10% of their income (or 20% for small non-profits) on political activities in order to maintain tax exempt status. This stipulation sparked fears and caution among non-profit organizations and resulted in a "tethered" approach to advocacy (Elson, 2007, p. 22).

3.2.3 Neoliberalism (1980 – present)

Since the late 1970s, income inequality has risen supported by neoliberal ideology and this has altered the institutional, economic, and political landscape for non-profit organizations. Like the 1920s, wealth is highly concentrated (see Figure 6), but unlike the industrial period, the

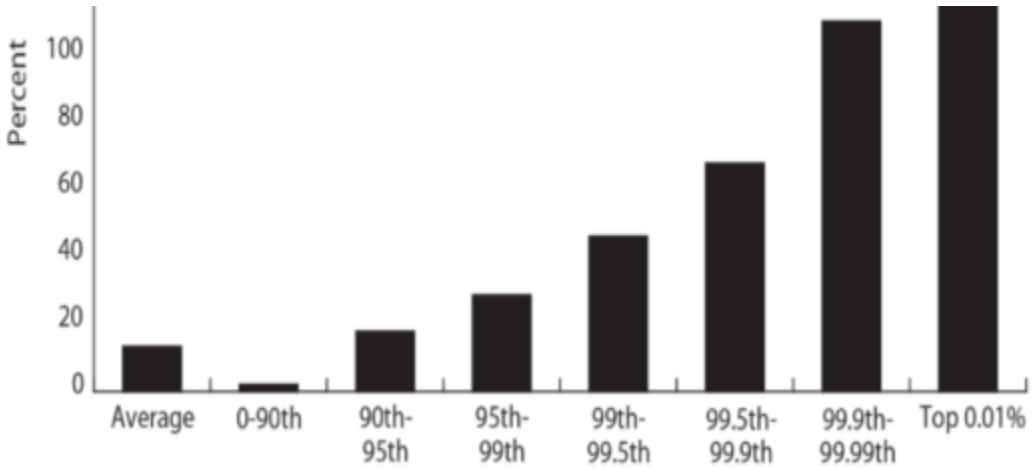
tax base collected from the top 1 percent has dropped significantly, resulting in reduced revenues for the common good. All levels of government have retrenched social safety nets; for example, reductions to employment insurance, health care, education and welfare, and governments have made drastic budget cuts to non-profit organizations (O'Halloran, 2007). By 2005, government support to the non-profit and voluntary sector had dropped significantly with just 51% revenues coming from all levels of government. By 2019,
all levels of government contributed less than 31% to the budget for community non-profit organizations and less than 5% for business non-profits (Imagine Canada, 2019). Emmet (2016) suggest that the provinces play a critical role in in financing non-profits through tax revenues, but the provinces are not keeping up the pace and reduced funding from 18.2% of funding in 1997 to 14.7% in 2008 (p. 21).

With increased polarization of economic well-being (Figure 6), the erosion of the middle class and the reduction of social safety nets, the needs of people have increased, creating greater demands for social, health, and education services (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008). The expectation has been that non-profits will pick up the pieces (The Editors, 2000; Rasmussen et al., 2003). In rural areas, the voluntary sector plays a particularly important role in keeping the community and economy afloat (Ryser & Halseth, 2014). Even though the demands are greater than before, non-profits are experiencing funding constraints, increased competition for limited funding, and a heightened need to demonstrate accountability (Malenfant et al., 2019). Today, more funding is project-based, which is "short-term and unpredictable and contributes to 'temporariness' in the sector" (Malenfant et al., 2019, p. 22). In order to maintain funding, non-profits have turned their focus to service

delivery (Hall, 2005; Pross & Webb, 2003) and the sector has bifurcated. On one hand, there is a relatively small group of very large organizations who provide services of "key interest" to governments in the areas of health, education, and social services (Hall et al., 2005).

Figure 6.

Total income growth by fractile, Canada, 1982 – 2010 (percent)

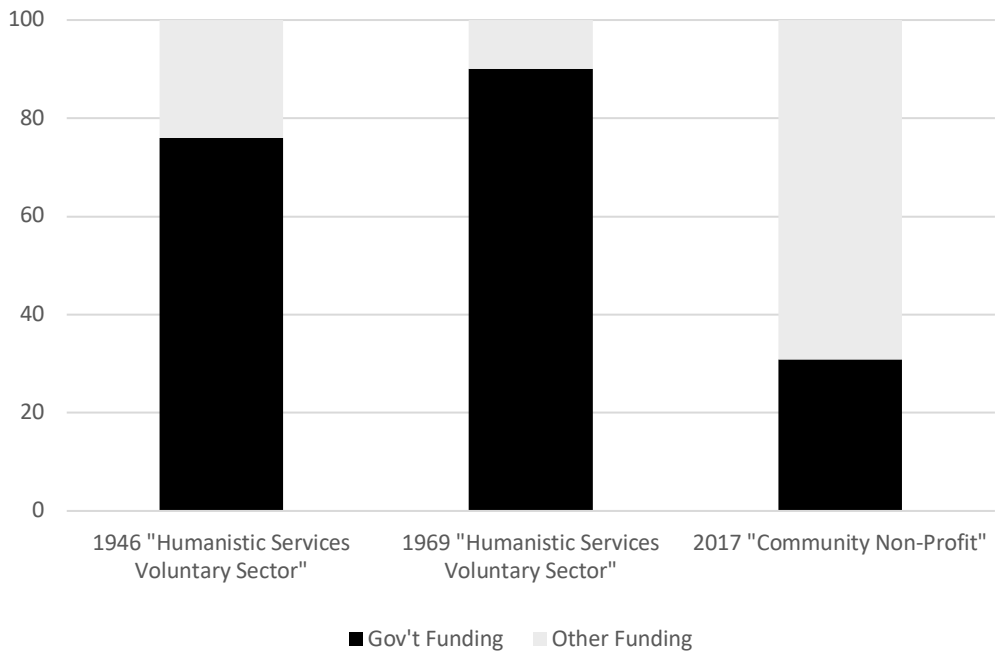


Note. Copied from "Income inequality in Canada" (Green et al., 2017, Fig.2)

These organizations continue to grow, having the ability to attract government contracts, professionally fundraise, and recruit (Hall et al., 2005). On the other hand, the majority of non-profits are small with fewer than four staff and a budget less than $250,000 (O'Halloran, 2007). Under neoliberalism, the nature of non-profit work has changed, and four trends have emerged: devolution, new public management, fragmentation, and the advocacy chill. Each of these trends will be addressed in the next section, along with an introduction to the term *non-profit industrial complex*.

Figure 7.

Proportion of Organizational Funding from Government, 1946 - 2017



Note. Based on Imagine Canada(2019) and Elson (2007).

3.3 The Current Context of Non-Profits Under Neo-Liberalism

3.3.1 Devolution

Devolution refers to the process by which authority and responsibility are downloaded from the federal government to local governments, and ultimately to non-profit organizations (Austin, 2003; Brooks, 2001). This process is believed to be a more nimble and cost-effective way to manage service delivery, particularly as, since the early 1990s, there has been an ongoing perception that volunteers can be mobilized as a reserve labour pool (Scott, 2003). Devolution led to a proliferation of non-profit organizations who engage in service-delivery,

especially health, social services, development, and housing organizations (Hall, 2005; HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008). While devolution has economic appeal, there are several detrimental consequences including:

1) **The stagnation of public policy.** Through devolution, issues are localized which reduces the national visibility of needs and stifles local actors from understanding the full extent or complexity of issues (Mulé & DeSantis, 2017). This also creates distance between those who make policy and those who implement it: policymakers are disconnected from local contexts, and local actors do not have a means to engage in broader policy discussions.
2) **The splintering of social rights.** Devolution hampers the capacity of civil society to create "bridging associations" (Putnam, 2000) across communities. This hamstrings national efforts to advocate for social change and compromises the extent to which social rights are extended and institutionalized.
3) **The subjugation of recipients to partisan social controls.** When social services are provided by the state, there is potential for public oversight through elections (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019) and "political voice activities" (Ertas, 2015, p. 608). However, when non-profits deliver state-funded services the means for public debate are removed. Non-profit organizations have their "own independent sources of authority and support" (Rasmussen et al., 2003, p. 85) and when compared to public sector employees, non-profit employees tend to feel that they should have maximum discretion in their work (Rasmussen et al., 2003). This creates vulnerability to social controls and exclusion based on organizational mandates. For

example, whether a homeless shelter will permit drugs or alcohol, or whether elderly gay couples can live together at a faith-based care home.

4) **The shift from citizen to consumer.** Devolution shifts the onus for securing needed services from the state to the individual and converts the relationships of people accessing social services from citizen to consumer. Practically, this obscures the reciprocal responsibility of citizen and state and shifts responsibility from the state to the market, and from the collective to the individual (Lessenich, 2005; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). As a consequence, the commons, which are defined as "goods and resources that serve functions of social interest rather than functions of private ownership and as such operate on a rationale different from the hegemonic social, economic and political rationale of capitalism" (Fursova, 2018, p. 12), have become increasingly narrow. In Canada, one study showed that even non-profit organizations prioritize individualized "lifestyle" based interventions while minimizing structural and collective interventions targeted at the commons (Collins, 2012).

3.3.2 New Public Management

Accompanied by the devolution of services to the non-profit sector, neoliberalism has thrust new public management practices onto non-profit organizations, eroding value-driven logics and blurring the distinction between non-profit and for-profit organizations (Frumkin & Andre-Clark 1999, 2000). This has fundamentally altered the relationship between non-profit organizations and the government. Whereas within the welfare state, non-profits were seen as partners of the government and received flexible block grants, under neoliberalism non-profits

receive short-term contract-based funding that requires adherence to strict government guidelines and reporting requirements; and rarely do government contracts cover the full costs of services and overhead (Collins, 2012; Eakin, 2001, 2005; Hall et al., 2003; Hall & Banting, 2000; Hall et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2005). Instead, non-profits are expected to supplement their budgets through fundraising and use market models to achieve greater self-sufficiency (Scott, 2003).

Recognizing the increasingly precarious and controlled funding environment in which they were operating, in 2001 non-profit organizations together with the Federal Government signed the *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* and the *Code of Good Practice on Funding,* which called for predictable, multi-year funding that included core operating costs. While the *Accord* was heralded as an "enormous promise for reshaping the contracting accountability regime" (Canada NewsWire, 2005, n.p.), today most non-profit organizations continue to face instability and uncertainty (Eakin, 2001, 2005; Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002a). Driven to achieve efficiencies, there is less funding available to direct services where most needed, to plan for the future, to support overall organizational capacity, to conduct research and theorizing, or to networking with other actors.

Additionally, non-profit organizations are under intense scrutiny due to the complicated process of regulatory control in Canada. Support, supervision, and the development of charitable purposes is under provincial jurisdiction, but federal tax laws govern revenue collection. This has created a forked approach, inconsistent interpretation of laws (O'Halloran, 2007, p. 354), and has meant that non-profits rarely get on the agenda of federal and provincial ministers because there are "no such gatherings that bring together disparate ministers

responsible for the issue" (O'Halloran, 2007, p. 365). There is a small ray of hope, however. In 2020, the Government of British Columbia announced the appointment of Niki Sharma as the Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development and Non-Profits, which is "the first-time charities and non-profit organizations will have a parliamentary secretary in the B.C. government" (Fitzpatrick, 2020, para.1).

3.3.3 Fragmentation

Together the devolution of services and new public management have contributed to the fragmentation of the non-profit sector. Funding constraints have increased competition between non-profit organizations and private sector organizations (Hall & Banting, 2000; Hall et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2005) and to retain funding from government and donors, organizations compete with each other by promoting only their own work. According to Smith (2017), this encourages organizations "to build a fractured movement rather than mass-based movements for social change" (p. 11). The culture of competition not only stifles social movements, but it also prevents inter-organizational collaboration, honest sharing, joint research, and minimizes the likelihood of theorizing across organizations. Organizing strategies lose sight of the wider context and larger goals, and are "particularized in dealing with problems," narrow in space and time (Rasmussen et al., 2003, p. 84).

Recognizing the threats of fragmentation, organizations have attempted to coalesce into groups or consortia under "umbrella organizations formed to support, educate or represent their interests and raise the public profile" (O'Halloran, 2007, p. 359). Yet, the voice of umbrella organizations is weak. Their silencing started in 1990 when the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future decided to hear from individual Canadians rather than from representative

members of interest groups (Elson, 2007). According to Elson (2007), this approach became the norm for national consultations and "was reinforced politically by the derisive reference to "special interest groups" (p.54). In 2007, voluntary sector leaders were "still explicitly and consistently told that they are only to act as an individual voice on any federal task force or committee, regardless of who they may otherwise represent" (Elson, 2007, p.54). Furthermore, in order to maintain charitable tax status, umbrella organizations have been required to "perform as a charity" (i.e., deliver charitable programmes), which is at odds with their consortia-forming mandate. Through these processes, the ability of non-profit organizations to create powerful knowledge and have a collective voice has been silenced and has hampered their ability to galvanize social change.

3.3.4. Advocacy Chill

The fragmentation of the non-profit sector, unclear regulations, and funding restrictions have created an "advocacy chill" among non-profits (Elson, 2007; INCITE!, 2017; Mulé & DeSantis, 2017). Elson (2007) suggests that non-profits live with a "de facto muzzle on legal dissent and social justice issues" (p. 24), and Mulé and DeSantis (2018) report that non-profits are increasingly reluctant to cooperate on advocacy campaigns that can influence public policy (p. 18). The advocacy chill intensified in 2006 when the federal government began to systematically eliminate or radically reduce funding for organizations that advocated for progressive public policies (Elson, 2007; Mulé & DeSantis, 2017). Today, organizations' participation in public policy-making processes continue to be influenced by the advocacy chill and many non-profits remain confused and anxious about the limitations of political activity. Social service agencies are becoming more tightly programmed and rationalized, restricting

workers to narrow, prescribed roles that preclude social activism or concern for larger social issues (Baines, 2010). There are class implications too: the engagement of marginalized groups in advocacy is more severely affected than middle-class advocates, who “are usually able to participate for longer periods because they do not have the same material and survival issues that tend to reduce marginalized groups’ engagement, thus compromising justice” (Mulé & DeSantis, 2017, p. 19).

The current decline in advocacy limits the effectiveness of non-profit organizations to attract media attention on issues of social rights, and media is critical because it helps mobilize supporters and validates the importance of an issue, thus enlarging the scope of an issue (Mulé & DeSantis, 2017). Without cross-regional media, issues are further localized and public debate is minimized. Jenson and Phillips (1996) suggest that the advocacy chill serves to stress the instrumental value of the non-profit sector as a means to deliver services rather than as an expressive voice for policy advocates and social justice; this “allows governments and corporations to place responsibility for societal problems such as pollution and poverty on individuals, eschewing any interest in or responsibility for the structural and systemic causes” (Mulé & DeSantis, 2017, p. 20). This also discourages collective civic action.

3.4 The Non-Profit Industrial Complex

Recognizing the shifts in the non-profit sector, a new term is being used to describe the current relationship of non-profits within highly stratified neoliberal economies: the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC). Rodriguez describes the NPIC as "a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social

movements" (INCITE!, 2017, p. 8). Because the state is "inherently biased toward capital," the regulations and structures that are used to govern the relationships between non-profits and government ultimately "serve profit-accumulating functions of the market" (Fursova, 2018, p. 5) and impede community-driven social change (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

Within the NPIC, non-profit organizations have been coopted into reproducing specific neoliberal subjectivities through the delivery of services, and their roles to facilitate the development of vibrant and participatory civil society or cultivate mass social justice movements have waned (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Non-profits have effectively become a "shadow state" stripped of power to engage with public policy or challenge the status quo. Furthermore, by incorporating non-profits into state apparatus as producers of social goods, the non-profit sector is re-positioned as a buffer zone, serving to manage and control public dissent by mediating conflict between citizens and the state (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; INCITE!, 2017). The NPIC promotes a culture that is non-collaborative, narrowly focused, and competitive. Additionally, the NPIC reframes social justice as a career, thus privileging educated employees and board members and silencing people most directly affected by issues of injustice (INCITE!, 2017). This has implications for non-profit organizations as a workplace.

3.5 The Non-Profit Sector as a Workplace

Though Canada's non-profit and voluntary sector is the second largest in the world, traditionally non-profit organizations have not seen themselves as a labour force (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2009), and, together with Canada's dire lack of data on the non-profit sector (Barr, 2021; Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015), insufficient attention has been paid to non-profit organizations as a workplace. The first-ever national labour force strategy for

the non-profit sector was developed in 2007 (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008) and in 2008 attempts were made to professionalize (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). While the concept of "labour market" is disputed within the non-profit sector, particularly as many non-profit employees reject the notion of transactional labour exchange, labour market concepts are useful to understand the conditions of the workplace.

In Canada, the non-profit labour context can be described as unregulated and unstructured in an uncoordinated liberal market economy. Work is often governed from within organizations rather than from external regulations or bodies, and decisions regarding job descriptions, performance, and remuneration are made through internal hierarchical or management systems. This makes it an "internal" labour market and contributes to the lack of skill mobility of workers. The HR Council for Non-Profits (2008) says that there are at least four bodies that make up the labour market: employers, existing workers, potential new workers and labour market intermediaries (Figure 8). It has already been established that employers within the sector are under-resourced and fragmented. As will be discussed, existing workers face precarity and labour market intermediaries are under-resourced. This will inform my exploration of potential new workers, which includes students, in later chapters.

Figure 8.

The Labour Market

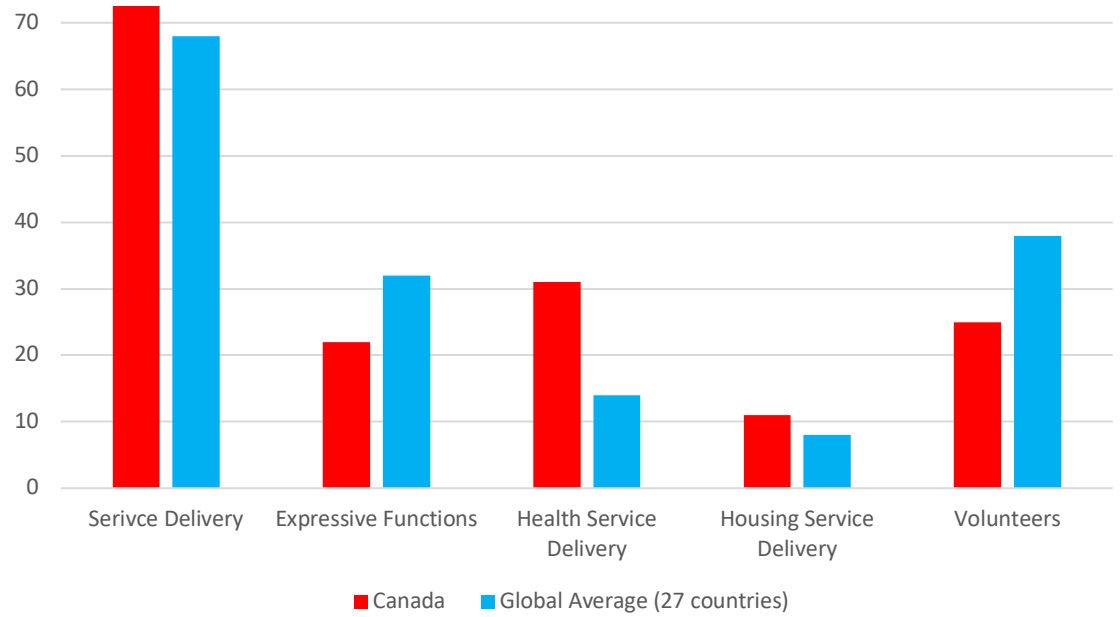
Note. Adapted from "Toward a Labour Force Strategy for Canada's Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector (HR Council for Non-Profits, 2008)

3.5.1 Existing Workers

In Canada, more than two-thirds of the non-profit workforce perform direct service delivery, with a concentration in health and housing (Hall et al., 2005; Zummach, 2005). The remainder perform expressive functions, for example, activities that allow for the expression of cultural, spiritual, professional or policy values, interest and beliefs (Hall et al., 2005). Volunteers are twice as likely to be engaged in expressive functions compared to paid staff: 36% vs 17% (Imagine Canada, 2019). Canada's non-profit workforce is disproportionately skewed towards service delivery, health care, and housing, and has lower rates of volunteers compared to global averages. See Figure 9 for comparisons.

Figure 9.

Comparing Canada's Non-Profit Workforce (as a percentage)



Note. Based on "Canada Boasts Second Largest Nonprofit Sector in the World," (Zummach, 2005)

The non-profit sector is characterized by lower wages, part-time, temporary and contract employment, minimal training, few benefits, and pensions (Emmet, 2016; HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008, 2011; Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). In 2008, 47% of non-profit employees made less than $40K while only 2.3% made more than $100K (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2009); given the small size of most non-profit organizations, there is very limited opportunity for upward mobility. Non-profits have a slightly higher rate of staff turnover compared to the average in Canada and the top reason (40.5%) non-profit employees look for a new job is because they are dissatisfied with their salary (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008).

As a sector, non-profit organizations lack diversity. Three-quarters of non-profit employees are women and work distribution is highly gendered (Malenfant et al., 2019). Ninety percent of employees are white and less than three percent of employees are Indigenous. The lack of diversity is reinforced by salary inequities, and though many organizations have anti-oppression and anti-harassment policies, it has been suggested that the precariousness of work prevents employees from acting on them (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015, p. 19). Recognizing the poor employment conditions, the Ontario Network of Non-Profits (n.d.) launched an extensive campaign to call for decent work in the sector, which includes efforts to increase diversity and inclusion.

Work-life balance is a tremendous challenge for the non-profit workforce. Expectations for performance often exceed remuneration and day-to-day duties are much broader than job descriptions. Less than ten percent of non-profit employees believe that the number of working hours is reasonable and almost thirty percent say they often end up working more hours than planned (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008). Nearly fifty percent say, “my job leaves me with little time to get other things done” (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008) and this does not change with upward progression. Thirty-two percent of leaders say that balancing personal life and work life is something they need to work on (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). Employees report that they feel obligated to carry out duties above and beyond their roles because they see direct negative impacts on their community and clients when work is not performed (Malenfant et al., 2019).

Many non-profits offer work flexibility, which young people see as a benefit compared to the private and public sector; however, this flexibility does not offer appropriate support or

stability and has been shown to create ambiguity, stress, and disengagement (Cordeaux, 2017). Furthermore, high levels of flexibility have contributed to job insecurity, a temporary mindset that inhibits long-term investments, and has created service gaps and poor community connections (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). In many cases, the qualifications that are required for positions are unjustified by the forms of labour performed. Work is transactional and context specific and this limits the portability of skills (Cordeaux, 2017). Despite these challenges, more than 85% of employees say they are satisfied with their work, and more than ninety percent say they are loyal to their organization and its cause (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008).

In addition to poor work-life balance, non-profit organizations are less likely to engage in long-term planning and invest in the training and development of their staff (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). A 2011 report by the HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector concluded that it is "clear that organizations in the sector are not spending (or do not have the resources to spend) sufficiently on training and professional development" (p. 27). In 2011, the average small non-profit spent less than for-profit or public institutions on training and development, and there was a significant gap according to the size of organization. Small organizations spent the most, approximately $1000 per employee on annual training and professional development, while large organizations spent half that and medium sized organizations spent between $100 – 400 per employee (HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector, 2011).

3.5.2 Labour Market Intermediaries

While the majority of non-profit workers suffer from poor work-life balance and an under-investment in their professional development, they maintain high commitments to the

cause and to their organizations (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008). Brookfield (2005) describes this as “being all you can be . . . coming home exhausted and feeling like it is the good” and he cautions that the concept of vocation has been cultivated to “justify workers taking on responsibilities and duties that far exceed their energy or capacities and that destroy their health and personal relationships” (p. 99). Arguably, notions of vocation, professionalization, and collectivization are contentious in the non-profit sector.

There are more than 300 different occupations and professions within the sector (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008), and though professionalization confers a sense of occupational stability and permanence, many see professionalism as a form of labour market elitism and self-protection that divides the non-profit workforce, denying security to those with fewer formal credentials, and undermining the collectivist tradition and egalitarian value base of human services (Baines, 2004; Carniol, 1990, 2000; Lundy, 2004; Mullaly, 2002). Fortier and Wong (2019) contend that attempts to professionalize social work have contributed to the erasure of Indigenous practices and have deepened structures of settler colonialism.

Professionalism is said to create a form of legitimacy by distinguishing particular forms of skills and practices from other professions, creating a “specialized knowledge” generated from a collective history. In other professions, like engineering, medicine, or law, specialized knowledge offers forms of privilege and labour market protection. It generates social capital and gives workers control over the conditions of their labour. However, it appears that given the structure of the non-profit context, the sector has been unable to leverage specialized knowledge (Barr, 2021) and most non-profit employees remain vulnerable within a volatile labour market (Cordeaux, 2017; Malenfant et al., 2019; Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). This was

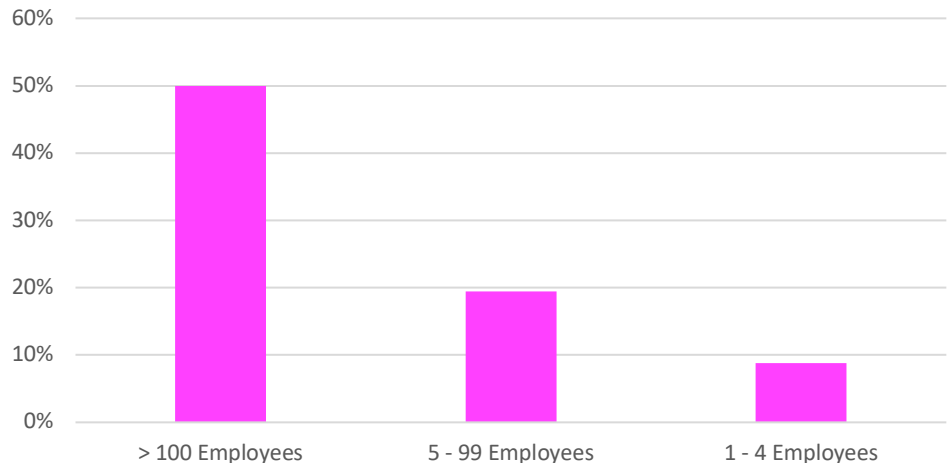
identified in the early 1980s and contributed to the formation of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy in 1981 (Elson, 2007). The Centre, which later became Imagine Canada, was created to support the collectivization of the industry through the collection and dissemination of information, research, publications, training, and development. The Centre was not expected to speak for the sector but instead support sector organizations to become more effective at speaking for themselves. Today, there are dozens of Canadian associations and affiliations established to support non-profit organizations from the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association to the Young President's Organization (Charity Village, 2021). In addition, Imagine Canada (2020) continues to work to "strengthen Canadian charities and non-profits so they can better strengthen the sector's collective voice, create opportunities to connect and learn from each other, and build the sector's capacity to succeed and serve individuals and communities both here and around the world" (p. 30). In fact, Imagine Canada created an accreditation process to support the professionalization and regulatory environment of the industry, but only 250 non-profits are accredited, which is insignificant compared to the 180,000 non-profits in Canada. The non-profit regulatory environment remains fractured and while Imagine Canada has made important contributions and has brought some attention and cohesion to the regulatory environment, it is under-funded and understaffed compared to other professional associations[4] (RSM Canada, 2021).

4 In 2019: Imagine Canada = $4M per year vs. Engineering Canada = $12M + Provincial Counterparts like the BC Engineering and Geoscientists = > $20M (https://www.egbc.ca/getmedia/843e95d2-76ac-4270-bc14-e43c66bde160/2020-2021-Annual-Report.pdf.aspx) (https://engineerscanada.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2019-annual-report/2019-12-31-engineers-canada-fs-eng.pdf).

Unionization is another way that historically has enabled workers to secure protections; however, few non-profit organizations have unionized. Over sixty percent of non-profit organizations are independent and do not have a parent organization or a sub-unit (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008). Eighty percent of non-profit employees are not members of a union or covered by a collective agreement (this percentage is slightly lower in health and social services; see Figure 8; HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector, 2011). Only twelve percent of organizations have a collective agreement and this is less likely the smaller the organization (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008).

Figure 10.

Rates of Unionization in Canadian Non-profit Organizations



Note. Based on HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector (2008).

3.5.3 Potential New Workers

Trista Spencer, Executive Director of the United Way of Northern BC, believes that "for a community to succeed, non-profits need to be seen as a viable opportunity for meaningful employment" (Community Futures Development Foundation Fraser-Fort George, 2021, p.1),

yet there is growing awareness that the employment practices of non-profits impact their ability to deliver services. This is a concern for Canada, especially in rural areas (Ryser & Halseth, 2014; Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). Short-term funding causes employment instability in the sector, which in turn forces organizations to spend significant resources for constant recruitment and training of new staff; unstable funding also makes it difficult for organizations to present working in the sector as a viable career choice for trained professionals (Hall et al., 2004, Hall, 2005). Almost half of non-profit employers say that it is difficult or very difficult to recruit employees, and nearly a quarter struggle to hire professionals (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector, 2008). Non-profits are concerned about how they can compete with the for-profit and public sector in the growing race to attract global talent (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008) and there is recognition that improvements in attraction, retention and development of young workers are crucial to prevent future talent gaps (Cordeaux, 2017).

Not surprisingly, remuneration is the biggest barrier to recruitment, but young people face particular difficulties finding stable employment and navigating career paths in the non-profit sector. Young people are attracted by the desire for meaningful work and want to make a difference; however, they are "unaware of the full set of non-profit employment opportunities available to them, and inadvertently constrain their options" (Cordeaux, 2017, p. 7). Young people report that getting the first job at a non-profit is extremely difficult and those who find success often enter through unpaid work. They take on many contracts before securing permanent positions and report that non-profit employers have unrealistic expectations for entry-level jobs (Cordeaux, 2017). Many roles require costly advanced

degrees, certifications, and formal training, yet the roles they enter do not utilize their skills (Cordeaux, 2017).

In traditionally regulated professions like nursing, teaching, engineering, medicine, or law; there are strong relationships between the profession and the academy. These relationships influence academic curricula to varying degrees, enable career exploration, forge systems for WIL, and support coordinated and more predictable entry into the profession. While some professions in the non-profit sector—for example social work and psychology—have coordinated relationships with universities, there are significant gaps across the sector, especially at the college level. Formal relationships are designed to support the future workforce but the relationship between non-profits and post-secondary institutions tend to be neglected and opportunities are overlooked (Barr, personal correspondence, 2021). Within the post-secondary context, faculty do not "think of the non-profit sector as a place in which their students might have careers" and in addition, faculty often know very little about the sector (Barr, personal correspondence, 2021). According to Dr. Cathy Barr, the Vice-President of Research and Strategic relationships at Imagine Canada, "it's not a well-developed field in Canada at all" (Barr, personal correspondence, 2021). The structures and functions that enable non-profits to partner with post-secondary institutions are fragmented and ad-hoc, which reduces the ability to effectively engage in the professionalization of the sector, to create powerful specialized knowledge, or to attract a workforce.

3.6 Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter, I described the evolution of the non-profit sector from the industrial era to the welfare state and finally to today's era of neoliberalism. This chapter focused on Canada

as a whole and in Chapter 6, I will provide a description of the non-profit context within the Fort, my site of research. In this chapter, I demonstrated that the non-profit sector is in a dynamic relationship with economic, political and social trends. While there are significant differences across the sector—for example, between direct service delivery and expressive approaches and between volunteer-based and professional organizations—non-profits have largely been impacted by devolution, new public management approaches, fragmentations, and an advocacy chill. Some refer to the current state as the non-profit industrial context. As a workforce, the sector is weak and precarious; however, employees maintain a passionate commitment to their cause and organization. Labour market intermediaries do exist but compared to other professions they are nascent, underfunded, and under-staffed. Together, this compromises the non-profit sector's ability to attract a future workforce, which includes students. Given the important contribution of the non-profit sector to our quality of life in Canada through health services, housing, recreation, culture, among others, the quality of life in Canada could be affected by our inability to attract a future non-profit workforce. With this in mind, it is worth exploring the opportunity for WIL within the non-profit sector.

CHAPTER 4. THEORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

Research about work-integrated learning (WIL) has proliferated over the last twenty years and has become increasingly theory-informed, referencing human capital theory (HCT), experiential learning theory, activity theory, and socio-cultural theories (Fleming & Karsten, 2018). Often, human capital theory explicitly or implicitly underpins WIL. For that reason, section 4.2 will describe HCT and in section 4.3 I will argue that though it is commonly used to underpin WIL, it is insufficient. In section 4.4, the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA) will be introduced as a more appropriate theory for this research, especially given the focus on personal agency in Canada (CEWIL, 2018). Section 4.5 will explain what is meant by well-being and agency within an HDCA, and I will consider how conversion factors and adaptive preferences influence well-being and agency. In section 4.6 the informational basis of judgement in justice that are used to evaluate social policy using an HDCA lens will be discussed. This will position an exploration of individual, social, and environment/institutional conversion factors related to higher education and employment activation. Section 4.7 will describe the limitations of the HDCA. In section 4.8 a brief overview of liberatory education will be offered as a complimentary theory to HDCA. Section 4.9 will summarize this chapter.

4.2 Human Capital Theory

As was stated in Chapter 2, WIL is rationalized by political actors and post-secondary institutions through reference to human capital theory (HCT). HCT legitimizes WIL by arguing that an increase in the right “real-world” skills leads to an increase in productivity, which in turn increases economic output and financial advantage. HCT is commonly cited within WIL

literatures (Drewery et al., 2020; Pennaforte & Pretti, 2015; Tanaka, 2015), establishing a neutral role for post-secondary institutions in the production of technically skilled human capital in support of national economic prosperity in a global economy. However, as I will discuss in this section, while HCT is backed by powerful rhetoric, it is insufficient as a theoretical framework for WIL. In this section, I will first describe HCT and how it has evolved since its inception and then explain why HCT is insufficient as a theoretical framework for WIL.

4.2.1 What is the Human Capital Theory?

Human capital theory (HCT) has been used as the basis for education policy decisions since the 1960s and today it continues to be a common policy assumption (Marginson, 2019). HCT was first developed by Schultz, Becker, and Mincer at the University of Chicago to describe the nature and causes of inequality in personal incomes (Mincer, 1958). Since then, HCT has evolved from a descriptive theory to a normative theory and today it is used prescriptively (Gelman & Tosone, 2010; See Figure 12).

During the late 1950s and 60s when HCT was first developed, economic growth was a top priority of the US government and new measures to assess economic progress were on the rise (Holden & Biddle, 2017). Using empirical evidence to understand differences in income at the class-level, Mincer (1958) concluded that "differences in training result in differences in levels of earning among 'occupations' as well as in differences in slopes of life-paths of earning among occupations" (p. 288). From this evidence, Schultz (1960) argued that education be treated as "an investment in man and to treat its consequences as a form of capital," and he explained that "since education becomes a part of the person receiving it, I shall refer to it as human capital" (p. 571). Schultz (1961) furthered this argument, making it "obvious" that skills

and knowledge were a form of capital which had the “most distinctive” impact on the national economic system at that time (p. 1).

In the 1960s, HCT was used to argue that investments into education were a greater priority than “land, man-hours and physical reproducible capital” (Shultz, 1961, p. 1) and this was justified based on the perceived high return on educational investments for the individual, group, enterprise, industry sector, and nation (Becker, 1962, 1964). Shultz (1961) claimed that “between 36 to 70 per cent of the hitherto unexplained rise in the earnings for labour [was] explained by returns to the additional education of workers” (p. 13). The HCT drew a universal and closed link between education and work, and made popular the idea that individuals who invested in education and training would improve their skills, knowledge, and ability, thus enhancing their employability and future earnings (Blundell et al., 1999; Dhaoui, 2013; Holden & Biddle, 2017).

In the early 1960s, when HCT grew in prominence, the United States had the “highest mass standard of living in the world” (Harrington, 1971, p. 1) and was guided by principles of social welfare (Marx, 2011). At this time, significant changes were being made to the structure of industry; there was strong and persistent growth in white-collar jobs in public and private sector bureaucracies (Brown et al., 2020; Livingstone, 2019; Wheelahan, 2021) and education served to usher people into newly created roles. In terms of the work process, human capital was perceived to be directly related to an individual's ability to apply knowledge and skills in a productive process (Becker, 1993) and human capital was simply defined as hours spent in education (Shultz, 1961). HCT was used as a descriptive theory to influence spending for public education, resulting in significant growth in institutions of higher education (Kerr, 2001).

Created in an era when racial and gender equality were fiercely pursued through social and political apparatus, HCT flourished alongside a social policy discourse of "equity of opportunity through education" (Marginson, 2019, p. 288). HCT articulated assumptions about the qualities of human capital (i.e., human capital could be affected by racial and religious discrimination, geography and migration, life course, and family roles) and it named the role of other social actors, like professional associations and governmental bodies, to mediate the return on investment in education (Schultz, 1961). Human capital theorists also argued for the importance of reforms and laws to manage "imperfections of the capital market" (Schultz, 1961, p. 14). Since then, the political paradigm has shifted from social welfare to neoliberalism and the context of post-secondary education has changed. Yet despite these changes, the "core 1960's propositions of the theory remain intact, at least as a partial truth" (Marginson, 2019, p. 289).

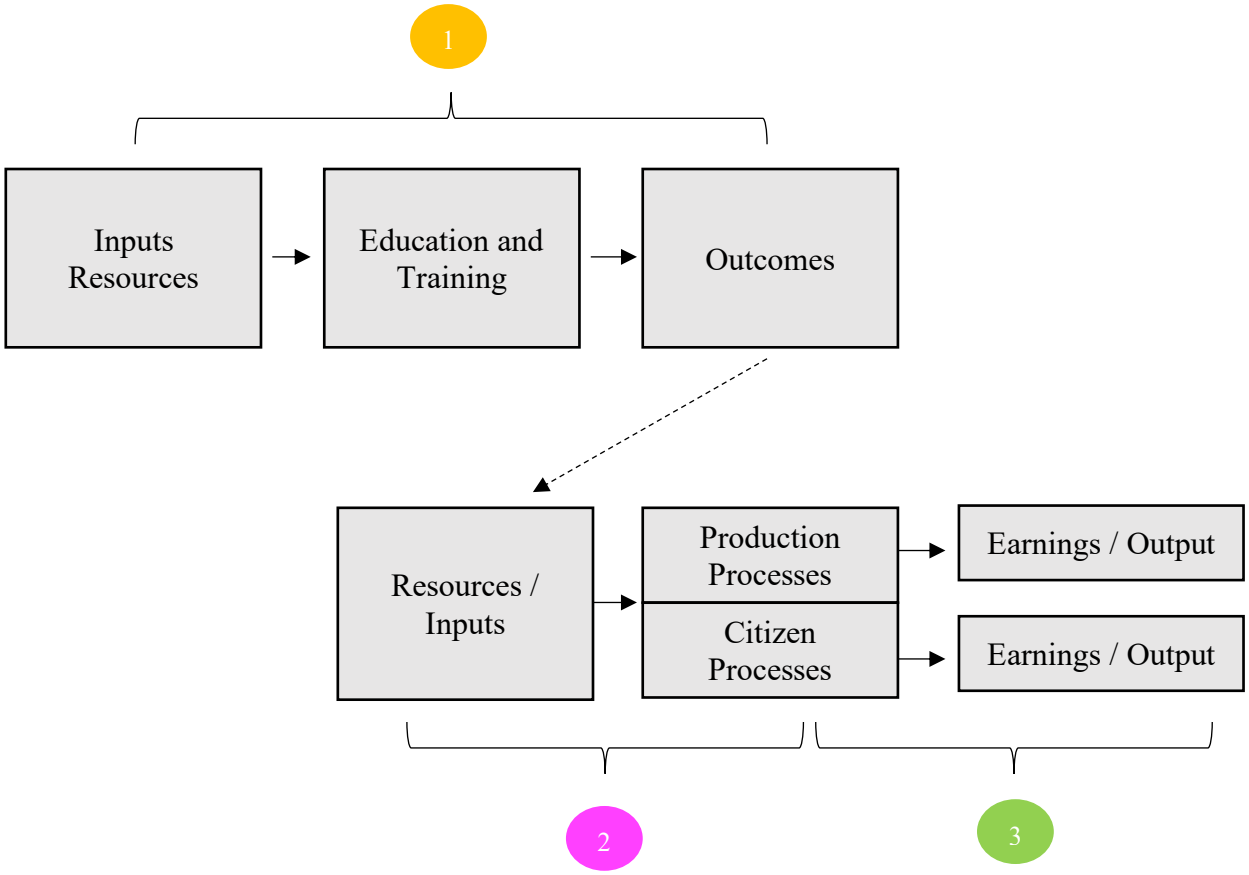
Though HCT persisted, it shifted from a descriptive theory to a normative approach, being used to argue that investments in human capital *ought* to be made in order to increase national economic advantage (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021). As described in Figure 11, three assumptions are foundational to the HCT (Swanson & Holton, 2009):

1. That an increased investment in education and training would contribute towards increased learning.
2. That an increase in learning would lead to increased productivity.
3. That an increase in productivity would lead to increased wages for individuals and earnings for businesses.

To support HCT, standardized empirical evidence was generated to demonstrate that higher levels of education and/or longer durations of learning brought higher rates of return. During the post-war years, measures like the Gross National Product became increasingly accessible—they were released on a regular basis and widely used by press and politicians to compare national economic performance. This provided HCT an "authoritative set of measures" and a "numerically precise" informational basis for judgement in decision-making related to education policy and funding (Holden & Biddle, 2017, p. 5). For example, the 1962 Council of Economic Advisors Annual Report noted that "education's contribution to output is reflected by the well-documented fact that income—the measure of each individual's contribution to production—tends to rise with educational attainment" (Economic Report, 1962, p. 118), and in 1963 the US Senate stated that there was "very persuasive evidence that support the conclusion, that the investment in education yields at least as much as, and probably a good deal more than, even the investment in plant and equipment" (US Congress, 1963, pp. 411-412).

Figure 11.

A Model of Human Capital Theory



Note. Adapted from "Foundations of Human Resource Development" (Holton et al., 2009, p. 123).

Since then, social welfare has been replaced by neoliberalism and the return on investment in education has stagnated. In the last decade, neoliberalism has produced mounting inequalities and widespread precariousness (Russell & Dufour, 2016), and in order to reckon with increases in underemployment among the educated class and the rise in unemployment, HCT has been re-politicized as a prescriptive tool to focus educational

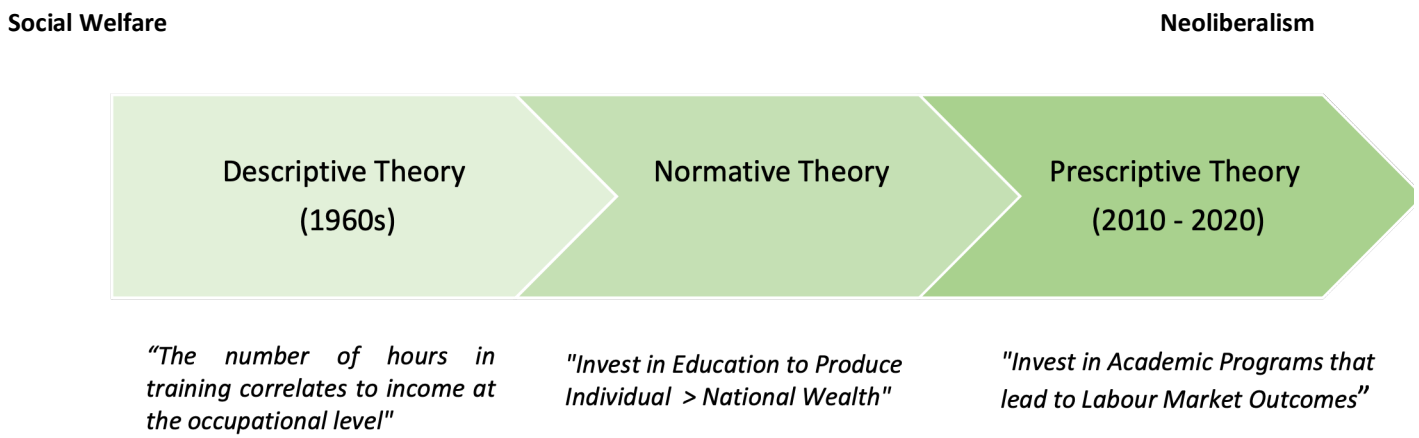
investments on programs that result in the highest economic value (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021). Within the neoliberal regime, HCT remains a powerful rhetorical device to link education policy and funding towards employment outcomes. Post-secondary institutions are framed as both an individual and a public good useful to increase students' human capital by providing training, thus benefiting students as future employees and benefiting industry by creating a wider cadre of capable candidates from which to recruit. An emergence of accountability measurements has ensued, including metrics to evaluate the employability outcomes of academic programs and performance indicators to evaluate post-secondary institutions based on labour market results (Elias-Cartwright, 2021; Marginson, 2019). Unsurprisingly, HCT has become prominent to justify WIL, creating a narrative that students who develop individual work skills from real workplace environments will have greater employment opportunities and be more prepared as entry-level employees (Abeysekera, 2006; Lorraine & Peter, 2007). HCT has also justified disproportionate financial and political investments to support WIL in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer science (Peacock, 2017).

