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Service-Learning and the Discourse of Social Justice

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> *When I became the Academic Director of Community Service-Learning (CSL) at a large Canadian university in 2012, one of the questions I grappled with was whether we (the staff and I) should be trying to promote a unified vision for service-learning across the university, and if so, what that vision should be. For example, social justice aims had been espoused by founders of the program and staff continued to endorse the importance of reciprocity between university and community. But the goals of instructors adopting service-learning in their classes ranged from providing opportunities for students in language classes so they could appreciate the cultural aspects of language and practice their skills in community organizations, to exposing first-year medical students to issues in the community as a way of expanding their understanding of the complex social problems in the urban contexts in which they would work. The curricular program was driven by instructors' goals for their classes; the process began with instructors submitting an "intention form" followed by staff working to find community placements aligned with these goals. In other words, student learning came first.*
>
> (Alison Taylor)

We begin with this story to provide a hint of the complexity and diversity of service-learning. Participants in CSL include instructors, community partners, students, and CSL staff (if there is a central unit providing support) – all of which are diverse groups. CSL is described as a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences, which meet actual community needs, are integrated into students' academic curriculum or provide structured time for reflection, and enhance what is taught in the classroom by extending student learning into the community

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(Furco, 1996). Writers suggest there are different approaches to CSL, variously described in terms of paradigm, continuum, or dichotomy (e.g., Butin, 2010; Lewis, 2004; Maistry & Ramdhani, 2010). While most writers in the academic literature focus on the outcomes of CSL for students in the literature (e.g., increased engagement), a smaller number focus on the impact on community (e.g., Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

The CSL literature often attributes differences in approaches to their emancipatory (social justice) or functional aims. However, it is not always clear what is meant by social justice aims in service-learning. Assumptions about who determines these aims and for whom they are directed, what kind of aims, and how they are to be achieved are not always explicit. For example, does social justice in CSL mean encouraging university students to learn about their communities so they can become change agents (assuming all participants can agree on what that means)? Does it mean providing service-learning as a way for underrepresented groups of university students (e.g., students first in their families to attend higher education) to be successful in their programs? Perhaps, privileging partnerships with community organizations that espouse social justice aims? Or what about universities working in collective ways (beyond a single course or class) with a range of community organizations on *wicked* community problems (e.g., poverty, homelessness)?

This chapter begins by examining how different approaches to CSL are described in the academic literature about service-learning. We then explore various conceptions of social justice developed in academic writing over time. Borrowing also from writings about *cognitive justice*, rooted in postdevelopment and postcolonial work, which argue for expanding the kinds and forms of knowledge seen as valuable in universities and beyond, extends our thinking about social justice by focusing more directly on questions around knowledge while embracing complexity and unpredictability.

The short section that follows provides background about how CSL has developed in the Canadian context compared to the US, where it has a much longer history. We then discuss how different approaches to CSL are described in the academic literature and the tensions in these approaches, for example, between *charity* and *social justice* approaches. The section that follows considers the limitations of social justice discourse within this literature and the implications of acknowledging the complexity of social justice work. We then turn to what can be learned from writings about cognitive justice and what changes are needed in universities to facilitate justice-learning.

History of Service-Learning in North America

In the US, service-learning appeared initially in the mid-1960s, when there was expansion in higher education and a focus on anti-poverty and social reform programs. But the pedagogical value of service-learning for students became the primary focus over time. Later, service-learning came to be constructed as an "educational reform strategy that complemented the traditional discipline-based curriculum and emphasized students' cognitive development" (Lounsbury &

Pollack, 2001, p. 332). While “service-learning” is the term of choice in the US, this language has been described as problematic; for example, Himley (2004) writes: “Service has roots in the volunteerism of white middle- and upper-class women in this country, where these hopeful and idealistic (and perhaps naïve) volunteers went out into poor and working class neighbourhoods to improve the material and moral lot of the less fortunate” (p. 419).

Canada followed the US in adopting the language of service-learning although programs in higher education began to proliferate much later. Their development was partly stimulated by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, which granted $9,500,000 to 10 Canadian universities between 2004 and 2011 to support the initiation or expansion of service-learning programming. The McConnell foundation also funded the establishment of the *Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning* in 2004 to strengthen and promote service-learning across the country. One source suggests at least 50 campuses in Canada had service-learning programs in 2010 (Keshen, Holland, & Moely, 2010) and this has continued to grow as universities seek to expand their engagement with the community.

Despite this expansion, Canadian service-learning lacks the coordination evident in the US, where service-learning has been supported by various levels of government, receives institutional and foundation funding, and has dedicated conferences and academic journals (Raddon & Harrison, 2015). A survey of service-learning practitioners and community agency networks concluded that the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning had important work ahead in connecting practitioners, developing resources, helping to develop research on service-learning, and linking national, provincial, and local organizations and associations (Hayes, 2006). The research literature in Canada related to CSL is small but growing (Taylor et al., 2015).

Approaches to Service-Learning

A review of service-learning literature suggests three ways of thinking about different approaches to this kind of community-engaged learning: a liberal *pluralistic* approach, which holds that a diversity of approaches can peacefully coexist; a *continuum* approach which assumes developmental movement from charity-oriented approaches to transformative approaches; and an approach that *dichotomizes* charity (or traditional) approaches with social justice (or critical) approaches.

