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The Radical Relationality of Complex Partnerships:
Community-Member Experiences in Critical Community-Based Learning

by

Amie Riley

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership: Postsecondary Education

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Portland State University
2023

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Abstract

Through a radical relationality within the social-ecological systems that sustain us, critical community-based learning (CBL) in higher education offers a praxis for engaging the demanding pedagogical and community challenges we face. When CBL is implemented as both a critical and sustainability pedagogy, as a strategy for social change, the relationships created by CBL partnerships have the potential to generate transformational outcomes for all partnership agents. Using a critical complexity theoretical framework, a bricolage of complexity science and critical theory, this critical qualitative study sought to understand the systemic patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership by elevating community-member voices. Situated within a CBL partnership engaged with the Capstone Program at Portland State University, this study's methods included dialogical engagement with CBL community-members, university Capstone students, and partnership leaders in reflexive focus groups, and ethnographic participant-observation. The results revealed the primacy and centrality of relationships in the CBL partnership. Further, three emergent outcomes for partnership agents were generated by partnership relationality, including: emergent identity development, ethical agency, and a dynamism of belonging and alienation. These emergent agent outcomes across all stakeholder groups were influenced by four key factors: the dynamism of the partnership system, place as a partnership agent, information sharing, the cultivation of relational awareness. The strategies suggested by this study's findings attempt to (re)orient the field of community-based learning towards the

complexity of our CBL partnerships, encouraging a radical relational paradigm shift in the partnership work happening between universities and their communities.

Dedication

For my star seed, and the partner who made her possible.

If my body were the solar system,
you would be my sun.

Acknowledgements & Gratitudes

Tucking one's acknowledgements away on a single page might suggest a missed opportunity for a meaningful practice of gratitude. Therefore, throughout this work I have endeavored to appreciate and elevate so many mentors, scholars, communities, and community-members, who have made this joint creation of knowledge, and my own (re)oriented path, possible. Yet, to not miss the opportunity presented here...

I have been transformed as a community-member myself, by my master's degree cohort in the Leadership for Sustainability Education program, by friends who have become family, like Rachel, Presence, Jake, and so many others, and with faculty like Heather Burns, Sybil Kelley, and Miriam Abelson, who taught me that academic rigor can look like love. I am deeply grateful to my doctoral cohort and faculty at PSU, including my committee members Christine Cress and Yves Labissiere, who blessed me with insight and encouragement at many stages, and lit the way through often dark times. I am so proud and grateful to be a part of both the Capstone program at Portland State, and the little engine that could, The PSU Landing at FUMC. To Seanna, Celine, Mercedes, Danielle, Shevawn, Liz, Mike, and Scott, your praxis of partnership inspires me. In the end, and there from the beginning, there would have been no "relationality," if not for my family. For the gifts of my ancestors, who stand both behind and before me, including my inimitable mom and the insatiably inquisitive papa, thank you. And for the one who was there every step of the way, for each lift, nudge, and late night rescue, your partnership has nourished and transported me. Thank you, Joe.

I would also like to make space here to acknowledge my deep gratitude for the Land and all living things, for all of the gifts this vital system of stardust provides. Thank you to the Indigenous teachers who are leading us home.

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Chapter One: Community-Members and Critical Community-Based Learning

The Case for a Relational Praxis of Partnership Complexity

Like a murmuration of starlings, our vast swarm of beautiful humanness begins *again* to engage with our intimate and inescapable interdependencies, with one another and with the Land. The complex and entangled social ecologies we are a part of are demanding an attunement to our relationships, both for what is locally vibrant and within a space/time we struggle still to comprehend. There is no single individual or institution that remains separate from the challenges of our time, or remains unscathed by the near universal embodiment of the violence of modernity. In the role of both preparing students with a lens of critical hope for the future (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), and as we engage our communities in high impact ways right now (Ramaley, 2014), our institutions of higher education face many unanswered questions. Alongside our communities, how do educators and students find recourse and strategies for the paradigm-shifts required? How do we in higher education understand our relationships and complex partnerships, and their material impacts? And, as intermediaries with the future, how can we leverage these times of chaos and upheaval to generate transformational outcomes and equitable relationships? The entangled problems of our time are significantly impacting the prospects of justice for our most vulnerable (Garza, 2020), and also significantly effect (v.) potential futures for all of us ("AR6 Synthesis Report of the IPCC," 2023). To face these challenges, it is necessary to expand the sphere of our moral concern, to deepen our awareness of the relationships we are in, and how we are responsible for how they work and what they create (Akomolafe, 2017). Now is the time to reach out towards one

another with active hope to build collective resistance and generative interdependency, instead of turning in towards the fears of otherness, scarcity, and despair (Eisenstein, 2013; Hersey, 2022; Macy & Johnstone, 2012).

One tool for this work is community-based learning (CBL), and particularly, the community-based learning practice taking place in colleges and universities. When implemented as both a sustainable and critical pedagogy, as a strategy for social change, community-based learning holds a powerful potential to untangle and address demanding pedagogical and community challenges simultaneously (Burns, 2015; Mitchell, 2007, 2015). A critical praxis of community-based learning offers us radical ways of being in relationship, to aid our understandings of abundance and to cultivate care for the social and ecological systems that sustain us. Unfortunately, CBL's pedagogy and partnerships have often been applied like many other one-dimensional solutions to systemic problems, serving the needs of one stakeholder group without true consideration of its impacts or costs for others. Using a critical qualitative approach, this study attempts to (re)orient the field of community-based learning towards the complex relationality at work in our CBL partnerships, and to elevate the community-member voices within our partnerships, those who often receive disproportionate attention in both partnerships and scholarship (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Hammersley, 2012; James & Logan, 2016). Within a critical complexity theoretical framework, leveraging both complexity science and critical theory, this study prioritizes the experiential expertise of CBL community-members in its investigation of the following research questions:

- 1) What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system?
- 2) How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system?
- 3) How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system's patterns and behaviors?

The following sections of Chapter One will outline and define community-based learning, including how it often functions, with whom and where, and why it is essential to better understand how CBL works for our communities and institutions. Chapter One will then introduce the critical complexity conceptual framework of the study, the study structure, and goals of the study.

Community-Based Learning

The profound claim for the transformational potentials of community-based learning begs the question of how scholars and practitioners define CBL, understand its core characteristics, and enact it in practice. Community-based learning (CBL) is known by various names, including service-learning, community engaged learning, civic engagement education, academic-based community service, and many more (Jacoby, 2015). It also is practiced in widely diverse modalities, such as mentoring, media and communications, garden-based learning, grant writing, and occurs in a diverse portfolio of educational applications, including as a. course component, a co-curricular commitment, or education abroad program (Pritchord, 2002). Many of these terms and

tags for CBL have been used interchangeably, and simultaneously are highly debated for their strategic and social implications, and sometimes patriarchal connotations. They have evolved over time and reflect a diversity of ideologies and identities from various personal, organizational, and cultural perspectives (Clayton et al., 2012; Preece, 2017). However, as Capra (1997) so accurately conjures for us, “In language we coordinate our behavior, and together in language we bring forth our world” (p. 282). In that light, this study will take language and its power to manifest truths seriously. *Community-based learning* is the chosen term for this project, due to the fact that it linguistically foregrounds the *community* aspect of the concept, as well as mirrors the primary term used by this study’s participants and collaborators. By choosing the term community-based learning, I hope to establish a focus on the complexity that is true of all social and ecological communities, shining a light on the multiple complex variables of relational change and multi-voiced agent exchange regularly happening when we are in relationship within a community. This relational and exchange-focused concept stands in contrast to other terms, like “service-learning” that may implicitly or explicitly chain some stakeholders to passive roles of receiving, and place others in the role of giver, resourced, privileged, or teaching roles (Cruz, 1990; Jacoby, 2015). By using community-based learning here instead, the possibly neo-colonizing and patriarchal implications that may be interpreted from the term “service,” or those in need of service, are eschewed, and the stark division of roles between those being served and those being a learner are thawed (Cruz, 1990). Additionally, a concept critical to the study is the *CBL partnership*, a primary unit of investigation in the study. In this case, the CBL partnership is an alliance

or collaboration between a higher education-based course and a community-based organization (CBO), or community-based group of actors. Whether a formal non-profit organization, a unit of a governmental entity, or informal yet organized community activists, without community-based partnerships, or collaborations, community-based learning cannot exist. Insight from a broad swath of community partners analyzed by Sandy & Holland (2006), reinforcing previous studies, emphasizes that effective CBL partnerships require attention to the “distinct needs and interests of higher education and community partners — the different ‘worlds’ in which we live—as well as a recognition and appreciation for the inherent commonalities and motivations that bind us together” (p. 40).

These CBL partnerships often consist of various groups of stakeholders, actors, or agents. This study will attempt to map the systemic interactions and processes of CBL with four key *agent groups*. Four agent groups stands in somewhat of a contrast to what is often found in the literature, which contains broader groupings, such as a) community and university partnerships, and b) students, faculty, and community partner partnerships (Bryer et al., 2019; Gelmon et al., 1998); however, a more nuanced specificity between these various groups of actors might allow for a deeper understanding of the systemic nature of these partnerships, as well as the impact on the community-side of engagement. James & Logan (2016), offer direction for this study as seen in Figure 1, wherein they explicitly differentiate between actors or agents with the “community partner” grouping. Within community-based organizations (CBOs), they differentiate between those with positional leadership like CBO staff, and those who are often a degree or more away from

decision-making processes, like the child participants of a CBO, or even the children's families. With support from their offered nuance, this study will engage with four partnership agent groups, including: 1) course faculty, 2) college Capstone course students, 3) community-based organizations (CBOs), represented by their staff or leadership, and 4) participating community-members. All of these groups, and the individuals they are composed of, will be actively acknowledged as agents in the study's participating CBL partnerships. *Agent* is a uniquely apt term for this study, as it is foundational to both complexity science (Holland, 2014) and contemporary critical

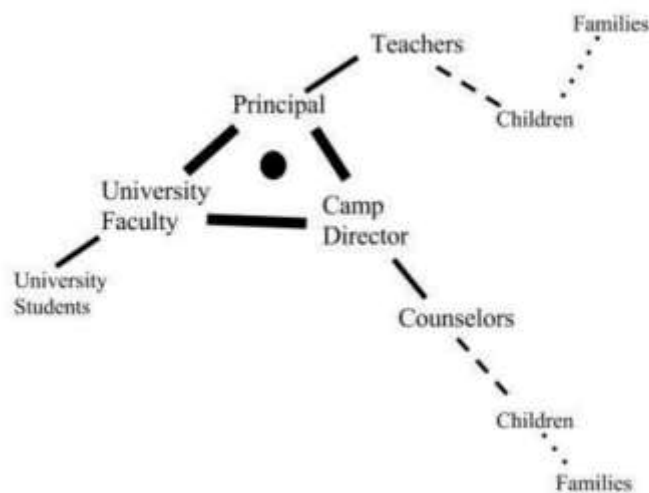


Figure 1. “Network Model of Relationships within the Service-Learning Project” (Source: James & Logan, 2016, p. 19)

theory (Hardiman et al., 2007), as well as being increasingly used in civic and social justice pedagogies (Ginwright & James, 2002). The term *agent* is often used interchangeably in CBL with the term *stakeholder*, and will be

done so here to align with participants and literature language. *Stakeholder* also derives from an ethical and complexity-oriented stance in organizational management (Freeman, 2004). However, recognizing its colonizing etymology, akin to flag-planting, *stakeholder* is a term I use hesitantly. Yet, in that very signification, a *stakeholder* does make a claim

both to ownership and responsibility: to voice, power, and belonging, which is essential for all participating agent groups in a CBL partnership. Further, this study pays particular attention to the “community-member” agent group in mapping the network of interactions in the sample’s CBL partnerships, as it is the group least discussed in the literature, and often least addressed in the dynamics of a CBL partnership.

Regardless of the diversity of terminology used for the field, many of the significant scholarly agents affirm that despite variations in vocabulary, CBL practices generally align with a set of core characteristics. Based on the following review of the literature, the six components used to understand community-based learning in this study include: *purposefulness*, *meaningful context and content*, *voice or agency*, *participant relationships*, *critical reflection*, and *mutually transformative reciprocity*, all of which are acknowledged and encouraged throughout the CBL literature. Explored in more detail in the literature review, overall these components of CBL comprise the nature of the various processes by which a CBL partnership functions. From one of the first conceptions of CBL in higher education, Sigmon (1979) defined the term “service-learning” by outlining the following three principles integrating these characteristics: those being served should control the services provided; those being served become better able to serve and be served by themselves as a result; and those who serve are also learners co-creating their learning. In theory, these principles would hold across modalities and contexts of CBL; however, often for purposes of institutional efficiency and course-driven learning outcomes, many instances of CBL implementation have moved away from multi-role, multi-stakeholder impact and learning, including the power-sharing implicit in these

principles. In reaction to this shift, there is an emergent critique of higher education's engagement in CBL (Grain & Lund, 2017). This critique reasserts that the essential focus of CBL must be an approach to the cultivation of mutual emancipation and an authentic praxis of social justice, not simply a pedagogical tool for participating college students or for reaffirming neoliberal workforce development ideologies (Breunig, 2005; Kliwer, 2013; Pompa, 2005). Optimistically, a commitment to investigating CBL partnerships and their community-member experience within the scope of these core characteristics will provide both a critical thoroughness and a systemic consciousness for the study.

Impacts of Community-Based Learning Partnerships

With a clearer understanding of what community-based learning is, it is essential to then understand what it purports to accomplish. The literature asserts that community-based learning cultivates the development of lasting civic engagement and social change in students and institutions of higher education (C. M. Cress et al., 2012; Musil, 2009; Pedersen et al., 2015; Saltmarsh, 2005). This impact has encouraged higher education institutions to integrate community-based learning curricula and community engagement strategies in order to meet the particular economic, environmental, and cultural challenges of the day, serving as a prescient response to the need for both local and global paradigm shift. It is integral to recognize that as a society, we depend on an active, engaged, and problem-solving population for pluralistic and critical problem solving (C. M. Cress, 2001; Stokamer, 2011). Education, and its community-based learning pedagogy, must be a *praxis*, an iterative process of reflection and action directed towards both personal and structural transformation (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1993). However, one

simple example of the trial being faced by higher education, and the students and communities it serves, can be found in The American Freshman survey (Eagan, 2013), where incoming undergraduate freshman, particularly from predominantly white communities, have dramatically low rates of self-reported skills in “being open to having their views challenged,” “ability to discuss controversial issues,” and “seeing different perspectives” (pp. 12-14). These are the skills required for young people to prepare for an unknown future where they will be called upon to confront the “wicked” problems of the day. These are the skills that community-based learning may be able to cultivate, if supported by the appropriate policies (Cress et al., 2005).

In the past forty years, institutions of higher education in the United States have called to re-prioritize the cultivation of students as active and committed community-members and citizens (Saltmarsh, 2005). Community-based learning (CBL) is one of the most relevant pedagogies to help face these challenges, as well as the most consistently deployed “high impact practices” in many higher education institutions in the U.S. (Kuh, 2008; National Survey Student Engagement, 2014). As CBL grows in application and esteem, its leaders and practitioners rise to meet the clarion call for this ‘crucible moment’ of engagement (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). There is justified enthusiasm about the transformational possibilities of CBL pedagogies and its myriad positive effects and outcomes (Eyler et al., 2001; Felten & Clayton, 2011). Universities are increasingly apt to create new policies and practices of community engagement as part of their missions to serve (Casa-Nova, 2019; Ramaley, 2014; Rodin, 2015). Much of the literature purports that CBL offers learning

opportunities and outcomes for students to acquire the capacities for knowledge application, civic engagement, reciprocity and mutuality, critical understanding of social systems that cause inequity and suffering, and the cultivation of the skills and attitudes to be effective change agents. CBL student participants report greater satisfaction with their college experience and are more likely to flourish (Gray et al., 1996; Low, 2011).

Overall, a plethora of benefits for college students engaged in community-based learning are well documented, ranging from personal growth and development, academic content comprehension and competencies, and interpersonal skills and mindsets (Jacoby, 2015).

Secondarily, there is increasing literature about the complicated, but often beneficial outcomes for community partners, or the community-based organizations participating (Bryer et al., 2019; Sandy & Holland, 2006; J. Thompson & Jesiek, 2017). However, much remains to be said about the individual community-member constituents engaging in CBL partnerships (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Hutchinson, 2011; James & Logan, 2016).

CBL and community engagement in higher education has been demonstrated to be an incredibly effective pedagogy and policy across diverse settings; however, to ensure the positive impact of its practice its problematic applications and missing perspectives must also be acknowledged, in order to be avoided or improved.

Study Significance: A Fine Line Between Transformation and Exploitation

As CBL is practiced in highly complex partnerships within present and historical contexts, without a penetrating attention to care and consciousness CBL has the potential to achieve the opposite of its intentions. As can be seen from the experience of one

community partner and local community leader engaged in CBL partnerships with higher education:

Oftentimes our communities are sort of a playing ground for academic centers who come to us only when they need something – a letter of support, a placement site for students, or patients to study. When the semester is over, they disappear, and we're not the better for having had them. (Seifer & Maurana, 1998, p. 253)

As previously shared, far too often the table for a CBL partnership has already been set, and the menu was designed for the academy. As critical practitioners, the question must be asked: What are the risks of engaging in a community-based learning praxis in this era of “wicked problems,” or complex entanglements? What are the risks in an era where communities are highly attuned to past injustice, while also continuing to suffer ongoing harm? If community-based learning, in its most effective manifestation, is a practice of critical pedagogy and the function of a sustainable partnership, it serves as a tool in achieving transformation towards social justice for all. However, for this to arise, all stakeholders must hold equitable places at the table, and as demonstrated in narrative above, too often community partner objectives and community-member perspectives are subsumed by student priorities and are missing in systemic ways. In the field of engagement at large, partner voices and priorities are often either invisible or minimized in both formal and informal policy conversations; nor are they regularly solicited or cited when it comes to CBL course and project visioning, design, and assessment (Bortolin, 2011; d’Arlach et al., 2009; Reynolds, 2014; Srinivas et al., 2015). The potential harm of

this attentiveness to the higher educational perspective can have an overall countervailing effect on the proposed practice of the pedagogy, for not only the community partners, but also on students and faculty. Community-based learning is a potent tool for transformation, however will it transform our past mistakes into greater community harm, or will it allow us to embody authentic ethical agency and dynamic relationship?

The challenge of equitable agency and reciprocity in the CBL endeavor lies in various aspects of the practice, including: choices made for student learning, and faculty roles in CBL partnerships and their choices made for scholarship and publication. Often, as colleges and universities laud the power and potential of community-based learning, their narratives include the positive community impact, yet their priorities and program design elevate their students' needs above others. An example of how CBL might perpetuate harm via its student engagement can be found in Endres and Gould's (2009) reflection on their own CBL course, where students were able to recognize themselves as having white privilege, but were not able to see themselves as agents of change or allies in antiracist struggles. Despite assumptions made by Endres & Gould as faculty that their CBL course and partnership were grounded in a critical praxis, they found that although their students were able to see that whiteness was linked to their CBL course experience, white student privilege was often reinforced and perpetuated by the experience. In their article, they noted that CBL became a tool for patronizing community-members, and a justification for white privilege if whiteness was "used for good" (Endres & Gould, 2009). Mitchell et al. (2012) clarify that this is not a single instance, but that CBL often demonstrates a pattern of engaging a "pedagogy of whiteness." Mitchell et al. continue by

explaining that CBL design and development often rely on the needs and cognitive orientations of white students in courses and activities, versus the needs and orientations of the communities being engaged. This sentiment is echoed in Swaminathan's (2007) illumination of how a hidden student-centered curriculum can create wasted opportunities to complicate content and systemic understandings. Examples of this can include a lack of attention to notions of service and to individual students' cultural competencies or social locations. Swaminathan also notes how the common CBL axiom, "the experience is the teacher," can serve to disappear the expertise and educational labor of community partners. If the exchange in a CBL partnership focuses simply on one privileged individual or agent group (the college students) caring for another more barriered individual (the community-member), then the system becomes dysfunctional and the more critical purposes of CBL are negated. This same potential for harm can exist when investigating CBL from the angle of course faculty. If CBL is not critical — intentionally engaging power-sharing structures and a co-creation of goals and desired outcomes, those being "served" can be viewed as deficient and needing charity from the university and its students, versus the interaction being a reciprocally beneficial relationship contingent upon a mutual exchange of teaching and learning. Communities are often not recognized as having their own expertise, or cultural wealth, to offer (Yosso, 2005), and faculty may be more inclined to see themselves as the sole experts in the partnership. Additionally, wider cultural and institutional systems often burden university faculty and facilitators to ensure truly participative opportunities within their community partnerships, creating obstacles through skewed power dynamics, minimal resource allocation, and risk averse

university policies (Miller & Hafner, 2008). Faculty and scholars also have been shown to privilege their institutions over the community in their scholarship. Through discourse analysis, Bortolin (2011) shows that whether it is the *university* making the community better, or community as recipient of *university* influence, or *university* as active agent in community, the language of scholars reveals the focus of faculty concern. This is significant in our understanding of these partnerships, as critical feminist theory reminds us, because those who get to both choose the questions and ask them of others, set the table and the tone of what knowledge is valuable (Alcoff, 1991; Miner & Jayaratne, 2007). The marginalization of community partners and their community-members in higher education community-based learning systems is widespread. In order to have an authentically critical praxis of CBL, policy actors, practitioners, and scholars must re-examine the political and pedagogical impacts for all community-based learning stakeholders. Particular attention must be turned towards the community agents, who are so often invited as spectators to the arena of CBL engagement in their own neighborhoods. The scholarship demonstrates that less is known of CBL's effects on CBOs versus students, but further, there is distressingly little about the impact of CBL on the people who live and work in the communities being "served". When perspectives become privileged in CBL, the pedagogy has the ability to perpetuate greater harm, including by obstructing positive social change, reinforcing stereotypes, and thwarting inter- and intra-community trust, doing a disservice for all involved, but particularly, the community participants of community partnerships. If Sigmon's (1979) original tenets from of service learning are not attended to, and more daunting, if attention is not paid to

the courageous conception of critical community-based learning as championed by Mitchell (2015), practitioners run the risk of corroborating a “glorified welfare system” and encouraging a sort of re-segregation (Robinson, 2000, p. 607), instead of the goal of illuminating and improving systemic inequities. Are we asking students and their universities merely to step in where the state has retreated? The phenomena of having the best intentions, but not understanding the context or repercussions of actions is often informed by patriarchal or racist hegemonies (Castagno, 2014; Haviland, 2008). Education here is in the exact danger colonizing nations and missionary tendencies have faced (Seawright, 2014; Woolf, 2005), resulting in tragedies like the cultural genocide enacted by Indigenous boarding schools. Having the “best intentions” has repeatedly created implacable dependency ecologies, thereby undermining agency and subverting personal and cultural sovereignty. Both critical and complexity theory show us how macro-institutional systems, like a now globalized culture of white expertise, perpetuate processes and relationships within smaller nested systems. In community-based learning, the danger is that oppressive perspectives and practices are reified at the local university, partnership, and individual levels.

Instead of falling into a hegemonic trap, a profound claim is that CBL has the opportunity to create personal and social transformation for all participants. However, this is only possible if all stakeholders actually have a stake. CBL has the powerful potential to create capacities to simultaneously cultivate youth *and* community empowerment (Clayton et al., 2012; Cress et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2007). Often, due to lack of authentic integration of all, and the inevitable impact of hegemonic systemic

influences, including institutional bureaucratization, practitioners and scholars fall short of this vision. To begin to remedy this challenge, it is important to explore what a healthy community partnership for community-based learning entails, as well as what the impacts of this partnership mean for community-member participants. Scholars examining community university partnerships affirm that authentic partnership requires reciprocity, mutuality of inputs and benefits, collaboration, valuing diverse perspectives, equitable inclusion of voice (from initiation to assessment), co-creation of goals and vision, partner-driven definition of needs, and social justice and civic literacy (d'Arlach et al., 2009; Srinivas et al., 2015; Stoecker et al., 2009). In short, scholars affirm that a holistic perspective of engagement has the best likelihood of wide-reaching transformation. However, without further research we simply cannot know what types of transformation - including knowledge, benefits or harm -- might be occurring for community partners and their members.

In conclusion, the significance of this study is to investigate how CBL can create transformational pedagogical experiences, while simultaneously creating spaciousness for new voices to be heard in deeper ways - for all to have a meaningful seat at the table in facing the local and global challenges ahead. The potential possible through CBL as a social change strategy must not be ignored, but cannot be achieved without greater understanding of community-member experience. It is time to relegate the exploitative and disempowering varieties of CBL to a time past, one of learning and experimentation but sadly also a reification of the same problematic paradigms it has the power to amend. As each CBL partnership serves widely diverse populations and holds dear its own

particular mission and passions, CBL creates a matchmaking opportunity for the academy and the community to form a deep solidarity to enact powerful strategies for social change. As critical scholars working to achieve transformational aspirations within CBL engagement, we must aim towards contextually responsive ‘best practices’ to avoid harm and unintentional negative impacts. The unique interconnections between faculty, college students, community organizational leaders, and community-members allow for innovative and transformational systems to emerge. Therefore, this study will apply both a conceptual framework and a research methodology that centers both CBL’s complexity and its necessary critical orientation.

Theoretical Framework, Methodology & Study Goals

To return to the research questions: 1) What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system? 2) How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system? And 3) How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system’s patterns and behaviors? In order to explore these three questions, a blend of two theoretical frameworks is utilized to develop a *critical complexity* conceptual framework. The first is complexity science theory, which serves as a guide, as the study attempts to map the relational nature of CBL as a holistic systemic approach. The second framework, critical social theory, helps to acknowledge and foreground the essential power dynamics within CBL, or as a systems scientist might say, the processes and feedback dynamics.

Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg (Kincheloe et al., 2011) envision this sort of collage of

frameworks as a “bricolage” to create a research framework and methodology that includes a variety of constructs for the creation of meaning in a particular context.

The application of complexity theories as a framework for this study is useful to capture the true diversity of perspectives and multidisciplinary often present in community-based learning partnerships. To begin to explore community-based learning and its partnerships as complex systems, it is helpful to imagine a nature-based ecology, like an old-growth forest and the diversity held within it. Complex systems are constituted by a multitude of diverse and unique components that result in synergistic outcomes, with results capable of more than what each actor or element could do individually (Capra, 2002). These systems are expressions of a deep degree of connectivity between self-organized and autonomous elements. Although the cause-and-effect relationships between elements of a system are intense and undeniable, it is often difficult to outline the interdependency in linear configurations (Mason, 2008). Systems are best imagined as highly interconnected networks, which can result in adaptation, restoration, and even creation, if healthy. Unlike many $a + b = c$ configurations for high-stakes testing pedagogy and linear educational scholarship, a systems framework is the opposite of a dualistic or reductionist strategy for improvement. From a systems perspective, the more engagement and interaction, with as many empowered agents as possible, the more effectively the results foster the emergence of learning and social change in the educational environment (Walby, 2007).