Since its inception, both the context and the use of the HCT have shifted. While it began as a descriptive theory within a social welfare paradigm during an era of prosperity and greater equality, HCT became a normative theory and today is used prescriptively within a neoliberal discourse during a period of widespread precarity (Figure 12). The rhetorical power of the HCT remains strong; however, as will be shown in the next section, it is unsubstantiated and insufficient as a theoretical approach to justify investments in education as a means towards

labour market outcomes or as a framework for WIL.

Figure 12.

The Evolution of the Human Capital Theory



Note. This model is based on "Analysing micro-credentials in higher education: A Bernsteinian analysis" (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021).

4.2.2. The Human Capital Theory is Insufficient

While HCT is persistent, many scholars who are focused on the political economy of education and labour challenge its core narrative claiming that evidence to support it as a model is weak (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Spring, 2015; Marginson, 2019). Neither post-secondary education nor the labour market is a closed system, the data that is used to justify HCT is of poor quality at the lower ends and is critiqued because "a linear theory is applied to material that is non-homogenous in space and time" (Marginson, 2019, p. 291). Furthermore, the concept of homo-economicus, which HCT is premised upon, does not exist, and real people face other non-educational barriers to the labour market, such as discrimination and location. With an emphasis on profitability and efficiencies, HCT narrowly addresses the growing list of

factors outside of education and training that impact productivity, and HCT minimizes how the regulatory environment influences earnings and outputs. These are described in Table 3, below. While HCT has been the basis of education policy and funding decisions for more than six decades, it is insufficient to describe the relationship between education and work *today*. Instead, it can be argued that the HCT enables the justification of inequality and the plunder of the poorest, based on work and education (Dif-Pradalier et al., 2012). Inequality is justified on the basis of contribution to labour market—and relates to the creation of "productive citizens" (Powell & McGrath, 2014, p. 129). Given its incompleteness, it is important to question, what benefit does HCT offer to WIL and who benefits?

Table 3.

Three Reasons Why HCT is Insufficient

Homo-economicus doesn't exist	Humans live in social environments (Urbina & Ruiz-Villaverde, 2019; Saltman & Means, 2019, p. 376), they are not "fully rational" (Simon, 1986), and human desires cannot be universalized (Urbina & Ruiz-Villaverde, 2019, p. 66). Homo economicus does not exist (Yamagishi et al., 2014).
The relationship between education and work is not linear	HCT recognizes that gender, race, discrimination, ability, among other identity politics are barriers to education and labour market entry but poses that "individuals choose the human capital investment that maximizes the net present value of lifetime earnings"(Benjamin et al., 2012, p. 248). Through a HCT lens, programs are targeted to marginalized communities to increase their participation in the economic system and training is subservient to labour force demands as determined, largely, by owners of capital (business owners, corporate shareholders, and boards, etc.). HCT can undermine the role of location, adaptive preferences, income, social and cultural capital as levers of choice—including the competitive advantage purchased through private education investments. Additionally, HCT does not explain the gap between education and work—in one study, nearly 65% of respondents had a university degree but only 37% were in a job that required a university degree (Martin & Lewchuk, 2018). There is little evidence to support the linear relationship between education and work (Marginson, 2019).
The regulatory environment influences earnings and outputs	Dismantling of unions and social actors, increased labour flexibility, globalization, automatization, industry deregulation, and transnational relationships have reduced labour earnings (Bosch & Charest, 2008; Bryson, 2015) while a greater share of wealth comes from inherited capital and intergenerational wealth transfer compared to 1960s (Marginson, 2019).

4.3 What does HCT offer to work-integrated learning (WIL)? Who benefits?

When WIL is framed through HCT, it is positioned as an instrumental response to a market-driven conundrum where education is expected to change, but the structures of the labour market and occupations do not (Wheelahan, & Moodie, 2019). Neoliberal rationalities, which currently govern the fabric of PSE (Viczko et al., 2019) and reify students as "one-dimensional, essentialized homo economicus" (Viczko et al., 2019, p. 119), make it more likely for Canadians to internalize post-secondary education as a mechanism for the production of human capital while other possibilities —for example that education can "develop one's capacity as a citizen" (Viczko et al., 2019, p. 121)—are negated. HCT also under-emphasizes the important contribution that WIL can make in supporting students to develop as complex, multi-faceted individuals.

Through the HCT discourse, "employability" is positioned as a universalized phenomenon regardless of identity (race, ability, class, gender, religion, etc.) and employability skills are naturalized in for-profit, government, and non-profit organizations without reference to profession, geography, unionization, among other factors. The responsibility to be employable, vis-à-vis proof of possession of the "work-ready" skills required for labour is bestowed to the individual (Forrier et al., 2018) and the responsibilities of employers, who have cut their investments to employee training by over 40% over the last two decades, are removed (Cotsman & Hall, 2015; HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector, 2011; Seal, 2018). Moreover, human-capital-as-metaphor overtly justifies inequality so that it can be implied that "no matter how fat their incomes, the rich always earned what they produced" (Fix, 2021, para.25). The conclusions that are drawn from HCT —that skills will protect from uncertainty, that post-

secondary institutions are service providers to business needs, that lack of skills and experience prevent young Canadians from well-paying jobs—are unsubstantiated and contested, and the obligations of government to "to steer a more equal income distribution" (Marginson, 2019, p. 290) are weakened. It is for these reasons that I propose HCT is inadequate as a theoretical framework for WIL and that an alternative theoretical approach should be used.

4.4 An Alternative Approach: Human Development and Capabilities Approach

The Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA) is more appropriate for an exploration of and for grounding WIL compared to HCT. The HDCA is a normative theory about human flourishing which focuses on well-being and agency, and asks how social policy and programs enable people "to be and do in their lives what they choose" (Walker, 2018, p. 119). Given that one of the primary goals of WIL is to develop personal agency (CEWIL, 2018), there is theoretical alignment between WIL and HDCA. In this section, I will discuss the HDCA, first providing a short background on its uses, then explaining several of the core concepts including well-being, agency, capabilities, functionings, and conversion factors. Following this, I will describe the informational basis of judgement and processes of deliberation that are central to HDCA. Finally, I will discuss some of the limitations of the HDCA and will conclude with a justification for HDCA as an appropriate theoretical framework to investigate WIL.

HDCA was developed in the 1990s by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum as an alternative approach to development goals, which prioritize economic output or "equal" access to resources and outcomes (Wheelahan et al., 2019). It provides a framework for evaluating the extent to which policy and other social arrangements support human flourishing and it emphasizes the extent to which people can live lives they have reason to

value (Robeyns, 2005). HDCA provides a flexible and multi-purpose framework that enables assessment of individual well-being and an evaluation and assessment of social arrangements, and policy design about social change in society (Robeyns, 2016).

Some governments and international development agencies use the HDCA, giving it credibility in policy-making circles (Robeyns, 2006; Robertson, 2015); for example, the United Nations Development Program uses the HDCA to "gauge whether people can lead long and healthy lives, whether they have the opportunity to be educated and whether they are free to use their knowledge and talents to shape their own destinies" (UNDP, 2010, p. iv). HDCA has been applied to studies of education (Robeyns, 2006; Walker, 2018), technical and vocational education and training (Lesley & McGrath, 2019; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2018; Wheelahan et al., 2018), employment activation (Bonvin, 2006; Egdell & McQuaid, 2016), and, as of 2020, it has entered the discourse within studies of experiential education (Mtawa & Nkhoma, 2020).

The HDCA pursues human flourishing which is realized through both well-being and agency. The HDCA suggests that well-being without choice is not flourishing, and neither is agency without well-being, and these are considered across the spectrum of life roles.

4.4.1 Well-Being

According to Robeyns (2005), within the HDCA, there is no singular definition of well-being; instead, it is plural and acknowledges the diversity of the human experiences. In this, well-being reflects an "evaluation of the wellnesses of the person's state of being" (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993, p. 6) and accommodates for the multi-dimensional influences on a person's welfare (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016). Well-being is not assessed by what people are, what they do (Orton, 2011), or what they possess (Bonvin, 2012; Deneulin et al., 2009). It cannot be reduced to

access to resources, states of satisfaction or happiness, or any single thing (Bonvin, 2012). As Robeyns (2017) explains, "If people were all the same and had the same needs and abilities, then the capability approach would lose much of its force and significance, since resources would be excellent proxies for our well-being and well-being freedom" (p. 114). Instead, well-being is assessed by the "constituent elements of the person's being seen from the perspective of her own personal welfare," thus recognizing that "some dimensions of well-being may be more important for some groups but less so for others" (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993, p. 6). This marks a significant departure from the HCT, which assumes that individuals use rational approaches to secure universalized, exogenous preferences.

Framed through the HDCA, well-being is a broad concept and can include such things as being healthy, escaping morbidity and mortality, being adequately nourished, being safe, having mobility, being happy, being calm, having warm friendships, being educated, having a job, being self-respecting, taking part in the life of a community, and appearing without shame (Deneulin et al., 2009; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). To conduct an analysis of social policy, well-being is negotiated across multiple dimensions and actors and becomes a collectively agreed upon framework. For example, within the realm of education, Walker (2019) suggests that well-being includes far more than academic status and suggests that educational well-being needs to include material well-being, for when students do not have adequate funding for their studies, when they struggle because they cannot afford transportation and food, or are worried, that is not well-being (p. 229). Walker (2019) concludes that "material ill-being distorts [students'] educational opportunities, participation and achievements" (p. 229).

4.4.2 Agency

Like well-being, agency is a foundational concept within the HDCA (Robeyns, 2017). The HDCA emphasizes "empowerment and process freedom where individuals remain in control of their own choices" (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016, p.3). According to Sen (1999a), an agent is "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well" (p. 19). An HDCA also considers whether policies and institutional arrangements enable people real freedoms, and it explores the extent to which rights and resources are distributed in such a way that people can act upon their freedoms. Agency is also extended to program design and implementation and an HDCA posits that those most affected by decisions should be part of the development of programs (Bonvin & Orton, 2009). For example, in the case of employment activation, an HDCA would ask what options are available to job seekers and what are the physical and non-physical barriers that restrict their options? This also introduces the question: is the possibility of not acting upon options also available? For example, do job seekers have the option to refuse work, or is the financial burden of not working too great? If an individual is coerced to work, either due to the overburden of student loans, lack of other options, or coercive work activation strategies, agency is limited (Bonvin & Moachon, 2008).

There is a difference between option-freedoms and agency-freedom (Pettit, 2003, pp. 389-392) and Robyens (2017) concludes that "what counts is the access that a person has to a wide range of valuable alternative options" (p. 105). Accordingly, option-freedoms reflect the properties of the options, the character of the options, and the number and diversity of options

that are available. In contrast, agency-freedom reflects the properties of agents: their social standing, status, and the way they relate to their fellows (Pettit, 2003, pp. 304-305). In an HDCA, "options are the alternatives that an agent is in a position to realize" (Robeyns, 2017, p. 105), and the realization of these options reflects both the access to options, and the options themselves.

4.4.3 Human Flourishing: Well-being + Agency

The HDCA imagines human flourishing as the combination of well-being and agency. To provide an example, while an individual may have an excellent job that commands a desirable salary and prestige (financial well-being), if they value health but their work schedule restricts their agency to be healthy (for example, because they constantly travel and are unable to participate in a fitness routine or choose healthy food), they are not flourishing; likewise, if an individual has all manner of freedoms in employment but is not able to secure housing, they too are not flourishing. Human flourishing takes into account well-being and agency for complex, whole, multi-dimensional, and sometimes irrational people. Using the HDCA as an evaluative framework, focus is on the capability to act upon options rather than merely on the outcome of achieving those options. This is because humans have a diverse range of resources available to them and personal, social, and environmental factors enable the conversion of resources to capabilities.

4.4.4 Capabilities and Functionings

The HDCA acknowledges that the diversity of human experiences and the contextual conditions in which lives are lived shape opportunities, preferences, and human flourishing. Two people with identical resources will make different choices of what constitutes a good life

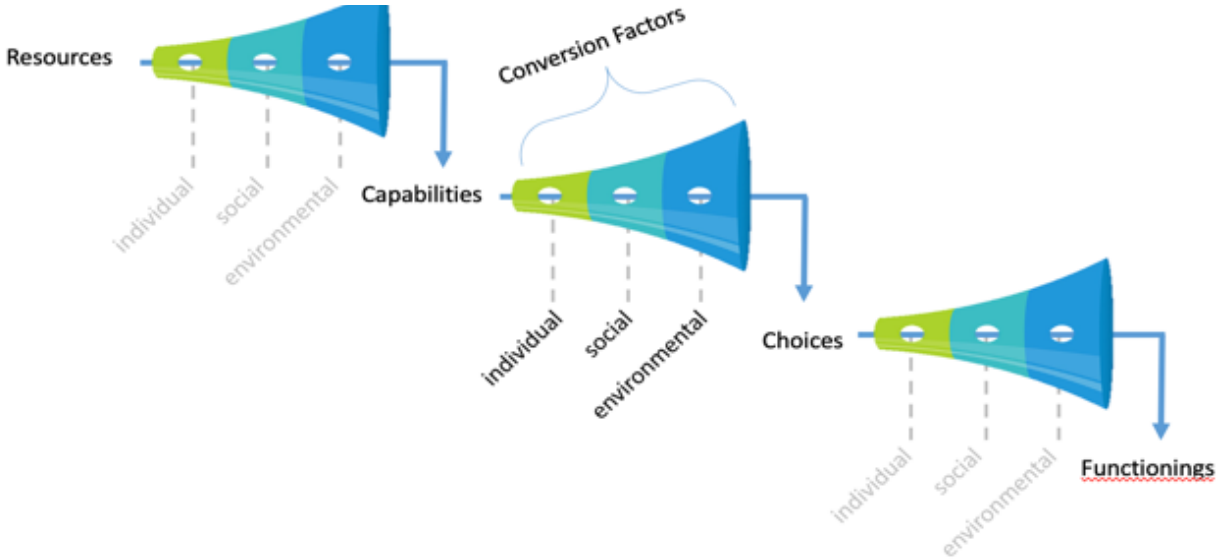
and the HDCA "respects people's different ideas of the good life" (Robeyns, 2017, p.101). It is for this reason that the HDCA focuses on *capabilities* —the real choices available to people, rather than *functionings* —the achievements or outcomes of their lives. The HDCA delineates between human capabilities, which are what people are able to be and do, and functionings, the outcomes or achievements of those capabilities. To provide an example, if I desire to go swimming and have all of the means to swim accessible to me, I have capability to swim but whether or not I go swimming reflects my functioning. I may choose to swim, or I may chose not to swim; this is agency.

Functionings are central to our understanding of ourselves as human beings and are what distinguish humans from inanimate objects or trees and animals because functionings require choice (Robeyns, 2017). Some functionings are universal while others are dependent on social circumstances or context. For example, owning a house is not a universalized functioning but being sheltered and protected from the elements is (Robeyns, 2017, pg. 4). According to Robeyns (2017), capabilities and functionings are value-neutral and there are some capabilities that we have reason to protect—for example, the capability to be to be healthy—while there are some capabilities that may be trivial, like the capability to float in an innertube down a lazy river. There are other capabilities, like the capability to harm someone, which we may fight or wish to eliminate (Robeyns, 2017, p. 42). For this reason, Deneulin (2002) says that there is a "need to differentiate between 'valuable' and non-valuable capabilities, and indeed within the latter, between those that are positive but of lesser importance and those that actually have negative value" (p. 67). For this, a process of deliberation is required.

In the HDCA, resources can be transformed into capabilities based on conversion factors, which reflect personal, social, and environmental conditions (Robeyns, 2005). Conversion factors influence a person's ability to convert their resources into capabilities, and to convert capabilities into functionings. To return back to the swimming analogy, I may be learning how to swim the butterfly stroke and there may be a beautiful outdoor pool in my town, but if admission to the swimming pool is too expensive for me, or if the hours for lane swim coincide

Figure 13.

Diagram of the Human Development and Capabilities Approach



with my work schedule, I am not able to convert my desire to swim (resource) into capabilities (to swim the butterfly stroke). A diagram of HDCA is shown in Figure 13.

To further understand the HDCA, a few key terms merit attention:

> **Resources:** Material and immaterial assets, which are available to persons for use. This includes income and wealth, marketable goods and services, psychological, physical, social, and intellectual assets. Conversion factors can impact the ability for people to make use of resources (Robeyns, 2017, p. 46).

Capability: Capabilities are what people are able to be and do, their "valuable beings and doings" (Bonvin, 2006, p. 124). These are real opportunities and process freedoms, which enlarge sets of opportunities, and enable people to make decisions aligned to preferences, wishes and expectations. Real freedoms are contrasted to formal freedoms, which have the appearance of choice however, opportunities are not available to enact options. Capabilities form sets, which can be converted to functionings (Robeyns, 2017).

Functionings: Functionings are the achievements or the outcomes of capabilities. While there are a few universalized functionings, what constitutes a reasonable functioning is negotiated within existing social structures (Robeyns, 2017, p. 40).

Conversion Factors: The factors that determine to what degree a person can transform resources into functionings. Conversion factors can be considered at individual/personal, social, or environmental/institutional levels (Radin, 2013). Personal conversion factors are internal to the person; social conversion factors are influenced by the society one lives in; whereas, environmental conversion factors reflect physical and built environments (Robeyns, 2017, p. 46). For this research, I will focus social conversion factors at the level of the classroom or workplace, while environmental factors will consider the broader institutional arrangements as well as geographic and physical aspects.

Adaptive Preferences: The concept of adaptive preference takes into account that humans may adapt their preferences according to the range of options that are perceived to be, or objectively are, available to them, limiting their aspirations in order

to conform to present circumstances. Though someone who lives in a persistently adverse situation may experience happiness or satisfaction with their circumstances, an adaptive preference is inconsistent with a person's basic flourishing (Robeyns, 2017). Groups that are systematically socialized to have low aspirations will see aspirations as unachievable; however, with social change, revised aspirations can be possible. Taking adaptive preferences into consideration, public action should aim at developing people's capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004, 2013) and enable them to imagine different futures.

4.4.5 Informational Basis of Judgement in Justice (IBJJ)

As stated previously, the HCDA is a normative framework, meaning it reveals what "ought to be done" and it offers a process for transparent public scrutiny towards the reform of socio-economic contexts and institutions in a manner that reflects the values and priorities of a society (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). An HDCA does not provide explanations or a theory of (in)equality and welfare; rather, it provides an informationally demanding process and framework to judge social policies and institutional arrangements (Bonvin, 2006; Robertson, 2015) on the basis of justice (Bussi, 2014; Robeyns, 2005; Verd & López, 2011). According to Robeyns (2005), the approach "focuses on information that we need in order to make decisions about individual well-being, social policies and so forth" at the level of capability or functioning and "rejects alternative approaches that it considers normatively inadequate, for example, when an evaluation is done exclusively in monetary terms" (p. 96). This is markedly different from HCT, which focuses on a narrow range of economic indicators.

Drawing on its commitment to agency, the HDCA seeks to ensure that people are included in decision-making that affects their lives (Bonvin, 2012). When evaluating a social program through the HDCA, effort is made to define the *informational basis of a judgement in justice* (IBJJ). This is "the factual territory over which considerations of justice would directly apply" (Sen, 1990, p. 111) and requires the selection, implicitly or explicitly, of certain types of information used to assess people. HDCA practitioners take effort to ask what information is included and excluded from evaluation (Robeyns, 2005). The HDCA opposes rigid approaches that rely on a universal framework for decision-making regardless of units, parts, or time. Instead, the HDCA recommends that the informational basis for decision-making be subject to public deliberation and that policies should be intentionally incomplete (Robertson, 2015; Robeyns, 2006) and under-specified (Robeyns, 2005). This makes space for the plural, multidimensional aspects of well-being and also "forces policy makers or other evaluators to make explicit the underlying theories" (Robeyns, 2006, p. 80). While the HDCA is critiqued for its perceived "incompleteness," this is intended to encourage the use of other complementary theories alongside HDCA (Bartelheimer et al., 2012; Robeyns, 2017; Walker, 2019).

4.5 The Process to Determine the Information required for Judgements of Justice

With the HDCA, social policies are evaluated and assessed at the local level, allowing alternative perspectives to define social justice (Bonvin, 2006). This enables agents the authority to decide the quality of their own lives "in terms of real freedom that people have to lead a kind of life they have reason to value" (Sen, 1999, p. 18). Democratic processes are used to determine "which capabilities count" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 105) and this requires an "ongoing

deliberative process" (Bonvin et al., 2018, p. 962) where different voices are heard. Acknowledging that social inequalities and asymmetries of power exist, the qualities and processes of deliberation are critical. Attention should be paid to how cultural symbols and mechanisms as well as cognitive abilities and skills influence participation. Moving beyond cognitive and rationalist mechanisms for public deliberation can extend the capacity of citizens for participation—for example, the use of theatre and the arts can broaden the IBJJ. It is also important to acknowledge how adaptive preferences temper deliberation.

Using the HDCA, it is essential to take stock of the social arrangements of actors involved in deliberations. Some questions include: who defines the agenda for deliberation? Where does deliberation take place? Who participates in debates? Is participation an opportunity or a duty? Do participants have political resources to either speak individually or collectively? Are there bridges between the voices expressed in different arenas or are they strictly separated? What is the protection, legal or otherwise, available when divergent viewpoints are presented or when the weakest members speak against power? Is there freedom to present counter narratives (Bonvin et al., 2018)? The HDCA suggests that the process of deliberation needs to be defended against a desire for clean, simple, or linear outcomes. Instead, confidence should be built in processes so that actors can change perspectives and that when things go awry, actors can speak up, even across difference (Bonvin et al., 2018, p. 965). Within the HDCA, confidence in the process of deliberation is more important than achieving perfection of information. This is in sharp contrast to HCT, which uses numerically precise and "authoritative" sets of measures that are disconnected from the people for whom they represent as its basis for deliberation. Predictably, the HDCA creates a burden

of nuance for both press and politicians who are prone to oversimplified sound bytes in an attention economy (Lane & Atchley, 2021).

4.5.1 What are Conversion Factors?

Unlike HCT, which is modeled upon a universalized citizen, human diversity is a core assumption of the HDCA. Understanding that the resources and preferences of no two individuals are the same, the HDCA provides a framework to assess how individual, social, and environmental factors enable some people to convert resources to capabilities and functions, while limiting others. These are called conversion factors. In this section, I will now turn to a description of conversion factors at each level, exploring possible applications of the HDCA for WIL based on past research focused on higher education and employment-activation.

4.5.2 Individual Conversion Factors

According to Robeyns (2017), personal conversion factors are internal to the person; this might include things like physical ability, gender or reading skills (p. 46). At the individual level, the HDCA resists the conception of student as a rational calculating actor and instead it accounts for the complexities and competing desires students experience—their human richness (Giovanola, 2009). Bonvin and Laruffa (2018) state that humans are multi-dimensional, taking on roles as receiver, doer, and judge and in this, the student is interpreted as a "beneficiary, whose interest and advantages have to be considered" (Sen, 1985, p. 208), yet not as a passive entity waiting for satisfaction (Crocker, 1992, p. 600). Students have aspirations and desires, and they behave as political beings, "able to formulate their own views and make them count" (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2018, p. 506).

The HDCA considers the conversion factors that allow individuals to find harmony across multiple dimensions of life, whether that be family, community or productive life, valuing each dimension, rather than subordinating one dimension to another. This is particularly important in a study of WIL as the labour force is sensitive to life course (age, cumulative factors, and changes over time). Within HCT, the student is viewed as being "independent and unconstrained by commitments and responsibilities towards other dependent human beings, which might affect the labour market choices that people make" (Robeyns, 2006, p. 80), but this view neglects power differences and structural inequalities. On the contrary, the HDCA acknowledges that students are people who flourish through relationships with other human beings, neither independent nor self-made. Through an HDCA, we ask how students become aware of the impact of work decisions on household and community relations, and how decisions are made with an awareness of future life span.

The HDCA recognizes that students have different aspirations for work, compared to one another and over time (Bonvin, 2012); therefore, the goal is that students value their future participation in the labour market and are increasingly capable to enter the labour market in a manner suitable for them, rather than deferring to a standardized outcome, like starting salary or position title. This marks the difference between a program which is focused on "matching of job entrant's skills and future labour market demand" compared to a program focused "on the opportunities open to individuals and the real freedom they have to make choices that they value rather than just outcomes (such as entering any job)" (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016, p. 2). Within an HCT framework students "choose the human capital investment that maximizes the net present value of lifetime earnings" (Benjamin, et al., 2012,

p. 248); however, within an HDCA lens, education offers students a "way to see alternative ways of being and doing and to develop sufficient agency to pursue lives of value" (Wood & Duprez, 2012, p. 471).

In this, the HDCA takes aspirations into account. Egdell and McQuaid (2016) recommend that employment activation programs should broaden the aspirations of young people and enable students to see "wider ranges of possibilities for the lives they want to lead within the realm of career, occupation or vocation" (Holland et al., 1993; Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011; Wood & Deprez, 2012, p. 479). Programs should allow students to deviate from typical employment pathways and may require that educators connect learners with their own creative powers and celebrate when their goals and desires do not conform to group ideals (Brookfield, 2005, p.53). As suggested by Sultana (2014), this is particularly important for students who have been marginalized, including Indigenous, first generation, and woman-identifying students. She says,

> certainly for those on the margins of society, for whom the task of transcending notions they have developed about the self, gaining knowledge of the opportunities their environment provides, and overcoming perceptions from their life histories as to what they thought was achievable is as challenging as it is vital from the perspective of social justice. (Sultana, 2014, pp. 319-320)

Wheelahan (2007) advises that unlike many learning initiatives where the starting point is the skill, through the HCDA we begin with the student and engage their sense of identity including how their life-course has been "conditioned by relations of class, gender, race and other socially structured dimensions of privilege and disadvantage" (p. 191). Egdell and McQuaid (2016) advise that programs should focus on removing individual and personal

barriers to employment, like lack of encouragement, literacy and numeracy skills, being young parents, among others.

Students also need to understand the "paths required to meet their longer-term ambitions" (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016, p. 14) and they need labour market information and information about the skills needed in order to take opportunities (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016). Access to career advice with emphasis on future progression, and interlocutors who can provide insights into labour market trends and offer "business process of guidance and placement services" (Bartelheimer, 2021, slide 7) can enable students to convert resources into capabilities. Most students have not had significant work experience so access to high-quality career services that include resume building and helping students find work opportunities that make students "more attractive to employers and [enable] young people to make choices based on first-hand experience" (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016, p. 8) strengthens their voice to choose (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016). Bilfulco et al. (2014) suggest that institutions should act as enabling structures to support the transition from school to work.

Bonin (2006) cautions that in addition to aspiration, students need to "be adequately equipped to escape from the constraint of valueless work, either through the real possibility of refusing such a job . . . or through the possibility of transforming it into something one has reason to value" (p. 126). Students should be able to say "yes" to work options with real processual freedoms that allow them to opt out of the labour market, to exit particular professional options, or to transform future work into something they would have reason to value, within a predictable timeframe, should they choose.

4.5.3 Social Conversion Factors

Unlike individual conversion factors, social conversion factors are external and stem from policies, social norms, and practices. An exploration of social conversion factors considers how societal hierarchies, power relations, or discrimination related to class, gender, race, or caste expand or contract capabilities (Robeyns, 2017, p. 46). While factors may be the same—for example, gender—whether they are internally or externally mediated is what distinguishes individual from social conversion factors, and in many cases, there is a graduating rather than definitive distinction. For example, a woman may choose to breastfeed or not based on her body—this is an individual conversion factor; however, whether there are designated breastfeeding rooms at a workplace is a social conversion factor. Both are related to gender; however, the locus of control are different. In the case of WIL, two overlapping domains are critical: the academic learning environment and the workplace learning environment.

In terms of the academic learning environment, the quality of post-secondary teaching and learning are a conversion factor (Walker, 2010). Formal learning ought to "impact specialist knowledge and disciplinary knowledge and the kinds of knowledge 'that are unlikely to be picked up in the course of everyday life' (Allais, 2014, p. 246), especially by young people from low-income families" (Walker, 2010, p. 227). Learning should enable students to "think about new ideas, or the ability to 'think the unthinkable'" (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 25), as this will expand agency and allow students to transcend current contexts and apply learning elsewhere. To do this, students need to learn both the knowledge of the practice and systems of disciplinary knowledge and they need to be exposed to ethical dilemmas and debates (including debates about what counts as knowledge) while learning technical, industrial knowledge.

Wheelahan (2007) recommends that student be exposed to multiple sites of learning as this creates spaces where the individual can question practice, criticize what they see, and develop their own theories and ideas. Wood and Deprez (2012) concur, recommending that students have the opportunity "to recognize contingency and partiality of human perspectives and work dialogically toward deeper insights and ever-evolving forms of knowledge" (p. 486).

The social conditions for learning are critical. Walker (2019) suggests that reciprocity, non-domination, openness, and critical dialogue are essential for the development of epistemic agency. She cautions that intellectual marginalization, limitations to free speech, hermeneutical injustice, and discrimination on the basis of prejudice can constrain agency (Walker, 2019). The social arrangements for learning should be considered: whether students participate individually, in groups or as a team, whether students can form friendships which support learning, and whether they able to communicate with a lecturer or feel listened to (Walker, 2008, p. 482). The focus on the social conditions for learning align to Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship (1998), which contends that the equitable relationships with peers and learning partners contribute to the development of agency-freedom (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2001; Bandura et al., 2001; Barber & King, 2014; Pizzolato, 2005; Pizzolato, 2007).

The conditions within the workplace are another social conversion factor. Bryson (2015) suggests that little attention is paid to mechanisms within organizations and argues that "successful policy intervention requires reflection on a complex range of influences in order to appreciate their impact on achievement and well-being at work" (p. 561). For example, how does knowledge exist within the workplace and how is it shared through onboarding and training, workflow, division of labour, and organizational artifacts (tools, models, recipes,

instructions, strategies, etc.; Wheelahan et al., 2019)? In insecure labour environments, knowledge is jealously guarded and information is disseminated through hierarchical positioning (Contu & Willmott, 2003). This constrains capabilities. Wheelahan (2010) states that "all workers need access to the theoretical knowledge that underpins their occupational field of practice" if they are to have agency within their field (p. 3). How and to whom do workplaces give access to codified, restructured and systematized knowledge?

WIL programs need to be designed according to the specific needs of target groups (Schröer, 2014) and the quality of jobs and activities available should be considered. Questions should be asked about how employers are selected and retained, and programs should assess not only the business needs, but also whether or not employers are able to provide a nurturing and supportive environment (Bonvin, 2009). Schröer (2014) acknowledges that employers need support, whether that be visits, contacts, or resources, and that they should have realistic expectations of students. This requires that the needs of both students and employers are negotiated. Schröer (2014) recounted one project worker who said, "you have got to keep the employers sweet to a certain extent as well because you don't want them turning round and saying it's not worth it, we are not working with you anymore. It is a very fine line" (pp. 10 – 11). According to Schröer (2014), the duration of programs can be a barrier and many staff "cited a lack of time to address all of the needs of the young people" (p. 11). Finally, the capacity of students to shape the social environment and labour market conditions (Bonvin, 2009) and the level of competition students face for positions (Schröer, 2014, p. 10) should be considered. According to Orton (2011), policies and programs aimed at addressing the competence of job seekers are insufficient as they put the onus of responsibility on the student.

Within a capabilities logic, a view of collective frameworks and arrangements is considered (Orton, 2011). Through the HDCA, we are compelled to consider "macroeconomic policies aimed at raising the number of available jobs addressing problems connected with environmental conversion factors" (Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006, p. 129). In other words, employability without employment does not make sense. This provides a segue to explore environmental and institutional conversion factors.

4.5.4 Environmental and Institutional Conversion Factors

People live in diverse environments and these environments affect our real opportunities to live in ways that we value. According to Robeyns (2017), environmental conversion factors consider how the "physical or built environment in which a person lives" (p. 46) allows or impedes their ability to use resources (Oosterlaken & Hoven, 2012). Though this description appears discreet, conversion factors are often entangled, and it can be difficult to distinguish between personal, social, and environmental conversion factors. Political and institutional structures are often included in a consideration of external conversion factors at a macro level (Bilfulco et al., 2014).

On the more distinct end, environmental conversion factors explore how the location of the post-secondary institution and workplace, as well as the location of public infrastructure enable options (Croceker & Robeyns, 2009). Are places of work accessible by affordable public transit? Is there snow removal in the winter months and are parking lots well lit? Do the way spaces are designed and animated challenge, sustain, or reproduce exclusion? Environment can be created in ways that enables flourishing and they can also produce undesirable coping strategies or unsustainable options (Allmark & Machaczek, 2015). For example, the lack of

places to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables on many post-secondary campuses and the availability of cheap fast food reduce the capability for students to be healthy. Globalization, wealth inequalities, and climate change impact environmental conversion factors (Apsan et al., 2014).

Environmental conversion factors also take into account the geographic concentration of the labour market. The labour market is a complex, bi-directional system where employees are co-producers of the labour market. Does the location of work and the location of the workforce contribute towards reciprocal and non-dominating relationships between employer and employee (Robeyns, 2017; Walker, 2018), or does location reduce the ability of people to "shape the social environment and labour market conditions" (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016, p. 10)? Skill enhancement will not enable an individual to lead a life that he or she has reason to value if they cannot safely access quality employment (Vero et al., 2012). At the level of environmental conversion factors, we acknowledge that choices are constrained by the wider context of the labour market and reasonable access to education and training opportunities.

Institutional conversion factors take into consideration how policy contexts are translated into institutional settings (Bilfulco et al., 2014, p. 301). In Canada, we delegate authority to institutions to create supports and conditions that enable capabilities (Wheelahan, et al., 2019). These public institutions make use of collective social, economic, cultural, and physical resources and are intended to be framed around "Canadian values" for equity and justice, "to increase the space of capabilities and eliminate or, at least, reduce those barriers to the achievements of freedoms" (Bussi, 2014, p. 4, referencing Farvaque, 2002). Wheelahan et al. (2019) suggest that rigour be used to transparently evaluate the goals of our institutions as

means to assess whether they are set up in the "best ways possible" to achieve our goals. Within post-secondary institutions, significant attention is paid to how education contributes to resolving economic ills (Walker, 2019), yet Bilfulco et al. (2014) suggest that attention should be paid to political ideologies. They argue that

> the competitive state is something different from the welfare state. Whereas the welfare state aimed at protecting the population and the companies against the international conjunctures, the competitive state aims at mobilizing the population and the companies to participate in the international or global competition. Further, the competitive state aims at making every person responsible whilst the welfare state weighted moral education (general education), democracy as community and freedom as the possibility to participate in political processes. (Bilfulco et al., 2014, p. 136)

We acknowledge that the manifestation of political ideologies impacts our perception of employment options. Though young people face a narrow labour market, there is a tendency to individualize the causes of their unemployment.

Institutional conversion factors should consider "welfare and educational arrangements, collective provisions, etc." (Bilfulco et al., 2014, p. 11). This challenges "discourses of aspiration" (Harrison & Walter, 2018, p. 914), which suggests young people from disadvantaged backgrounds lack aspirations and instead suggests that structural barriers including institutional recruitment strategies affect educational attainment and labour market outcomes (Harrison & Walter, 2018). An assessment of institutional factors considers these collective provisions, as well as legal frameworks that combat discrimination within public institutions (Egdell & McQuaid, 2016). In the context of this research, environmental and institutional factors include the geographic concentration of industry, the regulatory environment that governs non-profit organization and role of social actors (unions, regulatory bodies, and industry associations).

4.6 Limitations of Human Development and Capabilities

The HDCA serves as a practical framework to assess education as a resource towards capability attainment; however, it has been criticized for being complicated and informationally demanding, as a Western approach which lays the groundwork for capitalism, and for remaining silent on the roles and obligations of duty-bearers to provide capabilities (Robeyns, 2016). Furthermore, the HDCA is similar to HCT in that it emphasizes individual agency. However, unlike HCT, which makes invisible "the fate of those people whose lives [do] not correspond to that of an able-bodied, non-dependent, caregiving-free individual who belongs to the dominant ethnic, racial and religious group" (Robeyns, 2017, p. 115), the HDCA is a normative rather than methodologically individualist approach. Normative individualism posits that the unit of the individual is the ultimate unit of concern (Robeyns, 2017) while methodological individualism claims that "all social phenomena are to be explained wholly and exclusively in terms of individuals and their properties" (Bhargava, 1992, p. 10). The HDCA has undergone extensive cross-cultural consultation and provides room for contextual deliberation (Nussbaum, 2011). A further limit to the HDCA is that while it describes social inequality, it does not explain why social inequalities exist. Instead, other substantive social theories are required as explanatory devices.

Despite its shortcomings, the HDCA has usefulness in the context of WIL because of the intentionality to which it addresses human diversity and for the way it acknowledges the complex factors that limit human agency. In the context of WIL, HCT equates education to skills leading to employability; the HDCA, however, provides a systematic way to consider the individual, social, and environmental factors that influence capabilities. Furthermore, the

multi-level approach makes it possible to apply the HDCA for both individual and inter-personal analyses and to scale up to the level of institution or nation. Finally, the HDCA is an interesting theoretical choice for WIL because while it emphasizes social justice, it shares some familiarity with HCT, thus providing a "middle-way" across the continuum of WIL practitioners. For these reasons, I propose to use the HDCA as a theoretical approach within my research.

4.8 Liberatory Education

As stated previously, the HDCA calls for the use of complementary theories. This research uses liberatory education as a supplement to interpret research findings. This short section will introduce the concept of liberatory education, which is a form of education that is ultimately concerned with the struggle for freedom. As such, liberatory education focuses on issues of power, oppression, knowledge, and reasoning. In the paragraphs that follow, I will describe the purposes of liberatory education, I will distinguish it from other forms of education, and I will describe pedagogical devices that are used by liberatory educators, including Freire, Brookfield, Walker, Belenky et.al, Mezirow, and Pizzolato.

Liberatory education recognizes that education serves multiple functions, and liberatory educators see education as a means towards freedom in an epoch where power and domination are sustained through capitalism, racism, sexism, and other forms of inequality (Brookfield, 2005; Freire, 1993; Walker, 2019). While education can serve as an instrument to facilitate the "integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity," liberatory educators use education as a "means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Shaull, 1973, as cited in Freire, 1973, p. 16). Liberatory

education is concerned about the conflicting relationship between classes of people and see education as a vehicle through which a fairer, less alienating, and more democratic world can be created. As such, education is not an individualized pursuit of more knowledge, competencies, or skills, and it is not a commodity to be exchanged (Brookfield, 2005). Instead, liberatory education is a deeply social process.

Liberatory educators understand power as a complex phenomenon, which cannot be reduced to merely oppressive or liberatory tendencies, and they suggest that a number of devices are used to maintain power structures. One device is through the creation of lines of distinction between the humanity of the oppressor and the "things" who are people (Freire, 1993). Through acts of cultural invasion, the lifestyles and preferences of the dominant are universalized and those who do not resemble the powerful are signaled as deviants, having some form of pathology that separates them from so-called normal society. These forms of distinction dehumanize some people and legitimize their plunder. On one hand, in today's society we rationalize that the high incomes of the rich are fair because they have specialized education and common rhetoric suggests that education is meritocratic and equal to all. On the other hand, the poor are uneducated, which is used to justify their poverty. Another device is to propagate ideas of permanence, which create internalized narratives that change is not possible. Self-surveillance is a third device; Brookfield (2005) says that "when we monitor our own conduct out of fear of being observed by an unseen, powerful gaze, then the perfect mechanism of control – self-surveillance – is operating. . . . It is hard to deviate from the norm if you feel your thoughts and actions are being recorded" (p. 133).

Liberatory education resists notions of universality and permanence and is centered on the idea that all people can be part of the co-creation of our lives. Liberatory educators are concerned that when labour is atomized and roles are specialized, information and expertise are unequally distributed and the systems and theories that underpin shared work become obscured. This fragments reality and rather than seeing reality as whole, connected and interconnected, we see only partial perspectives. Instead of dialoguing with others to interpret meanings of reality, we become less prepared and capable of participation in public discourse and professional citizenship (Brookfield, 2005). Our ability for change and freedom is compromised.

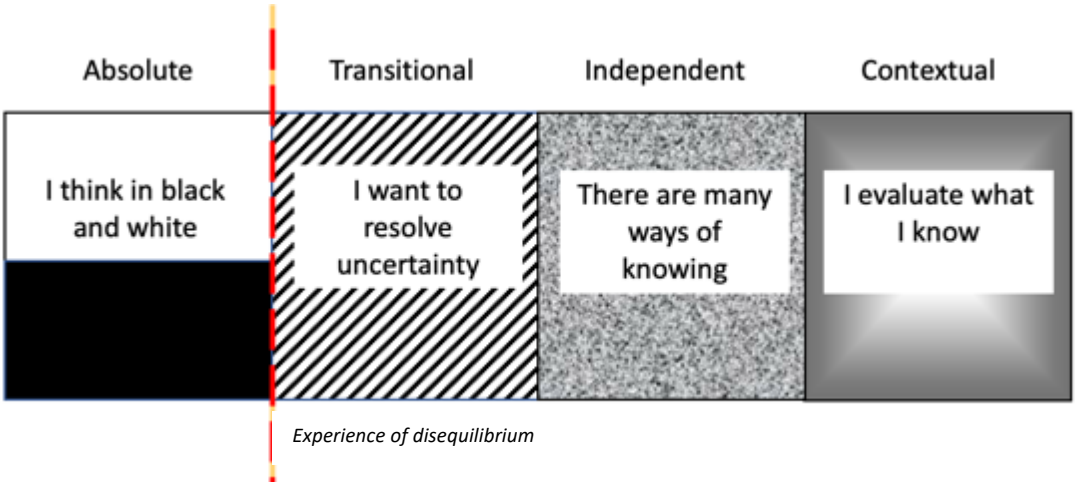
Liberatory education seeks to enable people to be judges in decisions that affect their lives and is an active process that involves dialogue, which is fulsome, and includes cognition, affect, and activity (Freire, 1993). Some forms of education position knowledge as fixed and unchanging; however, liberatory educators encourage students to see the limits of knowledge so that these limits can be transformed. They understand that knowledge is produced and that "knowledge claims are secured by the social practices of a community of inquirers" (West, 1982, p. 21). As such, liberatory educators ask students to consider how some forms of knowledge allow us to accept inequalities and systemic exploitation—how we consent to our own exploitation through hegemonic beliefs (Brookfield, 2005). Liberatory educators support students to develop cognitively in order that they are better able to "disengage themselves from the tacit assumptions of discursive practices and power relations in order to exert more conscious control over their everyday lives" (Kincheloe, 2000, p. 24). Liberatory education encourages students to ask who produces knowledge, how theories are created and what they

are about. It questions who has access to knowledge and what evidence exists to suggest when and how theories can be applied in particular contexts. At the heart of liberatory education is the ability to reason: to assess evidence, to make predictions, to judge arguments, and to be part of the public sphere of debate and discussion. Liberatory education encourages dissent and resistance and it is tolerant of discomfort and unresolved conflict. Liberatory educators "accept that proposed solutions to complex social problems should always be viewed as temporary, as contingent" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 61).

Liberatory educators understand that cognitive complexity can be developed and through cognitive development, people are better able to recognize overarching theories that normalize inequality and exploitation. Several approaches to adult education—for example Women's Ways of Knowing, Transformational Learning and Self-Authorship—suggest that there is a progression in how adults perceive knowledge, moving from black and white or "absolute" ways of knowing towards more complex and nuanced views of knowledge where knowledge is judged and discerned across an array of plausible options. The theory of self-authorship describes four stages of knowing, as shown in Figure 14 below. As students shift from "absolute" ways of knowing to contextual knowing, there is a transition in their reliance on teacher, peer, and self (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Cardone et al., 2013; Pizzolato, 2004).

Figure 14.

Four Ways of Knowing



Note. Diagram developed based on the Theory of Self-Authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004)

Accordingly, "the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments" (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143) reflects interpersonal, intrapersonal, and epistemic development. Environmental factors, like the experience of disequilibrium (Barber & King, 2014; Mezirow, 1991; Pizzolato, 2007), pedagogical inputs, like access to a "Learning Partner" (Bandura, 2001; Bandura et. al., 2001; Pizzolato, 2005, 2007), and reflection contribute towards cognitive development (Bandura, 1993; Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Egart & Healy, 2004; Jacoby, 2014; Mälkki, 2010; McNair, 2011; Merriam, 2004; Mezirow, 1991; Pizzolato, 2005; Usher & Pajares, 2008).

In a liberatory framework, students learn knowledge that is relevant for them through systematic and organized processes that takes into account both the student and teacher, in dialogue. Liberatory educators value praxis—the interaction between action and reflection – and understand that there is a bidirectional relationship between theory and practice. Ambiguity and contradictions are not a threat to learning but are necessary as students learn to "rank better and worse alternatives, decide on trade-offs and work together to decide what justice requires" (Walker, 2019, p. 221). Complexity is valued over simplicity and efficiencies, and students are encouraged to look for connections in whole systems. Within a framework of liberatory education, students are encouraged to "constantly question the tacit assumptions of earlier interpretations of the past" and to scrutinize "the norms these interpretations endorse, the solutions they offer, and the self-images they foster" (West, 1982, p. 20).

Liberatory educators use a range of pedagogical practices including ill-structured problems, art, reflection, and theory building. Educators believe that learning requires moments of privacy, introspection, and isolation. According to Habermas (1992), the pursuit of freedom through cognitive means is "profoundly ingrained in the structure of human species... intimately built into the reproduction of human life" (p. 194).