The Pluralistic Approach

CSL is not a coherent pedagogical strategy. Dan Butin (2007; 2010) presents four conceptualizations of community engagement and service-learning, described as technical, cultural, political, and antifoundational approaches. He sees the technical perspective as a major strand, which looks at linkages between service-learning and student outcomes to identify “best practice” principles. Our review of the literature confirms that significant attention is given to how to organize CSL to achieve certain student outcomes (e.g., Eyler, Giles, & Astin, 1999). Butin (2010) links a cultural perspective with the technical perspective in the literature since it, too, focuses on CSL as a means of achieving certain ends, in this case,

civic engagement, respect for diversity, and ethics. Here, Butin seems to equate civic engagement with a view of citizenship as “personal responsibility” as opposed to the more active citizenship associated with the “participatory” or “justice-oriented” citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Butin suggests a political perspective is primarily concerned with questions of power and legitimacy, asking questions like: Whose voices are heard? Who makes decisions and who benefits? It encourages a transformative pedagogy that aims to make a difference in communities while also encouraging a critical stance toward service-learning, for example, criticizing the idea of “drive-by volunteerism” (cited in Cross, 2005). Finally, antifoundational approaches, which are situated within feminist post-structuralist writings (Butin, 2007), question and disrupt the binaries that guide much day-to-day thinking and acting.

Morton (1995) also discusses three related but distinct paradigms of CSL – charity, project, and social change – with distinctive worldviews, ways of identifying and addressing problems, and agendas for change. Moving away from the idea of a linear progression from charity to social justice, Morton proposes that people adopt “distinctive ways of doing service” (p. 23). The charity paradigm is associated with control of service remaining mostly with education providers, limited time for engagement, and limited claims of impact on individuals. The project paradigm is more focused on defining problems and solutions and implementing plans, and impacts can be longer term and more systemic. Finally, in the social change/transformation paradigm, acts of service are part of a larger strategy to bring about change and to empower the powerless. In Morton’s view, each paradigm can be adopted with integrity, that is, with consistency between its ideals and practice. He sees potential in each paradigm to “move by a different path toward justice” (p. 31), since if done well, all three can lead toward the transformation of an individual within a community and toward the transformation of communities.

Our survey of the CSL literature suggests a variety of approaches to professional education programs (Taylor et al., 2015). For example, while university programs in teaching, social work, and health professions commonly include a CSL component with the stated aim of challenging students’ worldviews and developing a particular kind of professional identity rooted in a “social justice or anti-oppressive framework” (Charles, Alexander, & Oliver, 2014, p. 6), programs described as technical are also perceived to bring positive change to communities. For example, Galal et al. (2014) describe an initiative where pharmacy students assisted over 2,000 Medicare beneficiaries to reduce the costs of their plans while students gained knowledge, confidence working with clients, and hours toward professional certification.

The Continuum Approach

While writers like Butin (2010) and Morton (1995) describe a diversity of approaches to CSL, other writers imagine a developmental continuum. For example, Kendall (1990) suggested service-learning experiences should have a specific goal of moving students along a continuum from providing charity toward promoting social justice. Chambers (2009) describes a continuum of approaches from *philanthropy* to *social justice* to *social transformation*, which

connect but are informed by different theoretical literatures. A philanthropic approach is built on the idea of extending help to the less fortunate in an effort to improve their human condition; the community is perceived as a problem to be fixed. Social justice approaches seek access for marginalized people to the equitable and equal distribution of social resources, goods, opportunities, and responsibilities. Social justice and social transformation approaches are seen as distinct, with the latter focused on altering the system rather than righting a wrong done to individuals or groups.

Maistry and Ramdhani (2010) also suggest a continuum with service and learning at different ends:

> Research into service-learning programmes located on the "learning" extreme of the service versus learning continuum will certainly trigger distinctively different kinds of theorising as compared to service-learning programmes at the other extreme, namely those programmes that place "service" at the heart of the programme. (p. 564)

Like Morton, they urge instructors involved in developing CSL to be intentional about their aims. However, Maistry and Ramdhani do not suggest developmental progress as one moves to more mature forms of service (Morton, 1995). Rather, they argue for an approach to theorizing that recognizes infinite possibilities for program design and research between extremes on the continuum, with each design impacting the kinds of knowledge and kind of learning that is likely to occur.

The Dichotomy Approach

In contrast to both the images of paradigm and continuum, a strand of the CSL literature dichotomizes *traditional* and *critical* or *charity* and *social justice* approaches, with a clear preference for critical/social justice approaches (Lewis, 2004; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Mitchell, 2008). For example, Mitchell (2008) writes:

> In reviewing the literature, I was challenged by an unspoken debate that seemed to divide service-learning into *two camps* – a traditional approach that emphasizes service without attention to systems of inequality, and a critical approach that is unapologetic in its aim to dismantle structures of injustice…A critical approach embraces the political nature of service and seeks social justice over more traditional views of citizenship…Critical service-learning programs encourage students to see themselves as agents of social change, and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities. (pp. 50, 51)

Similarly, Marullo and Edwards (2000) state:

> *Charity* refers to the provision of help or relief to those in need….When one's goal is *social justice*, one attempts to alter the structural or institutional practices that produce excessive or unjustified inequalities among individuals. (p. 899)

Grounded in a critical pedagogy, a social justice approach “teaches students how to responsibly investigate what the individuals in a community define their concerns to be,” unlike a charity model, where educators often decide what is best for community or prioritize student learning (Verjee, 2010, p. 9). Lewis (2004) adds that charity and social justice models of service-learning are distinguished by the extent to which their objectives emphasize student learning or community empowerment; whether community is viewed as subject or partner; and whether one adopts a conflict (social justice) or consensus (charity) view of society.

