

## **Best Practices in and Impacts of Experiential Learning**

*Prepared by Rachel Hammerback for the Experiential Learning Network*

*Note: These were initially meant to be two distinct areas of research and hence separate bibliographies. However, it has become increasingly clear that it is nearly impossible to extricate one from the other. After all, one cannot define a practice “best” without some evidence of positive or negative impacts. The area of outcomes of experiential learning is also much less studied than the actual practices. This is especially true in the realm of impacts on the community and on faculty. There is much research on how impacts should be researched, but very few sources seem to take on such research. In part B of this work I have attempted to list mention of impacts – both specific and broad – that have been mentioned in my research thus far. I will continue to add to this list as I read more.*

### A) Annotated Bibliography

**Bringle, Robert G. and Kathryn Steinberg. “Educating for Informed Community**

**Involvement”. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 46 (2010): 428-441.**

Bringle and Steinberg’s article is one of the first I have seen that provides specific studies documenting the outcomes of service learning on communities. They also have a fairly specific and well-researched list of learner outcomes that is worth looking at. The article begins with a broad look at service learning and the goal of developing civic-minded individuals. Founded in Altman’s conceptual model for higher education, the discussion on this topic provides new perspective and ways to view experiential learning and higher learning in general.

The authors focus first on learner outcomes for the civic minded graduates. They developed a list of seven broad outcomes upon which they later elaborate. These learner outcomes are: academic knowledge and technical skills; knowledge of volunteer opportunities and non-profit organizations; knowledge of contemporary social issues; listening and communication skills; diversity skills; self-efficacy; and behavioural intentions. The expansion on “academic knowledge and technical skills” was particularly detailed and included such items as increased problem analysis complexity, solution complexity, application of knowledge, critical thinking ability, awareness of multidimensionality of social problems, and better learning in general. Most helpfully, the authors outline the individual studies that have found each of these impacts on learners.

The discussion on community outcomes is much shorter, and like many other sources, cites the lack of literature on the topic. Bringle and Steinberg have found it most helpful to divide the impacts on community of service learning into two categories: quality of life in communities and quality of partnerships. Some of the positive impacts they found were increased host capacity to serve clients, improved social and economic benefits and new insights on program development (Driscoll et. al, 1996). One study also found increased organizational capacity to take on new projects (Sandy and Holland, 2006). The authors also cite Gazley and Littlepage who found that service learning increased volunteer labor, improved visibility of agencies, and improved client services (2009). However, not all impacts will be positive. This article only alludes to this notion by mentioning that there is increased onus and responsibility on agencies to act as the direct supervisor to students. While of course this increased effort and challenge is necessary for the positive outcomes to take place, there has undoubtedly been “service learning gone wrong” in many cases. It may be helpful to have some examples of malpractice so as not to

follow suit in our own workings. Perhaps some of our annotations on ethics could be edited to fit with this new bibliography on impacts.

Like many, Bringle and Steinberg conclude by offering their own thoughts on how best to undergo research around community impacts. These recommendations essentially point to ways in which we can ensure the validity of research through generalizability, random selection and the like.

**Brinkard, Mary Jane, Barbara Holland, Stephen L. Percy, and Nancy Zimpher. “Calling the Question: Is Higher Education Ready to Commit to Community Engagement?”. *A Wingspread Statement* (2004): 1-29.**

Mary Jane Brinkard and her colleagues join the ranks of George Kuh as advocates for engagement as a foundation or synonym for experiential learning. The work does not explicitly define engagement which made this a moderately difficult read. The fact that I struggled so in trying to understand what was meant by their idea of engagement points to a difference in how we define and use the term. This article does not fit cleanly into any of our broader research categories. In fact, it seems to dip into each one. That said, the scope of the article is broader than what my current search calls for. I would revisit this article if engagement became an important topic for us or if the implementation of an experiential learning program were to become a reality.

**Clary-Lemon, Jennifer. “Best Practices Among Canadian Educational Development Centres: Directions for the Future of CTLT”.**

Clary-Lemon’s work regarding Educational Development Centres (EDCs) in Canada gives insight into the less commonly researched best practices in faculty development as we

move towards a more experiential learning system. In addition to speaking generally on the work of Canadian EDCs she talks specifically about the University of Winnipeg's own EDC – the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) – and its work. The results of a survey distributed to U of W faculty regarding their needs from the CTLT are also discussed. While this piece was not specifically written in promotion of experiential learning, I believe the information provided could lead to an important and beneficial partnership within the U of W.

Clary-Lemon provides a brief history of EDCs in Canada and then offers a detailed overview of where they are now. She identifies four central concepts or goals of which EDCs strive to actualize. They are teaching excellence, leadership/advancement of student-centered learning, innovation, and a collaborative environment (13). The former two goals seem critical to furthering experiential learning while the latter two sound in line with those of experiential learning – as though by accomplishing them positive steps would be taking in fostering a climate in which experiential learning could grow. The bulk of her writing is dedicated to where Canada is in terms of the following topics surrounding EDCs: activities, goals, faculty involvement, e-learning, voluntary versus mandatory participation, teaching awards, learning communities, and philosophy. From this discussion come a few best practices that could have bearing on how we develop our own experiential learning program.

She discusses “teaching professors” as an innovative way in which some universities like McMaster are increasing their leadership in teaching. You might ask “but aren't all professors, professors who teach?” Yes, but no finds Clary-Lemon. A “teaching professor” is a full time faculty member who does not have research expectations as a part of their appointment. With the resultant extra time they can better engage with students and learn more about best practices in teaching and learning. If you will recall George Kuh talks on the existence of “disengagement

compacts” in contemporary higher level education whereby both students and professors alike have too much reading, writing – and in the case of the latter – marking to do (see annotation Best Practices: “Engagement”). Out of this stress, both parties effectively disengage from the course by trading a smaller homework load for lesser contact with the professor. The appointment of these “teaching professors” could be a way to combat this.

