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Anthropocene U: Academic responses and responsibilities at Lakehead University

Gerum, Natalie

ANTHROPOCENE U:
ACADEMIC RESPONSES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT
LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

By

Natalie Gerum

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Abstract

This thesis explores the stories of six faculty members and administrators at Lakehead University who are responding to the Anthropocene through their academic work. Their stories suggest that there are barriers facing academic engagement with the Anthropocene and the associated possibilities for action are uniquely empowered by the particular position and privileges of higher education; rich tensions arise in exploring the response-ability of the academy to the Anthropocene. I consider the planetary and pedagogical contexts from which this research develops. Then, turning to participant stories, I look to appreciative inquiry, narrative inquiry, and place inquiry to guide my interactions with their experiences in ways that intend to grow the community of scholars responding to the Anthropocene at one Canadian university, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I next introduce the participants and the site of research through a series of vignettes, and explore the experiences of participants as they work to respond to the current moment on the planet. Their stories begin to illustrate the parallels between how neoliberalism has helped usher in the Anthropocene and has shaped the university in ways that minimize its ability to respond. The final chapter speaks to possibility and presents participants' visions for a University more responsive to the Anthropocene, illustrated by photographs of places that reflect participants' understandings of what is possible and that integrate place-voice into the research. This thesis concludes by summarizing key themes, and by daring readers to consider their own response-abilities in the Anthropocene.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Water's rising, knee-deep and climbing, politicians go rowing by
Photo albums float by me broken, dreams leaking out, all their memories die

Would we feel the ending, if it all started again?
This time with new faces, our lives trading places
In a sad and beautiful world

In these times, these dangerous times, a world held down by backwards minds
There's a baby born on a cold winter's morn
In a sad and beautiful world, in a sad and beautiful world

I could sing this same song over, I could sing it again and again
I won't be the first and I won't be the last -
The Clash poured the gas in me when I was a kid

Young minds, a new generation, revolution is in your hands
Take the reins back, step on our canes, Jack
Don't look back, just take a stand

~ Danny Michel and the Garifuna Collective (2013), *Sad and Beautiful World*

All I want is to be a little part of the things that I love
All I want is to make a little start on the things that I love
Seems there's lots of things that I could love

~ Old Man Ludecke (2008), *Proof of Love*

Chapter I: Introduction

Intentions, In-Tension, and Inquiry

When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: if you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. (Hawken, 2009, para. 5)

The purpose of this research is to explore how one university currently engages with the Anthropocene, and how this engagement might be amplified. The need for universities to act as responsive institutional citizens to issues of social and ecological justice is well established in the literature (Evans, 2012; Greenwood, 2012; Orr, 1994, 2010; Rees, 2003). The developing characterization of this moment in time as the Anthropocene, the age of humans (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000) further defined and explored in Chapter II, highlights an increasing urgency compelling universities' engagement with the many crises facing both the planet and its people (Greenwood, 2012; Crutzen as cited in Kolbert, 2011). Given the current state of climate change and the myriad crises it represents, as well as the state of university action on climate change, is there reason for optimism, pessimism, or some dancing between them both?

My thesis research is framed by Hawken's (2009) response to the dynamic relationship between optimism and pessimism when imagining the future. Climate change science positions the resilience of the planet and of humanity as being significantly compromised, with negative effects continuing to mount towards unparalleled global disaster (McKibben, 2010; Steffen, Grinevald, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2011a). Nevertheless, the number of individuals and organizations resisting the ideologies and paradigms of which climate change is a symptom, and concurrently creating different ways of being with planet and people, has reportedly never been so

great (Hawken, 2007). Universities as institutions largely continue to capitulate to, and reproduce, neoliberal agendas and to educate students in a way that is removed from the realities and possibilities of the places they inhabit (Bowers, 2011; Evans, 2012; Giroux, 2002; Greenwood, 2011, 2012; Orr, 1992, 2010). Nevertheless, many professors within these institutions resist such norms, using their privilege to engage proactively with the Anthropocene and to create educational opportunities that are responsive to the state of the world. A complex and fascinating tension thus exists between the problems facing the world and the people facing up to them.

With a personal history of experiencing defeat and exhaustion in campus-based climate activism, I now wish to learn from the people who are taking action despite the magnitude of both the problem and the barriers confronting their engagement in post-secondary educational institutional settings. While I recognize the value in analyzing challenges confronting activism within the academy, it is my hope to use this research opportunity to create space for the stories of those who are responding, and to explore these peoples' ideas of what is possible.

Research Questions and Inquiry Framework

Using narrative inquiry in a way that is informed by both appreciative inquiry and place inquiry, my research considers the stories of a group of professors at Lakehead University who are already responding to the Anthropocene through their teaching, research, and/or community engagement, and visions with them the possibilities for an institution acting more responsively to this moment in time. In pursuing this research, I proposed the following research questions at the outset:

- How does a group of Lakehead University professors engage with the Anthropocene?

- How have they come to this work?

- Why do they choose to engage with the Anthropocene?

- Do they see this engagement as a responsibility of the academy? Why or why not?

- What is their vision for a university that is more responsive to the Anthropocene?

I undertake this research with a spirit of appreciation for the people who act, for the people who see their place-making role as both disrupting the foundations of the academy <u>and</u> generating within institutions different ways of enacting academia. I am thankful to have met some of the people to whom Hawken (2009) refers. I wish to build joyful community around challenging ideas and, for me, this begins with sharing the stories of those who, as I suspected and had confirmed through this research, refuse to let education stagnate in separation from the world for which it was intended.

My intentions also extend into how my research was conducted. I wanted this research to play with the tensions between critical and appreciative frameworks of conducting research. I thus wished to learn how the methodology of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) interacts with, and comes into conflict with, issues of the Anthropocene in higher education. As well, I wanted my research to be place-conscious in its approach (Gruenewald, 2003a). The concept of place has significantly shaped my development as an educator engaged in the Anthropocene, particularly in coming to realize the potential of critical pedagogies of place in enabling students to make more sustainable places (Gruenewald 2003b). I continue to learn the extent to which place, and senses of place, determines possibilities for action and change. I wanted my research to embrace these place-conscious understandings and to explore how place inspires the engagement of my participants. I also wanted the layers of places that have hosted me

over the course of my graduate educational experience – Lake Superior, Lakehead University, Nanabijou, and the boreal forest – to be present, and for their wisdom, in some small way, to sing throughout my work.

Finally, I needed this research to embrace tension. I have found such freedom and courage in the notion of tension, and I wish to share the emboldening effects of this concept in my work. As such, I hoped to remain honestly and uncomfortably aware of the privilege of undertaking graduate education, and appreciative of the intense personal learning that has occurred for me over the course of this thesis process. I hope that my thesis makes a contribution to the developmental directions of Lakehead University as it continues to encounter the Anthropocene, and is an offering to those who will continue acting here well beyond the completion of my thesis work.

Research Stories

My research pursuits have developed out of stories. There's a planetary story, one that recognizes the current state of the world as being significantly defined by the climate crisis and the convergence of social justice emergencies being amplified by climate change. There's an academic story, one that offers conceptual frameworks and tools that challenge and nurture my ideas. And there's a personal story, one that relates the questions steering this research journey to the questions guiding my personal development as a learner, a citizen, an Earthling, and a young person finding her place in contributing to the world with integrity.

Some of my experiences within academia have enculturated me into a dominant narrative that entrenches and legitimizes distance between these stories. But other academic experiences have encouraged me to step into the learning that comes from

recognizing these stories as absolutely interconnected and interacting. I wish to engage with each of these stories as I work to construct and communicate the context for my research. Here, then, I endeavor to weave together these stories, celebrating how they challenge and enrich each other, and how they shape this research. The forthcoming offers an outline of how my thesis will present these stories.

The Unfolding Story: An Outline of the Thesis

The remainder of Chapter I presents my personal story in coming to this research. In Chapter II, I turn to the literature that establishes the context from where my research questions stem. I consider the planetary context and the arrival of the Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000), as well as the pedagogical context and the response-ability of higher education to this moment on the planet (Orr, 2010). Using Eisner's (2002) curricular framework of the explicit, implicit, and null curricula, I explore how the university distances itself from responding to the Anthropocene, but also what possibilities exist for universities to engage with the Anthropocene. I also look to neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) to situate the issues experienced in higher education when engaging with the Anthropocene in a global discourse. Chapter III outlines my methodological approach, in which I purposefully bring together three forms of inquiry: appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, 2005) empowers my research to approach the experiences of faculty and administrator actors who continue to engage with the Anthropocene, despite the barriers facing sustainability in higher education, with a focus on what is working at Lakehead University; narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) shapes my research's ability to amplify these stories of possibility at Lakehead University, and in doing, contribute to the growth of the university community's response

to the Anthropocene; and place inquiry (Basso, 2005; Gruenewald, 2003b) enables my research to bring the voice of place(s) to this research conversation, while concurrently offering participants a chance to creatively explore their vision of a Lakehead University more responsive to the Anthropocene. It also briefly addresses how anonymity can affect research (Nespor, 2000), particularly action research intending to nurture relationships amongst specific people in a specific place.

I then take pause, and consider how planetary, pedagogical, and personal contexts are shifting as I write this thesis. Chapter IV begins by revisiting my role as a researcher, and explores how I am positioned to respond through the research process to participants' expressed needs for resistance and reflection in engaging with issues of the Anthropocene at Lakehead University. The chapter continues by introducing the research participants and Lakehead University as the site of research. Next, it names and explores participants' understandings of the issues and opportunities involved in responding to the Anthropocene at Lakehead University; dominant themes include the importance of connection to the more-than-human world (Abram, 1997) in nurturing an ethic of care, how teaching informs participant understandings of their ability to respond to the Anthropocene, the effects of Lakehead University seeking status as a research-intensive institution on its capacity to respond to the Anthropocene, and the privilege of academic freedom in enabling meaningful university engagement in the Anthropocene. This chapter also refers back to framing concepts of neoliberalism to contextualize participant experiences in broader narratives, and gives particular attention to how universities are uniquely positioned to respond to the Anthropocene. Chapter V concludes the thesis by

presenting participants' place narratives, and related visions for a Lakehead University more responsive to the Anthropocene.

Throughout this work, my intention is to be in-tension. I write to explore the many tensions alive in academic-activist engagements – between resistance and complicity, between institutional objectives and individual action, between dominant norms and creative disruptions – and to embrace Hawken's particular framing of this moment on the planet as nested between pessimism and optimism – between the extent of the problem and the stunning capacity of the people.

"We Know What We Know From Where We Stand" (Kovach, 2009, p.7):
My Story of Sustainability in Higher Education

I wish to foreground my reviewing of the literature with my own story of coming to this research. My positionality as someone acting in and amongst issues of sustainability in higher education is what has led me to the questions and methodology guiding this thesis. While I work to make a contribution to the field of sustainability in higher education, and to offer something of value in recognition of the ongoing work of my research participants, I also wish to name my gratitude for the ways in which this thesis process has so significantly helped me to make sense of my own educational experiences. In attending to the personal stories underlying this research, I hope for my work to better resonate with you, the reader. I also hope for the literature to become more meaningful and contextualized in its intersections with my own 'lived literature', or personal story. As King (2003) writes, "The truth about stories is that's all we are" (p. 2). I am thankful for the opportunity to relate this research journey to my own journey through higher education, and want to here recognize the teachers who have brought me to this place.

My own engagement with concepts of sustainability in higher education began in the course of my undergraduate degree at Mount Allison University, a small liberal arts and primarily undergraduate institution located in Sackville, New Brunswick. There, while pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography and the Environment, I became involved in different movements acting for campus-based responses to climate change, including awareness-raising events, policy proposals, multi-stakeholder committee initiatives, and student referendums. While I felt energized by the latent possibilities for change, I struggled in feeling that our efforts were disconnected, even though the problems at which they were aimed were absolutely interconnected.

Then, during the third-year of my degree program, I traveled to Aotearoa/New Zealand on a university exchange and, through the invitation of my dear friend Graham Tipene, volunteered at a bilingual Maori-English Te Puna Reo (kindergarten) on the whenua rangatiratanga (ancestral lands) of the Ngati Whatua o Orakei iwi (tribe). It was an honour to be invited into this community, and I spent three beautifully challenging and humbling months on the shores of the waitemata (Auckland Harbour). About three weeks into my time there, a little girl in the kindergarten class approached me, and asked why I spoke differently than her. I explained that my accent sounded strange because my home was far away from Aotearoa. She then asked, "Whaea", which translates as 'Miss' in English, "Where's your place?" My place? In the course of my beginner understandings of Maori language, I had learned that one does not ask where someone is from, but instead, where is one's place. And the pronoun used with the word 'place' gives the concept of place ownership over the speaker, as opposed to the pronoun employed in use of the word 'house', over which the speaker exercises authority. Where was my place?

Finding My Place: Discovering Place-Based Education

Upon returning to Sackville and Mount Allison University, I had the opportunity to participate in a theatrical play exploring the history of New Brunswick's Tantramar region. We explored the voices of the land, the people, the passage of time, and the uncertain future of this small place near the shores of the Bay of Fundy. It was a rich experience to try on the role of a regional storyteller. But what affected me most about this experience was learning that I was, indeed, <u>placed</u>. The tiny town of Sackville, New Brunswick was home to many incredible stories – the Mikma'aq trade routes that formed the present-day layout of the town, the Acadian deportation that had taken place just five kilometres from my house, and the pivotal role of the local CBC radio towers in cross-Atlantic communication during WWII. Even though I was in the final year of my degree and apparently nearly 'educated', in Geography no less, I had <u>never</u> learned any of these stories. I quickly realized that I likely would have thought about, acted in, and responded to the place of Sackville very differently had I known these place stories. And I felt strongly that these stories were absolutely required reading in becoming an educated citizen.

Feeling almost deceived by my undergraduate education, I approached an ally within the university, Michael Fox, who was serving as head of the Department of Geography and Environment. Mike works with tireless determination to integrate communities and university classrooms, and creates unique learning opportunities for students to grow as engaged citizens. He informed me there was a whole body of literature exploring place and place-based education. After having struggled to find meaningful undergraduate thesis research, I had finally found a place.

As an educational paradigm, place-based education has grown from varied pedagogical arenas, including ecological education (Bowers, 1991), bioregional education (Berg, 2005; Berry, 1988), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and experiential education (Dewey, 1938). Through my research, I became excited about the ability of place-conscious pedagogy to respond to issues of sustainability in higher education and to serve effectively as a comprehensive orienting idea for action towards a more just world. The role of place-conscious pedagogy has been considerably explored at the primary and secondary levels of education (Gruenewald, 2003a; Orr, 2005; Smith, 2002); a gap in the literature remains considering its abilities and effects in post-secondary educational settings (Bartlett & Chase, 2004; Orr, 1994, 2005, 2010; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2007). My undergraduate thesis examined the exceptional characteristics that make universities effective avenues for place-conscious pedagogy, responding to the question: *how might place-conscious pedagogy empower university students' abilities to make more sustainable places, both at the university and in communities beyond the university?*

Leaving and Returning to University

During this time, however, my own efforts to create more sustainable university campuses were not personally sustainable. I experienced exhaustion and feelings of defeat in my campus activism efforts, and recognized this trend amongst many of my peers. I became highly discouraged about the potential for creating change in university contexts. Upon graduation, I felt overwhelmingly frustrated by the apparent contradiction between the barriers to change at the university and the immense possibility inherent for university leadership in fostering responsive institutional citizenship (Helferty & Clarke, 2009). This was perhaps the most difficult set of emotions to navigate in my departure

from undergraduate education. I believed I had to decide whether to be hopeful for or rejecting of university contexts. I didn't want to abandon hope; I deeply wanted to be hopeful. But I also knew I could not continue engaging in campus activism work as I had been if I wanted to avoid burnout.

After two years of working in alternative educational settings, a number of factors conspired to reignite my excitement about the potential of universities. I decided to return, with slight trepidation, to post-secondary education. I arrived at Lakehead University, and embarked on a graduate experience to further explore the role universities might play as responsive institutional citizens towards issues of the Anthropocene in their local social and ecological communities. During one of the first meetings with my supervisor, David Greenwood, I brought up my struggle with feelings of having to choose between hope and doubt. I vividly remember his response. Drawing on Walt Whitman's poem, *Song of Myself*, David spoke about the inevitability, and beauty, of contradiction. David went on to name the feelings I had been experiencing as a tension, and characterized tension as a place for rich and courageous learning. I cannot describe the freedom I felt in finding permission to both laugh and cry over the state of the world. Suddenly, I didn't have to choose between hope and doubt, optimism and pessimism. Being introduced to the concept of tension catalyzed my own movement away from dominant narratives demanding that my responses to the world be static, singular, and correct. My responses to the world, emotions and actions both, could not be reduced to one category of reaction, and doing so would serve to confine potential for complex learning. David encouraged and emboldened me to seek out tensions, and to dive into the complexity inherent to relationships, challenge, and change.

The Problem, the People, and the Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies

Since that first meeting, I have continued to describe my graduate experience as more intensely personal than I ever expected, and I continue to develop my understandings of engagement in these tensions as being necessary to processes of unpacking power, privilege, complicity, contradiction, and resistance. In exploring how the academy interacts and responds to the Anthropocene, one of the most valuable tensions I have come to recognize and experience is most adeptly captured by Hawken in the quotation from his commencement address to the University of Portland in 2009, presented at the beginning of this work. My experiences at Lakehead University have significantly shaped my relationship with this particular tension as named by Hawken. I have been lucky to meet 'the people'.

One venue for finding this community has been through my involvement as a graduate assistant with the Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies (CPSS). The CPSS, a new research and action centre, is comprised of professors from multiple disciplines, university administrators, students, teachers and school administrators, community artists, scientists, health care professionals, and representatives of various non-governmental organizations pursuing sustainability. The Centre is purposed to "incubate and support diverse place and sustainability related research, education, and outreach initiatives within the Lakehead University community, in the region, and internationally in order to create the conditions for social and ecological justice" (Greenwood & Stewart, 2012, Purpose section, para. 2).

The mission of the CPSS resonates with my own perspectives on the prospects of cultivating universities that are responsive and relevant to the social and environmental

crises being encountered by communities, a type of scholarship coined by Boyer (1990) as the scholarship of engagement. However, my experience with the CPSS has been most transformative in developing my understandings of taking action within the academy. At the CPSS, we endeavour to create a space in which interested parties come to connect; we come together as allies to collaborate. What has perhaps been most striking is that allies are everywhere. But, in my experience with the CPSS so far, I've learned that what allies require is a place to connect and belong, so that vision and action can emerge. I now question if, in my previous experiences with activism, I sometimes couldn't see my allies for my enemies. While this is admittedly too simple a dichotomy to accurately represent relationships engaged through activism, I am curious as to the effects of conflict-focused action on processes of building community around ideas, as well as building personal resilience.

In-Tension: The Individuals and the Institution

Beyond the CPSS, I have met numerous individuals responding to the Anthropocene at Lakehead University. Despite the many institutional barriers faced by those working as engaged scholars, these individuals continue to act beyond what might be seen as the conventions of academia. As this thesis will show, they envision their role, and the role of the university, to be one that responds to global challenges through integrated teaching, research, and community service. These stories of people engaged in sustainability in higher education are what have most inspired my own engagement. As emphasized by Hawken (2009), it's the people working to "restore the earth" (para. 5) who offer optimism amidst the extreme crises facing the planet. I want for my work to be focused on the stories of those making change despite the enormity of the Anthropocene and the extent of institutional intertia.

My thesis also grows out of a belief in the potential and obligation of universities to act responsively to social and environmental crises. I am inspired by the work being done in the disciplines of sustainability in higher education, engaged scholarship, and place-based education. I am excited to explore emerging relationships between these traditions as they are playing out at Lakehead University. But more so, I'm excited to explore the ideas and stories of the people taking up activist roles within institutions of higher education. Dominant social, political, and economic forces continue to impose an influential neoliberal narrative on educational institutions, to be explored further in Chapter II (Giroux, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Kahn, 2010). Yet, at the same time, there are individuals resisting these narratives and reinventing academic work to be responsive to values of justice, decolonization, and reinhabitation (Evans, 2012; Greenwood, 2010). A rich tension exists between neoliberal academic institutions and the inspired agents of change who reside therein.

In undertaking this thesis research, I wish to embrace various tensions – tensions between convention and creativity, the university and the 'real world', and the overwhelming hopelessness of the Anthropocene alongside the overwhelming possibility of the people who respond through both resistance and generation. I wish to develop my understandings of how and why certain people continue to engage with the Anthropocene through academia. This particular tension is personal too, as I question my own relationship with academia and whether I wish to continue my involvement in the academy in the future. I also want to explore and broadcast the stories of these responsive individuals as one small step in appreciating, contributing to, and growing the community of courageous allies who have so significantly empowered my own learning. I want to be

a vehicle for the stories of activism in academia for the Anthropocene. My methodological choices are shaped by these intentions, and will be explored in Chapter III. But next, in Chapter II, I turn to the planetary and pedagogical contexts of my research.

Chapter II: Issues and Context

The Planetary Context: From Planet Earth to Planet Emergency

The present moment on planet Earth is one seemingly defined by emergencies (McKibben, 2010; Orr, 2010; Parenti, 2011). Crises stemming from the convergence of globally deteriorating social and ecological systems present complex, urgent, and uncertain challenges to both human and more-than-human communities across the planet (Brown, 2008; Greenwood 2011; McKibben, 2010; Orr, 1994). While there has always been cause for environmental and humanitarian concern, the problems facing the planet today are inescapably different, as described by Steffen et al. (2011b): "This situation is novel in its speed, its global scale, and its threat to the resilience of the Earth System" (p. 739).

The climate crisis is arguably the most significant driver behind this collision of social and ecological catastrophes. According to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change, climate change is defined as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere" (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2001, Climate Change section, para. 61). Hansen, the former head of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, who recently quit his prestigious post in order to engage in more direct and radical action against climate change, first formally articulated the concept of anthropogenic climate change when he made his 1988 testimony before the United States' Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Shabecoff, 1988). There, he stated that global warming was predominantly a result of human activity (Shabecoff, 1988). Nearly thirty years later, the consensus amongst the scientific community

overwhelmingly asserts that climate change is here, it is happening, and many of the predicted impacts are occurring earlier, with greater frequency, and with greater intensity than originally modeled (McKibben, 2010; Steffen et al., 2011; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, & Crutzen, 2010).

As the climate heats up, so too do the host of other issues threatening the viability of ecological and social communities around the globe. Parenti (2011) characterizes climate change "as an accelerant" (p. 9). The effects of climate change, including extreme and unpredictable weather events, resource scarcity, and forced human migration, intersect and interact with existent human crises, such as poverty, resource-based conflict, and gender inequality, resulting in their escalation. As such, climate change can be understood as a symptom of multiple illnesses threatening the planet. Corporate hegemony, fossil fuel addiction, and inequitable distribution of resources, all of which are also inextricably connected, combine to render the planet incredibly unstable, socially and biologically (McKibben, 2010; Parenti, 2011; Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007; Steffen et al., 2011a). Climate change is thus not 'the' problem, but a most evident and dangerous symptom of so many problems.

Never before has the world seen a symptom of such potency or extent (McKibben, 2010). The ability of climate change to incite further destabilization cannot be underestimated. Climate change already frames national security imperatives around the world (Campbell et. al., 2007; Dyer, 2008); these changed social, political, and economic landscapes reflect life on a changed planet (Parenti, 2011). McKibben argues that in changing the climate, humans have irreversibly changed planet Earth (McKibben, 2006). In the 1989 first edition of his landmark text, he named this phenomenon the "end

of nature," asserting that, while trees still stand and birds still sing, there is no longer a natural cycle, season, or storm to be found on planet Earth unaffected by human activity (2006, p. xxiii). Changing the climate has changed everything.