A common assumption of social justice approaches described above is that CSL should encourage university students to learn more about social problems in communities so they can become change agents, assuming agreement on what that means. However, a small proportion of the literature also suggests that service-learning can play a social justice role *within* the university by providing a way for underrepresented groups of university students (e.g., “first generation” or students first in their families to attend higher education, students with disabilities, racialized minority students) to be successful in their programs.

Research focused on social justice within universities includes studies of the effects of CSL on diverse student populations from varying social, economic, and cultural backgrounds (McKay & Estrella, 2008; Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012; Shadduck-Hernández, 2006).[2] For example, Coles (1999) and McKay and Estrella (2008) looked at the role of CSL programs in diverse students’ success and retention in higher education, including students who are first generation (Pelco, Ball, & Lockeman, 2014; Yeh, 2010). Other studies address the ways CSL initiatives may reproduce marginalization because of their failure to interrupt the White privilege of White professors and students (Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012; Pickron-Davis, 1999). Bussert-Webb (2009) and Shadduck-Hernández (2006) emphasize the powerful significance of ethnic similarity in student–community relationships and the consequent impact on students’ experiences in CSL. Studies that address the impact of CSL on particular groups of students are useful, first, in recognizing that social justice aims need to encompass university practices, and second, in drawing attention to the diversity of student participants, a feature often overlooked in the literature. However, it is important to note that outcomes of experiential learning are uncertain as the students might learn things in line with or counter to those that have been predefined by the instructors (Cameron, 2014).

In sum, a number of the authors advocate for a social justice or critical approach to service-learning. While sympathetic to these aims, our review of the CSL literature suggests that the term social justice is often used without defining what authors mean, acknowledging there are different approaches to social justice, and recognizing the contributions of postdevelopment and postcolonial writers to current discussions. The sections that follow discuss how attention to the various conceptions of social justice and writings about cognitive justice (often connected to calls to value Indigenous knowledge in universities) may inform CSL research and practice.

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2 This literature was a topic in our synthesis of CSL literature (Taylor et al., 2015), which addressed questions related to CSL outcomes, including: What are promising practices to addressing student diversity through CSL?

Social Justice Discourse and CSL

This section argues that some of the tensions within the CSL literature around different approaches (e.g., charity–social justice dichotomy) can be traced to limited conceptions about social justice and failure to see it as complex and unending (Butin, 2007).

Conceptions of Social Justice

Social justice involves struggle against the practices and conditions that privilege some social groups and oppress others (e.g., groups divided by social class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ableism, and age) (Young, 1990). Justice work involves analyzing and addressing such socially constructed differences (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2010). However, there have been various approaches to deliberations about social justice.

Gale (2000) traces a trajectory of conceptualizations of social justice from the perspectives of John Rawls (1971) and Robert Nozick (1976) to Iris Young (1990) and Nancy Fraser (1995). Models of social justice have been categorized as *distributive, retributive* and *recognitive* (Gale, 2000). Viewing justice as the equal distribution of social and material resources has been a prevalent theme. Rawls (1971) defines two main principles of *distributive* justice: individual freedom compatible with the freedoms of others, and equal distribution of resources unless an unequal distribution is more conducive to justice for the less privileged. In the *retributive* perspective, the emphasis is on fairness in the competition for resources rather than equalizing possessions. Nozick (1976) believed individuals should be rewarded "in accordance with their differential contributions to productive and competitive processes" (cited in Gale, 2000, p. 256). From this perspective, addressing inequality means addressing limits on individuals' freedom to contribute and to access rewards from their contributions.

A *recognitive* model of justice rethinks the meaning of social justice to acknowledge the place of structures and social groups in the production of inequalities (Fraser, 2009; Young, 1990). For instance, Young (1990) explains:

> Oppression consists in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes that inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspectives on social life in contexts where others can listen. (p. 38)

In Fraser's approach, social arrangements facilitate an equal footing in social life for all, and therefore democracy depends on the justice of these social arrangements. For Fraser (2005), justice as "participatory parity" requires equal attention to both economic and sociocultural aspects of justice (p. 73). However, she argues that the conditions of our globalized world necessitate adding a political aspect to our understandings and analyses of justice. The political dimension of *representation* refers to adequate representation of groups and individuals in decision-making

processes. Fraser (2008, 2009) views injustice as a consequence of *misframing*, which excludes some from consideration and denies their right to first-order justice claims including material and sociocultural claims.

The capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen (1992) is similar to Fraser's work in arguing that redistribution is necessary but not sufficient for social justice. The reason is that the opportunities each person has to convert their resources into capabilities vary (Walker, 2006). The focus on capabilities, "what people are actually able to be and do, rather than how much income or other 'primary social goods'…they have," integrates both recognition and redistribution by addressing both economic inequalities and cultural injustices (Walker, 2006, p. 164).