A second point she makes relates to the philosophy of an institution and how it affects the behaviour of faculty. Clary-Lemon cites Ernest Boyer, an American educator who believed that faculty should be valued for a range of activities instead of just for their research and publication output. This range of activities could their community-based and interdisciplinary work, their problem solving in the community, and their contributions to the best practices of teaching *in addition* to their traditional research (22). Again, by adopting such a belief system, a climate within which experiential learning could thrive would be created.

She closes with a discussion of a U of W survey that was issued to new and established faculty at the University, outlining their interests and potential needs from the CTLT. The most important finding for our purposes was that sessions on active learning, student participation, and incorporating experiential and community-based learning into curriculum were all within the top five most requested by faculty. From this, it sounds as though the University faculty also has an interest in moving towards a new, more experiential education system. We could potentially rely on an EDC to offer workshops on and promote skill development in experiential learning techniques. Additionally, through faculty peer mentorship programs and the like, evaluation and upkeep of these initiatives could take place. The U of W CTLT seems like a logical partner to have as we continue our work in EL.

**Cruz, Nadinne I. and Dwight E. Giles Jr. “Where’s the Community in Service-Learning Research?”. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. Special Issue (2000): 28-34.**

This article begins by acknowledging the great void in the experiential learning research that exists in the area of impacts of service learning on communities. Cruz and Giles go on to give potential reasons for this gap in the research as well as provide a review of the little literature that does exist. To promote research on this topic, they argue that there should be less focus on outcomes and more on developing skills in using research as a process for sustained collaboration between the university and community (29). They leave off by offering four pillars upon which future research on community learning should be based.

Cruz and Giles cite political, intellectual and practical reasons for the lack of research in the area of impacts on community. Politically speaking, the people who provide funding for these experiential type initiatives are generally concerned with learner outcomes. Thus, this has become the focus of most experiential learning research (28). Additionally, along with the contemporary education system comes great concern for academic rigor. This also encourages research in terms of learner and institutional outcomes. In terms of intellectual blockers, the great issue lies in disagreement regarding what community even is. Does community refer to a neighbourhood or geographic location? Is it comprised of the agency staff with which students are working? Or is it instead the consumers of the services provided (29)? The argument here is that if you cannot define it, you cannot study it. Community impacts are also difficult to study in terms of research methodology. Regardless of the definition, no two communities will be alike,

nor can you possibly control for all variables that may confound the research. Generalizability is thus impossible and consequently the validity of research is compromised. In other words, it is no easy thing to research community impacts.

With that said, the author's note that only eight studies on the topic of community outcomes of service learning took place between 1993 and 1999. They summarize the literature with three key findings. The first is that service learning contributes to community development. Second, that it bridges town-gown (or community-university) gaps and third, that it offers benefits to community partners. Overall, the findings seem to be positive in nature. More specific key claims that fall underneath each of these findings are also provided.

Cruz and Giles thus suggest an approach to research that counters some of the aforementioned impediments. They believe that partnerships between the university and whom/what in the community should be the unit of analysis (31). This would provide a framework for generalization as well as nullify the issue of defining community. Second, they believe there should be consistency with good service learning practice principles as outlined in other literature such as Sigmon (1979), and Honnet and Poulsen (1989). It is becoming increasingly clear how intertwined the topics of impacts and best practices are across the board. It is often difficult to decide which annotation should go where. Third, they believe action research methods should be used and finally that there should be a focus on assets over needs in developing these programs and the central research questions surrounding them (31). For example, "has there been an increase in net community assets?" By building upon these four pillars, research in this area should be ethically sound as well as become less daunting. Cruz and Giles' article provides a lens through which to look at and better understand subsequent research on the topic of impacts of service learning on communities.

**Epprecht, Marc. “Work-Study Abroad Courses in International Development Studies: Some Ethical and Pedagogical Issues”. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. 25.4 (2004): 688-706.**

Epprecht’s article argues against the notion that field placements and other experiential learning initiatives are intrinsically good. He discusses a range of ethical and pedagogical issues that must be considered and addressed prior to any field learning – particularly that which takes students to different countries. I had previously wondered about the code of ethics currently in place to regulate experiential learning initiatives. This article handily answers my questions regarding the codes that guide international study and work. He focuses almost exclusively on international work-study programs, but his findings are applicable to most any experiential activity that sends students off campus.

Epprecht begins by outlining the dangers of any program that sends students “out into the world”. He warns particularly of those founded in the “naïve idealism” that wars, poverty, and the like could be avoided if only people knew each other through shared day-to-day experiences (691). Aside from being pedagogically weak, such programs risk hardening students’ pre-existing negative stereotypes, fostering a missionary fervor that prevents the public from truly understanding the community in which work is taking place, or creating feelings of burden by the community or exploitation by the student and/or their institution (690). That said, he believes the best programs will examine the ethical implications of the following before, during, and after the placement: the impact of the students presence on the community, bad local partners, bad laws, confidentiality, marketing, profit flows, and student alienation (694-700). With regards to each of these topics, Epprecht manages to bring up at least one question surrounding ethicality that I had never before considered. For example, he questions how students should deal with bad



laws in a host country – when is it more ethical for students to break a bad law than to respect it (696)?