Recognizing that education is increasingly subject to valuation in a market economy, liberatory educators oppose the commodification of knowledge. This includes experiential learning which is "fast becoming a central object in a powerful and oppressive discourse" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 206). Liberatory educators argue that "the turn to experience is a means of by-passing experienced practitioners and negating the power of their professional judgement. . . thereby transforming experience into a commodity to be exchanged for credit

towards qualifications" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 206). To add to this, "the ways we perceive and construct experience have been colonized by the dominant language of consumerism" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 207) and this creates a tendency for students to foreclose new and surprising understandings.

One of the fundamental reasons why liberatory education was chosen as a complementary theory for this study is because it resists the commodification of knowledge. Likewise non-profit organizations do not prioritize market-factors; therefore, this educational approach is consistent with the practices of non-profit organizations.

4.9 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for my research, which explores how individual, social, and institutional conversion factors enable or constrain the development of personal agency through WIL at non-profit organizations. In this chapter, I described the HCT and argued that while it is rhetorically powerful, it is insufficient as a theoretical basis for a study of WIL. I then introduced the HDCA and explained key concepts, such as well-being, agency, capabilities, functionings, and adaptive preferences. I then described the informational basis and principles that guide the processes of information gathering, explaining that the HDCA contrasts the numerical precision of the human capital approach and instead emphasizes confidence in the process of deliberation. Finally, I explored the individual, social, and institutional conversion factors from the lens of higher education and work activation. I concluded this chapter with an acknowledgement of the limitations of the HDCA and introduced liberatory education as a compliment to the HDCA. In the next chapter, I will introduce research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Using the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA), this research asked how non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions in northern Canada are positioned with respect to individual, social, and environmental conversion factors to enable and constrain the development of personal agency through work-integrated learning (WIL). This research had three primary questions:

1 How are non-profit organizations positioned to support students to develop personal agency through WIL?

2 How do stakeholders reflect on the strengths and limitations of WIL within a non-profit context?

3 How should non-profit organizations be equipped to support personal agency through WIL?

This chapter will describe methodological decisions and research design beginning with an overview of the philosophical orientation for this study. Section 5.2 justifies the decision to use a case study approach and section 5.3 examines the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. In section 5.4, the research design is explained, including the boundaries of the case and the sources of evidence. Section 5.5 describes data collection methods, and data analysis processes (NVIVO, concept mapping, seclusion and deep listening) are covered in section 5.6. Ethical considerations and limitations are in the final sections of this chapter.

5.1 Philosophical Foundation

I agree with Brookfield (2005) when he argues that Western democracies are highly unequal and the state and powerful actors are complicit in reproducing and normalizing

inequalities through hegemony. Though competing agendas are at play, the dominant rhetoric positions WIL as a win-win proposition, benefiting students and employers and neutrally mediated through post-secondary institutions. However, this research takes a critical and social realist perspective of knowledge and suggests that there are multiple ways to interpret and understand WIL.

A critical realist perspective of knowledge holds that the natural and social worlds exist independently of our knowledge of them and that the nature of objects determines how we explore them (Wheelahan, 2007, 2010). However, we do not have direct access to objects of knowledge; instead, our knowledge of the natural and social world is mediated through concepts. This means our knowledge of the world is always fallible, even though critical realists argue that there are grounds for choosing some accounts over others "because they provide a more 'practically adequate' account of the reality they seek to describe" (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 187). When we apply knowledge in new and different ways, in new and different contexts, "we transform that knowledge" (Wheelahan, 2007, p. 194).

In this case, education institutions, labour markets, and pedagogies are the result of history, and they are "formed out of cultural, political, and economic conflicts and compromises" (Roman & Apple, 1990, p. 41). They are real, yet the nature of the object under investigation is not stable or enduring; WIL is a relatively recent phenomenon and is understood though concepts which are being developed in relationships. The example of WIL shows that the social world exists *relatively* independently of our conceptions because our conceptions help to shape our actions which in turn reshape social structures. However, this is

always within the context of pre-existing social structures that condition the courses of action available to us, and not all courses of action are available to us (Sayer, 2000).

A social realist perspective recognizes that the creation of knowledge is a social process that becomes more powerful through collaboration (Wilson, 2008, p. 121); yet it is shaped by relations of power and bears the mark of those who produce it (Wheelahan, 2010). Because knowledge is the product of communities of knowledge producers who may seek to maintain their power and privilege, knowledge can be used to legitimate the power of the powerful, to maintain social order and to affect social change (Wheelahan, 2010). This research attempts to use a theory-led case study to transform our knowledge of WIL.

5.2 A Theory-Led Case Study of an Outlier

A theory-led case study that focused on an outlier was an appropriate methodological choice for this research. Fleming and Zegwaard (2018) recommend that when deciding methodology, consideration be given to both the research question being addressed and the researcher capability. While there has been an increase in the number of studies on WIL, research tends to be qualitative, descriptive and lack "theory-informed critical discussion" (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018, p. 205). For example, a significant proportion of WIL studies are rooted in the Human Capital Theory (HCT); and while HCT is assumed it is often not named. Case studies of WIL are emerging (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Linn et al., 2004) and the case study approach is recommended because of its flexibility and its ability to represent the highly contextualized nature of WIL. Furthermore, WIL is a complex pedagogical approach, which involves divergent stakeholders (students, post-secondary institutions, and labour market actors) with sometimes competing agendas. Case study methodology allows for an "in-depth

exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons, 2009, p. 21), and it offers a "means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 51-52). For the purposes of this research, a case study was ideal because it was anchored in real life situations and provided a rich and holistic account (Merriam, 2009) of WIL from divergent perspectives.

According to Merriam (2009), "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (p. 40), and if the phenomenon is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case. Creswell (2003) recommends "case studies generalize from a sample population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behavior of a population" (p. 154). Yin (2008) suggests that a case study "contribute[s] to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena" (p. 4) and that case study illuminates "important contextual conditions" that may be "highly pertinent" to the phenomenon of study (p. 18). Yin (2009) cautions that selecting the case is the greatest risk in doing case study research and for that reason, it is important to select a special case.

The "special" case for this research is an outlier in the field of WIL: non-profits in a non-metropolitan region of northern Canada.[5] This study encompasses individual entities, in this case non-profit organizations and the post-secondary institutions, who offer WIL, as well as the environment in which they exist, which includes the labour market, multiple government

[5] In Canada, the designation "northern" indicates geography (further North), climate (longer and colder winters), population density (more land per person), and demography (a greater proportion of First Nations people).

agencies, and the social context, among other factors. The decision to frame this case study as a single case instead of ten individual component parts (eight non-profits and two post-secondary cases) takes into account that WIL brings together two distinct and inter-dependent systems (education and the labour market) and is an effort to bring more clarity to the interaction between these systems. As described by Yin (2012), this is a single-case study with embedded subcases (p. 113). This research, centered on an outlier, is done with the hope that the findings will improve theoretical understanding and "shed new light on inconsistency in emerging theory and potentially reconcile theoretical predictions with real-world observations" (Lieberson, 1992, p. 174). Flyvbjerg (2006) says that a case study can illuminate or challenge a theory. Though outliers have the capacity to reveal boundaries and contingencies (Gerring, 2007), outliers are often excluded from the researcher's gaze "in an effort to tie up loose ends and improve statistical power" (Gibbert et al., 2021, p. 172). Gibbert et al. (2021) say that a "single deviant case can be instrumental in identifying the boundary conditions (e.g. moderating effects) and process explanations (e.g. mediating effects) of a theory that before the detection of the deviant case, remained unchallenged" (p. 175). It is anticipated that this research will create "a holistic impression of the total situation studied" (Mjoset, 2006, p. 736), and through the selection of an outlier, this case study will add complexity to the WIL discourse "making hidden phenomenon most blatantly visible" (Gibbert et al., 2021, p. 178).

Case studies enable an evaluation of a phenomenon that is research-based, evidence-led, and inclusive of different methods (Simons, 2009), which can serve as an "important example" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 13) for policy deliberations, programmatic information, and resource decisions. Recognizing that there are minimal studies of WIL in non-profits and

that prior to this research, there were no case studies of WIL using the HDCA, it is hoped that this research will be useful to inform future policy and programmatic decisions. Since 2015, more than a billion dollars have been committed to in WIL (Government of Canada, 2019), thus having a “greater understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 46) can inform how objectives are set and resources allocated across Canada.

To summarize section 5.1, this research utilized a theory-led case study methodology focused on an outlier. While a case study approach has previously been used for research about WIL, often WIL research lacks theory-informed discussion or theoretical assumptions are implicit (for example, HCT). This research is explicitly informed by the HDCA. Much of the current research on WIL is focused on profit-driven industries in urban centres, but this research focused on non-profit organizations in a non-metropolitan region of northern Canada. As an outlier, this research attempts to reveal boundaries and makes hidden phenomenon visible, which is useful for future policy and resource allocation decisions. Having clarified methodological choices, the next section will explore the primary instrument for case data collection and analysis: the researcher.

5.3 The “Insider” Researcher as the Primary Instrument of Data Collection and Analysis

Merriam (2015) states that because the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, the researcher is "closer" to reality than if a data collection instrument had been used (p. 203). This necessitates the researcher to establish credibility through construct validity, external validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2007; Singleton, & Straits, 2010; Yin, 2009), and by conducting investigation in an ethical manner (Abma & Stake, 2014). It also

calls attention to the researcher's positionality and biases. Rational scientific methods create an illusion of innocence "because they enable practitioners to step away from considering how they are implicated in inequality and injustice" (Strega, 2015, p. 123); however, the "rigorous application of a scientific methodology by a rational subject, disguises the gendered, racialized, and classed nature of this discourse and its privileging of White elite masculinity" (Strega, 2015, p. 123). With this in mind, I will turn to first person to declare my positionality and biases.

I am a white, well-educated, middle-class, middle-aged, urbanized, cis-gendered woman in a heterosexual relationship. To complete my PhD, I had the privilege of quitting my full-time professional job to move to the region of research. On a relative global scale, I am wealthy and possess financial, intellectual, social, and cultural capital. I was also the first in my family to complete post-secondary education; I come from working class origins and carry the "hidden injuries of class" (Lehmann, 2009). Addiction, trauma, poverty, institutionalization, mental illness, and inequality are markers of my heritage, together with compassion, joy, dedication, intelligence, and community—this informs my worldview.

When I began this research, I was both an insider and outsider. Having worked in non-profits for more than twenty years and as the former Director of Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto, I have a "deep level of understanding and interpretation of the context" (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018, p. 209) within both the non-profit and the post-secondary worlds. However, the location of the research was new to me. As a geographic outsider, this gave me distance on my "intellect, ego and emotions" (Yazaan, 2015, p. 142) and some protection from the tendency to "desire for positive outcomes" (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018, p. 209).

Wilson (2008) encourages that "something that should go in the writing is how you have changed and what the whole process has done to you" (p. 123). Besides the increased awareness of social and institutional conversion factors, I also became less of an outsider. At the beginning of my study, I had limited local context and few relationships in the region; however, as time progressed, I became an insider. I accepted a paid research project, which involved non-profits; I won a grant to deliver WIL at a college and university; I joined a municipal task force to address school to work transitions; and I was asked to be on the board of one of the non-profits in my study. In order to retain some level of distance, I declined the board offer and I also kept the organizations that were in my PhD research distinct from my paid research. The paid research gave me deeper knowledge of the non-profit labour market context and while the data set did not answer my PhD research questions and the geographic regions of both research projects were different, this provided me a new lens and a more nuanced context to situate my investigation. The grant offered me a vehicle to engage, to test and apply learning as it was being created. Through the municipal working group, I gained access to a wider range of stakeholders who carried knowledge about the system of education and/or the labour market—I engaged "in dialogue with those living in that world" (Abma & Stake, 2014, p. 152). In each of these new roles, I was transparent about the limits of my research, ensuring that all stakeholders were aware of my dual relationships (Helbok et al., 2006). These three significant events expanded the dossier of documents and archival records available for my study and enabled me to directly (virtually) observe how stakeholders were positioned with relationship to one another and to the labour market. These "insider" experiences increased the risks of partiality and bias, but they also created opportunities to

leverage my research findings in real-time. Having examined the researcher's position and biases, the next section will explain the research design describing the boundaries of this case study and the forms of evidence that were used.

5.4 Research Design

Case studies use multiple methods and emphasize subjective ways of knowing, and, as such, case study research is not defined by methodology or method; instead, what defines it is the boundary of the case (Simons, 2009). To determine the boundedness of a topic, Simons (2009) asks whether there is a limit to the number of possible people who could be interviewed or observed. The boundaries of this research are non-profit organizations registered within the geographic limits of the non-metropolitan region in northern Canada during the 2020-2021 academic year (July 2020-August 2021) and who had opportunity to participate in WIL with students from the local post-secondary institutions. There are one-hundred and eighty-eight non-profit organizations, one college, and one university within this boundary.

Starks and Trinidad (2007) recommend that "data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon—and who can provide a detailed account of their experience—might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typical sample sizes range from 1 to 10 persons" (p. 1375). This study was based on the experiences of eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions, with a total of 22 individuals who participated in the research. To understand multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon, diverse non-profits were selected. Organizations represented different sectors and were diverse in terms of size, history, years of experience with WIL, degree of external regulations, and level of independence. One organization identified as an Indigenous non-profit. Six organizations had conducted WIL

during the previous and current academic year, one organization stopped WIL for the current academic year, and one organization had never participated in WIL. Several organizations conducted multiple forms of WIL based on the CEWIL taxonomy; however, no organization was familiar with the taxonomy. While almost all forms of WIL, except apprenticeships and entrepreneurship, were conducted, no form of WIL predominated. The number of students that organizations hosted changed from year to year and ranged from one or two up to more than ten, depending on organizational factors and funding. Some students were paid, while others were not, some students were assigned organizations as part of course requirements, while other students voluntarily signed up. Sometimes students from different WIL programs worked side-by-side: paid and unpaid, voluntary and required, undergraduate, high school, and graduate.

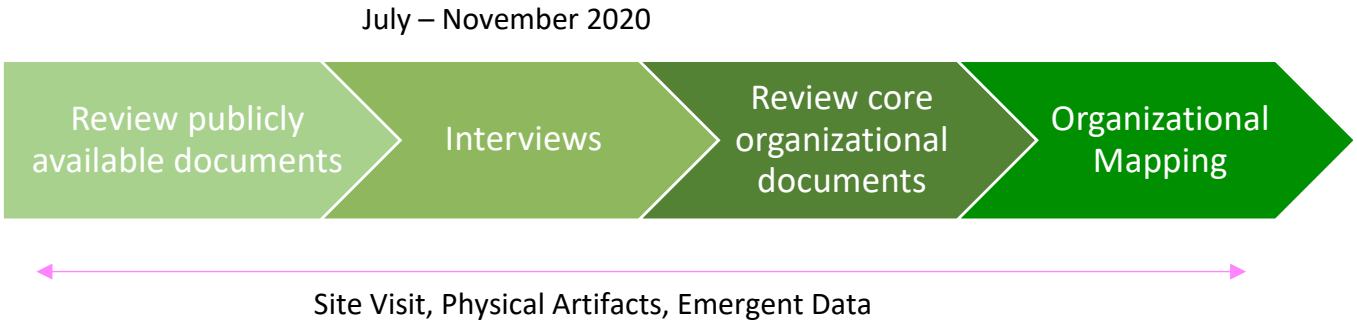
Having defined the boundaries of the case study, I will now describe the forms of evidence that were used. When undertaking a case study, six forms of evidence are recommended: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts (Baxter & Jack, 2008), and through the process of research, valuable data will emerge (Yazan, 2015). This research utilized all forms of evidence except participant observation.

Yin (2009) suggests that case study focus on the how and why questions and Woodside and Wilson (2003) suggests that space should be given for "deep understanding of the actors, interactions, sentiments, and behaviors occurring for a specific process through time" (p. 497). Protocols and tools should adapt and probe in different directions when new insights emerge. Accordingly, a research protocol for the collection of data by organization was developed in

order to minimize errors and biases (Yin, 2009, p. 45) and ensure "stability and consistency" (Singleton & Strait, 2010, p. 130) of the study. Interview guides were also developed (see Appendix 2 & 3). Questions focused on personal experiences facilitating WIL, how students engaged with theory and practices during WIL, the benefits and challenges, and also what WIL might look like in an ideal context. Questions were open and allowed space to probe deeper. Further information was gathered in many different and sometimes unexpected ways to gain an in-depth understanding (Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously (Yazan, 2015).

Figure 15.

Research Protocol



5.5 Data Collection Methods

Yin (2009) says that the value of case study methodology is the ability to combine data from different sources and since validity and credibility are gained through the triangulation of data, the more sources of data to support findings, the better (p. 77). Creswell (2007) provides a series of detailed steps to guide the data collection process. These include,

> using purpose sampling techniques to identify potential interviewees; deciding upon a specific interview strategy that "is practical and will net the most useful information to answer research questions" using proper recording equipment; creating and implementing an interview protocol; using a pilot test to refine the interview questions; locating an appropriate location for the interview to take place; obtaining consent to be interviewed from the subject; and conducting oneself properly throughout the interview including, but not limited to, showing courtesy and respect, staying within the allotted time frame, and allowing the subjects to speak for themselves." (p. 132)

In this section, I will describe the data collection methods I used to answer my three primary research questions. I will first explain how organizations were selected for participation and then I will describe sources of data.

To purposefully select organizations, the Canadian Revenue Agency 2020 list of 188 non-profit and charity organizations within the regional district was sorted by sector. Then, faculty and community leaders were consulted to create a short-list of non-profit organizations who had engaged in WIL. Twenty-one organizations were short-listed and Executive Directors of organizations were approached by email in sets of five. When organizations declined, the next organizations were emailed. This process ensured a diversity of organizations.

Unfortunately, the recruitment timeline coincided with the first wave of COVID-19 and many non-profit organizations were experiencing an increased demand for services alongside resource constraints. They had limited bandwidth to participate in research. Several organizations asked to delay participation until COVID-19 subsided and some declined. In total seventeen organizations were approached and eight agreed to participate. Brief organizational profiles will be provided in the next chapter; in the meantime, Table 4 illustrates the diversity of organizations.

Table 4.

Brief Description of Non-Profit Organizations

Organization	Sector	Employee Size	Period of Inception (globally)	# Years doing WIL	Regulation	Level of Independence	Indigenous
#red	Community Living	Large	Welfare	Many	Accredited	Local, Independent	No
#orange	Child Well Being	Medium	Industrial	Many, but currently stopped	Some accredited professionals	Federated Model with National and International Networks	Indigenous -led
#yellow	Arts and Culture	Small	Neoliberal	Few	Unregulated	Local, Independent	No
#green	Environment , Arts and Culture	Small	Neoliberal	None	Unregulated	Local, Independent	No
#pink	Social Services	Medium	Industrial	Many	Unionized, Some accredited professionals	Membership within National Society	No
#blue	Economic Developmen t	Small	Industrial	Few	Unregulated	Independent	No
#indigo	Indigenous Social Services	Large	Welfare	Many	Some accredited Professionals	National Network	Yes
#grey	Environment / Civic	Small	Neoliberal	Many	Unregulated	Local, Independent	No

In addition to non-profit organizations, one local college and one local university were included in this study. Collectively, hey offer full-time and part-time studies for a diverse student contingent of more than 11,000 students.

The eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions framed the case study, and a case study database was created to allow the researcher to track interviews and organize data such as transcriptions, documents, and interview notes (Yin, 2009), as well as

emergent data, by organization and participant. The table below compares research questions to data collection strategies. Each source of evidence will be described in further detail in the next paragraphs.

5.1 Interviews

Interviews were the most robust source of evidence and provided “large amounts of data quickly" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108). Interviews were conducted with twenty-two non-profit staff and volunteers, faculty and administrators. Once organizations and institutions agreed to participate in this study, interview participants were identified “based on their relevance to the research question, rather than the position titles they held” (Bryman, 2004, p. 334). For non-profit organizations, the Executive Director of each organization provided a short-list of potential participants, faculty provided recommendations and a search of organizational directories was conducted to ensure a robust list of potential participants. Additionally, at the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if there was somebody else who should be included in the study. When participants were being recruited, an email was sent to them explaining the purpose of the study, why the project was important, the rationale for selecting their organizations and the benefits of participation (Stake, 1995). This email is shown in Appendix 4. The majority of participants agreed to interviews. Except for the two non-profits who were not currently engaged in WIL, all participants had recent involvement with one or more WIL placements, either directly as a co-educator or as an administrator whose duties included WIL. Three of the participants held executive leadership roles.

Table 5.

Research Questions and Data Collection Strategies

Research Question	Data Collection Strategies
1. How are non-profit organizations positioned to support students develop personal agency through WIL?	▪ 12 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from 8 non-profit organizations ▪ 10 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from 2 post-secondary institutions ▪ Organization and institution websites ▪ Direct observations (2 non-profits, 2 post-secondary institutions) ▪ Physical artifacts (Riipen, career centre, map) ▪ Regional Working Group for Workforce and Skills - documents ▪ Media and social media
2. How do stakeholders reflect on the strengths and limitations of non-profits as a site for WIL?	▪ 12 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from 8 non-profit organizations ▪ 10 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from 2 post-secondary institutions ▪ Organization and institution websites ▪ City Workforce Report ▪ Media and social media
3. How should non-profit organizations be equipped to support personal agency, through WIL?	▪ 12 interviews with stakeholders from 8 non-profit organizations ▪ 10 interviews with stakeholders from post-secondary institutions ▪ Web and document review: WIL tools, frameworks, and resources from post-secondary institutions, workplaces, and national WIL organizations

For post-secondary institutions, after institutional ethics were approved, an online search of WIL courses was conducted and a snowball sampling technique was used to identify faculty and PSE administrators who supported WIL at non-profit organizations. Candidates were called and sent a follow up email to explain the purpose of the research. A slightly different, more scholarly explanation of the research was used for faculty and PSE administrators; this is shown in Appendix 5. Similar to non-profits, three of the participants

held executive leadership roles. The table below outlines the breakdown of participants by role, with executive leaders indicated in bold. Twelve participants were from non-profit organizations and ten were from post-secondary institutions.

Table 6.

In-depth interview participants by role

Non-Profit Co-educator	Non-Profit Administrator	PSE Faculty	PSE Administrator
Amber	Brent*	Alexis	Julie
Carla	Donna*	Kris	George*
Eden	Pat	Sophia	PJ*
Esther		Dana	Mak
Emma		Ben	Dustin*
Frankie			
Paul*			
Pam			
Rachel			

** Indicates executive leaders*

During interviews, it was important to create an environment that allowed participants to relax and express themselves candidly (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 115). Prior to interviews, an internet search of both the organization and the participant was conducted. This enabled the researcher to understand how participants fit within the organization and allowed the conversation to move in nuanced directions. People who participate in research related to their work can experience both risks and benefits. As Merriam (1999) stated participants may "feel their privacy has been invaded . . . be embarrassed . . . [or] tell things they had never intended to reveal" (p. 214). For this reason, it was important to assure participants that sufficient actions were taken to respect their privacy and confidentiality. Prior to interviews, participants were given a consent form which outlined their rights and explained how their

confidentiality would be protected (Appendix 6). At the beginning of each interview, participants were reassured of their anonymity and informed that they would have an opportunity to review their transcript and could withdraw from the study at any point up until the point of data analysis (Stake, 1995). Each participant was assigned a code, which was saved in a separate password protected code log. From the codes, a pseudonym was generated for each organization and participant.

Of the twenty-two participants, fourteen identified as female and seven identified as male. Men were more likely to be in senior positions—in fact more than half of the men interviewed were in executive leadership positions. There was almost an even split between participants who held their role for more than ten years and those who have worked in their role for less than ten years. Length of time did not indicate access to organizational-decision making, however, and seven participants indicated that they held senior decision-making roles, eight had mid-level decision making responsibilities, and seven were in the "front-line" with less decision-making power. Almost eighty percent of participants were full-time, permanent employees. Of those who were not, two were volunteers, one chose to go part-time, one faculty was sessional and another was "non-regularized." The interview guide did not directly ask race or ethnicity; however, one participant indicated that they are Indigenous and three others indicated that they moved to The Fort from other countries. There was almost an equal split between those who moved to the Fort from abroad or elsewhere in Canada and those who are from the Fort.

While two semi-structured interview guides were used (Appendix 2 & 3), the interview guides were not followed sequentially, but provided a reference to frame the conversation.

The researcher also invited participants to elaborate on areas that they felt particularly passionate about and gave them the opportunity to skip sections if they felt uncomfortable. During interviews, active listening techniques were used, and attention was paid to silences and pauses (Simons, 2009). No questions were skipped and in the middle of one interview, a participant exclaimed, "you are just bringing all my soap boxes out today. I'm not usually this chatty!" (Frankie, #indigo). All participants expressed interest in the study and shared enthusiasm to contribute towards student learning.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted online and recorded. To build trust, the researcher used video and all but one participant also shared their video. Following interviews, recordings were transcribed with the support of an artificial intelligence software, and transcripts were shared with participants (Creswell, 2007). Two participants made minor modifications to their transcripts. During the process of coding and analysis, the researcher identified information that was unclear and three follow up interviews were conducted with one faculty member and two post-secondary administrators. These interviews were also transcribed and shared with participants.

In total, twenty-five interviews were conducted, which included three follow-up interviews to clarify concepts. On average, interviews lasted 55 minutes with the longest interview being 84 minutes and the shortest being 31 minutes. Interviews tended to be longer with post-secondary stakeholders compared to non-profit counterparts.

5.2 Content Analysis

Over the duration of this study, the list of documents and archival records grew. For each of the eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions, the researcher

reviewed websites, strategies, and other organizational documents. There were significant differences across organizations in terms of the availability, content, and quality of their documentation and archival records. Through relationships and by happenstance, the researcher also collected unexpected data, for example a historical account of the women's movement in the city, which shed light on the relationship between post-secondary institutions and non-profits over four decades. Access to a City Workforce Analysis as well as municipal Workforce and Skill Development Working Group documents and archives—which focused on the school to work transition—were acquired. However, in the unexpected data that was acquired there were significant gaps. For example, a list of the College's Program Advisory Committees was requested on multiple occasions; however, the list never surfaced. A full list of documents and archival records is provided in Appendix 7. In order to obscure the location of this study, some descriptors were modified and citations that reference the location of this study were removed. To ensure confidence in the documents, a list of all location-identifying citations was provided to the PhD supervisor.

5.3 Direct Observation

One of the core elements of WIL is that it is situated in a real or authentic work environment (CEWIL, 2018). Direct observation was a crucial aspect of this research design; however, due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, direct observations were severely limited and mostly occurred online. The researcher used a research log to record direct observations, taking note of environment, relationships, and events. In-person direct observation was conducted through workplace tours at two non-profits (#orange and #indigo) and at both post-secondary institutions. Categories for observation included: proximity and accessibility for

students, visibility of organizational mission statement or devices that point to organization's theoretical approach (pamphlets, brochures, annual reports, etc.), spatial planning (i.e. communal space, private offices, restricted areas), as well as equipment and workplace tools (i.e. computers, white boards, art work, etc.). Being a resident of the region, I also conducted indirect observation, being aware of how the eight non-profit organizations and the post-secondary institutions engaged in the region and through social media.

5.4 Physical Artifacts

Physical artifacts were a cursory form of evidence. The most notable artifacts were Riipen, a Canadian technology platform that the college uses to match students with WIL opportunities and maps and documents from the career fair hosted by the college and university. These listed participating organizations and revealed how organizations were introduced to students.

5.5 Data Storage

All electronic data were saved on a personal computer using the University of Toronto One Drive cloud, which is password protected. This includes interview data (recorded interviews, transcripts, and notes), organizational documents, emails, and other files. Organizational and personal identifiers were removed from each research artifacts and coded using pseudonyms and data were saved in coded folders.

5.6 Data Analysis

Yin (2003) says that analysis is "one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (p. 109). Merriam (2009) refers to the meaning making process of consolidating, reducing and interpreting (as cited in Yazan, 2015). My process was to add and

expand data, and then transform them into meaningful structures. The researcher looked for relationships across data and attempted to synthesize concepts while resisting the urge to over-generalize and over-simplify. This involved sorting, refining, and refocusing data until coherence emerged. The theoretical framework provided focus and helped to make decisions about what should not be included (Yin, 2009, p. 130).

The process of analysis was “recursive and dynamic" (Merriam, 1999, p. 155). Wilson (2008) explains, “all of the pieces go in, until eventually the new ideas come out. You build relationships with the idea in various and multiple ways until you reach a new understanding or higher states of awareness regarding whatever it is that you are studying” (p. 117). The primary analytical strategies were inductive and deductive coding using NVivo, concept-mapping, triangulation, seclusion, and deep intuitive listening. These will be described in detail.

5.6.1 NVIVO

All interview transcripts were coded using NVivo12. With the HDCA as a theoretical framework, an initial set of codes were developed around the individual, social and environmental/institutional conversion factors. This is consistent with Yin’s approach to collect evidence against an initially stipulated pattern (2012, p. 118). After the first two transcripts were complete, they were coded to confirm validity of codes and subcodes were added by “putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps” to “create an organizational framework" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 133). I wrote memos, which were “written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories. [These] represent[ed] the development of codes from which they are derived" (Charmaz, 1994, p. 106). A list of codes and sub-codes is shown below:

1. **Environment/Institutional Conversion Factors:** Labour Market, Accreditation & Regulator Bodies, Branding, Collective, Government, Hierarchy (conceptual, rather than particular), Non-Profits, Pipeline, Boundaries, Place, Reciprocity, Roles
2. **Social Conversion Factors:** Theory, Non-Profits: Organizational Structure, Organizational Learning, Funding, Size and Scale, Social Capital; Post-Secondary Institutions: Curriculum, Faculty, Internal institutional arrangements, WIL: COVID-19, Tasks, Workload & Turn Over
3. **Individual Conversion Factors:** Students: Disequilibrium, Enabling Environment, Citizenship, Processual Freedom; Co-educator, Mentor, Supervisor: Motivation, Reflections and Expectations "on students these days," Reflecting back on my life, Emotions and feelings, Personal Boundaries
4. **Other:** Resources and Support for Non-Profits, Types of Opportunities, WIL as a term

After all transcripts were coded, I explored patterns and themes within the codes and across stakeholders. Clusters emerged demonstrating commonalities across stakeholders, who were then categorized using NVivo according to gender, connection to place, organizational level, and professional stage. LeCompte and Preissle's (1992) approach to combine inductive coding procedures with a comparative approach was used: "As data [were] transcribed and coded, they [were] compared across categories. Throughout the process, new relationships and themes emerge[d] and [were] analyzed further as new data [were] collected. The process fed back upon itself" (p. 256).

5.6.2 Concept Mapping

Recognizing the complexity of WIL and the possibility that stakeholders held divergent perspectives, the relationships within and across data were integral to this investigation. Wilson (2008) cautions that "if you are breaking things down into their smallest pieces, you are destroying all of the relationships around it" (p. 119). Instead, he says to "look at all those relations as a whole instead of breaking it down" and "use more of an intuitive logic, rather than a linear logic" (Wilson, 2008, p. 119). Concept maps kindled intuition and enabled the researcher to understand relationships and patterns in the data.

Concept mapping is a process that "primarily use[s] detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations" made by the researcher (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). An extensive body of conceptual maps that visually represented data was created, filling three 11x15 notebooks with coloured images, mind-maps, diagrams, and scribbles. Additionally, NVivo was used to create visual representations of data and PowerPoint models were created to refine pivotal insights. Through concept maps, I was able to "seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). Vague concepts became clearer through mapping, gaining distinction with each progression. Concept mapping was used as a tool to conduct triangulation, and also as an artifact of triangulation.

5.6.3 Triangulation

Triangulation enables the researcher to corroborate findings and confirm perspectives against other data sources (Singleton & Straits, 2010). I used triangulation to compare how

stakeholders described their organization's theoretical approach with core organizational documents. I also triangulated perspectives of participants from within the same organization, between non-profit organizations, and between post-secondary institutions.

5.6.4 Estranged from Reality: Seclusion and Deep Intuitive Listening

In qualitative studies, "the researcher is the instrument" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 79); thus, it is essential to consider the conditions of the instrument. According to Marcuse (1964), estrangement from reality is a necessary condition for the production of meaning for "when we live our lives in association with others, it becomes difficult to establish the necessary distance for autonomous thought" (as cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 197). Wilson (2008) says that we have been trained to separate our head from our heart and spirit and within our academic traditions, the dream world is separated from rationality, the symbols of the unconsciousness distinct from the symbols of scholarship. He resists the "separation of the subject from the object of knowledge" (Wilson, 2008, p. 123), and instead sees the presence of the researcher within the knowledge.

Over the course of this study, periods of seclusion generated rich analysis. I physically removed myself from everyday life and temporarily relocated to a desert town to create distance and allow insights. During these periods, all other research and work projects were paused, social media was turned off, and the duties of life (laundry, bills, and pets) were delegated. As Wilson (2008) said, before "I couldn't write about it, cause I was too busy with work and family. I was too busy with all these other relationships I was accountable to, to be able to work on" my research (p. 120). Estranged from reality, concepts and words came.

Art is another means to “induce estrangement” as it offers “a pathway of separation, a way of breaking with the rhythms of normal life” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 197). Marcuse (1978) says that “art breaks open a dimension inaccessible to other experiences, a dimension in which human beings, nature, and things no longer stand under the law of the established reality principle” (p. 72). I incorporated artistic experiences into the investigative process: painting, collaging, and reflecting on how objects of art made reference back to the research questions. While meanings did not always unfold at the time of artmaking, meaning emerged over time. Symbols, like that of the raven, kept returning and revealing powerful insights. The raven is known for its critical thinking and for the way work is performed socially, with ravens and with other animals, like wolves. This symbolism offered an alternative conception to both critical thinking and work. Appendix 11 provides an exploration of the symbolism of the raven.

I also maintained a “reflective field,” which allowed me to remain open to new perspectives, ideas, and to capture analytical thoughts when they occurred (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). A cloud-based folder was used so that whatever computer, tablet, or phone was available, memos were recorded. I also kept an abundant supply of coloured sticky notes and pens at my bedside and desk so that ideas could be noted, sorted, and arranged. Finally, I used physical processes to connect body to data. During long walks through the forest or through sage-brush hills, I replayed interviews or verbalized concepts. Floating ideas found structure and form. Together the process of seclusion, the experience of art, the reflective field and by forging kinetic connections to data, I was able to find relationships within the data as a whole (Wilson, 2008) and “each effort of data analysis . . . enhanced [my] capacity to further analyze" (Glesne & Peshkin, p. 129).

5.6.5 “Shadow-Testing” and emergent findings

Wilson (2008) recommends “continuous feedback with all the research participants” (p. 121) to build relationships of knowledge with the researcher and participants and across participants. According to Wilson, sharing knowledge as it emerges strengthens insights and ensures “concepts are properly encircled” (2008, p. 122). I intended to host focus group discussions to test emerging findings with participants; however, due the COVID-19, this was untenable. Instead, I consulted with subject-matter experts virtually one-on-one to test findings and listen for alternative interpretations. Stake (1995) refers to this as a ‘shadow test’ (as cited in Yazan, 2015). After the first draft of this dissertation was complete, I presented findings at the Human Development and Capabilities Global Dialogue.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

There are at least three significant limitations to this study: 1) limitations in design, 2) limitations in participants, and 3) limitations caused by COVID-19. The primary research question that frames this study asks how through WIL, non-profit organizations are positioned to support students develop personal agency, so they are able to create lives they have reason to value. The site of this study—a region in northern Canada—contributes to the research question, but it is partial and is not representative of the full Canadian context. While post-secondary education remains within the provincial jurisdiction, WIL is increasingly becoming a federal issue particularly as the federal government is “footing the bill” and national actors, such as BHER, CEWIL and Riipen, are directing WIL discourse. This research offers useful insights into how WIL is implemented locally, but recommendations need to be contextualized provincially.

The second limitation to this study is that though students are the primary subject of this investigation, they were not included in the research design. Access to students is complicated, funding and incentives prevented student participation, and the lack of student reflection on their WIL experience leaves many gaps: I am not able to understand how Indigenous, international, or settler students experience WIL differently, or how discrimination or privilege play out during WIL. My inability to triangulate student experiences with what non-profit organizations or faculty shared, or to observe how student agency was experienced or expressed over time (i.e., after graduation and in the labour market), is a limitation.

COVID-19 was the third limitation. Non-profit organizations faced a triple threat because of COVID-19: they lost revenue, they faced human resource challenges (ONN, 2020), and in the region of this study, 75% of the organizations had to cancel, reduce, or change in-person programming (Community Futures Regional Outreach Program End-term Report, 2021). Many had to reprioritize organizational activities and more often than not, volunteer programs were halted, including student placements. These disruptions were particularly challenging for smaller organizations and led to further power asymmetries between post-secondary institutions and non-profits (Esmail, 2021). Many organizations declined participation in this research and among those that agreed to participate, several were only able to release one staff member to participate in interviews instead of the intended three to four. Health protocols also prevented me from conducting direct observation.

5.8 Summary of Chapter Five

Ikri (1997) said that "as the writer I will do half the work, and you as the reader will do the other half" (p. 41). This chapter provided the reader with an account of the methodological

choices and research design in order to strengthen the reader's confidence in the credibility of this study, which asks how non-profit organizations are positioned to support students develop personal agency through WIL. This chapter justified the use of a theory-led case study methodology focused on an outlier—non-profit organizations in a non-metropolitan region of northern Canada—and outlined how eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions were selected. Data collection methods and the processes used for data analysis were also explained. The chapter concluded with an articulation of the limitations of this study. The next chapter will now introduce the eight non-profits and two post-secondary institutions.

CHAPTER 6. THE OUTLIER CASE

6.1 Introduction

This research is a theory-led case study of an outlier: non-profit organizations who participate in WIL in northern Canada. This chapter introduces "The Fort," the city in which this study is set. Beginning with The Fort's origin story and a description of its evolution through industrialism, the welfare era, and neoliberalism, this chapter provides an explanation of changes to the labour market and the non-profit sector. Following this is an overview of the post-secondary environment and a brief introduction to the ten research participants from the college and the university. Next is a description of each of the eight non-profit organizations who participated in this study, as well as an introduction to the twelve non-profit participants.

6.2 The Fort

The Fort is characterized by deep fissures between Indigenous and settlers, and between wealthy and poor citizens. According to archaeological evidence, First Nations occupied the land that is currently "The Fort" since 8700 YBP (Years Before Present; First Nation Band, n.d. para.1). In the late 1700s, European explorers arrived and realized the value of the lumber and furs in the region and by the 1820s the Hudson Bay Company established a trading post. Almost one hundred years later, the First Nation were forced off their land, relocated to a reserve and their village burned to the ground (First Nation Band, n.d., section "1913").

The industrial era was a time of immense change and laid the foundation for the city as it is today. To support the burgeoning lumber industry, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was built in 1914 and the construction of The Fort began within the design of the "City Beautiful" movement (Curry & Llewellyn, 1999). City Beautiful was a progressive social reform movement

that considered spatial order, social cohesion and combined aesthetic aspirations, but "tended to ignore social welfare concerns and left issues such as affordable housing for others to solve" (Freestone, 2007, p. 23). In the industrial period, forestry became the mainstay of the economy and since then The Fort has been positioned as a centre for social, political, entertainment, and retail functions and has served as an administrative and distributional hub for regional forest products (Curry & Llewellyn, 1999). Only a few non-profit organizations had a presence in The Fort during the industrial period, for example, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hospital Auxiliary (private hospital), various service clubs and churches (The Herald, 1915).

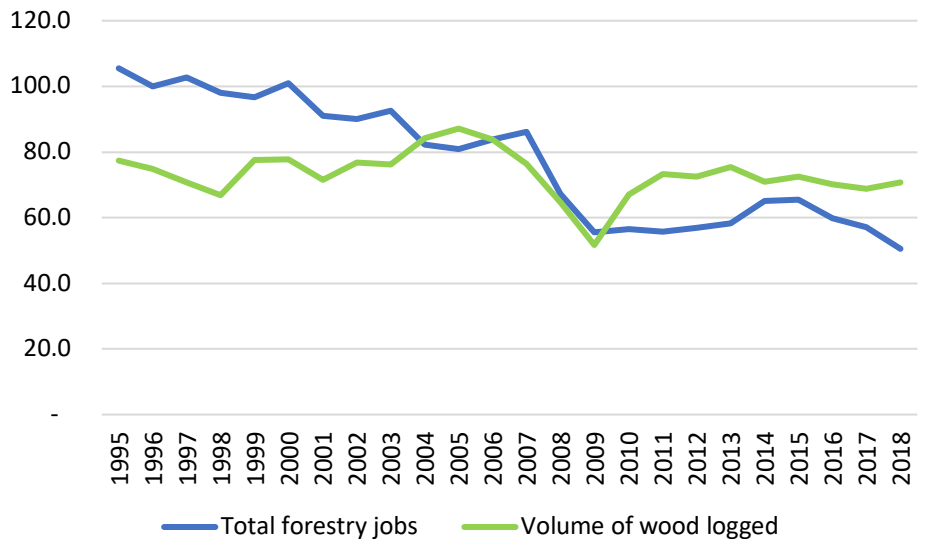
The welfare period was a time of wealth and civic development in The Fort. In the late 1950s, the need for post-secondary education was recognized and in the 1960s the College opened. The women's movement was born in the early 1970s when the Women's Civic Bureau and the Women's Centre were formed; and the first Human Rights conference was held in 1974 (Norman & Micco, 1985). During the welfare era, many pivotal non-profit organizations opened, for example, the art gallery, the symphony orchestra, Aboriginal Housing society, the Canadian Mental Health association, community-living for disabled adults, woman's transitional housing, an employment and refugee centre for immigrants, and the rotary (Canadian Revenue Agency, 2019). At the end of the 1980s, citizens rallied together to lobby for a university and 16,000 people signed a petition and contributed $5 to conduct a feasibility study for a university in the North. The university was approved by the province in 1990. At the tail end of the welfare period, there was a boom in the lumber industry and The Fort became one of the most prosperous cities in Canada, boasting the most millionaires per capita in the country (CBC,

2015). Many non-profit organizations received generous donations from the forestry sector, for example, the college and the hospital.

The era of neoliberalism brought significant challenges to the Fort and pronounced inequalities have surfaced. Corporate actors have secured new reforms, which enhance flexibility in the resource sector, and this has "liberated" them from responsibilities to the environment, labour and communities (Young, 2008). For example, while the volume of wood logged has remained fairly constant since the welfare era, the number of jobs per cubic meter has essentially reduced by half, resulting in the concentration of wealth within the forestry sector (Statistics Canada, 2019; See Figure 15).

Figure 16.

Wood volume (million cubes) v. forestry jobs (hundred thousand)



Note. Used with permission (Krebs, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2019)

At the same time, policies were implemented to promote “entrepreneurial” forms of community development and together, these have contributed to the dismantling of traditional institutions for rural development and regulation; and have transferred economic authorities and responsibility from public to private domains (Statistics Canada, 2019). Whereas previously the forestry sector made significant contributions to community and non-profit organizations, these were drastically reduced and there are now more demands than ever on the non-profit sector (Ryser & Halseth, 2014).

The labour market shifted significantly from the early days in The Fort and today the strongest demand for workers has shifted from forestry to the health care and social assistance sector (MDB Insights, 2019). Retail trade and manufacturing are also significant employers. According to a 2019 Workforce Analysis report, 18% of job postings in 2019 were in the social assistance and health care sector and there are projected shortages for social and community service workers, social workers, program leaders for recreation, sport and fitness, and instructors for persons with disabilities. The demand in this sector is expected to continue particularly as the Fort continues to be recognized as a regional hub providing education, services, commodities, and resources. There are almost 200 non-profit organizations providing key services and employment for citizens of The Fort and surrounding communities (Canadian Revenue Agency, 2019).

Unlike many other Canadian cities, in the Fort there is less competition for work and less demand for post-secondary education. Employment rates are high and the workforce is young (MDB Insights, 2019), and with less competition for work, there is less demand for higher education compared to the rest of the country. Though 43% of jobs indicate a requirement for

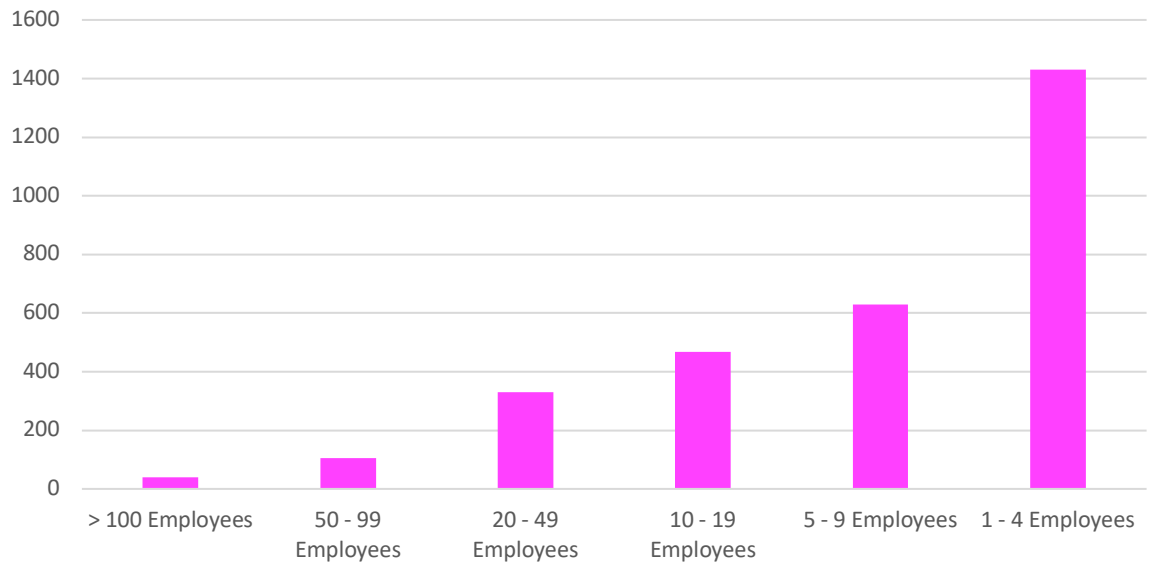
post-secondary education, only 33% of employees have either a college or university degree (MDB Insights, 2019). Arguably, there are contradictions in labour market perceptions and opportunities. On one hand, those with post-secondary credentials do not have adequate work opportunities that match their qualifications, and many graduates leave for work elsewhere. On the other hand, employers perceive a tight labour market and a skills mismatch. Sixty-one percent of employers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the availability of qualified workers in the region (MDB Insights, 2019, p. 36) and cite that students "lack practical experience in real-world settings and are often unprepared for the working environment" (MDB Insights, 2019,, pg. 44). It is reported that employees expect too much yet many employers suggest that it is not worth it to invest in young staff, as neither the city nor employment opportunities provide young people with reason to stay (MDB Insights, 2019). Smaller organizations feel that they are poorly positioned to attract and retain talent against bigger firms (MDB Insights, 2019). To curtail the migration of talent away, The Fort recognizes a need to update workplace cultures and improve organizational onboarding practices. Experiential and workplace learning, such as co-ops and internships have been recommended as a critical strategy to promote student retention and workforce alignment (MDB Insights, 2019).