Social Justice Conceptions in Education and Service-Learning

Social justice aims expressed in formal education, including service-learning, are often restricted to distributive models of justice. They tend to focus on creating access to education and equity for those defined as marginalized students (see Unterhalter, 2009) or on providing disadvantaged community members with cultural and material goods (including education) as a remedy for their perceived lack of certain skills (Gale, 2000). Writings about social justice and education have pointed to the limitations of this approach for over two decades. For example, in his discussion of schooling, R. W. Connell (1993) suggested that the question of justice in Western societies revolved mostly around "access" to formal schooling and certification, with the form and content of schooling being taken for granted. Michael Apple (1993) also highlighted the control of schools over meaning and knowledge. For him, schools were complicit in reproducing injustice through preserving and distributing what is perceived to be legitimate knowledge. In higher education, questions of access continue to be at the forefront; for example, Furlong and Cartmel (2009) suggest that social justice, following Rawls, involves ensuring "that individuals and groups all enjoy fair access to rewards" (p. 3). This means establishing an education system "in which all are able to develop their potential and pursue their interests, unrestricted by socio-economic disadvantage" (p. 16).

Some writers have argued that the focus on *access to education* in social justice interventions is important but not sufficient because it fails to challenge the role of education in producing and codifying knowledge (e.g., Connell, 1993). Education is a social process with an inescapable link between its content and distribution. As a form of knowledge, curriculum always has particular social bases and advances particular social interests. For example, Connell (1993) points to the class history embedded in the hegemonic curriculum in Australian high schools and to struggles over whose knowledge is of most worth; he asserts that taken-for-granted ideas about core areas of knowledge and how it is organized are products of "politics shaped by the wider distribution of social power" (p. 31). A distributive approach is therefore critiqued for seeing justice as a predefined ideal that works to allocate resources regardless of the conditions that created inequalities, including the politics in social institutions.

Attention to the political dimension of justice, including discussions about inclusion and exclusion, recalls Fraser's (2007) notion of framing, whereby certain "social orderings" and "political constitution of societies" may block or facilitate

participation and access for certain groups (p. 316). Those who are misframed or who are unable to claim their rights often become objects of charity or benevolence. Critiques of charity models in CSL stem partly from this argument that the root causes of inequality in social systems need to be recognized (Mitchell, 2008).

Despite the increasingly nuanced conceptual discussion of social justice over time, an examination of a sample of CSL literature suggests the term social justice is either used with little definition (acts as code for presumed shared beliefs) or is commonly expressed using distributive or retributive conceptions. For instance, Morton (1995) suggests that a social change or transformation paradigm sees acts of service as steps in "a larger strategy to bring about change, quite often assessed as the redistribution of resources or social capital" (p. 20). Chambers (2009), who favors service-learning based on justice and transformation over charity models, states, "social justice involves access to the equitable and equal distribution of social resources, goods, opportunities, and responsibilities" (p. 89). Although he notes that social structures affect access, he adopts a remedial approach, stating, "the redistribution of access to resources, goods, opportunities, and responsibilities is a response to prior unjust restrictions placed on certain groups of people in a society" (p. 89).

York (2016) also argues for attention to *difference* through institutional practices and policies that "mitigate the limited forms of capital" available to first generation students in service-learning (p. 13). Mitchell (2008) similarly describes critical service-learning as "working to redistribute power" (p. 56). The aim of facilitating the empowerment "of those in statuses who have been traditionally disempowered" through service-learning can be seen as another form of retributive approach (Marullo & Edwards, 2000, p. 898). In addition to the potentially problematic aspects of faculty and students becoming "advocates for those in need" (p. 898) (also see Fraser's ideas about representation discussed earlier in this chapter), this approach diverts attention from the responsibility of universities in reproducing social inequality through their constructions of what and whose knowledge is most important (cf. Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, & Hunt, 2015; Connell, 1993).[3]

The language of empowering the powerless in social justice-oriented CSL depicts university students as universal knowers, privileged, and agentic – those with the ability to empower, while community (particularly, clients of nonprofit agencies) are depicted as local knowers, needy and passive – the powerless. Because of this, Bruce (2013) critiques "critical" as well as "traditional" service-learning; in her view, both are framed within modern education projects concerned with individual self-betterment and social progress. Instead, she proposes a relational "postcritical" approach to service-learning (p. 35), described further later in this chapter. Himley (2004) and Butin (2007) also confront service-learning approaches claiming social justice aims that do not open space for discussions about privilege and knowledge. For example,

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3 The discourse of empowerment brings to mind an article by Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) called "Why doesn't this feel empowering?" about the rationalist assumptions of critical pedagogy. Ellsworth argued that if the assumptions, goals, implicit power dynamics, and issues of who produces valid knowledge remained untouched, relations of domination would likely continue.

Himley (2004) observes that service-learning students are authorized to write about the agency or nonprofit or community they work with through their position of epistemic privilege produced by their institutional role.

To disrupt this privilege, Himley suggests that service-learning advocates could learn from postcolonial and feminist ethnographic work. Postcolonial work directs attention to the historical processes whereby some bodies are configured as stranger and more dangerous than other bodies (Ahmed, 2001). The fact that broader relations of power frame any encounter between embodied subjects is important for thinking about how to democratize university–community engagements. Practically, disrupting the power of the university would involve community-led engagements that prioritize community issues and concerns in planning, implementation and evaluation.