The article also discusses pedagogical concerns with regards to courses abroad. He gives suggestions for best practices regarding time, preparation, journal assessment, re-entry programs, and what he terms “stretch”. One particularly interesting aspect of the discussion on time was Epprecht’s belief that two years is the minimum amount a student should spend abroad in order to experience true cross-cultural learning (701). Alternatively yet surprisingly, some organizations believe the minimum stay should be 6-12 months because “if the tunnel is too short, the light at the end of it remains critically distracting” (701). Such a time frame is clearly impractical for most undergrads – thus Epprecht recommends expanded orientation and re-entry courses as a way to draw the experience out to at least 6 months. Again, in the discussions on each of the aforementioned pedagogical categories Epprecht manages to bring up a new and important point. This is an important read for any educator planning to incorporate an international or even local practicum or field experience into their curriculum.

Having taken part in an international field course during my University career, I find this article of particular interest. Prior to my departure, I had thought very little about the ethics of what I was about to do. Within days of being in the host country I began to have big questions and revelations surrounding the morality of what I was doing. These realizations surprised me, and this surprise certainly led to a profound period of distress in which deep reflection took place. Would I have had that intense learning experience if I had been thoroughly briefed on Epprecht’s ethics beforehand? I also carry with me a sense of guilt. Would that be so had I been better prepared ethically? To what extent should these questions of ethics be left to students to

“stumble upon” and to what extent should they be prepared? Is it too risky to leave any matter of ethics to chance?

**Grauerholz, Elizabeth, and Stacey Copenhaver. “When the Personal becomes Problematic: The Ethics of Using Experiential Teaching Methods”. *Teaching Sociology* 22.4 (1994): 319-327.**

I read this article after reading a comment in the work of Teixeira-Poit, Cameron, and Schulman (see annotation) regarding the importance of avoiding controversial language in their experiential learning studies. They cited this Grauerholz and Copenhaver article as a basis for that idea. Upon reading the article first hand, I believe that Teixeira-Poit and her co-authors, misinterpreted the point of this paper.

Grauerholz and Copenhaver do warn readers of the potential harms that could come from delving into personal and sensitive issues in the experiential classroom, but they do not advocate against exploring these topics all together. They tell of ways to ethically engage with these political topics and conclude that to avoid these topics entirely would be a disservice to the students. One of their suggestions for ensuring that experiential learning practices remains ethical is disclosure by professors. They discuss how professors as “experts” do not hesitate to ask their students to undertake tasks that they themselves could not or would not do (323). If disclosure is one-sided then power differentials are only exacerbated. They also discuss the role of gender in relation to this which will be important to remember in terms of best experiential learning practices. Grauerholz and Copenhaver argue that if/when a female is asked to write about her personal life by a male teacher, she is surrendering more control to someone who already has emotional and social power over her (324). The feminist undertones of this paper are

quite obvious. Despite this bias, the ideas presented are worth some consideration. The authors also advocate for instructors “taking the role of the Other” in determining how an assignment will be perceived (325). This sounds like it would involve empathy – or looking to adopt the unique perspective of another – which consequently could be an intriguing area of research in terms of experiential learning.

This article arose out of an interesting situation in which the instructor of a gender and violence course assigned an autobiographical journal assignment to her students about their experiences with violence. On the day the assignment was due she received a letter from one of her students outlining her ethical objection to writing the paper as well as the re-traumatization she experienced as a result of attempting to write it. That teacher and that student are the co-authors of this paper. Receiving these two perspectives concurrently is fascinating and allows readers to see both sides of the issue quite clearly.

**Hickcox, Leslie K. “Personalizing Teaching through Experiential Learning.” *College***

***Teaching* 50.4 (2002): 123-128.**

Hickcox’s article is a shallow overview of experiential learning and experiential learning practices at three American universities. It did not offer much in the way of new information and I was disappointed in the lack of pedagogical underpinnings. The author did not point to any larger philosophy or particular benefits of experiential learning. Instead, she gave only very specific advantages which she obtained from students she interviewed in her case studies (ie: “I learned interpersonal skills’) (126). The article also gave information contradictory to what I have read elsewhere stating that it is the upper and middle class students who thrive in an experiential learning environment. This is opposed to the disenfranchised students reported to

experience the greatest benefit by most other sources I have seen (See annotations for Hooks, Fine, and Kuh). I will continue to look for further information supporting or disconfirming this.

Her article did however bring up an interesting experiential learning practice. At Marylhurst University they give University credit to adult learners who return to school for skills and knowledge learned on the job. Hickcox does not describe the criteria for determining who and what deserves credit, but it sounds like an interesting practice. The article also brought up – though did a poor job answering – the question of whether contemporary education requires a balance of experiential learning initiatives and traditional classroom courses in developing curriculum (123). In my research so far I have assumed a position of complete education overhaul. Perhaps this is too extreme and there is indeed a need for balance. I will keep this in mind as I continue my research. This article brought up a few interesting questions but the answers to these questions as well as the article as a whole could have used more depth.