Mentorship and experiential learning opportunities have also been identified as a strategy to support employers with recruitment and retention (MDB Insights, 2019). The majority of employers in the Fort are small (see Figure 16)—in 2020 there were more than 3000 employers and nearly half of them employed four or fewer staff. The small size of organizations limits upward mobility in the workforce, especially considering that there are only forty large employers who employ more than 100 staff. Horizontal mobility is also difficult as there are

fragmented mechanisms to connect workers to the labour market and word of mouth continues to be one of the top recruitment methods (MDB Insights, 2019). Gender and race-based discrimination persist in the Fort and Indigenous peoples face additional barriers to employment (Canadian Press, 2021a; Teegee, 2021; Canadian Press, 2021b). Given the high proportion of Indigenous and international students, the extend of discrimination poses a challenge for WIL.

Figure 17.

Employer organizations in the Fort, by size



Note. Based on Statistics Canada (2019), as reported by municipal economic development website, February 2020

6.3 Post-Secondary Education in The Fort

Though a "leader" in post-secondary education, boasting two post-secondary institutions (CBC, 2015) that service multiple campuses and almost thirty First Nations, the Fort has a low rate of post-secondary attainment compared to the rest of the country. Less than 25% of the population in The Fort and surrounding region have completed college or university compared to Canada's average of 54%. The Fort also has a higher proportion of young people, under the age of 15 compared to the rest of the province, which suggests that post-secondary education may be of increased importance in the next number of years.

Both the college and university are small in terms of budget and staffing, operating on less than $100 million annually. Of this, approximately 25% of the budget is from tuition and 51% and 65% are funded by government grants, for the college and university, respectively . Across both institutions there are approximately 11,000 students with more than 15% of the student population being Indigenous. The Fort has a significantly higher Indigenous population compared to the rest of the province (15% vs 5%) and this rate is proportional to the local population. More than 20% of students across the college and university are international students.

The Fort's workforce report identified a need to "provide experiential learning through internships, co-op placements, practicums, and paid cost-shared mentorship programs at a post-secondary level," and to give students opportunities to build contacts and network in the working world and give employers first contact with prospective employees (MDB Insights, 2019, pg.44). As per the report, both the college and university offer various forms of WIL across a number of programs of study, including business management, civil engineering,

kinesiology, health sciences, arts and social work. Some of the WIL opportunities occur at non-profit organizations. According to the President of the College, "stronger communities and economies depend on effective not-for-profit organizations and social service agencies" and

Table 7.

Brief Overview of the college and university

	College	University
Student Population	>7000	< 4000
Female	51%	63%
Under 25	55%	60%
Aged 30+	30%	24%
Indigenous	18%	14%
International	28% = up from 520 in 2015 - 16, representing a 285% growth	12% = *up from 282 in 2015 - 16, representing a 66% growth
Programs and Courses	< 100 programs across 8 areas of study (Business and Management, Community and Continuing Education, Health Sciences, Human Services, Technologies, Trades and Industry, University Studies, Upgrading and Access)	>100 academic courses across Bachelor of Applied Science, Arts, Commerce, Education, Health Sciences, Planning, Science, Science in Nursing, Social Work, >10 Masters Programs and <5 PhD Programs
WIL Programs of Study	Business Management, Civil Engineering Technology, Early Childhood Care and Learning, Kinesiology, Media Studies, Social Service Worker Applied, Social Serve Worker University Transfer	Bachelor of Social Work, Co-op: in Applied Sciences, Arts, Commerce, Health Science, Planning, Science Degree, Geography, Education, History

Note. Based on provincial data. For confidentiality purposes, the website is not identified.

the college is eager to support students to participate in WIL in the non-profit sector, believing it will improve "the social fabric of the communities we serve" (W2L, 2021b). The President of

the university shares similar sentiments suggesting that experiential learning enables students to “apply knowledge they learn in the classroom and help transform the social fabric of those communities" (W2L, 2021b).

Five staff from the college and five from the university participated in this study. From the college, Dustin, the President; a senior Administrator named PJ; two faculty members who offer program placements, Dana and Ben; and a faculty responsible for WIL, Mak, participated. From the university, George, the President; Sophia and Alexis, both full-time tenured faculty; Kris, a part-time sessional professor; and Julie, a co-op coordinator, participated. Ben and Sophia are in disciplines that are provincially regulated, while the others may be part of professional associations but are not regulated. Having described the context of the post-secondary environment and introduced the participants, I will now turn to the non-profit sector in The Fort.

6.4 Non-Profits in The Fort

The Fort boasts one of the highest rates of volunteerism in the province and has “a strong level of social capital and community connectedness” (City of Fort, 2019, p. 89). However, similar to the rest of Canada, a significant number of non-profits have been underfunded for years (Community Futures, 2021) and COVID-19 continues to exacerbate this. Likewise, non-profit organizations in The Fort are small, hyper-local, and few organizations are members of industry associations or regulatory bodies (Community Futures, 2021). When they are part of provincial or national associations, non-profit organizations from the Fort often say that their issues go unseen and their associations do not reflect the needs of their rural or northern communities. Many non-profits in the Fort have limited use of technology, including websites

and social media (Community Futures, 2021). In the past, students have played an important role for non-profits but there have been interruptions to student funding as a result of COVID. According to a study of 33 non-profits in the region, if an organization hosts WIL, it is more likely they host students from both the college and the university. Almost a third (30%) of non-profits in that study hosted students from *both* the college and the university (W2L report, 2021).

Eight diverse non-profit organizations participated in this study. They covered a range of sectors and employed a wide variety of occupations and professions: musicians, cooks, registered counsellors, a Director of First Impressions, administrators, marketing coordinators, financial controllers, early childhood educators, graphic designers, elders, and Executive Directors, among others. Of the non-profits in this study, 37.5% had one or fewer full-time staff and the median staff number including both full-time and part-time staff was 17. Ten non-profit staff and two non-profit volunteers were respondents.

More than half of the organizations in this study were independent with no parent organization or sub-unit. While many of these organizations had formal and informal partnerships with other organizations, they were accountable to locally designed mandates and principles. One-third of organizations were part of a robust national network, through which they shared common mandates and principles. Most non-profit organizations were not unionized. I categorized non-profits according to three distinctions:

Accredited/Unionized Organizations: These organizations were unionized and staff were represented through a collective agreement; or the organizations had undergone a

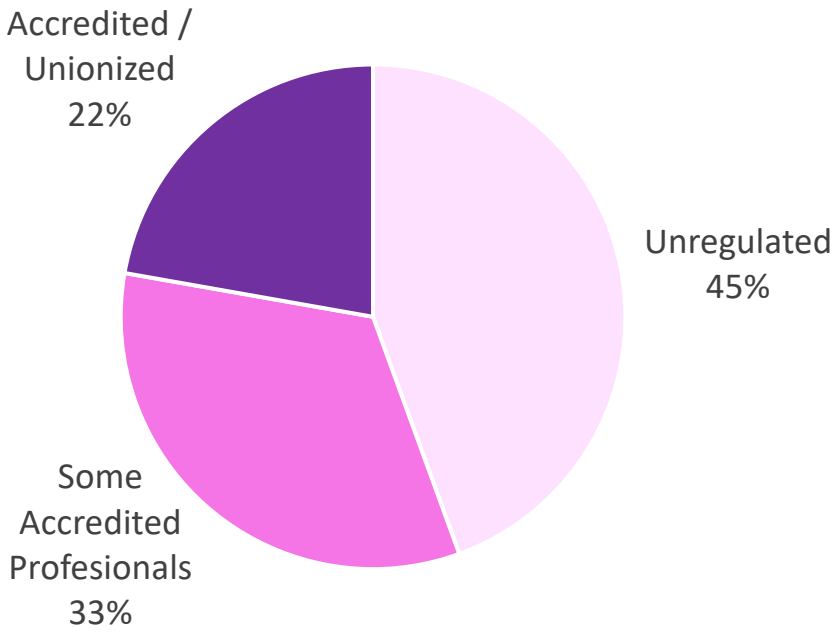
process of accreditation by a national or international body. The majority of functions within these organizations were regulated by an external body.

Some Accredited Professionals: While these organizations were not unionized or accredited, some professionals within the organization were regulated by professional memberships or accreditation through provincial or national bodies, for example, Early Childhood Care Workers, Social Workers, and Counsellors.

Unregulated Organizations: These organizations were not unionized and very few staff were held to regulations as defined by an accreditation body. The majority of functions within these organization were defined by internally designed, locally defined job descriptions. Based on this description, the majority of organizations in this study were unregulated, as shown in Figure 18. I will now provide an overview of the eight non-profit organizations in this study.

Figure 18.

Non-Profit Organizational according to External Regulation



6.5 Introduction to the Eight Non-Profit Organizations

An organization in the development, housing, and social services sector, #red is the largest organization in this study, and supports disabled adults through community-living, offering a range of programs including housing, daytime activities, and work-assistance. #red was established during the welfare era when several parents came together to envision a better life for their disabled children. They wanted their children to be better integrated in community and hoped they could have opportunities to participate in public schools, access work and social programs, and be contributing and valued members of society. Today, #red is a $28 million dollar non-profit organization, employing more than 500 staff. They are accredited

and provide services and support aligned to international standards. #red's theoretical approaches are public and explicitly stated through their vision, mission, and values. Their theoretical positions have undergone a rigorous process of evidence building, are documented and externally validated. #red has participated in WIL for many years, primarily taking on students from the college who require profession practicums or clinical placements, though they also take on other forms of WIL as requested. Amber, a mid-level manager was the spokesperson for #red.

In the Fort and the surrounding region, #orange is well-known. #orange is a medium-sized organization in the education and social services sector. #orange was first established in the United States during the industrial era and established a presence in The Fort in the welfare era. #orange is active in fifteen countries around the world. As an organization, #orange is committed to child wellbeing and they specialize in mentorship programs, particularly among communities who are socially and economically disadvantaged. They also offer early childhood care and community-based fundraising events. #orange has a wide impact though they operate on less than $500K annually. #orange's national office was accredited through Imagine Canada and some of their local team of 30 are accredited professionals, for example several are certified early childhood educators. #orange uses a national Theory of Change which was developed through intensive country-wide consultations and aligns to evidence-based mentorship models that include critical prevention and early-intervention services. The knowledge and theoretical approaches at #orange have undergone rigorous testing and scholarly review. They are decontextualized, meaning they have broad application both locally and across Canada. #orange maintains a database of resources, including theoretical

approaches and methodologies, which are accessible to all employees and board members through a password protected web-based platform. #orange has participated in WIL for many years but recently stopped due to staffing constraints. Annual staff turnover was a critical factor that impacted how #orange engaged with WIL. Brent, the Executive Director for #orange was the primary respondent in this research.

#yellow is the youngest of the organizations within this study. Federally registered under the societies act, #yellow is a small local arts and culture organization, bringing artists from around the world for an annual festival. Established during the neoliberal era, #yellow has a commitment to multiculturalism and believes that art is "one of the most fabulous ways for exchange of cultural information" (Carla). The 2020 strategic plan states that their goal is "reconciliation with our Indigenous people" and "dismantling systems of racism"; however, public reference to reconciliation and anti-racism have yet to be explained on the website and social media. For #yellow, multiculturalism is highly experiential, for example through music and friendship; however, they have not explicitly described their theoretical approach to multiculturalism. #yellow is well-known within The Fort and is sustained through the commitment of an extensive volunteer network. As such, #yellow has been able to operate on a modest budget of less than $400K and just one part-time staff. #yellow is independent and unregulated. #yellow has only participated in WIL for one year. Carla, the head of the volunteer committee was the primary spokesperson for #yellow.

#green is a small local non-profit organization within the environmental and arts and culture sectors. #green maintains a community garden and provides horticultural educational programs and community plant sales. A significant part of #green's work is to facilitate

community discussions about the community garden. Each year they have debates about how the gardens should be themed and as a committee they "try not to let anybody make one decision" instead they "emphasize group and committee consensus" (Donna). #green is a membership-based organization and run entirely by volunteers, there are no paid staff. #green operates on an annual budget of less than $50K. #green is unregulated but its members are stratified by level of expertise, with internal opportunities to become a certified "master." Though #green is located in close proximity to one of the post-secondary institutions, #green has never participated in WIL. Donna, the President of #green, was the respondent for #green.

#blue is a small business and professional association that supports local businesses and non-profit organizations through advocacy and raising awareness. Established during the industrial era, #blue is one of the oldest non-profit organizations in The Fort. As a membership organization, #blue provides a range of services, including carbon footprint analysis. As a result of their program, almost 60 local organizations have received recommendations about how to become more energy efficient. #blue has a dedicated team of four and a modest budget. They participate in a network of similar organizations but are independent and unregulated. #blue has a formal partnership with the university, which is funded by a corporate donor to support WIL. This three-way partnership has operated successfully for a number of years. Paul, the CEO; Pam, an administrator; and Pat, the corporate donor, were respondents for #blue.

#indigo is a large multi-faceted Indigenous organization that spans arts and culture, education, social services, development, and housing sectors. #indigo is part of a network of more than 100 organizations across Canada, which was started in a major Canadian city during the welfare era. #indigo was registered in The Fort during the welfare era. #indigo offers a

range of services within an Indigenous framework, including child and family programs, cultural, victims services, and employment programs. They also work to ensure that when Indigenous people receive non-Indigenous services, they are treated with respect. As explained, frequently family doctors or hospitals "don't seem to understand why there are Indigenous services, why they've been created. They don't even have the time to hear about why we're different, never mind why we exist" (Frankie). For this reason, #indigo works to better equip non-Indigenous service providers with tools to provide appropriate care and help them "understand that difference and know a little bit about Indigenous history and culture" (Frankie). While #indigo was originally run by volunteers, today it has almost 300 staff (full-time and part-time) and a budget of more than $13 million per annum. Some of its staff are professionally regulated, for example, social workers, counsellors, and early childhood educators. #indigo has participated in WIL across multiple formats for college and university students across the province. Students are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Frankie, a registered counsellor and mid-level manager was the spokesperson for #indigo.

#pink has a sophisticated use of theory, and is medium-sized feminist organization within the social services and development sectors. #pink acknowledges that patriarchy perpetuates in Canadian society and unequally favours men financially, politically, and socially. #pink has adopted a feminist philosophy to dismantle patriarchy and to rebalance power and control to better reflect the daily reality of women's lives. #pink is part of an international partnership, which began in pre-industrial England and established a presence in The Fort during the welfare era. As a community-based organization, #pink offers a range of programs and advocacy to support women and children who have experienced violence, marginalization,

and criminalization. They recognize the systemic and racial barriers that some citizens face to access justice and human rights and support women, children, youth, and families to gain access to counselling, education, social, and legal support. They also advocate for imprisoned women so that they are respected, empowered, and have their basic needs and rights met. #pink employs fewer than 80 staff (full time and part-time), some of whom are regulated professionals, for example early childhood education and social workers. #pink operates from an evidence-based perspective and follows a number of internationally recognized theories and approaches. Their theories are socialized across the organization, embedded within key organizational documents, publicly described on websites and social media, reflected in onboarding and training materials, and are the substance of ongoing debate. At #pink, theories were understood to be constantly evolving and the prioritization of specific theories were justified as an intentional choice made against an array of other possible options. Staff understood how the organization's theoretical choices were made, they participated in deliberations, and were able to explain the rationale behind the prioritization of particular theoretic choices. As such, #pink believes that their theoretical orientation sets them apart compared to other organizations. #pink is unionized, governed by a collective agreement, and they operate on a budget of less than $4 million per annum. Eden, Esther, and Emma were respondents for #pink. Each are mid-level managers and collectively Eden, Esther, and Emma have conducted WIL for decades. Their organization is deeply committed to WIL and have sustained partnerships with both the college and university.

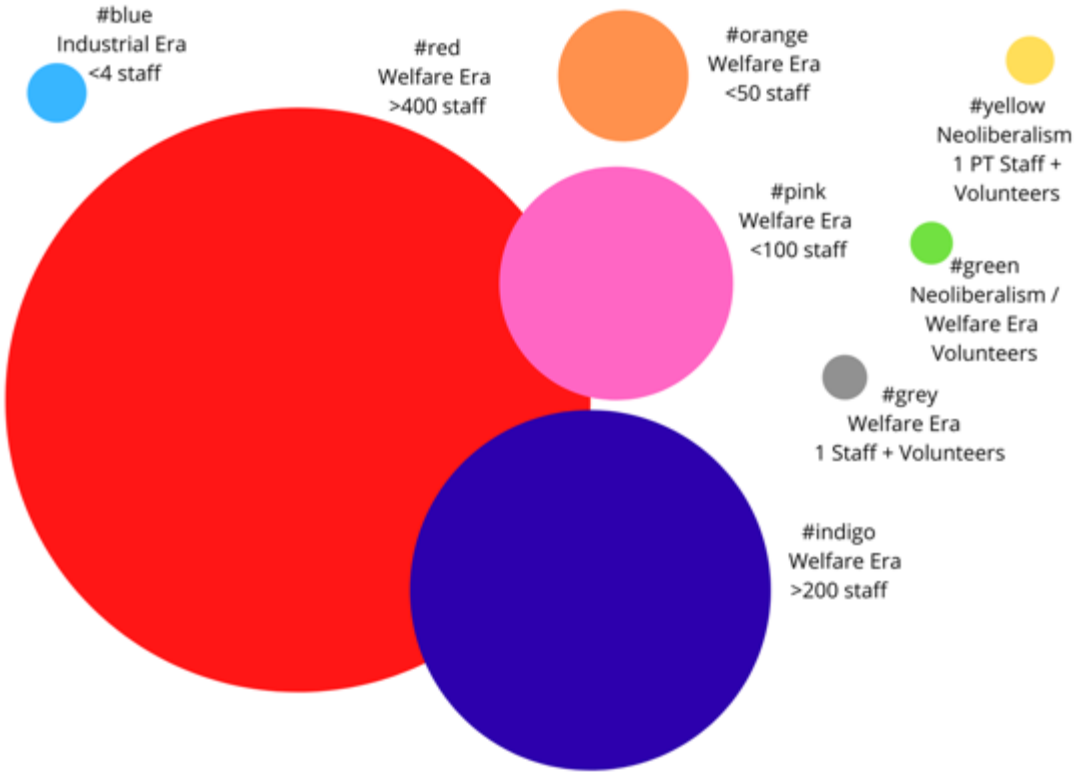
#grey is a small local non-profit organization within the environment and education sectors. They formed on the cusp of the welfare and neoliberal eras when a group of citizens

came together because they were concerned about the lack of recycling facilities and general lack of awareness of the environment in The Fort. #grey was created with the mandate to foster environmental stewardship and provide resources to help citizens adopt more sustainable lifestyles. According to their Executive Director, “anything that involves land, water, and air is what we're focusing on. We're best with reducing the waste in the household through diversion, bringing in awareness that we can reduce waste” (Rachel). They offer school-based programs, community workshops, and other educational initiatives that have contributed to a significant reduction of waste destined for landfill. Today, the organization is part of several robust networks but it is not regulated or professionalized. It has a small budget, one staff member, and many committed and sustained volunteers. #grey has supported WIL in a range of formats for both college and university students across the province and have participated in many federally and provincially funded WIL programs, for example Kitimivic and Canada Summer Jobs.

A simple diagram of the eight organizations is shown below, with the size of the bubble representing relative budget.

Figure 19.

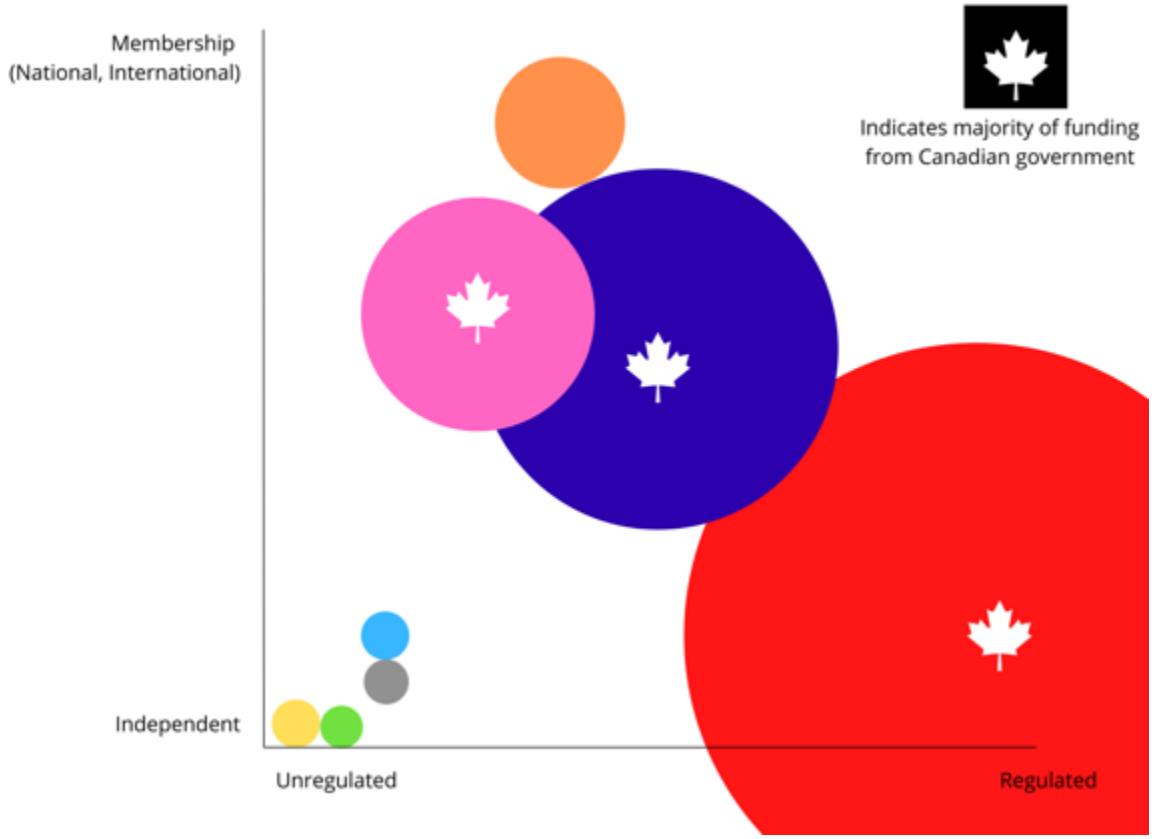
Eight non-profit organizations by era and size



Across all organizations, it appeared that there was a relationship between the size of the organization, degree of regulation, and level of independence. Larger organizations were more likely to be accredited or unionized and were associated with parent or sub-unit organizations, while smaller organizations tended to be independent and unregulated. This is shown in the Figure 20.

Figure 20.

Organizations according to membership, regulation and funding



6.6 Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter provided an overview of the outlier context. It illustrated the context of The Fort, considering the labour market, the non-profit context, and the post-secondary environment. This chapter also introduced each of the research participants and offered a brief description of the college, the university, and the eight non-profit organizations who participated in this study. Having provided the context of the Fort, I will now turn to research findings, beginning with findings related to individual conversion factors.

CHAPTER 7. INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION FACTORS

The next three chapters address research findings and will help answer the question: "how do individual, social and institutional factors enable and constrain the development of personal agency through work-integrated learning (WIL) at non-profit organizations?" Chapter 7 will explore conversion factors at the individual level, while Chapters 8 and 9 will speak to conversion factors at social and institutional levels, respectively.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how individual conversion factors enable and constrain the development of personal agency through WIL at non-profit organizations. Individual conversion factors are internal to the person and include things like learning styles, emotions, motivations, and aspirations. Students are unique and multi-dimensional humans, taking on roles as receivers, doers, and judges (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2018). Acknowledging students as complex beings who seek harmony across multiple dimensions of life, this chapter explores how non-profits supported diverse students to have agency to make informed decisions about their present and future careers.

Across the board, at the level of individual conversion factors non-profit organizations were well-positioned to support students' development of personal agency. As such, section 7.2 begins with an overview of the ways in which non-profit organizations described students. Unlike many promotional materials for WIL that that describe students as indiscriminately interchangeable talent in pursuit of generic employability skills, non-profit organizations tended to take a strengths-based, person-centered approach and understood students as complex, multi-dimensional individuals. Section 7.3 provides an analysis of how non-profit organizations

interpret their role as WIL educators. Though non-profit organizations were keen to see students develop skills, they were more concerned about intrapersonal development and this was expressly demonstrated in the way learning partners engaged students in career exploration, even when that led to career exits. Reflecting upon this, section 7.4 explores the processes and outcomes of career exploration during WIL. Sections 7.5 and 7.6 explain some of the current constraints that non-profits face as they participate in WIL. Though mentorship was in their DNA, non-profits said that they were constrained by their resource environment, and also suggested that the tools and support they received to prepare them as educators and learning partners were insufficient.

7.2 Students are Complex Multi-Dimensional Individuals

> "If a student doesn't feel safe and engaged enough, you're gonna have a practicum that operates superficially. Check boxes get done and off you go. Learn anything? Nope. Not very deep." -Eden, #pink

Almost every non-profit organization recognized students as complex, multi-dimensional individuals and created learning experiences that were centered upon the specific backgrounds, characteristics, and interests of their students. Learning partners spoke about students as unique and whole people whose academic discipline, previous experiences, motivations, personality, and positionality shaped them and their WIL placement. They took time to learn about the students with whom they were paired and asked about their priorities and other life responsibilities. Learning partners also engaged students at an emotional level, recognizing that the site of learning—the non-profit organization—could provoke wanted and unwanted feelings. Some learning partners invited students to articulate their emotions, even when they were seen as "negative."

For many learning partners, it was important that students felt comfortable being themselves. Eden said,

> The more you can operate true to yourself, the better person you're going to be whether that be a professional at work, or a partner at home or a mom or volunteer or a contributor to our community. It's when you feel you need to be not in your authentic self, then the best work and the best person and the best individual is not coming out. You got to be who you are, and you got to speak it.

Learning partners adjusted their approaches based on the uniqueness of individual students. Rachel recounted that at her organizations, "we've had English students, we've had environmental students, we've had biologists" and for each student she contextualized the learning experience to align with their academic background. She acknowledged that "everybody has a different teaching and learning ability." Emma said, "I think you have to look at the context [students are] coming from. If they're coming from a social work context, or if they're coming from an ECE context, then hopefully I would have some idea of what theories they would form from the foundation of that educational piece, and then approach it from there." Pam contrasted two different students who participated in WIL at #blue, a professional association that supports local businesses. One was captain of a women's rugby team and the other was raised in a family business. "Different personalities," Pam said, one she could put in front of a video camera, no problem. "She just took to it because she was used to speaking. It was no big deal," while the other needed coaxing and support. Like Pam, every learning partner felt that part of their responsibility was to get to know the student and to adjust work assignments and learning experiences based on the student's past experiences and exposures.

Learning partners also articulated that they needed to interpret learners in the context of their full lives, not just their WIL placement. For some students, their lives were compressed,

and they were negotiating between competing priorities—academic goals, family responsibilities, health and medical appointments, part-time work, and civic engagement. Esther stated, "students are trying to juggle their work, their school and then their placements and their courses," and she felt part of her job was to support them "create that balance." Frankie said, "I respect that people have other things going on with their time" and Pam shared a similar observation; she remembered, "one student had seven courses on his term. It's just unbelievable. He was quite happy to get Cs." She said that learning partners often fail to understand the full context of students' lives, and they aren't conscious of their workloads beyond WIL. Instead, "they know they go to school, but they don't understand that it's five courses in a term. This is one project in one course."

Several learning partners engaged students emotionally, as well as intellectually. They invited students to examine and articulate their emotional experiences at the non-profit workplace, acknowledging that moral, ethical, political, and social dilemmas were normal aspects of their work. Emma said that students often experience disequilibrium during their practicum, but "from disequilibrium comes great learning." In these moments, Emma sees that it is her job to hear the confusion, and the questions. She said, "Sometimes it's like a battle because they get angry in that moment." Professor Ben said that when students enter non-profit workplaces, they are tapping into the fullness of their human experiences, including their emotional lives. He said,

> We can tell all the war stories and give them a sense of being prepared but that doesn't do it in terms of *actually feeling it*. So out in the practicum it gives you experiences to see, observe and question ethical dilemmas, practice concerns, problem solving, political intrigue within and between organizations. They actually get to feel the extent of the problems that people are struggling with, as opposed to just reading about it, or hearing stories about the struggles that people have. (Professor Ben)

Both Amber and Emma talked about their role to hold space for student emotions, even if they were negative emotions like fear or anger. Emma revealed, “It’s very difficult to be that vulnerable,” but she welcomed hard conversations and invited students to speak to her, other staff members, or managers.

7.3 Learning as Development not Performance

Non-profit learning partners tended to see students as complex, multi-dimensional individuals, and they also perceived WIL as an opportunity for student to develop, prioritizing interpersonal growth, rather than performance. Emma has hosted WIL students for over a decade and she said that whereas in the past WIL was used to “weed you out because you made a mistake,” now WIL takes a “human approach of let's work through connection, let's work through strengths-based perspective,” which she prefers. Emma believes that it is more useful to support students’ development “rather than penalizing them.”

Many non-profit organizations offered a supportive environment to try things out. Paul said, “You got to make lots of mistakes. And we have to sort of go through these trial-and-error periods, so that you can point out those opportunities for improvement as you go along.” According to him, failure is a key component of a meaningful WIL experience; however, he also cautioned that learning partners need to be willing to step in and offer guidance so that moments of error can be used as a curriculum for learning. Mak, who has held a faculty role for many years suggests that having access to a learning partner is one of the “biggest benefits” of WIL. She draws a distinction between WIL and work, explaining that as a student, “you have somebody that you can talk to, that's not your [work] supervisor.” Mak said,

> Learning opportunities happen there [and you] have things go really bad and have things go really good and you're gonna get whatever feedback happens there. . . . And if the program is structured well hopefully there's that opportunity for feedback and an opportunity to ask questions and be like, "What on earth happened? Why did this go bad? (Faculty Mak)

Within the framework of development, non-profit organizations did not expect "perfect" student performance. Amber said, "Sometimes some [students] aren't as engaged, but I think that's more of a personal thing. They're more shy and timid so they aren't as engaged with the people that they're supporting. But I think they learn a lot from watching my staff interact with people." Amber was confident that students were internalizing learning through observation and that this was sufficient. Similarly, Rachel observed that when students started their placement, "they're lacking one-on-one skills, they're lacking that drive, they're lacking self-motivation, self-confidence, to get out there and get motivated." She recounted that for some students, "it's really frightening because they don't know how to work in this type of fast-paced mode, quick thinking." She feels that students have been done a disservice by the constant need to achieve, and for this reason Rachel gives students projects where there aren't easy or ready answers. For Rachel, WIL was important because students "need to have those supervisors that will push them to start moving and accepting and trying new things on their own, but also giving them the parameters and allowing them to sink or swim." However, over the last decade Rachel has noticed a change in students. She feels they "want things handed to them, they're not willing to go out there and look, they're not willing to think outside the box, to make those connections without being told." Compared to the students she hosted twenty years ago, Rachel feels this generation wants to be spoon-fed and are "stuck in this regimented performance," which prevents development.

Surprisingly, no one spoke about “nightmare practicums” but in an email following interviews, one faculty member said, “Practicum supervision can also be a fucking nightmare if things go wrong! Out of 30 students, there will always be one nightmare. That one nightmare student will take up more spiritual energy and time than the other 29. In our litigious world—if they've paid a tuition they can demand—DEMAND—to pass, regardless of how they've demonstrated competence or mental health issues or whatever. I've had three stories like this: nightmare. Some agencies who have had a nightmare don't want to ever do that again.”

Most learning partners perceived learning as relational and they made effort to build authentic relationships as a necessary condition for development. Many learning partners acknowledged that for students, their non-profit was a new site for learning and so they were intentional to help students feel safe and included. Carla made sure that her students “felt really welcome” and that her “crew was really welcoming to them.” They offered students rides home after their shifts and invited them to social events. Carla saw #yellow as “a safe friendly place” for students to explore their “larger learning into Canadian culture, Canadian society.” Emma said that “a mentor is someone who supports a person to feel safe in learning, safe and being vulnerable enough to try out all those new ideas and practices.” She talked about the importance of forming a “connection” with students first, so that they knew “they're safe to communicate how they're feeling about things.” Eden has supervised dozens of students and has come to the conclusion that without safety and “enough relationship,” students will not have the ability to join in workplace conversations. For her, the whole team is responsible for fostering social inclusion, it’s not just incumbent upon the student’s supervisor. Similarly, Frankie at #indigo invited students to events and ceremonies, hoping that they would learn culturally appropriate

ways to engage in the organization. Frankie saw that building relationships outside of the formality of the practicum experience was an important part of learning and created safety for both the student and employees of their organization. Esther said that in order for students to develop, they need to challenge themselves to things that "might not be seen as safe, but you're able to talk about it."

Social inclusion had a secondary purpose, according to Carla. She suggested that social inclusion prevented exploitation and contrasted the experience of her two students at #yellow with their experiences at a for-profit business saying,

> They were working at a downtown hotel and while they learn[ed] some important skills in terms of customer service or this and that, it was almost, I don't want to use the word exploitation, but it almost feels like they're getting free labor for someone to serve coffee. The [students] themselves expressed how nice it was to be treated with care . . . they really felt part of the group which I'm not sure that happens if you're working for a downtown hotel or something . . . they certainly remarked to us how they felt included and welcomed. (Carla, #yellow)

It is in those situations, when faculty members sometimes felt the need to intervene. Professor Dana and Professor Ben who both work for the college shared that there have been years where they have spoken to employers on behalf of their students.

To support students' development, the practices of reflection were seen to be a critical pedagogical input and a range of different reflection methods were mentioned. Professor Dana explained that his students "have to do a lot of self-reflection . . . unless they are reflecting, they don't really fully get the benefit." His students write daily journals, they prepare photo-based reflection and do a final report and presentation. Emma said that students "have to do a lot of self-reflection now. They have to pick out things on their own and log them. They're responsible for recording any conversations they have with the sponsored teacher." In addition

to individual reflection, Emma said that #pink provides students with “lots of opportunity for reflection, lots of opportunity for conversation and discussion with a multitude of people.” Esther recalled that she has observed students engage in deeper reflection and analysis about current events, together with colleagues without formal prompting. Amber also talked about how the collegial aspect of her non-profit workplace enables students the chance for life-changing reflection. She says that students “have peers who are working in the setting, and they're right there. It's like a home setting. So, people chat.”

Faculty and administrators tended to emphasize the role of reflection for workplace learning more than non-profit learning partners. Faculty asked students to reflect on what they saw while at non-profit organizations, whether there were discrepancies with their expectations, and how their identities may be perceived in the workplace. Professor Ben said that reflection is “part of the learning” and his students participate in a weekly seminar where they come together to reflect on their “own self-understanding” and their “own sense of what ethics actually mean on the ground.” Professor Ben challenged his students towards deeper reflection by asking students, “why are you here?” He said that students often say “I want to help people,” but he tells them that everybody says that. “A policeman wants to help people. A teacher wants to help people, the doctor wants to help people.” He pushes his students, “Why are you here doing this?” PJ, who is a Dean responsible for WIL at the college said that WIL provides a format for professional reflection that often isn’t always available once you are employed. WIL gives student the chance to ask, “Who am I? And where do I see myself going professionally? And how does where I go professionally, align with who I am personally?” During WIL, students can ask, “Why would I choose to work in a nonprofit? How does that reflect my values?” PJ pointed out

that the workplace does not necessarily make space to talk about these questions, but through school, you "think about it, write about it [and] engage with others about it."

7.4 A Proud Moment: Career Exploration and Career Exits

As WIL was an opportunity for interpersonal development, so too was it a chance to explore career options. While most non-profit organizations used job descriptions and goal setting to negotiate expectations with students, several learning partners shared that they also created flexibility and adapted the WIL experience to reflect the specific interests of students. Brent said that when he takes on a student he asks them,

> What are the other aspects of the agency you want to learn about? [We give] them those opportunities, whether they want to learn more about how we manage our social media, or they want to learn a little bit more about how our childcare programs run. We build those into their plans, so that they have that opportunity to do it, and it counts towards their hours. (Brent, #orange)

Rachel asks her students, "What part of the environment are you passionate about? Are you passionate about gardening, composting, pollution? Okay, what kind of project can you develop on that? How can we use your passion to enhance something that we're already doing? So, there's lots of availability and flexibility." Professor Alexis said WIL "gives [students] a real good sense of what it is that they want to do in the world." Several organizations and especially the smaller organizations felt that the flexibility with which they designed WIL was a benefit to doing a placement in a non-profit setting, and several felt that this was likely different than what students might experience in a larger corporate workplace.

In addition to their flexibility, learning partners also suggested that non-profit organizations exposed students to atypical workplace approaches. Amber suggested that #red

gave students a chance to explore unexpected and unknown career possibilities. She said, “show[ing] them a different side of their job, what else they can do besides just working in the health care field, in the hospitals and stuff like that, I just think it's so beneficial. I wish I had had that back in the day when I took mine. But we did all of our practicums at the extended care facility. And I didn't even know about [community living]”. Amber felt this is important because “a lot of people are just seeing the extended care side of it. And they're not able to go into the community home settings. It's different working in a community, it's more relaxed, it's more person-centered. They do activities and stuff like that. [Students] get to see what it can be like to live in the community.” Amber explained that it is not enough that students merely observe the contrast between #red and other care environments; instead, she is intentional to explain the difference, ensuring that students realize that being people-centered is by design. Amber said, “I think it's different for them bringing that knowledge into this kind of setting where it's not so technical and health related. That's not our focus. We work with a vulnerable population in group homes but . . . people are more than just what their health needs are. Whereas when they're coming from a hospital setting, it's more that.” Other learning partners suggested that their organizations stretched the ways students could apply their academic disciplines. While this was positive in that it expanded the range of career possibilities available to students, it also required that learning partners spend extra effort to create linkages between the workplace and academic learning, and it meant that non-profit organizations had to pursue the relationships with the academic institution as the post-secondary institution (PSI) may not have seen an easy academic fit.

A few learning partners said that WIL provided students an opportunity to add to their resumes, which they felt was useful for both career exploration and for career-signaling. Brent observed that the "new generation" that is being hired have very little lived experience beyond school. He compared this generation to his own experience: "I worked full-time and went to school and by grade eleven I had a full-time job. I took two morning classes, went home did homework, had extracurriculars and that story is not unique to myself." Brent acknowledged that younger people face different societal expectations and it is not "uncommon for them to solely be doing school." He said that he is shocked at the number of people who apply for roles at #orange and have "just finished university" with very limited work experience. Through WIL, students are able to try out work, build their resumes, strengthen their "competitive advantage," and find professional references. It also means that when fresh graduates are interviewing for work, they have past experiences to draw on.

Through WIL at non-profit organizations, students were more prepared to make more informed decisions about their current and future careers. Paul explained that "when you complete your practicum with the agency and get a job, you're kind of choosing that this is where I *want* to be. You know what you're getting into. I think that's always ideal"; however, sometimes students chose career exits. Julie explained that "there are students who have enjoyed the job, but they also know that's not what they want to do," and Professor Alexis said, "Sometimes they figure out what don't want to do." She explained that some students enroll in their academic program very interested in the ideas of the program, but when they go out and apply it, they "figure out what they don't want to do." She said that "internships allow you to shadow . . . to do things just to find out is this what you really want to do in life? Or should you be thinking about

something else?" Pat, who funds #blue's program, agrees; she said, "You can't underestimate how important it is for a student to be able to get a taste of what the workplace is, what the work environments are for them . . . even in terms of helping guide their career choices. I mean, not all of the students have set in stone exactly what they want to do. It gives them that opportunity to sort of explore."

Amber recalled one situation when the student discovered that they were not interested in completing their program of study. She said, "We talked to their teacher, we had a meeting with their teacher, and they actually decided that what they were going into was not for them." Amber contrasted this with another WIL experience the student had. Though the student was was uncertain about staying in the care-services, she just kept pushing through. Amber explained that the student had completed a previous practicum in a for-profit extended care facility but "there weren't people around to talk to. That was part of the problem." However when the student came to #red, she had several people to talk to and through informal conversation with colleagues decided to pursue alternative career options. Professor Ben shared that he has had many students who, mid-way through their practicum, realize that this is not the right field for them. He said, "They'll see this semester through. But they'll be saying, "no, I'm not coming back next year or [I'm] looking at other alternatives. This is not the work for me." President Dustin from the college has also "known a number of students that go out to an industry and go "phew. . . boy, am I glad I did that work term, because I'm never going to work in that sector, that company, or I don't like it anymore. I'm going to do something different."

Most non-profit employers acknowledged that WIL creates experiences for students to test their career assumptions, and they felt this was valuable. Emma said that when they are

recruiting, #pink wants “someone who says, ‘Yeah, I really want to be there because I had this experience. And now I know the direction I want’” rather than someone who says, "well, I got my Social Work diploma so here's the job." Emma believes that WIL gives students “a look into what could be their passion, what could be their strengths, it's a way to find out what their strengths are and where that might take them and hell maybe it'll just tell them where they don't want to go.” Eden agrees saying,

> If they come and do a practicum and they did a great job, but they're like, "you know what? Not really my gig, now I'm going to kind of shift gears and maybe look over here . . . thanks for that experience to try, and you know, really grow,” [I’ve] kind of helped them develop where they see their journey could go. . . . And that's part of their life journey. (Eden, #pink)

Both Eden and Emma understand that #pink is not an organization fit for everyone. Amber also said that she has “seen students who have come in and they've been able to look at some things that have triggered them, and [say] this isn't the work for them.” Learning partners were not disappointed or threatened when students chose career exits; rather, they saw this as a value—better for both the student and their organization. Frankie from #indigo said that it is important that students can feel safe enough to speak up and decide against their intended profession, “it’s a proud moment” when they do.

7.5 WIL is a “Natural” Fit, but it Requires Stability and Time

For several non-profit organizations, WIL was a “natural” extension of their approach and philosophy and some learning partners have hosted WIL students for decades. Emma said, “I have had students on practicum off and on since 1986,” and Rachel spoke by name of students she hosted more than thirty years ago. Brent said that WIL is their “way to give back to the sector,” and Paul felt “incredibly fortunate” that he doesn’t have to incentivize his team

to support WIL, they are a “huge supporter of work-integrated learning, of getting students to better understand the workplace . . . they're believers. They're drinking the Kool Aid.” Several people, like Eden, acknowledged that WIL is “such rewarding work,” while Esther reflected that supporting students is part of her professional ethic and contributes to her organization’s sustainability. She said, “it's within all of us to be an individual who can mentor and coach individuals. That's what I strive to do and it's always been an ongoing journey.”

While non-profit organizations had a “natural” commitment to WIL, several felt that the structure of WIL compromised their ability to support student learning. Several organizations indicated that the short duration of WIL was a barrier. Eden said, “From our organization’s point of view, we're people-centered [but] I'm not sure you can connect with somebody in three weeks, because you have to start with trust.” She compared the WIL experiences she offered students at #pink to the program her daughter is enrolled in at the University of Calgary. Her daughter’s program is one year long, which “gives [her] the ability to be part of a team. It's hard when things are short, because you know, even as a staff person we're all busy. And sometimes it's like, you know, for three weeks, I'm not sure how much time and effort I'm going to put in.” She expressed that as an educator “you need time. Both people need time to have a conversation, revisit a conversation, think about a conversation. There are conversations I've had with students that I revisit and I'm like, wow, that really wasn't my best conversation.” Eden was honest—she is human. She’s had good days where she glowed as an educator, engaging in meaningful and intentional dialogue, and she has also had bad days when she was responding to other internalized stressors rather than the student in front of her. When WIL is too short, she doesn’t have the chance to revisit, reframe, or improve upon past conversations.