The next section will explore the characterization of the present as a new epoch in the history of both planet and people. To borrow the phraseology of McKibben (2010), we're on a new planet, no longer Earth. Welcome to Eaarth, Tierrra, welcome to somewhere unknown. Welcome to the Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene

In 2002, Crutzen, a Nobel award-winning atmospheric chemist, wrote a short editorial article for the scientific journal *Nature*. Entitled "Geology of Mankind [sic]", Crutzen suggested using the term 'Anthropocene', from the Greek roots meaning 'human' (*anthro*) and 'new' (*cene*), to describe the current moment on Earth, seeing it as necessary to reflect the growing extent of human impact on the planet. For Crutzen, the term represented the understanding that " the Earth is now moving out of its current geological epoch, called the Holocene and . . . that human activity is largely responsible for this exit" (Steffen et al., 2011a, p. 843). Echoing McKibben's (2006) ideas in *The End of Nature*, the term Anthropocene signified an incredible shift in human relationship with the planet.[1]

In the past decade, the Anthropocene has increasingly been used beyond its disciplinary roots in geology and atmospheric science. Now, the concept is used in different fields of study and with accelerating frequency, suggesting broadening scientific esteem for the concept (Subcommission on Quartenary Stratigraphy, 2009). Popular

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[1] Two years prior, Crutzen had co-authored an article for the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme with biologist Eugene

media has also adopted the concept. In the last two years, *National Geographic* (Kolbert, 2011), the *New York Times* (Revkin, 2011), the *Economist* (Economist, 2011), and Canada's own CBC (Tremonti, 2011) have all featured reporting on the Anthropocene. While these outlets represent media mostly accessible to those with educational privilege, it nonetheless suggests that the term has traction with an audience beyond that of published scientific literature. Media's involvement with the Anthropocene might also reflect climate scientists' heightened public engagement as they work to politicize their research towards civic action. Here is an excerpt of an interview with Crutzen in a 2011 *National Geographic* feature on the Anthropocene:

> Crutzen, who started the debate, thinks its real value won't lie in revisions to geology textbooks. His purpose is broader: He wants to focus our attention on the consequences of our collective action—and on how we might still avert the worst. "What I hope," he says, "is that the term 'Anthropocene' will be a warning to the world." (Kolbert, 2011, para. 22)

Can the idea of the Anthropocene reach beyond science and come to represent the civic demands and social justice dimensions of the climate crisis (Steffen et. al., 2011a)?

While it is "widely agreed that the Earth is in this state" (Subcommission on Quartenary Straigraphy, 2009, para. 6), can the term 'Anthropocene' both define a global problem and elicit global action? Its adoption in scientific and civic communities faces challenges. From a scientific perspective, the Anthropocene must move through an ascribed approval process to be accepted as a new geological epoch. The Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London is the keeper of such designation, and in 2008, they "decided, by a large majority, that there was merit in considering the

possible formalization of this term" (Zalasiewicz et al., 2010, p. 2228). Since June 2009, an international working group has been investigating the evidence surrounding the establishment of the Anthropocene and expects to reach their conclusions by 2016 (Subcommission on Quartenary Stratigraphy, 2009).

Though tempting to compare the time needed for geologists to change their time scale to the rate of change of actual rocks, the possible introduction of the Anthropocene is momentous; the Geological Time Scale is the fundamental operating unit for understanding planetary history, and is thus not modified lightly (Zalasiewicz et. al., 2010). Perhaps it is this measured response that has lent gravity and legitimacy to the term within the scientific community. The esteemed reputation of the Geological Society of London likely also underscores the significance of this decision. To be in a new geological epoch, the first ever predominantly caused by a single species and, more importantly, the first species to also be aware of the changes they were making, marks a "remarkable episode in the history of the planet" (Zalasiewicz et. al., 2010, p. 2231).

The working group also has more to consider than just the scientific implications of the decision. As outlined by Zalasiewicz et. al. (2010), the Anthropocene "has the capacity to become the most politicized unit, by far, of the Geological Time Scales and therefore to take formal geological classification into uncharted waters" (p. 2231). There is an explicitly political dimension attached to the introduction of the Anthropocene because it is being positioned, as noted above, as "a warning to the world" (Crutzen in Kolbert, 2011). It makes irrefutable the existence of anthropogenic climate change, but even more so, the notion of the Anthropocene unapologetically challenges "the belief systems and assumptions that underpin neoclassical economic thinking" (Steffen et al.,

2011a, p. 862), the very same thinking from which anthropogenic climate change stems. Through their scientific articles and public advocacy, the members of the working group on the Anthropocene are taking aim at the hegemonic discourses shaping societal response to climate change (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007; Steffen et al., 2011a; Steffen et al., 2011b; Zalasiewicz et al., 2010).

The Pedagogical Context: Universities in the Anthropocene

What might universities learn about being a political institution from the Geological Society of London? In the context of my thesis research, I am choosing to engage with the concept of the Anthropocene as an experiment in its application within post-secondary educational settings. The idea has captured my imagination, especially in its potential to find traction and allies within universities. As a planetary concept, can it be understood and made to feel relevant at the local level of a university?

I am also keen to explore the capacity of a scientific term to extend into more popular dimensions of social justice. A number of scientists are now acting well beyond the conventional limits of scientific disciplines: McKibben has founded an international movement for climate action (350.org); Suzuki has long been a popular author and recently advocated direct action as being a necessary response to the climate crisis (David Suzuki Foundation, 2013); Weaver, a member of the 2010 Nobel prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently ran for political office and became the first Green Party representative elected to the British Columbian provincial legislature (Weaver, 2013); and Hansen quit his post at NASA to have the freedom to pursue more radical activist initiatives (Heffernan, 2013). Working with the Anthropocene as a conceptual marker enables me to explore how disciplinary boundaries

and conventionally prescribed priorities are shifting in response to the climate crisis, and to ask whether universities are capable of similar change.

The place where I find myself now is at a university, and it is this place's response to climate change and the Anthropocene that I explore in this research. Lovell, the current President of the Geological Society of London, writes in his book on the relationship between the oil industry and climate change: "We have received an important message from a warm planet. We can understand it, and we should respond" (2010, p. 196). How might a university respond to the Anthropocene?

What Is Sustainability?

As explored above, the world in which the university was founded has, since that time, undergone immeasurable change. Contemporary social and ecological crises present unprecedented challenge to humanity (Brown, 2008; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006a; McKibben, 2010; Orr, 1994) and the university, as an institution, is implicated in these issues. Here arise questions of sustainability in higher education.

Sustainability is a complex term, as it has become popularized and diverged in meanings (Wals & Jickling, 2002). Lakehead University, the site of focus for my research, derives its definition of a sustainable university from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which states "a sustainable university is one that promotes the concept of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Lakehead University, 2011, para. 1). This definition highlights both environmental conservation and unrestrained economic growth, concepts that are at the very least conflicting, if not an impossibility on a finite planet (Jickling, 2001; Victor,

2008). That the term sustainability connotes arguably contradictory concepts reflects one of the tensions alive within sustainability discourses.

The 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) defined sustainability in terms of sustainable development, and states, "Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). I am intrigued that what is perhaps the most common definition of sustainability explicitly focuses on economic development and takes for granted a growth paradigm; how might this stifle problematizing the assumptions underlying sustainability in the context of the Anthropocene (Jickling, 2001; Orr, 1992)?

Both Orr (1992; 1994) and Jickling (1994; 2001) position notions of sustainability and sustainable development as being more concerned with appeasing than antagonizing; Orr (1992) writes, "The word 'sustainable' pacifies environmentalists, while 'development' has a similar effect on businessmen and bankers" (p. 23). Is sustainable development useful only in its' soporific influence on critical thought? Limitations to the terminology become obvious when individuals and organizations with nearly opposite ideas of progress can "both use the term … to support radically different values" (Jickling, 2001, p. 176). If superficial treatment of sustainability constitutes the extent of engagement, especially in education, then we are prone, in the words of Orr (1992), to "offer aspirin-level solutions to potentially terminal illnesses" (p. 1). In my own treatment of the Anthropocene above, I needed to remind myself that the Anthropocene is not itself the problem but a pronounced symptom of the concurrent illnesses to which Orr refers.

He continues, "Until we see the crisis of sustainability as one with roots that extend from public policies and technology down into our assumptions about science, nature, culture, and human nature, we are not likely to extend our prospects much" (1992, p. 1). Some understandings and definitions of sustainability can deflect attention from the root causes of the Anthropocene by glossing over the extent to which the sustainability crisis is entrenched in dominant culture's norms.

Yet the concept of sustainability can also be very useful. As Jickling (2001) notes, there are a number of planetary ecological processes becoming severely compromised through human activity when the sustaining of these processes is necessary for human existence (p. 167). Beyond these ecological concerns, the concept of sustainability has also captured the imaginations of different communities, activists and academics included, around what is possible (Hawken, 2007; Wright, 2002). Its impact on environmentalist discourse is apparent and marks a notable moment in understandings of planetary crises and of the need to act (Hawken, 2007). And so, despite these outlined shortcomings, why did critical communities adopt this word and why do some continue to engage with it? Is it because sustainability endeavours to describe the often-fractured interdependence between social and ecological wellbeing? Does the word uniquely call on our responsibility to future generations, nurturing a sense of belonging to the human community and offering an opportunity to act from a place of deep love? And were those desperately attempting to make things better able to imagine a world that 'worked', was 'fixed', and was thriving through this term?

I doubt that one word could ever capture all that is attributed to and implicated by sustainability. My purpose here is not to take a position on the word itself, but rather to

open questions that pertain to its usage and its impact on my own, and my research participants', understandings of and engagement with the state of the world. The word is not neutral, nor is the world it works to describe. Alternative terms attending to the shortcomings of sustainability continue to occupy the discourse, among them environmental justice, climate justice, and resilience. These too bear influence, shaping the changing conceptual landscape. But the discourse of sustainability is growing in higher education more so perhaps than these other terms and continues to point to a broad movement for change. For the purposes of my research, then, I will keep with this tradition while working to hold awareness of the term's politicized and imperfect nature.

Sustainability in Higher Education

Sustainability in higher education (SHE) has emerged as a body of literature, policy, and action in response to post-secondary education's implication in the state of the world. The field was not simply invented; rather, its development stems out of preceding and related bodies of literature, including critical pedagogy, environmental education, and the scholarship of engagement (Filho, 2005; Wright, 2004). The more than four decades of international efforts and policy-making defining the relationship between sustainability and education created space in the discourse for SHE to develop (Berkessy, Samson, & Clarkson, 2007; Filho, 2005; Wright, 2002, 2004). Wright (2002) positions a number of international accords, notably the Stockholm Declaration (1972), the Belgrade Charter (1975), and the Tbilisi Declaration (1977), as illustrations of this relationship between global environmental politics and SHE; developed within the context of mounting international environmental concerns, each of these agreements served to pointedly argue for the specific role of higher education in responding to the state of the

world. Yet, these arguments did not come *from* decision-making powers within higher education, but rather were directed *at* higher education from a diversity of political forces, including activists both inside and outside of academia.

1990 marked a shift in the discourse as some communities within higher education began to take responsibility for their role in environmental and social crises (Wright, 2004). That year, twenty-two university presidents, vice-chancellors, and rectors from around the world convened at the Tufts University European Centre in France as the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future to respond to higher education's implication in the problem of sustainability (AULSF, 2008a; Wright, 2004). They recognized the unique position of universities to act in creating a more sustainable future, but, perhaps even more importantly, also acknowledged the unique responsibility of higher education to demonstrate leadership on issues of sustainability: "Universities educate most of the people who develop and manage society's institutions. For this reason, universities bear profound responsibilities to . . . create an environmentally sustainable future" (AULSF, 2008b). This meeting culminated in the establishment of the first international policy on sustainability in higher education, The Talloires Declaration (Wright, 2004).

Today, the Talloires Declaration boasts over 400 signatories in 50 countries (AULSF, 2008c); Lakehead University belongs to this community, having signed the declaration in 1991 (Lakehead University, 2011). The Talloires Declaration also stands as the historical catalyst for a host of subsequent policy actions concerning sustainability in higher education that have played out in local, national, and international contexts (Wright, 2002) It bears noting, however, that the social and ecological crises at which the

Talloires Declaration, and successive policy, have taken aim continue to worsen, and some argue that higher education is more complicit in sustaining the status quo than helping the planet (Berkessy, Samson, & Clarkson, 2007; Bowers, 2011; Orr 1994). This critique has significantly shaped the SHE field.

One of the key tenets of SHE is post-secondary education's obligation to act for the amelioration of social and ecological ills and contribute to a more resilient future (Bartlett & Chase, 2004; Bowers, 2011; Boyer, 1990; Ehrlich, 1999; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006a; Orr, 1994; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2007). This appeal is argued to be especially relevant considering that the university has contributed to the instigation and perpetuation of these problems (Rees, 2003; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006b; Berkessy, Samson, & Clarkson, 2007; Evans, 2012). As Orr (1994) asserts, the fragile state of the planet and its inhabitants "is not the work of ignorant people. Rather, it is largely the results of work by people with BAs, BScs, LLBs, MBAs, and PhDs" (p. 7). The power bestowed upon graduates of higher education continues to constitute much of the power that shapes the world. And while the university has also worked to improve social and ecological crises, it continues to educate students in ways that disregard engagement in civic responsibilities (Boyer, 1990; Greenwood, 2011; Orr, 1994; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2007).

Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Place

Different facets of higher education combine to perpetuate institutional distance from issues of sustainability (Greenwood, 2012). Post-secondary educational curriculum largely involves strict disciplinary and theoretical investigation with little, if any, opportunity for application and situation of integrated knowledge in actual experience

(Cortese, 2003; Ehrlich, 1999; Gruenewald 2003a; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2007). Certainly there are individuals, organizations, indeed entire fields of study and action working to resist abstracted curriculum and disciplinary silos. But abstract knowledge continues to propel dominant narratives of what constitutes legitimate and rigorous curriculum and research in higher education (Orr, 1992). These narratives stand in stark contradiction to the interdisciplinary action demanded by the Anthropocene (Rees, 2003), but their strength is not surprising given they are institutionally reinforced. While explicit structures tend to reward research responsive to dominant economic forces, implicit structures discourage scholarship integrative of research, teaching, and community engagement (Cortese, 2003).

Pedagogy also intersects with SHE. As dominant processes of higher education passively transmit curricular content, they actively instruct learners away from their own agency (Freire, 1970; Greenwood, 2012; Rees, 2003). Critical theorists have problematized this pattern, and both Freire's banking model of pedagogy (1970) and Dewey's concepts of democratic education (1938) offer powerful insights into the issues associated with these pedagogical norms. Arguably, traditional transmission pedagogies are problematic for engaging learners generally. But pedagogy empowering of critical thought, reflection, and action matters all that much more on a planet in the Anthropocene, where the need for responsive education is becoming more urgent as time to respond runs out (Cortese, 2003). The university has continued to educate students in a way often displaced from the world in which they will live what they have learned; Orr (1992) writes, "Sustainability is about the terms and conditions of human survival, and yet we educate at all levels as if no such crisis existed . . . the process of education, with a

few notable exceptions, has not changed" (p. 83). When the climate is changing and pedagogy is not, how can education hope to make a difference? In distancing students from their own implication in the Anthropocene, and their own abilities to act, passive pedagogies disempower active learning and active citizenship (Clugston & Calder, 2000; Ehrlich, 1999; Eisner, 2002). However, this pedagogical pattern is not surprising when one considers how university institutions themselves often serve as startling illustrations of de-placed education.

Higher education tends to ignore the university's existence as a physical place (Clugston & Calder, 2000; Greenwood, 2012; Orr, 1992; Rees, 2003). Even when curriculum is responsive to issues of the Anthropocene, the institution's physical and social environment rarely reflects these ideas; most often, the processes of the campus community actually contradict such curriculum (Bowers, 2011; Rees, 2003). M'Gonigle and Starke (2006b) provide a pointed reflection of the de-placed university: "New buildings go up in the forest, while a new parking lot goes in where there was once a community garden ... and the professor driving in barely notices. The academic gaze is beyond place, not in it" (p. 331). Learning becomes confined to classrooms, change confined to chalkboards, and action for the Anthropocene rests comfortably as a distant theoretical problem that 'goes away' when class ends.

But the campus is inextricably and dynamically bound up in the Anthropocene. Purchasing policies, physical operations, investment strategies, and models of campus governance and citizenship shape the university to be a "microcosm of the larger community" (Cortese, 2003, p. 19), and position the campus amidst the ecological, political, social, and economic forces that actively shape our experience of the world.

These forces play out at every institutional scale, from the placement of a student's chair in a classroom to corporate product placement in exchange for multimillion-dollar donations to the displacement of gardens for parking lots (Eisner, 2002; Evans, 2012; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006b). The campus place is not a reflection of the 'real world' somehow out there; it *is* the real world (Clugston & Calder, 2000). And the campus is also a real learning place that surely could be a powerful vehicle to nurture keen awareness of hegemonic forces, challenge assumptions, and experiment with alternatives.

The Explicit, Implicit, and Null Curricula in Sustainability in Higher Education

Having considered how curriculum, pedagogy, and place coalesce in distancing the university from critical engagement with the Anthropocene, I now wish to engage Eisner's conceptualization of explicit, implicit, and null curricula (2002) as a useful framework for understanding these interrelations. While the explicit curriculum constitutes what is officially taught, and advertised to be taught, Eisner characterizes implicit curriculum as that which is taught "because of the kind of place it [the institution] is" (p. 97). Organizational, physical, and pedagogical structures together teach a potent, and unspoken, curriculum. In not being acknowledged, the implicit curriculum is normalized, forgotten, and made to seem disappeared. Students are then schooled into a way of being that is positioned as innocuous because of its apparent inevitability (Eisner, 2002; Fassbinder, Nocella, & Kahn, 2012; Orr, 1992).

Eisner's third curricular concept, the null curriculum, is particularly potent in its effects on sustainability in higher education. He writes that the null curriculum is comprised of what schools "do not teach" (2002, p. 97) but is still very much learned.

Eisner explores how giving attention to that which apparently does not exist highlights the significance of the tension between explicit and null curricula:

> [I]gnorance is not simply a neutral void; it has important effects on the kinds of options one is able to consider, the alternatives that one can examine, and the perspectives from which one can view a situation or problems. The absences of a set of considerations or perspectives or the inability to use certain processes for appraising a context biases the evidence one is able to take into account (2002, p. 97).

Not calling attention to the null sustainability curriculum perpetuates myths of university neutrality in issues of the Anthropocene. But as institutions existing on Earth in this moment in time, increasingly capitalist and corporate in their missions (Greenwood, 2011; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006a), universities do not have a choice of whether or not to be implicated in the Anthropocene – they already are, always have been, and always will be. Eisner's curricular framework, especially around the null curriculum, helps to dispel a cornerstone myth in higher education: that universities can choose to simply not take a position or not take action on issues of sustainability. Non-action is inescapably action against sustainability, and universities cannot be separated from their impact, nor made to be exempt from the political position they occupy. Universities are always implicated.

Thus when universities appear not to promote sustainability, they are in fact promoting unsustainability (Bowers, 2011; Greenwood, 2012; Rees, 2003). Greenwood (2012) summarizes this tension, writing that there are "many ways that these state- and corporate-sponsored institutions of learning continue to promote *unsustainability* in structures, processes, and the epistemological assumptions underlying the meaning of a

university education" (p. 219). Whether through the explicit, implicit, or null curriculum, universities school their campus citizens into particular positions, even when citizens' awareness of these positions is concealed by institutional illusions of neutrality, objectivity, and the comforting lore of non-action. And to take this a step further, as a campus citizen with some level of awareness and capacity to act for sustainability, I continually and frustratingly find myself obstructed by my own practiced complicity to campus norms of non-action.

While universities see themselves as teaching students what to be in the world, they forget, whether mistakenly or on purpose, that they are teaching students how to be in the world, who to be in the world, where and why to be in the world. Recognizing the privilege embedded in being able to attend post-secondary education, campuses can represent the first places many students will experience being relatively autonomous young people. Thus universities are especially accountable for stewarding this community into patterns of citizenship (Orr, 1994). By continuing to identify as exempt from the Anthropocene, universities lose opportunities to nurture both critical and joyful ways of being in community at this time of planetary crisis (Evans, 2012; Fassbinder, Nocella, & Kahn, 2012).

Civic Learning and Engagement

Civic learning is so much more than a progressive pedagogical trend, or a lofty institutional objective to be highlighted in a university's latest report to the community (Ehrlich, 1999). Civic learning is potently ubiquitous across the university. When civic learning is confined within the null curriculum, it serves to de-place students, faculty, and staff from their own abilities, impacts, and agency. By colluding in silence, universities

legitimize the gap between what they teach about sustainability, what they actually do and accomplish, and what a citizenry can demand. Silence teaches all campus citizens that they can opt out of the Anthropocene.

For me, this nulled civic learning is particularly affecting as it significantly shaped my own undergraduate educational experience. I was busy working for sustainability, but I was actively discouraged from reading the institutional landscape to see how the university's systems were teaching unsustainability. Almost as a hidden curriculum matter, I now see my past actions as being directed by magician-like hegemonic forces that made possibilities and permissions appear and disappear, all in the interest of protecting the invisible status of the null curriculum. This resulted in understanding the campus' continued and active ignorance of sustainability as my own shortcomings as an activist.

Eisner's curricular framework helps to make visible the ways in which dominant and norming narratives, those comprising the status quo, shape experiences of education (2002). His work can be extended to develop understandings of how these narratives in turn position issues of and possibilities of response to sustainability in higher education. Just as higher education is enmeshed within the Anthropocene, so too is it entwined within the forces propelling forward and profiting from the Anthropocene. Many authors name the concentration of power and ideology expressed through this collection of forces as neoliberalism (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2002; Harvey, 2005; Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Neoliberalism has been, and continues to be, indiscriminately sweeping in its impact on higher education, and the investigation of the extent of its effects demands considerably more time and space than afforded by this thesis process. For the purposes of this

research, I want to consider the neoliberal narrative specifically in its effects on higher education's ability to respond to the Anthropocene. As the last component of this review of the literature, I turn to the intersections between neoliberalism and the ways in which faculty and administrators encounter the Anthropocene, exploring how neoliberal discourse and sustainability discourse exist in relation.

Neoliberal (yo)U: Neoliberalism, Higher Education, and the Anthropocene

According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p.2). As an ideology valuing private and capitalist gains over regulation and the public sector, neoliberalism promises prosperity through the tools of the free market (Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Hursh and Henderson (2011) explore the ascendancy of neoliberalism and identify its rise through the 1940's and 1950's as a reaction to Roosevelt's social democratic economic policies in the U.S. (p.173). Through the 1970s and 1980s, the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, in the U.S. and U.K. respectively, more completely institutionalized neoliberalism as dominant economic doctrine, and enforced the paradigm in international policy arenas (Giroux, 2002; Hursh & Henderson, 2011). Contemporarily, the authority of neoliberalism is tied to, and enabling of, patterns of globalization, colonization, and corporatization (Dhruvarajan, 2005). Considerable scholarship has been pursued critiquing neoliberalism for its exacerbation of inequality, its advancement of the interests of the most privileged, and its treatment of the environment as an inconvenient externality (Giroux, 1992; Harvey, 2005, 2006; Muzzin,

2005). Despite these affronts to justice, and the ways in which the paradigm "attempt[s] to limit public discourse, what can be said and thought" (Hursh & Henderson, 2011, p.176), neoliberalism remains "the defining political economic paradigm of our time" (McChesney, 1999, p.7).

The effects of neoliberalism on education, and higher education more specifically, reflect the paradigm's alignment with the tenets and tools of the free market (Apple, 2006; Evans, 2012; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Muzzin, 2005). According to Ball (2012), who draws on Foucault (1977), neoliberalism evaluates education on the basis of performativity, "a technology that links efforts, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output" (p.19). That is, the worth of education is measured by the logic of the corporate sector (M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006a); or as explained by Giroux, "The new corporate university values profit, control, and efficiency, all hallmark values of the neoliberal corporate ethic" (2002, p.434). Certain disciplines and academic activities thus become prioritized, at the sacrifice of those deemed less 'productive' or 'useful' for meeting neoliberal objectives and placing the university at a competitive, economic advantage (Ball, 2012; Kurasawa, 2008; Muzzin, 2005; Ward, 2003).