**Kolb, Alice Y. and David A. Kolb. “Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education.” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4.2 (2005): 193-212. Print.**

Kolb and Kolb are popular in the experiential learning literature. The article begins with a brief description and a helpful list of six fundamental principles of experiential learning theory (ELT) (194). To understand subsequent sections of this paper, readers must first learn about the ELT belief that knowledge results from a combination of grasping and transforming experience (194). The grasping component can occur through either concrete experience (CE) or abstract conceptualization (AC), whereas the transforming aspect of knowledge can take place via reflective observation (RO) or active experimentation (AE). (I should note here that this was a

rather difficult read due to the abundance of acronyms used. However, it was certainly worth pushing through as this article offers a perspective that I have yet to see in other sources). ELT maintains that the construction of knowledge involves tension among all four of these aforementioned learning modes and that this takes place in a cycle. I conceptualized the cycle to look like this:

*CE is the basis for RO which is assimilated into AC which leads to new implications that can be tested using AE which in turn creates a new CE.*

The authors argue that everyone develops a preferred way of learning by choosing among these four modes and that these choices translate into learning styles. The Learning Style Inventory (LSI) has been related to experiential learning for some time in that your style will determine how you approach and react to experiential practices. However, only recently did the number of learning styles jump from four to nine. The different styles are as follows: Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, Accommodating, Northerner, Easterner, Southerner, Westerner, and Balancing (a description and pictorial representation of these styles available on pages 196-198). The LSI's relationship to the learning space framework is then discussed. The learning space framework – based in Kurt Lewin's theory of life space – maintains that learning is not a universal process but a map of learning territories through which a fully developed or “whole” person should be able to move (201; 205). However, the traditional education system has developed a learning culture that emphasizes learning modes most related to the educational objective (usually the receiving of information) but devalues the opposite learning modes (208). Thus, students leave their education without having explored their full potential. The paper provides an interesting case study about the difference in learning styles of art and management students that demonstrates this phenomenon (201-202). However, without a balance between

doing and receiving, theorist John Dewey argues that nothing will take root in the mind (qtd pg 208).

This work sits on the fence of both the pedagogy of experiential learning and the best practices. An examination of the learning styles and spaces of students is a different way of approaching the need for a reform to our “banking” style of education. To be able to adapt to different learning environments and become flexible in your approach to learning seems like an invaluable and practical skill to be developed in higher education. Kolb and Kolb insist that institutional development in terms of faculty, curriculum, students, administration, staff, and resources would need to take place in order to implement these learning space principles but that it would be well worth it (209). Based heavily in theory, this article allows for and encourages diversity in learning styles and interests of students.

As I was reading, it was unclear to me whether Kolb and Kolb were advocating for or against banking education. Upon closer examination, it seems the authors instead advocate that there is a time and place for this method of learning, but that it must not be the only style available to students. This article provided many opportunities for further research. If I get the chance to re-look at the pedagogy of experiential learning I would be interested in looking at Lave and Wenger’s Situated Learning Theory (200) as well as Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism.

**Kuh, George. "What We're Learning about Student Engagement from NSSE: Benchmarks for Effective Educational Practices." *Change: the Magazine of Higher Learning* 35.2 (2003): 24-31. Print.**

In this article Kuh summarizes the findings of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and talks on how said findings relate to learning outcomes. He argues that it is no longer valid to look at SAT scores and faculty credentials when talking about quality of education. Instead, he insists people judge quality through the level of student engagement – which is precisely what the NSSE seeks to measure. Engagement is important since the more students study, practice, and get feedback on their work the more adept a learner they become (25). Furthermore, Kuh found that students who are involved in educationally productive activities in post-secondary school develop “habits of the mind and heart” that grow their capacity for continuous learning and personal development (25). This fits in well with the transformative pedagogy that backs experiential learning.

Interestingly, Kuh found that engagement varied more within schools than between schools (26). Thus, it is less about which school you go to than how you spend your time there. One step then, which schools can take, is to seek out those students who are disengaged and encourage them to join educationally productive activities. Unlike in his other works (see other annotations), Kuh clarifies that we cannot simply target groups of “at risk” or disengaged students. This he says, would be disrespectful of the individual differences of each learner (27). I appreciated this clarification as it was something that bothered me about his other works.

Kuh also makes the point that first-year students have expectations about college that are generally left unmet with the exception of the amount of studying they do whereby students are doing as much if not more than they expected (27). That being said, students are generally less

engaged in the college experience than they expected to be. However, great amounts of studying as well as other responsibilities – such as working – seem to discourage students from seeking to meet their prior expectations. Perhaps by changing standard practices of assessment (for example, minimizing the use of multiple choice tests) students could spend more time engaging with – rather than memorizing – the material they are learning as well as with the university experience itself. Kuh’s study points to bad habits being formed in high school which allow such a culture to persist in a university setting. Academic disengagement in the U.S. is higher than ever (45%), yet more students are graduating with an A average. This suggests that students are getting better grades for less effort. Kuh continues this discussion saying that there exists a “disengagement compact” whereby busy faculty who do not want to spend all their time marking and busy students who do not want to spend all their time reading and writing come to a mutual agreement – “I’ll leave you alone if you leave me alone” (28). With such a university culture, how can habits of the heart and mind that facilitate personal growth and continuous learning develop, and thus transformation take place?

Finally, Kuh covers topics like the importance of substantive contact with faculty, peers, and practitioners and how it aids in learning (29). This is in line with the educational practices Peter D. Hart and Associates Inc. found employers value in their new hires. It also fits well with the literature on critical dialogue and transformation. The findings of the NSSE seem to point to an experiential learning process as a way to facilitate engagement. As a result of adopting such practices, the survey would predict a higher quality of education.



**Kuh, George D., “High Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter”. *The Association of American Colleges and Universities*. (2008). 1-35.**

This report by George Kuh serves as a good starting point in terms of research about best practices in post-secondary studies. Though it does not focus solely on experiential learning, the article provides a good overview of the direction our education system is or should be moving in as well as an idea of what types of activities we should be looking for as we investigate best practices in our field of study. Kuh writes this article as part of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) Initiative. The goal of LEAP is to align the aims of college learning with the needs of the new global century. For more on that, the Peter D. Hart Research Association Inc. does a good job outlining these needs in terms of what employers are looking for in new hires (see annotation). The report is divided into two parts: the first discussing what high impact practices are and how they help to achieve the new goals of a liberal arts education and the second part focusing on who has access to these practices and why they matter. This article looks especially at students who begin university behind in terms of grades as well as those who belong to communities who historically have been deprived of higher education. Like some of the readings regarding pedagogy, Kuh has found that participation in high impact learning – of which experiential learning plays a large part – has an even greater benefit for these “historically undeserved” students than for others (17). He shows a series of graphs demonstrating this phenomenon (18-19).