The evident variation of justice-based approaches to CSL reminds us that the task of conceptualizing justice is complex and ongoing. As Butin (2007) states:

> Justice-learning is concerned most prominently with making visible the contingency of our present situations; that we are always in-the-making of our beliefs, practices, and structures. This is radical undecidability in that all conditions are open to contestation and reconstruction. This leaving open of conversations – for instance, about race, about equity, about justice – short-circuits any attempt at dilution for the sake of simple (and simplistic) answers. (p. 181)

Butin (2015) argues for an antifoundational approach, which begins from the premise that truths are always local, contingent, and intersubjective. By adopting a position of doubt rather than certainty, it is possible to disrupt binaries that close off space for discussion, debate and action. One such binary (identified earlier in this chapter) is *charity vs. social justice* in CSL writing. One of the problems with such binaries is the way social justice is constructed, which tends to presuppose that university participants know how to support these aims in any given context or community (Butin, 2015).

The critiques we have outlined do not deny the importance of distributive and recognitive approaches; they are fundamental prerequisites for other work. Rather, our aim is to highlight the importance of contextualizing discussions and activity toward social justice: “Social justice as a process and objective” is always situated (Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010). Further, instead of engaging with the *what* of justice, deliberations need to be concerned with the *how* of justice and also how justice itself is conceived. Questions about the differential valuing of various kinds and forms of knowledge, at the heart of discussions about cognitive justice, help us move beyond narrow definitions of social justice.

The Importance of Cognitive Justice

Given widening access to higher education along with persistent marginalization of certain groups of students and growing attention to the role of universities in the production of knowledge, it is not surprising that questions about knowledge

and epistemology are being debated. Most relevant for this chapter, some writers are drawing attention to the epistemic violence evident in higher education as academics working with subaltern groups (e.g., Indigenous students) "are called to translate [their ways of knowing] into the dominant language, logic, and technologies in ways that are intelligible…to readers and interpreters in the dominant culture" (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011, p. 44; Archibald/Q'um Q'um Xiiem, 2008; Simpson, 2014). Arguing for epistemological pluralism, these authors argue instead that knowledge construction must be recognized as contingent, situated, and provisional. This position is consistent with writers like Santos (2007) and Odora Hoppers (2009) who support the struggle for global cognitive justice.

The concept of cognitive justice is a response to a monopolistic and monoepistemological worldview, constructed through Western colonization and imperialist efforts and sustained by globalization and modernity (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2009; Santos, 2007; Visvanathan, 2000). Cognitive justice insists on the rights of different forms of knowledge to exist creatively without threat of colonization, subordination, or the oversimplifications of "add and mix" recipes for inclusion of marginalized groups into centered logics (Meneses, 2007; Odora Hoppers, 2009; Santos, 2007; Visvanathan, 2000). Advocates of cognitive justice seek to expand upon and diversify who contributes to a "citizenship of knowledge" (Odora Hoppers, 2009, p. 611) through an "ecology of knowledges" (EoK) (Visvanathan, 2000, pp. 3599, 3604). Although writers often focus on global North–South relationships, we propose that the quest for cognitive justice should begin in local contexts with attention to marginalized groups whose knowledges have been denied or appropriated. The concept of ecology of knowledges allows one to hold space for multiple understandings "without forgetting one's own" (Santos, 2007, p. 13). It is a "method for exploring difference, and providing for reciprocity and empathy" (Odora Hoppers, 2009, p. 611). Metaphorically speaking, an EoK allows for the investigation into *negative space*, or the "relationships *between* knowledges and…the hierarchies that are generated between them" (Santos, 2007, p. 15).

We therefore need to think about alternative knowledges not in terms of inclusion into the ideals of the nation state or capitalist system but as possibilities that may interrupt such systems; as an example, Coulthard (2014) suggests disrupting the generative structure of colonial-capitalist exploitation and domination. Precisely because EoK is not a simple "add and mix" diversity campaign, its engagement is likely to be resisted by those discomforted by disruption to their taken-for-granted ideas. This is because what may emerge through the influence of multiple perspectives is a "commitment to develop alternatives to modernity that will not reproduce its violences" (Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, & Hunt, 2015, p. 27). Similarly, Santos (2007) stresses that the critical task in advancing a global social justice with global cognitive justice "means that [such endeavors] cannot be limited to generating alternatives. Indeed, it requires an alternative thinking of alternatives" (p. 10).

Cognitive *in*justice, then, impedes the integration of multiple and varied forms of knowledge while advancing "unequal economic and political power relations which produce and reproduce increasingly more severe social injustice" (Toulmin, cited in Santos, 2007, p. xv). Cognitive injustice renounces other

epistemologies and works to obstruct and cease the production of such knowledges in many parts of the globalized world through multiple enactments including the "abyssal divide," or the division of Western and non-Western thinking by covert and overt violences (Santos, 2007, p. 1). Cognitive injustice asserts a hierarchy of "logic" and "objectivity" while simultaneously employing a deficit lens to develop historical narratives that pathologize the non-West (Odora Hoppers, 2009; Shiva, 1997).