The tools of measurement used to appraise achievement of these neoliberal objectives further serve to reinforce the paradigm (Giroux, 2002; M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006a). Within the context of higher education, audits, standardized assessment, counting of research dollars secured, program quality reviews, quantified measures for promotion and tenure, among other standards of success, determine the value of education, thereby severely narrowing the purposes and pursuits of education and effectively

institutionalizing neoliberalism (Ball, 2012; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Ward, 2003). In so doing, the university becomes both subject and master of neoliberal ideals; it becomes policed by neoliberalism and concurrently polices for neoliberal rule. The university's capacity to serve society as a critical and reflective space is thus dismantled (Apple, 2006). Giroux summarizes the impacts of neoliberalism on higher education in stating, "Reducing higher education to the handmaiden [sic] of corporate culture works against the critical social imperative of educating citizens who can sustain and develop inclusive public spheres" (2002, p.432). Institutionally, neoliberalism changes the purposes and possibilities of education.

But it also changes the educators whose work is the subject of this thesis. Those inhabiting institutions of higher education internalize neoliberalism in similarly potent ways as do the institutions themselves (Ball, 2012; Foucault, 1977; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Ward, 2003). Exploring the personal dimensions of this phenomenon, Ball writes, "[N]eoliberalism gets into our minds and souls, into the ways in which we think about what we do, and into our social relations with others" (2012, p.18). In this way, neoliberalism is much more than a system of priorities for economic transactions; it is "a moral system that subverts and reorients us to its ends" (p.19). Expectations of performance and productivity are normalized through institutional channels, then internalized until "[w]e take responsibility for working hard, faster and better as part of our sense of personal worth and the worth of others" (pp. 19-20).

I do not wish to critique effort in the academy. Instead, I feel compelled to challenge the restricting of the nature and measure of valuable academic work to capitulation to neoliberal ideals, and to disrupt the fixing of my own self-worth to my value as a

productive disciple of neoliberal hegemony. I am thankful that my graduate experience

has, at times, resisted dominant definitions of academic success and reinvented academic

work. As will be shown later, the participants in this research have been able, at times, to

challenge the ways in which academia participates in gendered, racialized, and other

forms of oppression. It is for the opportunity to learn more from these individuals about

the process of contravening neoliberal discourse and responding to the Anthropocene

within academia that I have taken on this research.

As a collision of social and environmental injustices, the Anthropocene is one piece

of evidence of neoliberalism at work (Greenwood, 2011, 2010; Hursh & Henderson,

2011; Klein, 2008; McKibben, 2010). Indeed, the institutions propagating neoliberal

understandings of success are the very same that are not only hurrying along the

Anthropocene, but actually perversely profiting from it, through what Klein terms

disaster capitalism (2008). Universities are very much participants in seeking profit

from these catastrophes; one illustration currently being challenged at Lakehead

University is institutional investment in the fossil fuel industry. At the same time,

universities also engage in work that speaks truth to power, that is committed to the

advancement of justice and to the creation of meaningful learning relationships through

teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration, civic engagement, and service-learning (Ball,

2012; Muzzin, 2005; Ward, 2003).

A tension emerges in landscapes of higher education, and more broadly too,

between complicity with and resistance to the logic of neoliberalism. This tension sits at

the heart of my research; I am here exploring what it means to respond to the

Anthropocene from within this tension. Because I cannot conceive of a situation where I

will not be in that tension, in higher education and beyond, I want to learn to act well from within it. For me, as a person beginning to occupy a place within the academy, what is perhaps most striking about neoliberal discourse in higher education is the ways in which it—through institutionalized hegemony—seems to decide what is possible, mostly through the power I, and others, lend to it. As stated by Ball (2012), "All of this brings about a profound shift in our relationships, to ourselves, our practice, and the possibilities of being an academic" (p.18). When responding to the Anthropocene stands in such stark contravention of neoliberal ideals, possibilities for response seem even more strictly limited. But the participants in this study are finding ways to respond. I am finding ways to respond. Not perfectly and not all the time, we continue to find ways to do academic work in response to the Anthropocene. I hope this research unpacks participant experiences of working from within the institutional and individual tension of complicity and resistance, and illustrates the unique resistances available to the academic community acting from within Lakehead University.

Summary

In this chapter, I have worked to situate my research questions in the literature. The concept of the Anthropocene describes the planetary context from which stem questions of the university's response-abilities. Considerations of sustainability describe the complexity of the conceptual landscape, and the literature on sustainability in higher education describes the pedagogical story of how the university is best positioned to respond. Standard practices around curriculum, pedagogy, and place (or placelessness) distance the university from responding to the Anthropocene; yet these contexts are also recognized as holding unique potential for engagement with the Anthropocene. Eisner's

(2002) curricular framework, especially his description of the null curriculum, demonstrates how university inaction on issues of the Anthropocene represents action for unsustainability. Finally, the chapter's investigation of neoliberalism – as a dominant organizing discourse – reveals a tension between complicity and resistance in higher education. I now turn to the methodological foundations of my research and the methods by which I am enacting selected methodologies.

Chapter III: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the stories of professors at Lakehead University who are responding to the Anthropocene through their teaching, research, and community engagement, and to vision with them the possibilities for a university that is responsive to the Anthropocene. Specifically, I am asking:

- How do select Lakehead University professors engage with the Anthropocene?

- How have they come to this work?

- Why do they choose to engage with the Anthropocene?

- Do they see this engagement as a responsibility of the academy? Why or why not?

- What is their vision for a university that is more responsive to the Anthropocene?

This chapter will describe the methodological choices I made to respond to these research questions, and the methods by which the selected methodologies were enacted. First, I position my research within qualitative research approaches in general, and briefly explore why my research is best served by doing so. I then name the three methodologies I used to construct my particular approach to this research: appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987); narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); and place inquiry (Basso, 1996; Gruenewald, 2003a). I discuss the strengths and limitations of each strategy of inquiry in the context of this research and explore how their combined use best positioned me to respond to my research questions.

Next, I look to the methods through which I enacted the three selected methodologies. Interviews were the dominant research method and contributed the majority of data. This method is discussed in terms of strengths and limitations, as well as how the interviewing

process was shaped in response to the chosen methodological approach. I also discuss the coding method used to identify themes from the research. Then, I explore the use of photographs as the place inquiry method employed in the research, and briefly consider how the integration of photography as a method contributed place-voice to the research. The third method, used primarily to triangulate participant narratives, was document analysis; selected documents are named and described in terms of their particular salience to the research questions. I conclude the methods section with a brief discussion of the role of anonymity in the research and how naming participants and the research site affect my ability to respond to the research questions.

Qualitative Research Approaches

In this research project, I took a qualitative research approach as it best corresponded to my research questions and gathering detailed accounts of participants' personal experiences of responding to the Anthropocene (Creswell, 2009). A key assumption of qualitative research is that participants' experiences and knowledge are contextualized (Creswell, 2009); because I intended to explore participants' experiences of engagement within a specific context, Lakehead University, qualitative design best enabled my research to value the particularities of this setting. While I also build connections between my research site and global trends by exploring how participant understandings of Lakehead University reflect relevant literature, it was nonetheless my intention to engage in situated inquiry. I wanted my research to respect the place-based nature of experience and knowledge, as well as contribute to the evolution of one particular place that has been my home for the past three years.

In referring to the contextualized nature of experience and knowledge, I also believe it necessary to acknowledge the positioned nature of both researcher and participant. As stated by Silverman (1997), "No method of research can stand outside of the cultural and material world" (p. 249). Nor can any qualitative researcher stand completely outside of the world from where they come (Creswell, 2009). As described above, the preponderancy of my previous research, academic, and extracurricular pursuits have related to university engagement and forming responsive relationships between universities, students, and surrounding social and ecological communities. I recognize my situated intentions as being a university graduate student working to make Lakehead University more responsive to the Anthropocene, and I acknowledge that these intentions contributed to my work.

Asking Meaningful Questions: Three Strategies of Inquiry

Within the broad array of qualitative strategies of inquiry, I chose to engage three specific methodologies, in combination. Appreciative inquiry (AI) offered an opportunity to play with the position, or perspective, from which I approached the research (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Using appreciative inquiry as the framing methodology for my research also provided an opportunity to explore the interacting tension between appreciative and critical perspectives. Narrative inquiry enabled me to explore the stories of my research participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). And by using place-based inquiry (Gruenewald, 2003a; 2003b), I was able to amplify the voice of the stories of land and locale in the research. These choices, and specifically using them in interrelationship, were deliberate; they facilitated my wish to engage the concept of tension in my research, and to invest my energy into the perspectives of allies working to respond to the

Anthropocene. Each of these traditions is further explored below.

Appreciative Inquiry: Critical Appreciation and Appreciative Critique

I am positioning appreciative inquiry (AI) as the guiding methodology of my research. AI is a qualitative research methodology related to action research in that it seeks to create change in the research context (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Stringer, 2007). My interest in AI started when I began to consider the direction of my thesis research. After several discouraging experiences probing the problem in undergraduate activist experiences, I wanted to focus on, again to use Hawken's (2009) words, 'the people' and the hope he found there. Considering the limited time and scope of a master's thesis experience, I wanted to use my time to lend energy and amplification to the stories of people engaging with the Anthropocene.

Developed out of predominantly private sector contexts and fields of organizational development, AI uses the principle of the positive presumption, "that organizations, as centres of human relatedness are 'alive' with infinite constructive capacity" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.2), to address problems and create change by generating more of what is already working well (Cooperrider, 1990; Michael, 2005). AI also draws on the biological principal of the heliotropic hypothesis, which states a plant will grow in the direction of light, to inform an underlying assumption that organizations will most effectively develop in the directions of the positive images they hold of themselves (Bushe, 2011; Cooperrider, 1990). More recently, this approach has been translated to academic research contexts, specifically, those compatible with the ethics and objectives of action research (Bush & Korrapati, 2004; Calabrese, 2006; Newman & Fitzgerald, 2001).

I find particular resonance with this methodology, stemming from both my academic and personal experiences, as well as how it positions me to respond to my research questions. It is especially intriguing to me in its potential relationship with critical research theories and the latent tension therein. I am curious how my experience of the research process might shift in response to refocusing on that which I want to be a part of, that which I want to support. Here and now, I am not particularly interested in continuing to ask why professors and universities are not engaged in the Anthropocene. It is part of the question, of course, but not the part to which I wished to devote energy in this research exercise. I wanted to go where people are getting responsive work done and learn from them. But I also recognize that challenge and critique play vital roles in the stories of these active and responsive individuals. The challenges encountered by participants in making, or not being able to make, change exist in fertile tension with stories of collaboration, support, and success. While my research will not include the stories of the people choosing not to respond to the Anthropocene, I nonetheless learned about the critiques and difficulties of even those who are active.

The methodological choice to use appreciative inquiry does not mean ignoring the barriers to making change. Russell's (2006) work on generous scholarship describes the importance of criticality in research methodologies aiming to promote collaboration and understanding; though generous scholarship is not identical in its methodological approach to appreciative inquiry, Russell's reflections offer valuable insight into the scholarly importance of this tension. Approaching research with intent of appreciation and generosity "does not preclude vigorous debate" (p.407); foregoing engagement with dissonant ideas can instead serve to silence those working to call out norms and

assumptions. Russell draws on Coulter's (2005) work to illustrate this phenomenon as experienced by feminist academics: "Rebecca Coulter (2005) decries the 'tyranny of niceness' that has, for example, served to silence and discipline 'uppity' feminists who insist on bringing uncomfortable knowledge to the fore" (2006, p.407). Russell also names the vital role of discomfort in "troubling cherished beliefs that may be counter-productive to a given movement" (p. 407) so as to advance scholarship and civic engagement in more meaningful ways. As she looks to create research environments able to work across and with methodological difference, Russell asks, "[H]ow might we … engage in ways that not merely allow for, but also encourage critical and generous, and difficult and respectful conversations that have the possibility of continuing?" (p. 407). This question is of utmost importance to responding to the Anthropocene because this moment on the planet is rife with tensions, as noted in Chapter II. Arguably, we must be willing to engage with discomfort.

In the context of my thesis work, I played with the question posed by Russell by querying how my research could embrace tension through methodology. I wanted to develop understandings of critical appreciation and appreciative critique, working to hold tension throughout the research process. The concept of tension has been replete with personal learning for me, and I was eager to extend this learning into experimenting with methodology. Using AI is one step in further exploring a more global tension between resistance and generation, particularly as these pathways to making change play out in a university context.

The constraints of this research exercise make the exact methodological prescriptions of AI challenging for me to follow; among the most apparent restrictions

are time, scope of participation, ability to integrate research findings into reformed institutional practice, and the ability to repeat the research cycle following this integration (Cooperrider, 1990). When similar constraints have been experienced by other AI-inspired initiatives, the process is adapted in a way that corresponds to the particular context (Calabrese, 2006; Moody, Horton-Deustch, & Pesut, 2007; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011; Whitney, 1998). If contextualizing research in the specifics of the problem and the community remain significant to the ethics of action research (Stringer, 2007), these selective applications may speak to a need for AI to be altered to adapt to new settings outside of its original domain of private sector organizational management. In this research, I hope to contribute to the literature by considering the use of AI approaches within the work of sustainability in higher education.

An additional limitation is that I, as a researcher, established the research agenda for my thesis. This is contrary to conventional AI approaches, and to conventions rooting action research (Cooperrider, 1990; Stringer, 2007). But, my research agenda emerges from considerable collaborations within my research setting, as well as meaningful personal experience with research themes. Thus, I do believe I was able to attend to some of the collaborative aspects of AI research. Further, I too am a member of the university community as a student and graduate assistant employee of Lakehead University. I work alongside my colleagues at the CPSS with the express purpose of improving Lakehead University's engagement with social and environmental issues. As an insider researcher, I wish to hold awareness of the opportunities and challenges presented by this position with integrity and keen reflexivity.

Narrative Inquiry: Meeting the People

    Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry as "a way of understanding experience" (p.20). As a methodology, it develops from an understanding that story is central to human experience. Narrative inquiry positions story as how we experience and come to make meaning of the world, as well as how we share these experiences with others and come to make meaning of their experiences in turn (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Research in this tradition operates from a foundational principle that "if we understand the world narratively…then it makes sense to study the world narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.17). I understand narrative inquiry as being responsive to my research aims in several ways. Narrative inquiry explicitly embraces the concept of tension. It positions the research issues of continuity and interaction as edges, or tensions not meant to be resolved but explored; narrative inquiry goes on to embrace the learning made possible at these tense edges (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

    This methodology also sees stories and experiences as placed. Recognizing that this extends beyond physical location to include other types of places, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write that narrative inquiry "remind[s] us to be aware of where we and our participants are placed at any particular moment – temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social" (p. 89). The explicit value of place within the methodology reflects how the concept of place has so significantly shaped my own thinking and relationship to this research. Narrative inquiry's respect of place also corresponds to my objective of integrating place inquiry into my methodology, to be further explored below,

Narrative inquiry understands the role of the researcher as stepping into the research questions and process in a milieu of stories and experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Drawing on the contextualized nature of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) position the methodology as "enter[ing] … in the midst and progress[ing] in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (p.20). I came to this research as someone also working to engage with the Anthropocene through the university, thus I am 'in the midst' of this engagement story at Lakehead University. Professors' engagement with the Anthropocene started well before my research and will continue well beyond its conclusions. While I am working to support and amplify these stories of engagement through my research, my research plays a small role in their evolution. Narrative inquiry acknowledges and facilitates this approach.

Finally, I see narrative inquiry as contributing to the building of community around challenging ideas. It was through story that I saw the CPSS create collaborative relationships between engaged university and community members, and it was through story that I came to know, in Hawken's words, 'the people' who offered me renewed curiosity in the capacity for change-making through the academy. Stemming from this power of story, narrative inquiry is arguably able to offer an entry point to make ideas and actions more accessible and more relevant to peoples' lived experiences.

Place Inquiry: I am NOWHERE … I am NOW HERE

The third component of my constructed methodology is place-based inquiry. Drawing on the literature on sense of place (Casey, 1997; Malpas, 1998; Relph, 1976;

Tuan, 1991) and place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003a; Orr, 2005; Smith, 2002), I feel strongly that the voice of place be given position within my research. As captured by Basso (1996) in the title of his publication, I too believe that "wisdom sits in places". And I wished to explore what possibilities emerge when one works to be more attuned to such wisdom.

For me, poignant illustrations of these possibilities have occurred through facilitating a simple exercise with numerous groups of diverse students; each time, I am reminded of the power of place. The assignment: to interview a place, to ask places questions, like we do people, and discover the layers of place stories held therein. Why does it look this way? Who belongs here and who does not? What does this place represent and how? In completing this exercise, students are able to name how physical spaces and places shape possibilities for engagement, participation, conformity, and creativity. They find new ideas in the landscape, ideas that require a focus on the landscape to emerge. They begin to see place-making as a series of deliberate choices very much affecting them, though perhaps having been made in ways that exclude their ideas. They also begin to identify with the notion of being a place-maker themselves.

I have been inspired by the potential of this simple exercise, and I wished to integrate its capacity for generating creative responses into my research. I understand Lakehead's faculty and administrative members who are engaging with the Anthropocene to be place-makers. As I asked them to turn their academic gaze onto and into place (M'Gonigle & Starke, 2006b), I explored their hopes for engaged institutions in and through senses of place. I wanted to facilitate their discovery of new ideas that require a focus on the landscape to find voice. How might their visions for a university that is

responsive to the Anthropocene be bound up in and represented by places? What possibilities require place-inspiration to be recognized and voiced? The ways by which I integrated this type of inquiry is explored in my methods below.

Methods

Interviews: Participant Narratives

My methodological choices frame the methods by which I undertake this research. Interviews were employed as the primary method of data collection, and were congruent with all three methodologies (Basso, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cooperrider, 1990). More specifically, semi-structured interviews were used in this research initiative to achieve multiple purposes. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to both pursue specific information from participants, and to ask some of the same questions of all participants (Wengraf, 2001). Simultaneously, semi-structured interviewing honoured my intention to create space for participants to respond with stories and ideas they deemed to be most important and pertinent (Wengraf, 2001). Participant autonomy in expressing what is most personally germane is an important tenet of AI approaches (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), as well as of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). Further, interviewing enabled me to pursue in greater depth unanticipated themes that arose in the course of the interview process (Wengraf, 2001).

That this thesis is situated within an AI methodology also affected the process of interviewing. Pursuing an AI-informed approach encouraged me to include questions around visioning and possibility as a means of moving towards the positive presumption. Correspondingly, the AI approach shaped my participant selection. I wished to explore

the experiences of individuals already engaging with the Anthropocene. I also focused specifically on members of Lakehead University's faculty, as well as one administrator demonstrating leadership on issues of sustainability. While many other members of the university community are engaged, I wanted to explore faculty's experiences because it is this group of individuals who have most significantly transformed my own relationship to engagement. I too am questioning whether I might wish to pursue further academic studies and engage with the Anthropocene through the academy. Thus, the experiences of this group of people are particularly meaningful to me at this point in time.

There are challenges that accompany interviewing faculty, particularly faculty with whom I have built a relationship over the course of my masters program. I recognize that my relationships with these professors exist within complex dynamics of institutional power structures, as well as empowering dynamics of mentorship, collaboration, and friendship. While maintaining awareness of the potential impact of these dynamics on my research, I wished to use this research opportunity to deepen my process of learning from these individuals and to share these specific conversations. I hoped the research would be a small offering of appreciation for their work and the ways in which their engagement has catalyzed much of my personal learning.

In line with AI, I approached seven faculty members and administrators at Lakehead University who are engaging with the Anthropocene through their teaching, research, and engagement, and whose leadership inspired me over the course of my graduate experience (Cooperrider, 1990); some were participating members in the Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies, but this was not requisite to participation. I did not seek a sample population per se, i.e., ensuring that I had participants from all Faculties,

all levels of Administration, of different demographic backgrounds (e.g. age, professional rank, etc.). Rather, I sought out individuals who I had come to know and learn from during my graduate explorations of sustainability at Lakehead University. Of this group, six individuals were able and willing to participate in interviews. The interview questions were sent to participants ahead of the interview to allow for prior reflection (see Appendix). Five interviews were completed in person, and one interview was conducted over the phone. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 105 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, and followed standard ethical interview protocol. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim and returned to the participant for member checking.

Following this review, I listened to the recording of each interview for a second time, and began coding. Transcripts were coded using a process informed by the work of Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2009). Each transcript was separately explored for notable themes and ideas, then themes were cross-compared across transcripts. I generated a list of shared themes and reviewed the transcripts for specific illustrations, or quotations, reflecting participants' expressions of the key themes. I sought out interrelationships between the shared themes, condensing some thematic categories where relevant. These emergent themes constitute the foci of Chapters IV and V.

Photographs: Place Narratives

In working to integrate sense of place and place-voice into my research, I asked each participant to select an interview location that represented their vision for a university that is being responsive to the Anthropocene. Because of the different locations, some interviews were conducted in the selected locations, while other locations

were described during the interview. I also took photographs of the locations, except in cases where the locations were not nearby; in these cases, participants provided a photograph of their place. The limitations and opportunities bound up within this method are further discussed in Chapter V, where participant photographs and corresponding responsive visions are presented.

Documents: Institutional Narratives

The interview narratives comprise the majority of qualitative data. However, I explored other sources to inform the context of my research. I examined certain Lakehead University documents pertaining to the main themes of this research, namely sustainability in higher education, neoliberalism in higher education, and how the reported developmental directions of Lakehead University intersect with the institution's response to issues of the Anthropocene. Based on relevance to research themes, I selected the Lakehead University Strategic Plan 2013-2018 (2013); the Lakehead University Strategic Plan 2010-2013 (2009); the Lakehead University Academic Plan 2012-2017 (2012a); the Lakehead University Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017 (2012b); the university's sustainability webpage (Lakehead University, 2011); the Office of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation webpage (n.d.a; n.d.c), the Organization Chart (2013b), and the Lakehead University Faculty Association Collective Agreement (LUFA, 2011).

These documents were used to triangulate data (Cresswell, 2009) gathered through interviews with institutional data, further contextualizing how participant narratives reflected, or not, institutional narratives in articulating opportunities to respond to the Anthropocene. They were germane to my research because they offer perspective

into dominant narratives informing Lakehead University's discourse on the Anthropocene, and illustrate our university's internalization of more global political, economic, and cultural trends in higher education. Though I am cognizant of the blurred boundaries between institutions and the individuals inhabiting them, the comparison between institutional and participant stories contributed to this research by helping to demonstrate how these stories are aligned, yet also exist in tension. I chose to limit my document selection to these materials due to the scope of this research, and to keep focus on participant experiences. However, further research could query a more extensive selection of university materials, and analyze institutional narratives as they relate to responding to the Anthropocene.

Who's Who: Anonymity in Research

Issues of anonymity also complicated my intention for this research to respond to and share the experiences of these particular participants. Although given the choice to remain anonymous, all participants chose to be named in the research. Given that, the research site is also named. Though a dominant norm in qualitative research, the standard of anonymity carries with it particular assumptions; just as naming participants and places has certain political effect, so too does keeping them unknown. In his work on anonymity and place, Nespor (2000) questions the representational strategy of non-identification for its powerful influence on research:

> Practices of inquiry and representation do not just discover or document relations; they presuppose and entail them or, as I have argued in the case of anonymity, hide and deflect them. In saying we should locate action in its places, I mean we should show how economic, political, cultural, and institutional practices produce places

and organize them into landscapes within which (or through which) participants, researchers, and readers can jointly orient themselves . . . Naming places and tracing their constitutive processes allows researchers to emphasize connections among people, places, and events. (pp. 556-557)

Identifying the participants and site of my research contextualizes my work in broader economic, political, and cultural forces as they are playing out at Lakehead University, which will be explored in further chapters. In so doing, I understand my research to be more empowered to incite action that is meaningful to the particular people and places in which it is situated. I also think the naming of participants and places better aligns my work with the ethics of AI methodology; I am able to recognize and value these participants' leadership on issues of the Anthropocene, and to bring awareness to their efforts that perhaps have gone unnamed and unnoticed.