Kuh uses the term high impact practices to describe practices that aid students in reaping the full benefits of their studies (1). Throughout the paper he argues that in order to enhance student engagement and increase success, it should be made possible for every student to take

part in at least two of these high impact practices during their undergraduate studies (19). Kuh's high impact practices are as follows: First year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing intensive courses, collaborative projects and assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning/community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects.

He helpfully addresses a potential challenge to experiential learning as he discusses the reluctance of many institutions to invest in practices such as this that are costly in terms of money and labour. Kuh counters by saying the costs are well worth it as "the quality of citizen's learning has become our most important societal resource" (8). I also appreciate his commentary on the role of faculty. He acknowledges how critical and engaged a role they play in implementing and maintaining such a system. He does not however, address the difficult business of evaluating some of these initiatives.

Out of Kuh's report arose some questions I now have about the taxonomy of experiential learning. Do extra-curriculars such as participation in student groups or athletics count as experiential learning? What about pursuing an honours degree where there is likely a greater demand for independent research and/or a thesis? These questions will need to be visited when it comes time to look into taxonomy.

**Kuh, George D., Ty M. Cruce, Rick Shoup, Jillian Kinzie, and Robert M. Gonyea.**

**"Unmasking the Effects of Student Engagement on First-Year College Grades and Persistence." *The Journal of Higher Education* 79.5 (2009): 540-563. Print.**

George Kuh et al did a study looking at the relationship between student behaviours – namely their grades and engagement levels – and the institutional practices in their schools that

lead to student success. The key questions guiding the study were as follows: does engagement during the first year of college have a significant impact on first year grade point average (GPA) and on student's returning for a second year and, are the effects of engagement conditional or general (543). The study's methods, data analysis, results, and limitations are well documented and could be used as a guideline for future studies. An experiment such as this one could be an interesting undertaking in a Canadian context as all of Kuh's work that I have seen thus far focuses exclusively on American data and schools.

The study found that first year engagement does affect GPA as well as the likelihood that students will return to the school for a second year. These effects were larger for students who entered college with a lower level of academic achievement as well as for students belonging to communities historically underserved education.

Kuh and colleague's study suggests that schools should put extra energy into encouraging "high risk" students – or students more likely to drop-out before graduating – to engage in campus activities and experiential learning initiatives (555). Risk factors include being academically unprepared, the student being the first in their family to attend college, and/or coming from a low-income background. Should educators be privy to that type of information if not offered to them by the student? This could open them to the possibility of discrimination and stereotyping. However, it does indeed sound like targeting of high risk students is what the study believes should happen in order for greater success in schools to occur. The faculty should be intentional in making students aware of campus activities as well as in creating a culture of community learning (556-557). I wonder if most faculty members would be willing to put in this effort and/or change their style of teaching in order to facilitate these aforementioned goals.

The study provides an interesting list of effective educational practices that are likely to

foster student success. The list is as follows: *placement testing*, first year seminars, learning communities, *intrusive advising*, *early warning systems*, *redundant safety nets*, supplemental instruction, peer tutoring and mentoring, *theme-based campus housing*, adequate financial aid including on-campus work, internships, service learning, and demonstrably effective teaching practices (556). Those italicized list items are ones that I am wondering about. Not only would I be interested in looking at how these types of things relate to experiential learning, but I am also wondering for some if they are a good idea at all. Placement testing seems like a way to actualize the self-fulfilling prophecy and discriminate against students. Intrusive advising also seems to have negative connotations in using the word “intrusive”. Kuh and colleagues have provided a good foundation for further research.

**Meisel, Joshua S. “The Ethics of Observing: Confronting the Harm of Experiential Learning.” *Teaching Sociology* 36.3 (2008): 196-210.**

Meisel offers an account contrary to most of the literature on experiential learning. He writes about the potential harms that could come to the non-student participants in some experiential practices. As a professor of Criminal Justice, Meisel uses his experiences in field trips to correctional facilities as a starting point for his research. Though the article makes many valid and interesting claims, I did find one contradiction that was rather bothersome. He begins by saying that the risks of experiential learning are particularly great in the realm of service-learning. He goes on however to discuss only field trips where the primary role of the students was to observe – seemingly equating experiential learning with observation. This is not in line with any of the other literature I have seen. Later, he discusses how the ethical challenges of service-learning could be improved upon if they structured the initiative beyond “doing for” to

“being with” the communities they work in (206). I thought this mindset is what makes service-learning what it is. That said, I am feeling confused about Meisel’s definition of service-learning (which he did not provide). For me, this confusion and apparent contradiction weakened his argument.

There are however, some valuable points to be taken away from this article. He re-iterates the dangers of unstructured experiential learning that we have seen outlined in Kornelson’s chapter on global citizenship and Schon’s on reflective practices (see annotations on pedagogy). Unstructured experiential learning can reinforce the notion that social problems are a result of personal troubles rather than structural, he says (196). Without structure and intent the lines between academic learning and “hedonistic voyeurism” can become blurred and potentially damaging (200). The article thus advocates for case studies over field trips if a short-term experiential learning initiative is desired. Alternately he promotes engaging in longer term initiatives – as opposed to short-term – where total immersion and/or co-learning are possible (205-206).