The Relationship Between Cognitive Justice and Social Justice

Critical sociologists of education like Apple (1993), Connell (1993), Giroux (1981) and Freire (1970) were writing about the power relations implicit in knowledge production and dissemination decades ago. But while such writings considered the epistemological dominance within formal education, more recent writers draw attention to the impacts of ontological dominance, perceived to be left unexamined by "strategies of equity, access, voice, recognition, representation, or redistribution" (Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 27). Further, recent discussions argue for the decolonization of higher education as well as alternatives to development beyond those rooted in Eurocentric knowledge (Gudnyas, 2011). There is a commitment to the continuous articulation of what cognitive justice means and recognition that meanings will continue to evolve; belief in a plurality of conceptions of the world, without hierarchies; and a shift from a focus on social class relations to a focus on global relations through theories that have emerged from the global South because of the work of Indigenous and postcolonial scholars (see Connell, 2009; Mohanty, 2003; Naples & Desai, 2002; Narayan, 1997).

Social justice without cognitive justice risks advancing the analyses of privileged perspectives on *which types* of social justice projects should be considered for engagement (Cole, 2012; Odora Hoppers, 2009). We see this in present-day endeavors motivated by what Cole (2012) has coined the white-savior industrial complex (WSIC). Couched in rhetoric of "service" and "justice," the WSIC advances dominant groups' assumptions about what marginalized groups *need* and advances flawed campaigns that can devastate the very populations they intend to serve. Such scenarios may seek to assimilate marginalized groups into Western conceptions of "success" rather than considering the role of Eurocentricity in the creation of systemic oppressions designed to impede the safety, creativity, progress, and unity of Others.

Attention to cognitive justice makes space for recognizing hierarchies of ideas and practices within (social) justice systems; it allows for a shift in power through dialogue about hierarchy and advocates for an engagement with an ecology of knowledges. Within the spectrum of cognitive justice, the social justice advocate is not the "learned" imparting knowledge to Others, but is instead part of an ecological/rhizomatic system that co-explores with multiple actors: reciprocity, diverse pedagogies, history/narrative/storytelling, perspective, purpose, intent, power, hierarchy, need, assumption, success, time, linearity, access, and so on. Participants in such justice practices recognize that there is no one answer to progress and learning. Theory, for example, is not just written in texts and distributed authoritatively, nor is it only for academics

(Simpson, 2014). In her writing on Nishnaabeg intelligence, Simpson (2014) elaborates on some of the many ways of engaging with theory:

> A "theory" in its simplest form is an explanation of a phenomenon, and Nishnaabeg stories in this way form the theoretical basis of our intelligence. But theory also works a little differently within Nishnaabeg thought. "Theory" is generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice and within each family, community and generation of people. "Theory" isn't just an intellectual pursuit – it is woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives. (p. 7)

Simpson's account illustrates some of the many ways that pedagogical experiences exist in the world. An ecology of knowledges creates the space for alternative responses to the challenges imposed by classical Western development (Gudynas, 2011).

Cognitive Justice and Community Service-Learning

Leading community service-learning projects with cognitive justice aims requires us to get messy through a process of "constant questioning and incomplete answers" (Santos, 2007, p. 18). Participating in cognitive justice through an ever-evolving ecology of knowledges also requires responsibility, that is, "a much broader vision of what we do not know, as well as of what we do know, and also [an awareness] that what we do not know is our own ignorance, not a general ignorance" (Santos, 2007, p. 18). Simultaneously, cognitive justice encourages the troubling of historical and contemporary understandings of higher education because of proclivities to center and assert Western epistemologies as "informed," "educated," "correct," "truthful," and "superior" while rendering Others as "non-agentic" and "victimized." Integration of cognitive justice in CSL endeavors would not seek to assimilate or train and convert marginalized community partners into "citizens"; rather, it would acknowledge marginalized peoples "reclaiming the custodianship over their knowledge in public spaces along with the right to speak and be determining agents of co-operative contemporary change and creative knowledge sharing of these knowledge systems" (Odora Hoppers, 2009, p. 4).[4]

In her article, "Service learning as a pedagogy of interruption," Bruce (2013) suggests an approach to CSL that is consistent with ideas about cognitive justice. The guiding ideas for this approach include being open to being taught by Others on their own terms; being comfortable with uncertainty and unpredictability; and being driven by aims related to relationality and responsibility rather than self-betterment. This approach entails explorations of justice that are specific to the particular social and political context, rather than universal and predetermined (Gudynas, 2011).

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4 Although Odora Hoppers is referring to Indigenous people's struggles, we argue that her ideas can inform the struggles of many marginalized groups.

As one might imagine, prioritizing cognitive justice in CSL necessitates reflexivity, time, and in some cases, potentially discomforting realizations about one's complicity in systems of oppression. Rather than suggesting specific ways to pursue cognitive justice in university–community spaces, we conclude this section with some critical introspections. We propose unpacking and deconstructing taken-for-granted knowledge systems including the common Western belief that "the history of knowledge begins with one's entry into the university" (Visvanathan, 2000, p. 3604).

Similarly, in writing about solidarity activism, The Autonomous Geographies Collective (2010), which consisted of a group of researchers who conducted action research with activists, advocate for co-constructing vocabularies to be utilized by all partners in an effort to blur dichotomies and "overcome the false distinction between academia and wider society in terms of both sites of struggle and knowledge production" (p. 266). Working for cognitive justice also requires a willingness to become uncomfortable including investigations around assumptions about other cultures and systems of privilege. Perhaps most important is the necessity to lean into discomfort as opposed to avoiding discomfort in an effort to reflect on one's own privileges and complicities in the construction and maintenance of hierarchical systems. Leaning in may require all actors to participate vocally but also silently by listening, examining, and reexamining their place within the ecological system.