This systems theory framework then sets up the potential to investigate CBL through a critical lens. To be “critical,” is to be obliged to take the “nonneutral stance of

knowledge” – to recognize certain kinds of knowing are privileged and certain kinds of people are privileged in that knowing (Adorno, 1951; Mills, 2014). To be critical, from a complexity perspective, is to know a multidimensional system can be seen from more than one vantage point. To engage in critical praxis is to acknowledge and interrupt systems of being and knowing which dominate and alienate many, and elevate and advance some (Breunig, 2005; Freire, 1970; Lather, 1986). The core of critical theory insists upon exposing the systems of power preventing freedom and imposing hegemonic domination, and concurrently developing alternatives to create agency, both for individuals and those communities historically barriered and oppressed (Rush, 2004). As applied to education, critical theory offers a method of problem-solving to promote emancipation and gain power over one’s own life and community, and thus allows knowledge to grow and be emergent, responsive, contextualized (Kincheloe, 2008). As applied to community-based learning, the problematic engagement of community partners is representative of critical hegemonic characteristics of oppression and whiteness, prioritizing one set of perspectives and priorities above other supposedly mutually engaged partners.

The contextual environment of the investigation of CBL partnerships is Portland State University’s (PSU) general education program, and its Senior Capstone program, in the northwestern United States. The regional, national, and even international context of community-based learning and PSU’s reputation for community engagement is incredibly relevant. The individual CBL partnership participants will be anonymized to minimize any possible risk to them as participants, in hopes of creating a space for

partnership agents to authentically share their own learning and possible experiences of transformation, regarding their experience interacting within a community-based learning partnership with PSU.

In order to research these questions, a critical qualitative research approach will be deployed (Carspecken, 1996), as well as elements of action research methodologies. One orienting principle of these methodologies is that research must be oriented towards and committed to transformation. However, action in this study is subtle. Practically, the efforts applied to this research project, by myself and all collaborators, will be a labor in developing the community-member perspective as a site of power in CBL partnerships, and to practice and reflect on partnership relationships. One, by creating opportunities for community-members to be heard and respected as an authority on their CBL partnership experience, it acknowledges their experiential expertise and may shift how individuals and institutions understand the ecology of CBL partnerships, and by implication, their future actions and impacts. Two, by inquiring, listening, and sharing a diversity of CBL partnership perspectives, project participants will indubitably alter the pedagogical and social system at work in the participating CBL partnership. In other words, the second actionable goal is for the partnership system itself to develop a deeper self-knowledge through the research process (Wheatley, 2006), which will lead to greater purpose, engagement, and wellness for all involved, if a CBL partnership does indeed function as a complex socio-ecological system.

An additional critical and definitional note is one of language. Firstly, throughout this proposal the word “white” will never be capitalized, but Black, Indigenous, and other

signifiers for communities of color will always be capitalized, in contrast to APA standards of nonbiased language and parallel use of racial terms. However, these identity groups are not parallel, and this change is an appropriate method to acknowledge and decolonize the status quo. This convention is adapted from Harvey (2018), who aptly explains about Black identity in particular:

African American communities have created Black identity as a conscious, collective, intentional, historical, and constructive way to self-identify. While different writers make different choices, many of the African American thinkers I am most indebted to use Black and not black. In contrast, to this point in U.S. racial history, white is not a similarly constructive, conscious, and collective identity that has been claimed—at least not for the purposes of antiracism. Thus, I always indicate white with a lower-case w. (Sec. Introduction)

Secondly, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will include the national or tribal affiliation of all Indigenous scholars included in this paper within in-text citations. In alignment with various Indigenous style guides (Denzin et al., 2008; Native Governance Center, 2021; Younging, Opaskwayak Cree, 2018), as well as the respectful mirroring of what most Indigenous scholars include in their own works, which acknowledges that inclusion of this identity marker holds a similar significance to family names. I propose that the in-text inclusion of Indigenous nation affiliation or citizenship by Indigenous scholars can be a call to action for all in academia to consider the interrelatedness of their own identities, legacies, and knowledges. As Rich (2002) laments in her poem, “this is

the oppressor's language / yet I need it to talk to you." Here, I attempt instead to make a gesture towards the power of language to both reveal and uplift us.

In the following chapters, these frameworks, methodologies, and principles will direct and strengthen the analysis. In understanding CBL as a critical pedagogy within a systems framework, this study may assist in providing context for the field's evolving and sometimes competing values, including the places and processes for the diversity of agent participation, and the systemic components of power and politics at play in every community-based learning setting.

Organization of the Study

Thus, Chapter One has outlined the need for empowered communities moving towards social change, and explored community-based learning as a strong leverage point for supporting and sustaining this endeavor for all agent groups. It introduced the purpose of the study as examining how CBL partnerships function from the perspective of community-members, and as a socio-ecological system that might work towards equity and empowerment for all stakeholders. Chapter One also contextualized many of the challenges of using an institutionally-driven tool to work for social justice in communities, and couches the process of CBL and the study herein within a bricolage of critical and complexity theories focused on both pedagogy and the systemic nature of a partnership (Kincheloe et al., 2011). Therefore, Chapter Two will be able to further develop the various systems in which the study is nested, as well as offer further analysis of the critical complexity conceptual framework and how it aligns with a critical qualitative research approach. Chapter Three will give a thorough overview of the study

including researcher goals and positionality, it will then present the research context and sample with a focus on the prioritized units of analysis, the CBL partnership and participating partnership agents, and community-members in particular. Chapter Three will also outline the data collection and analysis procedures used, with a critical discussion of study trustworthiness in regards to these processes. Chapter Four will present the findings of the study, and Chapter Five will offer a discussion of study findings and strategies and recommendations for the future of partnership praxis.

As esteemed CBL scholar and honored Portland State president emerita and trustee Judith Ramaley (2014) elucidates, universities unequivocally have a role in social change. They are increasingly acknowledging this role, and higher education organizations are being required to shift their identities as a response. The resources and skills residing within higher education institutions must be applied to the “wicked” problems of our time, and in this evolving kaleidoscope of community engagement initiatives, centers, programs, and promotion and tenure guidelines around the country (Ramaley, 2014), our communities’ complex wisdom and experience can and should guide us. The implication of this emergent identity for the university is that the academy must be in search of and in action towards social change in collaboration *with community*. It is imperative this shift comes from a critical epistemology, an intersectional commitment to innovative and equitable change. It is essential that the problems and solutions, processes and goals, are defined and driven by those at the center of the experience. Higher education, and its delicate yet radical praxis of community-based

learning, is but one element of a complex cultural system in disequilibrium, searching for positive paradigmatic change and a new radical sustainability.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To truly understand what is at stake in the practice of community-based learning, we must understand what it is and how it often functions. To do that, I will first outline the core components of community-based learning, and the documented outcomes of partnership participation for various stakeholders. Further, an interpretation of the partnership practice, informed by diverse academic and practitioner literature and by personal experiential expertise, is that community-based learning might best be understood as a complex adaptive system or social ecology, acting to influence broader practical and normative systems of power. Therefore, after initial concept introductions, I will articulate the critical complexity conceptual framework of the study, blending critical and complexity systems theories, in order to better understand the broader framework in which CBL is functioning. In order to demonstrate how the study necessitates this, three levels of the nested system that makes-up the practice of CBL in the United States will be explained. Firstly, the macro-system will be outlined as the broader cultural and policy environment of CBL in the U.S. The meso-system will be outlined as CBL at work in the unique higher education institution of Portland State University (PSU) in the city of Portland, Oregon. The micro-system of this project is one CBL partnership. This micro-system, or CBL partnership, is connected to a Senior Capstone community-based learning course within the general education structure at PSU, University Studies (UNST). UNST facilitates a collection of CBL courses with diverse community partners. This sample partnership will be discussed in detail in the methodological section of Chapter 3, as one of the primary units of analysis for the study. Finally for Chapter Two,

I will outline the chosen methodological approach of critical qualitative research, and why it is appropriate for the study at hand.

What is Community-based Learning?

Community-based learning is defined by a set of core characteristics in practice, and includes a set of typical actors or agents that participate in the practice. The following section outlines which characteristics practitioners often include in the concept of CBL, who implements those practices, and what the literature acknowledges are the outcomes of those practices for diverse participants and agent groups.

Core Concepts and Definition of Terms

One of the strengths and challenges of community-based learning practices is that they are implemented with incredible diversity. This allows for creative, contextual, and

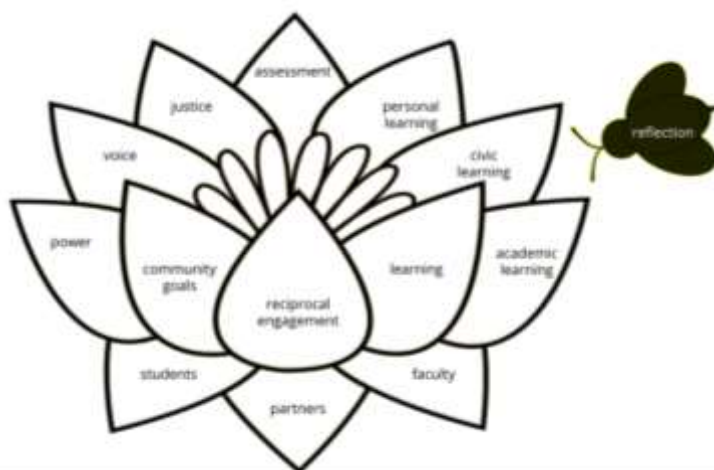


Figure 2. Key Elements of Community-Based Learning (Alkezweeny, 2019).

generative applications, all of which provide opportunities for truly authentic partnerships and significant social impact. As seen in Alkezweeny's (2019) lotus figure of key CBL elements (Figure 2), there are an abundance of nuanced aspects

that practitioners and participants may be attentive to, or may overlook entirely. In

general, CBL is a dynamic social system made up of a diversity of actors, processes, structures, and goals.

However, a limitation to this openness also allows for uncertainty in the field, and therefore attempts to develop the rigor and equity of the work can sometimes be compromised. Generally, CBL practices align with a set of core characteristics, yet the most pervasive critics of CBL, also often known as service-learning, are questioning “what counts?” as CBL. Butin (2003) questions this tension, noting that:

...despite (or perhaps because of) the recent proliferation and expansion of service-learning theory and practice, there is a troubling ambiguity concerning even basic principles and goals in the service-learning literature. Is service learning a pedagogical strategy for better comprehension of course content? A philosophical stance committed to the betterment of the local or global community? ...Or, as some critics note, a voyeuristic exploitation of the cultural other that masquerades as academically sanctioned servant leadership? (p. 1675)

The lack of consistent terms and definitions, may allow for contextual flexibility in its broadening proliferation, but to some extent CBL may also lose its power for transformative learning and mutual social change within the ambiguity (Furco & Norvell, 2019). The following discussion of core CBL characteristics captures what a large majority of scholars and practitioners in the field might identify with, and the particular principles by which this study will define a CBL partnership at work within the PSU Capstone program.

Purpose and processes of CBL.

For the purpose of this study, community-based learning is a course-based educational experience, which includes participatory activities that meet community needs, and participant reflection to develop understanding of both the academic discipline and civic responsibility (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006). Further, these experiences need to embody these six core characteristics: purpose, meaning, voice, relationship, reflection, and reciprocity are core characteristics of a CBL praxis, as captured in Figure 3. (Hammersley, 2017; Melaville et al., 2006).



Figure 3. Core Characteristics of Community-Based Learning

Purpose and meaning, first and foremost, are the ideas that require a CBL partnership to balance function and diverse stakeholder goals, including both experiential learning and social change (Furco, 1996; Jacoby, 2015). That a partnership's work is both purposeful and meaningful for all agent groups is essential. Voice, or feelings of control, choice and

belonging, allow CBL participants to be active agents of their own learning and transformation (Melaville et al., 2006; Morgan & Streb, 2001). Another way to understand voice is as agency. Agency makes possible the goal of balancing purpose and engagement for all participants. Agency is enacted through the three core characteristic processes of: relationship, reflection and reciprocity. Attention to cultivating personal relationships among participants and CBL leadership has been acknowledged as a priority from both school and community perspectives (Cress et al., 2005; Sandy & Holland, 2006). In the related SOFAR framework (Bringle et al., 2009), dynamic relationships can develop between college students, faculty, institutional administrators, community organizations, and community residents. Clayton et al. (2010) further applied the SOFAR method to developing the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) which helped to characterize three types of relationships that can exist in CBL interactions, including exploitative, transactional, or transformational. Felten & Clayton (2011) expound on this, encouraging learning goals and shared community goals to be developed in a spirit of relatedness and collaboration, and assert that critical reflection is significant in defining, achieving, and assessing those goals. Reflection is the process of bridging community-based activities with educational content, producing personal and educational transformative outcomes and learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler, 2002). Dewey's (1916) foundational contention that experience and theory are equally important aspects of learning, is demonstrated through Kolb & Kolbs' (2008) model of experiential learning, which aptly explains the process of reflection for CBL. Embedding a reflection process in community-based learning has been shown repeatedly to be crucial to pedagogical success

(Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco, 1996). Last of the core characteristics and possibly most important, research suggests that the process of reciprocity is one of the strongest predictors of successful service-learning partnerships, resulting from opportunities where each stakeholder gains from the experience with an equitable exchange of resources (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jacoby, 1996). However, reciprocity was also for many years of CBL practice in higher education, the least understood or critically practiced.

Reciprocity.

As Hammersley (2017) acknowledges in her comprehensive literature review on the concept of reciprocity in community engagement, reciprocity is a “defining and fundamental feature” of community-based learning (p. 116). It appears as essential in most every list of CBL components. However, it is a principle that until recently was often left ambiguously under-defined in much of the literature. Reciprocity can be used interchangeably with terms like, service and mutuality (Gelmon et al., 1998; Kendall, 1990). However, “service” can at times exist in higher education as a one-way endeavor, serves to reify “the notion of communities as deficient and undermines existing knowledges, skills and expertise. As a result, community ‘benefit’ is often defined by academics in terms of what students can provide” (Hammersley, 2017, p. 118). However, recent literature of theory and practice has increasingly unpacked the nuance of reciprocity, specifically offering new constructions of reciprocity such as, service as social change (J. Taylor, 2002), two-way mutual benefit (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008), and transformational relationships (Enos & Martin, 2003).

This increasing degree of clarity around reciprocity aligns with an equal increase in attention to power relations between the community and the university, and to the critical issues at stake around voice and agency. Dostilio et al., (2012) added depth to the idea of reciprocity, by outlining three additional nuanced orientations. Based on a literature review, Dostilio et al.'s three orientations state that a CBL partnership may enact reciprocity based on: exchange, influence, or generativity. Reciprocity of exchange is focused on acts of giving and receiving that might include benefits, resources, or shared interactions. In a reciprocity of influence, participants iteratively contribute ways of knowing and doing that result in relational connections and process shifts. As a function of the collaborative relationships developed through influence, generative reciprocity may then develop co-creative structures, which increase transformation for individual agents, partnerships, and greater systems. The ontological move here is from two-way mutual benefit (Weerts & Sandmann, 2008) to “mutual growth and societal/systemic transformation” (Hammersley, 2017, p. 121). A generative reciprocity affects not only what agents and entities do, but what they are and how they are (ways of being). Dostilio et al., (2012) point out that these ideas are based in the literature of transformative learning (Cranton, 2002), and sustainability education and systems sciences (Sterling, 2001), both embodying a complex relational or ecological worldview.

Both Hammersley (2017) and Dostilio et al. (2012), recognize in their recommendations and their assessment of the literature, different orientations and elements of reciprocity may exist simultaneously or differently over time in the same partnership, as well as differently within the various nested systems at work (e.g. single

CBL partnership, university program, institution). In fact, these ideas are also a return to present and traditional Indigenous epistemologies, centering interbeing and interconnected kinships (Armstrong, 2008; Harris & Wasilewski, 2004; Kumar, 2002). Regardless of temporal, cultural, or contextual diversity in a CBL partnership and its relationship, it is also essential as Hammersley (2017) asserts, that a simple claim to value reciprocity in a CBL practice should not thus create a “mystical aura” (p. 125), an aura then “held in such reverence that its invocation effectively ends any further debate or critical analysis” (Brookfield, 2007, p. 64 as cited in Dostilio). Rather, reciprocity should be an ongoing “mutual negotiation of meaning and power” (Lather, 1986, p. 261). To understand who this process of reciprocity functions among, it is important to understand the agents of CBL, the actors and participants of the partnership.

Agents, the actors of CBL.

Agent is a unique term in that it is foundational to both complexity science and contemporary critical theory, as well as being increasingly used in civic and social justice pedagogies. Agent will be the chosen term for the various actors, collaborators, or participants of this study. In complexity science, agents are the diverse components or elements of any system. Agents “learn and adapt in interactions with other agents” towards collective purposes and ever emergent strategies (Holland, 2014, pp. 8–9). A surprisingly similar sense of agency and agent groups is found in critical social identity theories. Agents in this sense are also actors in a collective system, but here not all system actors access the same agency. Agents in critical theory include identity groups that hold the center of social, economic, and political power (or social systems) and have

the power to define and adapt reality for their benefit (Snyder et al., 2008). Unfortunately, the agents in this sense are those culturally pervasive dominant groups, that are knowingly or unconsciously privileged in relation to targeted or “othered” groups, often through oppressive and exploitative means (Hardiman et al., 2007). Agent, in an additional pedagogical sense, is often used to explain a learner’s personal or public agency. Learners cultivate a “sense of agency” (Taylor, 2008), in reference to self-knowledge and social pursuits, as well as explicitly develop skill sets and mindsets to be “change agents” (Ginwright & James, 2002). This overlap of the term agency, in both complex systems thinking and in social power dynamics, invites reflection on how we think about the way individuals and groups in community-based learning are interacting.

This study will attempt to map the system of CBL with four key agent groups: the university, often represented by course faculty, university or college students, community-based organizations (CBOs), and community-members. The four groups are regularly seen in CBL literature, but often as a part of a more simplified community-university binary. This can be seen in Bringle & Hatcher (2002) where campus–community partnerships are named as “a series of interpersonal relationships between (a) campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students and (b) community leaders, agency personnel, and members of communities” (p. 503). The pair of university agent groups is this fairly self-explanatory (institution/faculty and students), but the community-side (CBOs and community-members) requires additional clarification. The literature often names community agents as the “community partner,” referring to a community-based organization; however, for these purposes I will explicitly delineate CBOs, including

their leadership and staff, from their constituents or clients, hereinafter referred to as community-members. If the term community partner arises in reference to the literature, it will be used synonymously with CBO. For this study, the four groups will be termed agent groups, and their individual actors termed agents. This study will analyze how the quality of agency for and among these agents is an emergent property of a CBL partnership system. Agency as a characteristic of complexity science might also be thought of as voice, autonomy, or freedom. Fundamental to the criticality of this project is awareness that, as in any system, some agents or agent groups have more autonomy and others less. To increase the resilience or adaptability of the system, and the care and transformation for all agents in the CBL system, increasing freedom and access to agency is one practical goal of this research study. However, before moving forward into how CBL partnership systems might change or transform, it is important to understand the various pedagogies CBL was built upon and influenced by.

Influential pedagogies.

Community-based learning comes from the integration of a long legacy of effective pedagogical theories. These pedagogies include early theories of progressive education, place-based pedagogies, experiential education, and constructivism. Additionally, as CBL practice has grown and been applied in increasingly diverse contexts, transformative learning theory and critical pedagogy have become increasingly important ingredients. Aspects of community-based learning can be traced as far back as the progressive education movement of the 1930s, which from its inception proposed that through experiential and reflective engagement with a project or problem students could

throw off the mantle of knowledge as an, “imposition from above and from outside (Dewey, 1938, p. 18). From there, the practice of CBL has only become more dynamic, and the creative blend of how these various pedagogies inform CBL offers insight into its exceptional nature. The following section describes how these pedagogies intersect in a CBL praxis through a definitional *mélange* supported by almost a century of robust literature. CBL pedagogy creates opportunities to cultivate critical consciousness and a self-reflective nature, through a deep engagement of our intellectual, social, physical and spiritual selves (Florence, 1998; Lindholm, 2007). As well, effective CBL requires its practitioners to become more aware and open to the different ideas and intersecting aspects of identity of themselves and others (Florence, 1998; Leonardo, 2004). By articulating starting point assumptions, being open to alternatives, having lively conversations and hands-on participation, and making time for deep reflection and introspection, CBL practitioners find interconnection, profound comprehension, and contextualized solutions to community challenges (Gruenewald, 2003). With foundations of trust and reciprocity, it is then also possible to experiment with those new relationships and ideas to continue to discern and create meaning for agency (Cranton, 2002; Kolb & Kolb, 2008; Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). Practitioners then become willing to stretch or engage in their zones of proximal development, as emotionally and intellectually safe spaces are cultivated (Schrader, 2004; Vygotsky, 1980). They are able to contribute to the well-being of community life, a commitment to the work of inter- and intra-personal relationships, and a multidisciplinary understanding becomes rooted in awareness of place and self (Gruenewald, 2003; Watts, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, 2013; Barad,

2007). Although this process of transformation, for both individuals and communities, requires complex and oftentimes charged participation, CBL offers the tools to bravely unravel what Mezirow (1991) calls the “disorienting dilemmas,” that CBL asks its practitioners to face as they construct and reconstruct the just society they want to live in (Illeris, 2009; Wiggins, 2011). With these foundational expressions of purpose defined, CBL has begun to patiently and pointedly reexamine a whole system pedagogical approach, in order to make critical change and transformation possible for all participants, and the communities they embody. To learn in community, intellectually, emotionally, and physically, CBL can build safe, ethical and sustainable methods for its learners to be practiced in honoring of all genders and sexualities, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and experiences and abilities (Tatum, 2000; Zacharakis & Flora, 2005). It also is imperative to acknowledge how power and privilege contextualize work in and for communities. This can be possible through the cycles of experiential learning that happen in place-based and project-oriented learning.

As honored teacher, founder of popular education, and critical pedagogy leader, Paulo Freire (1970) says, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention; through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry humans pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other,” (p. 46). We learn because of our experiences, our reflections on those experiences, and by the actions we take as a result of them, in particular the aware actions we chose to take to change ourselves and the world around us (Dewey, 1938; hooks, 1994; Kolb & Kolb, 2008). Community-based learning, when authentically integrating the values, experiences, and ways of knowing of all practice

stakeholder groups, is able to be that emergent and change-making platform Freire imagines. Community-based learning is a complex pedagogy with various components and processes, including multiple agent groups, emerging from a flourishing educational inheritance, while still continuing to evolve with today's students, practitioners, and community-participants. The outcomes and impacts of this complexity are remarkable, and more work remains for the practice and scholarship of a world of aware and ethical relationships in the making.

CBL Outcomes

Community-based learning, by name and explicit practice, has been extensively analyzed and researched over the last thirty to forty years. Relatively recently, the body of CBL and community engagement in higher education was limited, composed mainly of a call for civic education. Today the scope of the application of the pedagogy and its accompanying analysis in the literature is vast, increasingly theoretical, empirical and critical, and associated with virtually all academic disciplines (Crabtree, 2008). A preponderance of the literature focuses on the experiences and outcomes for the college student participants (Eyler, 2000; Jacoby, 2015) and the policy and pedagogical techniques that make those resoundingly positive outcomes for students possible (Cress et al., 2005; Kendall, 1990; Pritchord, 2002). After many scholarly calls to action over the last ten to fifteen years, an increasing segment of the literature has begun to investigate the reciprocal impacts, outcomes, learning, and effectiveness for CBL's community partners (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Butin, 2015; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Moore & Ward, 2010). Often research and resources that work towards prioritizing community

partner experiences function as guides to support community success within the culture and framework of higher education (C. Cress et al., 2015; Shinnamon et al., 2001). In just the last few years, CBL and community engagement scholars have also begun to build out an understanding of the network of CBL agents to the level of community-member, or CBO constituent. The following overview will endeavor to synthesize the literature that examines outcomes for participating college students, the partnering community-based organizations, and community-members.

College student outcomes.

Community-based learning has been lauded as one of the highest impact practices for student success in higher education, both widely evaluated and found to be beneficial for a wide diversity of students (Kuh, 2009). For a practice to be considered a “high impact practice” undergraduate students must demonstrate consistent essential learning outcomes, according to the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ (AAC&U). The high impact practices (HIPs) were defined by a data set that spanned nearly ten years and 1000 institutions (NSSE, 2019). The HIP study is just one of hundreds assessing CBL’s impact for college students.

A plethora of college student benefits from community-based learning are well-documented, ranging from personal growth and development, academic content comprehension and competencies, and interpersonal skills and mindsets (Jacoby, 2015; Russell & Jovanovic, 2023). Specifically, personal growth and development as a result of CBL participation has been shown to develop students’ moral development, empathy, efficacy or agency, personal and social responsibility, and a developed sense of civic

identity, i.e., an ongoing orientation and commitment to the above mentioned skills, long after the college experience is over (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hart & King, 2007; Morgan & Streb, 2001). In the area of academic success, CBL has been shown to increase persistence and retention rates, cognitive development, competencies in critical thinking and problem solving, the ability to apply theory to practice, and develop written analyses (Astin et al., 2000; Keup, 2005; Kolb & Kolb, 2008; J. L. Warren, 2012). Lastly, students also cultivate interpersonal skills, which are increasingly a requirement of both the civic landscape and the labor market (Kuh, 2009). These interpersonal skills include capacities like communication, intercultural competence and awareness, teamwork, and social responsibility. Not only are external assessments of student development and learning robust, student participants themselves report greater satisfaction with their college experience, and are more likely to flourish, increasing both the viability and vitality of their education experiences in higher education (Gray et al., 1996; Low, 2011)

Community-based organization (CBO) outcomes.

The field of community-based learning embraced the challenge of developing a body of scholarly literature that demonstrated how this dynamic pedagogy was effective and rigorous for student learning outcomes in a higher education environment; however, after a few decades of student impact focus, the field was compelled to realize that a similar understanding of community impacts needed to be developed (Cruz & Giles, 2000). In the last ten to fifteen years, the literature has greatly expanded to include a broader orientation of understanding CBL success by including community-based organizational (CBO) perspectives, often also called community partners. In 2006, Sandy

& Holland completed a landmark study for the field that included organizational staff from ninety-nine CBOs participating in CBL with a higher education institution. Specifically, they wanted to hear about and understand community partner experiences with CBL. From their series of focus groups, three themes emerged, many aspects of which had been noted in previous single-institution case studies, and institutional reports theorizing effective partnerships. To summarize the three themes, 1) they learned that community partners believed relationships are foundational and a first priority for effective partnerships, 2) that over time CBO staff often felt committed not only to their CBO constituents but to college student learning as well, and finally, and 3) three sub-categories of direct benefits to CBOs themselves. The three sub-categories of direct benefits ranged from: a) direct organizational impact, b) enrichment of staff within an organization and facilitated connection between community organizations, and c) a smaller number of respondents were motivated by CBL's work towards social justice outcomes, including an increase of the common good and creation of transformative learning opportunities. When informants addressed CBO constituents or community-members, it was embedded within the first category of CBO direct impacts (3a), a sub-sub-category where individual community-member benefits were named. The explicit direct impacts for community-members most clearly outlined was that of college students' effectiveness as role-models, particularly modeling educational skills and aspirations for community-based youth. Also recognized as a direct benefit for community-members was CBL students providing companionship for community-members.