Amber concurred that the duration of the WIL placements influences relationships and learning. She explained that while students “always work alongside another staff member” at #red, she reflected, “it's only 35 hours a week, for one week. And that's it. They do learn a lot in that time. . . but it's still not long enough. I don't think even two weeks would be better. We wish it was longer.” Professor Dana explained that the short duration of the placements in his program was a significant barrier for many organizations. He said that employers “don't even look at it as an opportunity. It's a waste of their time, if they're too busy.” Instead, the organizations ask, “Why don't you provide like a two months or three months of co-op?” He shared that two-thirds of the people he talks to say that forty hours is not enough. Carla agreed, saying, “one of the things is [that] we're really only going to know you for three weeks. You know, you can't really put a lot of time and energy into that.” There were ways around this. Rachel explained that one student worked with her “right out of high school all the way up through university. So, she was with me for like five summers.” It appeared that the duration of the WIL experiences, the frequency of interaction and whether students had returning placements impacted the depth of student learning.

In addition to the duration of the WIL placement, several organizations indicated that in order to build meaningful learning relationships with students, learning partners needed to have a reasonable workload. This was rare for many non-profit organizations. Esther said that she hears the frustration of her staff when they feel “that they're having to take on extra, plus their case, plus their workload.” She said that when her staff have too much work, they could “just shrug it off to a student,” which does not produce the intended learning environment. Eden’s staff also supervise WIL students. She said that some years they do not take on students because

“sometimes staff got other things going on, right? They might not have time and energy to do a student well . . . maybe we're in a big shift or something and it doesn't feel like the right time.” Before Eden’s department takes on a student, she always asks whether “the staff person [is] ready for the opportunity to take on the students? If it's a staff person who's for the first time taking on a student, then I absolutely will be checking in fairly frequently and providing help.” The work to support WIL does not fall to just one person, but impacts their full team.

In addition to workloads, staff transitions and shortages prevented non-profits from participating in WIL. #orange said that they did not take on a student last semester because they “had a couple staff members leave. . . We just were not in a position when [the university] called to take somebody because we knew we'd be onboarding one, possibly two new staff, and we just didn't have the staff time to properly supervise the students this year.” Other non-profits explained that they faced constraints because they lack credentialed staff. Undergraduate social work or psychology students need to be supervised by someone with a Masters degree and as Frankie explained, #indigo has only one registered counsellor. Frankie supervised all the counselling students who participated in WIL at #indigo, whether or not they were doing their practicums in Frankie’s department. Frankie explained that they have a long client waitlist and more students could help them provide faster services to clients; however, they are limited because they have only one person who fulfills the supervision requirements. #yellow is a volunteer-driven organization and while Carla was personally willing to invest the additional twenty to thirty hours to support WIL students last semester, she’s unable to do that every year. Donna indicated that this is a significant barrier for #green, who are also volunteer-driven and do not take on WIL students. #green is conveniently co-located at the university; however, Donna

thinks that in order for them to take on students, they would have “to pay for someone to train and to supervise [students],” which they are not in a position to do.

7.6 Learning Partners Have Insufficient Resources to Support Learning

Even with staffing constraints, most non-profit organizations were enthusiastic about WIL and wished they had access to additional resources to support WIL. Brent shared that #orange simply doesn’t have appropriate office spaces for students and often, before the practicum begins, they look around and ask “what old computer do we have kicking around that we can give them and who has room in the corner of their office to put a desk?” The financial priority at #orange is to support children and youth and they do not have discretionary funds that can be used for WIL. Brent suggested that if a post-secondary institution were to commit to a multi-year partnership and provide some funding they could buy a proper laptop and a work station for students. For Brent, more long-term planning would enable non-profit organizations to prepare and it would mean that the post-secondary institution (PSI) “is not every year calling and begging and pleading and playing phone tag with you for two weeks.” He thinks their time could be spent facilitating good student matches “rather than just begging somebody to take a student.”

Some learning partners said that they would benefit from resources to help them as learning partners or educators. Professor Dana admitted, “these organizations don't have time, but they need to be taught how to help students learn.” Rachel shared that she has had awkward moments as a learning partner. She recounted, “so, um, I had one young girl that worked for me. And then she came back to volunteer, but her name changed. And her designation changed.” This was the first time Rachel had known someone who underwent

gender transition. Rachel said it took her time to learn how to use the correct pronouns and she had to apologize several times in the process. Fortunately, Rachel said, "they were really good, because [they] just gave me this look, and I'm like, 'Oh, crap.' I appreciate that, and having that understanding, and that time and patience to educate me." I asked Rachel whether she was given any tools or resources that supported her as an educator. How did she learn what was appropriate, or about cultural sensitivity, or about how gender, class, or race might impact a student's approach to learning? Rachel said that in the three decades she has been doing WIL, she has not received any resources on these topics. She is involved with the school district, so she has access to some resources, for example for inclusivity training, but she admitted, "I really need to sit down and do some of those. Sometimes my common sense is good. And other times it's not and sometimes I put my foot in my mouth and it's really hard to pull it back out." I asked the same question to Carla and she said, "I got nothing. I didn't even know what they were learning in class, to be honest." Carla received little instruction about how to structure a meaningful or safe WIL placement, she did not receive any resources to support student learning or on how to create inclusion within the learning environment. This was particularly concerning because all of the students at #yellow were international and The Fort has a context of racism.

Mak, who manages practicums at the college, agrees that resources to support host-organizations are lacking. She reflected, "do [we] do anything to help support [organizations] be a mentor in terms of adult learning, or pedagogy? Or theory? How to incorporate theory? Not to my knowledge. No, not to my knowledge." When I asked whether she felt these kinds of resources would be useful, she said,

> When I think about even my own growth as a mentor, a manager or a supervisor or a coach, these are not skills that come naturally to me. I know they don't come naturally to a lot of other people. My development in these areas has taken years and has taken iteration after iteration, it has taken successes and failures. . . . Do I see that level of structure and support in place to actually take the role of building this skill set within workplace supervisors? No. Concretely, I would say no, not to that extent . . . no, I don't see it happening in a really substantive way. (Faculty Mak)

Neither the college nor the university have a toolkit of supervisory resources, or institutional guidance about how to ensure a student-centered learning experience. There are no websites or seminars that provide advice about how to create cultural safety, or about how to scaffold learning, or how to integrate academic learning in the workplace. It is left to the discretion of organizations and this can have a significant and unequal impacts on student's learning.

To add to this, student-centered career resources are limited in the Fort. The college does not have a career centre and the university has just one staff member designated to career services. Mak admitted,

> I know the College used to have a career center and a counseling center and more stuff. But unfortunately, that was some of the first stuff that was hit with budget cutbacks a few years back. And it hasn't made its way back yet. I think it's on the table and it's being discussed but it's unfortunate, because I think it hurts our students and I think it hurts the college's reputation. A high level of our students work at Lowes . . . and I'm like, "why are degree holders from another country, coming to the Fort in business and HR programs and they're getting paid, you know, $14.25 an hour working night shift at Lowes?" (Faculty Mak)

Certainly, career services would be useful for students who make the decision to exit their chosen profession.

7.7 Summary of Chapter Seven

At the beginning of my interview with Rachel, she told me about a WIL student that she hosted twenty-five years ago. "God love her," Rachel said, "she was a blessing." Similarly Paul

reflected on a recent WIL student saying, “I felt like she had as much of an impact on me as I maybe had on her.” Relationships are at the heart of WIL for many learning partners at non-profit organizations, and using a strengths-based, person-centered approach to learning, non-profit organizations tended to see students as individual learners with multi-dimensional and complex lives. To the best of their abilities, non-profit organizations supported students to develop as people and future professionals. They co-created opportunities to explore career options, even when that meant career exits. For them, WIL wasn’t about finding the “right fit,” creating a pipeline of talent, or recruiting future staff; instead, they saw value when students confirmed or discovered alternate life paths. This is significantly different than how WIL is promoted through the lens of the Human Capital Theory (HCT). Within a HCT lens, skill development is subservient to the needs of the economy. While non-profit organizations went above and beyond the call of duty, they recognized their constraints. They indicated that the short length of WIL programs was a detriment to learning and they asked for longer programs. They were clear that the demand and volume of their workload impeded their ability to say yes to placements and to be present as educators. They also indicated that they did not have sufficient financial resources to participate in WIL and that additional tools to support them as educators would be useful. Career and counselling services are helpful especially for students who make career exits, but in the Fort, budget cuts have meant that students do not have access to these supports.

Individual conversion factors consider how students are able to use their resources (learning styles, emotions, motivations, aspirations, etc.) in ways that expand capability and enable them to flourish. In the case of students participating in WIL, non-profit organizations

provided a safe and dynamic environment where students were able to expand their capability to test, explore, and articulate their professional aspirations. Learning partners indicated that more time, less work, and additional resources would aid them to better support students, thus further enabling conversion of resources into capabilities; based on the reflections of learning partners, it appears that at the level of individual conversion factors, WIL in non-profits expands agency.

CHAPTER 8. SOCIAL CONVERSION FACTORS

> "What I hope is that students have the ability to be safely inquisitive, to safely expand their boundaries, maybe push their limits, maybe have some growth, or maybe be able to develop critical thinking. Because I think all of those pieces will not only make you a great employee, it will actually make you a great human being." - Eden, #pink

8.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, at the level of individual conversion factors, non-profit organizations are an excellent site for student development, and learning partners expressed high levels of commitment to support students' development of personal agency through work-integrated learning (WIL). However, turning to the level of social conversion factors there was less uniformity; and significant variations across non-profit and academic contexts emerged. In many cases, non-profit organizations were poorly positioned to support the development of agency at the level of social conversion factors.

Social conversion factors consider how policies, social norms, and practices expand or contract capabilities and in many non-profits, explicit organizational theories are the basis for this. This chapter explores how the academic learning environment and the workplace learning environment impacted the development of personal agency through WIL at non-profit organizations and a particular form of agency was in focus: epistemic agency. Epistemic agency is the increased capacity to make informed judgements based on access to informational materials and the ability to interpret their meaning in a shared social world. In this chapter, the characteristics and interactions between the classroom and the workplace—where "theory meets practice"—were examined. Since theoretical knowledge transcends space and time, there is always a potential gap between theory and practice. This chapter explores the

relationship between theory and practice and how gaps were identified and navigated during WIL.

The relationship between theory and practice varied widely according to non-profit and academic contexts. This chapter will describe five different trends, beginning with a look at adherence to workplace standards, which is the basis for section 8.2. Section 8.3 will consider the application of, or the "bringing" of, academic knowledge to workplace practice. Section 8.4 explores how students critiqued workplace practice using academic knowledge, and section 8.5 considers the invitation to discern and debate academic knowledge and/or workplace practice. Finally, section 8.6 explores the extension of knowledge and/or practice. These five trends are shown in Figure 21. Following the description of each of these trends, section 8.7 will provide an assessment of the wide assortment of theoretical contexts across non-profit organizations. This provides the framing for section 8.8, which explores the implications for learning design.

Figure 21. Five ways that theory meets practice in WIL

A Adhere to workplace practices	• Student(s) are expected to demonstrate "appropriate" workplace practices as defined by host-organization. • When work is appropriately performed, student work extends the services offered by the host-organization.
B Bring academic knowledge to the workplace	• Student(s) apply theoretical knowledge learned in class to workplace environment. • When work is appropriately performed, student work may expand the services offered by host-organization.
C Critique workplace practice based on academic knowelge	• Student(s) formally and intentionally analyze and critique workplace practices based on theories, processes or ideas learned in class. • Host-organization may choose to adapt or change services and practices based on student recommendations. This can lead to improvements for host-organization.
D Discern & debate academic knowledge & workplace practices	• Student(s) use academic knowledge to formally & intentionally engage in analysis, discernment and debate with host-organization about appropriate and alternative theories and workplace practices. • Host-organization may benefit from exposure to "fresh ideas" or to new and alternative theories. • Organization has an explicit conception of the theoretical framework that guides their workplace practices. This is accessible to students and staff.
E Extend academic knowledge	• Student(s) partner with host-organization to learn, create or disseminate new or novel knowledge and theories. Often, faculty are centrally involved. • Host-organization benefits from access to emerging knowledge and theories that are fundamentally relevant to their workplace. • Organization is committed to extending, challenging or changing the theoretical framework that guides their workplace practices, but may not have an existing theoretical framework.

8.2 Adhere to Workplace Practice

Professor Dana teaches a post-diploma program and 100% of his students are international, many of them from South Asia. Some of his students were assigned to #yellow where they conducted a survey, did postering, and were greeters for a major festival. Professor Dana said that for his students, WIL allows them the opportunity to prepare for Canadian employment, learning to follow appropriate workplace standards. Professor Dana was frank, "we don't teach them academic theories. . . we only talk about how to interview well, how to apply to jobs well, and what do you need to do in terms of getting a job. That's all about the practicum, right." He explained that having an opportunity to perform within a Canadian workplace was important for his students and could fill the gap that employers look for when they insist upon Canadian experience. Carla from #yellow acknowledged that racism and discrimination can impact the job-seeking experience of international students, especially in the North, and through WIL students have a legitimized conduit to the workforce where the post-secondary institution takes on responsibilities to secure and intervene in workplace experiences.

Throughout their placement at #yellow, Professor Dana met with his students weekly as a group to discuss any challenging situations that they were facing. Dana found this practice useful because he could "always check on them before things go too wrong. I can always correct them." With Professor Dana's support, students were better prepared to avoid mistakes, which would compromise their resumes, and, in some instances, he intervened in the workplace on behalf of his students. For Professor Dana's course, adherence to workplace

standards[6] was the focus and there was limited attention to the theoretical frameworks that shaped the workplace. The relationship between theory and practice was implicit and unspoken.

This is similar to a story that Dean PJ shared about health students learning to apply protocols in a clinical health placement. She remembered students were "quite perturbed" to see that professionals in their practicum setting were not following all of the protocols the students had learned in class. She explained that one student said, "I get that there's gonna be some flexibility in the way any particular site does particular things. But when it comes to health and safety and patient privacy and patient protection, that kind of stuff, it seems to me that there's a standard way to do these things." As an educator, PJ realized that this student was "fresh and new" and she was cognizant that "we've all been in that position where we learned a way to do [it] but once you've been out in the field for a bit, you don't really have to do all those steps." This is where she sees the value of formalized learning saying, "the education piece in school can be a support to the workplace, because in school you learn all the details. There are 10 steps to doing something safely. In school, you do all 10, and in the workplace, you *should* do all 10." In this case, the workplace appeared to overlook the theoretical underpinning for their work but the gap between academic knowledge and practice provided a site for students to observe and negotiate how protocols were used within this clinical environment. In this case, the pedagogical design (the 10 step sequence) and the availability of the faculty member enabled the student to navigate the discrepancy between

[6] There are many interpretations of education that focuses on the performance of workplace standards, particularly for non-white students—for example Guo and Ameeriar draw attention to deficit-focused racism, which overlooks structural barriers that prevent labour market entry.

what she learned in class, and what she observed at her placement. At the level of social conversion factors, having a faculty member who bridged the academic and the workplace world provided a form of proxy agency and reduced risks for both the student and the non-profit organization.

8.3 Bring Knowledge to Practice

Over the years, #grey has taken on a myriad of students in a variety of capacities, from summer students, to internships, to academic-volunteer placements. When students start at #grey they are invited to contribute to a repository of environmental resources—they might create a new community presentation, develop a learning kit for elementary students, or add to the organization's website. In a recent placement, an Indigenous student-teacher applied Indigenous knowledge and an outdoor place-based learning approach to #grey's existing environmental curriculum. Rachel said the student-teacher is "going through my programs, and she's putting a First Nations twist on some of them and she's [asking] how can we bring it outdoors?" Rachel said she is really excited about this because she gets to learn from the student and it also enables her to extend her services.

Rachel sees the benefit when students bring their academic knowledge to #grey and improve workplace practices. She said,

> I really love having the students do all that program delivery and all that outreach because that allows me to sit back and watch them. I love it because I glean more ways of doing things just by watching how the students do it. I'm the student, and they're the teacher. I get rejuvenated and have more ideas coming out that I can run with later on in the year. (Rachel, #grey)

WIL enables #grey to stretch their services and increase their impact to community. However, #grey is a small organization and they have limited human resources. Rachel does not have the

technical expertise to crosscheck and confirm the validity of every students' work, or the bandwidth to review all student projects. For some students, faculty provide academic oversight; however, this was not available for all students, for example students from the Canada Summer Works program. To accommodate for lack of faculty oversight, Rachel has established a system for peer review where the full student team will provide feedback, yet there remain risks. What happens when students misunderstand the context and incorrectly apply a theory or use an inappropriate theory for #grey's context? At the level of social conversion factors, when WIL programs do not have the means for quality control vis-à-vis academic oversight, this limits the ability for students to develop epistemic agency particularly in organizations whose theoretical foundations are absent, emerging, fragmented, or outdated.

8.4 Critique Practice with Knowledge

Mak, the faculty member responsible for WIL at the college, described a change management course where six students were assigned to work with an organization. They were running interviews, analyzing policies and structures, "and reading through stuff . . . saturating themselves with all of this change management specific literature." In this scenario, students were expected to critique the organization's current approach and provide alternatives based on their knowledge of change management, while the organization provided feedback on the "realism" of their recommendations. The host organization said some ideas were "an interesting idea, probably not going to work," while others were "really good." In this example, students were invited to identify the gap between knowledge (change management) and practice, and then provide recommendations.

This is not unlike Professor Kris' class, which used an internationally approved technical framework to assess the carbon footprint of small business and non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations provided a range of data including their utility bills and students conducted an analysis of their workplace practices and provided recommendations to reduce their environmental impact. Professor Kris said that this hands-on experience was "so valuable to students," something importantly different from what they experienced in their traditional academic program. He concluded that "you don't get that from theory in class, but you do from this participative learning." Participating organizations also benefited. Kris said that they were "blown away" by the quality of student presentations and the outcomes, and they were able to save money based on the student recommendations. For many non-profit organizations, a commercial carbon-footprint analysis would not be fiscally possible; therefore, through WIL, these organizations gained access to a service otherwise unavailable to them.

In both of these WIL experiences, students were positioned as experts and they were invited to critique their host organizations based on a specific theoretical approach (change management) or technical framework (carbon footprint). The organizations did not have the knowledge basis to engage students at a theoretical or technical level or assess the legitimacy of students' knowledge claims; rather, these organizations simply provided the context for analysis. The faculty member held an important role to validate the appropriate use of knowledge. For example, Professor Kris reviewed all student analyses, reports, and presentations before they were released to host-organizations, and he was present for student introductions and presentations.

If not designed and facilitated appropriately, WIL experiences where students provide critique can pose risks for non-profit organizations, students, and post-secondary institutions. During WIL, students are still learning, and like these two examples, many organizations lack the ability to judge students' use of theory, particularly in subject matters that are new for them. In Professor Kris' course, he structured his syllabus so that students were required to submit their drafts to him before presenting.

There are other risks for non-profit organizations, students, and faculty that also need to be considered. Professor Kris recounted how an organization, which was voluntarily participating in the carbon footprint analysis, claimed to be carbon neutral, but the student assigned to that organization disagreed. He said that on their first introduction, his students called the organization out: "no, you're not [carbon neutral]. You're not following any process here." According to Kris, "that caused some friction" but a scenario like this can also lead to employability risks for students or reputational risk for organizations. Whether a student is working individually, in pairs, or in groups of six, like Mak's example, changes the level of risks. Certainly, working in a group of six offers collective agency and greater protection against backlash when and if organizations become defensive of the student's critiques. In a tight labour market where word-of-mouth can affect employment options, collective agency should be considered. Organizations can also suffer reputational risks if students do not understand the limitations of their role or become promiscuous with their stories, sharing on social media or in other venues. In a small town, this can have greater repercussions than in a large city where there is greater anonymity. In both of these scenarios, organizations were prepared for

critique, they understood that students were looking to find a gap between theory and practice, and students signed confidentiality waivers.

At the level of social conversion factors, the power imbalance between students and workplace stakeholders needs to be considered and faculty and host-organizations need to design WIL experiences with appropriate pedagogical methods (i.e. pairing students) and scaffolding to increase the likelihood that WIL expands student agency.

8.5 Discern and Debate Knowledge and Practice

#pink was an exemplar in the way it created spaces for students to engage with both theory and practice, learning to discern and debate across various theoretical orientations and practices. #pink used a suite of theories to guide their organization, acknowledging that some theories were more appropriate than others, depending on the context. At #pink, students were asked to consider how different theories showed up as they moved through their days. Emma said she would ask students "if they could see theory in action, or how would you relate that to you know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs? Where do you think that client is on the developmental piece?" Throughout the WIL experience, Emma engaged students to compare "what just happened to the theories that they know." Similarly, Eden said she asked students to reflect on "what forms, what modalities are you going to use?" and reminded students "a big key piece of everything is one shoe size does not fit all." Eden believed that these kinds of conversations enable students to transcend the context of their particular WIL experiences, so that students would have greater insights and confidence to apply their knowledge elsewhere. For #pink, this is important because it increases the likelihood that more practitioners will operate from a feminist, anti-oppressive, client-centered approach, which they believe is

important for societal change. It also leads to an evolution of theoretical discourse both within their organization and within the post-secondary institution. Emma said, WIL "brings in current information and knowledge for the agency and it informs the students and the academic institutions as to what's happening out there in the community." This reduces the cloistering that happens in academics and also enables staff to challenge their "old habits . . . staleness . . . and preconceived notions or belief systems that we've built up over the years of practice when getting jaded." Emma concluded that "without [students], I think we would get really stuck."

While #pink has a strong commitment to their theoretical orientations, Eden shared that some students do not accept their theories. Eden did not feel it was her role to defend their theories or to convince students to think otherwise; instead, she approached this as an opportunity for learning. She felt it was her role to support "students to be able to see the value in the uniqueness of philosophical approaches" and even if the student rejected #pink's theoretical approach, she believed "there's learning in that." She would challenge the student to find out why they felt that way, believing that there were "some pretty strong pieces going on inside you, philosophically speaking." She also asked the students to question why a theory was used, how a practitioner would know if it was working, and what would indicate it was "successful." She explained that "just because it doesn't feel like a fit doesn't mean it's not a fit."

The way learning partners at #pink engaged students in theoretical discussions was notable. They acknowledged that theory was as a source of power and as an organization, they invested time, partnerships, and money to build their theoretical context. As Emma said, "theory to me is massively important." A few faculty also approached the gap between theory

and practice as an opportunity for students to discern and debate. These faculty had explicit pedagogies that invited the gap between theory and practice as a curricular input for learning. Professor Sophia and Professor Ben, who both taught Social Work but at the college level and the university level respectively, did this.

Professor Sophia recounted that many students experience shock when they compared their real practicum experience to the ideals of theory in their textbooks or the "exaggerations" that are claimed in organizational literature. She says that student reflections are "astonishingly different" than the organization's pamphlets. According to her, "the students can come back and say, well, this agency does marvelous work in these five ways. But there's still these other 37 issues that they cannot address, that they don't address, that we need to keep advocating about." Professor Ben, said, "it can be a really rude awakening [for students]. But we always have to come back around again, but what are you learning from that? As opposed to be critical of it or not dismissive of it. Or you're outraged? Or, or you're overwhelmed? Tell me what you've learned from that, and how you might apply it."

In Professor Ben's practicum courses, he offers students a systematic approach to identify theoretical frameworks in action. His students complete three journal assignments that reflect on how the organization aligns with key theories that they learned in class, for example, sexism, homophobia, poverty, or illness. They also engage in collective reflection through a weekly seminar. Some years the seminar becomes a "support group" where students "really help each other." In the seminar, they ask questions of one another, share observations, and form insights about the organizations they are working in. Through this collective approach to learning, students do not just accept the workplace as it is, but instead they assess the

theoretical frameworks in use and examine other possible alternatives—for example, they might compare a trauma-informed approach to addiction to a medical approach or a "Twelve Step" abstinence approach. As Wheelahan (2010) calls it, the non-profit becomes the site of the "unthinkable," "the impossible" and the "not-yet-though" (p. 21).

This is similar to Professor Sophia' approach. Professor Sophia from the university reflects that her students read "in the textbooks that way—you know, Social Workers go out and we build people's self-esteem. And we have this complex code of ethics, and we have these visions and dreams, and we are all part of this mission in the world and all of these kinds of lovely, gorgeous, succulent, rich visions." However, once they get out into their placement, they realize there are gaps and delays in social services and what should be an immediate crisis response may take months to resolve. Like Professor Ben, Sophia also uses collective processes of reflection to support students as they unpack and learn through the gap between practice and theory. Students in Professor Sophia's class participate in six seminar circles during the course of their practicum. During the seminar, they each share an *ICK and a YUM moment*. She explained,

> An ICK moment, is anything that kind of made you go "yuck." So that could be an understanding, an epiphany, it could be, you saw one of the co-workers be rude to a client, you saw a client break down in tears, because they were told "oh, you have to wait six months for an assessment . . . [and] a YUM moment is where the client says, "hey, I found my own apartment, and I'm really excited, I'm going to leave that abusive relationship. (Professor Sophia)

Each student shares an ICK and a YUM with their peers, and "we all kind of process that with them." Professor Sophia invites her students to explore a range of possible alternative responses, saying, "if you had a magic wand, if you were the Executive Director of that agency,

what would your dream be?" This process provides students with the tools to envision other possible futures together with "comrades" who share similar theoretical foundations.

Professor Sophia says that when she facilitates ICK and YUM circles,

> I try to show them patterns . . . it does liberate you. You can individualize and psychologize, you can say, well, my coworker is a bitch. And she was mean, because she said, "Oh, that client has to wait six months." . . . No, your coworker is embedded in a situation where the federal, provincial and municipal governments haven't been able to step up there. . . . I'll often ask them: "How is that done differently in another country? (Professor Sophia)

During the seminar, she reminds her students, "once you are full-time employed in that kind of agency and an ICK like that comes up, what would you do to make it different?" It would be easy for a student to conclude, "fuck, it's not my problem," but a process like this, where ICK and YUM are in balance and negotiated together with peers allows students to stay engaged and "actively cultivate imagination, efficacy and long-term visioning." Professor Sophia suggests that if these experiences were left unprocessed, students could become despairing and that leads to burn out.

Professor Sophia and Ben employed pedagogical approaches that systematically use theory to frame student experiences and in this, WIL is the pedagogy and theories form the curriculum. Both professors created spaces for the students to identify the gap between theory and practices and they used individual and collective reflection practices to invite deeper learning. Professor Ben said that through WIL his students have "the luxury over these two years or four years of listening to theory, critiquing theory, reflecting on theory and its fit with the reality of the situation." The approach taken by both Professor Ben and Sophia enable students to understand that theories are created by people, that they are "messier than they sound in the book" (Professor Ben) and that theories require judgement. At the level of social

conversion factors, the explicit use of organizational theories and the availability and confidence of faculty and learning partners to dialogue about a spectrum of alternative theories can enable epistemic agency.

8.6 Extend Knowledge and Practice

In some cases, non-profit organizations were a site for the extension of knowledge and/or practice. Non-profits supplemented gaps in curriculum and exposed students to new theoretical approaches compared to what they had learned in class. This happened at #red, #orange, and #indigo. While non-profit organizations were aware of the gaps in academic curriculum, they did not anticipate curricular outcomes would change as a result of their involvement in WIL. Instead, they saw that their participation provided an opportunity to extend new knowledge to some students, which they hoped would shape their future professional practices. In this, WIL was a means to mainstream their theoretical approach.

#red: person-centered plans to shape the future "elsewhere" professional

At #red, students were introduced to a person-centered, community-living approach, which was often new to them. Amber said, "if students didn't come [here], they wouldn't get that piece about how to work with someone with a disability." Amber explained that their organizational approach stands in contrast to the extended care side things, where students often do their practicums—for example in hospital settings. At #red, students learn how a person-centered approach influences daily work responsibilities, for example, disabled adults direct their own care as much as they can. During a student's orientation, they learn about person-centered plans and read through the binders that outline the care plans for individuals with whom they are working. Amber said that this is new for students and while they can not

go deep into the theory because they only have 35 hours, it is a critical part of student learning. Through WIL, students learned an alternative to the dominant health-centered approach to care, which Amber believes has value not for just the present moment, but for the future elsewhere. As a result of their experience at #red, students will be better equipped to support disabled adults in their future professional lives, whether that is as a social worker, a nurse, a doctor, or as a home carer. #red supports WIL because they hope that in the future, more service providers will be better able to communicate with and care for disabled adults as people, not just health needs.

#orange: filling gaps in the curriculum

#orange was also a site where students were exposed to new knowledge. Brent told me that while formal education prepares students for many aspects of work in non-profit organizations, he observed that few students have learned about prevention as a critical component of well-being. He said that most students "are coming in using the lens on the reaction side or response side. They are coming in with the knowledge base and the experience to date of, 'how do we respond when there is a situation?'" #orange, conversely, has a proactive theoretical approach that prioritizes prevention. For that reason, when students come in, "there is a little bit of work that is done right off the get go trying to talk about prevention. And I would say a lot of people don't really necessarily think of prevention when they're thinking about human social services and social work." Brent acknowledged that prevention is an abstract concept and many students struggled with it. He explains to students,

> We are working with these children and these families now. So that ideally in five years time, these children are not going to be engaging in negative interactions with the law or drug or alcohol experimentation. Our investment of time and resources when the kids are

> seven are going to increase their chances to graduate from secondary and move on to post-secondary. (Brent, #orange)

Though #orange has global peer-reviewed research to support their theoretical approach and they are able to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of prevention, Brent said that students are not widely exposed to prevention-based theories within their academic curriculum. Brent says that "a lot of people are getting into social work to create change for kids now. Kids are in dangerous situations [and] they want to want to make sure that these children are safe . . . [for them it is] hard to grasp this abstract idea of prevention." Brent thinks it is valuable for students to learn about prevention and he is keen to offer #orange as a site for learning; however, there are constraints. In the first few weeks of a placement, #orange spends a lot of time explaining the data, procedures, and policies and Brent thinks they probably do not do enough to talk about the mission and vision. He also thinks that it is when students get involved in a group or in programs that "everything kind of clicks" and their prevention approach makes sense. Before a student can get involved, they need to complete certain pre-requisites and with the short timeframe of most WIL placements, the opportunity to learn is compressed.

#indigo: understanding the basis of evidence

Similar to #red and #orange, #indigo is also a site where students are exposed to new knowledge. At #indigo, Masters-level counselling students provide a range of supervised counselling services for children, youth, and adults in one-on-one and group settings. Students are typically near the end of their academic program and while some of them have taken an optional course in Indigenous counselling modalities, many of them have not. Frankie finds this alarming, particularly because there is such a high Indigenous population in the North where Indigenous people access counselling from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous service

providers. For that reason, Frankie thinks WIL is valuable because it extends the basis of student knowledge and increases the number of future practitioners who are more likely to understand an Indigenous approach to counselling.

Frankie says that when students come to #indigo, they are introduced to new counselling modalities, which they have not learned at school or seen in non-Indigenous facilities. She explained,

> The non-Indigenous counseling agencies here literally have programs where you type in all the intake information, and it tells you what counseling theory to use. Here we have more freedom, and we lean more towards the non-directive counseling theories, like person-centered, narrative, art-based therapies and play-based therapies. (Frankie, #indigo*)*

Frankie explained that many of the counselling approaches that students learn in school are based on the research of middle-class white people, which is not a valid evidence base for #indigo. She said,

> Indigenous people have had enough experts telling them how they're going to fix them, which is what directive therapies are. Non-directive therapies say that you have everything within you that you need to heal yourself and [the counsellor] is just a support and a guide to help you tap into that and connect to that. (Frankie, #indigo)

At #indigo, students are exposed to new knowledge that may otherwise be unavailable to them during their academic experience. I asked Frankie how she approached this with students. She said that she loves talking to students about the difference between counselling modalities and invests time to ensure students understand why #indigo has taken a non-directive approach. She helps students discern when and why each approach is used and says students are “so open minded and they can do academic discussions.” It takes effort for Frankie to engage students in this way and she recognizes that her organization still needs more resources to ground their approaches with Indigenous knowledge, but she feels it is worth it.

One day these students will be out in the world, some of them might choose to work for Indigenous organizations and others will work in non-Indigenous private clinics, in hospitals, or in government facilities. She thinks it is useful to extend the knowledge basis of counselling students so that when they go out into the world, they can do so with an understanding of Indigenous counselling modalities. That said, she is not hopeful that the curriculum at the local university will change. Not because of a lack of interest at the university, but because of the regulations that are controlled by the certification boards for counselling. As Frankie explained, "they dictate what courses we need to take, and probably the content, I'm guessing." At the level of social conversion factors, curricular decisions that mandate what is required or optional within a program of study influence agency.

Faculty like the idea of creating new knowledge, but it is hard and there are barriers

As demonstrated above, through WIL several non-profit organizations exposed students to different theoretical frameworks compared to what they had learned in school—they extended their knowledge. Non-profits chose to participate in WIL because they saw a gap between their organizational practices and the academic curriculum and recognized that WIL created an opportunity to introduce their theoretical approaches to students. In addition to this, in some cases non-profit organizations were also a site to extend theory.

University faculty frequently suggested that WIL was a tool that could be used to create new knowledge and practice for the benefit of communities, municipal, and regional governments. President George called this the "third-generation university" where academics and research are embedded within the community. According to President George, "if you can take research academics, and then embed it within a community context that really is work-

integrated learning, scholarship-integrated learning." In this, WIL offers communities systematic approaches to inquiry and theoretical options to solve local problems. Through partnership with post-secondary institutions, city governments, and regional governments, non-profits are able test out theories, conduct research, and deliberate on local solutions. In Professor Alexis' opinion, this "can really make a difference in that it gets faculty and students and by extension administrators valuing problem solving, and genuinely contributing to bettering society." In a northern context, where research and knowledge are often based on dissimilar non-northern environments, this has great attraction.

Professor Alexis' used this model to design a course where her students contributed towards the development of an Indigenous community-based seniors housing program. In her program, WIL created opportunity for collective theorizing between community and the university in order to contextualize and create new approaches for care. For many community organizations and institutions, this kind of collective approach to problem solving and theorizing is a luxury. As explained by Professor Alexis, post-secondary institutions have people who have capabilities "to identify problems and pursue them in a way that your city government or your regional government or your nonprofits, they usually don't have the resources." Similarly, municipal governments and non-profits do not have the time, training, or knowledge base to purse these problems,

> and so there's a real gap there, particularly as governments have run out of money to pursue a lot of things they know they need to pursue and they just don't have the time, resources or skill sets. So there are real benefits for both the students and the community to have community engaged learning going on. (Professor Alexis)

Furthermore, President George suggested that students offer a unique value to organizations during WIL. According to him, "the opportunity to add different lenses and

different voices will allow and facilitate new things that never would have come if you didn't invite that lens in." In this case, students offer an additional lens to organizations, bringing benefit through a "sort of inter-disciplinarity, multidisciplinary lens approach" (President George).

While this approached was described with enthusiasm by several faculty, faculty were also quick to indicate the constraints they faced. Professor Sophia spoke about the "time lag factor," which refers to the time it takes for "mucky but effective theories that matter" to become legitimized. Reflecting on the current toxic drug supply crisis, she said, "I learned about that through supervising practicums years ago. But it has only hit the news, you might say, in the last two or three years." There is a time lag between when an issue is identified, researched, written about, and published. "It can take years," she said, and even longer for it to enter into the curriculum.

Resources were a limiting factor, as was the pretense of "hoity-toity theory and exotic research," which is often inaccessible and irrelevant to communities. Professor Kris suggests that "a lot of profs are stuck in the theory world and do not want to go outside of it." Professor Alexis suggested that the inequities in how research funding is distributed through agencies like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) pose a barrier. She says, "so long as SSHRC is funding grand theory, there will be less appetite for local applied theory. . . . I have yet to see a well-funded applied project come out of SSHRC." President Dennis similarly reflects that "to get the federal funding, you need an industry partner," but often this creates barriers for students to participate. He thinks for some colleges, "they're just chasing the prestige and the money and students are not welcome."

Professor Sophia suggested that the influence of neoliberalism, which left post-secondary institutions with an obsession for funding and growth, is at odds with an approach to community engagement through WIL. She was critical of post-secondary institutions saying,

> The point isn't just to study the world, the point is to change it. Otherwise, it's a whole pile of self-indulgent bullshit that just helps disproportionately white males get published, so they can buy better suits and more Viagra, right? What we want is that academia should be the servant of those agencies and communities. (Professor Sophia)

She reminded me, "academia is largely subsidized by ordinary taxpayers." Professor Alexis concurs, "right now universities care about how much funding did you get? How many publications do you have?" Instead, she thinks we should ask universities "can you point to projects that have bettered the community that you worked in, whether it's an Africa or whether it's in, you know, northern Canada or whether it's in the neighborhood just down the way? Did what you do, whether it was teaching or research have a net benefit?"

8.6 An assortment of theoretical contexts

Across the landscape of non-profit organizations, there were significant distinctions in how non-profit organizations used theory. Non-profits often deal within social and emergent realms, which are more temporary and partial compared to the theories in "hard disciplines" like engineering and accounting. On one hand, organizations like #pink had an explicit use of theory; their theories were publicly stated, multiple and collectively debated, and their theoretical approaches informed their workplace practices. On the other hand, organizations like #yellow had a more implicit approach to theory; their theories were tacit and assumed. Procedural knowledge appeared to inform workplace practices and the theoretical basis of their practices were less apparent.

The way an organization approached theory influenced student onboarding. Esther from #pink explained that “when I'm meeting with the students the first time, [I] give them a whole Reader's Digest version of the programs. You know, I do the set questions to get a little bit of history and context.” In addition to the over-arching theories that bring cohesion across its departments, #pink used sector-relevant theories within their programs. Each of these theories are named, have a history, and a context. This was starkly different to #yellow who recounted that they faced a number of challenges preparing for students. Carla recalled that they were pressed for time with only two weeks to prepare, the placement was short so “you can't really put a lot of time and energy into that,” and with only two paid staff positions, they did not have a lot of resources to draw from. For all of those reasons, #yellow did not have a formalized onboarding process and did not integrate theory into their introduction to the organization. When Carla reflects back on this experience, she thought students “would have been capable of more but certainly what we were asking them to do is kind of show up.”

Professor Ben suggested that there are significant differences in the theoretical orientation of the organizations where college students participate in WIL compared to those where university students participate. For college students, “the theory in the field becomes very ad hoc, it is often very incomplete.” University students earn their credentials through the College of Social Workers (CSW) and are required to complete a practicum that is supervised by a field instructor with at least a Bachelor of Social Work, though a Masters of Social Work is preferable. This can make finding placements in northern and rural communities more difficult, but it is more likely to guarantee that university students are placed in organizations who use

theories that are aligned to the CSW. At the college, Professor Ben says, “we hope that we'll have a field instructor there that at least has a diploma but often they don’t.”

Professor Ben explained that the level of theoretical sophistication impacts the practicum experience: “If people just learn through work, through being there, they're not necessarily informed by any theory.” This can result in myopia within an organization, where they only recognize a single theoretical approach without critically analyzing other options. Certainly, there was a wide-range across organizations in how they approached theory, with some having invested significant energy to stay current and relevant, while others appeared fragmented and outdated. Ben said that in some cases “they take a workshop here or there. And that suddenly becomes the thing,” whereas the college and the university provide an environment for critical thinking and makes you aware that for every theory, “there are ten other theories that could be equally effective.” Professor Ben shares this example,

> In the field of addictions, for example, you hear people firmly wedded to the idea of the 12 step programs, and almost intolerant of even discussing other options like harm reduction. . . And, there are people then with limited understanding of the breadth of the problems in terms of social policy . . . and [they are] not really that aware of all the other possibilities. (Professor Ben)

For Professor Ben, post-secondary learning enables workplaces “the opportunity to engage more critically and thoughtfully about what works as opposed to just believing what somebody, however well intentioned, has come to believe worked for them.” Yet, if students are placed in organizations with a “myopic” approach to theory, will their learning be stymied? Are faculty adequately resourced to accommodate for “theoretically anemic” organizations? As has been demonstrated, the design of WIL needs to take into account the theoretical sophistication of the organizations where students are placed. At the level of social conversion factors, whether

an organization had an explicit theoretical approach to their work, and whether that approach was current, relevant, and appropriate impacted agency. In situations when faculty are available to engage students in discussion about theoretical observations, it is more likely students develop epistemic agency, but in many situations, faculty are unavailable. In the next section, I will describe some of the difference in learning design.

8.7 Drastically different learning design

WIL is intended to formally integrate a student's academic studies within a workplace or practice setting but there is considerable variation in the theoretical landscape across non-profit organizations. This is related to both the nature of knowledge in non-profit organizations and the neoliberal context in which non-profits operate. The wide-ranging use (and mis-use) of theory can result in considerable differences in the learning experienced by students, jeopardizing both the quality and equality of learning. For this reason it is essential that WIL is appropriately designed with the host-organization in mind, and that the organization's theoretical capabilities are accommodated for by faculty.

Neither the college nor the university had institutional resources to guide or inform their pedagogical approaches to WIL and faculty used drastically different learning designs. Most faculty acknowledged that it was common for students to observe a gap between theory and practice, between the professional standards, concepts and approaches they learned in class and the reality they experience during WIL; however, the way they addressed this gap varied. Sometimes faculty appeared to minimize theory and instead used an individualized, context-specific approach to frame students' learning within the workplace. In these cases, the gap between theory and practices was invisible. Other times, faculty used theory to help students

interpret challenging experiences, reflecting on theories individually or collectively. Some faculty held seminars and created spaces for students to talk about the gap between theory and practice together, using multiple formats to reflect, to test ideas, and "think the unthinkable" with peers. A few faculty spoke of their desire to use WIL to create new theories, brokered between academia, community, and students, but they recognized their limitations to do this.

Ultimately, there were at least five different ways that students integrated academic studies within the non-profit workplace: through adherence to workplace practices, by bringing academic knowledge to the workplace, by critiquing workplace practice with academic knowledge, through debates of both academic knowledge and practices, and by extending academic knowledge. Table 9 describes the implications for the learning design based on these five methods.

Table 8.

Five Ways to Integrate Academic Studies within Workplaces

Implications for Learning Design	
A - Adhere to workplace practices (#yellow)	▪ Minimal risk for students, non-profit or post-secondary institution ▪ Requires explicit standard operating procedures that have undergone rigorous testing and are aligned with academic theories ▪ Clear delineation of assessment responsibilities between faculty and learning partner is critical ▪ Consider how and when faculty will intervene on behalf of students
B - Bring academic knowledge to workplace practice (#grey)	▪ Poor or inaccurate application of theory could jeopardize organizations legitimacy and operations ▪ Requires mechanism for quality control, which in smaller organizations may be difficult. Faculty may need to step in ▪ Determine whether faculty will review student products before they are delivered/presented ▪ Provide learning partners with access to the theories that students are learning in class

C - Critique workplace practice based on academic knowledge (#blue)	▪ Higher level of risk for both students and non-profit organizations: employability risks for students if their critique is poorly received, reputational risks for organizations if critique becomes public ▪ Consider assigning students to work in pairs or groups to strengthen collective agency ▪ Requires clarity around the boundaries of critique: what theories, protocols, and frameworks will be used ▪ Determine whether a non-disclosure agreement or a confidentiality protocol is necessary
D – Discern and debate academic knowledge and workplace practice (#pink)	▪ Requires high levels of discretion from learning partners and a commitment to engage with knowledge rather than defend organization's decisions or theoretical positions ▪ Faculty must carefully select organizations that are theoretical sophisticated, pedagogical-sound, and have available time to support students debate knowledge and practice ▪ High level of organizational investment (time, money, resources) with low guarantee that students will remain with the organization ▪ Keeps academia relevant, helps non-profit professionals say current
E - Extend academic knowledge (#red, #orange, #indigo)	▪ A form of advocacy and social change, may expose curricular gaps ▪ Partnership with post-secondary institution can be a means to legitimize organizational theories. Attention should be paid to how organization's theoretical position aligns with course content and whether curricular gaps should be addressed. There is some risk – i.e. "green washing" ▪ Requires organizational investment (time, money, resources) with low guarantee that students will remain with the organization ▪ Requires higher levels of investment from the post-secondary institution, to validate, legitimize, or include new knowledge in future curriculum. ▪ Funding agencies may be involved ▪ Requires flexibility or openness from accreditation bodies to review curricular content

In each of these modalities a gap between theory and practice existed, and the way that gap was addressed influenced both the level of risk and the quality of learning. In the modality of critique, debate, and extend, the theory-practice gap was useful to reveal the messy, human side of theory and to expand students' agency in theorizing. Seen this way, the gap between theory and practice was not failure on the part of the host organization, but was a pedagogical input, which, when addressed with intention, gave students access to powerful knowledge.

Surprisingly, tools to support faculty or host organizations intentionally address the gap between theory and practice are limited.

8.9 Summary of Chapter Eight

This chapter discussed the social conversion factors that impact WIL at non-profit organizations. According to some learning partners, WIL provided students an opportunity to apply their knowledge in "real-life," non-academic contexts and this enabled students to better understand and negotiate the nuances of the workplace. Rachel believes this is valuable because students "need to have the experience. They have all the background literature, [but] they have no practical experience and they need to be able to incorporate their learning into practicality." Within the HCT lens, work experiences are also important to host-organizations, especially as they provide a more streamlined pathway to recruit talented people and "make the job of finding the right person easier for recruiters" (Drewery et al., 2020, p.285). However, at the level of social conversion factors, the outcomes from an HCT analysis are very different compared to an HDCA analysis, which addresses epistemic agency.