One thing I did notice through this research experience is that I have not felt a similar weight of responsibility around ethical representation in anonymous research situations as I do now with named participants. My experience resonates with Nespor's (2000) argument; I haven't previously questioned the impact of anonymity on my work, but experience an amplified, perhaps almost arresting, awareness of the politics of representation when working with identified research sites and subjects. Still, paired with this weight, I feel incredible privilege to have the opportunity to create honoured space for their voices in this research.

Summary

This section has considered the methodology rooting this research, and the methods by which it is being approached. I have presented the inquiry model I have

constructed by bringing together appreciative inquiry, narrative inquiry, and place

inquiry; this mixed methodologies approach best positions me to respond to my research

questions. I have presented the particular methods I have selected to collect data. To sum,

through interviews, I explored participant stories of responding to the Anthropocene,

engaged with participant photographs to integrate place-voice into the research, then

triangulated their narratives with the institutional narratives as presented in select

Lakehead University documents. I have also briefly discussed the role of anonymity in

this research, and the effects of having all participants named in this study. Now, it is

time to pause, and consider how the planetary, pedagogical, and personal stories evolved

over the course of this research and continue to evolve. I will then move towards

presentation of this research's findings and analysis in Chapters IV and V.

Pause

Several months have passed since I began this work, and it is winter now in Thunder Bay. Almost daily, I find myself passing by a city park that looks out over Lake Superior to the cliffs of the Sleeping Giant. It is a bitter winter, and there is something about the cold and brittle air that casts these cliffs into arrestingly clear relief at sunrise and sunset. Now, they look different to me. I feel new and loving awe for the twinned fragility and strength of this place; the air is so cold it feels as if it could crack like the iced-in harbor, and still the solid rock cliffs rise up.

Several months have passed since I began this work, and another United Nations climate meeting has come and gone. Once again, the Canadian government has behaved outrageously in its refusal to work for global mitigation and has actively blocked attempts at cooperative progress (Aulakh, 2013). A polar vortex has descended on our country as a result of a weakening jet stream, and freak storms of snow, rain, and ice, formerly known to occur every hundred years, are falling simultaneously across the continent (Roston, 2014). The Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC, released in March 2014, warns world powers time is running out to mitigate runaway climate change (IPCC, 2014).

Several months have passed since I began this work, and I am now participating in new projects related to sustainability in higher education. I am teaching a pilot Climate Change Pedagogy course in Lakehead University's Bachelor of Education program where, alongside teacher candidates, I am exploring how to best engage in the politicized and emotionally charged spaces of climate change education. And I am concurrently co-researching this project with one of my thesis interview participants,

Paul Berger. Understanding the course to be unique amongst Canadian faculties of education, we want to embolden others to grow their own pedagogical practice around climate change, and to advocate for the inclusion of climate change pedagogy in teacher preparatory programs. Also, I am preparing to co-facilitate a faculty development retreat with David and the Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies on integrating concepts of sustainability and place into curriculum at Lakehead University and a number of the interview participants will be attending this workshop. This project will work to develop interdisciplinary efforts in orienting the university towards responding to the Anthropocene.

Each of these projects is changing my relationship with my earlier work and with my participants, feeling like layers of complexity and subtlety are being added to my interpretations as I continue to move forward. Each new project is affecting what and how I am able to learn. I am finding new ways to understand the stories of interview participants, and different lenses through which to regard the literature on sustainability in higher education and the Anthropocene. I am thankful for the insights, intellectual and emotional, being offered to me as I occupy positions that are new to me in the landscape of higher education. And I am thankful for the multiple opportunities to deepen my engagement with education for the Anthropocene – through writing, through teaching, through listening and talking, through reflection, through reading, through action.

Climate change is a rapidly changing discourse. The Anthropocene is making itself up as we go, as it arrives. Our responses too are being made up as we react to this almost violent novelty shaping the current moment on the planet. I feel compelled to recognize what is happening around me, and I feel a responsibility to reflect this new

positionality in the next chapters of my thesis. With the issue being as alive as it is, in the news, in the landscape, in my classroom, and in myself, I feel compelled to recognize the changes that have happened since I started writing. This conversation is alive and in constant motion. I hope for my work to capture the 'then and now' element of my experiences and how my scholarship is consequently being formed. The colliding planetary, pedagogical, and personal stories remain present in my research.

Chapter IV: Stories of Response-Abilities in the Anthropocene

Introduction

Chapters IV and V present the results, analysis, and discussion of the research. Chapter IV focuses on the introductions of participants and research site, as well as the dominant themes arising from the interviews and document analysis, and Chapter V engages with participant photographs and corresponding visions for a Lakehead University responding to the Anthropocene. Thus, I am delineating the chapters based on themes rather than specific research stages. I am choosing not to separate the results, analysis, and discussion, but instead to weave these stories together. Engaging the findings in this way offers an opportunity to be more responsive to the stories of participants, and to be more transparent about my own positionality as I dialogue with their responses. I also believe I am better able to represent participants' ideas and experiences as placed within an ongoing narrative when communicating the findings in this manner.

Chapter IV serves as a departure point for this narrative, and first considers themes arising from participant understandings of my position as researcher; in so doing, I introduce the researcher role in this inquiry and how it responds to the research questions. I then move on to introducing participants and place by presenting a brief narrative for each participant, as well as for the research site, Lakehead University. Next, I address the themes emerging from the data: connection to place and to mentors as inspiring participant action on the Anthropocene; the role of relationships in enabling the academy to respond to the Anthropocene; and the role of teaching and curricular freedom in informing participant response to the Anthropocene. These themes are then

contextualized in the dominant, more global neoliberal narrative being encountered by higher education (Ball, 2012). I present participant and institutional narratives on the valuation and practice of research and teaching at Lakehead University, and consider how influences of neoliberalism in turn affect the response-ability of research and teaching to the Anthropocene. Chapter IV concludes by exploring tensions between the concepts of freedom and consent as they play out in academic spaces, and how these tensions shape universities' responses, or lack thereof, to the Anthropocene.

Resistance and Reflection: My Researcher Role Revisited

Since initially articulating my methodology, my understanding of my researcher role has significantly evolved. It now develops out of participants' descriptions of what is disappearing from their experience of the academy, and what I am positioned to offer. I recognize my role as responding to two particular participant needs: resistance and reflection.

Resistance and Neoliberal Numbing

When asked what she was most interested in learning from my research, one participant asked for my work to reveal to her how she had become complicit in propping up university structures and processes she actually wished to challenge, resist, and change because of the norming (and numbing) effects of time spent in higher education administration (C. Russell, personal interview, November 25, 2013). She wanted my research to illuminate her own practices of self-policing and manufacturing of non-critical consent, with the intention of strengthening her commitment to making higher education matter more to the Anthropocene than to the status quo.

Through the analysis of my results, I endeavored to bring shadowed elements of faculty and administrator experiences to participants', and readers', awareness. My position as a researcher offers a perspective not available to participants; I am just visiting their daily experience, while they are enmeshed. This task calls on me to be critical of the politicized systems in which participants are positioned and how their roles come to be shaped by and understood through the lenses imposed and reinforced by these systems. I do not mean to suggest participants, or myself, are separate from the systems shaping higher education; during the interviews, many participants acknowledged the ways in which they simultaneously conform to and confront hegemonic forces in university places. But each of the participants also recognized fundamental flaws in current university structures and processes, hence why they engage in their particular work. I hope to deepen understandings of this tension through this research.

Reflection and Neoliberal Norming

I also want my research to offer space for participant reflection. All participants noted they are made so busy, make themselves so busy, and make other people so busy that the contemplative professor archetype, feet perched on desk and chair tilted back, has all but disappeared from the academy, and many questioned if such a person ever actually inhabited higher education. In Chapter II, I considered the neoliberal discourse's dismissal of the value of reflection for the sake of 'productivity' (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2002). Nonetheless, having the time and space to question and contemplate are characteristics that position universities to make unique, valuable contributions to society, a theme to be explored later in this chapter. Without question, the privilege afforded by such time and space needs to be recognized as such, and perhaps even troubled. But

troubled in such a way to call on universities to step into responsibilities to serve society, rather than serve the interests of narrowly defined productivity. The devaluing of reflective space in the academy signals a neoliberal trend towards prioritizing profit over pedagogy (Giroux, 2002).

Spaciousness also creates more opportunities for inhabitants of an institution to see how systems of power are shaping their place. When made so busy to not have time to think, members' capacity to critique normative systems and act for alternatives can become limited. Research participants still find many ways to create change, and to nurture sustainability in higher education within the constraints imposed by busyness. But time and space really facilitate one's ability to step out from what has become normal or habitual and to perceive the systems of power and privilege in play. Just as one participant needed to move away from her hometown to be able to see the forces shaping her experience there (C. Russell, personal interview, November 25, 2013), so too do we need space within academic places to gain perspective, to wonder why things are the way are, and to invent responses for change.

Such cultures of busyness arguably also affect creativity, collaboration, and the kinds of conversations able to be shared between colleagues (Ball, 2012; Evans, 2012; Hursh & Henderson, 2011), themes also addressed by literature on neoliberalism (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2002), as well as by participants later in this discussion. Again, it is not that participants do not exercise agency. This study's research participants still engage in creative, collaborative, and critical work, and I do not name these barriers in the academy as excuses for inaction – there is still lots of work that can be done. But I believe it necessary to develop a more complex understanding of the context in which participants

work, and of their needs as they have articulated them. Here, I raise the issue of reflective

space in its connections to neoliberal discourse so as to name what I hope my research

can, in some small way, offer to participants. I moved forward in my writing with the

express intention of serving these participant-defined objectives of disrupting learned

neoliberal norms and offering reflective space. I believe each contributes to my ability to

respond well to my research questions and, more importantly, to create meaningful

conversations on the role and responsibility of my particular university at this particular

moment on the planet.

Introducing Participants

The task of introducing my research participants has challenged me. Considering

that participants trusted me to name them in my work, I wrestled with how to name them.

I found myself wondering what matters about who they are and what defines them in

terms of this research, as well as beyond it. Issues of representation reappear here in their

relationship to my use of narrative inquiry. I made this methodological choice because of

its characteristic ability to honour participant voice in research. And introductions seem a

particularly complicated moment in recognizing and respecting participant voice. To use

Hawken's (2009) language, my research participants are the people who offer a pulse of

change on issues of the Anthropocene at Lakehead University, and are important to the

work of sustainability in higher education at our institution. I do not want my research to

compromise their ability to do this work.

In the end, I decided to introduce participants from the same place I began the

interviews – with the first questions I asked. These questions explored how participants

came to be professors and how they came to care about issues of social and

environmental justice (see Appendix). In responding to these questions, each participant went back well beyond their academic experiences, and most referred to childhood memories. Every participant also spoke of respected mentors who had directed them towards academia, mentors who had cultivated a love for a subject, for teaching, for the possibilities of creating change through university work. These childhood experiences in nature and mentorship experiences in university have significantly affected who these people have become and how they do their work. It thus seems appropriate, and necessary, to include in participant introductions some of the places and people who brought participants to the places and positions they currently inhabit. I present these introductions in the order in which participants were interviewed.

"I can be an activist as an academic."

Connie Russell grew up on a farm in Flesherton, Ontario. She was concerned about the treatment of animals on the farm as well as expressions of sexism and other social injustices in her school and in her town. Connie describes herself as being raised to question authority and to speak out about her beliefs. She moved to Toronto to pursue her undergraduate degree in Psychology and developed a career in the social services. However, she came to see that she was not particularly well suited to the profession and its lack of time and space to reflect on praxis, frustrated her. A desire for a career change prompted her return to university to pursue a Master's in Environmental Studies at York University. There, Connie discovered theory, vocabulary, and academic literature to describe her lived experiences of injustice in her rural hometown.

Though she understood the academy to be an excellent site for her to use her strengths in research and writing to create change, she experienced fears of 'selling out' as an activist as she considered doctoral studies. A mentor, Prof. John Livingston, assured her of the unique contributions to be made by the academy to social change; he himself had spent decades as a front-line activist prior to becoming a professor, and recognized the university's capacity to offer the time and space for thought and reflection as a critical element in effecting meaningful change.

Connie is the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University after having spent 5 years as the Chair of Graduate Studies and Research in Education. She works at the intersections of social and environmental justice, and her research interests include critical animal studies, environmental education, critical pedagogy, and fat studies.

"Universities are probably singular institutions in society that have young, mostly young, thinking people within them and that are able to educate towards concepts in mind … it's hard to look at any other institutions that have such a mandate as a university for educating around sustainability."

Rod Hanley grew up in rural central Illinois, and spent his childhood exploring the wooded conservation areas surrounding his home. He was a member of the Boy Scouts, and really loved all of the wilderness activities in which he was able to participate through that organization. He was raised feeling connected to wild places.

Time in the military convinced Rod he wanted to pursue post-secondary education. In his third year of an Environmental Science major, he had to choose between taking a vertebrate natural history course with a reputedly curmudgeonly professor or a general etymology course with a professor he didn't know. Pursuing the etymology course made all the difference. That professor's near-religious enthusiasm for the material inspired Rod to pursue graduate studies in etymology. Even when Rod was again deployed between his degrees, this time to the Persian Gulf War, he collected bugs from the desert to send back to his professor where they were received with great excitement.

His etymological doctoral work took him from the University of Kansas to the Altiplano cloud forests of Bolivia. After his PhD, Rod faced another choice: a post-doctoral position at Kansas or a research associate position at an experimental institute on sustainability at the University of North Dakota. He identifies this as the single most important decision of his life steering him towards sustainability work. Rod soon became head of the institute, developed it into a new and independent academic department, and continued to grow his career as a university administrator.

Rod was the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of Lakehead University and is currently pursuing a Master's in Sustainability Leadership at Cambridge University.

"And suddenly, it just occurred to me that things are going in a very very bad way, and if a lot of people don't stand up and do something about it, then there's really going to be huge suffering and potentially extinction."

Paul Berger grew up having political conversations around the dinner table. He pursued an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering at McMaster University, and distinctly remembers one day driving in to university listening to a Noam Chomsky tape on manufacturing consent. That tape brought to his awareness the ways in which perceptions of global issues are shaped by calculated media discourses, the ways systems of power and privilege purposefully shape seemingly innocuous everyday experiences. Consequently, he used one of the only two elective credits available to him in his entire engineering degree to take a course in peace studies.

After a number of years traveling, Paul returned to university to complete a Bachelor of Education degree. A mentor suggested he continue with graduate studies and, overcoming the notion that only geniuses went to grad school, he completed a Masters of Education. The experience of pursuing independent research, combined with his growing love for teaching at the undergraduate level, inspired him to complete doctoral studies.

Paul's passion for action on climate change stems from his understanding that it will exacerbate all other social and ecological issues. His deep reading on the topic has played a critical role in allowing him to develop more complex understandings of the Anthropocene, and to challenge the media's skewed presentations of these issues.

Paul is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and has served as the Acting Chair of Undergraduate Studies in Education. His research interests include Inuit education, critical pedagogy, and climate change pedagogy. Each year, he watches for the freeze-up of Lake Superior, and loves to make the most of its skating potential.

"I learned about sustainable development right from the onset … when I went to grad school, I wanted to do something applied, I wanted to do something that was relevant, that was going to make some kind of positive contribution to make things better."

Todd Randall grew up with strong teaching mentors, and it is a love of teaching that has propelled his academic career. He remembers being so impressed by a Teaching Assistant (TA) working in his undergraduate science program at the University of British Columbia, but thinking he wasn't nearly smart enough to continue on to graduate school like this TA. However, after encountering a number of faculty mentors throughout his Bachelor's degree, he was excited by the possibilities of completing a Master's program.

It's always been important to Todd to do work that is relevant to problems facing communities around the world. His Master's research at McMaster University applied his scientific background to landfill siting. Concurrently, his passion for teaching continued to develop, as he now had a TA position of his own. He identifies this teaching aspect of his Master's degree as what he loved most about graduate school.

After returning to British Columbia and working for a few years as a consultant on the siting of resource extraction projects, Todd had the opportunity to teach in that province's college system. Feeling this to be much better suited to his passions, he returned to the classroom. His desire to grow his career as a post-secondary educator, as well as to engage in projects with meaningful applications to community issues, saw his return to McMaster University to pursue a PhD in Civil Engineering. There, a mentor from his Master's program had transitioned towards researching sustainable communities and suburban retrofitting, and Todd became enthusiastically involved.

Todd is the Chair of the Department of Geography at Lakehead University, and teaches courses in land-use planning, GIS, and sustainable community design.

"That's who I am and that is what I must do. I must engage with the work that I've been committed to for so long which is trying to figure out what we can do to respond to the times we live in, socially and ecologically and spiritually. So, I mean I do it because that's who I am."

David Greenwood grew up deeply connected to places. He recounts being fascinated as a child by the reflection of the sky in puddles and by ants marching up and down a neighbourhood culvert. He also remembers being aware that his friends might think it weird to be so awed by the natural world, that he almost had to hide his wonder. But this rooted connection made him feel most alive, and it continues to do so.

David also grew up amongst his family's passions for social justice, teaching, writing, and education. Originally attending university to become a chemical engineer, he soon developed a writing craft that helped him to become a high school English teacher. But in the schools where he worked, David experienced personal and professional contradictions in the politics of education: while encouraged to create outdoor and experiential lesson plans for his gifted class, he was instructed not to use such pedagogy with his 'at-risk' class but instead, to 'drill and kill'. He loved his teaching work, but was also coming to understand it as scripted and supportive of hegemonic discourses.

David left for the University of New Mexico where he thought he would pursue a Master's in Creative Writing. However, there he met the mentors who invited him to make sense of his own educational experiences, and to grow his scholarship to connect environmental discourse with critical education discourse. At the end of his Masters, he recognized his learning as having just begun and continued on in academia.

David is the Canada Research Chair in Environmental Education in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University, and a director of the university's Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies.

"That had more or less always been there – caring about and understanding the connectedness of all things … feeling that connection with the earth. Applying the tools I had learned through … academia and putting those tools to use on something I cared about was a very important opportunity for me."

Mirella Stroink grew up sensing interconnectedness to hold profound meaning to her understandings of the world. She expressed outrage in her adolescence over environmental issues, and she never felt quite at home in the large urban centre of Toronto. But her indignation and her feelings of being misplaced developed towards deep personal explorations into the relationships between human and ecological systems.

Mirella describes her academic career as one in which she has never really left school. She pursued an undergraduate degree in Psychology at Mount Allison University, where she grew to love both the discipline and to love the Atlantic Ocean. Her feelings of connection to her environment took root during this time. She continued on to complete a Master's and PhD in research psychology at York University, returning to Toronto but feeling disconnected from the place. There, she studied social identity and experiences of acculturation amongst second-generation immigrants.

Throughout her graduate school experience, Mirella felt her work was missing a social application, missing an opportunity to contribute to social and environmental betterment through research. When she successfully applied to become a professor at Lakehead University, she discovered opportunities to work for change through research. She soon became associated with the Food Security Research Network, and designed her courses to respond to issues of sustainability.

Mirella is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology. She aligns her work to resist mechanized worldviews of distinct human and ecological systems, and to embrace concepts of interconnectedness, complexity, sustainability, and change.

Introducing Place

Having introduced participants, I now turn to introducing the research site.

Lakehead University is not a singular place, the most obvious illustration of this being it

is made up of two distinct campuses, located in Thunder Bay and Orillia. Considering the

value I have assigned to place-voice in my work, I feel compelled to clarify I have never

visited the Orillia campus, even though it is comparatively more defined by and

recognized for its sustainability initiatives, especially in terms of its built environment.

The decision to focus my research exclusively on the faculty and administration of the

Thunder Bay campus reflects my intention for my research to be responsive to the close

learning relationships I have formed during my time at the university. But even with

reasoned purpose, this aspect of introducing my research site merits complicating.

The objective of this introduction is not to try to assemble a catalogue of the many

facets of Lakehead University interacting with issues of sustainability and the

Anthropocene; as explored through the work of Cortese (2003) and Orr (1994), the entire

institution is implicated. Instead, I wish for my research to be focused on how these select

participants are responding to the Anthropocene from within the organizational melee.

The purpose, role, and responsibility of the institution is negotiated amidst multiple,

sometimes competing, stories. There is a formal institutional sustainability story, one

delineated by policy and strategic administrative documents. Another story is comprised

of university members' experiences of the formal sustainability story, how those policies

and declarations are lived and troubled through day-to-day accomplishments and

frustrations. Participants also named additional stories built around their personal

relationships with Lakehead University, what they love about the place and why they

sometimes worry about its directions. And, to further complicate notions of defining place, none of my participants are originally from Thunder Bay. Each of these stories will be further explored later and correspond to the broad themes developed throughout the interview process. I name them here to illustrate how such a collection of stories, at times contested and at times converging, shape both the institution and peoples' processes of defining and experiencing it. The difficulty of introducing the place reflects its complexity.

"Mission Statement: [Lakehead University] is committed to educating students who will be recognized for leadership and independent critical thinking and who are aware of social and environmental responsibilities" (Lakehead University, 2009, p.1)

Lakehead University is a medium-sized post-secondary institution that was founded in 1965 (Lakehead University, n.d.d). Comprised of two campuses, the main campus is located in the city of Thunder Bay, and is attended by approximately 7300 students; this is the site of my research. The university's second campus is located in Orillia, Ontario, and is attended by approximately 1100 students (Lakehead University, n.d.d). Dr. Brian Stevenson is the current President and Vice-Chancellor of Lakehead University, and has been since 2011. Lakehead University is comprised of ten faculties: Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Graduate Studies, Health and Behavioural Sciences, Natural Resources Management, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Law, Science and Environmental Studies, and Social Sciences and Humanities. Though historically a primarily undergraduate institution, Lakehead University now identifies as "an innovative comprehensive university that provides an education that is about how to think, not what to think" (Lakehead University, 2013a).

In considering its relationship with sustainability policy, Lakehead University became a signatory to the Talloires Declaration in 1991. Lakehead University derives its definition of a sustainable university from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which states "a sustainable university is one that promotes the concept of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Lakehead University, 2011). Under the leadership of the CPSS, Lakehead University is currently involved in the Sustainability Tracking and Assessment Rating Systems process (Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies, 2013).

Harvesting the Learning: Introduction

Having introduced participants and the research site, I now turn to analysis of the themes emerging from participant interviews and triangulated with institutional documents. This discussion first considers the role of environmental connection in nurturing participants' ethic of care for environmental issues, as well as the role of academic mentorship in shaping the academy to be a meaningful space from which to respond to the Anthropocene. The theme of relationships is further explored in terms of relationships' transformative capacity to position the academy as a meaningful actor in the Anthropocene. Next, the importance of teaching as an academic response to the Anthropocene is discussed. Participant narratives on teaching are compared with institutional narratives that assert the development of Lakehead University as a research-intensive university. The tension between these narratives is explored as a possible illustration of neoliberalism within our university's context. Another tension existing between the privilege of academic freedom and learned patterns of consent to power further illuminates the influence of neoliberalism in higher education, and how it becomes internalized by those explicitly seeking to resist its assumptions in responding to the Anthropocene. The discussion concludes with considerations of how neoliberal discourse limits possibilities for responding to the Anthropocene.

Environmental Connection and Ethics of Care: Connecting to Place

All participants identified place as a significant influence on their academic work and their care for the world. More specifically, the six participants each spoke to feeling a connection with different aspects of nature. Some recalled these feelings of connection as rooting in childhood; Rod and David remembered playing in forests and in puddles,

whereas Connie named her farm homeplace and her relationship to the animals on the farm as shaping her ethic of fairness and empathy. For Mirella, it was an adolescent experience that developed her connection to place; she referred to becoming aware of not feeling at home in Toronto when she moved to the Maritimes for her undergraduate degree and put her feet in the Atlantic Ocean for the first time (personal interview, December 10, 2013).