Since the early 2000s, dozens of studies have been done with attention to community partner organization experience, and a large majority of them align with Sandy & Holland's (2006) three themes. Sandy & Holland's first theme, the focus on relationships in CBL partnerships, has been reiterated by many scholars, including varied perspectives about processes, challenges, and prioritization of collaboration and communication (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Birdsall, 2005; Boyle et al., 2011; Follett, 2012; Stoecker et al., 2009). The second theme, recognizing CBO staff interest and commitment to CBL student learning has also been reproduced in the literature. It is often paired with the impact of improving general welfare through development of social justice. The subsequent literature asserts that partners are interested and invested in teaching students about civic agency (Mitchell, 2015), diversity (Darby et al., 2016), and practical application of theory (Bacon, 2002). The subsequent literature regarding Sandy & Holland's third theme, direct impact for community partners, almost exclusively has a focus on organizational capacity development, with rare mention of CBO client or community-member impact. Much of the literature supporting the theme of CBL's direct benefits to community partners are framed as partnership analysis instruments (Clayton et al., 2010; Enos & Martin, 2003; Hartman, 2015; Shalabi, 2013) and very often within evaluatory frameworks for general partner impact (Garlick & Palmer, 2008; Goertzen et al., 2016; Worton et al., 2017). These instruments and frameworks offer tools for eliciting community perspective of partnerships, although with most data coming from CBO leadership and coordinating staff, or others situated with positional power. Therefore, of the three most substantial themes of research regarding CBL impacts on community

partners, including 1) relationship cultivation, 2) community co-education of college students, and 3) direct impacts for community partners, the attention paid to community-members explicitly appears to be a gap in the literature.

Community-member outcomes.

Although significant scholarly attention has recently been given to community perspective and impacts, it seems there may be a false binary constructed between the university and the community. It is time to differentiate a nuance in what community means in CBL. Do community-members' experiences with CBL align with the relatively positive experiences of other CBL agent groups? This study will attempt to further unpack the perspectives of various community-based agents in a CBL partnership, differentiating between the voices of CBO leadership and staff, and that of CBO clients and participating constituents. Engagement literature has increasingly recognized the importance of elevating all voices through a more articulated attention to reciprocity (Dostilio et al., 2012; Hammersley, 2012). However, often community-member voices remain reported, if at all, at the CBO evaluation level, versus being reported up through the nested systems of CBL and acknowledged through publication.

Among hundreds of articles published from 2010-2020, in five of the leading journals in the field of community engagement in higher education, excepting journals with particular area foci like engineering and public health, there is a very limited collection of publications that focus on community-member impact, outcomes, or experience. The few publications that do focus on community-members include, various strategies or models for how one might conduct future research to gather community-

member insight (Berinyuy et al., 2014; Kincheloe et al., 2011; Reeb, 2017), a handful of case studies (Boyle et al., 2011; Morton & Bergbauer, 2015; Searle & Larsen, 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2019), and a few compelling recent dissertations (Bowers, 2018; Dahan, 2019; Petri, 2012). This limited quantity, although very insightful, might be interpreted as a developing publication trend, including recommendations to continue this work more thoroughly. An additional measurement that recognizes this trend was also noted by an analysis done by the National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement (Doberneck, 2016). The analysis outlines a journal section comparison of thirteen leading engagement journals, and only three have ever had a journal section focused on community perspective or impact. Interestingly, there are also a number of strategic models for further integrating community-member experience into CBL, using complexity-oriented approaches. These include the psycho-ecological systems model (Reeb & Snow-H, 2017), an Indigeneity-informed model (Steinman, 2011), and Berinyuy et al., (2014) using networked analysis tools focusing on adaptive cycles. In summary, a growing interest in the academic field and in fieldwork is developing, and this study will work to develop these essential tools and possibilities.

When it comes to CBL outcomes, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the incredible levels of difficulty in developing that particular leg of scholarship. James & Logan (2016) outline a series of these obstacles directly. They begin by recognizing the concerted effort it has taken to justify service-learning as a pedagogical approach in higher education, as both effective and rigorous. They go on to list, “It is hard to document. The reach of any given project or course is hard to nail down. The resources

needed to connect with the many varied members of the partner network are scarce” (p. 31) They also experienced difficulty in tracking particular community-members over time, and developing study design that applied equally well to all types of participants. Furthermore, especially when service-learning work is multilayered or multi-pronged, it can be hard to identify cause-and-effect, or to tie community-based learning to specific outcomes (Hutchinson, 2011). For example, are the hours a college student spends tutoring a community-member directly responsible for increased educational motivation or aspiration? Or is that a component of greater CBO support and activities? Overall, there is an abundance of scholarship that demonstrates the powerful outcomes and impacts for many of the participants of CBL practice. Due to genuine challenges, it has been difficult to assess if the same is true for community-member participants. However, although it may be a complex challenge, it is high time to explore if those positive findings align for community-members as well.

Conceptual Framework as Bricolage

Both in theory and practice, the collection of components that make up community-based learning represents a convergence of multiple pedagogical theories and practices, all of which suggest that CBL in its most effective manifestations has the potential to be a systems-approach practice to educational engagement and personal and systemic transformations. From my perspective, the two broader pedagogical theories that best represent the vast diversity of practices, and best articulate the intentions of CBL pedagogy, are sustainability education and critical pedagogy. These two pedagogical theories together capture the variety and nuance of CBL in action. Additionally, I posit

that each of these pedagogical theories was birthed from their own foundational theoretical frameworks, complexity theory and critical social theory, respectively. Therefore, this project aims to describe CBL as a critical systems-oriented pedagogical approach, which can be seen through the lens of what I will call a *critical complexity framework*. Critical complexity intertwines the holistic systems approach of sustainability education, with an emancipatory critical pedagogy requiring action for social change. CBL is a process, able to leverage and champion the best of each of these. With these theories understood together, practitioners can engage a praxis of teaching and learning as a living system, which requires shared leadership and relationship, attention to the diverse boundaries, identities, and meanings of the system, and working through chaos towards unfathomably complex change and wild and imaginative survival (Wheatley, 2001).

An interconnection of two theoretical approaches is thought of as a *bricolage*, a critical research methodology that uses a diversity of constructs to capture the true diversity of social systems. Bricolage is a research paradigm that cunningly, yet rigorously, collects and applies methodological, theoretical, and philosophical tools in diverse interdisciplinary ways (Kincheloe et al., 2011). *Bricoleurs* recognize the significant limits of a single approach or discipline; they recognize the co-constructive nature of the knower, the known, and knowledge (Kincheloe, 2001). In other words, a bricoleur constructs a transdisciplinary space, where the application of diverse research processes can map the thick complexity of the human experience, and the resulting social systems in which that experience is nested. The term bricolage, first applied to

methodological flexibility by Levi Strauss (1962/2021), from the French word for handyman, harkens to a construction of research done with whatever tools are available and with what seems sensible, to a way of knowing that is uncolonized by Western structures of capitalized thought. Going further than simply making sense of debris, Kincheloe's bricoleur "looks for not yet imagined tools, fashioning them with not yet imagined connections. This handyman is searching for the nodes, the nexuses, the linkages, the interconnections, the fragile bonds between disciplines, between bodies of knowledge" (Lincoln, 2001, pp. 693–694). In an effort to also center a critical lens for the study, Lorde's (Lorde, 1984/2012) well known maxim, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," encourages the application of a bricoleurs work in this study. Therefore, in a simultaneous application of complexity theory and critical theory to CBL, an already interconnected application of pedagogy, the bricolage of critical and complexity conceptual frameworks and methods was applied.

The following sections will map out the intricacies of a critical complexity framework. The section begins with the broad strokes of complexity theory and its applications, and then outlines sustainability pedagogy, as education application of complexity theory. Next, critical theory is outlined, with some of its particularly relevant descendants highlighted, including an in-depth consideration of critical pedagogy. As these two theories are mapped out, alongside their pedagogical expressions, similarities of structure and inherent interconnections begin to emerge. The conceptual framework section closes with a specific discussion of the combination of the two theoretical frameworks, engaging the limited literature explicitly linking the two.

Complexity Theory

The first theoretical family in the conceptual framework is that of complexity theory. Complexity, arising from a holistic systems-thinking paradigm about biology and the atomic world, describes a method of understanding complex interactive social networks working towards a shared purpose. Beginning as a mathematical conundrum in quantum physicists' search for the basic building blocks of life, when scholars arrived at "the bottom," the smallest components of matter, they did not find there the tiniest of tangible particles, but instead found that our world is made up of probabilities, patterns, relationships, and interactions (Capra, 1997) as Feynman (1959) famously said, "There is plenty of room at the bottom." Like community-based learning, a single definition of complexity science is somewhat elusive, and depends on perspective and context. However, complexity science is often thought of as a universal paradigm framework across widely diverse fields (Weiler & Englebrecht, 2013). Since the 1990s, many fields have grown to include complexity, and what it means has adapted along the way (Catellani, 2012). However, all complex systems, the objects of complexity science, can generally be recognized as having certain core components. Various scholars from the 1920's through the present have developed these components, or system elements, and the understanding of their functions and interactions. The following is a composite of explanations from complexity scientists Capra (1997, 2002, 2014) and Holland (2006, 2014) outlining five features of components of a complex system. First, a complex system has many diverse components or agents, functioning within a boundary. Secondly, each of these agents retain some degree of freedom or autonomy, agency.

Third, each of these agents are highly connected and interactive with other agents in the system. Fourth, these interactions result in agents learning together, i.e. adapting. Fifth, all of this relational activity is iteratively driven by and helps meet shared goals or collective functions for the system, often called emergence. The first component of a system, the diverse agents work in concert with additional components to act autonomously and interactively in order to learn and create processes - together this is called a complex adaptive system (CAS). The study's focus on a CAS is to highlight and apply the ability of its agents to adapt, or learn through interactions with and within the system. Understandings of CAS functions have often been uncovered and applied to the ecological and living systems. For the purposes of this framework, CAS theory is also increasingly applied to understanding human social systems (B. B. Lichtenstein, 2014; Senge, 2006; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). To be clear, this binary of ecological and social systems, and the boundaries between them, are also increasingly questioned in social science and feminist literatures (Barad, 2007; Rosiek et al., 2020), and have always been questioned by many Indigenous onto-epistemologies (Cajete, Tewa Pueblo, 2018; Garrouette & Westcott, 2013; Watts, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, 2013). Within social systems thinking, CAS theorizes organizational and informal groups, like a CBL partnership, as a network of "interactive, interinfluencing, and intersynchronous" agents (Marion & Gonzales, 2013, p. 237). Thus, CAS theory offers a robust way to conceptualize community-based learning, its agents and their interactions, and the ways that critical qualitative research might create opportunities for adaptation. The following sections outline relevant descriptions of these agents and their interactions.

To understand complex adaptive system processes, one must begin with the three types of functions of a system agent. These three types include 1) agents, or agent groups, interacting moment to moment, 2) agents learning, or rating the usefulness of their interactions, and finally, 3) agents generating new capabilities to interact over time based on learning together and from their shared environment (Holland, 2014). All of these agent functions are determined by the rules and constraints of their system, and agents are triggered by these functions to react to the system and its environment. Examples of this abound from a leaf's photosynthetic reactions to sunlight, to a person's tacit participation in an hegemony. However, agents also simultaneously maintain a level of freedom. When triggered, agents must react, and they are bound to some extent in how they can react. However, agents also maintain varied levels of autonomy about how to react within those bounds, and how to incorporate their experience in order to adapt to future interactions.

Emergence is another essential property of a complex system. At the very core of complexity thinking is the recognition that patterns of interaction and interdependence create something more than exists among individual agents. This idea is generally understood through the aphorism: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and was linked to complexity theory, and coined emergence, or having emergent properties, in the 1920's by philosopher C.B. Broad (as cited in Capra, 2007). Emergent properties evolve either implicitly through a process of interdependence, or explicitly through articulated missions and goals. A simplistic example of emergence is that sugar is sweet, but its parts – hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen – are not (Capra, 2002). Sugar's sweetness emerges from the function of the system as a new pattern or property. In an individual human

system, emergence might look like creativity, philosophy, knowledge. In human systems, emergence looks like urban areas, economies, structural and institutional power. The property and functions of emergence are a direct contradiction of four hundred years of Newtonian science, which reasons that the physical world is mechanistic, can be understood by deconstructing and analyzing its individual components, the world as a watch (Barseghyan et al., 2018). Newton was indelibly influenced by Cartesian philosophy, the origination of a paradigm of profound separation, as applied to the human experience. The Cartesian paradigm created a mind and body dualism that now permeates most modern colonial social, ethical, and economic systems, which at its root disconnects us from ourselves, from each other, and from the more-than-human world (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Kimmerer, *Citizen Potawatomi*, 2017; Wheatley, 2006). Modern philosophical ideologies have been influenced by Newtonian and Cartesian thinking, including deeply ingrained reductionist ideas such as meritocracy, institutional alienation and oppression, neoliberal economics, and positivist and empirical research methodologies (Damasio, 1994; Eisenstein, 2013; Giroux, 2011). Understanding emergence, or the properties that emerge from the interdependent functions of a system, is a significant breakthrough for many humans' understanding of the worlds around and within us.

Finally, the way complex adaptive systems (CAS) adapt is when agents are triggered by both external and internal inputs, factors which mediate and influence the functions of the system. Complex adaptive systems adapt, and thus create emergent outcomes, as a function of these mediating inputs over time. These system inputs, or

mediating factors, create tipping points, leverage points, and feedback loops, each a specific example of the diverse processes of adaptation. Over time, these inputs can become a part of the system, or may be rejected from the system (Manning, 2017) A complex system functions much like the musical elements of a spring morning. As the sounds of unnumbered bird species and human lives come awake, the noises can come together in an inspiring melody, and then will fall into cacophony once again, and in a moment repeat. This takes place over the course of hours, and simultaneously the ecology in which this is made possible, took centuries to develop. Capra (2002) shares a similar example, in which the neurons of a brain create an ensemble that results in a human thought that might be lost or integrated. The evolution of each species working in concert with its environment is constantly coordinating in the same way for its survival. This change of function over time is important to acknowledge, because it demonstrates how experience both changes individual agents, as well as creates opportunities to react differently, to become different, over time.

Complexity science is often positioned in contrast to traditional Western paradigms of human understanding, specifically Cartesian and Newtonian mechanistic thought, which claims that everything is simply its component parts and the sum is exactly what you would expect and no more. This pervasive way of thinking claims the cell, the human body, even civilizations, are simply clocks with gears and winding mechanisms; they can be dissected, and taken down to their parts, and nothing is lost (Wheatley, 2006). The scientific method, mind/body dualism, and industrial understandings of class, race, psychology, politics, economy, climate, all rest on the idea

that what you get out is simply a different form of exactly what you put in (Eisenstein, 2013; Hawken, 2007; Meadows, 2005). This dualism, or separatism, claims that all parts are only temporarily interacting with other parts; they are not fundamentally interconnected for purpose, function, or change. This paradigmatic revolution towards complexity may be new to Western thought, but it is not new to human thought.

Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies across the globe have embraced complexity for millennia, using contextualized holistic frameworks to literally sense and make sense of the world (Apgar et al., 2009). From a diversity of Indigenous philosophies, from what is now North America, to Eastern knowledges like Buddhism and Chinese medicine, systems thinking is and has always been fundamental. There is a long history of human holistic thought where bodies are meaningful wholes. Many of these onto-epistemologies understand that all beings on earth are relations of and within one another, and there is a world where knowing, matter, and energy are not easily distinguishable (Donald et al., 2012; Hanh, 2020; Harris & Wasilewski, 2004; Kaptchuk, 1986; Nelson, 2008; Osborne, 1972; Seawright, 2014; Todd, Red River Métis and Otipemisiwak, 2016; Tynan, lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania, 2021; Watts, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, 2013). These cultures have been intuitively discerning thought leaders for millennia, though subjugated by colonialism and its ongoing hegemony of whiteness. Yet resiliently surviving, these ways of being and knowing insist on the existence of organizing relationships at all levels and of all things. Nhat Hanh (1991) world renowned Zen master and Vietnamese monastic, names this paradigm “interbeing,” the essential requirement of interconnection for existence. He shares this illuminating example,

...there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper...if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree...And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread... his bread is also in this sheet of paper... (p.95)

Nhat Hanh demonstrates how cultures and epistemologies that recognize interdependence and interbeing, offer subtle, yet powerful tools for both comprehension and ontological transformation. In fact, culture itself is an emergent property of society and civilization, with its multitude agents acting and reacting to each other, creating our dynamic world of constant change.

Complexity and these diverse system sciences are a body of knowledge that is rapidly (re)expanding across disciplines and around the globe, and is not simply interdisciplinary, but transdisciplinary (Apgar et al., 2009; De Angelis, 2018; Jörg et al., 2007). The concepts of complex adaptive systems are being applied to fields like computer science and artificial intelligence (Cattabriga, 2022), but also to far sweeping concepts like economics (Boulding, 1992; Lichtenstein, 2014), and political and globalization studies (Fabinyi et al., 2014; Meadows, 2005), organizational leadership (B. Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017), and education (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019; Tierney, 2008). Complexity is a way to understand the organization of humans with each other and within the world, in a way that will support the success and survival of our species. This paradigm and its related toolkit are essential from the most macro-human systems all the way down to micro-groupings of densely interconnected

and uniquely intersectional agents, like those within a community-based learning partnership.

One particularly relevant application of complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory is its increasing application in organizational theory and change leadership, and this application is especially relevant to a study of CBL. Most well known still within the social sciences is its application in the field of business management (Lichtenstein, 2014; Senge, 2006). However, for present purposes, the focus is on the broadening sphere of complexity as applied to educational organizations. In higher education in particular, scholars have also begun to apply CAS theory to policy and pedagogy, for finding solutions to the challenges institutions and their communities face. Educational organizational scholars have increasingly applied systems thinking to education leadership, institutional and programmatic structure, and student success (Astin et al., 2002; Manning, 2017; Tierney, 2008). Applying complexity science to human organizations provides new avenues to understand the ever-increasing amounts of information available (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Holland, 2014; Marion & Gonzales, 2013), new conceptions of organizational leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017, 2018), and nascently, is providing fresh insight on the systemic nature of social inequalities and intersectional identity (McCall, 2005; Walby, 2007; Walby et al., 2012). As complexity theory is applied to the structures and functions of educational organizations, it lends to further inquiry in how those same ideas show up in the educational work of teaching and learning. The following subsection of the conceptual framework discussion explores sustainability education, a simultaneously developing

field that offers an ecological systems model of understanding complexity in pedagogy, and CBL praxis in particular.

Sustainability education: Complexity theory in pedagogical praxis.

I propose that sustainability education is the pedagogical application of complexity theory. To see the paradigmatic overlaps between the components of complexity and the characteristics of sustainability education, it is important to first understand sustainability, and then, the pedagogical frameworks of sustainability education. Sustainability began as a tripart list of disciplinary ways to think about long-term planetary and human survival and success, including the “three Es,” ecological, economic, and ethics (i.e. equity, social sustainability) (Figure 4) (Goodland, 1995). As



Figure 4. Three Pillars of Sustainability (Purvis et al., 2019, p.682)

the concept of sustainability has continued to develop over the past twenty years, the complexity paradigm has been more thoroughly integrated and more ecological approaches to sustainability have come forward. As Burns (H. L. Burns, 2015) recently defines, “...sustainability has generally come to mean taking a stance

toward making changes and finding solutions to address complex cultural and ecological problems. Sustainability can also be understood as transformative personal and

communal shifts to ways of being and acting that critically question dominant systems and are more relational, interconnected, place based, and in balance with ecological systems” (p. 260). Sustainability education (SE) is a pedagogical strategy and social movement to develop a sustainability stance in learners around the globe, as well as to cultivate transformative shifts for learners to understand themselves in context with local and global complexities, and further, to develop social responsibility or ethical agency.

Sustainability education is a leverage point, by which to develop comprehension and find solutions to complex sustainability issues, in both human and natural systems (Hawken, 2007; Orr, 2010). Like complexity, sustainability education “implies whole paradigm change” that includes adaptive learning for systemic change (Sterling, 2001, p. 14). Sterling (2001) goes on to demonstrate how sustainability education is a pedagogical tool with roots in a postmodern paradigm, drawing from complexity sciences, ecological democracy, and sustainable development theory. Sustainability education engenders relationality through pedagogical applications in diverse contexts and modalities, and results in emergent ecological connectedness and wide-ranging solution-oriented programs, projects, and networks (Smith & Williams, 1999). SE began as an ecological experiential problem-solving practice, moved to include place-based pedagogies and transformational learning, and continues to pursue a critical pedagogical praxis and acknowledge the embedded Indigenous epistemologies in sustainability theories. Built upon a number of effective pedagogical theories, the complex nature of sustainability education offers a process able to champion the best of each.

When we think of sustainability education, scholars posit the very idea of teaching and learning as a system, though with different terminology. Sustainability education explicitly incorporates systemic ecological design into pedagogical design. It challenges educators and students to develop interconnections between personal and intellectual learning with the complex global issues of our time (Sterling, 2001). A claim is that higher education's purpose is to create active citizens and self-reflective learners who can engage in complex systems as empowered agents, able to understand feedback loops and maneuver leverage points (Sherman & Burns, 2015). Burns and Knox (2011), have built on the ideas of constructing educational ecologies by mapping the idea of a complex adaptive system (CAS) onto the classroom and its diverse agents. They use the particular case study of applied linguistics in a second language learning classroom. They recognize the classroom as a collection of components that interact in non-linear and emergent ways, and further, that particular agents in the classroom, the teacher for example, is their own micro-CAS, made up of their ongoing experience in the classroom, their teacher preparation, and their own experience as a language learner themselves. Applying complexity and sustainability pedagogies in the classroom in Australia, Anne Burns & John Knox (2011) conceptualize "the classroom not as a machine where inputs are processed and outputs generated, not as a space where activity takes place, and not as an activity, but as a convergence of different elements which stretch beyond the temporal

and spatial locations of a given classroom, and which combine in dynamic relationships”
(Burns & Knox, 2011, p.2).

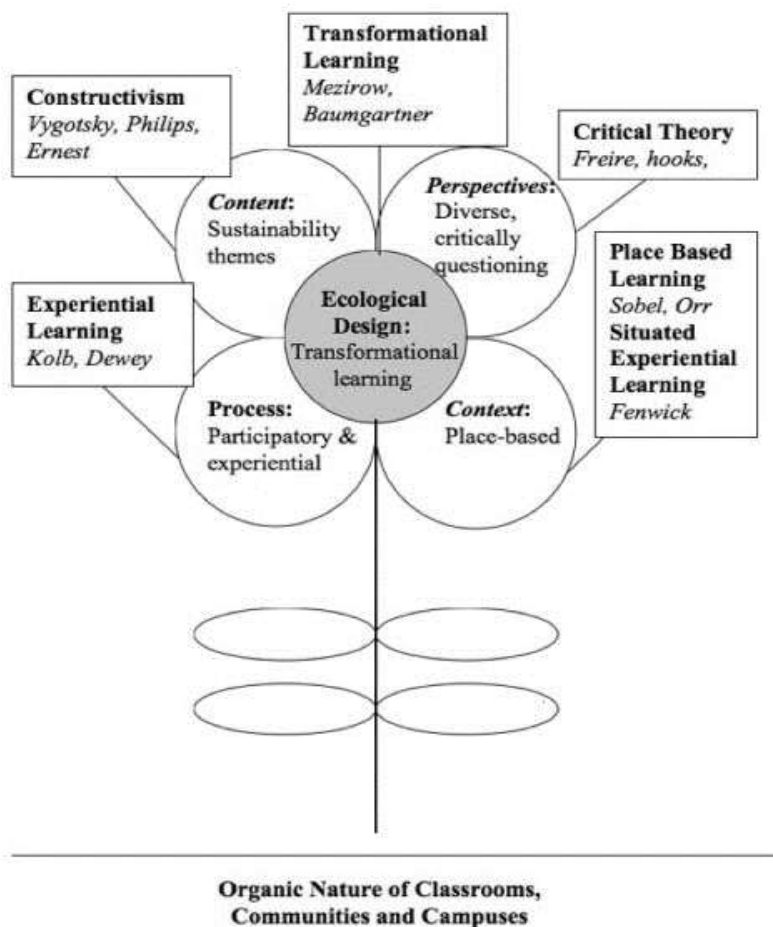


Figure 5. Burns' Model for Sustainability Education (Burns, 2011)

The sustainability pedagogy of Heather Burns (2013) has gone further to conceptualize a dynamic and interconnected sustainability education framework, which centers an ecological design process for pedagogical design (as seen in Figure 5). She recognizes components of the educational ecological system that include context, processes, content, and perspectives. These components are synonymous in many ways

with components of a complex system. The organic nature of the classrooms or learning communities are the environment in which the educational ecological system exists. Within this environment there are a variety of system structures and system processes that coordinate the agents of the system, including experiential and participatory engagement with diverse and critical perspectives. The agents, the educators and the learners, of the system are the participants of a bounded educational setting. This similarity between a sustainability education model and a complex adaptive system is embedded explicitly in the Burns' Model (2011) through this focus on an ecological design process. The idea of ecological design, borrowed from permaculture theorist Hemenway (2009) includes phases that invites practitioners to observe patterns and relationships in natural systems, and then allows those observations to be developed into "social and cultural systems that are resilient and sustainable" (Burns, 2011, p. 10). The ecological design process, as well as the learning that emerges from a sustainability education framework, are the emergent properties of a sustainability pedagogy. Lange (Lange, 2012, 2018) calls this process of emergence a dialectic for transformative and restorative learning. Through an experiential learning process aimed at developing sustainable societies, Lange found that learners experienced a change in their way of being in the world, as agents in a complex system learn and adapt. Some learners in Lange's (2004) study experienced a "deep awareness and participation in the creative dynamics of a living universe" (p. 131), demonstrating how transformative learning is a complex process that engages the dynamic relationships between the four sustainability pedagogy components, context, process, perspectives, and content. This relational

ontology, or paradigm of interconnectedness, is elemental to sustainability education (Lange, 2018). Lange theorizes that sustainability education embodies insights from living systems theory and Indigenous epistemologies, which leverages ecological systems thinking to offer participants processes for transformational learning and adaptation. In summary, sustainability education centers concepts and processes that require attention to balanced partnerships, reciprocity, and shared meaning and purpose, all of which are also key elements of a critical CBL practice, and sustainable community-university partnerships.

Complex community-based learning.

Community-based learning, much like sustainability education, represents a convergence of multiple theoretical frameworks and supporting research, all of which point to CBL as a practice of sustainability education. For the purposes of deepening our understanding of community-based learning, this study posits that the micro-system unit of analysis, the CBL partnership, as both a social organizational network and a pedagogical model, is a complex adaptive system (CAS). Successful CBL partnerships have a capacity for action that is greater than the summed capabilities of their parts. The partnership demonstrates elements of a complex system. In particular, it is a collaborative collection of agent groups that has self-defined its purposes, created goals and boundaries for functioning, and can exert a greater influence on its environment, than its diverse and autonomous agent groups alone. As Stocker (2014), explains “social structure comprises networks of connected individuals who for various reasons will form links of various strengths between each other” (p. 3). These partnerships are learning systems, constantly

working to maintain stability and simultaneously transforming, to remain purposeful and sustainable. They engage in a constant flow of new energy to support growth, equilibrium, and self-generation. Therefore, they embody the core characteristics of complex systems.

Additionally, the function and adaptations of a CBL partnership reacts just as a system reacts to change and disruption - it is influenced by leverage points and feedback loops triggered by both external and internal inputs. This functionality is essential to the research orientation of this study. The process of data collection itself, as well as dissemination of the findings, will be piloting a feedback loop as a leverage point for creating change over time within an individual CBL partnership, disrupting present patterns for the purposes of systemic learning and future system well-being and stability. This process of stability and flexibility is already manifested in many CBL partnerships within the PSU Capstone program. The nature of the Capstone program allows for adaptive flexibility in each unique CBL partnership structure, discussed in more detail later in the chapter. Therefore, the study's setting is ripe for additional evolution that include additional participating CBL agents like community-members, and thus adaptations are likely to be supported by the PSU program meso-system.