Every learning partner, faculty member, and administrator referenced the important learning that can happen when students integrate theory and practice. They also acknowledged that gaps exist between what students learn in class and the reality they observed at the workplace. Arguably, how "theory meets practice" and the characteristics and interactions between the classroom and the workplace can be a powerful impetus for learning which supports the development of personal agency. Overall, there was no unifying way that non-profit organizations or post-secondary educators approached this—instead, there was considerable inconsistency in the way learning partnerships were designed. In some cases,

students were expected to adhere to workplace standards and practices. There was little room for negotiation and while this reduced the risks to the non-profit, students, and post-secondary institution, it also limited the opportunity to develop epistemic agency. In other cases, students brought new knowledge to non-profit organization, enabling the non-profit to extend their services. In still other cases, the non-profit organization was the site for critique. This created risks for the non-profit organization, the student, and post-secondary institution, which were sometimes managed better than others. In a few cases, the non-profit organization was a site to discern and debate theoretical knowledge and practice. In these cases, students had the opportunity to reflect individually and collectively on the appropriateness of theoretical concepts and workplace practices. This required foundational knowledge and discretionary effort on the part of the non-profit organization and flexible pedagogy on the part of part of the faculty member. In a neoliberal context, this was rare. Finally, in three cases, non-profit organizations were a site for the extension or creation of knowledges. In these cases, non-profit organizations supplemented gaps in curriculum and saw WIL as an opportunity to mainstream their theoretical approaches, preparing future professionals to work within the framing of their organizational theories regardless of where they found work after graduation.

CHAPTER 9: INSTITUTIONAL CONVERSION FACTORS

"Collective agency is the only way oppressed people have any kind of power . . ."
- Professor Sophia

9.1 Introduction

Having addressed individual and social conversion factors, this chapter now turns to institutional and environmental conversion factors. Environmental conversion factors consider physical and built environments or political and institutional structures. At this level, the non-profit sector was constrained in its ability to support students, to convert their education (resources) into options for entry into well-paid, middle-class jobs (capabilities and functions). As such, this chapter asks how institutional or environmental arrangements allow or impede students to use their resources in pursuit of personal agency. It explores the relative position of the non-profit sector within the labour market and within the larger social and political context, it considers how this positioning creates or limits the capabilities of students to pursue decent work. This chapter also asks to what extent location impacts the opportunities of students to secure future work that they have reason to value.

Chapter 9 starts with a reflection on the range of perceptions about the position and role of non-profit organizations within the context of WIL (section 9.2). Following this, section 9.3 explores four different mechanisms that are used to negotiate the expectations of WIL. As will be shown, the concept of work-life balance is important within a non-profit context. Section 9.4 describes both the ways in which student learn to manage professional boundaries in non-profit organizations as well as the limitations of their learning. The two sections that follow examine factors which compromise the ability of non-profit organizations to support students'

development of agency through WIL, at the institutional and environmental level: 1) The constraints that post-secondary institutions face to adequately prepare students and 2) The lack of employment opportunities, especially *good, middle-class jobs* (Morneau, 2019). These are sections 9.4 and 9.5 respectively. The influence of neoliberalism on both non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions is made visible in this chapter; seen together, it is apparent that the increasingly precarious positioning of non-profit organizations within the labour market threatens the ability of non-profits to offer WIL students options for (future) decent work, limiting their agency.

9.2 The Non-Profit Sector is Misunderstood

The non-profit organizations in this study were diverse in size, focus, theoretical approaches, budgets, and histories. Yet, despite their differences, they hold a unique role in the Fort and are distinct from for-profit companies and government agencies. With this in mind, attention was paid to understand how non-profits are perceived within the context of WIL. As a starting point, the governance structures in non-profit organizations set them apart. As stipulated by the Societies Act, non-profit organizations' constitutions and bylaws need to be transparent, democratic, and accountable. However, this study suggests that there was limited understanding about how non-profit organizations were distinct; as a result, there were few accommodations made for non-profits in terms of how WIL was designed or implemented. President George said, "obviously, their mission and mandates are different, given what they're trying to accomplish, but I think if you distill it down to the base opportunity, there should be no difference. . . . Profits have, not for profits don't or they have to do things a little bit differently. . . . In terms of community, not for profits versus government, not for profits, again,

I don't think there's much difference in my mind." President Dustin concurred saying that if you,

> Look at this as a hierarchy at the most simple level, there shouldn't be [any difference between non-profit and profit placements]. There may be [differences] especially on the employer side, but really, there shouldn't be. It should be about how does this connect to the learning, the good of the student, the health of the sector, having better prepared entry-level employees is going to be good for everybody. (President Dustin)

Yet, President Dustin also saw that there were nuances to consider, suggesting that "after that broad statement it starts to break down into very different perspectives around benefits and how it should be done."

Professor Kris was not sure if non-profits were distinctive. He said there were some logistical differences like following confidentiality protocols. He shared that

> We had one non-profit that was a woman's shelter so we couldn't have any male students going on premises. But I think those are all just things we had to adjust for each and every business. The thing we did worry about with non-profits is their ability to act on the recommendations compared to the other businesses. I think there's an acceptance that non-profits work on a slighter tighter budget. And that their grant funding is what they live off of. But some of the students were positive that non-profits can apply for more grants . . . (Professor Kris)

For many faculty, the difference between WIL at non-profits came down to whether or not students were paid. Professor Alexis said, "when I run internships, I don't care whether the organization is paying them or not paying them, it's up to the student to determine whether they want to be a volunteer whether they want to find paid employment for it." However, this introduced inequality as Dean PJ suggested. She explained,

> You can go and do an internship somewhere and have a paid internship or you can go to a non-profit where they don't have the ability to give you a paid internship. . . . If there's a focus on learning, I can appreciate a student not being paid to learn, but if the focus is on the work and students are really going to be contributing work, then why should anybody benefit from free labor? Especially because you're already paying to take the course. (Dean PJ)

On one hand, Dean PJ further problematized this saying,

> I would say a bigger difference [is the] social difference and that could be remarkable because not enough people understand the contribution that non-profits are making to our greater community . . . but I'd like to think that whatever your institution or organization does, the actual business skill sets should be the same, right? So whether it's relationship building, or document building, or whatever it is, well, that should be the same . . . patient care, client care, if it's about finances . . . (Dean PJ)

On the other hand, reflecting on the kinds of organizations where her students have completed practicums, Professor Sophia recognized a tremendous difference between what students learn at for-profit and non-profit organizations. She shared that

> Whether that's daycare, caring for the elderly, caring for sick, caring for a youth in trouble, these for-profit care homes where they house juvenile delinquents - all these places where it's a for-profit, if you're there to make profit, if that's why you created this place in the first place, your natural and irresistible urge every single day is "how can we keep the heat low? How can we keep the food cheap? How can we have just enough staff that we don't get arrested for negligence?" That's what a profit margin does, bottom line. Every day, every day. Now, there might be exceptions to that. But in general, that's the pattern. . . (Professor Sophia)

This research suggested that there were differences in the learning environments between for-profit and non-profit organizations. #red, #yellow, and #indigo each contrasted experiences students had at their non-profit organizations with experiences they had at for-profit companies. Amber said that #red provided more opportunities to "chat" and this enabled students to make life-changing decisions that they avoided when they were at for-profit care facilities. Carla compared #yellow with the "exploitative" experiences students had at downtown hotels, and Frankie contrasted the Indigenous and person-centred counselling modalities at #indigo with the technology-centered approach at a profit-based counselling centre. Although sometimes unrecognized, non-profit organizations were distinct not only in terms of their governance structure and operating environments, but also in terms of what was

learned and how it was learned. Recognizing the distinctness of non-profit organizations, the next section will explore how post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations negotiated expectations around WIL.

9.3 Four Mechanisms to Negotiate WIL Expectations

WIL is expected to prepare students for entry into the labour market and President George is confident that that if you "set it up the right way and have clear expectations, clear accountability and understand the metrics of success and what you want, then I think it could be successful." However many participants indicated that the process to negotiate expectations during WIL was cumbersome and there were differences depending on the post-secondary institution, the non-profit organization, the program of study, level of study, the structure of the program, the individual students, and even based on the faculty. Most non-profit organizations hosted multiple students, sometimes concurrently from different academic programs, creating complexity. Non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions alike spoke about the high levels of discretion and judgement that were required in order to make WIL possible.

Professor Dana shared that it was difficult to find WIL experiences that were valuable to employers and also worthwhile for students. The most common complaint he got from students is that the work they were assigned was mundane and simple. His students do not want a job shadow but are looking for work that will challenge them. He said, "they wanted to do something, like a responsible task—not like the same task over and over and over and over." Esther admitted that at her organization "students are sometimes given the tedious tasks or given the responsibility of doing the work that employees should be doing." Dustin, the

President of the college, suggested that his institution could “definitely do a better job of working with industry to agree on joint reasons, joint outcomes.” He said that “often we look to students for more than what is reasonable. They are intended to be pretty good beginners and some of them are just focused on not messing up.” However, he said that often organizations are looking to students to “come in and solve our problems and innovate and stuff.” On the other hand, there have been students who have called him to say “all I’m doing is pushing a broom, or standing there watching somebody,” and he concludes that the system lacks structure and design.

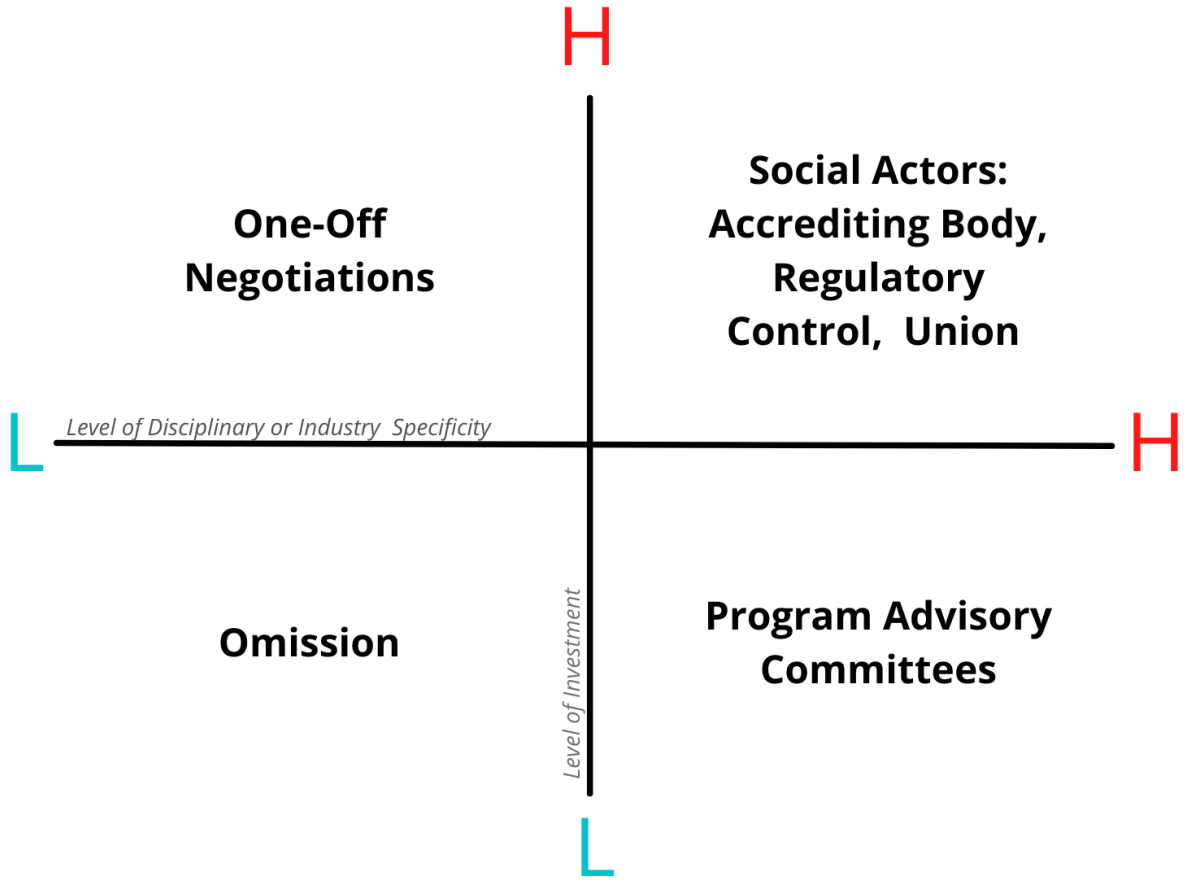
President Dustin suggested that the starting point to designing WIL should be collaboration between post-secondary institutions and industry. He said educators should ask “if our students are going to get a job in your industry, what do they need to learn?” Eden, a manager at #pink, agreed, stating that she thinks “competencies when they're created, should be from the practical placements as well as the educational institutions.” However, Julie, who leads the co-op program said that they are still trying to figure out “what to teach students in order to get them into the workplace while being a student.”

Across both non-profits and post-secondary education institutions, there was limited apparatus to negotiate expectations around reasonable work and there were significant variations across academic disciplines. President Dustin says that there are “programs that are heavily controlled by accrediting bodies and so the assessment is much more a national or provincial standard. And then we have programs where there's some loose norms and the faculty figured it out as they go, based on some previous experience, some sharing.” Within the non-profit sector, the regulatory bodies and professional associations that support the

professionalization of the industry are often under-funded, weak, and fragmented. This was seen to impact the ability of post-secondary institutions, and non-profits negotiate the expectations and boundaries of WIL. This section provides a description of four different ways that non-profit organizations and post-secondary negotiated the expectations for WIL: 1) With guidance from regulated bodies and professional associations, 2) Through Program Advisory Committees, 3) Through one-off negotiations, and 4) By omission (as shown in Figure 23).

Figure 22.

Four Ways the Boundaries of WIL are Negotiated



Regulated Bodies and Professional Associations

In a few cases, regulated bodies or professional associates provided guidance for non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions as they negotiated expectations for WIL. Five organizations were explicitly mentioned: the Ministry of Children and Family Development, which certifies early childhood educators; the CSW, which license social work students at the Bachelor's level and higher; the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, which provides credentials for students who have competed a graduate degree in counselling or related professional fields; and the College of Psychologists and the Psychological Association, who both register psychology students at the graduate level. These bodies provided a collectively negotiated code of conduct that offered explicitly agreed upon professional boundaries, connected future professionals to their industry beyond their particular WIL contexts, and offered tools and resources to imagine future and alternative professional possibilities. They also provided clear structures around WIL.

Of the faculty members interviewed, only Professor Sophia's students were on an academic trajectory that gave them access to a professional association and a collectively legitimized standard of practice. Sophia teaches at the university. Professor Ben, who teaches at the college, said, "I always introduced the College of Social Workers Standard of Practice, code of ethics, scope of practice. And we went through all of that together"; however, his students were not eligible for membership in the College of Social Work because in his Province entry begins at the university level. Seeing the value of the Social Work standard of practice, Ben teaches his students,

> Look, you're doing a Social Service Worker Program, you're not going to be registered, you're not going to be able to call yourself a social worker, but in essence you are, you

> just can't call yourself that. And although there's no regulatory body, we would like you to pretend there is and tell yourself that this code of ethics and the standards of practice are yours. (Professor Ben)

Professor Ben sees the CSW as a powerful resource. He says it is a

> counter thrust to the idea of walking into work at any organization, never having had any experience. You could become an excellent person doing that job at *that* organization but you don't really have a good understanding of what social service is, what is the professional body. What are the professional bodies that are constantly swirling around you engaged with, what are their roles, your roles. (Professor Ben)

Through his program, students develop their professional identity as social workers and learn "that you're a part of a much larger concept of the welfare state, a much larger concept of redistribution of wealth . . . you get this bigger picture of what it is you're doing. What you're a part of."

The CSW provides a template for social work practicums. Sophia jokes, "I can't just do anything I want, you know, oh, hey, come to my house and paint my walls and I'll call that part of your practicum. And while you're there, you'll do my cat boxes and wash my fridge." CSW dictates who can supervise students and the kinds of environments students should be exposed to. For example, students should witness group therapy, counseling, and diversity issues. These standards do not apply at the college level, however. Ben explains that in social work, each province has a different standard and in his Province, they have "tried for regulation for social service workers for years," but the CSW continues to exclude college students. Ben sees this as an expression of elitism and remembers back in the 1990s, "there was a group of people that were saying, you should only register master's level social workers and up. BSW should never be registered. They're not worthy." To graduate, college-level social work students need to

conform to provincial standards in terms of the number of hours, and programs need to meet standards set by a consortium of colleges, but they cannot be accredited through the CSW.

Like social work, psychology also regulates workplace learning. Master's level psychology students are required to be supervised by someone registered with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association or the College of Psychologists. For Frankie, that means she does all of the formal supervision at #indigo. Unlike social work, she says, "the accreditation body doesn't talk to me about what to do with students or what's appropriate. It's just a big checklist-y form and me saying that I've done the amount of hours." She reflects "they don't care what kind of theories I use, they don't care what I'm doing, because I've already met their registration requirements, they assume I'm doing good work."

Julie, a coop coordinator at the university sees the advantage of regulation for WIL and reflects that accountants "have their system figured out, and they kind of know how to move students along." Nursing and social work do too. Amber shared that they do not frequently recruit social work students for practicums because the tasks they require at #red are not within the scope of a social work standards of practice, for example, "helping bath someone." #red is regulated according to international standards and it appears that this influenced #red's decisions when negotiating appropriate student labour within their workplace. Similarly, Dean PJ explained that for the trades, the Industry Trade Authority (ITA) regulates workplace learning. The ITA "already have a pretty good fix on what the time commitments should be." For disciplines associated with accreditation bodies, regulations take some of the guess work out of negotiations; however, as Professor Dana explains, there are many disciplines, where there are no federal or provincial standards to guide workplace learning, for example information and

technology or office management. Dean PJ is working to address this for her institution. She says, for programs like tourism or marketing, “there's no requirement for work time or work-integrated learning. So what is appropriate? And how do you determine what's appropriate?”

Program Advisory Committees

For some academic programs, national and provincial accrediting bodies provide reasonable boundaries for what employers, students and faculty can expect during work-integrated learning. Where accreditation bodies do not exist, many institutions have found it useful to bring local employers together to deliberate using Program Advisory Committees (PACs). President Dustin explains that in his institution, “every program has a Program Advisory Committee, every program is directly connected to a bunch of industry people and if there is work-integrated learning, those people are often involved in the conversation.” Professor Dana recalls that the PAC was really helpful when they launched their practicum course. Through the PAC, he was able to reach out to all the local industry leaders and ask “what kind of skill sets are you looking for from our graduates? That was good.” PJ explains that when

> You're going to send students out you want to ensure that they're prepared to go out. We also want to have clarity from the employer that look, this is a first-year student or second-year student, they're this far along and we're hoping that you're going to work with us to teach them or expose them to other skills. (Dean PJ)

PACs can help make desirable competencies visible and can also contribute towards reasonability of expectations.

Dustin is realistic that the quality of PACs vary across institutions and in “a lot of institutions the conversation stops with, we got you a placement. Good luck.” However, Dustin believes that when WIL works it is because

> People have said let's roll up our sleeves, let's get in the same room, let's have this conversation. Let's work together and then let's do that continuous feedback loop where the students and the employers are involved in a follow up conversation to say, "what could have gone better? And what could we do to improve it for the next round?" (President Dustin)

Creating and maintaining a PAC takes work. Professor Ben says that over the years the PAC has been sporadic and admits that "at times it has been strong and at times it withers away." His PAC meets twice a year, and they have an annual luncheon where the President will say thank you and offer remarks. They budget about a thousand dollars a year for the PAC. Professor Dana's WIL program is fairly new and he was tasked with creating a PAC. He recalls that though he asked for guidance, he was given very little direction. The only thing he remembers being told was to go "find local industry leaders and let them participate." He asked other colleagues who were running practicums or had PACs for documents or advice but he did not get very much support. He ended up creating all the documents himself and then later his Dean told him that she had found a Terms of Reference for a PAC. He shrugged, "I wasted so much time at the beginning" and he explained that the process created self-doubt. Dana thought he was the problem and wondered why he did not know about these things?

Dustin knows his institution could do a better job to support PACs, but he also thinks there are extenuating factors that influence how PACs perform, including institutional reputation, the culture of the industry, and the character of individual faculty members. In one town where he previously worked, a niche-industry had tremendous confidence in the rigor of the post-secondary program, which created synergies, but that is not the same everywhere. The degree of comradery within the industry affects the way PACs perform—when there is fierce competition or threats of "poaching" within an industry, it can be very hard to instill trust and

inspire collaboration in the PAC. This is an important insight recognizing that there are high levels of competition for funding across non-profit organizations. Whether or not a faculty has an interest or aptitude for collaboration also has an impact. Dustin reflects that some faculty members are like "Rah! Rah! I just came from that industry five years ago and I'm connected and I'm excited to keep those connections alive and really engage." Other faculty members see it as "a ton of work" and they "don't want to meet with the industry and hear all their complaints" (Dustin). Staff turnover, both among faculty and within industry, can also negatively impact PACs.

For some post-secondary institutions, engagement is "in the DNA." Dustin recalls that in one institution further south, faculty are held to a heavy service component and are accountable for engaging with industry. This is featured in their annual workload reports and influences resourcing and promotions. Contrasting this, Dustin remembers that when he started teaching in trades his institution was "terrible" with their approach to industry engagement. He did not think much about it at the time but later when he saw a different model, he realized there were better ways of engaging with industry. He recalls, "we just did our thing. And that was the culture. It was just a different culture, you know. It varies wildly."

While faculty and administrators spoke about the role of PACs, none of the representatives from non-profit organizations mentioned their involvement in PACs. Amber from #red said that they had been to a big open forum where they were "invited to come and sit at the table and discuss how things were working with the college." Frankie from #indigo said that their Executive Director is on "a Senate board or something like that up at the university"; however, no one was directly part of a PAC. Professor Ben explained that the PAC "has always been an

advocate for our program but to be honest, we invite people to sit on it, so they may be a little biased." Professor Dana said that when he created he PAC he was on a tight timeline. He listed high net-worth international global businesses, well-recognized name brands, but did not have non-profits on his PAC. He said, "I am not sure their educational status or whether they are part of other [industry] associations. You know, I didn't really have a chance to go deep into that because we had to create one right away." This led me to wonder about the composition of PACs: are non-profit organizations included? Do they represent a diverse mix of organizations or just the most prominent or powerful ones? A search for public information about the PACs was unavailable and no one at the college was able to provide further information about the composition of PACs.

While it appeared that non-profits were under-represented in PACs, non-profit organizations also indicated that they do not have a mechanism to collectively engage with the college or university, for example like the Chamber of Commerce might have. There are two or three umbrella organizations in the Fort which attempted to bring cohesion across non-profit organizations, but they have had limited success partnering with either post-secondary institution. Carla acknowledged that "in the Ministry of Children and Family Development, there's a person who liaises with social work and counseling programs and helps students get placement," and she thinks it might be good to have "an appropriate umbrella group or maybe a coordinator position that could take some of the burden off the non-profit organization on the ground." However, she is doubtful that would happen.

Case-by-Case Negotiation

For the majority of non-profit organizations, it was incumbent upon the non-profit organization and the individual faculty member or program administrator to negotiate the expectations around WIL on a case-by-case basis. Across all unregulated industries, not just within non-profits, this can be difficult. President Dennis recounted that much of the literature about the current skills gap critiques employers for having unrealistic expectations of entry level employees. He said they "want their entry level employees to be at a different spot than they needed 20 years ago," and he cited the banking industry, which has automated a lot of the work that was previously done by junior employees: "Now they are expecting grads to come out already performing at a more mature level or more advanced level than they would have needed to 20 or 30 years ago." The shift in expectations impacts what employers expect of students during WIL, too.

Dean PJ says that facilitating WIL outside of traditional WIL disciplines is complicated. When an apprenticeships or clinical placements happen in a professional setting, "people understand, I'm already a mechanic, I'm taking an apprentice mechanic, I understand what needs to happen here" (PJ). However, she questions what happens when an office manager brings a student in, "maybe they are a human resources student and I'm an office manager. So it's like, am I the right person to be mentoring a human resources person?" (PJ). PJ cautioned that faculty members need both a deep understanding of the work that is performed in each organization and to know how that work aligns to the academic program of study. Only then can a faculty make informed decisions and adequately prepare students for WIL. She said this takes time and

is realistic that “in the first two to three years, I think we all need to be prepared for some growing pains.”

Frankie explained that her organization, which has more than 200 staff, does not have a human resource department so it is up to her to vet and negotiate student placements. She admitted, “I've been a bit scared by some bad experiences I've had with students, I try to be a little more cautious now.” She has learned to take more time to get to know students before she says yes, to see “if I can meet their needs, and they can meet our needs.” She is “still kind of a pushover” and said she is “trying to put a bit of a process in there so if I've got red flags, I can be like, you know, maybe it's not the right time.”

It appears that larger non-profit organizations have some advantages when negotiating WIL. Emma has confidence knowing that if she were to run into a difficult situation with a student, she could go to her manager for support. The more experiences a non-profit organization has, the more capable they are to set realistic expectations. Esther explained that after several iterations they were better able match students to the appropriate programs at #pink. She reflected that previously they put students “in victim services and we were providing all the training pieces for the victim services work and trying to move them into that client transition piece.” However, they learned that first-year students are not ready for that. Now, they assign second-year students to victim services and “if we are taking first year students, we know that the work that we need to be doing with them is more project based, or doing crisis calls to give them that flavor of experience.” If it is a fourth-year student, they might give them a more in-depth project to work on, to give them more exposure into certain areas.

Dean PJ is working with her team on mechanisms to determine what makes for appropriate workplace learning. She sees that they need to "come together" and considers both the viewpoint of the student and the organizations. She reflected that there are differences in the number of hours a workplace can offer to students. Some workplaces might say "we really only have an appropriate setting that you know, for 35 hours [while] someone else might say, oh, you know what, we could easily accommodate a student for 120 hours." Mak explained that when a student is present for more hours, employers tend to invest more in the relationship and give students higher levels of responsibility. There are other factors that also need to be considered. #yellow explained that they do not want to give work to students that a volunteer can do. As Carla shared, "we've got a big lineup of people that want to do [the work] and we're not going to take volunteer spots away from the people who've supported us for years and years and years."

When it is up to individual faculty and non-profit organizations to negotiate the expectations of WIL, both parties are expected to use discretion and it is often assumed that they approach negotiations with goodwill. However, President Dennis says, "you can't nail down industry because they all look at it very differently, depending on their business and their location and whether they're motivated by cheap labor or the greater good." Another downfall is that there are often missed opportunities. Brent says, "it would be great if we could see a WIL opportunity for other sectors," for example IT or marketing. His organization has only been paired with students from social work or early childhood education, the "typical sectors." Frankie knows the chair of the social work department of the university, but reflected that "we don't have any meaningful engagement with the social work department, it's really with the

counseling department. Those degrees are a little bit interchangeable. So there's definitely work we could do there."

Neglecting

While most non-profits and post-secondary institutions negotiated WIL expectations through the mechanism already mentioned, in rare situations post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations failed to negotiate the expectations for WIL. Faculty member Mak admitted that sometimes students were exposed to unreasonable expectations put upon them by employers, and even suggested that human rights issues might be at play in some work environments, especially for international students. Despite this, her institution did not have a formalized process to ensure that workplaces adhered to labour laws, or a protocol for students to follow when/if workplaces were unreasonable or unethical. In fact, neither the college nor the university had resources to support students to learn about and defend their labour rights. Professor Alexis acknowledged this as a significant risk, asking, "how many parliamentary aides have reported sexual harassment by MPs? I mean, some venerable institutions still have problems." Professor Alexis referenced several industries where sexual misconduct and harassment persist and probed, "do you want to be the person who has to counsel the student when they come back? Somebody sexually harassed them, and it triggered, you know, issues from their own past. That's ugly. So, there needs to be a bit more input into this." She suggested that students need to be adequately prepared to negotiate their environment but concluded that "nobody has really thought through the risk particularly well."

WIL is one of the most demanding forms of learning and it requires intentional negotiation between the post-secondary institution and the workplace. There are multiple

mechanisms that were used to negotiate expectations. In some cases, a professional association or a regulatory body, like the College of Social Workers (CSW), provided clarity around what can and cannot be included in a WIL experience, how WIL should be structured, and who can supervise. However, there are few regulated bodies that preside over the work of non-profit organizations. At the college, PACs were established to supplement negotiations, but as President Dustin explained, the success of a PAC is dependent on the post-secondary institution and the culture of the local labour market. The university did not make mention of a PAC or anything similar. When there is no regulatory body or a PAC, faculty and non-profit organizations negotiate WIL case-by-case. This requires high levels of judgement, trust, and is improved through years of experience. This approach can be unstable and inconsistent, especially if there is staff turnover. Unfortunately, in some cases, the boundaries of WIL were not explicitly negotiated, and this can leave students vulnerable to a poor learning experience, to exploitation, and harm. In this study, the majority of organizations negotiated the boundaries of WIL through one-off negotiations, while two organizations were supported by social actors, and one organization indicated a loose relationship to a PAC. At the level of institutional conversion factors, this suggests that ad hoc mechanisms are in place across the spectrum of academic-workplace partnerships and while some students might benefit from arrangements that that support the development of agency, others may experience constraints.

9.4 Learning to Manage Work-Life Balance

As demonstrated above, the mechanisms to negotiate expectations between non-profits and post-secondary institutions were complicated and they were often based on

individual judgements. In cases where third party “social actors” were present—for example, regulatory bodies, professional associations, or PACs, there appeared to be greater predictability, clearer decision-making, and less reliance on individual discretion, which saved time and reduced risk. The same appeared to be true when supporting students to learn about professional boundaries. Across non-profit organizations, learning partners felt that given the demands of non-profit work students should learn about work-life balance; however, they also cited the challenges that they personally face to set and maintain professional boundaries. Learning partners remarked on the emotional burden that is common within their profession and they felt that it was important that students learned coping mechanisms. Thinking about her students, Eden said, “when you're done at four o'clock, I hope I've given enough skills for you so that you're not vicariously taking things home. If you're waking up three nights in a row, because of a client you saw last week, we need to talk about that. That's not okay.” Esther suggested that setting work-life boundaries can be complicated for students. She said, “when you're in a program that is crisis intervention and support, and you've got crisis going on at home, how do you then balance that? And when you're a student, sometimes it's like, how much do I share? How much don't I share?” She acknowledged that students have less power and that they may perceive a heightened need to protect themselves, especially when they are looking for work. During WIL, Esther tries to open lines of communication and she tells students to “share with us as much as you can.” She asks them to reflect, “if you were in a real-life job, what are the pieces your employers need to know, to ensure your health and safety and the health and safety of the people you're working with?”

Brent recognizes that it is not easy to negotiate professional boundaries within a non-profit context. He said, “it's like working for nonprofit . . . we always joke that sometimes our job description is written in pencil because it can change on a daily basis.” However, he also affirmed that WIL can support students learn coping strategies:

> One of the things that we talked about when we bring our practicum students in is developing your own coping mechanisms for this type of work . . . you're going to be dealing with some pretty heavy things and making sure that there's a mechanism in place . . . you have those supports in place that if all of a sudden something is heavy, you have people that you already have that relationship with it, you can pop into their office and talk to and debrief and know that there's a team here who's able to support you. (Brent, #orange)

In Brent’s organization, the formation of trusted relationships with colleagues was a critical tool to support work-life balance, and he saw WIL as an opportunity for students to start building relationships with colleagues.

While all work is relational and relationships certainly support well-being at work, there are other apparatus, which also support work-life balance; for example, collective agreements, labour laws, regulations, and wellness benefits. Very few organizations mentioned these and neither the college nor the university provided non-profit organizations with resources to explore this aspect of work with students. Pam, who managed WIL placement for several students at #blue, was exemplary and said, “I got a lawyer talking about employment standards. I got Workers Compensation Board talking about work safety. I had a fellow come in and talk about networking. I had a guy doing interview techniques and what he looked for in interviews, as well as another lady doing how to write a resume that will get you noticed. Had that at the university and we had 25 students show up.”

Another aspect of learning professional boundaries is learning how to make ethical judgements in the workplace. Professor Ben shared that his students have had experiences that forced them to contemplate their professional ethics, and he said they have “hit some doozies. Some real doozies with ethical issues that are blatantly presented right in front of them, and they are like "[this non-profit] should close down.” In fact, one year an organization almost shut down because a student reported unethical practices. This was threatening for the student who was hoping to get a good reference check from his practicum, but it also created risks for the non-profit and the faculty who had to tactfully navigate this. Professor Ben said that in cases like this he invites his students to “look at the agency from a critical perspective and if you see unethical situations, or if you see poor practice, we want to talk about that in seminar.” In the past, he has provided one-on-one support to students, helping them evaluate their options. He will ask them, “Do you want to confront them? What are the possible consequences of confronting them? Can they fail you?” He wants his students to consider all of the consequences—and through this, they learn to consider their reality versus their ethics. This consideration can extend the agency of students but as Professor Ben says, “that might not be the agenda of the field instructors, right.” He reflected that as the professor, it is his job to help students navigate their options and after several decades in social work, Professor Ben is both experienced and respected. He is also near the end of his career, which means he is well positioned to have difficult conversations around controversial issues, such as organizational practices and unethical behavior. This is a tremendous asset for his students, but not all professors are positioned the same way. Sessional faculty, non-tenured faculty, or new faculty may face different decisions based on their professional risks.

WIL provides opportunities for students to learn about professional boundaries and learn coping strategies that will support work-life balance. In an era where 20% of Canadians experience a mental health problem or mental illness each year, often triggered or exacerbated by work, this is important (Government of Canada, 2018). While learning partners felt this was an important aspect of WIL, many organizations and post-secondary institutions were poorly equipped to educate students about their professional boundaries and the tools to address decent work and workplace exploitation were rarely discussed. In only a few cases were external social actors, such as regulatory bodies, professional associations, and unions, referenced.

9.5 Students are Under-Prepared for WIL at Non-Profit Organizations

While non-profit organizations were consistent in their support of WIL and saw that WIL could be useful to shape the future workforce, they recognized limitations at the institutional level. In the current neoliberal era, many non-profits operate in an environment where the demands placed on them exceed their capacity, their funding is precarious, and trust and legitimacy are essential to their sustainability. In this context, it is important that students are well prepared; however, participants indicated that post-secondary institutions are under-resourced to prepare students for WIL in non-profit contexts. This can jeopardize the credibility of the host-organization and/or cause unnecessary costs (in terms of time, labour, money, expertise), which many non-profits are unable to absorb.

President Dustin acknowledged the risks saying, “our students need to go there when they can add some value and not be seen as a liability.” He elaborated that they need safety training and training around proper service standards. “Don't send them when they're going to

be seen as somebody we're going to trip over when they're in pain," he cautioned. Faculty member Mak agrees; when coordinating WIL programs, she has heard non-profits say, "we don't have the luxury of extra time or people, we need somebody that can perform a specific function at a certain level out of the gate." Mak thinks that the post-secondary institution has a responsibility to prepare students and, to do that, they need to first understand what the workplace is expecting of them.

There are at least two things that non-profits expect. The first is that students have an awareness of cultural protocols for the workplace. Both Paul and Pam talked about how students have not had previous exposure to professional settings and that they need to be aware of appropriate protocols. Paul, reflecting that he might be an "old man rant[ing] on a soap box," said that their "soft skills are quite lacking . . . we've become so digitally driven that soft skills have suffered. Communication, eye contact, language capabilities. As simple as shaking someone's hand and being engaged in a conversation. I mean, when I say soft skills, I mean, the real, real basics of soft skills." Mak indicated that in her capacity as the coordinator of WIL placements, she is particularly aware of the need to prepare international students for a Canadian workplace. She said, "there needs to be a high level of graciousness, especially with students that are thousands of miles from home and English isn't their first language." Mak admitted that faculty are cautious about offering first year students WIL placements because "they want the students to do well . . . and as faculty, they want [the students] to represent them well so there's a huge amount of hesitancy when written English isn't their first

language." Recognizing the risks[7] to future employability, Mak suggested that first year international students need time to build their confidence speaking English in a Canadian context before being thrust into new workplace settings. Professor Alexis teaches a first-year course where students do service projects and she indicated it is "a hit and miss" and sometimes students are not ready for the workplace. Dean PJ said that being underprepared compromises the college's reputation and she admitted, "we lost some credibility in the community when our students were sent out perhaps a little bit underprepared."

The second thing non-profits expect is that students have critical self-awareness and are prepared to work with their specific populations, who are often marginalized. Frankie explained that students who have come to #indigo do not have sufficient awareness of Indigenous culture. She said,

> Most of the students are not adequately prepared. Unless you choose to take the Indigenous elective at the university, and if you've never worked in [an] Indigenous agency, you'd have no awareness that there is a cultural protocol, and that that's going to be different at every Indigenous organization. The people who are better prepared are either Indigenous and a bit grounded in their culture, or they've worked at Indigenous organization, and they know the questions to ask. (Frankie, #indigo)

Professor Alexis said, "I don't know how many times I've had to say to a student, 'you may not wear this t-shirt that says "Fuck This," anywhere near a community member. Please go find a t-shirt with a much more neutral saying on it." For her, it is important that students are aware of "their relative position in the world vis-a-vis formal education versus the experience that community members or organizations also bring to the table." Dustin summed it up well:

[7] Risks that a potential employer will not convert a WIL student to employee, that WIL supervisors will provide a poor formal reference or that WIL supervisors will speak badly about students to other potential employers within the community.

"if you want work-integrated learning to be successful, and you want the students to be seen as positive contributors to profit or nonprofit, you design that into the sequencing, [into] the design of the program, and then it can actually be successful."

There do not appear to be any protocols or "safety requirements" for students participating in WIL in non-profits. Only two faculty and none of the host-organizations indicated that students received required training about cultural agility, reconciliation, trauma-informed practices, ethics of care, or about positionality prior to WIL. In a non-profit context, this training is as vital as safety training for students entering construction sites or as important as students wearing safety googles and having access to emergency eye wash stations when working in laboratories. The protocols, funding, time, and resources to ensure that before students participate in WIL in a non-profit organization they have completed essential "safety training" has not been considered by post-secondary institutions nor by the provincial or federal government. At the level of institutional conversion factors, the lack of safety training for students participating in WIL in non-profits is alarming and constrains the development of agency.

9.6 Non-Profits Lack "Good Middle-Class Jobs"

It could be assumed that if WIL is expertly negotiated, taking into account both the non-profit and post-secondary concerns and that students are well-prepared, WIL should position students for future employment. WIL is most often positioned as a potential recruitment vehicle and promoted as a means to build an organization's talent pipeline. However, non-profits lack good middle-class jobs and while the desire was there, few organizations, faculty or administrators were able to recall specific examples when WIL students were converted to full-

time employment. Emma said that WIL "gives us an idea of where to pull from if we need to hire or look for fresh, enthusiastic people," and Pat, the funder of the #blue program, believes WIL creates the potential for recruitment, opening "up a potential pipeline for the companies to have quality students applying for their jobs." Professor Kris shared that he

> had businesses tell us that it's a great opportunity to test out students, because they might have a job afterwards. It's so tough hiring now, right? You commit to someone and once they're on your staff for three months, it's a difficult proposition. People are leery of hiring and [WIL] gives them an opportunity to see the students engaged already. (Professor Kris)

Despite the positive intentions, none of the students from Professor Kris' most recent graduating cohort were hired in the organization where they completed their WIL placement. Two of the six students got jobs directly in their industry and three got jobs in similar industries but none of the organizations who hosted students offered them full-time positions. #orange recounted two students who were hired on to longer-term employment following their WIL placement; however, Brent cautioned, "that was two out of many staff that we've hired over our time." Professor Dana says that only a few of his students received job offers after they completed their practicum placement. One took a position at the Marriot hotel and another at a local business. None of the students who were placed at non-profit organizations were converted to employment. He explained that "[our] industry has ups and downs, it's really hard to get a solid full-time position at the beginning [of your career]. Usually employers are hiring part-timers here and there, or temporary positions here and there."

There are several reasons why students were not hired after they completed WIL. Some organizations did not have vacancies—this was the case for #orange, #yellow, #blue, and #grey. Pam said, "the jobs that we hired for have been a different skill set. Usually, when students are finished, it just happens to be not when we've been hiring." She went on to say, "we've only got

three full-time people and me. That's it." This is not an uncommon experience for non-profit organizations. In Canada, the majority of non-profit employers are small, with fewer than four people and large non-profits tend to be in major urban cities[8] inaccessible to students in the Fort. Furthermore, few non-profits in the Fort have employment pathways that lead elsewhere; in fact, only #orange mentioned the possibility of working in their organization outside of the Fort.

Some non-profit organizations offered students jobs following their WIL placement but very few students accepted the employment offer. Students rejected employment offers because they had "better" offers elsewhere because of the low salary range or because they wanted to move out of the Fort. Julie told me about one of her current students in a non-credentialized co-op program. While this story is not about a non-profit organization, it illustrates several factors that impact conversion to full-time employment. Julie said this student has

> been with the City for three or four placements over a two-year period [but] she wouldn't stay, she will move. She'll move out of the Fort when she's finished. . . . She's proven herself, they love her, she's liked the work [but] it's not where she wants to stay. They can't afford to keep her anyways. (Administrator Julie)

Only two of the six co-op students in her co-op program secured full-time employment following their placement. For many students, location matters, like Paul's student who loved the mountains and was planning to leave the Fort after graduation. Frankie tells a similar story as Julie. She said,

> We had a really amazing student here working in the counseling program and I was really hoping she would come work for us after because we had some openings. And she didn't, she chose to work at a non-Indigenous agency. (Frankie, #indigo)

8 Of the top ten largest non-profits (by budget), seven of them are based in Toronto: World Vision Canada, Plan Canada, United Way Toronto & York Region, Sick Kids Foundation, Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation, Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation while the other three are pan-Canadian: Canadian Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke Foundation, Salvation Army.

While this was disappointing for Frankie, she reframed the experience and instead said, “we have a really great ally over there who understands what we do and why we do it.”

Unionized workplaces also face barriers offering employment to students. Esther explained that before they unionized, practicum students could become employees, but now that they are unionized, “students are told that while they're in their practicum they can't apply for a position. However, if they've done that practicum, they can. But I mean, if there's a practicum student who works, who's working out really well, why couldn't they be afforded the opportunity to apply for a position during their practicum?”

These labour market barriers are further compounded by a lack of interest and investment by the municipality to the non-profit sector. For example, though the Fort’s 2019 Workforce Analysis indicated that “the health care and social assistance sector had the strongest demand for workers” (MDB Insights, 2019), there has been little municipal investment to address this. Instead, the municipality established a working group “to develop clear talent pipelines from local educational institutions to the Fort’s target clusters, which include Forestry, Manufacturing, Transportation, Professional Services, and Construction” (The Fort, Economic Development Office, 2021). The forestry sector has a consistent and respected voice in the working group meetings, while non-profits are either uninvited or too busy to attend and have no representation.

In addition to employment, several participants shared their hope that WIL could support the sustainability of non-profit organizations and reinvigorate civil society. Rachel, Donna, and Esther all shared concerns about the sustainability of their organizations and how they need to transition to the next generation of leadership. For them, WIL could be useful to

do that. Esther reflected, “we're at 65 employees now. And there's a few of us “old fogies” who will be transitioning. I'm going to retire from here. Seeing the new energy coming in, for me, the work is not only rewarding, but what we're getting back is that we've impacted these students who are going to come back to our organizations to our communities.” Donna, whose organization is entirely run by volunteers and does not currently host WIL, said, “we would really like students for the selfish reason of sustainability. I mean, that's part of it. Right? And then I hate to be judgmental, but the other generations don't like to volunteer quite as much.” Several non-profits indicated that they are concerned that young people are not engaging as citizens in civil society organizations. Rachel said, “it's unfortunate, because we don't have the kids out there giving back to the community.” She explained, “we've been talking about that for the last 25 years because any volunteer group that we go with it's the same faces and we're not getting any younger.” She concluded, “I think that the school really needs to start engaging the students through volunteer work, and let them know what their community is involved in.” She said that we need to “explain more. Why do you have to get back to your community? Why is it important? What does your community do for you?”

9.7 Summary of Chapter Nine

This chapter discussed the environmental and institutional conversion factors that impact the ability of students to develop personal agency through WIL at non-profit organizations. While there are good intentions, it appears that the institutional environment in which non-profits deliver WIL constrains the development of personal agency. Non-profits hold a unique role in Canada’s social, economic and political landscape, yet this often remained invisible within the context of WIL, and is not accommodated in the policies and frameworks

that support WIL. The lack of regulation and collectivization, combined with the narrow funding and rhetorical contexts within which non-profit organizations operate further contribute to the precarity that non-profit professionals face in their working lives, and this compromises the outcomes of WIL.

When designing WIL, it is important that the expectations of WIL are intentionally negotiated across stakeholders. This ensures reciprocity, sustainability, and contributes to the quality and equality of learning outcomes for students. Non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions used multiple mechanisms to negotiate the expectations of WIL and where social actors, such as regulatory bodies, professional associations or PACs were present it appeared that some of the "guess work" was removed. When social actors were absent, the level of judgement and complexity escalated. This is perhaps one of the most notable findings of this study and sheds light on the value of research focused on an outlier, as well as the contrast between HCT and HDCA. Within an HCT lens, analysis at the level of institutional and environmental factors pits capital against capital: individual owners of human capital against the owners of organizational capital (business owners, corporate shareholders, and boards).