For all participants, the influence of the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996) continues to inspire their work, but more fundamentally, their self-concept. Mirella, who put considerable emphasis on the word 'interconnectedness' throughout her interview, now works to re-place human systems as "nested within the biological ecosystem that [they] are not separate from" through her research on complexity and systems thinking (personal interview, December 10, 2013). This paradigm also informs her spiritual beliefs and personal development. David spoke to feeling most alive when in wild places, "[b]eing outside with the land in a place that hasn't been paved over, a place where I can wander and discover the intricacy and beauty" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). And Todd joked that a local cross-country ski area is his "chapel on a Sunday" (personal interview, December 2, 2013).

As well, holding a developed sense of place affected many participants' decision to live and work in Thunder Bay, according to participant reports. Paul noted how he and his partner, who is also a professor, "didn't have any desire to be in any old university" (personal interview, November 26, 2013), that they would require proximity to wilderness at their place of work. Three other participants spoke to how they really appreciate the closeness of wild places to Lakehead University, and understood it, among

other characteristics, to affect the types of faculty, staff, and students attracted to our institution. Amongst participants, a common expression of what makes Thunder Bay special is it being a place where the biophysical environment, at least in appearance, continues to dominate the landscape. For Mirella, this serves as a reminder that human activity is nested within the environment (M. Stroink, personal interview, December 10, 2013). Additionally, many participants named this characteristic of Lakehead University and Thunder Bay in explaining why they chose their particular interview places. This will be further explored in Chapter V's discussion of place-voice and selected interview locations.

Here though, I want to raise the question of why and how place matters in supporting and growing a community of practice on education for the Anthropocene. According to most participants, childhood places shaped their senses of self and the work they grew to understand as being important. As such, universities that understand themselves as having responsibilities to the Anthropocene perhaps also hold responsibilities to play a role in connecting children and adolescents to nature, not to mention their own students, faculty, and staff. At Lakehead University, there exist possibilities for rich collaboration with elementary and secondary schools in facilitating experiences in nature-places, especially considering the size of the Faculty of Education compared to many other faculties at Lakehead University, and the expertise held by many education professors and instructors in outdoor and experiential environmental education. But another dimension of this theme is how wild places reinforce and motivate participants' current scholarship for the Anthropocene. Though his research investigates urban environments, Todd finds inspiration along cross-country ski trails. His lens for

understanding the importance of the sustainability of urban places perhaps at least partly stems from time spent in the wild places he is working to protect from sprawl and poor land-use planning. Rod's experience provides another example: he is currently studying how principles of biomimicry might be applied to ameliorating structures of university governance. He sees the institution as related to the more-than-human world, and positioned to learn from the environment in which it is nested.

It perhaps takes time in nature for participants to remember why they do their work and for what, or whom, they are working. I sense that, for all these participants, opportunities to spend time in nature makes their academic work more meaningful, relevant, and placed. David, for example, named how important this is to his work in saying, "This is why I got into this work … pairing my love for nature with my work" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). For me, the question distilled from this theme asks what would it mean for universities to understand themselves as having a responsibility to connect people to nature and to understand that places matter? What would be happening at such institutions? And would universities with these priorities be able to respond to the Anthropocene with greater effectiveness? From participant experiences, I believe giving university community members opportunities to stay connected with wild places, creating opportunities for young local citizens to also connect with nature, preserving natural areas on campus, and valuing these places as spaces for learning would inspire those currently responding to the Anthropocene and grow the community of educators working to be relevant to the Anthropocene at Lakehead University. Certainly the rich, diverse, and increasingly sophisticated writing in outdoor experiential education, significant life experiences, and the educational

implications of human/nature and human/animal relations echo these values and their role in the development of an ethic of care (Fawcett, 2013).

Personal Connection and Experiences of Mentorship: Making A Place

Parallel to the effects of place, participants expressed strong recognition of the influence of mentors in moving them towards academic work. When asked how they came to be professors, every participant named at least one person whose impact contributed to their development as actors for social and environmental justice within the academy. Most participants, in fact, named multiple people, and underscored the significance of these people in guiding their academic careers. A number of participants commented that, prior to graduate studies, they had believed only geniuses went to graduate school. And so, one critical role assumed by mentors was to disrupt such "imposter syndrome", encourage participants to pursue a university education, and even consider academia as a professional home. For some participants, family members were critical in opening up academic possibilities. Both of David's parents held graduate university degrees, and he remembers his grandmother "being a huge champion of education" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). Connie's parents were farmers who saw their daughter's strengths in academic skills, and strongly encouraged her to pursue university studies: "[T]hey valued it even though they didn't have it themselves" (personal interview, November 25, 2013).

Other participants encountered mentors through schooling experiences; these mentors sparked participant interest about a certain aspect of university work, thus motivating participants to continue developing their academic career. Todd "got a bit of a bug for teaching" (personal interview, December 2, 2013) in working with undergraduate

professors and TA's who were incredible educators. They inspired his own love of teaching and it was this opportunity to develop his teaching practice that motivated his return to university for doctoral work: "[I]t was … the aspect of my program I liked the best" (personal interview, December 2, 2013). Similarly for Paul, it was a mentor who created the opportunity for him to teach in Lakehead University's Bachelor of Education while only holding a Master's degree: "I found out quite quickly that I really liked it … and I felt like I was effective in helping [teacher candidates] to understand more how they could bring themselves to their teaching and could do different things" (personal interview, Novemeber 26, 2013). Wanting to extend his ability to teach in universities, Paul pursued a PhD. For Rod, the enthusiasm of his etymology professor made the idea of doing research irresistible; Rod then began to grow his own career. Mirella's graduate work was also motivated by research opportunities.

However, from what I understand of participants' experiences based on their reports, the most significant contribution of mentors to participant scholarship arrived in the form of community; participants gave particular recognition to the mentors who made them feel like they, and the work they wanted to do, belonged within the university. Though participants' specific concerns about working in the academy differed, mentors' responses positively influenced participant understandings of the academy and what work was possible therein. These mentors made participants feel like they had a unique contribution to make, that their contribution was valuable to society, and consequently, that they could act on social and environmental justice from within universities.

Todd and Mirella each sought meaningful applications of their research in developing their academic careers. They wanted to their work to be connected to real

problems in the world, and to make a difference to environmental issues. Todd's mentors in his Master's program involved him in a waste management siting project with direct applications to municipal policy directions. He waited to continue with doctoral work until he could once again work with a mentor who also prioritized research applicability; as explained by Todd, "The fact that it was a very applied topic, and relevant, and … the choice of supervisor that totally brought me back to being an academic. Yeah, he's a real mentor" (personal interview, December 2, 2013).

Mirella's experience was different in that her Psychology undergraduate and graduate programs were very focused on research. She described the experience by saying she "felt like there was a piece that was kind of missing for me … I learned a lot of hard core research skills, which was great. But I felt like I needed a social application that wasn't there" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). It wasn't until she had successfully attained a tenure-track position at Lakehead University that she felt she was able to look for mentors and allies in applying her research. She eventually became connected to the Food Security Research Network at Lakehead where her research and teaching developed towards environmental psychology, theories of change, and community service learning.

For Connie and David, the academy offered an empowering opportunity to discover theory and literature responding to their lived experiences. They both described it as thrilling to learn of communities of scholars exploring the questions, doubts, and dilemmas they had been experiencing in their lives and careers; in Connie's words, "[I]t was this massive 'aha' for me, because … all of a sudden, the things I'd been feeling, there were names for it" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). Connie's pursuit of a

Master's in Environmental Studies took her to York University, where she had the opportunity to study with scholars leading international conversations in environmental philosophy, critical animal studies, and humane education. These fields of inquiry related directly to her farm experiences, and her transition from living in rural to urban places. Her mentors at York University brought her into these conversations in such a way as to make scholarship meaningful to the questions that mattered to her.

David also turned to the academy to explore the politics of education as experienced during his career as a high school teacher. Though he originally went to graduate school for a Master's in Creative Writing, David recalls how a course on child-centred education "completely opened [my mind] to an incredible tradition of education that I hadn't even been introduced to yet. And I had already been teaching for eight years" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). David's mentors helped him to make sense of his own experiences as a student and as a teacher; eventually, he developed his own research community around the intersections of critical educational discourse and ecological discourse through the lens of place.

For me, discovering David's literature on place-conscious education (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b) during my undergraduate thesis work evoked similar senses of belonging, of someone's ideas really resonating with my own. I remember feeling so excited and inspired to have language to describe my experiences of and ideas for the world. This is not to discount the ways in which universities remain inaccessible; the academy has, in many ways, earned its 'Ivory Tower' critique, and there is a need to continue to trouble how privilege operates within academic spaces, especially in terms of what knowledge is valued therein. Yet it is also important to remember how the

opportunity to engage with theory and academic literature can engage us in conversations that have the potential to shape policy and action agendas.

But, this kind of engagement requires mentors committed to the kind of scholarship that takes seriously its responsibility to those outside of the Ivory Tower, according to participant reports. Both David and Connie worked alongside academic mentors who also identified as activists. These people were determined to involve the university in creating meaningful change, and to use the strengths of academic spaces to support community activism. As such, their scholarship mattered to issues of social and environmental justice. For David and Connie, both of whom grew up with an ethic of care towards social and environmental issues, the university thus became a place where they could continue the work they cared about in ways befitting their particular strengths for reading, writing, researching, and teaching. Mentors created possibilities for the university to support David and Connie's inquiry and their activism in more fulfilling ways than their previous careers. The importance of mentors (family, friends, and professional colleagues) and of community echoes well the writing on ecological identity (Thomashow, 1995), significant life experiences research (Gough, 1999; Chawla, 2001), and generous scholarship (Russell, 2006).

Radical Relationships

From exploring participant experiences with mentorship, I am learning that if Lakehead University wants to support SHE work, it needs to support the people doing this work, a theme that emerged from participant interviews. Participant experience strongly suggests that this support is what sparked, and now sustains, their development as academics acting in response to the Anthropocene. Relationships thus need to be

valued and cared for within the institution. These include faculty-faculty relationships, in which professors have the opportunity to collaborate across disciplines; faculty-administrator relationships, where professors feel they can access decision-making channels and administrators can be bolstered by accessing stories of meaningful learning and change; and student-faculty and student-administrator relationships, where faculty and administrators can be energized by student ideas and engagement, while students can come to know they matter within the university. Such relationships changed participants, and I believe they have the capacity to change institutions.

But, according to participant reports, it is not sufficient to assume these relationships will flourish merely by colleagues working in the same place. As earlier explored, neoliberalism devalues the kinds of relationships, between people and between people and their environments, named as so valuable to participants. Instead, the paradigm creates conditions in which some university members feel irresponsible when engaging in activities deemed non-productive by neoliberal tenets (Ball, 2012). Many participants named the extent to which workaholism has become revered within university communities, and beyond; for example, Connie expressed concern about "workaholism … this is not just the academy. I think this is part of the place we're in in Western society, where busy is really valued" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). As noted in Chapter II, narrowly defining productivity is related to the arrival of the Anthropocene. Within such pervasive cultures of busyness and competition, valuing relationships that take time and effort to develop becomes an act of disrupting dominant neoliberal paradigms (Evans, 2012).

Explicit institutional support is therefore required to support faculty, staff, and student resistance to agendas of individualism. Personally, I wish I did not feel the need to have institutional permission or sanction to invest more of my time in my academic relationships and, on some brave days, I feel I am able to give myself that permission. When challenging such powerful narratives, it is helpful to have institutional support. Lakehead University can choose to contribute to creating a culture where faculty, staff, and students are rewarded and recognized for building relationships amongst each other and with more-than-human places. Participant reports suggest this would be one of the most radical acts upon which Lakehead University could embark to meaningfully respond to the Anthropocene.

For Hawken (2009), issues of the Anthropocene become ripe with possibilities for action when he looks to the incredible people getting down to work. Participant experiences echo the value of relationships in exploring how they have come to do their responsive work with the Anthropocene from within the academy. Somewhere along the way, someone told them they belonged, and made space for their unique contribution to be valued in a university context. These mentors made doing responsive academic work to the Anthropocene seem meaningful, possible, and exciting.

Places have also shaped participant engagement with the Anthropocene. Childhood experiences in nature nurtured senses of responsibility for acting on social and environmental issues, and this ethic of care continues to inspire the academic work that feels most significant to participants. Participants feel connected to the wider world, and thus, their scholarship responds to that world encountering the Anthropocene. Themes of place and mentoring relationships echo throughout my own academic experience. My

undergraduate research explored the intersections of place-conscious learning and sustainability in higher education; it was my response to discovering ideas of place and to mentors encouraging me to deepen my engagement with these ideas. Now, my Master's research is my response to the many mentors I have encountered over the course of my graduate experience, those who are educating in the Anthropocene at Lakehead University. My story is also because of, about, and in many ways, for the people and places walking with me.

Tuan (1991) writes that place is how the earth becomes our home; the meeting of people and environment creates our home places. Lakehead University, and the academy more broadly, has become one home-place for the work of participants. In exploring these themes from participant introductions, I have responded to questions around growing and supporting Lakehead University's community of academic actors responding to the Anthropocene. In attending to what makes the place, the environment and the people, we can work towards attending to the Anthropocene.

Critical Pedagogy: The Importance of Teaching and Curricular Freedom

The next section considers participant perspectives on what aspects of academic work feel most important and valuable to acting on the Anthropocene. In naming what is meaningful to the people doing this responsive work, I hope the university might take up these participant priorities as directions for institutional development. Lakehead University can support the kind of academic work that is working to respond, as proposed by these members of the university community who are demonstrating leadership on these issues.

When asked what they enjoy about working from within universities, participants affirmed that they love to teach and to engage with young people. As explored above, teaching mentors played significant roles in the lives and careers of many participants. Participants now occupy these positions and ascribe value to the ways in which it influences their own learning and engagement. As well, all participants considered interacting with young people to be an aspect of academic work particularly meaningful to effective academic responses to the Anthropocene.

Todd underscored his love of teaching throughout the interview conversation. He remembered a teacher mentor saying to him, while still a student, how one of the most valuable aspects of university work was teaching. Now, Todd is similarly enthusiastic about and appreciative of the opportunity to work with young people: "[Y]ou have this ability to interact with people all the time, especially young people who are really excited about their future. And I think that's probably one of the most rewarding experiences" (personal interview, December 2, 2013).

Some participants specifically described their teaching as activism, connecting their teaching practice to critical pedagogy. The ways in which teaching enables Connie to be in learning relationships with many young people positions her well to have impact on the Anthropocene: "When I think about the people I've taught now over the years, they're all doing their own thing and influencing more people … [t]hat exponential possibility [and] what that ripple effect does is pretty amazing" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). During our interview conversation, we discussed how engagement through university teaching has the unique potential to be sustained and deepened in ways not necessarily available to other forms of activism. This is not to dismiss other

ways of creating change. As Connie elaborates, "We all have different skills and things that we bring to the world. I think I can reach people this way. It doesn't mean I discount all other forms of activism … but I've got the privilege of having people for 9 weeks or 12 weeks" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). Within the context of university teaching, professors have an incredible opportunity to develop different kinds of sustained interactions with students. While the choice to use this opportunity to respond to the Anthropocene must be taken up by the professor, it is a powerful possibility.

Connie's interview comment was one that most significantly shook my understandings of the relationships between activism and academia. Her expressions of the power of critical pedagogy and critical engagement with academic work rocked my notions of the academy's capacity to effect change. I have often been frustrated, and questioned what universities are actually doing in response to the Anthropocene. Connie's commitment to teaching as a critical pedagogue, to teaching in a way that makes education relevant to social and ecological issues, offered me a new perspective on the activist potential of teaching, and on my own ability to feel fulfilled engaging in academic work as activist work. Having just completed teaching my first university course in Climate Change Pedagogy, her words reflect my own feelings that have developed through that experience.

A second theme arising from participant experiences around teaching was the freedom experienced by professors in what and how they teach. I do wish to recognize that concepts of academic freedom were also named by participants in relation to their broader ability to enable many kinds of academic work to be meaningful to social and ecological issues, not just teaching. These ideas emerged as critical to participants'

understandings of how the academy can respond to the Anthropocene, and will be explored in later discussion. However, notions of academic freedom were frequently related to participants' teaching experiences.

For some participants, the autonomy to design and teach courses pertaining to their passions for social and ecological issues is a means of acting on the Anthropocene. Mirella integrates concepts of sustainability across many of her courses in the Psychology Department: "I can take a course called Environmental Psychology and make it all about sustainability … there is that wonderful freedom … it is a good position from which to do some of this work" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). The academic freedom offered to professors creates opportunities for teaching to be a place of action.

Participants also noted how, because of curricular freedom, they are able to respond to the current moment on the planet through their teaching by bringing students into contemporary discourses shaping the Anthropocene. Some have been inspired to do this in their own classrooms because of the professors they encountered as students. Both Rod and Todd recalled learning about issues of sustainability in their undergraduate and graduate classrooms while those same issues were evolving in international policy arenas; as part of a course, Todd read the landmark text 'Our Common Future' the same year it was published (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) and graduated in 1992 as the Rio Summit made efforts to catalyze international environmental action. Through their university classrooms, participants became connected to the world around them, and experienced the empowering, exciting sense of being involved in real issues. While I wish not to make claims that education will 'save us' (Orr, 1994), I do believe education's capacity to create change is significantly

strengthened when that education is made relevant to the world in which students will live out their learning. Gruenewald's (2003b) work on a critical pedagogy of place explores how education becomes more meaningful when in dialogue with the wider world. University classrooms are well positioned to engage in these conversations.

Paul expressed how he feels particularly responsible for using his academic freedom to inform students about the world around them as a professor in a Faculty of Education. He recognizes the critical societal role of teachers in responding to the Anthropocene and thus understands his role, as a person educating the people becoming teachers, to be necessarily engaged with the Anthropocene:

> [B]eing in a Faculty of Education is especially kind of a fertile place to do that. Because if you believe Noam Chomsky who says that the job of an intellectual is to tell the truth to an audience that matters, and in teaching that's your students, I don't see any bigger role for teachers than to help students grapple with the world that we have and, in terms of the big issues of the day, [climate change] to me is huge. And I can't imagine calling yourself a teacher without having some knowledge of the world that you're living in, some broader knowledge, not just about narrow little things, but about the big challenges facing humanity and other species. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

According to participants, academic freedom enables the kind of teaching they love to do, the kind of teaching they feel a responsibility for doing, and the kind of teaching that is best able to respond to the Anthropocene. Teaching thus comprises a significant component of their engagement with the Anthropocene.

It is, however, one academic avenue of many pursued by participants in responding to the Anthropocene. Professors engage in research, community service, and administrative service within their role. Participants expressed ways in which each of these responsibilities can inform their response, and they recognized each of these as being valuable and mutually supportive. David spoke to the concepts of engaged and integrated scholarship as a means of aligning his academic work with the Anthropocene:

> How I [respond] is connected to my scholarship of engagement, to my integrated scholarship. [A]ll of my courses, all of my acts of service, and all of my scholarship are about building a community that is somehow struggling with these questions of what should our response to the Anthropocene be. How I do it is to make this the centre of all my acts as a faculty member. And to try to integrate those different realms so that my students see their course not just as a course, but something connected to a larger transformative aim. (personal interview, December 3, 2013)

For David, opportunities to bring together different facets of faculty work enable more holistic and meaningful responses to the Anthropocene. Integrated scholarship challenges university structures that separate and make hierarchies of the many aspects of faculty work. David wishes to develop a response to the Anthropocene through all of his engagement.

Participants occupying primarily administrative positions illustrated numerous examples of their capacity to enact change through administrative work. As the most senior administrator amongst participants, Rod's role was one of immense organizational

leadership potential. He reflected how he is constantly asking himself how he can best act

from the position he occupies within the institution:

> How do I as a provost, someone who is able to have the president's ear [and] who
>
> works with the board of governors … push the entire institution … towards the
>
> ideas of sustainability? How can I in my leadership role push the university
>
> towards that? (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

Rod recognizes his unique access to channels of decision-making power, and is

questioning how he can best use these for responding to issues of sustainability.

Connie's comments serve as an elaboration of Rod's experiences. She

understands all of her actions to matter to the Anthropocene, but recognizes her particular

influence as an administrator in establishing an environment where the impact of other

academic work is empowered: "I think all of what I do has impact, because

administratively I've created conditions for this to be even bigger … I think it all can

make a difference if you're willing to spend your privilege and actually do this stuff

(personal interview, November 25, 2013). The point she raises about academic privilege

and freedom will be considered later in the discussion. Here, I want to name how

administrative work relates to other faculty engagement; if seen and used as an

opportunity to create academic contexts where other forms of responsive work, like

teaching, can flourish, it constitutes a critical component of engagement. Administrators

who understand the importance of teaching to academic responses to the Anthropocene

become powerful, and necessary, champions when dominant administrative narratives

assert other institutional priorities and erode the value of teaching. And, as argued by

those engaged in transforming education to respond to social and environmental

injustices, teaching is central to movements for change (hooks, 1994; 2003; Kincheloe, 2004).

Having considered the importance of teaching to participant understandings of their ability to respond to the Anthropocene, I now wish to discuss concerns raised by participants around institutional support for teaching at Lakehead University, which arose as another theme as a result of analysis.

Neoliberal (yo)U II: Lakehead University as a Research-Intensive Institution

In the interviews, a number of participants made reference to Lakehead University's transition towards becoming a research-intensive university, and worried about the effects of this transition on the valuation of teaching at our institution. This developmental direction is clearly articulated by the Office of the Vice-President Research, Economic Development, and Innovation: "Lakehead University's research activities are a testament to its growing commitment to become one of the top 25 research-intensive universities in Canada" (Lakehead University, 2012a, p.5). Both the university's Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017 and Academic Plan 2012-2017 also refer to the pursuit of this ranking (Lakehead University, 2012a, 2012b). In naming the university's "growing commitment" to research, these documents arguably point to an increasing institutional emphasis on this aspect of academic work. As described by Todd, "Certainly the fact that Lakehead, when I came here, was more primarily undergraduate. It was before we started becoming, labeling ourselves as, a [research-intensive university]. There certainly was a much larger emphasis placed on teaching" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). Both participant narratives and institutional narratives recognize this status-seeking as a current phenomenon at Lakehead University.

Participants were careful to point out that this changing alignment of institutional priorities towards becoming a research-intensive university does not have to be adversarial to teaching, that teaching and research are not inherently, nor do not need to be, polemic in their relationship. But participants did question how teaching might continue to matter as research activities gain institutional priority. Research is able to generate income for universities in ways teaching does not. While pedagogies can certainly promote neoliberal values, research has the unique power of being able to be privatized, patented, and sold. As described by Mirella,

> [W]hile the university as a whole might try to point itself towards resolving [social and ecological] crises, you can also have individual professors getting very large grants and lots of accolades for developing … some marketable thing that's going to make more weapons …There [are] all kinds of things that we create that are celebrated, not because they are resolving any global crises, but because they're going to generate wealth. (personal interview, December 10, 2013)

Research is more explicitly tied to neoliberal definitions of status and success than teaching (Ball, 2012; Muzzin, 2005). At Lakehead University, the conflation of economic development and research is evidenced through the name of Lakehead University's office responsible for research activities; this pairing will be further discussed later. But for now, one must question whether becoming a research-intensive institution promotes neoliberal values, and therefore deepens Lakehead University's complicity in the Anthropocene? And what are the costs to academic work without such obvious economic benefit, like teaching?

This section of analysis will first consider participant experiences of Lakehead University's transition to a research-intensive institution, especially the effects of this shift on their understandings of the value of teaching at Lakehead University. Then, these narratives will be set against the narratives of institutional documents pertaining to Lakehead University's pursuit of status as a research-intensive university.