At the meso-systemic level of this particular study, the higher educational institution of Portland State is another systemic organizational unit. Particularly as an urban anchor institution, it exists in deep contextual relationships with both its internal and external participants and affinity groups. Higher education institutions are often thought of as complicated instead of complex organizations, led by a series of

hierarchical and typically centralized figures, with a singular focus of preparing educated graduates. However, as the political and economic landscapes in which they are situated continue to experience surprising and rapid phase shifts, it is imperative to not only recognize the emergent abilities of these institutions, but the variability of goals, actors, and influencers – from president to resident. The engagement and community-based learning work happening at PSU embraces its complex nature, by engaging the nested ecologies they touch, while preparing their students to do the same through the CBL pedagogy. Often unacknowledged, each actor in the university, is also a member of many other communities and enacts other social agent roles. This is especially true at a university like Portland State, with a majority of students embodying diverse and often unique roles in higher education, including with 60% being 25 years and older (Graves, 2011), 24% are student parents, over 1500 military veterans are enrolled, (Gomez, 2019), and over 65% transferring to PSU from another school (Garrity, 2022), and 58.2% of first year students identified as BIPOC (*PSU By the Numbers / Portland State University*, 2023). PSU students often hold community leadership roles, lead families, and engage deeply in the communities at stake in PSU's CBL practice. Vice versa, PSU is not an inviolable or closed system. CBL at PSU is just one example of a macro-system of community-based learning praxis that is increasingly demanding that university communities be prepared to be influenced, engaged, and disrupted by their neighbors and the nation.

With this consideration of complexity theory and its application to educational organizations, and its pedagogical manifestation in sustainability education, the next step

will be to map critical theory and its educational application in critical pedagogy. The interface of these two families of theories creates a conceptual framework, which attempts to capture the dynamic critical complexity of the practice of community-based learning.

Critical Theory

The second theoretical family in the conceptual framework is that of critical theory. Beginning in the 1930s and growing expansively in understanding and application through the present, critical theory has evolved into an important family of theories to articulate how power, contextualized by place, history, communities, and visions for the future, impacts our social systems. As the following section examines critical theory, critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and finally critical research methodologies, does critical mean the same thing in all these cases? Carspecken (2019) believes that these diverse usages from a wide variety of fields and scholarship, are all informed by the understanding that power and knowledge have a complex and interdependent relationship. Human social relationships, constituting a networked web of social conditions and institutions, reproduce cultural, political, and economic forms of power and oppression. Critical theory, as a discipline of philosophical social thought, comes from the 1930s Frankfurt school in post WWI Germany. The Frankfurt school was informed by Marx and Freud, led by thinkers like Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, and later amplified by Habermas (Rush, 2004). A consistent belief of the school was that by understanding how social conditions worked and were produced, society and particularly those most marginalized by society could be empowered to instigate positive

social change (Kemmis et al., 2015). The Frankfurt school, its adherents, and even many contemporary activists influenced by their work, were motivated by a deep concern to overcome injustice and deepen critical consciousness, in order to bring about community and cultural empowerment through collective action. Critical theory often starts with knowledge, knowledge of what, whose knowledge, and how was it constructed. Therefore, “scholarship – the formal production, identification, and organization of what will be called ‘knowledge’ – is inevitably political” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiii). Critical theory rejects that scholarship can be or even should be “neutral” or “objective.” There is no possible place for a scholar to be outside their own social skin, to be simply an experimenter, an observer, or a thinker, let alone a social actor, educator, or community-member. Critical social theory began with a focus on class-identity, differentiating power structures and actions differently accessible by those originating from or experiencing wealth, poverty, or the middle class. Contemporary applications of critical theory have been vastly broadened. Carspecken (2019) captures this extension, recognizing that “injustice and oppression are understood not only in terms of human needs for safety, economic security, material and cultural resources, and socially structured opportunities, *but also* in terms of existential identity needs that include needs for dignity, respect, recognition, self-realization” (p. 16). As diverse movements for both political rights and social justice broadened into the second half of the 20th century, so did scholars’ efforts to bring more particular aspects of these hidden social structures of power to light. These include diverse perspectives, from those exploring constructions of race and impacts of global colonialism, to those engaging generative ontologies of gender

and sexuality. For this study, two particularly relevant bodies of this emergent understanding of knowledge include critical race theory and Tribal critical race theory.

Critical race theory.

Three theoretical advancements offered by critical race theory (CRT) are crucial to understanding how community-based learning functions, including interest convergence, intersectionality, and community cultural wealth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race theory comes from Black scholarship with both an explicit dialectic of the Black American experience and important wider implications and scholarly applications. CRT emerges from an American historical legacy, articulating the ongoing systemic constructions of power that emerged from deeply embedded systems of slavery and Black dehumanization, bodily commodification, exploitation, and strategic and state-sponsored murder (Onwuachi-Willig, 2022). The first of the three relevant elements of CRT in the scope of this study is interest convergence, as elucidated by Bell (1980, 1992). Interest convergence is when a hegemonic or dominant white culture supports advancements for justice and equality for communities of color, yet only when it also serves their own communities, or white interests. In light of this phenomena, as community-based learning is increasingly institutionalized within universities trending towards commodification, it is essential to be wary of CBL stated purpose of transformative social change. The second component of CRT, intersectionality, was formulated by Crenshaw (1991) in her foundational work in both critical race theory and critical legal theory, which describes the entangled and interdependent nature of social identities. Intersectionality was originally conceived in the context of the particular

complex social relationship and embodiment of being both a Black American and a woman, demonstrating how overlapping identities create interdependent systems of discrimination or access. The originating circumstances come from a labor discrimination complaint that did not apply to all women in a workplace or all Black employees at the same workplace, but was discrimination that was targeted at Black women specifically, who were not yet protected as such. Intersectionality is particularly relevant in any project attempting to understand individuals and communities that are impacted by intersecting oppressions, particularly when agents hold complex and diverse social identities and positional roles in a CBL partnership. In the highly varying and interdependent context of a CBL partnership, both individual agents and agent groups often hold various positionalities simultaneously or over time, which affects how partnerships function and are able to embody their articulated purposes. A relevant example of this in the context of this study might be to think of a college student, who also happens to be currently homeless, who is engaging with a CBL community partner supporting families being threatened with eviction. This intersectional web of roles likely will apply to all participants (faculty, community-members, etc.) in some way, and attention to this partnership dynamism is critical. Lastly, the powerful conception of community cultural wealth, developed by Yosso (2005), is a robust and decolonizing model of cultural capital. She demonstrates how the wealth of a community or individual is a total accumulation of assets, resources, relationships, and knowledge. Her framework of cultural and community capital, subverts stunted capitalist conceptions of value, often used in decimating federal projects like “urban renewal” (Hargrove, 2009), or policies

assessing parenting solely by measurements of wealth (Children's Bureau/ACYF/ACF/HHS, 2021). In a powerful and relevant contrast, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model recognizes components of wealth like familial, social, aspirational, linguistic, resistance and navigational capital. This nurturing and empowering strengths-based perspective for communities of color and other subaltern groups defies Bourdieu's narrow cultural capital theory, often used to assert some communities are "culturally poor" (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). Yosso's model is a valuable tool in the pursuit of a critical CBL, which recognizes the dynamic relationships between individual CBL agents and stakeholder groups. A dynamic CRT cultural wealth model can help CBL authentically integrate interdependencies around teaching and learning, and giving and receiving – moving towards collaboration and collective action.

Tribal critical theory also offers direction for this study on both theoretical and practical levels. The following insights from Brayboy of the Lumbee people (2005) outlining tenets of Tribal critical race theory, offer direction for this study and CBL praxis. On a theoretical level, as previously acknowledged in descriptions of complexity theory, Indigenous epistemologies are highly influential to both complexity and sustainability, commonly centering ideas of interdependency. These include ideas like cooperation and community, or as Brian Burkhart (2004) a Native scholar of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma with roots in other Indigenous communities, writes, "We are, therefore I am" (p. 25). However, there is simultaneously a great risk of overly generalizing a vast diversity of Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Tribal critical theory offers guidance for balancing these two truths. Secondly, as applied to practice,

U.S. educational policy has a generations long history of deadly and dehumanizing encounters with Indigenous people; whose only purpose was Indigenous assimilation through policies like forced boarding schools of Indigenous children, versus an educational experience promoting empowerment or agency. This historical legacy requires an active critical consciousness of present-day pedagogical research that engages Indigenous peoples, as well as includes diverse Indigenous knowledges (Dei & Kempf, 2006). One applicable principle is to make the acknowledgement that story makes theory, and that stories are legitimate sources of data. Thirdly, to engage in a way that holds theory and practice as interdependent, and therefore scholarship is and must be action towards justice. There exists a particularly ugly irony when primarily white institutions, in primarily white cities like Portland, exercise scholarly thought like complexity and engage in pedagogical practices like community-based learning, which are both deeply influenced by Indigenous epistemologies that the primarily white establishment attempted to obliterate through assimilation. These legacies, and the knowledge and circumstances they have created in the present, are integral to both the critical and the complexity lens applied to this project and will offer guidance for critical methodological choices.

Critical research methodologies.

In understanding how knowledge is produced and validated, and further how that can both be a source of generativity, oppression, or reconstruction, a plethora of methodologies have been conceived and utilized to operationalize critical theory in the academy. Yet across all of them, there is agreement that “Through action knowledge is

created, and analyses of that knowledge may lead to new forms of action... [therefore]

By involving people in gathering information, knowledge production itself may become a form of mobilization” (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015, p. 470). From this perspective, what is empowering about critical research is the extent to which it is able to create more democratic forms of knowledge creation. Knowledge and power are deeply interrelated, and critical methodological frameworks draw out attention and alternatives to how these relationships function in scholarship (Collins, 2002; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995). First, knowledge must be seen as a resource. Critical researchers must ask who and what constitutes knowledge? Who decides what is knowledge, versus belief, opinion, myth, or inaccuracy? (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015). Secondly, power lies in the production of knowledge. Who has it and who does not? Who is a part of the debate, the dialog, the catalog of knowledge? Who has access to voice - who is heard, who is speaking, who is valued, who is silenced? Gaventa & Cornwall (2015) also outline how power like this is often hidden, “keeping issues and actors from getting to the table in the first place” (p.466). Critical research scholars can expand who is a knowledge creator, by opening deliberations about what counts as expertise, and drawing explicit attention to which voices are elevated and which are excluded. Thirdly, consciousness changes us. Through the radical act of producing knowledge, one’s awareness and worldview changes, not only in a reflexive way, but also in the way in which one’s interconnectedness with the world becomes denser. This understanding of the production and validation of knowledge leads directly to the questions of how that knowledge is communicated and exchanged.

Critical pedagogy is one answer, as a praxis of critical theory in educational settings and institutions.

Critical pedagogy: Critical theory in pedagogical praxis.

Just as knowledge and knowledge-holders can be privileged, education also cannot be neutral (Freire, 1970). Critical pedagogy is to critical theory, as sustainability education is to complexity, both serve as pedagogical corollaries to a greater theoretical framework. In addition, collaboration of these two pedagogies improves and informs the other. For the diverse sustainability education practices to be used to investigate systems, it must also promote consciousness of those systems and liberation. Pedagogical practitioners must center an understanding of social and ecological systems, and apply an intersectional and equity lens to the work. These dual necessities are particularly true for community-based learning pedagogy. By including the foundational insights of critical pedagogy from thinkers like Aronowitz & Giroux (1984) and McClaren (2003) popular education as pioneered by Freire (1970), and the pedagogical ethics of hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy, any educational project becomes epistemologically committed to a praxis of community co-creation of knowledge.

Beginning in 1950's Latin America, Freire began to work with illiterate adults living in poverty towards an education that was a practice of freedom, with students learning both to read and to politically organize and problem-solve, at the center of the work, was for the learners to know and to trust their own knowledges. Through exile and subsequent collaboration in Chile and the U.S., Freire was able to develop, promote and practice his theory of popular education and conscientization (2012), "Conscientização"

in the original Portuguese, is a practice of expanding awareness of everyday things to be situated in a broader social or cultural context of power, in order to allow for agency and social change (Freire, 1970). In the 1980's theoretical and educational practitioners like Giroux and McLaren pushed critical theorizing into the realm of higher education, a formalized site for the exchange, transfer, and particularly, recognition of knowledge (Carspecken, 2019, p. 14). By bringing neo-Marxist thought into the methodological and theoretical work of education, critical pedagogy scholars of the 1980s-90s also brought a critical consciousness about the systemic forces of militarism, neoliberalism, capitalism, and the commodification of education, to higher education institutions, and then directly to the classroom (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; McLaren, 2003; Shor, 2009; Wiggins, 2011). This critical pedagogy brought strategies for liberation, justice, and emancipatory practices to teaching and learning. hooks (1994, 2003), directly influenced by Freirean praxis and the intersectionality of her Black feminism, introduced her notion of engaged pedagogy to the American university. By interweaving Freirean critical consciousness with liberatory pedagogical practice, hooks pushed equity and equality in the classroom further through a feminist standpoint of relationality. By rejecting educational policies and practices that perpetuated white supremacist and patriarchal values, she practiced a transgressive pedagogy that embraced vulnerability, authenticity, hope, and community (Berry, 2010; Florence, 2011). These engaged and critical pedagogies nest tightly within an intersectional critical race theory framework. Critical pedagogy, and the supporting framework of critical race theory (CRT), has been used to assess inequity in education since the early 1990s (Hiraldo, 2010). Solórzano (1998) outlines how the elements of

CRT might offer a criterion by which to assess and align a truly critical practice of pedagogy. Highlights of these defining elements include challenging dominant ideologies and a commitment to social justice at all stages of pedagogical practice (Solorzano, 1998). Social justice education is an offspring of critical pedagogy, which offers a collection of tools and strategies offering practitioners tangible and thoughtful ideas for applying theory to practice (Hardiman et al., 2007). An example of these tools and a

pedagogical practice of social justice education, Harro's (2013) "Cycle of Liberation" offers direction in how to explicitly outline application for course design (Figure 6). The cycle includes the iterative components of experiential learning, with both engaged active learning and critical reflection. It also explicitly assists learners in recognizing interconnectedness, through reaching out, building community, and coalescing. These various critical pedagogies recognize, as a systems scientist might say, that learning is adaptation in community, a process of integrating both internal and interpersonal inputs.

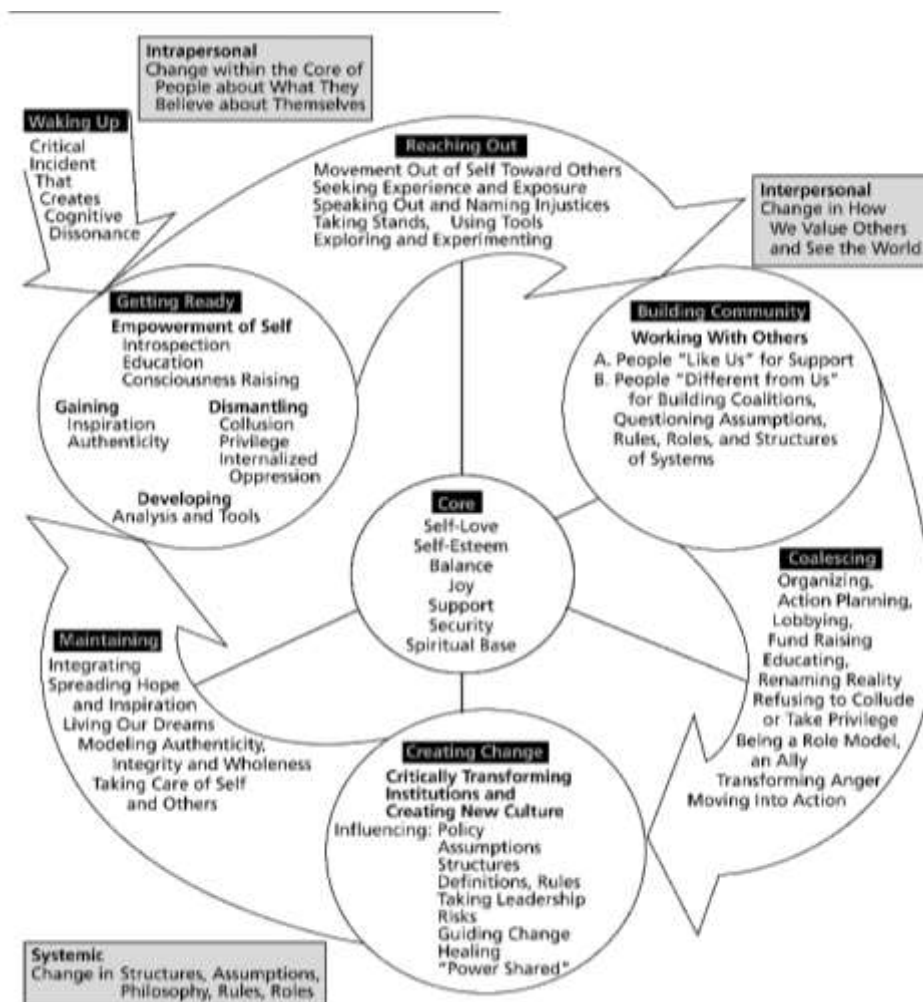


Figure 6. Cycle of Liberation (Harro, 2013)

These critical pedagogists, both scholars and practitioners, have shown how to cultivate transformative learning for communities and adult learners, and present scholars assert that CBL had the potential to be manifested in these terms, yet sometimes fall short of the mark (Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010; Hernandez, 2016; Mitchell, 2007; Stokamer, 2011). Educational institutions, structures and pedagogies have the contradictory potentials to both oppress and marginalize, and emancipate and empower (Bernal, 2002). Therefore, practitioners must recognize the social change capacities of a CBL pedagogy, while problematizing the often underdeveloped praxis of its implementation and assessment for justice (Breunig, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2012). To learn in-community, it is imperative that CBL engage safe, ethical, and sustainable methodologies to acknowledge how power and privilege contextualize work in and for communities. Critical pedagogy and critical theory offer a theoretical framework for community-based learning practice to embody those values and processes.

Critical community-based learning.

The development of critical community-based learning is one particular embodiment of a radical yet delicate educational praxis. Unfortunately, as CBL has become increasingly institutionalized, and leaders convert theory into practice, the standard is often to measure CBL partnership's success solely by a student-oriented perspective, quantitatively measured hours "given" or invested, the community-based data collected, and the tangible products created, in Freirean terms, measures which might fill the bank where output is measurable by a bottom line. These types of successes are essential, however, without critical practices in place many CBL partnership projects

do not arrive at even these measures of success, and truly these measures are but systems inputs towards the broader goal of social change. These important inputs are the fuel for adaptive and creative shifts towards increased sustainability and authentic orientation of participants towards themselves and others (Wheatley, 2006). These linear measures are not the stick for success, rather a critical praxis of CBL is a site where radical change happens because it engages our very humanness (hooks, 1994; Shor, 1993).

The following section outlines what a praxis of critical community-based learning (CCBL) might look like, and the potentialities for personal and system transformation. Mitchell (2008), who names the praxis “critical service-learning,” explicitly differentiating it from traditional service-learning, defines practice with three components, 1) that it has an explicit social change orientation, b) while actively working to redistribute power between agents and in society in general, c) by developing and nurturing authentic relationships. If practitioners of CCBL hold the goal of actually making a difference in the lives of their communities or the greater system dynamics, their praxis must take into account the radical idea that their own beliefs, experiences, and identities, as well as the culture of academia, are affecting the definitions of what success means for both students and their community partners (Bensimon, 2007). If supported through Freirean pluralistic decision-making, co-creation of knowledge, and power-sharing leadership models, CCBL can offer powerful processes for change and conscientization, offering all stakeholders new and meaningful information, and recognizing and strengthening the fields of our relationships (Hernandez, 2016; Mitchell, 2015). To recognize CCBL in action, as an iterative development process of community

and identity development, participant agents must make room for the potential crescendos of dynamic change. Dynamic change in organizations like a CBL partnership may even sometimes involve a disorienting or volatile process (Wheatley, 1993). However, CCBL educators must remember that change and upheaval are not random, and that paradox is common. Adaptation can be both a rejection of past truths and injustices, and a deepening commitment to the parts of themselves and their communities that participants want to preserve and nurture. Social change and learning can then be both change and stability in the praxis of a critical community-based learning. Adaptation and change processes are acts of culture and the development of new modes of organizational relationship. CCBL practitioners bring aspects of personal and institutional culture to the CBL process with them, including ceremonies of communication and assessment, stories and myths about partnership and change, as well as methods of communication for strategy, goals and leadership (Tierney, 2008), inputs which define and impact relationships and outcomes. Each agent's reality is defined personally, institutionally, and culturally, and is constantly evolving through a self-referential process of change, while also attempting to stay true and consistent to itself, much like any organism within its ecological system (Walby, 2007; Wheatley, 2001). Participants are processing their realities through socialization and interaction, and like the living systems they are, as they are affirmed or rejected, unheard or encouraged, those will be the measures by which transformation occurs. CCBL leadership requires care and attentiveness towards the range of participants and their activities, "from the courageous to the mundane" (Tierney, 2008, p. 16). When seen through the lens of organizational theory, Manning (2013) reminds us that any

partnership includes characteristics of diverse and possibly contested goals; radical, shifting and innovative technologies; and fluid levels of participation amongst multiple and varying actors. However, when partnership agents are attentive to these seemingly competing or chaotic factors within their partnership relations, they have the potential to create systemic solutions for all agency groups, including community trust and cooperation, and dispersed power and leadership.

In summary, these diverse critical pedagogies nest tightly within a critical theory framework, and can be applied to understanding around educational research, educational institutions, and educational pedagogies. Therefore, this project attempts to recognize the liberatory capacity of a community-based learning pedagogy, while problematizing the underdeveloped praxis of implementation, assessment, and full acknowledgment of all participants (Breunig, 2005; Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012). The critical aspects of the theoretical framework for this study support investigation into the relationships and processes of power and relationships as systemic practices in community-based learning.

The Intersection: A Critical Complexity Framework

The previous analysis of complexity theory and then critical theory exposed many surface and semiotic intersections between the two theories; however, the current yet minimal literature also explicitly connects both theories, outlined in the following section. This critical complexity framework also proposes an additional intersection between their concomitant pedagogies, sustainability education and critical pedagogy, absent in the literature. Educational theorizing is ripe with scholarship with an increasing systemic orientation, much like scholarship across the academy engaging with a turn

towards complexity, or the “complexity revolution” (Hodge, 2007). When it comes to critical theory, education has already long been a site of praxis. For the purposes of this study, these two theories bound together create the structure and process for understanding community-based learning. If this critical complexity framework is found meaningful in one setting, this union of theories may also have the potential to be applied more widely in the field of education, offering a powerful imaginary for the paradigmatic shift happening in the world of teaching and learning. The following literature is where this theoretical pairing has begun to be acknowledged, and also outlines the few instances where complexity and critical theory are applied together to the field of adult education.

The term “critical complexity” was coined by Cilliers (1998) in his descriptions of how complexity theory can be applied to social-ecological systems. He drew out the idea that if we begin to look at organizations of relationships between people with a complexity lens there is necessarily normative and ethical action taking place. Critical complexity scholars must recognize the influence of their systemically defined ontological and epistemological positionalities. This scholarly work often requires decisions about defining a system, or creating the boundaries of a system, and thus, has serious implications about knowledge validity. This concern with the ethics of mapping social systems spans across systems-work, as it also designs who relevant agents are, and what relationships are included. His idea has remained largely within the field of philosophy, however, more recently has also been applied via a sustainability lens, where complexity studies scholars are examining the management of a South African freshwater ecosystem, investigating human systems as interconnected ethical systems intertwined

with ecosystem services (Audouin et al., 2013). Cilliers warned of the challenges in prescribing ethical systems for justice onto the vast complexity of human interactions, particularly when more-than-human systems are involved (Preiser, 2016). However, it seems intuitive that the application of an ethical, and in particular, a critical social lens could be used in analyzing any complex organizational system. In this framework, I may be attempting to push critical complexity into new terrain. Yet, Cilliers and Preiser (2010) speak to critical complexity as a broad epistemological project in which we must recognize that the “complexity revolution” (p. 267) applies to all human organizations and can offer a framework for our understanding of those systems. In the case of the present study, the concept of criticality is more specifically focused on how issues of agency and purpose are at play in a complex adaptive system. Recently, innovative scholarship has applied complexity theory directly to the analysis of social inequalities. Walby (2007) takes Cilliers’ intersection further in unpacking how complexity might be used to understand intersectionality. She applies complexity constructs of emergence, co-evolution, and path-dependency to critical social theories of society-wide systems of overlapping oppressions and interdependent social environments, and their subsystems of institutions and communities. McCall (2005) explicitly applies complexity and systems theory to the CRT principle of intersectionality, and its complex nature of overlapping identities and systems of oppression. These scholars begin to develop the frontier of a conceptual framework of critical complexity that might be applied to social organizations. In an educational setting, Burns & Knox (2011), describe how a classroom or pedagogical space can be seen as a complex adaptive system intertwined with the

various roles of agents in the classroom and their social mass. The community-based learning partnerships between diverse stakeholders demands to be seen as a place in which interactions and relationships of power and various purposes are being acted out, and which are in a constant mode of adaptation and evolution. These relationships are also nested in a larger educational program, within a large highly complex institution, and further, with a nationwide educational strategy. Therefore, the application of a critical complexity conceptual framework to the nested socio-ecological systems of community-based learning may lead to fruitful discovery and understanding. However, this will require a nuance understanding of what all CBL agents are at work doing together, for what purpose, how, and for whom.

In closing, although numerous frameworks could be used to investigate the systemic nature of CBL, this critical complexity choice embodies my own epistemological perspective, my perceptions of the frameworks of the Capstone program, and the historical and cultural history of the greater institutions and contexts. All of these factors persuasively encourage me to center a critical complexity framework, with attention to the intersectional complexity among agents. The criticality of social systems are networks across practices, institutions, cultures; complexity is a theory that provides general structure for those networks, insight for organizational leadership. With an understanding of context, a critical complexity paradigm may allow for a deeper comprehension to find potent leverage points for systemic change.

Nested Social Systems at Work: A Praxis of Community-based Learning

With this in-depth understanding of what community-based learning is, and the dynamic conceptual lens applied throughout the study, the following section includes an analysis of the greater context of CBL. A nature-based metaphor serves as the structural outline to understand the nested systems, or environments of CBL. Imagine a great forest ecology, embodying interactions between diverse species across time, sharing soil, climate, and watershed. This forest can be understood as a macro-system. In this case, the macro-system is the broader practice of community-based learning in higher education in the U.S., and the related cultural and policy tensions that set the stage for the practice of CBL. This macro-system pedagogical perspective will by definition influence and structure many of the particular instances of CBL (Capra & Luisi, 2014). Within this vast forest, let one species become the focus, perhaps a northwest native, the bright white Trillium flower. The way members of this species interact among themselves – reproducing, adapting, and developing variety – this is the meso-system. In this case, the meso-system is the more particular practice of community engagement and community-based learning happening at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, and within PSU's general education program. Yet there beneath a towering cedar, is a single bloom, an instance of what it means to be a Trillium, the micro-system. With its unique petals, stem, root structure, it grows within the greater systems it is nested within, part of its species at Portland State, part of the forest ecology of CBL practice. This study will zoom in on this particular blossom, a single CBL partnership. The partnership is engaged in a particular part of the city, interacting with different types of people, and with various

purposes and processes, but still exists within the purview of PSU's Capstone program. The details of this particular micro-system will be outlined in Chapter Three's study sample section, and further reported on as study findings develop. Therefore, in the following section, the macro (CBL broadly) and meso (CBL at PSU) systems will be considered.