Given the demands of their non-profit environment, learning partners felt it was important to support students to learn about professional boundaries, yet many indicated that they were under-resourced to do so. They did not refer to collectively negotiated professional boundaries like those available in other industries[9]; instead, this was taken on as individualized or as an organizationally-specific pursuit. Furthermore, the absence of social actors and lack of tools to address workplace exploitation and decent work were rarely discussed. This possibility

[9] https://engineerscanada.ca/sites/default/files/guideline_code_with_1.pdf

indicates that non-profit learning partners were unaware that such apparatus exists in other fields and could be available to them.

While non-profit organizations saw the value of WIL and believed that it can be useful to shape their future workforce, they also recognized the limitations of WIL. Students were often ill-prepared for the particular demands of WIL at non-profit organizations, for example students did not have adequate awareness of Indigenous cultures. Additionally, there are limited opportunities for "middle-class work" at non-profits and there were few vacancies available for students after the completion of WIL. This was particularly pronounced in the North, which does not benefit from the concentration of industry as seen in major urban centers.

Seen together, the increasingly precarious positioning of NPOs within the labour market threatened the ability of non-profits organizations to negotiate WIL, to support students' development of professional boundaries and to offer students options for decent work. This limits agency. This research suggests that the institutional and policy environment that undergird WIL do not acknowledge the distinctness of non-profit organizations within a neoliberal economy and this makes invisible other dimensions that affect decent work, such as the regulatory environment, collectivization, and the contracting regime. To ensure well-paying jobs, these invisible factors must be addressed. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10. DISCUSSION

10.1 Introduction

The findings presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 explored how individual, social, and institutional conversion factors positioned northern non-profit organizations to support students to develop personal agency through work-integrated learning (WIL). This chapter will situate findings in the broader literature in order to advance conceptual and theoretical propositions related to non-profit workforce strategies and WIL. Section 10.2 considers how WIL exposes fundamental vulnerabilities within the non-profit context, which, if not addressed, will contribute to continued precarity in the sector. This section suggests that while non-profit organizations are important to the sustained quality of life in Canada, they are inadequately positioned to participate in WIL. At the level of individual conversion factors, non-profits enable students to convert their resources (learning styles, emotions, motivations and aspirations) into capabilities for career exploration, thus expanding agency, but at the social, environmental, and institutional levels, WIL in non-profit organizations may constrain agency. WIL at non-profit organizations can be useful for student learning but it can contribute to elitism; and while WIL can be beneficial to non-profit organizations, it can also further perpetuate precarity within the profession. Section 10.3 re-examines WIL in the light of the outlier case and makes explicit the influence of neoliberalism and corporate power. Observing WIL through the lens of non-profit organizations in the North suggests that the labour market is not a universal phenomenon, and that WIL cannot be understood as a neutral conduit between the system of academia and the system of the labour market; rather, it is in relationship to two complex, distinct but inter-dependent systems. This section concludes that WIL in its current

form is not a viable labour force strategy for all industries, and particularly the non-profit sector. Instead, the design of WIL should consider specific and local labour market conditions including regulation, social actors, and the concentration of industry. Furthermore, it is argued that given the deeply stratified nature of the Canadian labour market, WIL is insufficient on its own to produce middle-class jobs. Finally, having examined WIL from the perspective of an outlier, section 10.4 will extend the concept of "quality WIL" and suggest that the role of theory requires greater prominence if WIL is to support the development of personal agency so that students have the capability to enter and contribute to their occupations in a manner that they have reason to value. Section 10.5 concludes with a summary of the discussion and will set the stage for the final chapter of this dissertation.

10.2 The Perpetuation of Elitism and Precarity through WIL

This study demonstrates that non-profit organizations can provide quality WIL experiences and that there are many potential benefits for both students and non-profit organizations; however, due to the weak position of non-profits within the labour market, WIL may contribute to elitism and precarity. This section discusses the material limitations that exclude non-profits from WIL and demonstrates how the lack of renumeration and the fragmentation of knowledge reinforces inequality in learning. This section also highlights the relationship between social actors, professional boundaries, and the lack of awareness about non-profits within post-secondary institutions, thus extending the literature about non-profit labour strategies.

Non-profit organizations, especially those in northern and rural communities, are vital to the sustained quality of life that Canadians currently enjoy (Ryser & Halseth, 2014;

O'Halloran, 2007). The organizations in this study offered housing, counselling services, environmental education, cultural experiences, employment support, and more. Additionally, in the current era of neoliberalism where government provided social safety nets are increasingly under threat, the non-profit organizations in the Fort are essential to well-being (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008). Despite their importance, similar to the rest of Canada, the eight non-profit organizations in this study indicated that they face considerable human resource constraints. Many indicated that the demands put upon them exceed their capacity and they are concerned about their ability to recruit and sustain the next generation of employees. While WIL presents an attractive solution to their labour market conundrum, the impacts of neoliberalism make it less possible for non-profits to participate in WIL. Non-profit organizations faced considerable challenges in terms of funding, staffing, accountability, and political position (Collins, 2012; Hall & Banting, 2000; Hall et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2005; Eakin, 2001, 2005; Malenfant et al., 2019), and their core demands left little capacity to mentor students or pay modest student wages (Doel et al., 2007; Hay & Brown, 2015). Many non-profit organizations were unable to "provide resources such as equipment, space, supervision, cooperative team members and a role that is suited to the learner's capabilities" (McRae et al., 2018, p. 6).

Against all odds, some non-profits did find a way to participate in WIL. For some, WIL is perceived as a cost-effective way to extend services. Frankie shared that WIL is "a great help to our organization. We're definitely getting help and support to more children, youth and adults quicker." However, WIL is double-edged and reliance on paid and unpaid student labour can further weaken the non-profit sector and compromise student learning. In these

environments, student labour fills gaps left as a result of government retrenchment strategies, and this makes students vulnerable to exploitation as a cheap form of labour (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2007). Furthermore, it sets a dangerous precedent that non-profits can do more with less and the costs of services remain invisible to public scrutiny and debate. The reliance on student labour as a depoliticized practice can perpetuate inequalities, preserve unjust structures, and "normalize and civilize radical tendencies" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51).

To add to this, there is tension around the role of renumeration for learning. Within most corporate environments, WIL is paid and there are increased resources and grants to supplement organizations so that they can pay students for WIL. Some non-profit organizations, such as #grey and #blue, have been able to leverage government funding, yet many organizations face obstacles to apply for grants or do not meet funding criteria. Pam from #blue indicated that the process and timing to secure grants for WIL was unpredictable and this jeopardized their ability to attract students. In this, learning is shaped by economic power (Livingstone & Sawchuk, 2003), and, on one hand, this makes WIL in non-profits vulnerable to exclusivity, only available to "those with the personal and family resources who are able to meet the costs associated with an extended competition" (Brown, 2003, p. 3). On the other hand, it disadvantaged students who chose to participate in unpaid WIL. Emma said, "students don't get paid when they're on practicum. They have to pay to do practicum which is crazy." Eden suggests that the inability to pay students compromises their learning. She explained that when students are paid they are "coming in with their A game because they're excited, they're being validated. They're being respected because they're part of a team. They're paid!" Emma suggested that if they were able to pay students, they could extend their

placements and this would make their learning “a bit more integrated.” Esther compared their student placements with paid co-op or apprenticeship models. At #pink, she said, “students are trying to struggle and juggle their work, their school and their placements and their courses. In the life of a student what gives at that point?” According to Emma, when students are pulled in so many directions their learning is stifled and “the sad thing is that they're not getting benefits for it. They're not getting paid for it.”

The tension around renumeration for WIL highlights similar concerns about the elitism inherent within the non-profit industry. Critics of the non-profit industrial complex illustrate the transition of social justice from being a civic responsibility incumbent on the public to it being a career pursuit reserved for those who have elite access to higher education, social, and financial capital (INCITE!, 2017). The professionalization of the industry has led to the erasure of Indigenous practices and has deepened the lines of distinction between those served and those serving within non-profit agencies. This research reveals how other lines of distinction have been drawn, for example, between the organizations where college students are assigned and where their university counterparts are assigned. Given the unstable, complex, and competitive environment in which non-profits operate, there are fractures across the sectors (Eakin, 2001, 2005; Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002a) and this compromises the ability of non-profits to galvanize powerful knowledge. Many smaller organizations tend to operate from under-developed theoretical positions that are narrow in space and time (Rasmussen et al., 2003, p. 84). Professor Ben explained that college students are more likely to be placed in theoretically weak organizations, which, as Wheelahan (2016) explains, denies them “access to the control of knowledge because they are only given access to contextually specific knowledge

and not the principled system of meaning" (p. 186). Furthermore, because the non-profit sector largely reflects internal labour market conditions, the portability of skills students learn is limited. In this, WIL may be complicit to reinforce and reproduce existing social patterns of inequality.

Despite these criticisms, there is evidence that when post-secondary institutions are positioned as interveners and advocates, WIL at non-profits can contribute towards more inclusion within the workforce. WIL can support career exploration, and can enable students to see "wider ranges of possibilities for the lives they want to lead within the realm of career, occupation or vocation" (Wood & Deprez, 2012, p. 479). WIL can better prepare students for labour market entry, strengthening resumes, references, and career signalling. When faculty are resourced to intervene on behalf of students, as Professor Dana did, WIL can be a tool to support inclusion into a discriminatory labour market, especially for working class, racialized, Indigenous, international, and LGBTQ+ students. For a sector that lacks diversity (Malenfant et al., 2019), this could be an important value proposition.

Arguably, social actors, like professional associations or unions, could take up some of this role, as is seen in disciplines like engineering. BC Engineers and Geoscientists (2021) provides clear guidelines for both students and employers about appropriate practice; it offers a code of conduct and an established process for complaints and disciplines. There are few social actors or umbrella organizations, which represent the interests of non-profit organizations (O'Halloran, 2007), and this creates additional burdens for post-secondary institutions who have to step in to intervene and advocate.

Additionally, social actors help reinforce professional identity and offer mechanisms to negotiate and legitimize professional boundaries. The lack of social actors weakens the position of non-profits within a deeply stratified labour market and leads to an individualization of coping strategies where the majority of non-profit employees say that work-life balance is a tremendous challenge (HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, 2008). Bandura (2000) suggests that performance accomplishments and vicarious experiences are sources of information that impact the expectations of personal efficacy. Seen this way, WIL can normalize indecent work and create a concept of vocation that justifies "workers taking on responsibilities and duties that far exceed their energy or capacities and that destroy their health and personal relationships" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 99). Lack of collectivization has led to a sector where non-profit staff take on responsibilities and duties that far exceed their job descriptions and salary, and through WIL, students learn that this is acceptable.

The lack of social actors also minimizes the visibility of non-profit organizations within the gaze of post-secondary institutions. In the Fort, like the rest of Canada, the non-profit sector is largely unregulated, unstructured, and operates in an uncoordinated liberal market economy. Very few social actors were mentioned over the course of this research and it appeared that mechanisms to coordinate between post-secondary institutions and non-profits were ad hoc. In an attention constrained environment were post-secondary institutions face pressures to engage a wider range of organizations and agencies (Morley & Dunstan, 2013), non-profits remain unnoticed. Unlike other industries where professional associations have made it their strategic priority to engage with universities and colleges through sponsorship, special events or alumni, non-profits had minimal exposure on campus. Faculty do not think of

the non-profit sector as a place in which their students might have careers and as Professor Alexis explained, most faculty know very little about the sector. Julie, the co-op manager at the university said, “for the three semesters that I've been involved in placements I don't have any non-profits. . . . I mean, I haven't talked to any non-profits, I haven't approached them and been told no, there's just been no communication yet.”

Though social actors play an important role in WIL, they are often overlooked in the design and resourcing of WIL. Rarely are social actors named in WIL strategies, institutional frameworks, or curriculum, and when funding decisions are made, they often prioritize professional associations who already have existing relationships with post-secondary institutions. Yet, social actors produce and disseminate powerful knowledge, they create and reinforce ideas of what it is to be professional, and they provide necessary boundaries about what it acceptable within the workplace. In the absence of social actors, students are more vulnerable to exploitation, and greater demands are placed on faculty to intervene and advocate. Furthermore, non-profit organizations remain less visible to WIL facilitators and faculty members.

The rhetoric in support of WIL is attractive. Given the desire to diversify the non-profit workforce and to attract the next generation employees, WIL appears to be a reasonable approach within a non-profit labour strategy. However, upon greater scrutiny, WIL may well contribute to exclusion and precarity. The inability for non-profits to pay students to participate in WIL, the fragmentation of knowledge, the divergence between WIL experiences of college and university students, and the normalization of porous work boundaries contribute to this. These limitations are compounded by the lack of established social actors within the

non-profit sector. While non-profit organizations are eager to support student learning and strengthen their future workforce, WIL may compromise their broader goals for a just and equitable Canada.

10.3 Who Benefits? WIL through the Lens of an Outlier

The Business + Higher Education Round Table promotes WIL as a "long-term strategy to continue attracting skilled talent to contribute to business sustainability in a competitive labour market" (BHER, n.d.d) and suggests that WIL contributes to a "thriving Canada where everyone has an opportunity to reach their potential" (BHER, n.d.a). This research investigated WIL from the lens of an outlier in order to reveal boundary conditions and moderating effects (Gibbert et al., 2021). Through this approach, it became evident that the context of WIL, in terms of labour market conditions, geography, and student identities influence how and for whom WIL produces capabilities. There are claims that WIL produces high salaries for graduating students and valuable innovation for participating businesses; however, this narrative is not consistent across all disciplines, industries or geographic regions. Instead, there are a number of mediating factors at social and institutional levels, such as the availability of industry knowledge, the presence of powerful social actors and workforce regulations that influence outcomes. This section explores those often invisible factors and discusses who benefits.

Non-profits employ more people than finance and insurance, forestry, construction, transportation, professional and scientific services, yet these industries dominate WIL in Canada (CEWIL, 2019). Furthermore, while there are significant labour shortages in rural and northern regions, particularly due to the aging workforce, WIL is concentrated in urban centres. This is reflected not only in the proportion of WIL placements, but also in the policies, practices,

and funding for WIL. This begs the question, why are non-profits and northern economies neglected from the design of WIL? Whose interests does WIL serve?

Paul, the Executive Director of #blue, a professional association that advocates for small businesses in the North, suggests that while big business benefits from WIL, small businesses do not to the same extent. He said, "RBC or Scotia Bank or TD can afford to pay a nominal fee to the students, but a five-person shop cannot. That could be life or death." He saw a significant disparity in the capacity for large corporations to access student labour compared to local business and suggested that WIL serves particular forms of industry that are narrow in focus. Certainly, businesses with high recruitment needs and continuous staff turnover would value WIL differently than a two-person mom and pop shop.

Yet non-profit organizations employ more than 2.5 million people, making non-profits a significant employer within the Canadian labour market. Like other industries, non-profit organizations are concerned about the recruitment of the next generation of employees (HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector, 2008), so it would be reasonable to expect that non-profits would perceive WIL to be a useful mechanism to build talent pipelines. However, non-profit organizations found the notion of a talent pipeline problematic. Carla said, "if they have a pipeline directly related to [the college] and they are just getting these different kids every semester to come, probably then, they're getting free unpaid laborers is what they are doing." Carla then asked, "where [is] that line between exploitation and learning? It's a little harder to find, I think."

When employers are primed to expect a pipeline of talent it is conceivable that organizations will measure conversion to employment as a proxy for success. The Business +

Higher Education Round Table (BHER, n.d.b) has even created an interactive ROI calculator to help employers assess the return on investment for WIL and it considers three factors: 1) Skilled Talent Pipeline, 2) Production, and 3) Innovation (Figure 24).[10] While strengthening a skilled talent pipeline is portrayed as a universal good, as Carla implies, it introduces the possibility for exploitation and it can prematurely foreclose student career exploration. In these situations, when "quality students" are not converted to full-time employment, the company may consider this a loss.

Figure 23.

BHER Guide to Calculate WIL Return on Investment: Skilled Talent Pipeline

Skilled talent pipeline refers to benefits and savings associated with attracting, recruiting, onboarding, and retaining students after their WIL placement. Refer back to How to Calculate Your ROI to learn about the different types of skilled talent pipeline benefits and how to calculate their value. Although overly simplified, one way to do this is to calculate the difference between the cost to attract, recruit, onboard, and train external applicants compared to hiring a WIL student. For example, if it costs you $2,000 per external applicant vs only $1,000 per WIL student and you hire 6 out of 12 WIL students following their placement, your retention value is 6 x ($2,000 - $1,000) = $6,000.

Note. Reproduction from "Interactive ROI Calculator" (BHER, n.d.c.).

Contrary to corporate rhetoric, non-profit organizations rejected the metaphor of the talent pipeline and went above and beyond their call of duty to support fulsome career exploration, even when students choose career exits. According to the accounts of learning

[10]BHER's ROI calculator takes into account costs specific to each organization; however, it is not clear whether the formulas to administer WIL funding are also specific to each location. For example, WIL in the North is arguably more expensive than in metropolitan regions.

partners as well as post-secondary faculty and administrators, this enabled students to discover their professional interests and disinterests without coercion or cooptation, but it often meant that organizational "return on investment" was poor. In fact, very few non-profit organizations offered students part-time, seasonal, or full-time work following WIL.

This forces a return to the question, who benefits from WIL? In the case of non-profits, though students may have learned a great deal during WIL and may have even demonstrated themselves as employable, decent jobs simply did not exist. It can be argued that expanding employability skills without the provision of employment wastes effort and creates the conditions in which capital has greater control of labour. Furthermore, through WIL the idea that individuals are responsible for managing the conditions of their employment is normalized, while the role of the state to address systemic reliance on low-wage labour is minimized. Very few WIL programs appeared to address labour conditions, negotiations, or employment rights; and faculty suggested that they were ill-supported to address alternatives to current labour market conditions. Through WIL, the universality and permanence of the competitive state was reinforced. This benefits large corporations in a neoliberal economy.

This inability of non-profits to produce recruitment results invites WIL stakeholders to re-articulate the relationship between the systems of academia and the labour market. Mak, the WIL facilitator for the college, suggests that the relationship is becoming more complicated. She see this from the vantage point of students who might not be able to secure placements locally; through technology, like the Riipen platform, they have new opportunities. She said, "you now have businesses in Boston that need help. And we've got students uniquely suited at our college in the North who could help that organization." Mak also said that "local

organizations are now also outsourcing work to non-local people. And so you end up with this . . . hopefully it all works out for good. In the end, I have no idea." On the one hand, these scenarios obscure the relationship between post-secondary institutions and the labour market, and this can have consequence in terms of labour protections. On the other hand, this can lead to a form of virtual brain drain. Julie believes that one of the most important aspects of WIL is that it strengthens the local labor market. According to her, the goal of WIL is "to enrich the North, and the smaller community organizations, businesses, non-profits. We built a university here for a reason, we want students to be here, to stay here. And if they can get their experience here at a company where they can get a job, then they'll stay here."

While the college, the university, and the municipal government in the Fort recognize that WIL can bolster the local labour market, WIL in rural and northern regions is adversely affected by the concentration of industry in urban centres, and also by neoliberal demands for efficiency. Julie shared that the labour market characteristics of the North make WIL challenging, explaining that

> big government [is] saying, "here's all this money, please go and be prosperous." And you have an organization like CEWIL funding national WIL programs, but the chances of getting that money is hard because where is that money going? Are they going to [fund] the small engineering firm down on Fourth Avenue? That's been around for 20 years. It's one building versus SNC LAVIL or some other huge firm. (Administrator Julie)

President Dustin said,

> it was just really hard to get enough placements so we gave up. It was expensive, we were beating our heads against the wall. . . . In order to [make it work], we need a lot more institutions providing multiple placements, so it's not 'we will take one,' it's like, 'we'll take five,' and then again, their commitment becomes greater. (President Dustin)

It would seem that in an effort to streamline work and reduce administrative costs, post-secondary institutions and donors like CEWIL and BHER look to organizations who are able to

absorb more students. This is unrealistic in the Fort where there are few large employers. Pat, the donor for the #blue project, judges things a little differently. She said, "part of the decision to invest in this [WIL program] was because we knew that it was going to be supporting the local businesses and the local residents in the Fort and this was a way to show our support for the employees and the retirees that live in that area."

While post-secondary institutions, urban and big businesses jump on board, there are many ethical issues and tensions surrounding WIL that are yet to be resolved. Focusing this study on an outlier made these hidden ethical dilemmas more visible. How WIL plays out in a deeply stratified labour market is poorly understood. Over the last thirty years, access to education has improved while labour market conditions have eroded. The regulatory environment and collective apparatus to protect labour within a predatory system are weakened and the power of capital is rising. In this context, WIL could be perceived as a training ground where students are taught to compete for few decent positions. Without an assessment of macroeconomic policies and the availability of jobs (Bonvin & Farvaque, 2006, p. 129), WIL is insufficient to address labour market constraints. WIL cannot overhaul the labour market and it cannot change concentration of industry. There are other forces that contribute towards decent middle-class jobs. Johnston (2011) cautions that when the university is heralded for the production of graduates who serve industry needs, questions must be asked about the role of the post-secondary education. It would appear that through WIL there is a complicity between academia and industry that remains unchallenged and unexplored.

10.4 The Important Role of Theory in Quality WIL

This final section extends the WIL literature and discusses what this study means in the context of quality WIL. There are three contributions. First is the importance of theory to quality WIL, second is the epistemic agency continuum, and third is the vetting of "add-on" curriculum.

The findings of this study suggests that there are multiple dimensions that impact how and what students learn through WIL. At present, the CEWIL taxonomy defines nine forms of WIL and though this taxonomy may be useful for faculty as they structure curriculum, it appeared the taxonomy had minimal relevance for host-organizations. This research suggested that the material aspects of WIL are more important for host-organizations, for example the number of hours; the duration of WIL; whether students can return to the same placement in later years of study; whether students are assigned or selected; whether they working individually, in pairs, or in groups; whether funding is available to pay students; and how supervisors are incentivized to provide a scaffolded and suitable learning environment. Finally, how host-organizations understood their role with regards to the gap between theory and practice was critical.

Currently, CEWIL's quality framework does not directly address curriculum, and while it does reference the relationship between theory and practice stating that WIL enables "students to connect theory to practice" (McRae et al., 2018, p. 8), it leaves too much room for individual interpretation. If not addressed, the unspecified role of theory and its relationship to disciplinary knowledge can be an impediment to learning which reinforces existing social patterns of inequality.

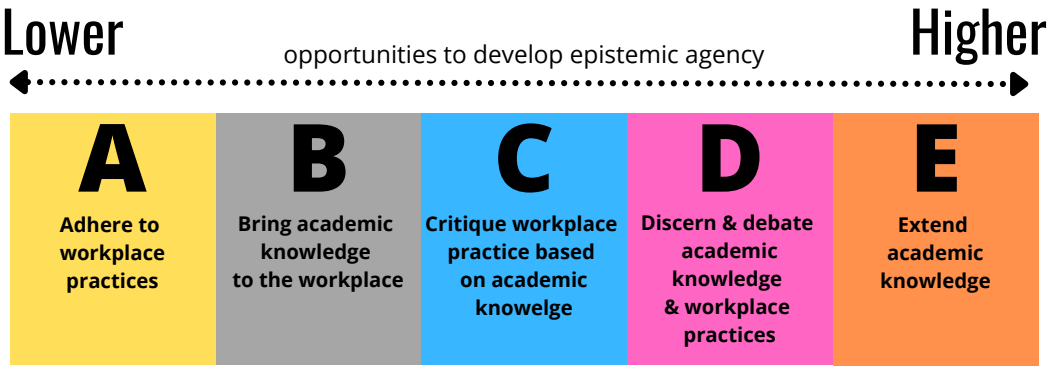
This study suggests that powerful learning is not just about “the work,” but also about being exposed to theoretical thinking in the workplace where the gaps between theory and practice serve as a pedagogical input. WIL creates an environment in which students are exposed to ill-structured problems and provides an opportunity for students to use dialectic processes to respond together with faculty, learning partners, and peers. The WIL environment is complex and embedded in social-cultural contexts (McRae, 2015, p. 138) and for that reason, the selection of host-organizations is critical. As has previously been stated by WIL scholars, host organizations should be assessed based on their ability to provide meaningful work, to offer a nurturing and supportive environment (Bonvin, 2009), and, as this research suggests, they should also be selected according to their theoretical capacities. Theory is critical for the development of epistemic agency and quality WIL needs to be designed in relationship to the theoretical context of the host organization. It is recommended that the P.E.A.R. quality framework be updated to include theory: pedagogy, experience, theory, assessment and reflection (P.E.T.A.R.).

Additionally, this research demonstrates that not all WIL experiences are created equally and some are more likely to produce a specific kind of agency: epistemic agency. Epistemic agency is gained through access to informational materials and the ability to interpret their meaning in a shared social world. With epistemic agency people have a more sophisticated ability to understand and deliberate a range of knowledge perspectives and make informed judgements. The epistemic agency continuum is offered as a tool for faculty to design WIL experiences that intentionally incorporate the “theory-practice” gap. As shown in Figure 25, at one side of the epistemic agency continuum there is a focus on task performance and this

is at the expense of disciplinary or theoretical engagement. In WIL contexts where students are expected to adhere to workplace practices, students should be exposed to multiple sites of learning so that they can question practice, criticize what they see, and develop their own theories and ideas (Wheelahan, 2007), otherwise they are less likely to develop epistemic agency. As learning designs move to the right of the continuum, a more systematic approach is used to integrate disciplinary knowledge within workplace practices. This supports educational and occupational progression as it gives students the tools they need to contribute to developing knowledge in their field. At the far-right end of the continuum, students are provided an environment to evaluate knowledge claims, to engage in current debates within their work environments, to transfer their learning into other contexts, and/or to transform the conditions of their work (Wheelahan, 2016). This kind of learning environment is more likely to support the development of epistemic agency. In this study, #pink saw themselves as developing epistemic agency and they hoped students would leave their WIL experience with greater capacity and confidence to engage as professionals in workplace debates.

Figure 24.

Developing Epistemic Agency along a Continuum



Using the epistemic agency continuum as a framing device, faculty are invited to consider the social arrangements in the design of learning experiences. Educators should ask, how will asymmetrical power arrangement between students and host organizations be mediated? For example, if students are expected to critique workplace practice, faculty are advised to assign students to work in groups in order to minimize the impact of defensiveness or negative recourse. If students are expected to discern and debate disciplinary knowledge and workplace practices, how will learning partners be equipped to engage students in equitable relationships, rather than as an authority, which may be unfamiliar (Bandura, 1993; Bandura, 2001; Bandura et al., 2001; Barber & King, 2014; Pizzolato, 2005; Pizzolato, 2007).

A final discussion point is that when selecting learning partners and host-organizations, faculty and administrators have a responsibility to ensure that both the explicit and implicit curricula are aligned with program directions. Often the terms that are used to describe employers—whether that be host, supervisor or mentor—neutralizes their role as an educator. This research suggests that employers play an important role as educator, whether consciously

or unconsciously, and, in many cases, learning partners chose to participate in WIL because they had specific learning objectives for students. For example, #pink educated students about feminism and #indigo educated students about reconciliation. These were not part of the formal curriculum but were "add-ons." These examples make visible the role that all learning partners play in educating students and suggests that post-secondary institutions, as the steward of education and credentials, need to vet host-organizations so that learning is aligned to course descriptions. In the case of most non-profits, the "add-on" curriculum was based on values of citizenship and equality, but this cannot be expected of all organizations. What are the "add-on" curriculum that students are exposed to through WIL at RBC, Manulife Insurance, Shell, or Aecon?

10.5 Summary of Chapter Ten

This chapter began with an analysis of findings in relation to the non-profit workforce. While WIL can contribute to student development and a more diverse workforce, the institutional and labour market contexts in which they operate make it less viable for non-profits to participate in WIL. Furthermore, the fragmentation of knowledge and the resulting inconsistency of WIL experiences may contribute to elitism, while the normalization of porous work boundaries and the lack of established social actors within the non-profit sector leave students vulnerable to precarity. In effect, WIL may compromise broader goals for a just and equitable Canada. The chapter also discussed how an outlier—non-profits in northern Canada—revealed boundaries and mediating factors that influence WIL outcomes. There remain a number of factors that are often invisible within the framing and discourse of WIL and it is argued that these invisible factors disproportionately benefit large corporations in a neoliberal

context. The regulatory environment, collective apparatus to protect labour, the concentration of industry, and the efficient contracting regime impact both WIL and the ability for students to access middle-class jobs. Finally, this chapter discussed findings within the context of quality WIL. The epistemic agency continuum was offered as a tool to highlight the important role of theory within WIL and to provide a framing devise to design WIL with reference to social-cultural contexts. It is also recommended that host-organizations be vetted for their theoretical context as well as the "add-on" curriculum that they offer.

CHAPTER 11. CONCLUSION

11.1 Introduction

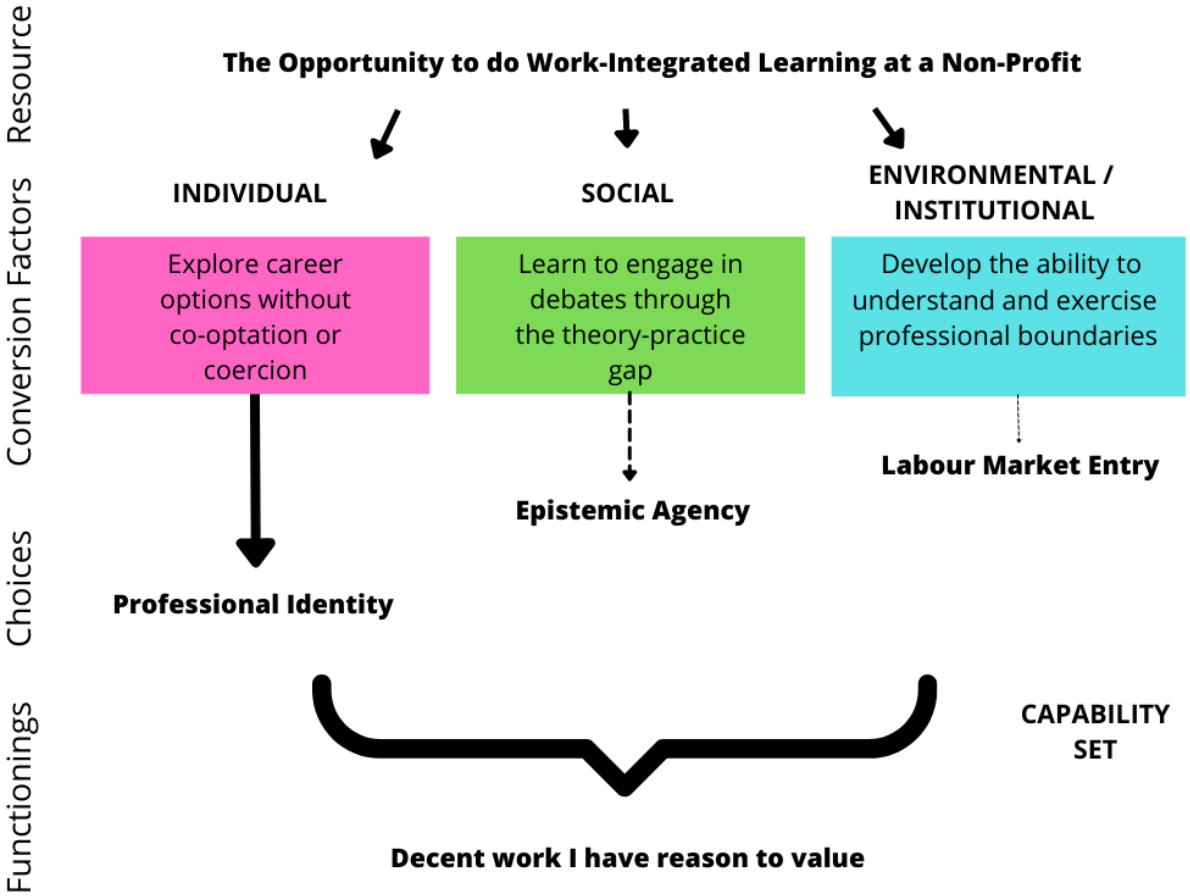
Work-integrated learning (WIL) is believed to be an effective tool to support young Canadians "get the skills and experiences they need to start a well-paying career after they graduate" (Trudeau, 2017). Using the Human Development and Capabilities approach (HDCA), this research examined WIL as a tool within the non-profit labour strategy and asked what is required so that non-profit organizations are able to provide meaningful and quality WIL experiences. This research also expanded the theoretical discourse that underpins WIL by providing an alternative to the human capital theory (HCT), which most often frames WIL. Using a case study methodology, this research explored the experiences of eight non-profit organizations and two post-secondary institutions in northern Canada, which participated in WIL. This chapter provides concluding remarks beginning in section 11.2, which offers answers the original three research questions. Section 11.3 discusses implications for policy and practice and section 11.4 suggests areas for future research. Section 11.5 summarizes Chapter 11 and concludes this dissertation.

11.2 Responding to Research Questions

This research project was framed around three research questions. The first question asked how non-profit organizations are positioned to support students develop personal agency through WIL. This research demonstrated that when considering individual conversion factors, non-profit organizations are well-positioned to support students develop personal agency; however, when considering social and institutional conversion factors, non-profit organizations are poorly positioned to support personal agency (this is shown in Figure 26 and Appendix 9).

The fragmentation of the non-profit sector, and the lack of regulation to protect non-profit professionals threatened the ability of non-profit employees to secure their own agency and diminished the likelihood that they could support students to do the same. That said, organizations which were better equipped at two levels of conversion factors (for example, #pink who excelled at the level of individual and social conversion factors), tended to be better equipped at all three levels. Additionally, larger, well-connected organizations seemed to have more robust theoretical foundations and this expanded the ways that they designed learning experiences to support the development of agency.

Figure 25. WIL Capability Set Applied to Non-Profit Organizations



The second research question asked how stakeholders reflected on the strengths and limitations of WIL within a non-profit context. Non-profit organizations saw many strengths to WIL. First, and foremost, several non-profit organizations said that WIL strengthens the future workforce giving students the lens and tools to respond as professionals in a manner that aligns to the non-profit's world view. For example, #indigo hopes that doctors are better equipped to support Indigenous people, #red hopes that nurses can understand the verbalization of disabled adults, and #pink hopes that professionals of all varieties will take on a feminist, person-centre approach in their work.

However, most non-profits indicated that they are under-resourced and that the demands for their services outweigh their capacity to deliver. They were able to extend their services through WIL, which they saw as a strength. As explained by Frankie, WIL "is a benefit to us because we have children, youth and adults sitting on our counseling waitlist. And if you come as a student and I can give you 20 of those people who are lower risk." While many saw WIL as an opportunity to extend their services, I would argue that this is double-edged and the reliance on unpaid student labour could further weaken the non-profit sector and compromise student learning.

Almost every learning partner appreciated that students stimulated their thinking. Rachel said she gets bored and she likes it when students come in the summer because they enlighten, educate and re-inspire her and her team. She explains, WIL "keeps us current, it keeps us relevant, and keeps us engaged." Emma said that WIL "brings in fresh perspectives. It brings in current information" and it makes her "enthusiastic again." She said that "if we operate in a vacuum of no more students, no more learners we're really cutting off an essential

source of innovation, information, freshness and professional development." As a manager, Frankie thinks "having a student is a really great excuse to review and cover really basic things that counseling teams need to talk about, like conflicts of interest." She said that she introduces topics at clinical meetings "on behalf of the student, but really [it's] on behalf of everybody because we all need to review." She concluded it "keeps your team fresh and on your toes thinking together." Eden also thinks WIL is important for her whole team. She said, "when students ask questions, that's how staff continue to learn because it refreshes you, it allows you to exhibit your expertise, [and it] reminds you why you're in the field."

Another strength of WIL is that it enabled non-profit organizations access to the college and university more broadly. Non-profits appreciated partnerships with the college and university and said they benefited from research, events, and special projects, as well as "novel forms of engagement," like library access, enrolling clients into academic programs, providing bursaries or scholarships to students, and having faculty members on the board or hiring students. A few non-profits said that WIL helped them improve their recruitment practices for staff, board members, and volunteers. Pam said that WIL helps employers gain a better understanding of the younger workforce. She said, some employers "can't always relate to people that are younger than them so [WIL] has been really good . . . [employers say] 'Oh, now I understand what this student is saying.'"

Several organizations said that partnering with post-secondary institutions gave them credibility in community and it helped them get their name out there to students. Eden said that WIL "validates us and allows us to perpetuate our unique approach. Not a whole bunch of organizations identify themselves as a feminist organization. " Emma said that WIL "maintains

our connections within the community" and Eden said that WIL "would help with raising our professionalism." WIL can be the starting place for research, and the basis of codified knowledge for the sector. Finally, several people said that the strength of WIL is that it contributes to better society. Alexis summed it up well saying that WIL "can really make a difference in that it gets faculty and students and by extension administrators valuing problem solving, the genuine contributions to bettering society."

While many non-profits recognized the strength of WIL, they also identified limitations. Non-profit organizations indicated that students were underprepared for their context and this posed risks for vulnerable clients, students, and the organizations. Several organizations, for example #indigo, suggested that students should complete required cultural training before starting a placement, and certainly this would be consistent with other industries who require safety training before entering job sites. Yet funding, time, and resources to provide students basic cultural safety training were unavailable at the post-secondary institution and at host-organizations.

Several non-profit organizations indicated that they did not know how to access the post-secondary institutions. Both the college and the university have offices to support WIL; however, the co-op coordinator at the university recently resigned from her role and she was the third person in that role in two years. Professor Alexis said, "I can't tell you how many times [someone said] I know you're not the person who can do this, but who would I talk to?" Non-profit organizations said that they have experienced false starts and poor follow-through when trying to partner with the college and the university. In a separate study, almost half of surveyed non-profits in the region said that they would reach out to the academic department

if they had a research opportunity; however, academic departments did not indicate that they are equipped with tools, mechanisms, and incentives to support partnerships with non-profit organizations (Merrick, 2021). Professor Alexis shared frankly, "you have faculty who have never really talked to an ordinary person in a community before," and, arguably, faculty need support if they are to be the broker of relationships with industry. Donna explained, "you need that dedicated personnel to continue on with not just the practical link, but also the academic link as well." Trusted professionals who can span academic and labour market boundaries, and who are able to sustain relationships are valuable, but many non-profits indicated that this was a limitation.

Some non-profits have been successful to obtain government funding to support WIL. #grey received funding from ECO Canada, Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC), and Katimavik; and #blue was able to pay for internships through Canada Summer Jobs and they won a six-year grant from a major corporation for their carbon project. However, almost every non-profit indicated a need for sustained financial resources to supervise students and to pay students for the work they perform. Neither college nor university has an office to support non-profits apply for grant funding and often non-profits were ineligible for WIL funding because they do not have match funding or because they do not have full-time staff on their payroll, which is often a condition for WIL supervision. Almost every non-profit said that funding was an important consideration when they decide whether to take on WIL and they needed to calculate the cost of supervision, for administration, and to pay students. Larger organizations tended to be better able to sustain WIL year after year, but smaller organizations struggled and accepting WIL placements was done on a case-by-case basis.

The third question asked how non-profit organizations can be equipped to support personal agency through WIL? There are a number of ways that non-profit organizations could be better equipped to support WIL. WIL frameworks at the national level need to be redesigned with consideration to the particular context of non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations would benefit from greater intentionality and transparency from post-secondary institutions about their involvement in WIL. Funding and resources need to be allocated to make participation in WIL more possible for a greater number and diversity of non-profit organizations, including small ones and remote and rural organizations. Non-profit learning partners need to be equipped with co-educator resources to better support student learning; similarly, students need to be better equipped to enter into non-profits. Students need to be aware of anti-oppressive practices, reconciliation and workplace culture.

11.3 Implications for Policy and Practices

This study reveals four broad implications for policy and practices. First, the human capital theory (HCT) should be replaced with Human Development and Capabilities Approach (HDCA) as a theoretical foundation to inform policies and institutional design for WIL in Canada. This would necessitate that the informational-basis to make resource decisions about WIL be expanded beyond overly simplistic economic indicators and include questions of justice and human flourishing. Second, post-secondary institutions should be supported to develop institutional frameworks and co-educator resources to support the delivery of WIL, which recognizes the PSI's role as "intervener." Third, WIL needs to be redesigned specifically with non-profit organizations in mind. Finally, the HDCA needs to further problematize the messy

inter-relationship between the three levels of conversion factors, particularly within a neoliberal context where the individual is implicated at both social and institutional levels.

11.3.1 Reframe WIL using HDCA

This study suggests that HCT is insufficient as a framework for WIL in Canada and proposes that the HDCA be considered as an alternative. Doing so would shift a number of decisions related to WIL. For example, much of the WIL literature imagines students as homo economicus, where students are described as indiscriminately interchangeable talent in pursuit of generic employability skills. Organizations are enticed to participate in WIL so that they can build talent-pipelines where the complexity and uniqueness of individual students are subordinate to a standardized list of literacies, competencies and characteristics required to thrive in in the twenty-first century (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021). Using the HDCA, the student at the centre of WIL would be re-imagined as a complex and whole individual whose life experiences are shaped by power, race, gender, ability and various forms of privilege. This would expand the framing of WIL policies and institutional arrangements to explore how WIL enables diverse students' real freedoms and it would explore the extent to which rights and resources are distributed so that all students can act upon their freedoms.

With an HDCA, the terms of assessment and evaluation of WIL would also shift. Over the last decades, post-secondary institutions have increasingly accepted employability metrics as a measure of performance. They have re-envisioned their role in society and have made claims that they can efficiently and effectively provide skills for the labour market. This often positions post-secondary institutions as politically neutral and does not recognize that they are performing as interveners between students and the labour market. To this end, many

campuses have revised their strategic and operational mandates to strengthen partnerships with industry, rendering higher education "supplicants that supply industry what it needs" where customers can "'purchase' the specific skills that they want" (Wheelahan, 2016, p. 190). This has impacted post-secondary institutions at multiple levels, influencing hiring decisions, curricula, transcripts, and how students spend their time on campus.

With the focus on employability outcomes, WIL has risen in importance for many post-secondary institutions. Though WIL existed in Canada prior to the 2017 budget commitment, disciplines like social work which have used WIL as a core pedagogical approach for over a hundred years have not been able to leverage federal funding like has been done by the corporate sector in the last five years. Similar to human capital theory, WIL became increasingly relevant when consistent and numerical precise statistics could be used to tell its story. Metrics like starting salaries, "conversions to employment" and labour market outcomes have guided institutional and government decisions about WIL. Though these measures are simple and clean, they only tell part of the story.

As has been shown through this research, WIL offers benefits beyond labour market entry. It allows for personal growth and the formation of professional identity and it can expand epistemic agency. While it can produce industry benefits, it can also contribute to the sustained quality of life Canadians currently enjoy, many of which cannot be calculated in financial terms. For that reason, more fulsome information should be used to determine WIL funding and resource arrangements made by government and post-secondary institutions. As Paul said, the government "needs to strongly consider what that funding approval process looks like, the value of what they're willing to invest in it. A billion dollars may sound like a lot,

but it's not going to go very far, particularly once it once it lands in a city like Toronto, or Vancouver." Instead, Paul suggested that the government "start looking at smaller post-secondary institutions that have a more connected route to the communities they're in." National actors like CEWIL and BHER also need to consider a broader basis of information. Julie pleaded, "if CEWIL wants to support everybody, they need to look at everybody which includes us little guys that have like, one or two-man shops, and we don't fit the mold. We don't want to and we physically can't, yet we want to be part of this thing."

With an expansion of the informational-basis for decision making more attention should be paid to ensure that those most affected by decisions are included in the design and implementation of WIL programs, including students and non-profit organizations (Bonvin & Orton, 2009). If an HDCA was used, policy makers would broaden the kinds of information collected to justify and fund WIL and there would be increased investment to strengthen the forms of public deliberation regarding WIL (Robeyns, 2005), for example through Program Advisory Committees. Some questions would include: who defines the agenda for deliberation? Where does deliberation take place and who participates in debates? Is participation an opportunity or a duty? Do participants have political resources to either speak individually or collectively? What is the protection, legal or otherwise, available when divergent viewpoints are presented or when the weakest members speak against power? Furthermore, efforts would be taken to make more explicit the other underlying theoretical positions that are used in decision-making—whether they be capitalism, human resource management, feminism, and ableism, among others. As is apparent, the use of an HDCA is in

sharp contrast to HCT, which uses as its basis for deliberation numerically precise and "authoritative" sets of measures for example, salary ranges of fresh graduates.

Finally, a shift to HDCA puts greater emphasis on the two-way, reciprocal dimension of the labour market and it draws attention to the working conditions that students are entering. Rather than seeing WIL as a one-directional, deficit-reducing mechanism ("students don't have the experiences they need to get good jobs and WIL provides experience"), within an HDCA approach, WIL becomes an opportunity for mutual negotiation and learning. Furthermore, within an HDCA approach, policy makers have more information to assess the labour conditions which students are entering—and this expands the levers that are needed for change. For example, political will, funding and resources could be allocated towards strengthening social actors, to invest in theory building in the non-profit sector or to fund program advisory committees at the college level, rather than just funding market-driven technology platforms that match students to placements.

11.3.2 Invest in Institutional Frameworks and Co-Educator Resources

The federal government's $1 billion dollar commitment towards WIL has largely been administered through the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, as well as the Employment and Social Development Canada, yet responsibility for post-secondary education lies with the provincial jurisdiction. Practically speaking, through the current funding arrangements, WIL has been framed as an industry policy issue, subjugating education to industry.