Meisel also questions why field trips and experiential learning initiatives escape review by the ethics boards in terms of the protection of the non-academic community while formal research methods are so highly regulated (203). He suggests that perhaps universities should prohibit any learning activity that may cause harm to non-student groups (204). This seems a bit drastic. Perhaps instead with new ways of learning should come updated codes of ethics to which educators should subscribe. Ethics are an important part of best practices as any experiential initiative that does not consider the moral and ethical implications cannot indeed be a best practice.

**Ostrander, Susan A. “Democracy, Civic Participation, and the University: A Comparative Study of Civic Engagement on Five Campuses.” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, March 2004, pp. 74-93.**

Ostrander’s study of civic engagement on five U.S. campuses looks at which ‘types’ of programs different ‘kinds’ of schools have emphasized and developed. She also synthesizes the results of her study into four key findings. This information could be valuable as we begin to make decisions about what our own initiatives will look like. The schools visited were University of Pennsylvania’s Centre for Community Partnerships, Brown University’s Swearer Centre for Public Service, The Bates College Centre for Service-Learning, Portland State University’s Centre for Academic Excellence, and the University of Minnesota’s Centre for Democracy and Citizenship and Office for Civic Engagement (79).

The first key finding outlined by Ostrander is that the most successful civic engagement programs are not those founded in universal best practices but instead those practicing within a dynamic and developmental framework (75; 80). In other words she is advocating that the best practice is to do away with the notion of best practices and adopt flexibility and creativity. To this end, Ostrander found that there are four main components of engagement a school may choose to emphasize at any one time depending upon the nature of their mission and their needs. These components are student learning, curriculum transformation, community-defined priorities, and knowledge creation (75). Because the U of W’s emphasis is on student learning (see “mission statement” <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/hr-mission>), Ostrander would likely suggest we develop a program something like Brown University’s (88-89).

One aspect of her paper that I found particularly helpful was her discussion on the physical structural features of a civic engagement program. She recommends the creation of a free-standing association that joins the community and university (86). These are sometimes called “intermediary external organizations”, she tells us. Here, there would be one or more university-paid staff that come from and reside in the communities with whom the university is partnering. She goes further to say the mark of a strong program is a when people flow frequently and naturally from campus to off-campus sites and back again (88). This fits well with Gugerty and Swezey’s notion that students and staff need to be visible parts of the community in order for partnerships to last (from *Developing Campus-Community Relationships* by Jacoby). An off-campus location may also take away the expectation of the community coming to the university as opposed to the other way around.

From her findings, the author also provides a helpful list of five critical factors that may affect the level of ease with which you build your service learning program (82). While this article was focused specifically on civic engagement or what we may call service learning instead of all experiential learning, it is still valuable to us. Since most Canadian universities have EL programs founded in service learning, I would not be surprised if ours grows that way as well.

**Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. “How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers’ Views on the Accountability Challenge”. *The Association of American Colleges and Universities* (2008). 1-8**

In this report, Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc. give the results of their 2007 survey of 301 executive-level employers regarding the preparedness of recent college or university

graduates to join the workforce. This report shows that the “real world” or working world has also gotten the sense that educational practices need to change. Employers believe that most graduates are prepared enough for an entry level position but are less convinced that these same hires would be fit for promotion or advancement within the company (1). The survey shows that employers perceive grads to be least prepared in the realms of global knowledge, self-direction, writing, and critical thinking (3). With that said it seems the answer would at least in part point to an experiential component to learning whereby students engage in an independent work project and then have critical dialogue upon return to the classroom about this new primary experience. Depending on the nature of the experiential learning intervention (ie: community-service learning abroad or exchange program), global knowledge may also arise.

The survey also demonstrates that employers do not value the traditional and common forms of assessment such as the transcript and the multiple choice test as they look to hire recent grads. Instead, they report looking for supervised internships, community-based learning, and senior projects or theses in their new hires (5). Thus, these are the types of activities universities should develop and promote.

This article did spark one question that I would like to explore further: are senior thesis projects a form of experiential learning? This survey provides more evidence that traditional methods of teaching and evaluation are no longer cutting it.

**Schwartz, Michelle. “The LTO Best Practices: Experiential Learning”. *The Ryerson Learning and Teaching Office* (2010). 1-20. Print.**

The beginning of Schwartz’s article provides a broad overview of experiential learning and its practices. This work is highly accessible and would be a good starting point for someone



just beginning to look into experiential learning and the like. As part of her overview she provides lists such as “characteristics that should be present in experiential learning” (1-2), “guide to integrating experiential learning into course work (5-6), “the teacher’s role in the experiential learning classroom”, as well as “experiential learning teaching techniques”.

Schwartz’s overview gives the most comprehensive look at evaluation of experiential learning that I have seen in the literature thus far. Like most, Schwartz encourages that teachers assign projects over tests as it is important to measure more than a just a student’s ability to remember information (13). She also recommends constant assessment and uses Alexander Astin’s Input-Environment-Output (AEO) model as an example (15). Schwartz also maintains that evaluation should be student-centered with self-evaluation playing a role. She closes off with a fairly comprehensive list of ways to assess experiential learning fairly.

However, it seems that Schwartz’s view of experiential learning is slightly different than what I have seen expressed in other literature thus far. She divides experiential learning into two categories: field based experiences and classroom-based learning. While the field experiences sound pretty standard, her classroom practices include role playing games, case studies, simulations, presentations, and group work (3-4). While I can understand how these could be considered part of experiential learning, I am not sure if they are something we want to include in our taxonomy. Further research should show if others consider the aforementioned practices to be EL activities.