A CBL Macro-system: The Historical and Contextual Environment

The macro-system of CBL is composed of three broad themes that represent the cultural and policy tensions that set the stage for any practice of CBL in the United States. These three themes include, the national community engagement and community-based learning policy for public and higher education, the policy tension between the seemingly competing priorities of equity and excellence, and the devastating historical legacy of service so often utilized as a project of dominance.

The national educational community engagement agenda: Policy as a process of power.

The context of the policy landscape for community-based learning has long been an undulating narrative of shifting priorities. The earliest conversations of connecting the academy and the community can be traced back as early as the progressive era of public and universalized education in the United States, and these conversations continue to drift unceasingly forward towards today's ongoing fracas between higher education's dual priorities of equity and excellence. Policies affecting the personal and pedagogical relationships of community-based learning can be found at the national level, including federally funded programs, related laws, and their subsequent policies. Community-based

learning, arising from various social movements and called diverse names over the course of the last century, has also always been rooted in a complex system of actors and organizations, working to meet each of their needs and manifest their own ethical demands. From a critical complexity perspective on community-based learning, the policy question to be asked is: whom do these policies aim to serve, who do they actually serve, and how well?

As early as the turn of the last century, early inspiration for CBL can be seen in the Progressive era of public education. Inherent in the developing spirit of universal education was the purpose of education for the development of a civic identity; that participating in public education can and should result in successful participation in civic life for the solving of social problems (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Dewey (1938), the foremost educational philosopher of the movement, asserted an experiential pragmatism, which leverages a pedagogical approach that explicitly encouraged political and policy engagement. The progressive education movement established that social problems could only be solved if private, but socially engaged citizens took an active part in describing the nature of social problems and proposed solutions (You & Rud, 2010). This problem-and-solution oriented education established the basis for a pedagogical approach that included “continuity,” “interaction,” and “reflection” to identify and implement actions based on experience and observation (Dewey, 1938, pp. 40–47). National educational policy and federal spending supported the pedagogy and its purposes, hitting a new public school expenditure high in 1920 of one billion dollars (*As American as Public School: 1900–1950*, 2000). These national level policies were mirrored in higher

education funding in the form of the Morrill Acts (and concomitant Hatch and Smith-Lever Acts), which established and expanded land grant colleges and their associated extension services, from the 1860's through the 1920's (*Colleges of Agriculture at the Land Grant Universities*, 1996). Tragically, however, these Land Grant university policies facilitated the theft of over ten million acres of land from Indigenous nations, among the 1.5 billion acres stolen since colonialism (Huber, 2021). Additionally, the community college sector was founded with the mission to serve community needs while linking education to preparation for practical work in community settings, and enrollment tripled from their invention at the turn of the century through a depression and progressive era surge (Drury, 2003). These examples exemplify a view of public education which sees students as active citizens, and institutions as community engaged actors. This interconnected view dominated public education policy well into the 1950's and the Cold War, when a sense of national protectionism shifted priorities towards global competition, and a return to centering math and sciences towards a more competitive and mechanistic pedagogical rigor (*VISTA Timeline*, 2015).

In the way an ocean tide will elevate and recede, like the oscillation of many natural systems, modern policies of the late 1960s reintroduced the spirit of community-based learning and U.S. domestic "community service" to the national landscape, and by the 1990s had made community-based learning a national phenomenon implemented in thousands of higher education institutions. In many ways, as a part of the Kennedy legacy, it began with the Kennedy/Johnson Administration's "War on Poverty," and its central piece of legislation the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. One of the eleven

programs launched by the act was the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program, which had 1400 members serving in 39 states by the end of its first year ("VISTA Timeline," 2015). Over the next 40 years, this program grew into a national institution and is now known as the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) engaging millions of participants at over 70,000 community and school-based sites nationwide every year ("CNCS 2011-2015 Strategic Plan," 2011). Under the banner of the CNCS, federally funded inducements and federally managed initiatives for capacity building included well known programs like AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and most relevant to CBL, the Learn and Serve America grant program ("National Service Timeline," 2013). The Learn and Serve America program was signed into law by the first Bush administration in 1990, and at its peak was engaging over 1 million youth participants in K-16 education programs annually. Across the U.S., the Learn and Serve program made grants to one in four K-12 schools, one in four universities, and one in two community colleges nationwide, to implement programs that linked "academics to action – called service-learning" ("Learn & Serve America Factsheet," 2011, p.1). With numbers like these it is undeniable that a CBL pedagogy has been embedded in the modern culture of U.S. academics. As for these policies, many of these national service programs continue to this day. Sadly, however, much like the tide, with an increasing federal shift towards tangible cost benefit analysis for educational appropriations, the Learn and Serve America program was cut from the federal budget in 2011.

These policies not only represent the history of community engagement policy in the U.S., they also establish the academic and institutional legitimacy of the field of community engagement in higher education. The programs they funded were essential stepping stones to make higher education more accessible to and accountable to the nation, in particular to the communities in which these institutions reside. In the last thirty years, the mobilized and institutionalized practice of this pedagogy has been possible in part due to key non-profit and academic organizational players leading the way.

Along with the role of the U.S. federal government, four key gatekeeper organizations have played key system agent roles in both creating field-wide relationships and in furthering their own autonomous and political developments, thereby developing an interconnected macro-system of community-based learning. Firstly, the National Society for Experiential Learning (NSEE) was founded in 1971. The NSEE's mission is still "to cultivate educators who effectively use experiential education as an integral part of personal, professional, civic and global learning" ("NSEE Mission and History," 2014). The NSEE offers educational opportunities for educators using the modality, and has in some ways defined and standardized the pedagogy through its publications and educator certification process.

Another highly interconnected CBL agent organization is Campus Compact, which was founded in 1985 by a cohort of prestigious university presidents ("Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education," 2000). Campus Compact engaged with almost a quarter of all U.S. colleges and universities at its peak (Harkavy & Hartley, 2010). Campus Compact supports these institutions through funding, program

models, curricular and partnership resources and research, faculty member development, and most recently a commitment to developing an equity lens for engagement. The work done by Campus Compact, and its associated reports and actions, to legitimize and grow community engagement policy and pedagogy in higher education created the most recent successful national agenda. Important results of their agenda included the creation of a nationwide organizing structure for political engagement of university leadership around engagement, vast CBL course and program development for faculty, and the resulting effects of these efforts for the students and community partners involved (*History of Campus Compact*, n.d.).

Third, is the Carnegie Classifications, which began in 1970 to identify groups of comparable degree-granting higher education institutions creating both clarification and hierarchical ranking structures among institutions ("About the Carnegie Classification," 2018). The Carnegie family and foundation's influence on American education existed long before the Carnegie Classifications with the development and bureaucratization of the "Carnegie Unit" used to assess student progress based on time spent in a classroom, versus more progressive assessments of competency-based evaluations (Silva, Elena et al., 2015). However, in 2015, the Carnegie Classification organization took on an additional mandate, to recognize and classify higher education institutions as "Community Engaged" if they elected to be assessed (*Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement*, 2018). This new classification attempted to both acknowledge and apply rigor to institutional claims to be a community engaged organization, from course work to presidential leadership.

Lastly, the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), which was founded in 1915, holds a broader educational mission much like Carnegie, but only as recently as the last ten years has it taken on a particular penchant for reinvigorating the civic purpose of higher education, and with that the pedagogy of community engagement (Hawkesworth, 2015). An essential feature of this particular policy agenda can be found in their cooperative leadership in publishing the 2012 report *A Crucible Moment*, with the U.S. Department of Education (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The primary claim of the report is to make a clarion call for educational leaders and practitioners to engage in community, with their students and partners, for the promotion of social change and a civic engagement necessary for the survival of our democracy.

In looking at the policy impacts on individual higher education institutions (HEIs), created by federal programs and national organizations, contemporary HEI agendas often reflect a resulting ripple effect of conversations regarding equity, access, and the purposes of higher education. It is imperative to investigate what these policies and power brokerages look like as they trickle down to individual institutions. With this overview of the strategic policy tensions at the macro-level of CBL, one can see the complexity of systemic factors and how they might play out more locally.

Equity or excellence: Processes of power in higher education.

The second cultural and strategic tension at work in the macro-systems of CBL is a seemingly binary choice between prioritizing equity or excellence. This ongoing tension of values between excellence and equity, rigor and access, market productivity

and holistic growth, lies at the heart of almost 150 years of educational policy debates. The Civil Rights Movement's impact on higher education and the desegregation of schools in 1954 (Green, 2003) affirmative action policies (Tierney, 1997), 1972 Title IX's impact on improving sex and gender discrimination (2018), "Free and Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) legislation, and the 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("About IDEA," 2019) are all examples of how public education in the U.S. has made great strides towards equity and access through policy movement. However, at each turn there has been pendulous action towards what has been termed excellence, often defined by standardized assessments with a singular focus on the development of a globally competitive workforce (Putnam, 2016; Wagner, 2014). An example of the excellence priority in education includes the dismantling of nearly the entire educator of color workforce post-integration, to supposedly meet goals of efficiency and quality (Green, 2004). Other examples include the "Nation at Risk" report (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), demanding empirical and measurable strategies of learning outcomes as the means to fix America's schools, followed by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Obama administration's Race to the Top Initiative (Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2010), which doubled and tripled down on standardized-orientations to learning. Standardized testing orientations to learning have been shown to discriminate against diverse populations of students, and further push students out of school completely, subverting the work of universal access to public education (Warren & Goodman, 2018). This tension of values in public education

between excellence and equity is a classic example of system disequilibrium, which can be both harmful or can inspire adaptation and innovation.

To return to definitional language for a moment, attention to equity versus excellence language and discourse is essential. When applying a critical lens to the rhetorical tone shifts between a focus on equity or excellence in the national service and learning conversation, there is a remarkable ideological parallelism. As the actors and era have changed, and the focus has waxed or waned, the assertion of power through pedagogical policy has shifted, but not lessened. An example of this can be seen in a comparison between “War on Poverty” vocabulary and the language of the Learn and Serve act. The War on Poverty’s stated purpose was to “eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty,” in other words, to pursue “equity” (“Economic Opportunity Act,” 1964, Sec. Declaration of Purpose). However, in the 2009 Serve America act there was a new focus on providing “service opportunities” for rigorous learning for more privileged sectors of the population, in other words, in other words “excellence” (Serve America Act, 2009, Sec. Purpose). It comes back again to asking who is education serving, and for what purpose? Each new iteration and implementation of educational engagement policy, as related to equity and excellence, is an attempt to assert different priorities of social, democratic, and economic values in American educational culture (Fowler, 2013). In higher education, as equity presently continues to give way like a fickle tide to excellence and efficiency, the capitalization and commodification of education swings towards a focus on profitability, marketability, and in some cases threatens the survival of accessible public education (Giroux, 2011). Engagement for, with, and in, community has

been an intentionally pursued objective to prepare and socialize the public towards civic activity, create cultural collectivist values, and shape social consciousness over multiple generations. It may also be possible that CBL is an ongoing tool to confront the tide of neoliberal reification and simplification of educational purposes. Perhaps, educational community engagement has met both excellence and equity demands over time, including significant moments of national economic transformations. However, many community engagement policies have also been promoted to prepare our national populace to be neoliberally competitive. Simultaneously, the idea of an educated public that has experience of critical problem solving, interconnectedness and collaboration, empathy through service, and a sense of civic responsibility, might also be the inherent drivers for the ways our educated population has met global economic challenges successfully. However, with a history of educational policy that has not often found a balance between competing values, can the future of CBL and educational civic engagement offer equity and excellence for all?

Service as dominance: Processes of power in CBL.

The third tension present in the greater systems environment of community-based learning practice is the legacy of service as a practice of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. This historical super-structure is both more tangential, in that it is not related explicitly in name or policy, and yet is hyper-local in the intergenerational and personal trauma inflicted by oppressive educational policies nationwide, often proposed as best intentions.

Community-based learning itself, as demonstrated by the tension between traditional and critical CBL (Mitchell, 2008), has been charged as a pedagogy of whiteness (Mitchell et al., 2012). Conceptions of CBL have often been intertwined with imperialist ideologies, ideologies embedded with power relationships that saddle marginalized communities with agendas to fix or save them, with agendas that were not the communities at all (Hammersley, 2012). These “interventions without invitation” are what Cushman (1998) calls “missionary activism” (p. 29). Additionally, Cruz (1990) demonstrates how students with privilege, positioned as agents of problematic CBL agendas of service, can reify perspectives of superiority, or imperialist colonial mentalities. Along what Morton (1995) lays out as a spectrum, from charity to social change, there are many ways that CBL is being practiced that creates both benefit and harm. However, the possibly problematic nature of CBL practice since its inception, is not the beginning of the story. Interestingly, early policies of progressive educational community engagement in higher education overlap temporally with the formative period of anthropology. Coming from a similar era of academic thought, many critics recognize that the concomitant establishment of anthropology served dominant forces in the service of racism and colonialism (Keene & Colligan, 2004). For contemporary thinkers this comes as no surprise, and CBL’s ongoing practice in international community development has been termed the white savior industrial complex (Cole, 2012). Seawright (2014) demonstrates how these settler traditions were built into U.S. educational practice, and often still exist in hegemonic ways today. As Illich (1968) encourages in his educational treatise, *To Hell with Good Intentions*, it is vital to pay

heed to the hegemonic nature of any contemporary educational practice, yet, education is an essential part of community, learner, and social change. So, for CBL, at the root of these concerns is Keene & Colligan's (2004) essential question: Is any CBL partnership "grounded in an ethic of charity or in an ethic of social justice?" (p.5). This study centered that question in both design and analysis.

At times, this possibility of harm can lead to discouragement for practitioners, and overshadows the incredibly positive impacts and transformational potentials of CBL. Personally, while learning of both the benefits and harms done, as a white American CBL scholar and practitioner, it is necessary to continue to evolve my critical consciousness of CBL and to adapt my praxis. I lean towards both the hopeful innovation of foundational agents in the field, and the inspiring accounts of emerging scholars. A highlight of experienced scholars engaging in new and critical ways include AAC&U's new initiative to facilitate Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Centers on campuses around the country, prioritizing collective community-based experiences (Alberts, 2019). Another example is the *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning's* recent Future Directions Project. The Future Directions project is explicitly decentering the dominant narrative of *to* or *for* the community, and re-centering *in* and *with* and *of* the community (Stanlick et al., 2017; Zlotkowski, 2015). Emergent and community-based scholars are also adding to the scholarship, including Santiago-Ortiz (2019). who offers strategy and insight on how to move from critical to decolonizing service-learning, and Martin & Pirbhai-Illich (F. Martin & Pirbhai-Illich, 2015) who are leveraging CBL as a process of post-colonial discourse.

Macro-System Summary

It is evident how the macro-system, encompassing a national policy agenda, the cultural tensions between equity and excellence, and the greater problematic legacy of service, creates the environment for what is happening in micro-systemic levels of CBL partnerships. The macro-system of community-based learning is a vast political ecology, recalling the dense forest where our Trillium flowers live, creating a social ecology for how CBL is practiced. Yet there is always an iterative fractalized process between system-levels, with changes at the macro-level filtering down to the micro-level, and interactions at the micro-level rippling back out again. This inter-systemic process is how CBL will continue to adapt, improving how it serves the needs and interests of all agents. This study focused on creating adaptation and action in a micro-level CBL partnership, by capturing and centering community-member perspectives and systemic patterns and behaviors. However, a wider activist agenda of the study also aims to filter those perspectives back into the greater systemic environment of CBL. To do this, exploring the meso-system that connects the micro and macro, that of CBL at Portland State University, is a prerequisite.

Meso-System: Portland as Local Variety and Context

PSU as an Engaged Anchor Institution and The City of Portland

Portland State University (PSU) is a large public research university of over 27,000 students, with an average student age of 27 years old, and with the most diverse student population of any public Oregon institution ("PSU By the Numbers," 2019). PSU has a uniquely large percentage of students who are of nontraditional age or returners to

higher education. Many of these students are long-time residents and active adult agents in the surrounding communities, which provides interesting insight for CBL partnerships.

PSU prides itself on being an “anchor institution” – an urban institution with significant infrastructure in a specific community (Yates & Accardi, 2019). The anchor institute concept in many ways began as an economic classification, including institutions with often large real estate holdings, labor impacts, and the attraction factor of bringing young residents and capital to an urban area (Ehlenz, 2018). However, it has evolved to be something more robust and holistic, including ideas like being an urban laboratory, engaging in urban renewal and neighborhood revitalization, and being a home-base for community-university partnerships (Ehlenz, 2018; Rodin, 2015) as can be seen in the cyclical process imagined in Figure 7. Including PSU, many universities have owned this

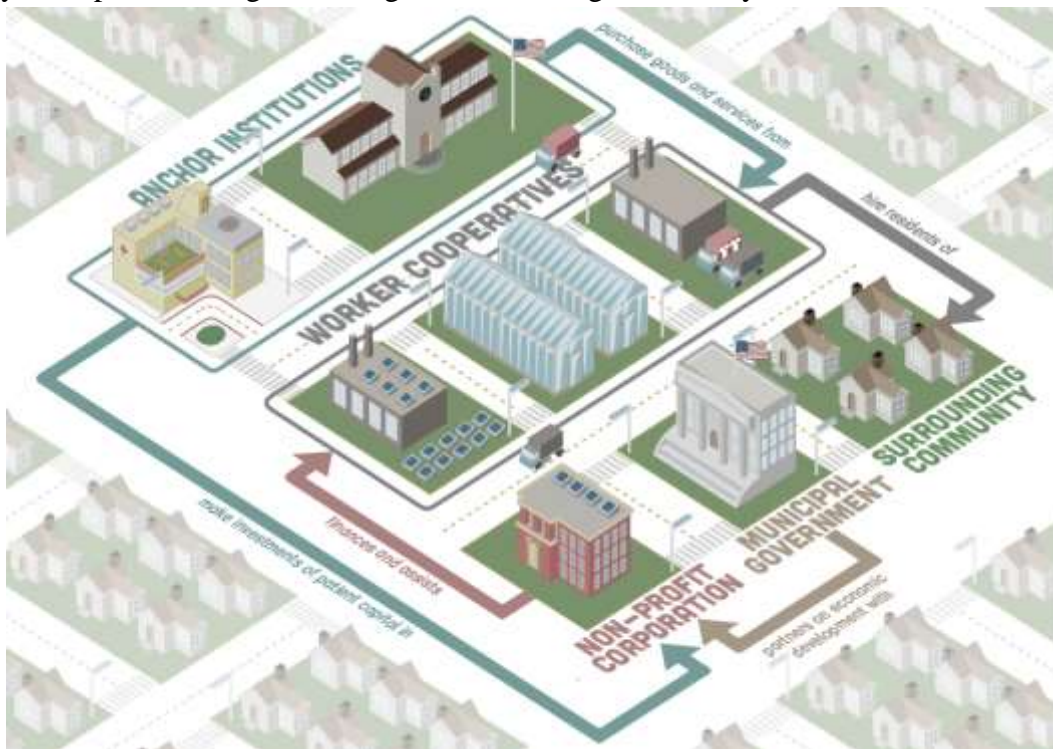


Figure 7. Model of anchor institution impact as part of urban network (Yi, 2014).

identity and the challenges that come with it, by institutionalizing engagement, and building civic capacity (Martin, 2010). In the recent Living Labs Report (2019), PSU was recognized nationally for integrating its anchor institution identity through including it as a centerpiece in its strategic planning, and launching work to include an equity lens in its engagement work. This iterative process of exchange of energies and dense relationships between the university and other community agents is an active complex system itself.

Since the 1990's PSU's motto has been "Let knowledge serve the city" prominently displayed on a bridge across the main thoroughfare of the campus. This motto demonstrates a pride associated with being an anchor institution with a core curriculum that requires community-based learning for the nearly all undergraduates, through the PSU Senior Capstone program (Portland State University, 2016a). In fact, engagement has been incorporated as one of three central goals, into the most recent strategic plan for the university, and is often leveraged in university communications (Portland State University, 2016b). As a student and adjunct faculty myself, I see that the motto creates a sort of culture, whispering ideas of civic responsibility and a defiance of the town/gown divide. A recent university president published with colleagues an account of how the sustainability education and scholarship culture of PSU is directly linked to our acknowledged anchor institution status, and charged the PSU community to cultivate its responsibility to the city through partnerships, engaged scholarship, and community-based learning (Wiek et al., 2011). An example of the outcome of an engagement orientation is the recent cross-institutional partnership for a School of Public Health and an expanding College of Education partnering with other public universities, the city and

metropolitan area government, and various local corporate and non-profit agents ("Portland State Engagement & Partnerships, Strategic Partner: OHSU," n.d.).

To understand the context of PSU in its home City of Portland, Oregon and the fundamental necessity of the work of the Capstone program, it is important to look closely at the systems of power and culture in this mid-size Pacific Northwest city. Portland has had many identities over the span of centuries, from the multi-millennia home of the Salmon and River people, the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Watlala bands of the Chinook, the Tualatin Kalapuya, and many other Indigenous nations of the Willamette and Columbia River basins ("Portland State Global Diversity & Inclusion: Cultural Resource Centers: Welcome," 2019). Over the last ten to 15 years, Portland has been recognized for its popular culture "weirdness," as seen in the TV show *Portlandia* (Courtemanche, 2015), for being a "sustainable" and ecologically-oriented city, drawing multitudes of new residents. The harsh results of the increasing popularity of the city have disproportionately affected Portland's communities of color, causing mass gentrification (Hannah-Jones, 2011; Parmett, 2018), and a severe homelessness and affordable housing crisis ("Homelessness in Oregon," 2019). Long-term lack of cross-sector institutional neglect and discriminatory institutional access, have caused deep legacies of tangible inequities for communities of color in Portland (Curry-Stevens et al., 2010). This pattern of harm to communities of color is nothing new in the history of the city, from the original displacement and decimation of the Native peoples, to the Japanese internment during WWII (Hegwood, 2000) to the racist legacy of the founding of the State of Oregon as a "white utopia" (Imarisha, 2013) consigning

Portland to be one of the whitest cities in America (Semuels, 2016). All of this sets the stage for both the meso-system of CBL at Portland State, and the city in which the CBL partnerships of the study are hard at work, including the state of general education at PSU and the Senior Capstone program that is an essential part.

Housing and Homelessness

The CBL partnership is a central unit of analysis for this study, and the sample partnership engages deeply with the crisis of homelessness that our country, city, and campus are reckoning with. The Capstone course within the CBL partnership supports students to consider the challenges of housing insecurity and homelessness, through a critical systems-thinking approach to complex social issues, and guided by the partnership stakeholders, with the goals of changing narratives, implementing creative actions, and advocating for effective housing policies and services for their PSU peers who are unhoused. Therefore, the following content and context regarding the housing and homelessness within the nested systems impacting the CBL partnership in the study's sample offer a significant and relevant orientation to the issues and central purpose of the partnership.

Homelessness has been on the rise in the United States since 2015, an overall increase amounting to 3 percent of the country's population, and in Oregon meaning roughly 18 of our neighbors out of every 100,000 are unhoused ("State of Homelessness," 2023). The National Alliance to End Homelessness reported that in 2022, "counts of individuals (421,392 people) and chronically homeless individuals (127,768) reached record highs in the history of data collection," ("State of Homelessness," 2023,

Sec. Key Facts). Although in many states, including Oregon where this study takes place, homeless services systems have rapidly expanded availability of homelessness services, shelter beds, and support for affordable, transitional, and permanent housing, these resources still fall far short of reaching everyone in need. Understanding homelessness as a problem of an individual's deficits simply cannot explain these numbers. Narratives propped up by myths of neglected personal agency and accountability offer one-dimensional solutions of individual bootstrap meritocracy, for a systems-wide crisis requiring complex and relational solutions.

Ubiquitous hegemonic cultural stories about who experiences homelessness and why often lack depth regarding the intra-related systems that create: access to housing, housing stability, and the commodification of housing, including the related "American Dream" that all who work hard can be on a path towards building personal wellness and family wealth through homeownership. According to the 2022 biannual federally mandated "Point in Time Count," 28 percent of those unsheltered are families with children, meaning children under the age of 18 comprise a fifth of all people experiencing homelessness ("State of Homelessness," 2023). When it comes to our young people (aged 13 to 25), nearly half of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+ (Morton et al., 2018). Morton et al., share that these young people most often attribute loss of housing to family conflict and rejection due to gender and sexuality. Americans are also 200% more likely to become unhoused if they have served in the U.S. military, and contrary to popular myth, 89% of homeless veterans received an honorable discharge (USC's Masters in Military Social Work Program, 2021). Veteran homelessness is often directly related to

those with service-connected disabilities (McElhinny, 2021), with likelihood being high as nearly 40% of post 9/11 veterans have a service-connected disability (“Profile of Veterans,” 2009). More broadly, due to constraints of employment and social safety net benefits, nearly 1 in 4 people experiencing homelessness are navigating the world with a disability (National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2019). Those with disabilities often face employment barriers and housing discrimination, and are also often even denied access to shelters and other housing services, based on accessibility and safety issues (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). Essentially rendering living on the street “safer” for those with disabilities who cannot for example navigate aging infrastructure. Tragically, once someone has experienced homelessness they are more than 10% more likely to become chronically homeless (U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2018). The National Healthcare for the Homeless Council (2019) shares that those who experience homelessness have also been shown to experience a 40% increase in depression, and a 40% increase in substance abuse disorders, often as a coping mechanism for the trauma of being unhoused. Their report goes on, stating that without access to proper hygiene and rest, minor health problems are exacerbated, resulting in severe and chronic issues, and shockingly, on average die 12 years earlier than their peers.

These disproportionate impacts to housing security, related to meaningful experiences and identities, are especially true for Black and Indigenous communities, who are significantly overrepresented in those both episodically and chronically unhoused and facing severe housing insecurity (HUD, 2019). Although our nation’s

trends of homelessness are notably escalating since 2015, the building blocks of housing injustice in the U.S. emanate from a sordid historical legacy. Beginning with the settler theft of over 1.5 billion acres of Indigenous land (Warren, Santa Clara Pueblo, 2022), to the racist applications of housing and land laws and policies, including misuse of eminent domain, federal and state “urban renewal” projects, mortgage discrimination and redlining of neighborhoods of color, and ongoing gentrification supported by local zoning and property tax policies (Rothstein, 2017), it should come as no surprise that our Black neighbors are experiencing homelessness at 3 times the rate of their white counterparts, and our Indigenous neighbors, the original stewards of these lands, are 4 times more likely to be homeless than the general population (HUD, 2022). Evidence-based quantitative and qualitative analysis of these chasms of disparity are present in housing and social safety net policies from the national to the local level in the City of Portland.