While WIL can and does contribute towards industry, labour market outcomes and industry growth are not the exclusive purpose of WIL. Recognizing this, it would be important

that each post-secondary institution have an institutional framework that reflects locally deliberated decisions about their preferred relationship between education and the specific labour markets to which they are attached. An institutional framework should also incorporate intentional approaches to ensure a diversity of organizations that reflect student interests, including non-profit organizations (Appendix 12 provides a number of questions that can be used to develop an institutional approach to WIL).

In addition to an institutional framework, post-secondary institutions would benefit from a suite of resources to support learning partners as co-educators. Most non-profit organizations in this study indicated that they had received few resources to support them as educators and felt resources could be useful. Co-educator resources can be structured according to conversion factors as shown below:

Table 9.

Proposed Topics for Co-educator Resources

Professional Identity	Epistemic Agency	Labour Market Entry
Adult Learning Strategies Principles to Scaffold Learning Supporting Career Decision-Making	Theoretical Orientation Critical Reflection	Professional Boundaries Labour Laws Labour Market Entry

Adult learning strategies should be available to learning partners and include resources to support the sequencing, scaffolding, and assessment of learning. Similarly, learning partners should be provided with tools to engage in critical reflection. This could be as simple as a list of questions to explore together with students. When designing WIL opportunities, it is important that host organizations understand the intended learning outcomes and feel confident that the time, structure, and resources allocated are sufficient. Learning partners need to have access

to the theories students are learning in class, as this will increase the likeliness of epistemic agency, and faculty should be clear about how students will address the gap between theory and practice. For example, will students apply the theories they have learned in class within the workplace? If so, how will quality be assured? These resources, together with an institutional framework will strengthen WIL as an approach to learning.

11.3.3 Design WIL with Non-Profits in Mind

While an institutional framework and resources to support learning partners as co-educators will benefit all host-organizations who participate in WIL, this study reveals fundamental constraints and unmet opportunities for non-profits particularly. Arguably, retrofitting historical models of WIL for the non-profit context is insufficient and non-profits would be better equipped if WIL was designed to address the specific context of non-profits in Canada today. This includes funding considerations, partnering mechanisms, approaches to pedagogy, research, and advocacy.

Most obviously, non-profit organizations do not have discretionary funds or a surplus of time to support WIL. Resources need to be allocated to make it more possible for non-profits to participate in WIL. President George suggested there could be some form of financial support for non-profits saying, "if the course is $1,000 for a student to take, then we need to ensure that as part of that goes to supporting the not-for-profit for taking the student on." While passing an additional cost along to students could be one way to support non-profits, I would suggest that government funding be disproportionally allocated towards WIL in non-profits or that a levy be applied to for-profit organizations, which could then be re-allocated to support the inclusion of non-profits.

In the absence of professional associations, regulatory bodies or other social actors who support the non-profit sector, resources need to be allocated to support boundary-spanners (Lanford & Maruco, 2018)—individuals and organizations who can broker and coordinate between the academic and non-profit worlds. Professor Alexis said, "we proposed a position who would essentially be the community coordinator, somebody who could be the broker for community groups, or government. They [might] have an idea but they don't know who at the university might be able to help them with it or which course might be useful for it." She explained that it would also "allow people at the university who had a course and were looking for a project to connect. That one didn't get funded by the university, unfortunately." Funding could also be directed to umbrella organizations who strengthen the sector's capacity and collective voice. The diversity of organizations who participate in WIL influences which students participate and how WIL partnerships are operationalized has an impact on our communities and society. This research indicates that institutional practices need to more intentionally shift to include non-profits, as a distinct segment within the labour market.

Pedagogically, this study revealed that across non-profits there is an inconsistent use of theory and that while some organizations are theoretically sophisticated, many are not and this impacts how students learn. With this in mind, faculty need to be resourced to contextualize learning appropriate for non-profit WIL experiences. Furthermore, in light of the fragmented use of theory available to non-profits, WIL offers a unique win-win opportunity that could benefit non-profits, students, and post-secondary institutions. Increased funding should be made available to support research that benefits non-profit organizations, and the funding directives of post-secondary and Tri-Council research should prioritize non-profit organizations.

Additionally, faculty should be encouraged and not penalized from using their scholarship to advocate for the needs and issues of non-profits. With this in mind, it would be wise to consider the role and protection of WIL students who chose to advocate on behalf of the non-profit organizations where they are paired.

Finally, it is recognized that non-profits are defined by vague professional boundaries. As Brent said, "we always joke that sometimes *our job description is written in pencil*" and only few organizations were unionized. The institutional environment normalized the ever-expanding encroachment of work into their everyday lives and frequently learning partners spoke about the challenges to set professional boundaries. They hoped that students would not follow their personal examples, but they had few resources to provide alternative coping mechanisms. With this in mind, resources need to be designed and available to both student and host organization to support students' understanding of labour laws and negotiate the boundaries of their work. Practically speaking, basic "non-profit safety training" (cultural safety, reconciliation, trauma-informed, positionality, etc.) before students begin WIL could be a good start to addressing these needs.

Finally, WIL rarely produced opportunities for students to enter the workforce. Many organizations said they were small, had limited budgets and vacancies rarely coincided with student placements. In the rare occasion when non-profits were able to offer full-time work, non-profits said that they had a hard time competing with profit organizations or better paying positions in other regions. With this in mind, the value proposition for WIL needs to be nuanced. The suggestion that WIL can create an opportunity to build a talent pipeline is

unrealistic for the non-profit sector (as well as in Northern regions). A diagram which shows WIL as it is currently designed for non-profits is shown in Appendix 9.

11.3.4 Emphasize the inter-relatedness within and across conversion factor

This study demonstrated a "complex interplay" between conversion factors at individual, social, and environmental/institutional levels (Zielgler et. al, 2015, p. 11). At the level of individual conversion factors, non-profit organizations indicated that time constraints and the demands of their work interfered with their ability to build trusting relationships that supported deep student learning, and at the level of social conversion factors, constraints within the post-secondary environment meant that students and co-educators were under-prepared for WIL. At the individual level, non-profit organizations offered students space for career exploration without cooptation and coercion, and, at the institutional level, non-profit organizations rarely had job vacancies with which students could secure good, well-paying jobs. At the level of social conversion factors, non-profit organizations were operating in a fragmented theoretical environment and this constrained students' access to the theoretical underpinnings that explain and legitimize practice—consequently restricting the portability of their experiences and the ability to transform their work. At the institutional level, social actors, such as industry associations or unions that would typically be instrumental to create and disseminate theories that transcended particular organizational contexts, were absent. At every level threads from one conversion factor entangled with others.

Though conversion factors are a "compulsory" component of the HDCA (Robeyns, 2017, p. 38), there are debates within the capabilities approach on the nature of conversion factors. The focus of the HDCA is the individual, who is seen as inherently worthy—and in this, the

capabilities approach is committed to ethical individualism, yet the capabilities approach does not "view individuals and their opportunities in isolated terms" (Dreze & Sen, 2002, p. 6). Social, environmental, and institutional factors influence the conversion of resources into capabilities and functionings. This research made clear that the ability for individuals to convert their education (a resource) into good, middle-class work (functionings) depended not on personal choices or current sacrifices that would maximize future earnings. Rather, in order for individuals to convert their education into work, social and institutional arrangements were required. These arrangements were beyond the sum of individual actors and their actions and were based in collective actions and organizing.

This observation highlights an important implication of this research—that evaluations of WIL must explicitly and intentionally consider social and institutional conversion factors. This contrasts much of the WIL literature which positions WIL as ontologically individualistic—meaning that WIL is often understood with reference to "the sum of individuals and their properties" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 108). In this study, ontological individualism was seen in the ways in which professional boundaries were negotiated (i.e. individual relationship-based coping strategies rather than with reference to labour laws or a collective agreement), and also in how learning designs were structured (again, often individualized in the pairing of one student with one learning partner).

This research also problematizes the relationship between and across conversion factors and demonstrates that these relationships are messy and highly related. Within our current neoliberal context, the role of individualism is expressed within social and institutional dimensions and therefore it may be more useful to do away with the discreet distinctions of

individual, social, and institutional conversion factors and, instead, acknowledge their overlap. Doing this may also strengthen emphasis on conversion factors as a powerful force to mediate outcomes, rather than individual merits or deficits. In the case of this study, the concept of conversion factors makes clear that resources are insufficient in themselves: for individual students, education and experience is not enough to land a good, middle-class job.

11.4 Future Research Directions

This study was the first of its kind to research WIL in the non-profit sector using the HDCA and opens up new possibilities for future research. First, the boundary of this case study was a non-metropolitan city within Northern Canada. Future research to understand the individual, social, and institutional/environmental conversion factors impacting non-profits that participate in WIL in an urban context would be useful and could demonstrate the consistency or convergence in the non-profit sector across Canada. If funding and timing were available, a multi-site study of non-profits in both urban and rural areas, and across multiple provinces, would provide a more robust investigation and would strengthen research recommendations. Though this research included the experience of one Indigenous non-profit organization, this in no way captures the depth or breadth of Indigenous organizations who participate in WIL. Additional research to understand the experiences of Indigenous non-profit organizations as they participate in WIL would be important.

This study also exposed questions about how students might experience WIL differently whether they were Indigenous, international students, or based on gender, ability, or religion; however, because of COVID-19 and funding constraints, this study did not include any direct observation, nor were the experiences of students considered. Sen and Nussbaum (1993)

suggest that when using the HDCA, well-being is assessed by the "constituent elements of the person's being seen from the perspective of her own personal welfare" thus recognizing that "some dimensions of well-being may be more important for some groups but less so for others" (p. 6). Future research using an HDCA to explore student perceptions of the constraints and opportunities presented as a result of their participation in WIL at non-profits would be an asset. It would be valuable to contrast student experiences in Northern as opposed to urban contexts and to consider race, gender, ability, and religion, among other identity politics.

Finally, it would be beneficial to reproduce this research approach focusing on large corporations, small businesses, and government agencies. This would provide a more clear picture of the reciprocal benefits for participation in WIL and would illuminate the often invisible factors that contribute towards labour market outcomes.

11.5 Conclusion

This research demonstrated that at the level of individual conversion factors, work-integrated learning in non-profit organization can contribute to the expansion of personal agency. Work-integrated learning can offer students a powerful experience to support the formation of professional identity and expand life choices, including career exits. Unlike many work-integrated learning programs that focus on "matching job entrant's skills with future labour market demands," non-profit organizations allowed students to see the "wider ranges of possibilities for the lives they want to lead" (Wood & Deprez, 2012). However, when external conversion factors at the social and institutional level are considered, work-integrated learning is insufficient to expand personal agency. The fragmentation of the non-profit sector, and the lack of regulation to protect professional boundaries threatens personal agency. Furthermore,

the constraints that post-secondary institutions face in an era new public management compromise the ability of faculty to design curricula and guarantee learning environments that are appropriate for diverse non-profit contexts. Neoliberalism is an underlying and unnamed factor that threatens to redeploy work-integrated learning as tool for the perpetuation of precarity.

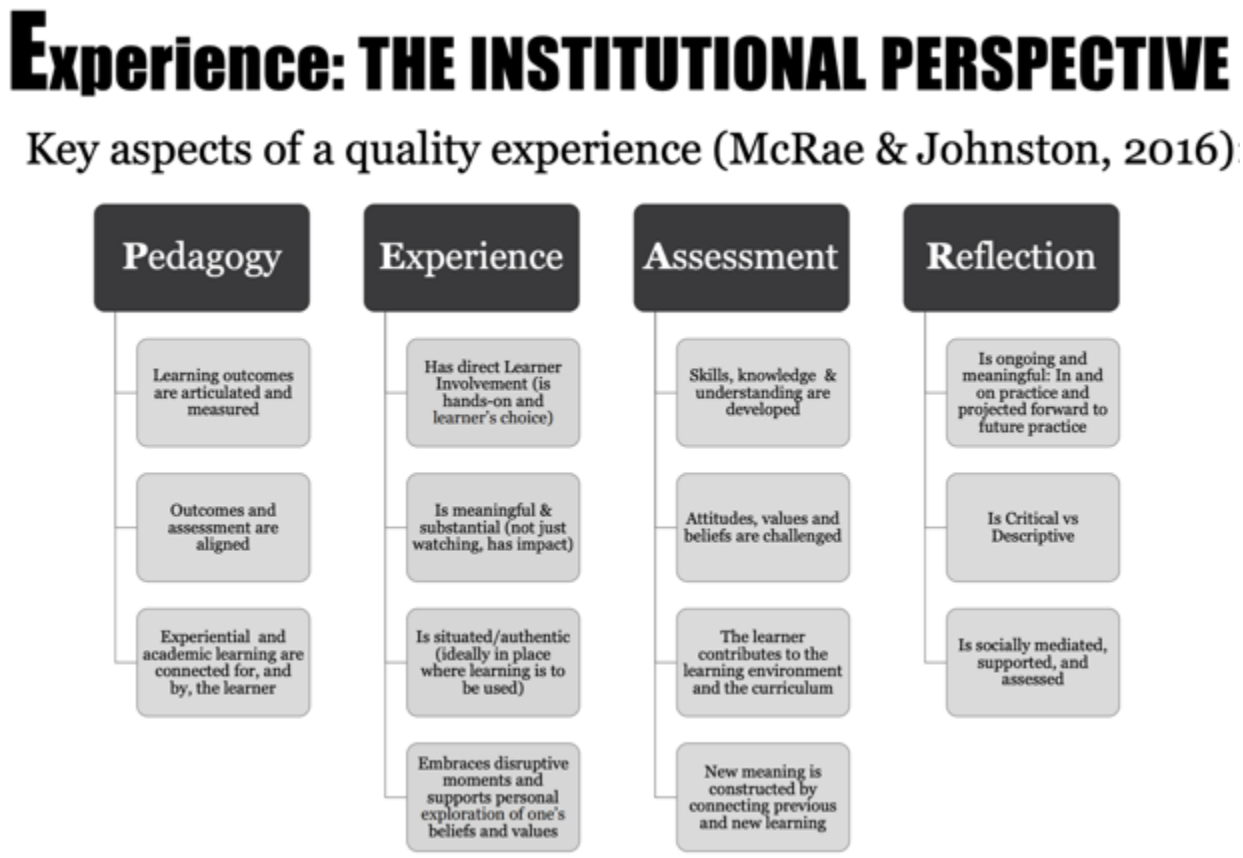
The use of an outlier case study approach to conduct this research shed new light on inconsistencies in the WIL literature (Lieberson, 1992). WIL is dominated by industries related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, it is often city-centric and monopolized by major corporations. Much like human capital theory, WIL is strong rhetorically and academic institutions who are able to do WIL well have simple and numerically precise data that convey a powerful, yet unnuanced story about the benefits of WIL. The rhetoric suggests that access to skills and experience can solve the labour market conundrum, that WIL can offer skills and experience, which will increase productivity and lead to economic benefit. However, through an investigation of WIL within an outlier context, it is apparent that this story is not universal and does not hold true of WIL in the non-profit sector. The dominant rhetoric of WIL masks the invisible factors that contribute towards labour market outcomes and middle-class jobs, for example, the role of regulations, professional associations and sector stability. For this reason, the theoretical frameworks and indicators to justify and fund WIL should be re-examined through the lens of specific labour markets.

In the last two decades Provincial governments have off-loaded responsibilities to non-profit organizations who were already experiencing increased demands as a result of growing income inequalities and changes to Canadian demographics and culture (Emmet, 2016). Today,

the non-profit sector is poorly positioned politically, they have insufficient and temporary funding and this is being managed alongside hyper-vigilant accountability measures and public scrutiny (Emmet, 2016). Few non-profit organizations have sufficient resources to get today's job done, let alone excess resources to think about their wider context or the future. It is within this framing that I conclude that non-profit organizations are poorly positioned to support personal agency through WIL. While non-profit staff go above and beyond the call of duty to support individual students, the pernicious presence of neoliberalism has contributed towards a lack of regulation, indecent and temporary work; and this threatens the ability of non-profits to maintain professional boundaries and create sustainable career pathways. Without changes to the institutional context of the non-profit sector, precarity will be normalized through WIL, limiting agency options for diverse students.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. P.E.A.R. Framework



https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/sites/ca.centre-for-teaching-excellence/files/uploads/files/waterloo_exl_norah_mcrae_final.pdf

Appendix 2. Non-Profit Interview Guide

1. Please describe your role in work-integrated learning.
2. Do you think that WIL matters? Why or why not? In an ideal world, what would WIL look like? How does that compare to the current reality? What would need to happen to make WIL better resemble your ideal?
3. What is your organization's role in WIL? Why does your organization participate in WIL? (What's in it for you? What do you require to say "YES"?)
4. If you have a volunteer program, how is WIL different from your volunteer program, if at all? (what's onboarding like?)
5. What do you want students to learn while they are here? Why is that important to your organization?
6. How does your organization design the environment so that students learn? How do you reflect on your organizations ability to deliver a meaningful learning experience? (How do you prepare and incentivize your staff member to be a supervisor of a student? Why does a staff want to do this?)
7. One of the unique features of learning through WIL is that students are in environments where "theory meets practice." Can you tell me about how students engage with theory and practice while they are here? Do you think this is useful? Why/ why not?
8. "Disruptive moments." Have you ever had student(s) experience tensions between what they expected and what they "experienced in real life"? What happened? How did you support the student to navigate this? Reflecting back, is there anything that could have helped you approach this to have a better outcome? (See Appendix 2: P.E.A.R. Model)
9. Can you tell me about a challenging situation you faced during the lifecycle of work-integrated learning? What happened? How was it resolved? Are there ways this can be prevented from happening again, or to make it less challenging next time? What would be needed to make that happen?
10. How does WIL impact upon your organization's ability to achieve your mission? (If you have staff who did WIL here, do you notice any difference?)
11. How does partnership with the university/college support your ability to achieve your mission? In the best case scenario, what more could happen? What prevents this from happening?
12. (Why do you think students would want to work at here? What do they gain from learning at a non-profit?)
13. (Let's go back to the first question, why does WIL matter? How is it different than a first time job?)
14. How does COVID influence your thinking about future WIL placements? Or your relationship with the university or college?
15. Is there anything else I have missed or anything you would like to share?

Appendix 3. Post-Secondary Institution Interview Guide

1. How are you involved in work-integrated learning? What is required of you to deliver WIL?
2. Do you think that WIL matters? Why or why not? In an ideal world, what would WIL look like? How does that compare to the current reality? What would need to happen to make WIL better resemble your ideal?
3. Can you tell me about your institution's approach to WIL? What factors lead to this decision? If your institution doesn't have a formalized approach, can you tell me about your approach to WIL and how you came to that approach?
4. Have you seen a student "transformed" through WIL? If so, can you tell me about that experience? Was there anything unique about the organization where the student was placed that made transformation possible or more likely?
5. How is your/your institutions approach to WIL in non-profits different than with for-profit or government agencies, if at all?
6. What do you see as the role of non-profit as they participate in WIL?
7. What are the challenges in offering work-integrated learning to students at non-profit organizations? How could this be overcome?
8. What are the benefits of participating in work-integrated learning for non-profit organizations?
9. I have heard several non-profits speak about the challenge of timing – that practicums and placements are not long enough. Why do you think that is?
10. Janice Orrell proposes that workplace learning can support students "learn to work" or "working to learn." Can you compare and contrast how you see these played out, in the context of WIL? Is there a difference in the context of non-profits?
11. How do you/your institution support (resources, tools, training, etc.) non-profits create appropriate curriculum/learning environments? What are the strengths of this approach? What are the limitations?
12. What would be required to better position non-profit organizations participating in WIL?
13. How does COVID influence your thinking about the future of WIL in non-profits?

Appendix 4. Non-Profit Organization CEO Institutional Approval Email

ACTIVE WIL NON-PROFITS

Email Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study re: Work-Integrated Learning & Non-Profits

Dear <CEO>,

I am writing to seek your permission for <Non-Profit Organization > to participate in a research study entitled: "Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning." As a way of introduction, my name is Amelia Merrick and I am the Director, Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto. I am currently on academic leave in order to complete my PhD through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is in partial fulfilment for my PhD degree. My resume is attached.

In 2019 the Canadian government made a $100 million commitment to scale up work-integrated learning (WIL). This funding will support post-secondary students to participate in internships, placements, practicums and applied research across workplaces in Canada. Currently, the majority of funding and placements are directed to government or for-profit organizations. Having served in executive leadership roles in non-profits and having supported WIL for dozens of students, I am interested in how non-profits understand their role in WIL.

My research will explore how non-profit organizations see the purpose of WIL and the extent to which those purposes are achieved, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations.

As part of my study I would like to interview staff and board members who have broad responsibility for work-integrated learning in non-metropolitan, non-profit organizations. <Organization> is appealing to me because of your organization's mission, the sustained experience you have providing students with workplace learning and your geographic location.

I have already received approval from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board and I would also comply with your institution's policy for ethical conduct of research. If you provide approval for your organization to participate, I will invite up to six staff/board members for a 90-minute online interview. Invitees are at liberty to accept or decline participation according to their choosing and their decision will be confidential. Organizations/participants can withdraw until the point of data analysis without any judgement, penalty or consequence. The information sheets I am providing to participants and interview questions are enclosed.

The risks association with participation in this study are minimal. The interviews will not ask questions of a personal or sensitive nature and I will take a number of actions to respect your institutions privacy and confidentiality. All organizations and participants will be anonymized. I will not name the location, participants or organizations/institutions in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted to help protect anonymity. I will remove names and contact information from interview data, notes and transcriptions and data will be coded.

I recognize that Covid-19 is having unimagined consequence for non-profit organizations, such as yours. My hope is that this research will be useful as we collectively find ways to provide students meaningful learning opportunities in ways that don't compromise your mission. Through this study we will have a better understanding of the experiences of non-profits, which can inform advocacy and create useful resources, tools and support. I hope that you agree to allow your institution to participate.

I will conclude by indicating that I will be delighted to share the results of my research in person with you and your team. Furthermore, I would be pleased to share periodic information about my findings, a copy of my final dissertation or other publications if it is useful.

If you have any questions or concerns about my proposed research, I would be happy to further discuss. You can reach me or my supervisor, Dr. Leesa Wheelahan at the contact numbers below. I look forward to speaking to you.

Thank you,

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca
416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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leesa.wheelahan@utoronto.ca
416. 978.1217

Invitation Email to Non-Profit Organization Staff (ACTIVE WIL Non-Profits)

Email Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study re: Work Integrated Learning & Non-Profits

Dear <Non-Profit Staff Member>,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study entitled: "Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning." In 2019 the Canadian government made a $100 million commitment to scale up work-integrated learning (WIL) in Canada. This funding will support post-secondary students to participate in learning programs like internships, placements, practicums and applied research across workplaces in Canada. Currently, the majority of funding and placements are directed to for-profit or government organizations.

In light of this, my research will investigate the experiences of non-metropolitan, non-profit organizations as they participate in work-integrated learning. Specifically, I will explore how non-profit organizations understand their role in work-integrated learning, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations. Your CEO <name> recommended I contact you.

This research is important to me as both a researcher and as a non-profit practitioner. I am currently a full-time PhD student in the Leadership, Higher and Adult Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), however this project started 20 years ago when, as a fresh graduate I participated in a one-year government-funded internship at a non-profit organizations. As a working-class kid this program changed my life and jump-started my career in the non-profit world. I worked in a number of roles to support community-based child well-being, disaster response and advocacy.

In 2015 I made a career shift and began working in student services at the University of Toronto. There I realized that many talented students bypass the opportunity to pursue a career in the non-profit world because they do not see it as an option. Last January 2020 I took academic leave from my role as Director, Career and Experiential Learning in order to pursue my PhD full-time. This research study is a "joyful expression of my professional curiosity" and is in partial fulfilment for my PhD degree.

As part of my research I am interviewing staff from non-metropolitan non-profit organizations who have broad responsibility for work-integrated learning. I am interested in the experiences of board members, human resources, finance, student's supervisors, colleagues/peers, "alumni" from the PSE and the President/CEO. I would love to hear about your experiences and perspectives – both the good and the ugly!

I know that you work very hard and you have already invested richly into the lives and learning of students. My hope is that through this research your experience (the good, the bad, the funny) will inform the resources, tools and support that are being created to support organizations participate in WIL. We need to find way to do work-integrated learning that doesn't compromise your mission.

If you agree to participate in this study, please email me at amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca or call me at 416.909.5664. We will schedule a time for an online interview, which will last up to 90 minutes. During the discussion you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that you are not comfortable answering. All participants will be anonymized, and I will take a number of actions to respect your privacy and confidentiality. I will not name the location, participants or organizations/institutions in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted to help protect anonymity. I will also remove names and contact information from all data and all participants will be given a code which I will use for data analysis.

Interviews will be recorded and participants will be provided with a transcribed copy of their interview. If you don't want your interview to be recorded, that's fine too. In this case, I'll just take notes during the interview. You will have an opportunity to edit your transcript and/or interview notes, if you wish. Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any point until I begin data analysis without any judgement, penalty or consequence. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I hope you agree to participate in this study. If you have further questions or concerns, you can email me or my supervisor Dr. Leesa Wheelahan. I am happy to discuss your involvement in this research.

Thank you,

P.S. If you are interested in receiving periodic information about my findings or a copy of my final dissertation or other publications, I would be happy to put you on my mailing list.

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca
416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education,
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Sharing the Work:
An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of WIL

Principle Investigator: Amelia Merrick
Contact: amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca / 416.909.5664

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is increasingly important in Canada. In 2019 the Canadian government made a commitment to ensure that within ten years, every post-secondary student will have an opportunity for work-integrated learning before they graduate.[i] This is an ambitious goal and will change the way post-secondary institutions, workplaces, and students work together.

Work-integrated learning comes in many forms, such as apprenticeships, cooperative education, internships and field placements. It also includes applied research projects, entrepreneurship, mandatory professional practicum, and service learning.[ii] WIL has many benefits for students. Learners can develop critical thinking, communication skills, problem solving capabilities, intercultural competence, personal awareness, networking and many practical and applied skills.[iii]

WIL can also be useful for host-organizations. Host-organizations have reported enhanced employee morale and capacity, the creation of new ideas and knowledge, and the completion of stalled work.[iv] There are also recruitment advantages – in Ontario, 82% of employers who offered WIL to students offered employment to at least one graduate.[v]

While WIL can benefit host-organizations, very few non-profit organizations participate in work-integrated learning. In fact, more than 70% of reported participating organizations are from the profit sector and less than 5% are from non-profits.[vi] There are good reasons for that. The investment of time to mentor and supervise students combined with busy workloads, limited budgets and concerns around risk make participation untenable for many non-profit organizations.[vii]

In light of this, my research will investigate the experiences of non-profit organizations as they participate in WIL. Using qualitative research methods informed by a case study approach I will explore how host-organizations understand their role, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations. My research will focus on non-profit organizations in a non-metropolitan community in northern Canada. All organizations will be anonymized.

I will be conducting qualitative research informed by case-study methodology. I intend to interview four to six people at each organization, conduct site visits and review guiding WIL documents (like job descriptions and onboarding documents). I will also interview post-secondary administrators and representatives from key Canadian institutions who have broad responsibility for WIL. I will frame my research using the Human Development and Capabilities Approach (in contrast to Human Capital Theory).

Having served in non-profit leadership roles for more than twenty-years I understand that participating in research is a big undertaking. My hope is that my research will be an asset to participating organizations and as such, I will provide consultation and an overview of my

findings to each organization, providing insights to strengthen their approach to workplace learning.

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Inactive Non-Profit Organization CEO Institutional Approval Email

Email Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study re: Work-Integrated Learning & Non-Profits

Dear <CEO>,

I am writing to seek your permission for <Non-Profit Organization > to participate in a research study entitled: "Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning." As a way of introduction, my name is Amelia Merrick and I am the Director, Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto. I am currently on academic leave in order to complete my PhD through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is in partial fulfilment for my PhD degree. My resume is attached.

In 2019 the Canadian government made a $100 million commitment to scale up work-integrated learning (WIL) in Canada. This funding will support post-secondary students to participate in learning programs like internships, placements, practicums and applied research across workplaces in Canada. Currently, the majority of funding and placements are directed to government or for-profit organizations. Having served in executive leadership roles in non-profit organizations and having supported work-integrated learning for dozens of students, I am interested in how non-profits understand their role in Canada's approach to WIL.

My research will explore how non-profit organizations see the purpose of WIL and the extent to which those purposes are achieved, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations.

As part of my study I would like to interview decision-maker(s) from non-metropolitan, non-profit organizations who do not currently offer WIL to students. <Organization> is appealing to me because of your organization's mission and your geographic location.

I have already received approval from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board and I would also comply with your institution's policy for ethical conduct of research. If you provide approval for your organization to participate, I will invite you or a delegate for a 90-minute online interview. Invitees are at liberty to accept or decline participation according to their choosing and their decision will be confidential. I have attached to this letter an information sheet and the questions I will be asking.

I recognize that Covid-19 has radically shifted our day to day lives and this is having unimagined consequence for non-profit organizations, such as yours. My hope is that this research will be useful as we collectively find ways to provide students meaningful learning opportunities in ways that don't compromise the mission of non-profit organizations.

The risks association with participation in this study are minimal. The interview will not ask questions of a personal or sensitive nature and I will take a number of actions to respect your institutions privacy and confidentiality. All organizations and participants will be anonymized. I will not name the location, participants or organizations / institutions in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted, to help protect anonymity. I will remove names and

contact information from interview data, notes and transcriptions. All participants will be given a code which I will use for analysis.

Participation in this study is voluntary and organizations / participants can withdraw until the point of data analysis without any judgement, penalty or consequence.

I will conclude by indicating that I will be delighted to share the results of my research in person with you and your team. Furthermore, I would be pleased to share periodic information about my findings, a copy of my final dissertation or other publications if it is useful.

If you have any questions or concerns about my proposed research, I would be happy to further discuss. You can reach me or my supervisor, Dr. Leesa Wheelahan at the contact numbers below. I look forward to speaking to you.

Thank you,

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
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University of Toronto
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca
416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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leesa.wheelahan@utoronto.ca
416. 978.1217

Appendix 5. Post-Secondary Institution President Approval Email

Email Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study re: Work-Integrated Learning & Non-Profits

Dear <President>,

I am writing to seek your permission for <Post-Secondary Institution> to participate in a research study entitled: "Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning." As a way of introduction, my name is Amelia Merrick and I am the Director, Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto. I am currently on academic leave in order to complete my PhD through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is in partial fulfilment for my PhD degree. My resume is attached.

As many of us in post-secondary institutions are observing, work-integrated learning (WIL) is increasingly important in Canada. In 2019 the Canadian government made a commitment to ensure that within ten years, every post-secondary student will have an opportunity for work-integrated learning before they graduate. This is an ambitious goal and will change the way post-secondary institutions, workplaces, and students work together.

In light of this, my research will investigate the experiences of non-profit organizations as they participate in WIL. Specifically, I will explore how non-profit organizations see the purpose of WIL, how they understand their role in work-integrated learning, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations.

While the focus of my research is non-profit organizations, as part of my study I am interviewing faculty and staff from post-secondary institutions who have broad responsibility for work-integrated learning with non-metropolitan, non-profit organizations. <Institution> was identified because of your geographic location, the diversity of your student body and your existing partnerships with non-profit organizations.

I have already received approval from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board would be happy to seek approval from your REB, if required. If you grant approval, I will invite approximately 2 – 5 faculty and staff for a 60-minute online interview. I would also request an interview with you if you are available. I have attached to this letter the email invitation, informed consent letter and information sheets I am providing to participants, as well as the questions I will be asking them.

The risks association with participation in this study are minimal for both your organization and staff / board members. The interviews will not ask questions of a personal or sensitive nature. Furthermore, I am committed to the ethical conduct of research and will comply with all of the requirements as specified by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board and your institution's Research Ethics Board.

In terms of confidentiality, all organizations will be anonymized and participation will be confidential. I will take a number of actions to respect your institutions privacy and confidentiality. I will not name the location, participants or organizations / institutions in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted, as relevant to help protect anonymity. I will also remove names and contact information from interview data, notes and transcriptions. All organizations and participants will be given a code which I will use for data analysis.

I intend to digitally record interviews and participants will be provided with a transcribed copy of their interview. I will provide participants and opportunity to edit their transcript. Participation in this study is voluntary and organizations / participants can withdraw until the point of data analysis without any judgement, penalty or consequence.

I recognize that Covid-19 has radically shifted our day to day lives and this is having unimagined consequence for post-secondary institutions, such as yours. My hope is that this research will be useful for <institution> and for non-profit organizations as we collectively find ways to provide students meaningful learning opportunities that enable them to "be and do what they have reason to value" (Moodie, Wheelahan & Lavigne, 2019, p.5). I hope that you grant approval for your institution to participate in this study.

At the conclusion of my research I would be delighted to share my findings in person with you and your team. Furthermore, I would be pleased to share periodic information about my findings, a copy of my final dissertation or other publications as requested.

If you have any questions or concerns about my proposed research, I would be happy to further discuss. You can reach me or my supervisor, Dr. Leesa Wheelahan at the contact numbers below. I look forward to speaking to you.

Thank you,

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/U of T
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca or phone 416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/U of T
leesa.wheelahan@utoronto.ca or phone (416) 978-1217

Invitation Email to Post-Secondary Faculty & Staff

Email Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Research Study re: Work-Integrated Learning & Non-Profits

Dear <University Faculty / Staff>,

My name is Amelia Merrick and I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study entitled "Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning." As a way of introduction, I am the Director, Career and Experiential Learning at the University of Toronto however I am currently on academic leave in order to complete my PhD through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. This research is in partial fulfilment for my PhD degree. My resume is attached.

As many of us in post-secondary institutions are observing, work-integrated learning (WIL) is increasingly important in Canada. In 2019 the Canadian government made a commitment to ensure that within ten years, every post-secondary student will have an opportunity for work-integrated learning before they graduate. This is an ambitious goal and will change the way post-secondary institutions, workplaces, and students work together.

In light of this, my research will investigate the experiences of non-profit organizations as they participate in WIL. Specifically, I will explore how non-profit organizations see the purpose of WIL, how they understand their role in work-integrated learning, how they design and deliver workplace learning, and how they reflect on their capacity to support learning both in terms of strengths and limitations. I have received approval from the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board and <if necessary, add information about their institution's REB's process>.

As part of my research I am interviewing faculty, staff and administrators from post-secondary institutions who have broad responsibility for work-integrated learning in non-metropolitan, non-profit organizations. Given your role as <job title>, I am interested in learning about your experiences and perspectives.

If you agree to participate, I will schedule a time for an online interview, which will last up to 60 minutes. During the discussion you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that you are not comfortable answering. All participants will be anonymized and I will take a number of actions to respect your privacy and confidentiality. I will not name the location, participants or organizations / institutions in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted, as relevant to help protect anonymity. I will also remove names and contact information from interview data, notes and transcriptions. All participants will be given a code which I will use for data analysis.

I intend to digitally record interviews and participants will be provided with a transcribed copy of their interview. Participants will be provided an opportunity to edit their transcript.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw until the point of data analysis without any judgement, penalty or consequence.

My hope is that this research will be useful for post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations as we collectively find ways to provide students meaningful learning opportunities that enable them to "be and do what they have reason to value" (Moodie, Wheelahan & Lavigne, 2019 p. 5). That said, if you are interested in receiving periodic information about my findings or a copy of my final dissertation or other publications, I would be happy to put you on my mailing list.

If you have any questions or concerns about my proposed research, I would be happy to further discuss. You can reach me or my supervisor, Dr. Leesa Wheelahan at the contact numbers below. Furthermore, if you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics, ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273.

I hope that you agree to participate in this study. I look forward to speaking to you!

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/U of T
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca or phone 416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/U of T
leesa.wheelahan@utoronto.ca or phone (416) 978-1217

Appendix 6. Consent Form

Date:
Title of Study: Sharing the work: An investigation into the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated learning

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research on the experiences of non-profit organizations in the delivery of work-integrated-learning. I anticipate that the interview will last up to 90 minutes. Please know that participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty, consequence or judgement, up until the time of data analysis. During the interview, you may decline to answer any question without negative consequences. Prior to data analysis, you will be provided with a copy of your transcribed interview and you will have an opportunity to edit your transcription if you wish to do so.

In order to capture the richness of your interview I would like to use an audio-recording device. This is voluntary and you if you decline audio recording, I will do my best to make notes of our conversation. Given the large volume of interviews I will use a reputable transcription service, complying with ethical standards. Your name and contact details will be removed from your audio-file. If you do not wish to have your interview transcribed by a professional service, I will personally transcribe your interview. You may identify that preference before, during or after the interview, without any negative consequences.

In addition, I will take a number of actions to respect your privacy and confidentiality. I will not name the location, participants or organizations in my study, and certain contextual information may be adapted to help protect the anonymity. All organizations and participants will be given a code which I will use for data analysis and the file to connect names with codes will be saved separately in a password protected encrypted file and destroyed at the conclusion of my research. All data will be saved in password protected encrypted files. Digital recordings will be destroyed after transcription is completed.

The risk involved in participating in this study is minimal and very little personal information will be collected. The majority of the interview will focus on your perception of how work-integrated learning is delivered and your insights into how it could be delivered differently. Given the opportunity to edit your transcript, and the steps I will take to anonymize the data and results, I do not foresee many risks in participating in this study, to you or to your institution.

My supervisor and I will be the only researchers who will have access to the data. However, the research study you are participating in may be reviewed for quality assurance and to ensure that the required laws and guidelines are followed. If chosen, (a) representative(s) of the Human Research Ethics Program (HREP) may access study-related data and/or consent materials as part of the review. All information accessed by the HREP will be upheld to the same level of confidentiality that has been stated by the research team. If you have any

questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact The Office of Research Ethics, University of Toronto (ethics.review@utoronto.ca; 416-978-5585)l

I hope that you agree to participate in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about my proposed research, I would be happy to further discuss. You can reach me or my supervisor, Dr. Leesa Wheelahan at the contact numbers below.

Thank you,

Amelia F. Merrick
PhD Candidate,
Leadership, Higher and Adult Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
amelia.merrick@utoronto.ca or phone
416.909.5664

Dr. Leesa Wheelahan
Associate Professor, Higher Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
leesa.wheelahan@utoronto.ca or phone
(416) 978-1217

Consent:
Please initial here if you consent to having the interview audio-recorded:
Please initial here if you consent to having the interview transcribed by a transcription service:

Please sign below to indicate your consent to participate in this research study. Signing also indicates that you understand the conditions and protocol outlined above. Please keep a copy of the consent form for your records.

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	Signature	Date

Appendix 7. List of Documents and Archival Records

- 8 non-profits: website, strategy, annual reports, job postings, and other pertinent documents
- 2 post-secondary institutions: website, strategy, budget, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training mandate letter, historical documents, program calendars, course syllabus
- Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training website: Educational Quality Assurance, Post-Secondary Data, Post-Secondary Funding & Accountability, Sector Labour Market Partnership Program
- Stats Canada: Employment in non-profit institution by activity
- Canadian Revenue Agency List of 188 non-profits and charities
- Municipal Workforce and Skill Development Working Group documents: terms of reference, meeting minutes, notes
- Municipal Workforce Analysis
- Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL) website, member portal, annual report, definitions
- Association of Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning (ACE-WIL) website, definitions, member portal
- Business + Higher Education Round Table (BHER) website
- RBC Launching Careers Playbook
- Post-Secondary WIL resources (University of Toronto, Waterloo, Niagara College)
- Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) website
- Engineers Canada website

Appendix 8. Questions to Address in an Institutional WIL Framework

a. What is the organizational commitment to WIL and what motivates this commitment?

b. How is WIL mobilized – is it centrally managed or decentralized by department?

c. How will faculty be incentivized to participate in WIL? How does WIL contribute towards promotion and tenure? Are there differences for tenured, new or sessional faculty?

d. How is WIL funded?

e. What are the roles, responsibilities and benefits of WIL for student, employers, community (geographic, industry, etc.) and post-secondary institution?

f. How is WIL shaped by the specific context and needs of the surrounding community / city / region?

g. How is WIL influenced by industry and their social actors (professional associations, unions, regulatory body, etc.)? Where are the boundaries and how thick or permeable are those boundaries?

h. When the local context changes (for example, because of COVID-19) how will this be accommodated? Who is responsible for navigating this change? (Central or decentralized)

i. **Pedagogy:** How are learning outcomes designed? What is the relationship to curriculum and regulatory bodies, professional agencies or industry? What is expected of host-organizations and learning partners as educators? What accommodations can be provided to students who have barriers to their learning? How should students be assigned to organizations? Should they work individually, in pairs or in groups?

j. **Experience:** Who will broker relationships between the post-secondary institution and the labour market? How will organizations be selected? By what standards will

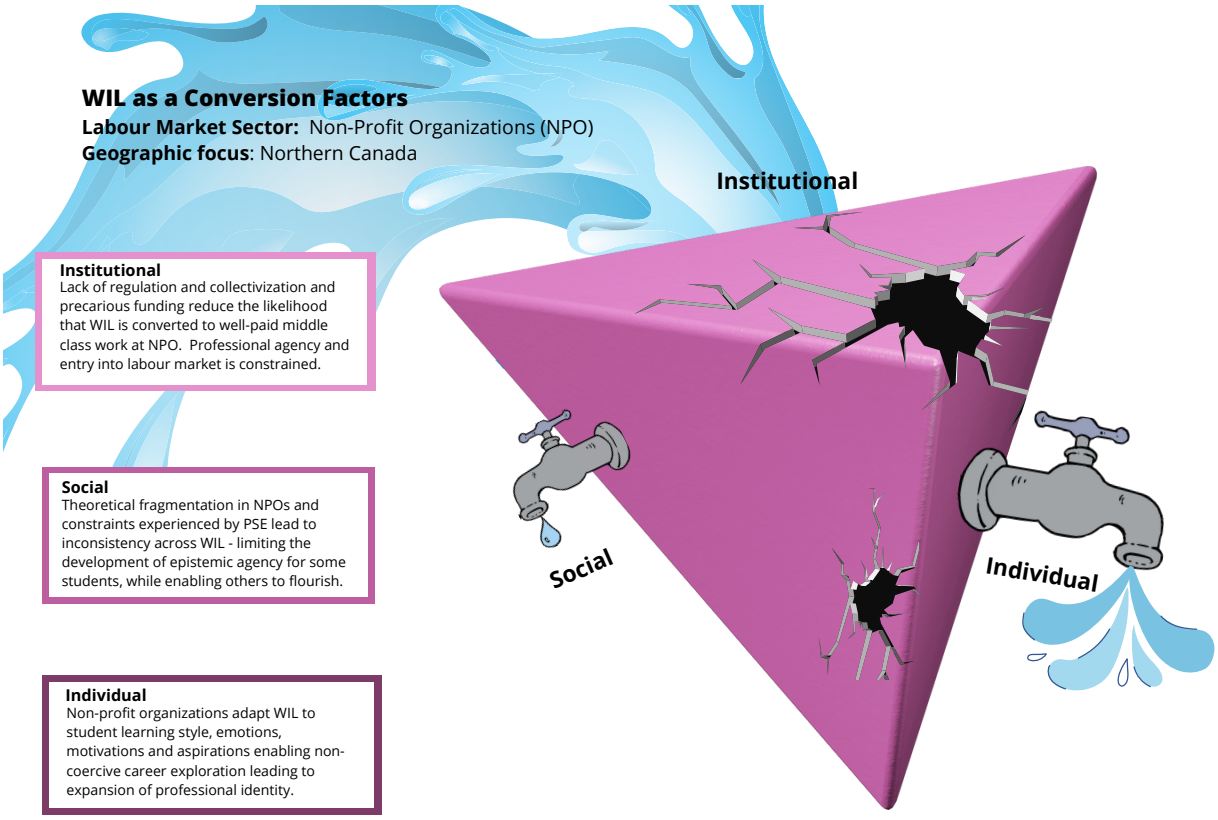
organizations and WIL placements be judged “appropriate?” How will students identify WIL experiences (technology, faculty member, job board, etc.)? What is used to determine the boundary between exploitation and learning? Is there a reasonable diversity of organizations, including non-profit organizations from which students can chose? What protection is afforded to students and to organizations? How will incidence be managed? How will organizations and learning partners be incentivized, supported and assessed? How should stakeholders decide if they should continue WIL relationships together? What are the “exit” mechanisms to gracefully conclude relationships?

k. **Theory:** What are the mechanisms to assess a host-organizations theoretical approach? What resources are in place to support faculty design learning according to diverse theoretical landscapes? If students use theories learned in class to critique the practices within a host-organizations how should faculty consider power asymmetries to protect both students and the organization? Do confidentiality agreements exist at the institutional level? How should intellectual property be handled? What guidance is available to access funding to extend academic knowledge, etc.

l. **Assessment:** How will learning be assessed? What is the role of the host-organization and learning partner for assessment? If learning partners have a role in assessment, how will biases and discrimination be mediated? Is there a distinction between academic and career learning and if yes, how are each assessed separately?

m. **Reflection:** What tools or resources are available to support critical reflection (written, oral, visual, kinesthetic methods, etc.)? What reflection tools can be used to consider reconciliation, anti-oppressive practices and equity? When should reflection be done individually, in peers and in larger groups? How can students and host-organizations engage in reflection together? How should students reflect on their position in relation to the community they are serving and how power may be negotitated or transferred? What guidance should faculty consider if a student reveals personal challenges in their reflection assignments? What resources are available for students who are triggered during WIL (i.e. mental health, student advising, career services, etc)? What guidance should faculty consider if a student reveals unethical practices during their reflection?

Appendix 9. WIL as a Conversion Factor



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