I particularly enjoyed Schwartz’s discussion of primary and secondary experiences (5). Primary experiences are lived experiences whereas secondary experiences are experiences of reflection or application of what you learned through the lived experience. This is different

terminology than what I had seen in our research surrounding pedagogy and for me it makes a lot of sense. If undergrads do not have primary experiences, then learning may be lost because they will not have anything on which to base secondary experiences. Without secondary experiences, there would be no reflection, which as we know from much of our research is crucial to experiential learning.

While reading, I could not help but feel as though this article was written to be used at a grade-school level. For one, in her descriptions of evaluation and assessment it sounded as though all students were learning the same topic and taking part in the same field work outside of school. This sounds neither typical nor ideal for a post-secondary setting. The article does not specify that it is applicable to a higher learning context, but having been written at Ryerson University in their *Best Practices* magazine leads me to believe that it should be. Though not particularly in depth, this article is valuable in terms of providing a broad overview as well as a resource for the evaluation of experiential learning.

Schwartz draws quite a bit of information from S.D. Wurdinger and J.A. Moon. Works by these authors may be worth looking in to.

**Stokes, Peter. "Experiential Learning's Role in Preparing Students for Post-Graduation Careers: A Big Idea." *Inside Higher Ed*. N.p., 23 July 2013. Web. 27 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2013/07/25/experiential-learnings-role-preparing-students-post-graduation-careers>>.**

Noting high youth unemployment rates in spite of an abundance of entry-level jobs going unfilled, Stokes advocates for places of higher education to implement practices which smooth the transition between education and employment. He uses Boston's Northeastern University –

where he happens to work – as a place where such efforts are being made. Northeastern considers itself to be a leader in global experiential learning. Upon exploring their website, it seems that education at Northeastern is synonymous with experiential learning. Each student there takes on at least two cooperative education programs – or co-ops – in the course of a degree. Max Kaye, CEO of IDEA explains the logic of the University’s focus on experiential learning. He says that “when you move students away from textbooks and closer to real people they develop a skill set and judgment that is more broadly applicable in industry”. This echoes the sentiments of most every experiential learning paper I have read thus far. However, I digress.

This particular article focuses on the University’s IDEA Venture Accelerator in their business faculty. Here, business students are provided with the opportunity to bring their ideas to and/or work in the think tank. First, ideas are developed and discussed and business proposals built. They call this the “incubator”. Students are connected with student coaches and experienced mentors to help them through the process of building their business plan. To top things off, Northeastern gives small grants of about \$10,000 to promising projects, thus investing in their students and giving them a start in the professional world. They say the difference between their incubator process and those of other universities is that they stay involved until the venture is self-sustaining.

The philosophy behind IDEA is “educate, incubate, launch”. This sounds like it could be applicable to any experiential learning venture. We educate ourselves about the world while in the classroom, move into the field to “incubate” and learn in a controlled and guided way. Then, we are prepared to move or launch into the professional sphere. Northwestern University may be a good place to look to for more information on best practices.

**Teixeira-Poit, Stephanie, Abigail E. Cameron, and Michael D. Schulman. “Experiential Learning and Research Ethics: Enhancing Knowledge through Action.” *Teaching Sociology* 39.3 (2011): 244-258. Print**

This article and study applies the principles and practice of experiential learning to teaching responsible research conduct to undergrad and graduate students of sociology. Using experiential practices the researchers hoped to broaden student understanding of ethics beyond right and wrong (244). The article offers an overview of traditional versus experiential learning as well as a review of the literature the authors read in preparing for their study. They then outline the three-step process used in their study. It involves a case study, role play, and facilitated dialogue. The post-experiment survey served as fourth step of critical reflection. They found at the end of their study that students either strongly agreed or agreed that the experiential learning exercise had facilitated their learning (254). Indeed, in the written reflections it was clear that for most students notions of ethical behavior had expanded past clear-cut ideas of “right versus wrong” (251).

The authors make a brief comment about working in a classroom setting with movable chairs. This made me consider aspects of the physical classroom and how that could affect experiential learning. How can critical dialogue and engagement take place while students sit in rows of immovable chairs? Even the set-up of the classroom is meant to strengthen the banking concept of education. This is another challenge for experiential learning that may need to be answered for and addressed.

I was also puzzled by the author’s mention of how careful they were to avoid controversial subjects such as violence in their experiment (249). Censorship and avoidance seem to counter the philosophical underpinnings of experiential learning that I have seen in other

research. They cite Joshua Meisel as well as Elizabeth Grauerholz and Stacey Copenhaver in that discussion. I plan to find these sources to better understand this purposeful censorship. The article as a whole was perhaps too specific to Sociology and ethics for our purposes but brought up some good questions and implications for further research.

**Thomas, Liz. *Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change: a Summary of Findings and Recommendations from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme*. United Kingdom: What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme, 2012.**

Though never expressly named, this study from the UK clearly advocates for experiential learning as the key to student engagement and retention. Based upon the findings from seven studies, this report outlines recommendations for best practices in teaching and learning for student engagement and retention. For institutions, retention is important as each student who leaves is also a loss of income (4). The report states that a significant minority of first year students (between 33% and 42%) in the UK consider withdrawal from higher education. This is especially so in the first semester and right after Christmas. The top reported reasons for withdrawal are academic issues, feelings of isolation and/or not fitting in, and concern about achieving future aspirations (8). From this, it was found that the best combatant to these aforementioned issues is to foster a sense of belongingness in all students (6). Belonging, as we have seen in the works of George Kuh is linked to engagement at both the academic and social levels with academic engagement being synonymous with deep as opposed to “banked”, surface learning (6).