The specific region in which the study takes place, the greater Portland Metro area, offers no exception to this ongoing housing crisis. Recent research done to support a Supportive Housing Services measure which passed with over 60% voter approval (Oregon Metro, 2020) includes estimates of homelessness in the greater Metro/tri-county area that range between 6,000 and 12,000 people. In the Point in Time count of January 2019, officials counted 5,711 people experiencing homelessness in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. The Oregon Department of Education counted over 7,000 students who experienced homelessness in the 2018 school year. Unfortunately, these reports often undercount people experiencing homelessness while staying with a friend or family, or living in vehicles. However, a more robust and

expansive report done by PSU's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative (HRAC), reported that it was closer to 38,000 people experiencing homelessness in the tri-county area, as far back as 2017 (Zapata et al., 2019), and since then challenges have only increased. The majority of those surveyed were longtime Oregonians who lost access to housing because of rent increases. More than three-quarters had a disability. Nearly half had experienced domestic violence. As well, similar to national rates of homelessness, Black Oregonians are 2 times more likely to experience homelessness, those with Indigenous ancestry are 4 times more likely (Oregon Legislative Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities, 2022). Homelessness numbers are also tied to the fact that as populations grow and housing markets become tighter, additional households near the brink of homelessness (HRAC, 2020). The HRAC report shared that over 100,000 households faced housing insecurity or were at risk of homelessness in 2017 in the tri-county area due to low incomes resulting in housing cost burdens, i.e., paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Locally, communities of color are once again disproportionately barriered facing much higher rates of rent burden, with lower median income when compared to white counterparts. In the case of Black households in the Portland area, they earn half that of the overall median (Zapata et al., 2019). These clear inequalities related to homelessness and housing security raise critical questions about our ubiquitous American stories of home, and encourage instead systemic and relations engagement in collaborative action towards equitable access to housing.

One prolific and similarly inaccurate assumption about housing insecurity is that it is not a problem for those enrolled in college or university, on the path to economic and social mobility and success. Yet, for nearly ten years, the #realcollege Hope Report (2020), which surveys college students across the nation, has demonstrated otherwise. Over the past five years, research done at colleges across the United States found that 39% of college student respondents were food insecure, 46% were housing insecure in the previous year, and 17% of respondents were homeless in the previous year. The report also reveals clear evidence that basic needs insecurity negatively impacts students in nearly insurmountable ways. It shows decrease in attendance, grade point average, campus engagement and belonging, student's beliefs about ability to repay student debt, and more. These numbers once again disproportionally represent both BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students, and shed additional light on the challenges students with disabilities and first generation students face. This scourge of insecurity significantly affects students at Portland State University, the site of the study's sample CBL partnership. A powerful report done by Portland State's HRAC, profiles the widespread and heartbreaking need for increased student housing support at PSU. It presents findings that demonstrate that 61.6% of PSU students experienced basic needs insecurity, over 16% experienced homelessness, and 44% experienced housing insecurity (Townley, G., Stewart, K., Greene, J., & Petteni, M., 2020). A student interviewed for the PSU report says it best, "I am trapped where I am at, because costs of housing, food, and insurance, and education, are so high." Imagine, two of every three students on the PSU campus find it difficult to get enough to eat or sustain stable housing, often both, while attending classes,

completing homework and exams. Yet, many of those students persist in graduating, and even moving on to graduate school, believing that higher education truly is a pathway to “making-it,” a path to well-being and vitality. Relational and systemic-shifting solutions are recommended to face the housing crisis challenges we face at all scales. “Multi-stakeholder processes can help build power across groups and create advocacy networks and coalitions. Multiple groups operating in government or civic society can help create broader commitments to work toward a common goal, in this case addressing homelessness,” (Zapata, 2019, p.7). Within the scope of this orientation housing is considered a right not an earned privilege, housing is considered as healthcare, and housing is considered a well documented multi-scale institution. Housing and the institutional dysfunctions causing homelessness demand an engagement with this wicked problem that moves beyond often inaccurate stories of the individual impacted, and engages in radically relational and systems-thinking perspectives to work together towards a future we would like to imagine.

PSU’s University Studies and the Senior Capstone Program

University Studies (UNST) is Portland State’s nationally recognized general education program, still innovating after over twenty years in practice (“The 10 Most Innovative Colleges in America,” 2022). Unlike many general education programs across the nation, UNST is designed to extend across all four years of the undergraduate experience, integrating connected learning experiences. Almost every one of Kuh’s (2008) high impact practices for higher education are being implemented and coordinated within UNST programming, including tightly structured clusters of courses with

interdisciplinary themes, that include intensive writing, collaborative team and project work, and community-based learning. University Studies begins with Freshman Inquiry, a year-long course introducing students to critical inquiry and college success tools, often also including CBL components. Sophomore Inquiry requires students to choose three different courses, which lead to thematically linked Junior Cluster courses. Finally, all students are required to complete a Capstone course, most often taken in the senior year, which consists of teams of students from different majors doing academically-linked collaborative project work in a CBL partnership, with attention and action towards a social challenge or initiative in the Portland metropolitan community or abroad ("Portland State University Studies Goals," 2019).

Portland State University (PSU) aims to promote the development of civic identity and social engagement as a scaffolded element of the general education requirements, by requiring nearly every undergraduate student to complete a Senior Capstone course that integrates community-based learning (CBL) within a more traditional classroom experience (Fullerton et al., 2015). In the Capstone classroom, students engage in dialogue about a specific social issue, within the lens of a particular community partner. The CBL course component provides hands-on experience with a community partner representative of the course's interdisciplinary social challenge theme (Kerrigan, 2015; Portland State University, 2017; "Portland State University Studies Goals," 2019).

University Studies requires attention to four program goals at all course levels, and is also regularly working to reflect on and transform these goals to be at the leading

edge of higher education's critical consciousness. The four goals include: 1) inquiry and critical thinking, where students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners”; 2) communication, where “students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways ...to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies”; 3) diversity, equity and social justice, where “students will explore and analyze identity, power relationships, and social justice in historical contexts and contemporary settings from multiple perspectives”; and 4) ethics, agency, & community, where “students will examine values, theories and practices that inform their actions, and reflect on how personal choices and group decisions impact local and global communities” (“Portland State University Studies Goals,” 2019). These goals align in incredible ways with the processes and purposes of CBL. The structure and goals of University Studies (UNST) general education program, and the Senior Capstone community-based learning courses are a robust and consistent part of PSU culture.

PSU's model of CBL curricular integration is not an anomaly. As colleges and universities set goals at the institutional level of creating engaged, civically-minded students and graduates, programs to foster civic identity and social justice have moved from co-curricular arenas on campus (non-credit activities, alternative spring break trips) to being integrated into the academic curriculum. In fact, much of the research on implementing effective CBL programs at institutions of higher education have specifically called for programmatic curricular integration (Musil, 2009; Pedersen et al.,

2015). In order to maintain this successful legacy, UNST engages in long term and annual assessment, within a culture of learning, growth, and renewal.

PSU Capstone assessment.

Within the current assessment research conducted in UNST, the Capstone program has many surprising and compelling results, and as well as some compelling gaps. Capstone survey data revealed that a super majority of students (80.3%), had a better understanding of how to make a difference in their community after participating in their Capstone course, improved their ability to analyze views from multiple viewpoints (84.9%), and 87.5% felt a personal responsibility to meet the needs of their community partners (Portland State University, 2016a, 2017b). These student outcomes are impressive. Community-based learning practitioners, and PSU's Capstone program specifically, make the claim that CBL impacts both students and communities in meaningful and reciprocal ways (Chickering, 2008; Portland State University Studies, 2015). To measure the validity of this claim, the UNST Capstone program consistently employs an annual impact assessment, which includes student surveys and work sample assessments, and regular faculty evaluation and professional development. However, this evaluation process currently has a highly student-centered approach, with faculty and community partners as the structures upon which student learning and development rely (Fullerton et al., 2015; Kerrigan, 2015). The program's assessment offers little guidance on community partner or community-member partnership outcomes. Yet, this is not rare in higher education CBL assessment overall, as community partner impact is often a missing component in any truly meaningful way. A recent exception, authored by PSU

Capstone leadership, includes a qualitative study involving community partners and their faculty counterparts (Kerrigan et al., 2015). The study of ten Capstone faculty and their CBO staff partners pointed out logistical stumbling blocks like scheduling, but also exposed a question about how well CBL partnerships were able to focus on the community's high-priority projects. Advice offered by community partners for future actions included "be engaged, listen," "act with humility," and "be reliable" (p.66). This insight is valuable, and work to continue to fill the gaps of community impacts and perspectives was a motivating factor for this study.

The current assessment practices in PSU's UNST practice are built upon an innovative comprehensive case study process that was piloted in 1996 near the launch of the Capstone program. The methodological process included four CBL agent groups - students, faculty, community, and the PSU institution (Driscoll et al., 1996). For Driscoll and colleagues, a design requirement was to, "honor PSU's commitment to mutually beneficial partnerships with the community," (Driscoll et al., 1996). The model focused on capturing and interpreting the impacts that each constituency experienced, while measuring what characterized changes in the participants, as well as their own perceptions of the impact and effectiveness of the experience (details in Figure 8). Before the pilot could be refined and implemented in the following academic year its funding organization, PSU's Center for Academic Excellence, was defunded and disbanded (S. Kerrigan, personal communication, March 7, 2017). Since 1996 until the time of this writing, no program wide policy has existed to capture the experience of the Capstone community partners or their perceived impact of the program, this is particularly true of

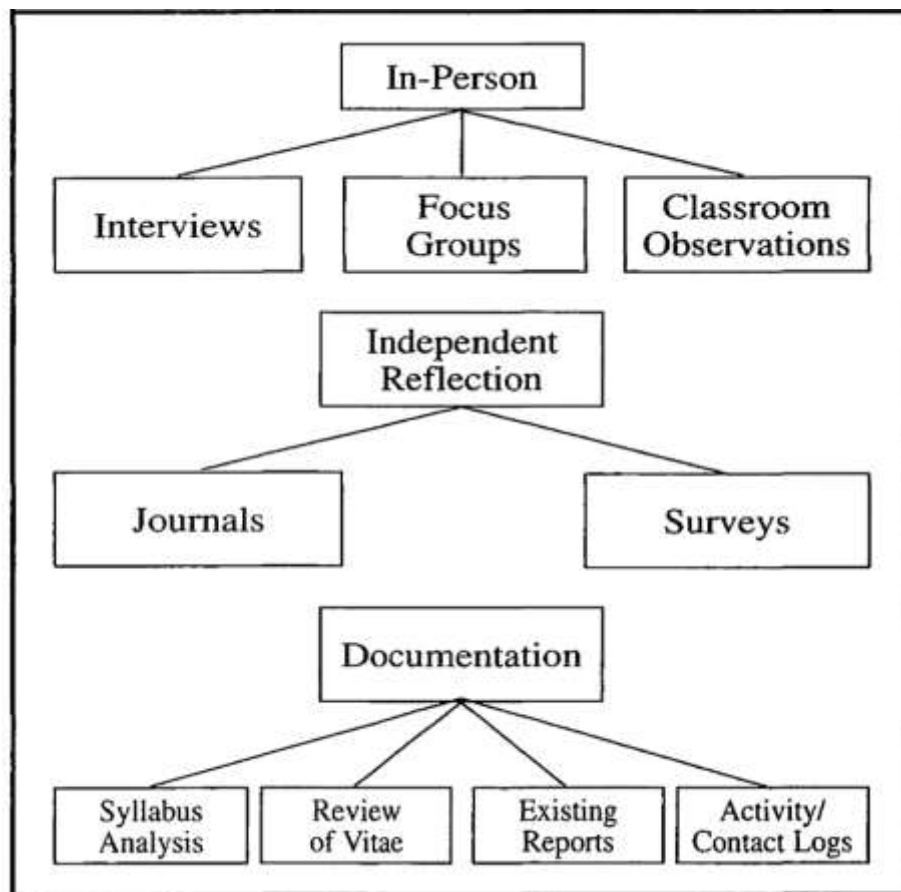


Figure 8. Mechanisms to measure of CBL partnership impacts (Driscoll et al., 1996).

the experiences of participating community-members who were also not explicitly included in the pilot.

In the course of a collaborative study design with Capstone leadership, I learned PSU's Capstone program was originally designed to use the study's holistic system for program evaluation, including community feedback (Driscoll et al., 1996); however, both national and subsequent institutional policy changes and funding deprioritizations made the plans for evaluation impossibly cumbersome (S. Kerrigan, personal communication, March 7, 2017). Based on the challenging conditions of assessment of community outcomes of Capstone CBL partnerships, as well as desired and previously used

mechanisms to measure impact piloted by Driscoll et al. (1996) at PSU over twenty years ago, this study attempted to pilot a systemic method of understanding community-member experience and the CBL partnerships holistically, which may be able to be implemented more widely in an accessible way across the program.

Meso-System Summary

This study was developed in close collaboration with Capstone leadership to work towards an understanding of the systemic nature of the Capstone's CBL partnerships, and the community-member perspectives. As both PSU and the Portland community face increasing challenges of inclusion, safety, homelessness, and gentrification, in our time of social tension and complexity, what better way to signal care and collaboration than to reassert the value of authentic community voice. An in-depth understanding of the nested systems of CBL, must include not only a national, or macro-system perspective, but must provide a more localized context through an understanding of the institutional meso-system and its successful programs and structural barriers. The specific micro-system of an individual CBL partnership, connected to the meso-system of Portland State University's Senior Capstone program, will be addressed in more detail in the study design and sample discussion in Chapter Three. However, in order to understand study design decisions, an analysis of the methodological approach decisions and the literature that substantiates those decisions is necessary.

Critical Qualitative Research: An Appropriate Methodology

Situated within a critical complexity framework, influenced by both critical theory and systems-thinking complexity theory, the purpose of this investigation is to

understand the patterns and behaviors of systemic CBL partnerships, and the diverse agentic experiences of all stakeholders, particularly elevating the community-member agent experience. Through a critical qualitative research project, this study's goal is to positively invigorate the systemic nature of community-based learning partnerships, and particularly the agency of the community. The research questions to pursue these goals are:

1. What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system?
2. How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system? and
3. How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system's patterns and behaviors?

A critical qualitative research (CQR) methodology offers the best opportunity to cultivate an understanding of experience, identity, and power in the interactions of a community-based learning partnership. CQR is also referred to as critical ethnography, due to overlapping methods and commitment to qualitative depth and detail of understanding (Carspecken, 1996). Further, within the conventions of CQR are often components of a new materialist action research framework that acknowledge that knowledge creation is active and impacting. This goal-oriented framework of CQR provides the research project the foundations and procedures to leverage the research project itself as a strategy for supporting community-member experience agency and

empowerment. CQR is briefly outlined in the following section, with further methodological applications detailed in Chapter Three.

Critical Qualitative Research

The broad category of critical qualitative research (CQR) is an appropriate approach for this research, as CQR is grounded in ideas from both critical and systems theories, aligned with the critical complexity framework of the study. CQR is also often known as critical ethnography, because it requires a complex or thick understanding of the system and its actors, information, and processes. While CQR uses a variety of methods, it requires centering concepts of power, and centering meaning making via the analysis process. The ethnographic aspect of CQR is a recognition that it is a study of the culture of power, whatever the particular setting or typical understanding of culture in the setting might be, and encourages significant observations and supports insider researcher identities. Additionally, the meaning-making, or knowledge creation happening in CQR is constructed democratically by collaboratively exploring “first perceptions” (whose holders may be unaware of power’s influence on the social setting), and then pragmatics and actions (which include how people speak and act in relation to power) (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). CQR, or critical ethnography, is in the direct lineage of Freire’s critical pedagogy work (P. F. Carspecken, 2005). Critical pedagogy is explicitly framed as pedagogy versus ethnography, however, the goal of Freire’s (1970) conscientization shares a similar purpose of deepened self-awareness, systemic-awareness, and agentic capacity. Like critical pedagogy, critical ethnography is a political act. A scholarly act that takes ethical responsibility for human liberation, and through the research process

moves from naming “what is” individually, to “what is” systemically, to “what could be” (Hardcastle et al., 2006; Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993). Specifically, I significantly adapted Carspecken’s (1996) approach, which first centers on the often unheard voices of certain individuals or groups, but then also requires a systemic analysis that might not be fully revealed to actors that are seen as peripheral in the system. This approach creates concrete direction for both data collection and data analysis particularly helpful to novice researchers (Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2006). One limitation of a critical ethnographic project in this particular context, with its explicit centering of culture, may inadvertently make a claim of homogeneity across various partnerships. It will be important to avoid any interpretation or outcome of the research claiming anything about all partnerships or all partnership agents. However, themes and motifs did emerge that may help to increase transformative outcomes for agents, and adaptability for CBL partnerships.

Conclusion

If the proposed methodologies serve to achieve a critical research praxis, the outcomes of the study can hope to offer authentic insight for increased CBL partnership success and community-member agency. Community member perspective, if integrated into the relational ecology of a CBL partnership, has the opportunity to create immediately beneficial impacts for all community-based learning agent groups. Possible implications of the outcome of this research may deepen college student learning, inform future community-university course design, and more generally community-based learning practices and programs in higher education. Additionally, this may create

corollary initiatives to adjust or innovate faculty and partnership professional development around community-based learning pedagogies and partnership development and facilitation. Findings may also be applicable to related fields such as organizational and partnership studies, and diverse related pedagogies such as experiential education, place-based and sustainability education, and transformative education. Further, this investigation into the nested systems of CBL, with a critical complexity lens may infiltrate into higher education institutional policy discussions regarding institutional partnerships, anchor institution orientations, and civic and engagement agendas in higher education reform.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

More than 1000 U.S. higher education institutions engage in community-based learning practices (Hartley et al., 2016), and more than 3000 students each year pour out of the Portland State University campus and into their surrounding communities for CBL Senior Capstone experiences (Barich, 2019). The question to be asked is who are the unnamed thousands of partnering community-members inspiring these efforts? What would they share about their experiences with community-based learning if asked? What is their understanding of how PSU's knowledge is serving the city? Through a critical qualitative research project, the proposed investigation addresses the need to understand the patterns and behaviors of these complex community-based partnerships, and to elevate the community-member experiences within them. The investigation is situated within a critical complexity framework, centering both critical social theory and pedagogy and complexity science, organizational ecology, and sustainability pedagogy. The investigation takes place within a unique CBL partnership within Portland State University's general education program, University Studies, and its Senior Capstone program.

The following chapter begins with a research overview, in which I share research goals, desired outcomes, and my relevant personal and professional positionality. Then, I offer an in-depth discussion of the particular research context and participant sample. Next, I outline the research methods that were used during the study. The proposal closes with my two-stage data analysis and quality assurance strategies, determined by prioritizing the integrity of all participants and a robust process for research validity.

Research Overview

This section will introduce the research questions guiding the study, offer a high-level orientation to the project procedures, and explain study goals and desired outcomes.

Research Questions & Study Introduction

Research is needed to further inform our understanding of the complex nature of CBL partnerships and their engagements with all stakeholders, particularly those community-members who have often been neglected in both research and partnership evaluation. The following research questions were used to direct this inquiry:

1. What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system?
2. How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system?
3. How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system's patterns and behaviors?

The following outline provides orientation to how the study attempted to answer these questions. The primary unit of analysis for this critical qualitative research project was a CBL partnership within the PSU Capstone program. The primary methods of data collection to understand the CBL partnership and partnership agent experience were three in person focus groups with partnership participants and significant in person and remote researcher-participant observation. These methods were supported by a review of background partnership documentation and online focus group follow-up interviews. The

study was done in two stages beginning with an extended participant observer period over multiple years and a subsequent preliminary analysis process, followed by a second stage of significant data collection over the course of a single academic term, and followed by a comprehensive data analysis process of all evidence collected.

Critical Qualitative Research Approach: The Study Application

Critical qualitative research (CQR) as an approach uses a variety of diverse data collection methods; however, it always requires centering concepts of power, and centering meaning-making in the data analysis process. CQR is often also thought of as a form of critical ethnography. The ethnographic aspect of CQR is a recognition that a culture of power is being investigated, whatever the other particular cultural settings or understandings might be. Additionally, the meaning-making, or knowledge creation happening is constructed democratically by collaboratively exploring first participant perceptions (whose holders may be unaware of power's influence on the social setting), and then via pragmatics and actions (which include how people speak and act in relation to power) (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002).

Goals and Desired Outcomes

Practically, the efforts applied to this critical qualitative research project, by myself and all collaborators, were a labor in developing the community-member perspective as a site of power in CBL partnerships. By creating opportunities for community-members to be heard and respected as an authority on CBL experience, it both acknowledges their experiential expertise and may shift how individuals and institutions understand the ecology of CBL partnerships, and by implication, their

impacts. Additionally, by centering, and sharing community-member perspectives on CBL projects through dissemination of project findings, alongside their organizational and institutional counterparts project collaborators will indubitably alter the pedagogical and social system at work in each unique partnership. In other words, there is an explicit actionable goal for the study's findings - for the system of a CBL partnership to develop a deeper self-knowledge through the research process, which will lead to greater purpose, engagement, and wellness for all system agents (Wheatley, 2006). Finally, by prioritizing dissemination of research findings among participating community-members and CBL collaborators, they may hopefully be encouraged to continue to share and offer partnership guidance into the future and in other settings.

There are two additional desired outcomes of the project. Firstly, this research project was designed with a wider application in mind than only the particular partnership sample in the study. The findings will also be used to engage the PSU Senior Capstone program leadership, faculty and staff, and holds opportunities as a tool for the PSU Capstone program and its faculty and community partners. Secondly, guidance was requested from the CBO partner about what they hoped to learn during this process. A best effort was made to integrate their unique needs into the data collection procedures and formats, including attention to partnership study participants and the focus group and related follow-up online interview formats. In working towards more reciprocal partnerships and shared power, this work aimed to be in direct service to the organization partnered with PSU, The Landing, to make the partnership possible. Often CBO partners don't have the resources to solicit in-depth community-member feedback regarding their

PSU partnerships, and the study findings will be able to support their desire for learning and growth as a program and an organization. Additionally, the findings regarding feedback and process from the other agent groups will also be shared with participating CBOs.

Research Context and Sample: The Micro-System

Before an in-depth discussion of data collection, including timeline, methods, and procedures, it is essential to understand the complex setting and actors involved. The setting for the study was within the Senior Capstone program at Portland State University (PSU), an urban public anchor institution. Each year, over 3000 students participate in hundreds of Capstone program courses led by University Studies (UNST), the organizing body for general education for the university ("Portland State University Studies: Introduction," 2019). These courses engage nearly 100 community-based organizations and their related community-members (Portland State University, 2017a). This section will orient the reader to this complex web of actors, and outline the two units of analysis the study prioritizes: 1) the community-based learning partnership, and 2) the agents of the partnership, specifically elevating community-member agents to have similar levels of engagement as other partnership stakeholders. This section will then describe the parameters and process used to select the specific CBL partnership that participated in the study, and the related positionality of myself as both researcher and as my concomitant roles participating in the study's CBL partnership.

Prioritized Units of Analysis

The two primary units of analysis in this study are the community-based learning partnership, and the agents of the partnership, specifically elevating community-member participants as agents and sites of expertise. The CBL partnership as a unit of analysis has been promoted and practiced in the field, due its role as the infrastructure facilitating the processes between partnership stakeholders (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Driscoll et al., 1996). The CBL partnerships in the PSU Senior Capstone program are a mutually decided upon pairing, between a faculty member of specially-designed senior-level undergraduate courses, the Capstone, and a diverse range of community-based organizations based in not only in Portland, Oregon but as far afield as Russia and Costa Rica. They will herein be referred to as CBL partnerships, or simply partnerships. When considering CBL partnerships as a unit of analysis in critical qualitative research, the collaborator community in a study is often a specific social identity, such as a racial or ethnic group, or possibly those with a shared geography or occupation (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013; Nicolaidis et al., 2011). This study is not committed to often related approaches like, participatory action research (PAR) and community-based participatory research (CBPR), however, from the critical complexity theoretical viewpoint, it is necessary to acknowledge that all research is realist, generative sites of knowledge creation (Barad, 2007). In other words, the act of doing research with human subjects impacts both the researcher and the participants in mutable ways, and both the act of knowledge creation and the sharing of it, changes those that cultivate it, encounter it, and hold it. For this study specifically, it is important to understand who the community is when it comes to

understanding how all study participants are in some ways collaborators, and how both I and they move through the world with activist intentions and real impacts. In the case of the PSU Capstone program, and its community-based learning programs, the community is a group of “community partner” organizations, and their clients or constituents, that work together on projects with Capstone courses. What is difficult here is that both the literature and UNST Capstone program defines this group of organizations and its concomitant community-members as a single “stakeholder” (“Community Partner Handbook: Portland State University Studies” 2015; Cress, Stokamer, & Kaufman, 2015; Morton & Bergbauer, 2015), yet rarely communicates with them as such, and possibly never encounters them as a group in itself, most often engaging with the various community partners as separate units working with separate Capstone courses. As well, reflexively, many of these community partners may not even know they exist within this externally constructed collective identity, as a Capstone community partner. This difficulty in defining the complex construct of “community” for Capstones is widely reflected in the CBL literature as a challenge in general for CBL assessment and research (Cruz & Giles, 2000; James & Logan, 2016; Varlotta, 1996). A goal of the study is to find common ground in the site of community, without also essentializing or decontextualizing community partner and community-member experiences, which would in effect in *othering* them further (Fine, 2018). Each community-partner organization serves widely diverse populations and holds dear its own particular missions. However, each of these organizations are working towards social change (a similar mission), most often in the greater Portland area (shared geography), and share similar human

relationships, policies, and vocabulary in regards to their parallel Capstone experiences (via Capstone program processes and requirements). In many ways, these factors bind them together as a community of common interest, a reasonable unit of analysis (Nicolaidis et al., 2011; Nicolaidis & Raymaker, 2015).

The second unit of analysis, partnership agents and specifically the agent group “community-members,” is incredibly important and the guiding motivation for the study, yet the grouping of community-members is an even more amorphous group. The complexity dynamic as shown above with community partner organizations is exacerbated when individual community-members begin to be taken into account. Even within each community-based organization (CBO), the individual community-members themselves may or may not personally co-identify as sharing a community with that organization (i.e., two youth who have at some point attended an annual CBO event). This must be almost exclusively true between community-members across CBL partnerships (i.e., a community-member finds themselves engaging in two different CBOs that both happen to have CBL partnerships with PSU’s Capstone program). I broach the complexity of defining community and community-member here, because in almost all critical and action research literature, participant or informant participation is central, and most of the time the goal is to answer the call of a specific community or organization’s articulated need. In the case of this research that explicit and direct alignment to critical relationality became the central challenge to the goal of the research itself. However, by accepting the claim that community-members engaging with CBL partnerships share a community of common interest, practitioners might then engage

them as such. Compellingly, acknowledging CBL partnership community-members as a community has a social change value, by its ability to develop solidarity among community-members and leverage that solidarity as a site of social power. Yet, by the very nature of the CBL pedagogy being practiced at a macro-institutionalized level, as well as the vast level of contextual flexibility the Capstone program offers each CBL partnership, Capstone community-member “membership” will very rarely be a self-identification. It is important to take pause here, and recognize the problematic and harmful legacy of outsiders naming and grouping people. An archetypal example of this harm is evident in the invention of race as a social construct crudely hidden under the guise of positivist hard sciences like biology and genetics (Miner & Jayaratne, 2007; Walter & Anderson, 2016; Zuberi, 2001). The literature of critical methodologies does provide evidence for working with non-traditional “communities” that experience issues in research similar to those expressed by more clearly identified minorities and barriered communities (Bernal, 2002; Denzin et al., 2008; Radloff et al., 2016). The case to make here is that much like a labor union, or other work to cultivate solidarity and shared justice, the development of a collective identification of community-members may create more opportunities for community-member voices to be elevated and integrated, within their own CBL partnership, but also possibly within the Capstone program, or even within CBL as a higher education practice. This collective identification challenge was incredibly prescient when deciding which CBL partnership would be the sample for the study. The partnership that was eventually chosen was deeply influenced by its more interconnected stakeholder roles and relationships, often rare in CBL partnerships. For

example, in this study *community-members* held both that agent role, as well as that of being a student themselves in the partnering university, PSU. More details are shared about this process and its outcomes in the forthcoming section. With this study, I humbly endeavored to explore how PSU and the Capstone program, might see and understand their CBO community partners and community-members as a community, which then might include deeper access to meaningful impact, engagement, and authentic reciprocity with the community.