Implications for Practice

At the beginning of this chapter, we note that CSL has multiple aims, which are often seen as conflicting. For example, a charity–social justice binary juxtaposes programs focused on student development with programs focused on community change. Our discussion suggests that this binary is overly simplistic; social justice is more complex than ideas about distributive justice suggest. After considering different conceptualizations of social justice, we argue for approaches focused on the *how* of justice as well as the *what* – approaches that see service-learning as the opening question rather than final answer on how to support civic engagement and social justice (Butin, 2015). Articles by Himley (2004), Bruce (2013), and Butin (2007) point to the importance of being open to the messiness that necessarily characterizes relationships within and between diverse groups of instructors, students, community organizations, and community members. Following from this, an important role for university participants involves providing space for discussions about knowledge and privilege and the way power circulates (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014).

As suggested above, we think writings about cognitive justice can inform such discussion. We are said to live in a *knowledge economy*, which seems to translate into universities valuing applied research, university–business partnerships, and the development of intellectual property. However, countertrends in higher education include the priority given to university engagement with community, defined more broadly. This engagement, particularly with vulnerable segments of the community, requires respect for other knowledge systems and understanding "for the other as a life form, a livelihood and a way of life…fraternity at the epistemological level" (Visvanathan, 2000, p. 3604). Such ideas suggest an approach to engagement, which involves a readiness to work through difficult issues rather

than trying to control processes and outcomes or looking to others to provide solutions. Encouraging students to engage in a cumulative and ongoing reflective process – what Langdon & Agyeyomah (2014) refer to as hyper-reflexivity – also suggests the need to turn the gaze back on the university to ensure ethically responsible engagement. Below we consider some of the implications of our discussion for university administrators, CSL program developers, instructors, and students as a starting point for dialogue.

Administrators

As noted, the role of formal education in perpetuating injustice has been a topic in sociological writings for decades.[5] Writings focused on cognitive justice extend this discussion to highlight questions about epistemology while also bringing our gaze back to the university's own practices as they impact its relationships with community. For example, working toward a campus climate that supports equal access and equity for all students, faculty and staff, regardless of race, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and/or socioeconomic status (Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010), is likely to model the kind of practice expected of students when they work in community.

Further, there are initiatives within our own faculty to *Indigenize* curriculum within teacher education and graduate programs, informed by First Peoples Principles of Learning (FNESC, n.d.), which include the idea that learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place) as well as attention to Indigenous knowledge. Clearly, much work lies ahead in understanding what epistemological pluralism (Andreotti, Ahenakew, & Cooper, 2011) means in a university context and what changes are required in practice.

CSL literature refers to the undervaluing of such community engagement within university reward structures, for example, in tenure and promotion activities (Butterwick & Gurstein, 2010). The time required to build meaningful, long-term relationships between university and community and the differing logics of university and community organizations must be understood and addressed (Taylor & Kahlke, 2017). One way to approach this is by offering multiterm courses that prepare students for communities through exposure to diverse theories and practices related to justice-oriented engagements; this would allow students both to identify potential harms/contributions before going into the field and to engage in critical reflection and dialogue throughout the process. Otherwise, CSL activity overall is likely to be limited, and the dominant CSL approach is likely to be technical.

Finally, community–university relationships require a vigilant rethinking to prevent hierarchical university–community relationships that position the community as the recipient of knowledge. For example, East Carolina University provides a model of critical service-learning that sees community stakeholders as co-creators in the production of "local" and "socially-just knowledge" (Getto & McCunney,

5 Much of this discussion sees education as a positional good and has focused on questions of access for historically marginalized groups of students.

2016, p. 348). Creating a space for community partners to network with other organizations representatives through their service-learning center, redefining the impact and role of student service activities, and sharing potential partnership development opportunities for the future are among the goals of conversations hosted by the service-learning center aligned with their purpose of building reciprocity into CSL principles and practices.

CSL Program Staff

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the diversity of curricular CSL undertaken across universities can make it difficult to prioritize one approach or paradigm over others. But it should be apparent from the discussion earlier in this chapter that the decisions made throughout the process, from who initiates and develops the CSL placement or project to what supports are provided for different groups by a central office, impact how activities unfold. The types of placement opportunities students are offered shape the kind of questions that can be asked (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). A central CSL office can play an important role in making space for discussion about the messiness of justice-oriented CSL involving all participants (community participants as well as students and instructors). It can also provide ideas about what kind of principles should guide practice. For example, Andreotti (2016) encourages educators to ask open-ended questions about power, privilege, redistribution, and the reproduction of complicity in systemic harm, which could inform justice-oriented CSL, such as:

- Whose knowledge is perceived to have universal value? How can this imbalance be addressed?
- How is the historical connection between dispensers and receivers of knowledge framed and addressed? How are power imbalances addressed?
- What is being projected as ideal, normal, good, moral, natural, or desirable (in projects)?
- Do educators and students recognize themselves as culturally situated, ideologically motivated, and potentially incapable of grasping important alternative views?
- How are marginalized people represented?
- Are groups' legitimate right to disagree with the formulation of problems and solutions proposed recognized?

In addition to "how to" materials, which are prevalent in most CSL offices on campuses, orienting questions like Andreotti's could be provided to instructors who express interest in justice-oriented learning.