Though this article is a summary of the findings of seven different studies, if they had gone just slightly deeper I am certain they would have begun to name specific experiential learning practices as critical to engagement. Instead, Thomas states that student belonging is achieved through: supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction between staff and students; developing knowledge, confidence, and identity as successful higher education learners; and a higher education experience relevant to student's interests and future goals (7). For those of us with a grasp on the theory and practices of experiential learning, it is probably quite clear how it is through experiential initiatives that these aims can be actualized.

Thomas poignantly put experiential and participatory education into a phrase that I found particularly interesting and appropriate. She said "an opt-out rather than an opt-in approach to education should be the norm, not the exception" (9). Students should not have to choose engagement; instead it should be thrust upon them.

Though the studies upon which this report is based took place in the UK, they echo the same sorts of troubles and solutions found and reported on by George Kuh and colleagues in the United States.

## B) Impacts:

### *On Learner:*

- Principle of Engagement: the more students study, practice, and get feedback, the more adept a learner they become. Students who are involved in educationally productive

activities in college are *developing habits of the mind and heart* that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development.(Kuh, 2003)

- Participation in high impact practices (see annotation for Kuh, 2008) is especially beneficial to students who start further behind in terms of entering academic test scores and students from communities that have historically been underserved education (Kuh, 2008).
- Kuh, 2008: Chart A – the Essential Learning Outcomes:
  - Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
  - intellectual and practical skills
    - Inquiry and analysis, written and oral comm., quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving
  - personal and social responsibility
    - civic knowledge and engagement – local and global, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning
  - integrative and applied learning

\*Seems like a pretty good overview of the different learner outcomes. List was developed through “multiyear dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning, analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business

community, and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education.\*

- Students who use “deep” approaches to learning tend to get higher grades and retain, integrate, and transfer information at higher rates. (Kuh, 2008)
- First year engagement affects GPA as well as the likelihood that students will return to the school for a second year (Kuh, 2009).
- Using experiential learning to teach research ethics can broaden student understand of ethics beyond right and wrong (Teixera-Poit et. al, 2011)
- Potential negative effects on learners and communities:
  - Poorly structured experiential learning can reinforce the belief that social problems are a result of personal troubles rather than structural (Meisel, 196).
  - Short-term experiential learning can run the risk of enforcing stereotypes and amplifying the sense of voyeurism (Meisel, 206)
  - May be untold damage asking students to reveal difficult/traumatic parts of their lives (Grauerholz and Copenhaver, 321).
- Experiential learning: producing self-initiating, self-directed learners (Hickox, 123).
- Service-learning reduces prejudice and racism and increases intercultural sensitivity (Simons et. al, 191).
- Bringle and Steinberg’s student learning outcomes for the civic minded graduate:



- Academic knowledge and technical skills, knowledge of volunteer opportunities and non-profit organizations, knowledge of contemporary social issues, listening and communication skills, diversity skills, and self-efficacy (2010).
- Increased problem analysis complexity, solution complexity, knowledge application, critical thinking ability. (Giles and Eyler in Bringle and Steinberg)
- Awareness of multidimensionality of social problems (Batchelder and Root in Bringle and Steinberg)
- Better learning (Markus et al. in Bringle and Steinberg)
- Higher quality of thought (Kendrick in Bringle and Steinberg)
- realization of “unique potentiality” or a student’s willingness to continually become what they already are not (Curzon-Hobson, 266).
- Greater student interest in learning when their lived experiences are incorporated (Fine, 19).
- Unstructured study abroad programs can harden students’ pre-existing negative stereotypes, foster a missionary fervor that prevents the public from truly understanding the community in which work is taking place, or create feelings of burden on the community or exploitation by the student and/or their institution (Epprecht, 690).

*Hireability:*

- Develop a skill set and judgment that is more broadly applicable in industry (“A Big Idea”, Stokes)

- Companies viewed students with internship, co-op, and community project experience as having more potential for success. (Peter D. Hart, 6).

*On Community:*

- Though Universities may have best intentions, lack of attention to power differentials and to ethnocentric values creates harm and distrust (Gugerty and Swezey, 95).
- Cruz and Giles 2000 literature review – key findings:
  - Service learning contributes to community development
  - Service learning bridges town-gown gaps
  - Service learning offers benefits to community partners
- Contribution of experiential learning to quality of life in communities and quality of partnerships:
  - Hosting service students had positive impact on their capacity to serve clients, led to improved social and economic benefits for agencies and provided new insights on program development (Driscoll et. al in Bringle and Steinberg)
  - Increased organizational capacity to take on new projects (Sandy and Holland in Bringle and Steinberg)
  - Increased volunteer labour, visibility of agency, improved client services.  
However, may be more challenging for agency because direct supervision rests on community staff – not faculty (Gazley and Littlepage in Bringle and Steinberg).

- Unstructured study abroad programs can harden students' pre-existing negative stereotypes, foster a missionary fervor that prevents the public from truly understanding the community in which work is taking place, or create feelings of burden on the community or exploitation by the student and/or their institution (Epprecht, 690).

*On Faculty:*

- Greater value given to professors' work outside of research and publication. Thus, they would have more room for exploration and innovation (Clary-Lemon, 22).
- Enhanced research opportunities across a wide range of disciplines (Wilfrid Laurier scan of CEL)

*On Institution:*

- At institutions with "better than expected" rates of graduation faculty is more likely to use engaging pedagogical practices (Kuh, 2008 – 21).