Participant Narratives on Research and Teaching

David explored the correlation between the trend of universities seeking status as research-intensive institutions and dominant neoliberal paradigms directing the development of higher education. He described neoliberalism as "a discourse that celebrates individualism, private property, and the rules of the market over government regulation, over social issues" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). According to this definition, neoliberalism cannot encompass the values and priorities necessary to respond to the Anthropocene; as noted in Chapter II, under a neoliberal paradigm, the planet remains an externality (Ball, 2012; Hursh & Henderson, 2011). David went on to share how he has experienced neoliberalism in the university, and how he observes it playing out across the institution: "I see it everyday in the university system … in the way that people internalize structures that limit what we're capable of doing because of the need to respond to a certain set of rules … determined largely by neoliberalism" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). His experiences mirror Ball's (2012) understandings of how neoliberalism becomes normalized, internalized, and then propagated. As neoliberalism establishes the rules by which the university community governs their participation and their work, the values constituting this paradigm more strongly become entrenched in the governance of the institution. Lakehead University's shift towards

ranking as a research-intensive university reflects this influence of neoliberal values in shaping institutional direction.

Another reflection of neoliberal discourse in higher education is the competitive ranking of institutions and the influence of prestigious institutions, as defined by neoliberal ideals. Connie discussed the role of large institutions in influencing the culture of higher education, and how what is beneficial for them becomes an expectation and desired characteristic of all other universities. Connie was particularly concerned about how big universities influence the value of research and teaching across higher education; she commented, "[W]hat happens is a big player like U of T [the University of Toronto] will [say they're] happy to differentiate [between teaching and research] because that will benefit them … it's hard to get the universities together to say, 'No, we're not going to do that'" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). Connie also reflected on the disquiet that she sometimes feels as an administrator responsible for navigating institutional direction. She asks herself, "Will I look back in twenty years and [realize] I helped transform the university into even more of a neoliberal institution? Or did I help to slow it down? Or disrupt it in some ways?" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). For Connie, neoliberalism within higher education is troubling in its dominance, and in how it is reinforced in competitive institutional relationships. Becoming more like other universities, especially as those universities lessen support for teaching, arguably does not position Lakehead University to emerge as a meaningful leader in responding to the current moment on the planet.

Certainly teaching is not impervious to influences of neoliberalism in reflecting and consenting to dominant cultural norms. But it is important to note that teaching is the

means through which many participants have experienced some of their most meaningful

engagement with the Anthropocene. Teaching can counter hegemonic neoliberal

discourses in higher education that value competition and economic definitions of

success by (re)centering the importance of relationships in the institution. In returning to

Hawken's advice that hope for change rests in the people taking action (2009), teaching

can share stories of people who are responding to the Anthropocene, and invite students

into becoming part of, or developing their own, such responses. As summarized by Todd:

> [B]eing at a … university where I do get the chance to be in the classroom quite
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> regularly, I do think I will be able to impart some change that way. More than if I
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> had been at a bigger institution where I would do less teaching. I mean, there
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> certainly are great teachers at big institutions, as I said earlier. But I think that's
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> one of the things I value is that chance. (personal interview, December 3, 2013)

I also want to make clear that I do not wish to characterize one means of

responding to the Anthropocene through academic work as being better than others, nor

to suggest that one must occur at the expense of others. As underscored by participants

and the literature on the scholarship of engagement, good teaching need not contradict

good research, nor must robust research programs be positioned to compromise pedagogy

(Boyer, 1990; Ward, 2003). Instead, in keeping up with cutting edge research ideas,

professors are able to invite students into the most relevant conversations in the field;

concurrently, in growing their skills as teachers, professors are able to nurture students'

abilities to ask critical research questions. Teaching and research are both required for the

development of meaningful scholarly responses to the Anthropocene. Yet the institutional

documents outlining the developmental directions of Lakehead university arguably

suggest teaching is not as important a priority as research. These documents will now be explored in terms of how they position our university to be growing as a research-intensive institution.

Institutional Narratives on Research and Teaching

To contextualize participant comments in the institutional narrative, I looked to some of the documents guiding the university's developmental directions and informing participants' experiences of the institution, namely the Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017, the Academic Plan 2012-2017, the Strategic Plan 2013-2018, the university's organizational structure, and the Lakehead University Faculty Association Collective Agreement. First, I turn attention to a symbol of the conflation of research and economic development within the university's organizational structure. As named above, Lakehead University has a Vice-President position and support office dedicated to research initiatives. But the Vice-President's title is the Vice-President Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (Lakehead University, n.d.c). This is not to say senior administration is not concerned with teaching, nor to suggest that all research being supported by the Office of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation is exclusively corporate. The office's website features examples of projects being pursued in service of local communities and defines one research responsibility of Lakehead University as service to its region of Northwestern Ontario (Lakehead University, n.d.c). Still, the Vice-President's title corresponds directly to economic development. In its description of research accomplishments, the Office of Research, Economic Development, and Innovation's website states, "[I]deas put forth by our talented researchers and students have created meaningful impacts and led to the emergence of

new companies and industries" (Lakehead University, n.d.a). Though the people inhabiting these positions have the agency to take action against such neoliberal trends, these signals in the organizational landscape suggest research to have greater institutional investment than teaching, especially in its corporate connections.

That Lakehead University is seeking a particular, and competitive, benchmark in regards to this objective also underscores the influence of the neoliberal narrative in steering the institution (Tuchman, 2009). No such comparable designation or goal for teaching is articulated in these documents. This is not to suggest teaching would be best served if similarly measured. In the Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017, successful movement towards ranking among the top 25 research-intensive universities is measured in economic terms, and the plan states, "In the latest Macleans rankings, Lakehead is first in Ontario in SSHRC Grants and Total Research Dollars" (Lakehead University, 2012b, p.1) among primarily undergraduate institutions. Measuring teaching by such standards could subject teaching to neoliberal assessments like standardized testing.

It appears, then, that these documents are emphasizing a growing commitment to research, not teaching. Nonetheless, I do want to underscore that each of the considered documents made connections between research and teaching. The Strategic Research Plan 2012-2017 positions the relationship between these two academic activities as follows: "Teaching and research are seen as inextricably linked and driven by a common focus on learning and creation of new knowledge" (Lakehead University, 2012b, p.5). The Academic Plan 2012-2017 underscores the connection between teaching and research in also stating, "Teaching and research are inextricably linked and Lakehead University is committed to excellence in both. Lakehead University believes that its

professors at both campuses should engage in both teaching and research" (Lakehead

University, 2012a, p.4). These documents acknowledge the ability of teaching and

research to be mutually supportive and characterize academic work at Lakehead

University to include both activities. At least in theory, these documents could support

Lakehead University's response to the Anthropocene if such statements are realized

through institutional practice and are adequately resourced; as articulated in the literature

on engaged scholarship (Boyer, 1990, 1996), understanding scholarship to be comprised

of integrated teaching and learning better enables academic work to be relevant and

responsive to the world in which it is occurring.

In considering institutional support for teaching, especially as compared to the

prioritization of research and economic development, three additional facets of Lakehead

University's organization merit naming. First, the university has a Provost, also titled the

Vice-President Academic, who, at least according to the university's organizational chart,

holds parallel status as the Vice-President Research, Economic Development, and

Innovation (Lakehead University, 2013b). Granted, an organizational chart is a static and

simplified representation of the ways in which these positions actually play out in the

organizational landscape; it does not necessarily reflect lived experiences of power and

privilege because it cannot describe the complexities of personal interrelationships

developed amongst these job titles as they come to be inhabited by individuals. But it

does offer the opportunity for teaching to be represented at the Vice-President level of the

university. Lakehead also has an Instructional Development Centre (IDC), founded in

2005 (Lakehead University, 2012a, p.8) with the mission of improving teaching and

learning within the institution. According to the organizational chart, the IDC accesses

power through their reporting to the Provost (Lakehead University, 2013b); the actual influence of the IDC on the university's developmental directions arguably merits questioning because of the complexities surrounding the enactment of organizational structures, but it has been organizationally established. And third, the Lakehead University Faculty Association (LUFA) Collective Agreement names "exceptional quality of teaching" as a qualification for promotion and tenure (LUFA, 2011, p.60). This recognition exists amongst other qualifications including "exceptional research and creative scholarly output" and "exceptional competence in the activities of administrative service and/or service to the Profession and community" (LUFA, 2011, p.60), the achievement of which are determined by a committee of people occupying different positions within the university. By this document, teaching is at least a part of how Lakehead University formally defines faculty success.

That Lakehead has a Provost, an IDC and a collective agreement that supports teaching are all positive signs that teaching is valued. However, the existence of these institutional structures does not necessarily mean that faculty experience a culture of commitment for teaching commensurate with the increasingly neoliberalized culture of commitment to research dollars. Despite these structures in the institutional landscape, participant narratives suggest research is increasingly becoming a more valued element of academic work, particularly in its conflation with economic development. Thus, I question the strength of the practice of teaching at Lakehead University, especially as compared to other institutional messages around faculty work and what kinds of productivity are most valued. Is teaching defining institutional direction as strongly as the objective of becoming one of the top 25 research-intensive universities in Canada? Are

faculty members being supported to design research initiatives that are engaged with their teaching? Is teaching being supported and recognized in ways equitable to research activities that move beyond words on paper and into practice? The issues surrounding how power and privilege are ascribed to research and teaching at Lakehead University raise questions of how strategic institutional documents are being enacted and experienced by different members of the university community.

I did not anticipate this tension around Lakehead University seeking status as a research-intensive institution to arise so prominently in my research. That it did raises another question about the relationship between sustainability and neoliberalism in university contexts: how does institutional support for research and teaching relate to institutional responses to the Anthropocene? Further research is required to consider how teaching and research interact at Lakehead University, particularly in the context of individuals' ability, and the institution's ability, to respond to the Anthropocene.

I have worked to probe the tension between teaching and research as aspects of academic work informing the university's response to the Anthropocene, and develop more complex understandings of their relationship to the enactment and enablement of neoliberalism at Lakehead University. Particularly as a driver of the Anthropocene, neoliberalism's effects on the academy must continue to be named and complicated so as to grow universities' capacities to resist, reinvent, and respond. In examining these documents for evidence of the changing status of research at Lakehead University, and for expressions of neoliberalism in the relationship between research and teaching, an important tension emerges between the power of the institutional narrative and the power of the stories of the people who inhabit the institution. Participants in this research both

resist and reinforce institutional policies and objectives as they work to respond to the Anthropocene. But this consideration of institutional documents reminds me that people inhabit the institution and, as Hawken (2009) points out, it is these peoples' stories that are the greatest reason for optimism in responding to the Anthropocene.

As a final consideration in understanding Lakehead University's prioritization of academic work, I want to highlight another institutional priority: social justice. In the Academic Plan 2012-2017, the goal of "strengthening our commitment to social justice" (Lakehead University, 2012a, p.2) is put forth as one of five university-wide academic priorities. The plan goes on to articulate that social justice will be pursued so as "to create the conditions whereby all people can flourish and continue to actively combat all forms of oppression and discrimination" (Lakehead University, 2012a, p.6) and that Lakehead University will embrace diversity in such a way as to have it "reflected in its people, its programs, and its curriculum" (Lakehead University, 2012a, p.6). The plan also articulates a particular social justice commitment to Aboriginal communities, recognizing this commitment to be a regional responsibility of Lakehead University (Lakehead University, 2012a).

The prominence of social justice as an academic objective should be celebrated. For the advancement of social justice to comprise one of only five institutional priorities lends institutional legitimacy, at least on paper, to anti-oppressive work at Lakehead University. As well, if and when injustice arises within the institution, the priority can be turned to in defense of the legitimacy of social justice at Lakehead University. What now must be considered is how this policy is being practiced. How is it being publicized, supported, and grown comparative to other priorities, like research intensity? Principles

of neoliberalism and principles of social justice do not exist on a level playing field; the Anthropocene is a reflection of the disparity between the power held by discourses of neoliberalism and discourses of social and ecological justice (Giroux, 2002; Greenwood, 2010; McKibben, 2010; Orr, 1992). As such, initiatives in social justice arguably require greater institutional backing to be able to take root amidst the dominant neoliberal discourses promoting inequality. In this case of social justice policy at Lakehead University, the distance between theory and practice needs to be critically considered to understand how these documents are being acted out, and whether they have significant influence to enhance Lakehead University's response-ability to the Anthropocene. Further research could explore if other institutional policies and documents effectively orient around principles of social justice, as well as how different members of the university community actually experience these policies. Such analysis could offer more nuanced understandings of how neoliberalism is both resisted and reinforced within the academy, and offer valuable insight into the values guiding Lakehead University as it encounters the Anthropocene.

Summary

In the above section, I have investigated both participant and institutional narratives pertaining to Lakehead University seeking status as a research-intensive institution. These place-specific narratives have been contextualized within a more global discourse of neoliberalism in higher education. Selected university documents assert the value of integrated teaching and research, as well as the prioritization of social justice, in guiding academic work at Lakehead University. However, the conflation of research with economic development, and even more so, the institutional directive to become one of the

top 25 research-intensive universities in Canada arguably offers evidence of institutional backing of neoliberal norms. Some participants question how such institutional objectives might impact the valuation of teaching at Lakehead University; these concerns are particularly germane to this study because many of the participants understand teaching, as a component of academic work, to be one of their most effective vehicles through which to respond to the Anthropocene. But curricular freedom is just one, albeit significant, feature of the privilege of academic freedom. Now, I want to extend this discussion to further explore academic freedom, and how this privilege exists in tension with patterns of consent and self-policing, as universities continue to be shaped by the dominant political, economic, and cultural patterns in which they are enmeshed.

Tension: Academic Freedom and Consent in the Anthropocene

I now wish to explore concepts of academic freedom and privilege as they exist in relationship with participant responsiveness to the Anthropocene. I hope to unpack how academic freedom exists in tension with systems of neoliberal governance and consent in university spaces. Five participants underscored the indispensible role of academic freedom in creating the political space to act on social and ecological issues from within the university. This understanding extends earlier discussion on the unique role of the university in offering time and space for praxis, especially as compared to other forms of activism. The political space and freedom to act in response to the Anthropocene was emphasized by participants throughout the interview conversations, and very frequently named as one of the qualities participants most appreciate about working from within the academy.

Paul described the importance of academic freedom in saying, "I think one thing that is totally critical is that we can speak freely … It gives me a huge amount of freedom with what I can do" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). He continued on to correlate the freedom he enjoys in academic spaces to his capacity to speak out in public arenas, such as the media. Discussing concerns surrounding the ability of Canadian government scientists to share research contrary to the government's political posturing and agenda, Paul commented,

> A lot of the best media I've heard has been CBC interviewing scientists that are affiliated with universities … Environment Canada scientists can't even talk about almost anything, but I guess the government hasn't figured out how to muzzle university scientists who have tenure and who are fairly well protected. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

Paul's comments recognize how neoliberal politics are playing out in the Anthropocene, specifically in the Canadian context where the near omnipotence of the fossil fuel industry is backed, by resources and ideology, by the federal government (Sawyer & Stiebert, 2010). In this political climate, action on climate change is policed as dissent. For Paul, the university offers some level of protection against such policing of critique and better positions him to respond to the Anthropocene.

The academy also offers opportunity for response at a more local level. Todd shared similar thoughts on his ability, as a tenured professor, to become involved in municipal planning decisions without fear of negative repercussions for job security. He recalled working on a project with two city planners, and then co-authoring an academic paper on an issue of municipal concern. When it came time to publish the paper, the city

staff decided not to have their names associated with the paper. As recounted by Todd, "[They] said … '[I]t probably would be better if we weren't on that paper, just so that [our] boss doesn't somehow see that.' And these are senior people in the city planning department" (personal interview, December 2, 2013). Todd did not consider the paper to be especially controversial, but this situation reminded him of his ability to speak freely: "[T]he paper is just realistic in my view. It just talks about how population has gone down. But again, as an academic, I have an ability to be a bit more critical" (personal interview, December 2, 2013).

Connie also recognized the exceptional positionality of academics to respond to the Anthropocene, and explicitly named it as privilege. She asserted the need for universities to spend their privilege as a means of demonstrating leadership:

The university should be a leader in all sorts of ways … we have such extraordinary privilege because we do have the time to think and make recommendations and be thoughtful … [it] is very clear that we have serious environmental problems so to not act on it is irresponsible. (personal interview, November 25, 2013)

She emphasized the protection offered by tenure, and went on to argue for both individual and organizational action in responding to the Anthropocene, stating, "As individual profs we have responsibilities, but then as an organization, we should be … coming out and saying something is wrong, we need to do something, and we have the resources and interdisciplinary expertise to provide some ideas" (personal interview, November 25, 2013).

These illustrations underscore the importance of academic participation in public and civic arenas, not only in terms of academia's ability to dissent but also to experiment with alternatives. Whether termed knowledge mobilization, engaged scholarship, or just useful and important work, the need for academic participation in civic processes is made especially necessary by professors' ability to be politicized and controversial in their responses. As stated by Paul, the presence of discord and transformation "is as it should be in a democratic society, where you want to have dissent …[I]t's a great protected place to do good work. And to try to get that work out and known by people" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). Those working within academic spaces enjoy particular protected freedoms not available to many other sectors of society. While the extent of these freedoms, the ways in which they are granted, and the ways in which they too are subject to neoliberal governance, can certainly be troubled in terms of replication of neoliberal norms, tenure represents a form of privilege. Not spending that privilege to bring both critique and imagination to civic spaces is arguably a failure to take responsibility for that privilege. The academy has a critical role to fulfill in contributing to the democratization of information and decision-making in society.

This responsibility is especially relevant in considering responses to the Anthropocene. As explored earlier, to challenge the Anthropocene is to challenge dominant paradigms and powers heavily invested, through money and minds, in the status quo (Evans, 2012; Greenwood, 2011; Greenwood, 2010). The ability of academics to confront, contest, and invent amidst these entrenched interests is essential; as a result, the academy has the potential to become a much more transformative actor in creating a response to the Anthropocene if it chooses to enact this responsibility in civic spaces. But

arguably this transformative role will be more effective if approached with a sense of shared leadership, and an understanding of the dynamics of movement-building politics.

Building on the idea of democratization, Connie further qualified the role of academia's civic response. She positioned the institution as being a contributing member, and recognized that "it doesn't mean we know all the answers, but at least we can help organize … I don't want to be arrogant about it, we don't necessarily have to lead it, but we can at least feed it. And I think that's really, really important" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). University engagement with the Anthropocene could seek to challenge dominant structures continuing to isolate academic knowledge in the ivory tower by acknowledging the diverse strengths of many actors. The academy can take leadership in the particular areas it is best positioned to do so, and can open space to learn from the skills of other allies. In doing so, the university could become a better citizen, especially in the Anthropocene (Boyer, 1990; Cortese, 2003; Rees, 2003). Despite the political space formally afforded in academia however, the university is also not immune to the broader sociopolitical context. The concluding section to this chapter considers how, even with academic freedom, neoliberalism influences and limits what is considered possible from within academia in responding to the Anthropocene.

The Neoliberal Nature of Limits

Alhough there is a certain degree of academic freedom, universities remain nested in societal systems that police dissent (Kurasawa, 2008). Mirella spoke to the tension she experiences as someone who uses the freedom granted institutionally to challenge the institution's investment in the status quo: "That is another one of those tensions … how the university manages to continue to exist. And not really change and continue to

participate in maintaining the wider system, even as people within it challenge it and challenge that wider system" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). Some processes within the university empower dissent while others explicitly support dominant norms. Mirella continued, "It's a complex system that it can contain … this conflict within itself. It's a neat place that way … [the] [u]niversity is a little bit of a microcosm of society itself" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). As illustrated through participant experiences of the tension between academic freedom and institutional structures that bound such freedoms, the university continues to resist and reinforce neoliberal hegemony.

This tension affects participants' responses at a foundational level. David felt compelled to bring into our conversation the barriers he feels working within the cultural context that has created the Anthropocene: "I think it's really important for me to background any discussion of what I feel I'm capable of doing with at least an acknowledgement of the culture [not] enabling … transformative work … the culture is often moving the other way" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). He returned to notions of neoliberalism in explaining how dominant culture can impede academic responses to the Anthropocene, saying, "As much as it is a privilege to operate in the space of higher ed … it's definitely culturally determined largely by the neoliberalism that has continued to exert influence over every institution" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). David asserts that, despite the privilege of freedom experienced in universities, universities continue to be shaped by neoliberalism and thus academic freedom often comes to be experienced as limited. When considering the capacities of academic freedom to enable responses to the Anthropocene, it is critical to recognize it as

a freedom existing within dominant neoliberal cultural contexts to the contrary (Giroux, 2002; Muzzin, 2005).

In addressing the broader cultural contexts in which higher education is situated and to which it is responding, I want to name three factors I understand to be significant based on participants' observations. First, none of my participants are non-tenured faculty; five are tenured professors and one is an executive administrator. Their experience of academic freedom may or may not be different from those working at Lakehead University without the privileges afforded by tenure. Future research could query whether tenure uniquely empowers participants to respond to the Anthropocene. Second, the participants in this research have not always been academics, nor do they operate exclusively in academic spaces. Coming to the academy, they are accompanied by all of their prior and current conditioning within, and sometimes disruption of, the dominant neoliberal paradigm. This likely affects their interactions with and understandings of academic freedom and protection. And third, I want to recognize the nature of limits imposed on academic freedom. These limits may be real, may be perceived, may be institutionally imposed, or perpetuated by individuals' understandings of what is allowed; participant experience suggests their concepts of freedom move in and amidst each of these categories.

From wherever it stems though, the effect of these limits on those engaged in the academy achieves similar ends – it limits what people understand to be possible. And in the Anthropocene, to have the people demonstrating responsive leadership to this moment on the planet come to know themselves as limited is to lose hope. Using

Hawken's (2009) phrasing, it is to lose our pulse for what could be, for what is coming into being, for what is possible.

Summary

This chapter has considered themes raised in participant interviews and document analysis. It commenced by exploring themes of connection; connection to the more-than-human world shaped participants' ethic of care for environmental and social issues, while connection to people created mentoring relationships that made the academy a place of belonging for participants, and a place within which they could meaningfully respond to the Anthropocene. Participants continue to experience the importance of relationships, and understand the valuing of relationships within the academy to be critical to universities' responses to this moment on the planet. As an aspect of academic work that effectively strengthens relationships and enables meaningful action on the Anthropocene, teaching is recognized as being of significant value to participants. But the neoliberal narratives promoting Lakehead University's desire to become a top 25 research-intensive institution in Canada arguably challenge the value of teaching. While institutional documents also assert integrated teaching and research, as well as social justice, to be developmental priorities of the institution, the influence of dominant neoliberal discourses perhaps trump in practice that which is prescribed in policy, and thus continue to lend power to research, especially in its conflation with economic development. Discussion of the effects of neoliberalism on curricular freedom extended to explore the tension between neoliberalism, privileges of academic freedom, and practiced patterns of consent. Participant experiences name the limiting power of neoliberalism on the

possibilities of responding to the Anthropocene from within the academy, and the danger of this discourse is thus articulated.

But despite the authority of neoliberalism, possibilities for resistance and reinvention exist. These people, these participants, continue to act. They find ways to respond to the Anthropocene from within the academy, harnessing the privileges and power bound up therein to demonstrate leadership. And they hold visions ripe with what is possible.

Chapter V: Anthropocene (yo)U

The first section of this chapter continues to address themes emerging from participant interviews. I work to challenge notions of consent, and demonstrate the multiple possibilities, enabled by unique privileges, for responding to the Anthropocene from within the academy. The chapter next presents and explores participants' responses to questions of if and how they understand universities to have a responsibility to act on the Anthropocene. Here, I endeavour to build on the ideas presented in the previous chapter of participants' understandings of higher education's responsibility to this moment on the planet. These articulations of responsibility demonstrate the leadership of six actors at Lakehead University in terms of how they define their roles as educators and how they define the purpose of the university in the Anthropocene. Having worked with document analysis in Chapter IV, participant reports become the focus of this section. I also briefly reflect on some of my own experiences as an instructor in the Faculty of Education in relating to the themes raised by participants. The second section of Chapter V describes participants' visions of how universities, with special attention to the place(s) of Lakehead University, might best respond to the Anthropocene. To complement spoken ideas, I asked participants to select an interview location reflective of their vision for a responsive university to the Anthropocene, and to take a photograph, or select an existing photograph, of their chosen place. These photographs are used to frame participants' visions for how Lakehead University could respond to the Anthropocene. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research and my vision of how participant voices and visions might inform Lakehead University's response-abilities to the Anthropocene.