The study chose one CBL partnership to investigate to provide a lens through which to explore in-depth the actors and systemic patterns and behaviors at work. One partnership allowed for broad and diverse participant engagement, as well as authentic relationship building across stakeholder groups and over time, which would have been difficult to do with more than one partnership at a time, and impossible to do from 2020-2022 with the limitations and challenges imposed by pandemic isolation and precautions. As there are so many variations of community-based learning and its partnership structures and behaviors, it can be easy to assume that patterns in one setting are not possible or relevant to another. This is not an unfair assumption, as it is critical to acknowledge that ideas like relationship, meaning, perspective, and place are crucial to successful CBL interactions, and broad generalizations are often inadvisable if not impossible (Cress et al., 2005; Jacoby, 2015; Prast & Viegut, 2014). Even so, due to the deficit of systemic and community-member knowledge in the CBL literature, this project is an attempt to fuel the conversation, and create inspiration for replication, possibly even direct experimental pedagogical application. Critical research is often used in educational

settings with similar goals (Kemmis et al., 2013; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2002).

Additionally, there are hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States that are creating course-based CBL interactions partnering with CBOs, initiated from an institutional program (Campus Compact, 2016). This project considered that the consistent aspect of institutional culture and organizational systems at work in these partnerships and interactions had the potential to offer insights across partnerships and institutions about how community-members are included, valued, and integrated into the system of partnership-oriented CBL. I believe the findings suggest powerful opportunities for application both within the site of this partnership, across the field of CBL in higher education, and frankly for the practice of inter-community partnership work in a diversity of fields.

To summarize, although these two prioritized units of analysis, a CBL partnership and the community-members of the partnership, may be both complex and sometimes difficult to delineate, the partnership provides the systemic structure for understanding CBL at work, and elevating agency and voice for community-members is essential for enacting a critical community-based learning practice.

Parameters for Partnership Sample

The community-based learning partnership that became the sample for the study was The PSU Landing at First United Method Church (The Landing). The course in the partnership was with my own course Senior Capstone: Housing and Homelessness. The Landing was additionally a partnership with ties between the university and CBOs that were independent of the Capstone course itself. This partnership offered overwhelming

opportunities for the study, and it exceeded many of the sought benefits desired by the study proposal's sample parameters, as outlined below. To initially be considered for study inclusion a rubric was created with an aim to center and authentically solicit participating community-member perspectives, as well as to engage with a community-university collaboration that was or had opportunities to develop systemic infrastructure. The starting point for sample formation included the complete UNST database for interdisciplinary Capstone courses being offered in the 2019-2020 academic year. The complete list was narrowed down using a rubric of parameters developed by myself, Capstone leadership and faculty, and in conversation with the literature in the fields of university engagement and community-based learning. To narrow the community-based learning courses, offered as Senior Capstone's in the PSU Capstone catalog, in order to find an appropriate partnership, were as follows:

Table 1
Sample Parameters for CBL Partnerships

1	Course taught \geq twice annually
2	Faculty taught course for \geq one year
3	Personal interactions between Capstone students and community-members
4	Reasonable level of risk and vulnerability for community-member participants
5	Ability to communicate metacognitive and self-reflective insights in English

The rubric in Table 1 contains the series of parameters that were applied sequentially to narrow the list of interdisciplinary Capstone courses provided by program

leadership based on university course registration documentation. The **first parameter** is that the Capstone course had to be taught at least two terms each academic year. This parameter indicates some level of consistent interaction between Capstone course and CBO, which suggests a deeper partnership relationship. My hypothesis was that this iterative state of partnership relations over the course of an academic year creates a more hospitable environment for the study and more accessibility for success of the study's intervention. This goal for sustainable connections between partnership stakeholder groups and for me as a researcher was essential, for both relationship and trust building, which facilitated possibilities for both authentic engagement in the study and possibilities for scheduling. **Secondly**, the course faculty must have taught the course for at least a year before participation in this study. These first two boundaries together encouraged that the partnership had pre-established personal relationships and communication systems in play, recognizing relationship as integral to the critical framework of CBL (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2015; hooks, 1994; Routledge, 2004). Additionally, both the CBO and course faculty needed to have previous experience engaging with and facilitating the partnership. As well, established relationships often have the ability to create more space for CBO staff and CBL faculty to be engaged in a collaborative research process. In this case of this study, this proved to be true, both between myself and my co-teacher, as well as with Landing leadership and staff. For example, ongoing relationships and communication had significant influence on focus-group protocol design and format, influenced by known communication and learning styles of partnership agents, and specifically community-members who I had interacted with in workshop-like settings

before the primary term of data collection. **Third**, community-members needed to be involved with the CBO partner via interpersonal interactions with the Capstone students in the course. To be considered for the study, the CBL partnership had to include a consistent opportunity and expectation for community-members and Capstone students to interact directly. For clarification, the literature around service-learning and CBL often names this “direct-service” (Furco & Norvell, 2019; Prast & Viegut, 2014). However, this term lacks criticality, and the focus here is not on any particular service-oriented aspect of the interaction. Rather, the focus on interpersonal interactions helps direct the focus towards community-member perspectives. This is differentiated from CBL partnerships that focus on development of CBO infrastructure or capacity-building (e.g., grant writing, marketing, etc.). For the same reasons, this parameter also eliminated Capstone courses that were primarily web-based courses. Due to COVID restrictions, this shift to indirect engagement did happen for some sections of the course; however, even then there was at least one opportunity each section for interpersonal interaction between community-members and Capstone students. For the primary section of the course that took place in fall 2022, within which the focus groups took place, there was significant and consistent weekly interactions between community-members and Capstone students. Additionally, all stakeholder groups had a chance to interact as well, as leaders and staff from The Landing partnership itself, leaders and staff from the CBO, and faculty from PSU engaged in various activities over the term together. **Fourth**, Capstone courses that fit within the original four parameters were then assessed by the level of risk and vulnerability for the community-member population to be engaged as “human subjects”

by IRB standards, as well as holding to an elevated critical standard of care and human rights encouraged by critical research scholars (Blee & Currier, 2011). In order to make the study achievable with limited resources, time, and within health and safety protocols of the time, if more than one vulnerable population designation applied to a single community-member grouping, the course was removed from the sample. An example of this includes a course that met all other parameters but engaged incarcerated minors (i.e., “Juvenile Justice” Capstone with D. Smith Arthur). This particular CBL partnership is inspiring and longstanding, and would have offered incredible community-member insight, unfortunately it would have elevated the efforts to reduce risk and receive informed consent beyond the capabilities of the study by engaging folks that were both currently incarcerated individuals and minors. In the case of The Landing, community-members were experiencing the vulnerability of severe housing insecurity, and the related trauma of those experiences. However, as active adult college students they did not as a group meet the threshold of additional IRB acknowledged vulnerabilities. **Fifth and last,** the goal for the quality of dialog and data was to explore critical and complexity theory components through a process of co-creation of meaning. This goal not only required an effort to establish relationships and a sense of safety between myself as researcher and participant collaborators, but also a fair chance for participants to communicate about those ideas. Therefore, this parameter calls for the ability to engage in metacognitive and self-reflective conversation in a limited period of time, and unfortunately, in a single shared language, based on the limitations of a dissertation project’s scope and resources. This parameter removed from the pool of CBL partnerships those that engage directly

with both early English language learners, young children (under the age of 12), and those with relevant developmental disabilities, for clear but quite diverse reasoning. The college student community-members of The Landing partnership easily met this parameter, and in fact were often seeking opportunities to critically engage in opportunities to process and reflect on their experience at The Landing.

In summary, five parameters were used to narrow the catalog of PSU Capstone courses engaging in community-based learning partnerships. The parameters and review of the catalog was informed by the insight of various PSU campus informants familiar with the program, principally the Capstone program director, other Capstone program staff, and a direct inquiry with relevant and possible study participant Capstone faculty. Once the field was narrowed, I engaged in iterative dialog over the course of more than a year with the eligible Capstone faculty, also including my own course and community partner. As the parameters were reviewed in the context of the developments of COVID-19 upheavals and lockdowns, as well as increasing demand to center trust, relationship, and the possibility of Capstone and community-member interactions, the possible sample partnership pool was reduced, until the best fit for the study sample was the community partnership with The PSU Landing at FUMC, and the Capstone Course: Housing and Homelessness. The following section will describe more about the partnership of The Landing, as it emerged as the best fit to engage as a sample partnership for the proposed study.

The Participating CBL Partnership

The sample community based-learning partnership was with The PSU Landing at FUMC (The Landing), a program of the First United Methodist Church, in partnership with Portland State University. The Landing is a collaborative community resource providing transitional safe-haven housing for Portland State University (PSU) students navigating severe housing insecurity and homelessness. The Landing is an 8-bed shelter operating in the large basement gym of the church, from 7pm until 7am on weekdays and until 8am on weekends, every night of the year. The Landing provides private sleeping spaces in painted plywood cubbies that are folded out from the wall each evening, with a small curtain strung across an entrance, and folded away in the morning to allow the church preschool to use the space. Additional church spaces for The Landing include three all-gender restrooms, showers, two kitchenettes, a study room with computers, printer, and wifi, laundry facilities, secure storage lockers, and free parking. The Landing aims to offer trauma-informed, person-centered supports, embracing trauma-informed colors, signage and layout, quiet hours, and flex spaces that can be adjusted for individual needs. Residents also have access to secure, nature-focused, calming spaces on our grounds, as well as Lift UP's on-site Preston's Food Pantry.

The Landing was launched in 2020, with funding primarily from an emergency grant from Multnomah County's Joint Office of Homeless Services, and funding from the greater Methodist Church organization. Since then, funding has come primarily from church donors and funds, as well as additional small grants and individual community

donors. PSU has also made one small direct financial contribution to the partnership project. Landing staff are employees of FUMC, managed by FUMC staff leadership, however significant volunteer hours are required for operation, often PSU students and staff. Many staff and volunteers have previously experienced housing insecurity and come with the intention to give back and support their peers. The paid and volunteer staff are on site at all hours. The Landing is open and volunteers have been trained to respond in a crisis. The Landing also developed a program to support Landing Student Residents who are interested in becoming Landing volunteers and staff. This resident program has happened both during and post their residency with The Landing, in order to support their own interests in giving back, and to offer volunteer and job resume development opportunities. Additionally, it is well documented that LGBTQ+ students are significantly more likely to experience homelessness (Townley et al., 2020), and 50% of Landing residents have identified as LGBTQ+. This has driven The Landing to conscientiously prioritize affirming, inclusive care and training. There is also absolutely no expectation that residents adhere to any particular religion, affiliation, or other restrictive manner of identifying. By validating and empowering the whole person, the Landing helps residents feel safe and secure. The Landing is also in a service-providing partnership with PSU. PSU's CARE Team and Student Basic Needs Hub, both housed in the Office of the Dean of Student Life, is the single point of referral for PSU students eligible and interested in becoming Student Residents with The Landing. Between the coordination of the CARE Team and PSU's Basic Needs Navigator, Landing Student Residents are supported with wraparound in-reach services, including PSU student meal

plans, physical and mental health care through PSU's Student Health and Counseling Center, and individual case management focused on retention (staying enrolled until graduation) and obtaining gainful employment (often via the PSU's SNAP Training & Education Program). PSU's Basic Needs Navigator refers students to the shelter and then works with each resident to help them transition to affordable, long-term housing. Student Residents are able to stay in residency at The Landing, without a time limit until they can successfully make this transition.

The Landing, as a partnership between FUMC and PSU was launched by a member of both communities who saw the need arise in his interactions with faculty reporting houseless students seeking help with little to no resources or PSU support structures in place. Under the direction of a Senior Pastor, soon to retire, FUMC facilitated a process they called "the next big thing." The congregation, with the guidance of their leadership body the Parish Council, was educated about and discussed a series of large community-driven social change projects. Along with two other ideas, a PSU student shelter inspired the congregation and a commitment was made. As FUMC pursued the administrative concerns of launching the project, a coordinating group of volunteers, including myself, came together from both the PSU and FUMC communities. This team helped to launch The Landing, and has done much of the staff and volunteer recruitment, training, management, grant writing, COVID response, and partnership management between the two larger institutions. I have been a member of this coordination team from nearly its inception. From my position on this team, I also

recognized the opportunity for deep and reciprocal community-based learning for all students, and designed and proposed a PSU Senior Capstone course to address the systemic housing crisis, and to work in collaboration with The Landing to ease the impacts of that crisis for PSU students. The first Capstone course to engage with The Landing was in the winter of 2020. In my role as both PSU faculty and a member of The Landing coordinating team, I have developed, organized, and trained Landing staff and volunteers, including Capstone students. As well as partnered with the local NGO JOIN, to offer additional volunteer training and workshops. Both paid staff and volunteers provide site support and gentle peer support services, and have all received at least basic trauma-informed and culture-of-care training, as well as engaged information about the causes, barriers, and solutions to the housing crisis, and housing justice. Since the beginning, Capstone students have engaged in both direct and indirect service with The Landing, from helping to develop organizational policies, to designing inclusive, trauma-informed Student Resident spaces at The Landing, to covering volunteer shifts during the Landing's open hours. A Capstone course was designed specifically to partner with The Landing, and was developed and launched in Fall of 2021, before this partnership happened with the work of another more broadly aligned basic needs security capstone (See Appendix B for more detail about this process and timeline). The current iteration is the Capstone: *Housing and Homelessness*, which partners with The Landing twice each academic year, typically having between 12-16 interdisciplinary seniors enrolled, and facilitates an investigation into the socio-ecological systems that impact housing and housing justice in the United States. I have now been partnering a Capstone course with

The Landing for four academic years. Since Fall of 2021, I have been co-teaching with a community-based practitioner. The purpose of co-teaching is to heighten community expertise engagement, and to offer diverse faculty perspectives for partnership stakeholders, specifically for Capstone Students. Capstone students often stay on as volunteers for The Landing after the course, some even join the coordinating team. Two additional PSU Capstone have also intermittently partnered with The Landing. In the fall of 2022, the fourth year, students participating in the Capstone engaged weekly as in-person volunteers at The Landing, for both short evening shifts and some overnight shifts sleeping at The Landing. Table 2 outlines how much of the CBL literature understandings how stakeholder groups in a CBL partnership are defined (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Cruz & Giles, 2000), and aligns the particular Landing agents and groups within those understandings.

<i>Table 2. CBL Partnership Stakeholder Agent Groups</i>	
CBL Stakeholder Groups	Landing Partnership Specifics
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Portland State University (PSU) Faculty ● PSU Institutional Actors
Community Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landing Paid Staff (FUMC employees) ● FUMC Institutional Actors ● Landing Coordinating Team (FUMC/PSU)
University Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PSU Capstone Students (i.e., Landing Volunteers)

Community-Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landing Student Residents (At various times, also Landing volunteers and paid Landing Staff)
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In fact, in Table 2 the final group of community-members is often not included at all or acknowledged as a stakeholder group, evaluative actor, or site of partnership knowledge. However, as seen in Table 3, for the purposes of this study it became important to reimagine these stakeholder groupings even further. In order to significantly elevate the voices of community-members, and to create not only an equal opportunity to engagement in partnership knowledge creation, but an equitable one, this study was limited to three stakeholder groups.

<i>Table 3. Study CBL Partnership Stakeholder Agent Groups</i>	
CBL Stakeholder Groups	Landing Partnership Specifics
Partnership Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PSU Faculty ● PSU Institutional Actors ● Landing Paid Staff (FUMC employees) ● FUMC Institutional Actors ● Landing Coordinating Team (FUMC/PSU)
University Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PSU Capstone Students (i.e., Landing Volunteers)
Community-Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landing Student Residents (At various times, also Landing volunteers and paid Landing Staff)

The process of defining stakeholder agent groups, the attention to “who’s engaged” and “what engagement,” is often significant in the CBL literature, but in reality,

the groupings are not often so clearcut. However, even guidebooks are written to support meaningful engagement for particular stakeholder groups as outlined in Table 1 (Cress et al., 2005; Gelmon et al., 2018). In the case of this study's partnership, its community-university engagement is particularly unique, in that the partnership resides within multiple PSU institutional homes, not simply between the CBO and the curricular Capstone course. As The Landing's purpose is to serve PSU students with housing needs, the Capstone student engagement became a peer-to-peer project. In engaging with the sample partnership via the three stakeholder groupings in Table 3, it allowed the study to truly put students at the center, in the more typical way, with Capstone students, and the emergent critical focus on community-members, with Student Residents of The Landing. Additionally, I did not want to exclude the perspectives of the leadership and coordinating actors from the study, however, by grouping them together, I hoped it would create a backdrop upon which university student and community-member perspectives would be better illuminated. The findings emergent from these stakeholder grouping decisions were in fact illuminating, yet in surprising and informative ways. It is also important to note, as can be seen in Table 3, that community-members sometimes also held leadership and coordinating roles in the partnership, and were not limited to constituent or client roles. This was another complicating factor in the groupings, and is also not unique in the function of many CBOs doing critical work.

Lastly, a discussion of confidentiality and the possibilities of participant exposure with a sample including so many shared specificities are important. In this study, both large participating institutions are clearly named, as well as the particular programmatic

partnership and CBL course. Some might question the transparency of the sample, and the risks to participant anonymity. Let me address these concerns in three ways. Firstly, both PSU and FUMC are doing essential and significant work towards social change, through the award-winning CBL Capstone program and the powerful housing justice response of FUMC. The Landing as a program should be elevated and promoted, and participating actors are mostly proud of their involvement, and often hope to be a resource to others in doing similar work. Therefore, this study and its reports, can serve to connect those interested in the opportunities and challenges of similar work to be directly supported and inspired. Secondly, the concerns about in-partnership critiques might be mitigated through acknowledgement of the focus group design. Much of what was shared by participants was done publicly with each other in shared discussion. Although additional data was collected in writing and anonymously, much of what was added in post focus-group online interviews was just deeper or more detailed reflections of what was shared in group discussions. Third and most importantly, is the risk of outing or exposing community-member residents of The Landing. Student Residents expressed specific concerns of being targeted as “homeless”. I have taken the utmost care to anonymize their responses, however, it was made clear to all participants that the findings would name The Landing specifically and within a small community there were risks of anonymity being preserved. My own participant-observer status is also uniquely exposed and interconnected with real and ongoing personal and professional relationships. Although this might bring some risk to myself, the importance of engaging in critical relationship-driven knowledge creation projects outweighs the concern. The following

researcher positionality section is particularly relevant in these terms.

Researcher Positionality

In all projects of knowledge creation, and so importantly within the problematic legacy of higher education institutions and their research processes, it is imperative to ask and publicly answer “Who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?” (Herr & Anderson, 2015). This study is unquestionably somewhat personal, although many academics and researchers attempt to avoid the personal for risk of bias, as a forfeiture of credibility and validity (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rudolph, 2015). However, this project, like many scholarly academic pursuits, is guided by intellectual rigor, identified expertise within the field, an ongoing critical conversation with the literature, and the material intra-action of a real human researcher. From within my motivations, driven by an ethic of care, my choice of field, the study’s focus, and the design of the project as influenced by a both personal and professional relational ethics, who I am in this project matters, is material. This personal connection aligns with a realist perspective that the activity of research itself instigates change and impacts relationships (Barad, 2007; Mazzei, 2013). From the choice of study sample to my interpretation of the evidence, all is filtered through the lens of my social location and systemic understanding of the world. Each phase of this work is affected by my humanity, and my humble attempt to be respectful of the humanity of others.

Am I an insider or an outsider? Even this question has been elegantly complicated by critical theorists recognizing such positions as the “outsider within” (Acker, 2001; Collins, 2002). All research starting in the academy requires boundary crossings and

identity negotiations (Villenas, 1996), and this project includes a particularly complicated set of borders, for myself as the primary researcher, as well as for the stakeholders and communities engaged. I began this study as an outsider-within, through study design and Stage One data collection. However, as I reflect on my positionality as the project comes to a close after years of my involvement and participant-observation, I stand clearly inside the boundaries of this open system. I have been materially changed through my relationality with this project, as well as by the people I have come into deep relationship with. However, it would also be inauthentic not to recognize how I was motivated and informed by my personal and professional identification with many of the study's stakeholder positions, before this study even began. Herein, and throughout the study, I strive for transparency, as all involved in this project are attempting to navigate the unique relationships and power dynamics inherent in the work we have done together (Herr & Anderson, 2015). To begin to understand these entangled relationalities, I will begin by sharing some of my own standpoints and identities.

Withing the collaborative work of community-based learning, I have long been an insider. I have been involved in CBL since I was a high school adolescent myself. When I reflect on my educational autobiography, I am awed to see that every single transformational moment I track as paradigm-shifting was a result of learning in or with community, often outside of formal educational settings. If CBL is: experiential learning, educational travel, and transformational learning in partnership and relationship with a community, then I am a lifelong insider. I have also led community-based organizations, which hosted teachers and their students in communities both in the United States, as

well as in Central America and Europe. I have hosted young high school and college students in communities that were foreign to them in so many ways, and again in other settings where they began to see new galaxies in their own backyards. In roles as an educator, non-profit executive, and institutional consultant, I have negotiated, compromised, and eased tensions when requests for student learning outcomes and “safety” in CBL trumped the essential existence of the community-members being “served.” I have watched both silently and protested furiously, as humans in their own homes became merely containers for holding the experiences of visiting students. If our reality is socially and historically constructed, I have seen visionary moments when the truth was defined by everyone present, and other times when community-based meant only community used.

As this is a work of a boundary-crossing partnership, where community is both inside and outside of the academy, I am again, at least currently, an academic insider. My primary professional identity is presently that of a doctoral student, curricular consultant, and an adjunct faculty instructor at PSU. I have taught undergraduate and graduate level courses in the greater Portland area, and have been mentored and supported by PSU Capstone faculty and leadership, and their pedagogical praxes. I have been building relationships with and learning from those who lead, teach, and are passionate about the Senior Capstone program and its courses for nearly a decade now. I was drawn to this university distinctly because of its community-based learning Capstone program and undergraduate graduation requirement. I respect this program, and the incredible educators and administrators within it. I envision facilitating future connections between

my community and students at PSU with the community-based organization I once led in Nicaragua; to connect two communities I love dearly to learn together and from each other. In this web of stakeholders and roles as a member of the Portland State University community, I most closely resemble that of the Capstone faculty. Frankly, in looking at the majority of Capstone instructors, this is true even in our often-shared social identities as white college-educated ciswomen.

I also identify as a Portlander, but only through my adult experiences here. I was not born here, and I was not raised here. I may never be Indigenous to this place, yet I hope to do my best to naturalize myself with this Place. I live here, as Kimmerer (2013) would say, “as if [my] children’s future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do” (p. 215). Yet, I am not a recent immigrant to this place, my people came to the U.S. 200 hundred years ago and came to the west coast over a hundred years ago. I come from a tragic and story-filled legacy of colonization and manifest destiny, passed to me through the matriarchs of my family. I have become a mother here myself and over the course of this project, a change so material I still struggle to find the words, even as my daughter turns five next month. I live in a 110-year-old home in the City of Portland, with a 111-year-old tree as a neighbor. In short, I can imagine being happy to return to the Land here. In our city shaded by urban forest, I have come to know for the first time what being in relationship with a Place might really mean. I am beginning to know my sister rivers, and watershed, the plant families, and the constellations that fly overhead each season. I know how to get around without a map, beside the one in my head and in my stories. I know the names of

the bridges, and have stood among thousands on their decks to reclaim a future we would be proud to live in. I can appreciate the challenges this city faces, and I am beginning to understand the legacies that caused them. I feel a responsibility and a humility for the hurt these challenges cause the people I share this city with. In our city overwhelmed with humans, too many of them with even their most basic needs unmet, I yearn to be an ally in re-storying the shape of progress. However, as Tuck & Yang (2012) affirm, decolonization is not a metaphor. Much like the genocide of the river and salmon peoples of our region, and the redlining, isolation, and gentrification of Portland's communities of color, Portland's mode of existence on any map has long been painful for many, and recent growth and "Portlandia" pop culture celebrity offer no exception. The path of place-making in Portland has been challenging for me, as I do the work required to truly learn about this Land and its peoples as an ecological and historical place. As I struggle with the path of becoming more than just an ally, this study is one project in which I hope to actively live knowing as Emma Lazarus knew in 1883, "until we are all free, none of us is free" (Lazurus, 1883).

And in this vein, when it comes to the traumatic and paradigm-shifting experiences of being unhoused, I remain an outsider. I do not claim this status to assert some positivist notion of neutral observer and documentarian. I am in both professional and personal relationships with the agents of the CBL partnership of this study, and they move me. I myself am an agent changed by The Landing partnership. And, I must continually ask myself who I am in relationship with these relations. I will include one relevant reflection of my status as (re)defined by those I have been in relationship with

over the course of this study. I was once young and brave and afraid, yet my gender expression protected me in a way so many in this project were not. I did not come into my body as a young person and find it misnamed and misunderstood by others. I was not told I should love someone other than the people I have loved. I do not live with daily fear in my body about safety, care, nourishment, separation, and rest. And yet, this unknowing I hold, which persists still at the far end of this project, is the reason I have come to do this work. This unknowing I hold is why knowledge creation, when it is a procreative and inclusive process, is significant work. Our unknowing and ongoing becoming is how we learn to fall down together, and then to get up again in a future of radical relationality. I come as this sort of outsider to learn from my communities, and with a soul-work purpose to facilitate, from *facile* - to make easier, the telling of stories that can change us. With this public reflection of my own positionality and context, my work within this study is an attempt to prioritize ways of knowing and being that can change us, to illuminate our radical relationality and its ethical implications for the relationships which we inhabit.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

As with most critical qualitative research, various data collection methods were employed in this study, including critical qualitative ethnographic observations, focus groups, online focus group follow-ups, and an analysis of relevant partnership background documentation. I include a variety of methods in alignment with the critical complexity framework. In order to create authentic opportunities to share experience, and co-create meaning for participants, it was essential to collect insight from as many

stakeholders as possible in settings similar to how each person's role typically interacts with the partnership. This diversity of data collection methods allowed me to be a) an observer in settings where the CBL partnership was in action, b) in group settings with collectively-established norms (focus groups), and to pursue follow-up thoughts, feelings and narratives in written format. Additionally, participation for all agent groups included information and acknowledgement at the outset that data collected during the study would be shared out in meaningful ways for all agent groups. Opportunities to offer ideas about how to share feedback among stakeholders was included in all focus groups, in an effort to create responsive research and develop a more robust feedback loop process beyond the scope of the dissertation itself. This process was sustained throughout the study by including an online focus group follow-up, after in person data collection. To allow for participants to continue to share deeper, additional or ongoing partnership reflections, anonymously if they liked. The study methods hoped to potentially improve how the CBL partnership shares and integrates information, and engages participating community-members. In the following section, I will outline an adaptation of Carspecken's (1996) multi-phase method of critical qualitative research, followed by the procedures for each data collection method. All data was used to develop an understanding of the systemic function of a CBL partnership, and to ensure those partnership practices were equitable and empowering from all partnership agents. The following section provides an overview of the data collection timeline, and detailed descriptions of methods used.