Faculty/Instructors

Much CSL literature focuses on the experiences of instructors in their own university classrooms, including articles cited above by Himley (2004), Bruce (2013), and Butin (2007). Their ideas about justice-oriented learning may guide action, in particular, ideas concerning how to approach relationships in community and how to encourage critical reflexivity around the kind of questions posed by Andreotti (2016) in this chapter's section "CSL program staff."

It is also important for instructors to think carefully about the kind of experiences they are creating for students.

For example, in his discussion about antifoundational pedagogy, Butin (2007) describes the *Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program*, developed over a decade ago at Temple University, which involves university students working with incarcerated men in an immersion experience where tensions and dilemmas have to be reflected upon and resolved. Similarly, an instructor interviewed at a Canadian university developed a writing course taught at an inner-city location with university students and marginalized community members learning together (Taylor & Kahlke, 2017). Such approaches disrupt traditional ideas about education and the centrality of university knowledge by helping participants to rethink the idea of a classroom as well as who is *teacher* and who is *student*.

Experimenting with approaches that allow students and community members more involvement in the development of experiences, while logistically challenging, may also allow relationships to develop rhizomatically rather than hierarchically. Given the challenges of the academic timetable, building CSL experiences into academic programs in deliberate ways may also allow for longer-term engagements for both students and community. Further, faculty and instructors can aid in their students' development of more relational, holistic engagements through alternative assessment measures such as: the removal of letter grades (in favor of pass/fail or other options); teaching students to self-evaluate their work (see hooks, 2003); and including peer evaluation as an element of evaluation.

Students

In addressing students' roles in CSL it is necessary to acknowledge that they are connected to a greater web of actors (e.g., administrators; faculty/instructors), have less institutional power than other actors, and, thus, can hardly work in isolation.

In response to service-learning that is connected to self-betterment purposes and dissemination of knowledge from university to the communities, alternative approaches focus on students' deconstructing assumptions about what and whose knowledge matters, assumptions reinforced in their previous classroom learning (Langdon & Agyeyomah, 2014). The notion of *disruption* described by Chovanec, Kajner, Mian Akram, and Underwood (2016) as a design element of their critical pedagogy-based CSL speaks to the question of "complicity and complacency in systems of oppression" (p. 109). Giroux (2015) describes a pedagogy of disruption as a "cosmopolitan, imaginative, public affirming pedagogy that demands a critical and engaged interaction with the world we live in mediated by a responsibility for challenging structures of domination and for alleviating human suffering" (para. 19). Disruptive pedagogy creates space for students to become aware of the consequences of their actions on others and the ways in which they may benefit from harm done to others, and to address the institutional causes of suffering (Cameron, 2014). Consistent with Freire's demand for students to become indignant about injustice and oppression, Chovanec et al. argue that disruption and uncertainty in the process provides the space for students to challenge their assumptions.

It is incumbent upon faculty and teaching staff to develop a safe space for students to unlearn. It should be highlighted that *safety* is not intended to negate a challenging,

rigorous, or even uncomfortable student practice, but to allow students to more deeply question dynamics of power and privilege; their own complicity in systems of oppression; the agency of others; what it means to practice with integrity and consistency; and the politics of being an insider versus an outsider in communities. To encourage deep and thoughtful questioning, we have to consider not only what the students can do but the systemic institutional web in which they are embedded. Preparing students for communities requires engagement with the entire system.

KEY TERMS

- **Cognitive justice**: This insists on the rights of different forms of knowledge to exist creatively without threat of colonization, subordination, or the oversimplifications of "add and mix" recipes for inclusion of marginalized groups into centered logics (Meneses, 2007; Odora Hoppers, 2009; Santos, 2007; Visvanathan, 2000). It works to engage a citizenship of knowledge or an ecology of knowledges in response to a monopolistic and monoepistemological worldview constructed through Western colonization and imperialist efforts that are sustained by globalization and modernity.
- **Ecology of knowledges**: EoK expands upon and diversifies who contributes to a citizenship of knowledge; it co-creates an ecological/rhizomatic system that co-explores with multiple actors and thereby diminishes hierarchical approaches to social justice as well as teaching and learning.

KEY IDEAS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- We propose that extending our focus beyond narrow definitions of social justice will engage and support marginalized students in the academy, particularly as cognitive justice seeks to employ a more holistic and agentic engagement with the world's participants.
- Working toward a campus climate that supports equal access and equity for all students, faculty and staff, regardless of race, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and/or socioeconomic status (Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan, & Patton, 2010) is likely to model the kind of practice expected of students when they work in community.
- The term social justice is often undefined or defined in limited ways in CSL literature. Lack of definition can lead to injurious consequences whereby university actors make assumptions about the communities with which they are working and thus treat them as non-agentic or victimized members of society.
- Cognitive justice works to ensure the advancement of justice projects that are ethical because they engage an ecology of knowledges; are desired by and deemed necessary by communities; and value rhizomatic structures rather than top-down or hierarchical ones.
- Within the spectrum of CSL, cognitive justice contributes to a more complex view of justice and allows for a more diverse engagement with CSL practices.
- Cognitive social justice within CSL and justice initiatives challenges us to get messy as it requires open-ended questions and unfinished answers; the troubling of the university and other power dynamics; and sitting with personal discomfort.

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