Privileges and Possibilities

Connie challenged notions of consent, and underscored all that is possible from within the academy in responding to the Anthropocene. She shared her experience of "hav[ing] so much freedom in teaching and research" (personal interview, November 25, 2013) and identified patterns of non-action as related to hegemonic discourse:

> I think that people often think that there's going to be way more resistance than there is. I just think it's bullshit … and it's because they've been taught to consent, and this is how hegemony works. So I think lots of us will say, 'Oh well, I can't speak up pre-tenure', and then they're so domesticated by the time they get tenure that they never speak up. (personal interview, November 25, 2013)

Connie's words powerfully illustrate how dominant regimes of power, control, and consent shape her and her perception of other's academic experience. Her experiences suggest that encouraging universities to respond to the Anthropocene is not only a question of enforcing structures protecting political space and freedom, but also addressing internalized oppression to consent and self-police. As well, Connie's experience speaks to the need for emboldening supports to be put around those working in the university, perhaps especially those without tenure.

If university professors experience the limiting effects of neoliberal discourse in doing work responsive to the Anthropocene, other organizations and individuals most certainly encounter these barriers in their own responses. Universities' capacities to respond to the Anthropocene will benefit from increased critical awareness of how these discourses affect academic spaces, and from increased recognition of how we, as individuals working from within the academy, are lending power to these discourses

through our own complicity. Nevertheless, especially for those who are able to attain

tenure, the university still offers a certain level of security. Without question it is a

complicated kind of security, in that achieving tenure arguably demands the meeting of

some neoliberal measures of success, like publications in "top tier" journals (and in

numbers seemingly on the rise) or research dollars secured (Tuchman, 2009).

But surely those who do have tenure can make the most of its' albeit imperfect

protection to empower their response to the Anthropocene? Participant experiences

largely agree that there is incredible opportunity for the civic responsibility of faculty

members and universities to extend beyond conventional knowledge mobilization.

Universities have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by spending their privilege of

academic freedom and politicizing their response to the Anthropocene. And as

institutions in the Anthropocene, this leadership is increasingly seen as becoming a

critical responsibility (Cortese, 2003; Greenwood, 2011; Orr, 1994).

As I write this, I am concurrently concluding my first experience as a contract

lecturer in Lakehead University's Faculty of Education's Bachelor of Education program.

I have just finished teaching the pilot course of Climate Change Pedagogy. And over the

last three months, I have witnessed and experienced cultures of fear within my students

and within myself. I certainly did not anticipate the extent to which students would be

anxious about integrating the topic of climate change into their future classrooms. Some

of this anxiety stemmed from a lack of understanding about climate change and climate

science, so clearly there is more universities can do to develop curriculum in

undergraduate education to include climate change across disciplines. I too, as a teacher,

sometimes felt as though I could not teach about climate change because I was not an

'expert'. But I think the fear of not having every fact and figure at my fingertips is symptomatic of the root concern that we will get in trouble if we teach about climate change. From what I witnessed in students and in myself, this stems from a fear of speaking up politically. Even though there are countless curricular opportunities across disciplines to educate on climate change, even though the Ontario elementary and secondary curricula explicitly include climate change education, even though I was hired specifically to teach on climate change, I (and by extension, we) are still scared because dominant discourses policing our political participation remain, in some cases, stronger than the structures intended to protect political spaces. For me, this is the greatest challenge facing education in the Anthropocene. If we become domesticated early in our careers, as Connie said, we will not recognize nor use our freedoms as we progress. Hegemony severely limits our potential as critical educators.

Currently, I am involved in a research project with Paul to explore students' experience of the Climate Change Pedagogy course. Through this research, we hope to develop better understandings of how fear interacts with climate change education amongst teacher candidates and amongst instructors. I am excited for the potential of this research to move beyond content recommendations, and contribute to creating structures, processes, and cultures supportive of climate change pedagogy. Similarly, I am intrigued by participants' experiences with academic freedom and consent. To grow the community of university educators engaged in education that is responding to the Anthropocene, I firmly believe new faculty must be supported in their efforts to teach in politicized spaces and the results support this sentiment. If more established and tenured faculty can spend their privilege in detangling processes of tenure and promotion from

neoliberal aims, and newer faculty can seek support from their more established colleagues, we can all be reminded of our power and the possibilities to respond to the Anthropocene. Furthermore, if administrators can ensure institutional signals create space for those willing to respond and explicitly make clear their support for faculty who are doing so, efforts will be significantly advanced. While it is not easy to call out systems of consent as illusory, faculty and administrators speaking truth to power can help build counter-cultures to fear and to the Anthropocene. Making use of academic freedom is one facet of the university's response-ability in the Anthropocene. The next section will consider further dimensions of participant understandings of academic response-abilities.

Who's Responsible For Responding to the Anthropocene? Lakehead University

All participants agreed that universities have responsibility to respond to the Anthropocene. Rod understands higher education responding to the Anthropocene as an "ethical [and] moral responsibility to examine, to prescribe, to report, and reflect the human impacts on our natural world … all the way through the sciences, all the way through the arts" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). He explained this responsibility in terms of the historically established role of the university in Western society:

> [U]ltimately, the central pillars of society have strong roles to play … if the fallout from the human domination of the natural world will be paramount in the coming century, which I believe that it will, then we have an ethical responsibility as an organization within society to address it. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

Rod went on to define the role of the university in the Anthropocene by recognizing the unique educational responsibility of the institution. Of those foundational societal institutions, he understands universities to be best positioned to engage young people in issues of the Anthropocene. He said, "Universities are probably singular institutions in society that have … mostly young, thinking people within them … it's hard to look at any other institutions that have such a mandate as a university for educating around sustainability" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). I interpret Rod's understandings of the university's responsibility as bringing attention to the particular opportunities existent within educational institutions, and to the leadership the university could demonstrate on issues of the Anthropocene.

Paul also asserted the responsibility of universities to respond to the Anthropocene. He understood societal responsibility to be of the most urgent importance to universities:

> I can't believe that it wouldn't be the first priority. Every university is created … to help people think critically about the world we live in, among other functions. To have something coming down like climate change, something that is changing the whole geological era, I think everybody has a responsibility to take it into consideration, and to figure out how they will respond. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

While recognizing universities hold multiple functions, Paul also focuses on the critical educational responsibility of universities. He understands this to be what universities can offer to communities in the Anthropocene, and asserts the need for this responsibility to be fulfilled. But he also stated the ways in which universities are being shaped not to

respond. He said, "[T]here [are] all kinds of forces in Canada and the world now push[ing] universities towards just helping people to get jobs and not to think about becoming educated to be citizens and to be able to respond to things" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). Different understandings of the role of the university in turn shape the different possible roles of the university in the Anthropocene (Cortese, 2003; Orr, 2010).

When I asked David if he understood the university to have a responsibility in the Anthropocene, he first named the complexity implicated in academic spaces, especially when considering the role of the academy to respond to the Anthropocene. He recognized the "need to be more precise about what that means, when I say the academy, because that's speaking for a lot of folks. Who have a lot of different commitments" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). Like Paul, David spoke to the ways in which the academy is orienting away from what he terms intellectual life, and becoming more preoccupied by objectives of job training; he commented, "[H]opefully the academy is still about that, and hasn't just been sort of shifted into another training ground for employment" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). David and Paul's observations do not position students finding meaningful work after post-secondary education and investigating responses to the Anthropocene as mutually exclusive, nor do they ignore the privilege bound up in higher education. Rather, I interpret David and Paul's comments around employability as naming the ways in which universities sacrifice their distinct critical capacity for the sake of further capitulation to neoliberalist aims, thereby limiting their response to the Anthropocene.

In our interview conversation, David recognized a relationship between the forces narrowing the scope of academic work and the forces narrowing the kinds of critical conversations able to occur within the academy, saying, "[T]here hasn't been a larger conversation about the deeper … ecological and cultural context of our lives. Intellectually, I know it's really important to have that conversation. Politically, I know it's very difficult because of people's diverse investments in their careers. And who they report to" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). His observations speak to how the politicized structures within universities can counteract responses to the Anthropocene.

For David, the presence and potency of these political obstacles make it all the more important for universities to respond to the Anthropocene. He understands responding to the Anthropocene as an opportunity for universities to examine their purpose in relationship to the times in which they are existing and educating: "I absolutely think that we as academics and an institution of higher education [have] a responsibility to take stock, to examine what its [the academy's] purposes are in relation to the times we are now living in" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). In so saying, David illustrates a critical tension between responding to the Anthropocene and responding to the neoliberal forces disempowering critical academic work, as discussed in Chapter IV.

Changing the Climate at Lakehead University

Because of this tension, the academy's responsibility to respond to the Anthropocene is about so much more than climate change - it's about examining the purposes of higher education at this moment on the planet. As earlier explored, the hegemonic forces accelerating the arrival of the Anthropocene are the same forces

moving higher education further away from critical civic and pedagogical purposes, from that which could actually confront the Anthropocene, and leading universities towards more intensive neoliberal governance (Ball, 2012; Giroux, 2002). Participant experiences of divestment, in terms of money and mission, from the university's unique capacities for creating change – time and space for reflection, time and space for relationships, time and space for political freedom, time and space for good teaching – represent increased investment in neoliberal definitions of success (Giroux, 2002; Tuchman, 2009). To return to Eisner's (2002) concepts of the null curriculum, inaction on the Anthropocene makes Lakehead University responsible to the status quo it reproduces. And while I am regularly outraged by the perverse sponsorship granted to Canada's oil and gas industry, comprised of some of the richest corporations on the planet, in the form of 1.3 billion dollars of annual federal taxpayer-funded subsidies (Sawyer & Stiebert, 2010), I had not recognized, until now, the parallels to university sponsorship of the status quo. For universities to put their power and privilege behind neoliberal discourses is perhaps most troubling in the opportunities lost for meaningful action on the Anthropocene.

However, actions in service of a responsibility to the Anthropocene can constitute actions in service of disrupting hegemony. As such, universities are being presented with an opportunity to reclaim their unique capacities to make change. David characterized this opportunity as responsibility:

> I think it's without a doubt our responsibility. If we're not paying attention as academics, as people paid to think about how the changes in the planet cross-culturally are impacting potential meanings of education, and potential purposes of education, who's going to think about that? If we're not going to do it, then

nobody's going to do it. There are plenty of people outside of academe thinking

about those changes in different realms. But no one's going to think about them

for us inside. (personal interview, December 3, 2013)

In recognizing their responsibility to the Anthropocene, universities can make a much

broader statement about their purpose at this moment on the planet. And a much broader

commitment to addressing their own complicity. From what participants shared, I now

understand the challenge to be more than recognizing the dangers of the Anthropocene in

changing the climate. It concurrently involves recognizing the Anthropocene as changing

the university. My thesis work grew out of an intention to make a case for Lakehead

University to take action on the social and ecological impacts of the Anthropocene. This

desire is still strong, but is now paired with the intention of encouraging a response to the

impacts on the ecosystem of the university. There is considerable internal work to be

done, and from the experiences shared by participants, I believe this internal work will

further enable and empower responses to the changing world in which a changing

Lakehead University is nested.

With Great Freedom Comes Great Response-Ability

Having already identified the ways in which academic freedom facilitates

responses to the Anthropocene, I wish to briefly revisit the concept and how it interacts

with participant understandings of an institutional responsibility to respond to the

Anthropocene. Mirella qualified her ideas around institutional responsibility in saying, "I

think it is [a responsibility]. But I wouldn't pull that down so far as to say that each

professor has to do research that is relevant to this or that. Because I don't think we can

do that" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). The respect she holds for academic

freedom characterize her notions of institutional responsibility. Similarly, Paul spoke to how this relationship might play out in university classrooms. After asserting his strong belief in the need for universities to respond to the Anthropocene, he commented, "That's not to say that I think everybody in every course in a teacher education program has to focus on it" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). Paul also explored administrative roles within this context: "It's always a delicate balance because of the ways universities work and you don't want the leadership to say, 'I decree that we are now going to do this.' But you do want people to lead" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). These comments serve to further illustrate the ways in which participants understand institutional responsibility to operate in ways that uphold academic freedom. Overly prescriptive responses at the level of individual researchers or courses are not what they consider to be an appropriate institutional response.

Both Mirella and Paul continued on to describe how their understandings of institutional responsibility comprise an orientation of the institution as a whole towards responding to the Anthropocene. Mirella said, "But I would say that the university as a whole should point itself in that direction …we should be pointing ourselves towards finding solutions to these very complex challenges" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). Paul too expressed his belief in the need for the organization to act, saying, "But I think a university that doesn't take this on and figure out what their response is to it is, at this point in time, I just think it's kind of incredible" (personal interview, November 26, 2013). Here, these participants affirm their belief in a need for a major institutional response to the Anthropocene.

With Great Response-Ability Comes Great Freedom

In this discussion on institutional responsibility to the Anthropocene, I felt it important to raise issues of academic freedom because I do not want academic freedom to become an excuse for inaction. As explained by participants, academic freedom is not compromised by the assumption of an institutional responsibility to address the Anthropocene. Greenwood (2012) carries these ideas into sustainability discourse in contending educational institutions frequently teach for unsustainability by not responding to the world in which they are situated. Organizations, including universities, are always taking positions; they can't not. It is just that when a particular stance belongs to the status quo, it can become invisible. As in McIntosh's (1990) work on the 'Invisible Knapsack' of privilege, that which is normed and belongs to dominant discourse becomes unseen through structures of hegemony. Neoliberal institutional positions are thus not seen to be infringements on privileges of academic freedom because they are not seen, especially by those holding power and privilege. A responsibility to respond to the Anthropocene presents no more of a threat to academic freedom than currently entrenched priorities. However, that it challenges dominant paradigms makes it visible and possibly understood as going 'too far'.

In this study, participants recognize the value of orienting the organization towards responding to the Anthropocene. They describe an institutional response as signaling a deeper commitment to the Anthropocene, a commitment that acknowledges meaningful responses must entail more than changes in course content. David describes one vision of institutional responsibility:

There are many issues bound up in the Anthropocene, and it's hard to take on

everything, but we are in a university. We can make action, impact, statement from

here. We have a responsibility for our place. We've had a shift. The Anthropocene

marks a shift. We need a corresponding cultural shift in higher ed. That's what we

have a responsibility to create … It's not going to be an add on. We're not going to

add on the course and say check. That's the whole history of environmental ed, it's

amounted to only that in so many cases. So, how to re-culture an institution resistant

to change is probably my core question. (personal interview, December 3, 2013)

In my introduction to this thesis work, I noted how I find myself at a university in the

Anthropocene, and it is the university's response-ability I wish to develop through my

work. The participants in this research represent responsive leaders at Lakehead

University. These individuals are already taking up response-abilities in many ways.

Furthermore, they have grounded and creative ideas on the next steps towards reculturing

Lakehead University to matter to the Anthropocene.

We Imagine What We Imagine From Where We Stand

Participants' visions for a more responsive Lakehead University have been

presented throughout Chapters IV and V of my thesis, and I have tried to represent their

possibilities for responding to the Anthropocene through academia across this work.

Now, I hope to provide some additional colour to these visions by adding participants'

photographs of their selected interview locations into the conversation.

Having participants select an interview location reflective of their vision for a

responsive university in the Anthropocene complemented their spoken contributions.

Inspired by the communicative potential of place-voice or, to employ Basso's (1996)

phrasing, of the notion that wisdom sits in places, I believe this practice also offered

some structure through which participants could develop and extend their ideas. Using

this methodology also caused some challenges within the research process. Because I

conducted interviews in late November, the weather was quite cold, damp, and snowy.

These factors may have discouraged some participants from selecting certain outdoor

interview locations. As well, finding time to conduct interviews within participants'

schedules may have limited certain possibilities of interview locations. There also was

the issue of investment in the idea; some participants were more responsive to the idea

than others. I believe this framing appealed to certain participants' processes of making

sense of their experience more so than others, and this was to be expected.

I don't believe these limitations negate the value of the exercise. From what I

learned by engaging in this process, I am inspired to experiment further with this form of

place-voice in scholarship, and I hope to continue to integrate more creative expressions

of place-voice in my work. For me, the following conversations represent a dynamic

exchange between participants' engagement with this experiment in place-voice and

vision, and participants' experience of the structural challenges existing within academic

spaces – the very tension I have worked to embrace throughout my thesis.

The following are six vignettes, then, of place and of vision. I synthesized each

into two pages. The first page presents the participant's photograph, a description of the

location of the interview site, and a quotation from the participant's interview

conversation. The second page presents an exploration of their vision for a university

responding to the Anthropocene. The vignettes are presented in the same order as

participants' introductions, and are intended to mirror in conclusion the opening of these stories.

Connie Russell

It was interesting, because when you asked me that question, I immediately, and this is probably my old outdoor thing going [pause for thought], "Oh, I guess we better go outside, and maybe we better go to the woodlot that I use sometimes, or into the field." And then I thought, you know, I spend most of my time in this office, and I do extraordinary work from this office. And so, I wanted to disrupt that inside/outside dichotomy, the nature/culture dichotomy, … I can look out and see birds, I regularly see deer, and all sorts of stuff. So I can see the natural world. I can engage with it. But in terms of the hard work that I'm doing, most of it happens here in this office. My teaching, I sometimes get out, it's not that I don't get out. But, in terms of where I'm making the most change, it's actually from this spot right here using that computer and that telephone, and meeting people in here, as an administrator. (personal interview, November 25, 2013)

This photo is of Connie in her office in the Bora Laskin Building at Lakehead University's Faculty of Education in Thunder Bay, ON. She is looking out the window, and also facing her computer screen.

Connie's vision for a more responsive university to the Anthropocene is in the here and now. What is of utmost importance to her is for people to start acting: "We'll always be waiting for perfect conditions. They're never ever going to be perfect … it'd be nice to be actually doing stuff now and not making excuses" (personal interview, November 25, 2013). She chose her office as an illustration of this vision, because she recognizes she is acting now, from within that space. It is not a green building, nor is it an outdoor classroom, and she is still getting down to work. Connie's vision for a more responsive university is in action.

She also recognizes the importance of community engagement. For Connie, priorities of a responsive university in the Anthropocene would include publicizing research in accessible ways, communicating research to diverse audiences, and conducting research in service of, and with, communities. She extends these understandings of civic responsibility into the classroom, and imagines the kind of responsive academic educational experiences that develop out of community service learning. She envisions the Faculty of Education demonstrating leadership through such pedagogical and research responses.

Connie works to offer entry points into responding to the Anthropocene. Recognizing emotional and logistical barriers, she dares the academy to act anyway:

> We just use these things as excuses, these aren't the real issues. The real issues are how we relate to the natural world, what we've decided we can and can't do [and] how change is so very, very hard for all of us … we blame it on other things … "Oh, I would do it if I had more time, I would do that if I had a million dollars." … I don't buy it. Do it. (personal interview, November 25, 2013)

Rod Hanley

I did a lot of fieldwork in Central and South America. And one of my favourite places to go to was Bolivia … Most of my fieldwork was in cloud forests, old growth cloud forests … So there's always a level of high humidity, lots of mist, lots of cool critters there. From an etymological standpoint, low land rainforests were dominated by ants in the leaf litter. As you go higher in elevation, the ants begin to become a little less numerous and beetles become more common in the leaf litter, they dominate the leaf litter. So I was at that leaf litter where the beetles dominated … There's a whole community of people that live in this area. They're Aboriginal people in the Altiplano of Bolivia. They would congregate on the market on the road. And the women with these derby hats … It would be a picture like that. How does that relate to university life? I don't know. I was a student at the time, so there's got to be some kind of cool linkage. But it is something, when I think about sustainability, when I think about a group of people living within what appears to be a sense of harmony with the natural environment, and then as a white Western outsider type person that came in to check it out … it had a big impact. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

No photo was provided by the participant. However, I found this image to respond to Rod's description of the market scene (Aabech, 2014). It was taken in the Altiplano of Bolivia where Rod conducted the fieldwork for his Master's and Doctoral degrees in etymology.

In reflecting on his choice of photograph, I, like Rod, had some difficulty in corresponding the image to a vision for the university. But after reviewing the transcript of our interview conversation, I came to understand Rod's vision of a more responsive university to the Anthropocene as being about structures and systems. His description of the market scene in Bolivia perhaps speaks to the beauty of an organizational structure that fits within and is responsive to its place. For Rod, this encapsulates responsibility.

With a passion for biomimicry, and a recognition of the potential of his leadership role to affect change within the university's institutional structure, Rod envisions a university system that responds to the current moment on the planet. He is pursuing a second Master's degree in sustainability leadership to develop this vision:

> I'm quite interested in this notion of looking through nature, maybe an insect system might be a good example … what does that system … inform, how can we learn to make systems more sustainable? So it's a systems thing … I want to position the institution … to more fully embrace sustainability as an organizing principle for the entire university. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

Rod is curious about the ways in which Lakehead University might organizationally respond to the Anthropocene. He understands the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge and collaborative skills in responding to the Anthropocene, and hopes to grow such a system at Lakehead University. He asks of the academy, "[I]f we can move towards getting people to work in interdisciplinary teams, because frankly, that's what's more common in society … isn't that doing both the students and the institution the right thing?" (personal interview, November 26, 2013).

Paul Berger

But one of the things that I thought of immediately with my office is I have probably one of the biggest windows in many of the offices here and it looks out mostly just into trees … I don't look onto a parking lot, the sun comes in at times and I need to put the blind down, but it doesn't at others, so I'm very aware of what's going on outside in a way that the first four years I was here, I was in an interior office, no window, I could be in all day and be kind of surprised as I left in the evening or late afternoon whether it was sunny or not, because it was totally different. Here, I feel pretty connected, I have a window that opens, I feel pretty connected to what's going on outside … I don't think you could build a university that was trying to pay attention to sustainability that had interior offices without windows. As energy efficient as that is, it just seems to be a strange idea – to have … I'll answer this personally: I don't feel as healthy in a work environment as I should if I feel cut off from what's going on outside … I think it's important where we're working and how we're working. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)

This photo is of Paul in his office in the Bora Laskin Building at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, ON. The many books and pieces of art that have inspired his growing commitment to responding to the Anthropocene surround him.

Paul's vision of a more responsive university in the Anthropocene begins with asking questions. His office represents the many aspects of academic work Paul is questioning and changing in his aims to be responsive, as both a professor and administrator, to the many issues bound up in the Anthropocene. In our interview conversation, Paul commented on how he is trying to work differently as part of his vision for the university by using a standing desk and human-powered treadmill he constructed from reused materials. But it's about more than new desk arrangements:

> The idea that you come to work and sit down in a windowless office for 8 hours … [it's] got to be one of the craziest things you could ever imagine. And if we're going to move towards a world that is survivable … we're going to be working differently. (personal interview, November 26, 2013)
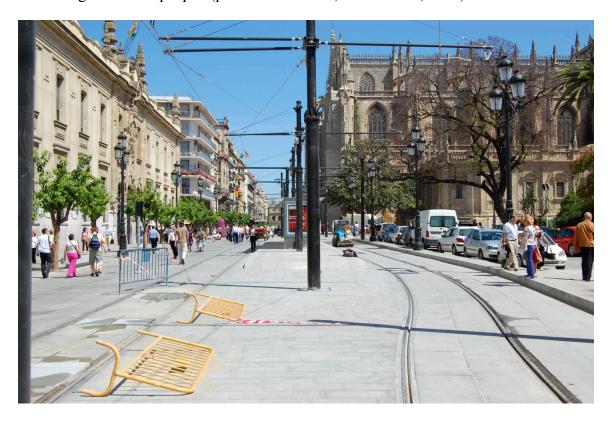
Asking questions of how work happens in the academy is a process of making the null curriculum visible, and arguably creates space for more questions to probe some of the underlying assumptions of the academy. It opens up politicized space.

This continues into curricular development. Paul believes Lakehead University must start to ask how climate change is going to impact different disciplines and what students will need to know to make their education relevant in the Anthropocene. But it's also important to Paul, who has invested significant personal time in developing his own understandings of climate change literature, that time and space be created within university structures for educators to educate themselves on the Anthropocene.

Responding to the Anthropocene is about so much more than changing light bulbs and saving energy. Paul's vision begins by asking "why we're in this mess [and] how we might get out of it" (personal interview, November 26, 2013).

Todd Randall

Where would [I] want to be interviewed, that's a good question … I think you could pick any European city. I mean, when I was sixteen, don't get me wrong, I was right there getting my driver's license like every other kid. As I've matured, I love a place where I can get off on a subway, I don't know, if it's because I didn't have them as a kid. But I just love the mobility to wander around, be entertained by what you walk by, whether it just be some kind of commercial streetscape, or an ornamental greenspace, or a river walk in an old downtown, and then getting on somewhere different. The year that we were on sabbatical in France, we were in Toulouse, lived in a rural area. But when I went to work, I could have driven the car into Toulouse every day, but I drove to the nearby train station and I rode the 50-minute train into Toulouse and then the subway to get to the university. But it meant that I saw a lot of the downtown core of Toulouse. I love the mobility that you can have when transit is designed in that way … On transit, you're interacting with more people. (personal interview, December 2, 2013)

This photo is one taken by Todd during his sabbatical in Toulouse. It shows the downtown scenes and transit options enjoyed by Todd during his time there.
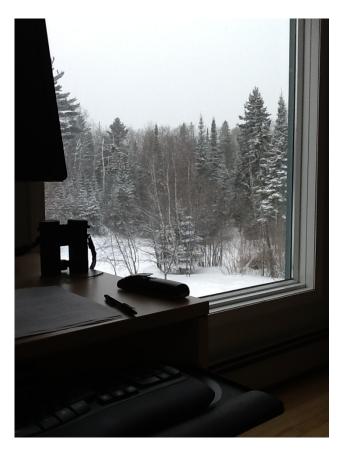
Todd's vision for a university responding to the Anthropocene mirror the objectives of good urban design. In his interview, Todd and I spoke at length about what makes certain places more sustainable, livable, and enjoyable. We discussed what is valued, what difficult choices must be made, what must be traded for certain benefits, and what becomes prioritized. I gathered from our conversation that, for Todd, these are the same questions to ask of any university looking to respond to the Anthropocene.

Todd emphasized the role of teaching in creating change. When he spoke of enjoying meeting new people through his use of public transit, it caused me to wonder whether this element of interaction is what Todd loves about teaching too. He also spoke to how teaching can open many opportunities for students to become engaged in issues of the Anthropocene. He noted that this is perhaps especially relevant in a discipline like Geography: "[A]s a geography prof, [my role] has always been to teach people about the world around them and their interactions with it. And with what's happening to the world [including] climate change" (personal interview, December 2, 2013). Perhaps similarly to the ways in which well-designed streetscapes can engage citizens in new experiences, so too can teaching move a university, and its student citizens, towards new responses to the Anthropocene.

Todd's vision also is about passion. He recalled a story of sharing a conversation with his examiner following his doctoral defense. When asked by the examiner whether he really believes in and practices his ideals of sustainable urban design, Todd replied, "I said, for me, I can't leave it at work. It's in your face, and it's every day" (personal interview, December 2, 2103). Todd makes deliberate choices to respond to the Anthropocene. Todd's vision asks Lakehead University to do the same.

David Greenwood

There's a meditation that I listen to that asks one to imagine … your best self and to build an image of your best self and to eventually walk into the image and to become part of the image. And I always imagine myself right up there on the knoll, where the wolf said "Hi" when we first moved into this place. I always imagine myself up there, and my posture is … very open and receptive and present. And just calm and serene and open to others. I'm solid, I'm calm and serene and I know what I'm doing, even if I don't, and I'm open to others … There is a deep rootedness in the posture. The feet are grounded twenty feet under the earth … I'm there, I'm totally connected. I'm in the wild on the land that I love and I'm open to others. And it's that openness, it's an invitation for communion. And, you know, if I were to answer your question, I'd say it's an invitation for communion in the Anthropocene … The other posture is more like a forward, like a high lunge. And it's reaching up. And there's a lot of sort of forward motion in the chest … And there's definitely a reaching up, and a momentum forward. And there's exposure and power at the same time. And I think my best self is those two things. The totally present and open, and the other piece of me is the momentum, the moving forward. (personal interview, December 3, 2013)

This photo is of David's office and yoga space at his home on Hilldale Road, outside of the city of Thunder Bay, ON. The windows look out onto the backyard, a small pond, and forest. If you climb up the ridge, you can see out to Lake Superior.
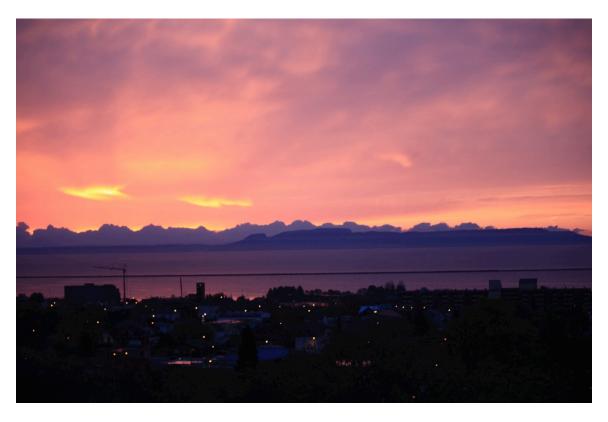
David recently completed a yoga teacher training course. Knowing this practice to be significant to his changing understandings of academic response-abilities in the Anthropocene, I asked David to take up a yoga posture embodying his vision for a more responsive university. David's vision is about people, places, and the in-between spaces. He recognized a need for "more flow between community and university, and between natural world and built environment" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). For David, a more responsive institution disrupts the silos currently defining academic work, and takes up processes and structures meaningful to the current moment on the planet.

One avenue for enacting this vision comes through interdisciplinary learning: "Let's just right now end the idea of courses and degree programs and let's talk about people learning what they want to learn". Another avenue exists in the retooling of faculty work: "I think part of that retooling is around the reward structure … honouring who people are so that they can bring forward what they really most want to bring forward". And a third is in the university's connection to the communities encountering the Anthropocene: "I want to feel a much richer interaction between what we talk about and what people are experiencing on the local level. So a lot more place-based, community-based learning … peopled with folks outside the university" (personal interview, December 3, 2013). These start to build David's vision.

To me, David's vision is like the yoga postures we took up together at the end of the interview. It is grounded, open and present, and is also reaching, moving forward. I am learning from mentors that the art of teaching embraces presence and simultaneously looks out and around; it acts in the now, while preparing to invite others to come and play. A rich tension. This is what David asks of the academy in the Anthropocene.

Mirella Stroink

The places that are most powerful to me are places like Hillcrest Park and looking out at the Sleeping Giant … I think it's the combination of prominent aspects of the physical environment and the sort of overlook you have of the community at the same time. You know, you sort of see the community, which looks very small when you're standing up there, you can see all the buildings and everything but they look really small and they're just sort of huddled there on the edges of this rather powerful and strong physical presence. It makes people seem small and in their place … you can see that humanity has tried to create this illusion that we are somehow separate from and safe from the forces of nature. But then you stand there, especially on a day like this when you can die if you fall asleep in a snowbank, and you realize … we're just carving our little habitat into this part of the land. Not unlike a beaver making a dam on a pond. We've built our little thing here. Whereas in Toronto, you stand at Yonge and Dundas or something, and it just goes on and on forever. Here it's like, no, you can see it all, you can see an edge all around and you can see how powerful that lake is … maybe that's part of the vision for this university of the Anthropocene then … we need buildings and we need light and all these other things. But they should somehow appear to be continuous with the physical environment around it, not somehow boxed up, stamped over, bulldozed over part of the land. It should be continuous. (personal interview, December 10, 2013)

This photo is taken from Hillcrest Park in Thunder Bay, ON. From this vantage, you can see a part of the north end of the city. You can also see the Sleeping Giant, and Lake Superior.

Mirella's vision begins with transforming relations of power within the university system. Just as the City of Thunder Bay is dominated by the more-than-human world in the image, Mirella imagines a university understanding itself to be nested within a more important ecological system. Having the university system reflect this dynamic would facilitate critical learning; as described by Mirella, "We need to help people to recognize … there is a marketplace economy but it exists as part of, it's nested within the biological ecosystem that we are not separate from" (personal interview, December 10, 2013).

Mirella questions whether current institutions are capable of such fundamental reorientation: "I don't know if you can take a university like Lakehead and then turn it around to make it do that" (personal interview, December 10, 2013). She understands that, in order to sufficiently disrupt the underlying assumptions of higher education, it may require universities to start over, to reorient built environments and learning environments. She envisions universities working "to make that [connection to the more-than-human world] part of their vision, part of their core mission statement, part of their culture, and [to] integrate it into everything about what they do" (personal interview, December 10, 2013).

But Mirella also understands the need for transformation from within the institution. She subverts university systems by enacting anomalies that challenge dominant structures; in teaching a transdisciplinary course, she invents ways to force the system to bend and change. It doesn't necessarily substitute for renewal. But she envisions it facilitating a reorganization of power where the university's responsibility to the status quo is diminished by the university's responsibility to the Anthropocene: "It could be a really beautiful thing" (personal interview, December 10, 2013).

Practicing Possibilities

Having presented the photographs, I wish to comment on the content and methodology of this visioning exercise with the intention of supporting responsive visions to the Anthropocene across Lakehead University. First, further research is required to more comprehensively inquire into participants' visions for responding to the Anthropocene at Lakehead University. My work has created some space for these expressions in asking questions of vision, amongst other research questions. And there is considerably more time and space that could be dedicated to deepening conversations of vision. Indeed, I believe this will be a necessary step in developing Lakehead's response to the Anthropocene. I name it here as a limitation of my own work, but also as an exciting direction for further study and action at our university.

I am also compelled to explore a personal observation made during the interview conversations and subsequent analysis. I asked participants to describe their vision for the academy more generally, and Lakehead University in particular. Of all of my interview questions, this was perhaps the one from which I was most excited to learn. But initially, I was underwhelmed by participants' visions. I do not mean to sound arrogant, and I have experienced discomfort in feeling this sense of being underwhelmed within myself. Nevertheless, after each interview, while also having been struck by the commitment and passion of these six individuals, when I heard their visions for the university I remember thinking, "That's it?" Now, I've had five months to reflect on this discomfort.

One issue associated with the vision question pertains to methodology. I believe I did not give participants sufficient structure through which to respond to this visioning request, did not provide enough scaffolding on which to hang their visions. Though I sent

the interview questions to each participant ahead of time, this did not seem to be enough. This is not the first time I have encountered this challenge of finding balance between offering meaningful framing concepts and offering open space for people to bring their own ideas forward, to think of things I never could anticipate. While I cannot offer evidence from this research as to why visioning was, and perhaps is, so difficult, I can ask questions of this particular experience. I wonder, are the challenges I observed in imagining and visioning reflective of the lack of time and space for reflection in academic spaces and beyond? Is it that we, in the society in which I and we have been raised and cultured, are not well practiced in imagining? Has time spent in pursuit of formal education caused our imaginative abilities to decline and become devalued in exchange for the 'right' answer? Or is it a particular challenge of the Anthropocene, that imagining a different way of being in place and on the planet has been overwhelmed by the power of crisis? Exploring imagination in the academy, especially as it pertains to responding to the Anthropocene, would offer opportunities to better understand the university's capacity to respond, and I would recommend such inquiry as an extension of the work presented here.

I also want to recognize my student vantage as granting different perspective than those held by faculty and administrators. As Kovach (2009) writes, "We know what we know from where we stand" (p. 9). Perhaps we imagine what we imagine from the places and positions we occupy. As such, I do not intend to be at all dismissive of participants' visions. I also must remember that I have been working intently with visioning ideas, both theoretically and, to a lesser extent, practically, throughout my thesis process. I am currently steeped in these ideas and their importance to me is arguably amplified,

certainly because I believe in the subject but also because my field of vision of university work is narrowed for the moment, comparative to research participants.

Another methodological dimension of eliciting visions of a more responsive university is the role of appreciative inquiry. My observations on imagination underscore the need for appreciative inquiry to inform methodologies of scholarship engaging with the Anthropocene. I employed appreciative inquiry to lend greater space and power to imagining and inventing within the interview conversations. As a methodology, it explicitly focuses on that which is working well to energize more successful work (Cooperrider, 1990). That it did not spur wild imaginings is perhaps not so much a failure of the methodology as much as a lack of practice within this paradigm for me and for research participants; it is certainly not how I typically 'solve' problems, hence my interest in experimenting with it here. I look forward to developing appreciative scholarship, especially within educational settings, and believe it to be of significance in imagining academic responses to the Anthropocene.

Finally, I want to recognize the possible impacts of having participants individually explore their visions of responsiveness. In their interview conversations, every participant spoke to the role of supportive colleagues in propelling their own ideas forward, and to the prospects that emerge from within contexts where one does not feel isolated or alone. From these statements, I understand participants to value a sense of community and collaboration to invigorate their sense of possibilities. In my own work, I often find myself to be more creative when engaged with supportive colleagues; such environments are personally more conducive to envisioning. Russell's (2006) work on generous scholarship also reflects the value of such academic environments. Further, AI

methodology encourages group visioning as a more effective vehicle for catalyzing meaningful and supported action (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). I do not know the extent to which the solo visioning of this research affected participant responses, however, I want to identify it as a possible influence. In future work on this topic, I would recommend providing opportunities for participants to collaborate on their responses, especially for questions of vision. As well, this observation may speak to an opportunity to recognize current structures and processes at Lakehead University that draw colleagues together, and reimagine these spaces as working to respond to the Anthropocene.

Summary

This section has explored the visions of participants for a Lakehead University more responsive to issues of the Anthropocene. Then, it looked to some of the methodological choices shaping this place-voice exercise, and my reactions to the results. The Anthropocene demands imagination and vision of the academy, indeed of every individual and institution, yet getting to these imaginative visions proves difficult. Here, I have suggested appreciative inquiry be considered as a means of enhancing the creative capacity of the academy, especially in the face of crisis. Collaboration too can play a role in energizing the visions of those inhabiting university institutions. Given that relationships so significantly factored into participants' understandings of their ability to respond to the Anthropocene, collaboration with allies across disciplines arguably invigorates the imagining of possibilities. Hawken's (2009) reference to the people as hope further underscores the importance of bringing together individuals and their ideas; if the people are sources of inspiration, the academy might spark its response to the Anthropocene by giving people a chance to be inspired by each other's actions. It has

certainly worked for me. I conclude this thesis with my own vision statement for a more

responsive Lakehead University, created at the end of this particular journey from what I

have learned through embarking on this research.

Natalie Gerum

Canoeing has become part of my life on the northern shore of Lake Superior. It's a way of being with land and water I will associate with the boreal forest, with jack pines, walleye, fresh water, moose, northern lights, bedrock, and loons for the rest of my life. The night before a canoe trip, I'm always scared. The first day of a canoe trip, I'm always grumpy, and usually will cry at least once. But it's as if the wild has to soften me again, has to disrupt my norms and bring me back to myself. The deep joy I feel in wild places is often so different than the happiness I feel in more urban places. It lives somewhere closer to my heart. Still, I often feel like I don't belong in the wild, that I'm not sufficiently skilled, resilient, nor determined enough to be 'out there'. And I always want to return. The tensions of adventuring amplify each time I carry a canoe. It hurts, and the blueberries taste so good. It's heavy, and the fire is so beautiful. I literally feel the tension in my shoulders and I keep walking excitedly to get to the next lake. Some days, I absolutely cannot carry my own canoe. I travel with friends. Some days feel more like paddling, others are like a portage. But every day in the wild seems to take me apart and put me back together again in a way that gets me closer to myself, to the ways I want to be in the world, to the learning I need to do to get there. This thesis experience has been wild.

This photo was taken by my partner during a canoe trip on the Kopka River in August 2013.

My vision for a university that is being more responsive to the Anthropocene begins by building joyful community around challenging ideas, by courageously inhabiting the tensions this thesis has raised for participants and for myself. I began this thesis process inspired by the words of Hawken (2009) to explore a tension between pessimism and optimism. Through this work, I have uncovered other tensions: between the ways in which I am complicit in consenting to and even maintaining hegemony and the ways in which I disrupt it; between the ways in which I want to resist as a means of making change and the ways I want to create; between the ways in which consent is imposed upon me and the ways in which I imagine the need to consent into being; between the ways it is so hard to make change and the ways in which there is such opportunity. These are all alive in my vision for a Lakehead University that decides to matter to this moment on the planet.

As I reflect on this thesis process I am thankful for the six particular people who have each formed, and transformed, my experiences in graduate education and my experiences of these tensions. And as I look to how this thesis might invite change, I feel more strongly than ever that the process will begin by listening to the people at Lakehead University who act as educators in the Anthropocene. If the university wants to matter to this moment on the planet, it must signal that these people matter to the institution. It must give them and their visions a place to belong, to be valued, and to grow.

Because that is how these stories began. For all participants, their engagement with the academy began when someone made space for them, and for their vision of what academic work could be. As people committed to creating change on issues of social and ecological injustice, they decided to act through scholarship because there were mentors

who let them know they belonged, who encouraged critical and responsive academic

work, and who spent their academic privilege to act on issues of the Anthropocene. Now,

participants are the people mentoring others into scholarship responsive to the

Anthropocene. These participants recognize the importance of relationships to creating

interdisciplinary communities within academia better positioned to respond to the

problems of the Anthropocene. They understand relationships as radical in their ability to

disrupt neoliberal narratives in higher education, but also know that institutional

acknowledgement of relationship-building as valuable academic work will likely be

required for the broader university community to measure success in terms of

collaboration. Participants have found a way to lend value to relationships through

teaching. Many participants understand teaching to be their most effective, and most

engaging, means of responding to the Anthropocene. Yet, they question how teaching at

Lakehead University will continue to matter amongst shifting institutional priorities as

the university seeks to become on of Canada's top 25 research-intensive universities.

Strategic institutional documents suggest both research and teaching can continue to

matter, and should be integrated in practices of engaged scholarship. But participant

experiences position teaching as becoming devalued; arguably, how this example of

neoliberalism within the landscape of Lakehead University proceeds will significantly

impact participants' ability to respond to the Anthropocene.

Amidst such institutional challenges, participants also recognize the ways in

which academia is uniquely positioned to act on issues of the Anthropocene. Participants

named academic freedom as a critical privilege empowering their responsive work. While

they recognize academic freedom as a complex issue, in that it exists in tension with

patterns of consent that are reinforced both institutionally and individually, they also know it to offer a certain extent of privilege that facilitates their ability to make a more politicized contribution to societal responses to the Anthropocene. In this way, participants understand universities to have a responsibility to take action on the Anthropocene; unanimously, they agreed that Lakehead University has a moral obligation to respond to this moment on the planet. Participants extended this responsibility to act on the Anthropocene as a responsibility to act on the neoliberal forces propelling the Anthropocene as they are playing out at Lakehead University. While the climate is changing, so too is our institution, and the issues are entwined. Participants expressed a deep commitment to making Lakehead University response-able to the Anthropocene by responding to the ways in which injustices are normalized, internalized, and replicated on our campus, and on our own senses of what is possible. In tension with these injustices are the possibilities, and participants' visions for a Lakehead University more responsive to the Anthropocene are indeed filled with possibilities. Yes, we are all complicit in propping up the Anthropocene, but we can continue to do the work necessary for us to not be complicit in having the forces driving forward the Anthropocene dictate our own possibilities. As Hawken (2009) writes, it is the people who offer hope because they are still acting, despite the data. And I have learned from participants' courage in challenging the tensions they experience as academic actors in the Anthropocene to keep imagining and to keep acting.

My vision for Lakehead University begins with recognizing our university as placed. It is placed in the Anthropocene, reflecting and reinforcing the dominant neoliberal paradigms that are destructively reorganizing every system on the planet. It is

also placed within the imaginations of the people who inhabit it and the wisdom of the land hosting it. We are not nowhere; we are now here, at this moment on the planet and in this place. We are responsible. Understanding Lakehead University as placed empowers possibilities for change because this understanding enables us to see our institution and ourselves as implicated in and response-able to the Anthropocene. Understanding Lakehead University as placed reminds us that our decisions matter, particularly at this moment on the planet of accelerating and unpredictable ecological change. There exists an incredible opportunity to accelerate our own responses, and to become unpredictably creative and courageous in our visions for and responses to our very own place.

My vision for Lakehead University is for all members of the university community to find conviction in the imaginations of its inhabitants, and the imaginations of those who have not conventionally been included in academic conversations. It will not be scared to be different, and will understand that if it is to be a responsible place of learning, its citizens must reveal the hidden power of the status quo as a neoliberal paradigm demanding disruption. This responsive university resists lending power to the forces that limit possibilities and propel the Anthropocene; it also refuses to profit from the wreckage of ecological systems, democracy, and equity. Instead, it asks questions of its privilege and responsibility to local and global communities, then supports creative collaborative relationships to ask even better ones. It supports the hopeful people who are responding to damning numbers and data. In so doing, this university extends understandings of what is possible. Lakehead University will become responsive when action on the Anthropocene finds a place, a respected, protected, and celebrated place, within the institution. Lakehead University will become response-able when it steps

bravely into becoming Anthropocene (yo)U – a place where those responding to the Anthropocene can feel their change-making reverberating throughout the institution, where they can find a home in the university for their heads, their hands, and their hearts.

       Finally, my vision for Lakehead University is to get going, and to keep going. As my writing ends, the stories of participants continue. For the longest time, I could not find the words to close my own story of this thesis. Then I realized it is perhaps because I intend this to be another step in responding to the Anthropocene, not the final one. Just as it has done for me, I hope my thesis invites Lakehead University, but more importantly, invites you, whoever you are and wherever you are, to find the courage to ask ourselves what will we do now that we know these stories (King, 2003)? How will we grow our own response-abilities and possibilities? And how will we choose to matter to the Anthropocene, to this moment on Planet Earth, to ourselves, and to all that will come as a result of us being here? Having met these people, I hope you too find your pulse of all that is possible.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

How did you come to be a professor? Can you describe your journey into working in academia? What made you decide to become a professor and to engage in your particular field/area of research? What do you love about being in academia? What do you find challenging about being in academia? What brought you to Lakehead University?

How have you come to engage with issues of social and environmental justice? Can you describe your journey into working on/working for these issues? What issues are of particular importance/concern for you? Why? Why do you engage with these issues?

Are you familiar with the term the 'Anthropocene'? If yes, what does this term mean to you? (If no, provide a short description for participants). Do you think this term can represent the social and environmental justice issues with which you are engaged? Why or why not? What are strengths of this term? What are potential shortcomings of this term?

What made you decide to engage with the Anthropocene through academia? How do you engage – through your research? Teaching? Community engagement and civic scholarship? Can you describe this engagement? I invite you to share any stories you might have around this engagement.

Why do you engage with the Anthropocene through academia? Can you describe how you understand the relationship between your profession (as a professor in a university) and engagement with the Anthropocene? What challenges are presented by engaging as a professor? What opportunities are presented by engaging as a professor? Are there any stories of your experiences that illustrate these challenges and opportunities?

Do you understand engagement with the Anthropocene to be a responsibility of the academy? Why? Why not?

What is your vision for a university that is more responsive to the Anthropocene, to the challenges and opportunities presented by this moment on the planet? What would it look like? Who would be there? Where would it be? How would it function? How would its' leadership function? What would be happening there? What would be its' mission statement?

Please describe the place you've chosen to be interviewed. How does it reflect and respond to your vision for a university that is more responsive to the Anthropocene?