Data Collection Overview and Timeline

Critical qualitative research is a political act, one that takes ethical responsibility for human liberation, and in this case has the goal of moving from “what is” for individual study participants, to a deeper understanding of “what is” systemically, into the generative space of “what could be” (Hardcastle et al., 2006; Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993). Diverse sources and types of data were gathered to help meet this goal, with the addition of a significant period of participant observation. Data collection for this study included two stages. Stage One included researcher participation in the CBL partnership, both as a faculty member of the CBL Capstone course, as well as a founding Coordinating Board member for The Landing itself. It also included my engagement in partnership observations while actively recording ethnographic field notes about the partnership. Stage Two included three in-person focus groups, online focus group follow-up interviews, a review of the collection of partnership documentation, additional observations including immediate and ongoing researcher memos, and ongoing accumulation and analysis of field notes, in order to achieve a high level of descriptive validity. Stage one participant-observation began in the spring of 2020, after IRB approval was granted. Stage Two was meant to begin in the same term; however, due to COVID, Stage Two did not begin until the fall of 2022. Over the course of this time, various study design and sample changes became necessary, and the original research plan has been slightly amended. Most notably, the study’s timeline and inclusion of one CBL partnership in the sample, versus three. The entirety of Stage two activities happened during the fall academic quarter of 2022, after in person engagement had

become significantly safer for most partnership stakeholders. Focus groups were professionally transcribed within a month after the focus groups concluded, and were closely reviewed by the research for accuracy, including typos, punctuations, voice ascriptions, etc. Additional handwritten data created by focus group participants was transcribed by the researcher within the same month. Reflective researcher memos were created after each focus group, and directly after the transcript revisions supported by multiple reviews of the audio recordings of the focus groups. The following sections will outline each data collection method, including observations, focus groups, online focus group follow-up interviews, and document analysis.

CBL Partnership Observation

Participatory observation began during PSU's academic spring term, April of 2020. Observations began in connection with the development of The Landing partnership, and teaching the first section of the Capstone that was working on supporting the policy development of The Landing. At this point, both for myself as a participant of the emergent partnership, as well as my students at the time, much of the work was about gathering information. For the purposes of the research project, it was particularly aligned with capturing an early etic record, capturing simply what was happening and developing, including interactions, motivations, relationships, interacting social roles and routines, and individual and group dynamics. Data collection from observations was often engaging heavily with inter-stakeholder interactions, captured via jottings and journaling, and longer reflective memos, as encouraged by the critical qualitative research (CQR) approach (Kemmis et al., 2013). These observations helped me to

develop my own understanding of context and how the partnership was manifesting. Carspecken (1996) would call this work a cultural reconstruction, and in this case maybe it was also part of the actual cultural construction of the partnership. As has been shown repeatedly in critical qualitative or critical ethnographic studies, by seeing the partnership in action with all stakeholders present, my ability to understand and analyze stakeholder insights about their own experiences was significantly elevated (Georgiou & Carspecken, 2002). I continued this participant observation, capturing field notes and research memos over the course of the next two and half years, through December of 2022. These observations as a participant were also focused on developing relationships with partnership leadership and coordinators, the development of a co-teaching relationship, as well as engagement with both Student Residents and Capstone students. This appreciable amount of time allowed me the privilege of developing trust, interacting with the social system of the partnership and the two greater institutional partners, Portland State University and Portland's First United Methodist Church, and permitted me to demonstrate to partnership participants my personal interest and support (Carspecken, 1996).

Participant Recruitment

This study is a unique application of critical action research, with a participatory role for many of the collaborators, due to their impact on study format over the course of multi-year participant-observation in Stage One of data collection. Based on best practices for focus group and group facilitation techniques (Gibson, 2007; Kook et al., 2019) the goal was between six and eight participants for each focus group.

Approximately 15-20 participants were invited from each of the three stakeholder groups, and there were between six and eight participants present for each focus group.

Participation in the online focus group follow-ups was offered only to those present in person at each initial focus group, and between 3-5 focus group participants from each session completed the online focus group follow-up interviews.

Background Partnership Documentation

As previously addressed in Stage One, a review of four background partnership documents were included and coded for the study. They include:

- Capstone Course Syllabus: The syllabus is the foundational process, values and planning document for a course. I included the syllabus as it documented student engagement expectations, and how The Landing partnership was often introduced to new partnership participants. The syllabus has been modified over the course of the various terms the Capstone was offered. The most recent and most relevant to study participants was from this academic term (November, 2022; See Appendix A)
- Landing Partnership Proposal & Agreement: This document was created in partnership with the Landing coordinating team, and was used for the PSU Capstone course proposal. (December, 2019; See Appendix B)
- The Landing Website: The website was created and hosted by the First United Methodist Church, with input from staff, Student Residents, and Coordinating Team members. The website has been amended significantly over time. (Accessed November, 2022)
- Memo of Understanding: Partnership agreement between Portland State University and Portland's First United Methodist Church (2019)

These documents were chosen to support systemic and structural analysis of the partnership. A review of these documents supported Stage One and Stage Two analysis,

and offered contextual understanding of the partnership, its agents, and its systemic processes.

Focus Groups

With the three pre-defined stakeholder groups, I conducted one two-hour focus group. These interactions were central to the study's goals, and method choice to method format are designed with attention to the systemic nature of the partnership and attention to power dynamics within the partnership, in alignment with the critical complexity conceptual framework.

Logistics.

Partnership agents had the opportunity to participate in a single focus group session. For Capstone Students, it was held in week nine of the last weeks of the 11-week academic term, in which they participated in the partnership. For community-members, or in the case of this partnership Landing Student Residents, their focus group was held the week after the fall academic term was over. The Landing leaders and coordinators focus group was held the same week. Both of these focus groups took place in person in a large meeting space familiar to participants in the First United Methodist Church. All three focus groups came at a time of transition for the partnership, and within one month of each other. Focus groups were scheduled for two hours, and were scheduled in response to sample feedback on best availability and modality. Discussion of consent, confidentiality, and dissemination was a part of all focus groups. (Three unique stakeholder group informed consent forms can be seen in Appendix D.) The Capstone

Student focus group happened in the course classroom space, during class time, to accommodate student requests for accessible participation, and with the expressed interest that a reflection on the Landing partnership and Capstone Student participation should be a part of the Capstone course. The other two focus groups happened during evening hours, after various rounds of emails confirming the best availability. For the course of the two-hour sessions, the first 30 minutes everyone took time to share a provided meal (breakfast, and two dinners), as well as time for orientation to the study and a review of study consent forms. The following 90 minutes included three semi-structured focus group activities. The 90-minute sessions were scheduled to promote a reasonable depth of engagement, while also aiming to avoid attention fatigue (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Wibeck et al., 2007). For the most part, all participants were still actively engaged at the close of the two hours, and in all sessions, participants remained afterwards to continue to discuss the partnership, while also expressing fatigue at the end of the day. This was particularly true for community-members, who all stayed at least an additional 20 minutes, and then some continued to plan for future times to connect and to coordinate supporting each other around meal leftovers and rides home. A note-taker was present at each focus group, with instructions to capture process, facilitation feedback, and any relevant comments or questions that may not be picked up on the audio-recording due to equipment placement. Researcher memos were created immediately after the departure of the final participant for each focus group, including a review of the note-takers jottings.

Focus group literature suggests that between four to eight participants is a good size to facilitate meaningful participation and insights encouraged, particularly when the construction of a collective identity may not yet exist (Gibson, 2007; Munday, 2006). This goal was met for all three focus groups, and more details will be provided in the following sections. The focus group logistics provided a consistent structure for a supportive process of critical co-construction of knowledge; however, centering the structures and cultures of each stakeholder group was foremost, and some variations between invitations to participate, timing, and sample size occurred to be responsive to participant needs.

Method choice.

The purpose of the focus group discussions at the end of the term were for each group of stakeholders to engage in a meta-cognitive reflection on their experience with the partnership through co-operative inquiry (Godden, 2017). In recent years, use of focus groups has increased in critical and participatory inquiries, as contrasted with their more typical marketing-oriented usage (Kook et al., 2019; Romm, 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2019). The focus group is an appropriate method for this study, as it facilitates a process of collective co-construction of the meaning of a group's experience; a collaborative articulation of the ecosystem of relevant interactions from participant perspective (Farquhar & Tesar, 2016; Kook et al., 2019). Wibeck et al., (2007) articulate it as a process of "collective sense-making" (p. 249). Focus groups also have the ability to emulate Freire's (1970) conscientization, allowing for increased knowledge of self

through collective reflection on the social system's we occupy, which is central to the action nature of this critical qualitative action research study.

Focus group format.

The focus groups centered the goal of narrative agency, and focus groups were designed to create opportunities for community-members to co-create and share their understanding of the partnership and their experiences within it. That design was mirrored for the other two stakeholder groups. Empowerment and reciprocity, values of critical CBL, were also at the heart of focus group design, beginning communications and the session itself with a clear discussion on consent and understanding the action-oriented goals of the study. Discussions were oriented towards how partnership agent perspectives can influence the way others engage and interact with agents.

The focus group format included individual, paired, and collective group activities, with written, oral, visual, and mapping components. These various methods of engagement supported various communication and learning styles, offering an elevated level of accommodation and inclusion. Each focus group had three activities. The first activity was to remember and reflect on both meaningful and challenging experiences with the Landing partnership, and to capture personal stories and reflections on paper. The second activity was to share one meaningful and one challenging story with a partner. Each pair then created a word bank for their shared stories. All of the words from the group's stories were then posted to the wall to create a collective word bank, which participants were then asked to discuss as a whole group. The third activity was a process of mapping the partnership with an impromptu cluster map. Participants were asked to

brainstorm and post to the wall, a) Who? Partnership actors and agents, b) What?

Partnership interactions and activities, and c) How? Feelings and features of partnership interactions and activities. Participants were encouraged to be responsive and inspired by what others added, and to add ideas to the map iteratively. The group then was prompted to discuss their co-created partnership map. Finally, participants were asked to envision a future for the partnership, one in which all the best parts of the partnership were enhanced and had come to fruition. Participants added their visions for the future to the map, and then again were prompted to discuss their collective understanding of the partnership and their visions for the future. The diversity of the three focus group activities was used to encourage engagement and accessibility, to develop voice and intragroup trust within the focus group session, and to pilot a variety of ways to gather partnership perspectives and feedback. The collection of these three activities was incredibly useful in facilitating authentic, meaningful and universal participation from focus group participants.

The types and diversity of activities constructed an effective way to meet the goal of the study to understand the complex nature of the partnership system and the diversity of agent perspectives. The increasing collectivity of the activities helped scaffold the group from personal experiential expertise to co-generating concepts and partnership structures, through opportunities to share and then respond to focus group peers, iteratively (Barton, 2001; Edgell et al., 2016; Kenny et al., 2001; Munday, 2006). The activities included a cohesive and fairly equivalent data set across focus groups, through a variety of activities, by generating a collection of significant or key words for analysis, and offering images (by way of the creation of a collective map) for analysis (Clark-

Ibáñez, 2004; Cox & Benson, 2017; Gieseeking, 2013). It allowed for the co-creation of knowledge through independent work and peer to peer interactions, while also making the format accessible for various communication styles and eliciting additional sensory interactions (Kenny et al., 2001; Kwasnicka et al., 2015; Tsui & Franzosa, 2018). Finally, both formats allowed for open-ended time for direct verbal responses and participant-directed conversations. The sessions were audio-recorded, and audio-recordings were professionally transcribed.

All focus groups closed with a clear explanation of the stakeholder groups involved in the study, and a clear commitment to share the collective outcomes of the focus groups activities across agent groups. This dissemination commitment is an essential aspect of the critical action research approach and proposed feedback loop process, and was the subject of great interest and concern for participants in all three focus groups. (Detailed focus groups protocols can be found in Appendix D.)

Community-member focus group.

All past and current Landing Student Residents were invited to participate, and seven were present for the focus group. The group consisted of two current residents, three past residents, one past resident who had also been a volunteer paid staff member, as well as one past resident who was currently still a volunteer and substitute paid staff member. Participants' experience ranged from those in residency across all years that The Landing was open, from early days to the present. All community-member participants had at least some direct interaction with Capstone students during the course of their participation in the partnership. After confirmation of PSU's IRB approval and

confirmation that study participation would be properly de-identified, the Landing Coordinating Team approved direct communication with Student Residents about the study. The Landing Coordinating leadership also included PSU referral staff in accordance with FERPA regulation considerations. Student Residents of The Landing were then identified by Landing staff, and were contacted via email and text message, according to their documented preferences. Community-members confirmed during the review of the Consent to Participate form that they would be participating in a focus group, an online focus group follow-up interview, and additional observational experiences. Community-members were compensated for their time in the focus group and for participation in the online focus group follow-up, by receiving an electronic gift card of \$100 for both focus group and online follow-up activities. They did not have to complete the online follow-up, in order to be compensated for the first step of the focus group.

Capstone student focus group.

At the end of the academic term, Capstone students participated in a focus group. This process of engagement with focus groups started at the beginning of the term, when Capstone students were introduced to the project and invited to participate, and informed about the end of term optional focus group participation. The process of recruitment was ongoing throughout the term to prepare students for their participation, and to remind and encourage them to feel empowered about their choice to opt-out of participation. The Capstone student focus group was 90 minutes, the duration of a single class session. The format mirrored the format of other focus groups closely. All Capstone student

participants (identified by Capstone course roster) were invited to participate via in class discussions. Capstone students were also informed of their ability to opt-out via verbal and/or written communication, and even offered the possibility of not being present that day. They were also informed their participation would have no impact on their course grade. (See Capstone Student Consent Form in Appendix C.) The Capstone course for the partnership for the focus group term had 15 students registered, and eleven were present on the day of the focus group, all of which participated in the study. One student left early and another one arrived late. The Capstone co-teacher was present as technical support and note-taker, and offered debriefing notes that were included in a researcher memo

Leaders & Coordination focus group.

Those invited to the Leadership and Coordination focus group include a range of partnership involvement. PSU and FUMC institutional actors were invited, as well as the entire Landing coordination team, the most recent Landing staff coordinator. The Capstone co-teacher was also invited but was not able to attend. She was however able to offer a partnership participant peer check of the findings discussed in Chapter 4. Six people participated in this two-hour focus group, including many members of the Landing coordinating board, including participants from the both the PSU side and the FUMC community. This focus group also included FUMC leadership, and one past Landing staff member. Some of the participants held multiple of these roles. As I shared the role of faculty and Landing Coordinating Board member with these focus group participants, I found I was deeply satisfied by the evidence that resulted from this focus

group, and felt represented by many of the opinions that were shared, as well as profoundly informed in new ways by other perspectives that were shared.

Online Focus Group Follow-Up Interviews

After participation in one of the focus groups, participants were invited to share additional thoughts, feelings, reflections, information, and related background and demographic information. This follow-up was originally included as a component of the in-person focus groups. However, after significant feedback and insight gained during Stage One data collection and analysis, I amended the protocol to offer the opportunity for an online and written follow-up, after the focus groups. Reasons for this shift included: Divergent and diverse accessibility issues offering more time, space, and another format for focus group participants to engage with the reflective and reflexive process of The Landing partnership. This change explicitly supported partnership participants with ADD, ADHD, social anxiety, and other mental health needs. Additionally, original design included the possibility for a follow-up focus group, to share additional feedback and insights, due to public health concerns, offering a follow-up opportunity that was not in person felt attentive to participants' personal health and well-being. The online focus group follow-up interview included a return to many of the prompts offered during the focus group, space for open-ended feedback, questions regarding relevant demographic information, as well as the option for anonymity. (The link for this element of data collection can be found in the Focus Group Protocol in Appendix D.)

In summary, the data collection methods for this critical research study included participant observations, background document analysis, and focus groups with an online

follow-up component. These methods were conducted with three agent groups including Capstone course students, partnership leaders and coordinators, and novel to CBL research, the community-member participants. The variety of agent group voice and diversity of data collection methods is intended to create a data set that allows for the cultural reconstruction and systemic data analysis necessary to understand CBL partnerships in a critical complexity framework.

Data Analysis and Quality Assurance

In this section, I outline the details of the data analysis process, including the two-stages of data analysis, as per the iterative process of a critical ethnography, or a CQR approach. This section will also close with a discussion of strategies to ensure validity and quality assurance, and study limitations.

Data analysis for both stages was informed by Carspecken's (1996) critical qualitative research (CQR) approach. The first stage of data analysis came at the close of Stage One of data collection consisting of participant observations. The participant observations were a direct result of the insider status of myself as the researcher, as well as the agent roles I embody in the partnership itself, over the previous two years of participation, from Spring 2020 to Spring of 2022. Stage One included the creation of related field notes and researcher memos, as well as jottings regarding two pieces of partnership documentation, including the original CBL partnership agreement and the current Capstone course syllabus. Stage Two of data analysis happened at the close of the primary academic term of the study, fall 2022, and included all of the data collected during the study, both a secondary review of Stage One evidence, as well as the

additional data collected from focus groups, focus group follow-ups online, partnership documentation, and additional observations. Using the framework of CQR as a basis for my methodological approach allowed for a dual nuance in data analysis. It first centered on the often unheard voices of certain individuals or groups, but then also required a systemic analysis that might not have been previously revealed to actors that are seen as peripheral in the system. In this way, it aligned incredibly well with a critical complexity framework, and the peripheral positionality of CBL community-members, and their simultaneous centrality in the study.

Stage One was the initial data analysis stage. It included a read through of all written observational materials before the beginning of the primary data collection term, Fall 2022. From this reading, I produced three researcher memos, refined the study design based on sample feedback, and began an initial code logbook. The three memos included: a) An overall reflection on systemic themes from partnership, as well as patterns of general patterns of engagement of different stakeholder groups, as was an initial step to create a summary of the partnership system from my single observational stance; b) a reflexive analysis of my own ongoing participant status, and how my of agent roles had evolved and engaged with various stakeholder groups, and an effort to understand how that was affecting both my own participation, as well as how it might impact my participation as researcher in the partnership and my lens of analysis of the forthcoming data; and c) capture all of the stakeholder group feedback that might be relevant in refining study design. This included feedback from every group about research participation. This feedback was essential to doing a critical qualitative study.

including this limited iterative and participatory process served to support engagement, meaning, and accessibility for possible study participants. Examples of this feedback included questions and concerns about mental and behavioral health of participants, diverse and divergent learning, conflict, and communication styles for participants at work in the partnership, the fatigue and fear and precautions resulting from multiple spikes of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racist state-sanctioned and enacted violence and the mass movement to protect Black lives, and a resulting general research fatigue. The three memos included reproductions of partnership routines, unusual events, reflection and reflexive analysis, which is suggested by Carspecken (1996) as a review for “meaningful acts” (pp. 95–101) and “pragmatic horizons” i.e., reflecting on what is foregrounded or backgrounded (pp. 103–105). The memos also included personal ideas, stakeholder ideas, peer and colleague checks, and additional literature reviews, all in order to create appropriate methodological responses to feedback. This process was planned specifically to amend study design details and protocols to be responsive to the needs of the partnership and its participants. Partnership influences design and protocol decisions allowed for the focus group process to be more relevant and accessible to the agents of the partnership, and demonstrated early efforts to extend collaboration and study agency to more CBL partnership participants. During Stage One analysis, I also created an initial code log based on a review on the provisional codes considered during the study proposal stage in fall of 2019, and the outcomes from the three researcher memos. I decided at the time that using the coding via relevant principles from the study’s critical complexity theoretical framework, as well as the principal elements of

community-based learning collated in the literature review, would serve me well based on initial observational reflections. These included codes for elements from systems and complexity theories (e.g., adaptation, emergence, feedback/input), and their related sustainability pedagogy (e.g., context, experiential process, ecological design, etc.), and codes from principles of critical social and critical race theory (e.g., intersectionality, interest convergence, community cultural wealth, etc.), and related critical pedagogy principles (e.g. praxis, interdependency, etc.). (Complete list of codes included in Appendix E). In addition, as the partnership had developed significantly over the years of observation, I added the partnership's five self-identified values, including 1) autonomy/agency, 2) inclusion (of diverse social identities), 3) safety, 4) trust, and 5) respect (nothing about us, without us). These five values were both unique and, in some ways, overlapping with the more theoretically driven codes. In the development of the code logbook, I also created definitional comments for each code, to help create a reference check to avoid drift in code associations (Creswell, 2013) including insights of my own “normative reflections” to check my coded interpretations of communication, meaningful for the cultural norms I will inherently bring with me into the field (Carspecken, 1996, p. 100). I returned to these comments, adding and reflecting on them regularly throughout the later coding process. Stage One was significant in that it created the bridge from an etic, or outsider perspective, towards the more nuanced emic, or insider perspective. As the partnership developed, so too did both my understanding of it, as well as my participation. The aim in Stage One was to collect data from an etic perspective, to begin as an outside and as my own understanding of and engagement with

partnership relationships evolved towards being deeply embedded within the partnership. I myself was changed by the partnership, in both relevant roles and in constitution. This related initial analysis phase was like a pause button, an initial reflection of the relationships developing and processes that structured meaningful actions and ways of knowing in the partnership. As qualitative analysis literature suggests, this read through of the initial data allowed for emergent thoughts, ideas, and reflections (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The subsequent Stage Two was a more dialogical stage, wherein I was more directly involved with partnership participants as a sample group and as study participants, in order to construct and understand the system and its agents from my insider, or emic, perspective.

Stage Two analysis came after Stage Two data collection, which included a variety of dialogic, collaborative, and interactive methods of data collection, centering three focus group interviews. CQR thinks of this stage of the process as an analysis of the “behavioral routines locked into system relations” (Georgiou et al., 1996, p. 320). For this study, this stage was the central process of discovering system intra-relationships and outcomes. Stage Two began with reviewing the complete data set, including: two previously notated partnership documents, transcripts of three focus groups, additional digitized focus group data, including collective word banks, partnership cluster maps, and hand-written participant stories from Activity One, online focus group follow-ups, Stage One jottings and field notes from observational sessions, and a logbook of initial codes and their comments. In addition to the complete review, I also captured a researcher memo for each focus group audio-recording, after my listening for the first time. With the

evidence collected, organized and reviewed, I then began to add coding to my analysis process.

My main analysis process consisted of iterative coding and memo creation, as well as regular and iterative peer checks with colleagues familiar with the project or the partnership. For the coding process, I began with the improved provisional codes predetermined from the literature review of the theoretical framework (Saldana, 2015) as well as the addition of the Landing partnership's promoted values. I had the choice to code the data by stakeholder group or by method sets. I chose to code by method, as it allowed me to see interconnecting perspectives immediately, for example, coding all of the meaningful stories from all three focus groups together. Carspecken (1996) recommends that this is an opportunity to discover links between one method and another. However, I applied similar thinking to make interconnections between perspectives in one method. After doing the first stage of coding, many of the coding groups became prominent and served well to capture the patterns of knowledge being shared, while others were rarely used. However, in scanning and assessing for systemic patterns, two broad concepts related to agency and relationality were ubiquitous, and it was necessary to add codes related to the forthcoming findings, including a) sense of belonging or alienation, and b) normative responses/sense of responsibility/relational attunement.

Although the coding was informative, I also found the process of coding significantly problematic. Coding often felt at odds with the study's purpose and the emergent findings. Within the theoretical framework of the study, committed to the

intersectional nature of social systems and their dynamics of power, and also to the complex and ecological nature of partnership systems, to engage in a process of (dis)integration of the data, a separation and isolation of elements, in order to understand the interconnected nature of the knowledge, often felt like applying watchmaker's tools to a group therapy session. As Strauss (1987) put it when elucidating aspects of qualitative research of social phenomena, the goal of coding is not to count, but to “fracture” the data in order to “rearrange it into categories” (p.29). Yet, this exact process of fracture seemed to be contraindicated, where instead this study was pursuing fractals, repeating patterns at different scales within significant structures. In other words, the goal of the study was to understand the more holistic and systemic nature of the partnership. Yet again, this sense of divergence while coding also simultaneously illuminated the major finding related to the significance of relationship and relationality in and within CBL partnerships, to be explained in Chapter Five.

With these challenges with my iterative coding process, as well as ongoing analysis through memoing, many of the emerging patterns were pleasantly unexpected, but not surprising. In order to deepen the analysis, I returned to Carspecken's (1996) CQR approach, which suggested a return to the literature. He refers to this as a practice of theoretical validity, or checking how researcher conclusions from the data align with or contradict particular theories or systemic conceptualizations. I found significant resonance in the additional literature of feminist new materialism, Indigenous onto-epistemological frameworks, and complexity leadership theory. The purpose of this

process was to engage in a theoretical dialog with the data; “to seek explanation of your findings through social-theoretical models” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 195).

In summary, the data analysis process included early action reflective and reflexive journaling and memoing in Stage One, and robust coding, memoing, and a return to a dialog with relevant literature in Stage Two. Throughout both data collection and data analysis stages, a commitment to the trustworthiness of this dynamic process was crucial.

Validity & Quality Assurance

I used a range of strategies and sensibilities to do my utmost to honor all participants and stakeholders as co-creators of this knowledge and to limit any possibilities for causing harm. The success of productive research is often tested by validity, or accuracy of findings. Lather (1993), offered a critique of validity as solely acknowledging consistent outcomes, sameness, or generalizability. She asserts that validity lacks a robustness in a postmodern world, where subjectivities, paradox, and complexity are essential to understanding truth. Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) offer the concept of quality assurance as an alternative, elevating the rigor of qualitative research while being responsive to a critical ethical perspective. In this study, in order to pursue quality assurance, I applied a variety of measures to ensure a legitimate and trustworthy study, including attentiveness to both internal and external credibility.

Internal credibility can be thought of as the truth value within the study’s setting, the dependability and consistency of interpretations within the internal context of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In this case of nested systems, I have strategized to include internal credibility within the work with the micro-systems of the particular CBL

partnership. Methods for attaining various types of validity have been built into data collection and data analysis procedures. Rather than reject or ignore this seeming contradiction between the simultaneous obfuscation and the illumination of qualitative coding, I also was attentive to both paralogic and rhizomatic validity. These two types of validity created room for paradoxical (paralogic) and complex vs. linear (rhizomatic) interpretations of study data. Attentiveness to paradox and complexity in data analysis within a critical complexity conceptual framework was essential. Additionally, as addressed above, theoretical validity was also a supportive constraint during the analysis process. Additional strategies for internal credibility include the process of outlining my researcher positionality for my committee and as well as at the beginning of each focus group, although in a more limited capacity. I believe this helped all participants, including myself, be aware of positional confirmation and observational bias (Carspecken, 1996; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995). Finally, ongoing researcher memos, and a reflective code logbook process also served as effective strategies to maintain internal credibility.

Another specific threat of internal bias was the process of engaging community-members as special and in a way that is not typical, which might have constituted a reactivity or novelty threat. The act of empowering community-members to assert and enact increased partnership agency might change how they would normally respond, simply due to the study participation process. Candidly, the activist agenda of this study aims to purposely increase this effect, not only during the course of the study, but with the goal of shifting systems permanently to create more opportunity for special attention

and acknowledgement overall in CBL partnerships. If unexpected information comes from this effect, it should be considered a healthy and emergent adaptation of the partnership. This leads directly to external quality assurance goals applicable to critical research.

Strategies for external credibility have also been embedded in study design, including attention to critical research concepts like dialogic and process validity, and catalytic validity. Herr & Anderson (2015) outline these four types of validity, and suggest strategies for achieving them. Dialogic and process validity checks for what was already an explicit goal of this study, to critically and co-creatively generate new knowledge about the system of CBL partnership and practice. Secondly, inherent to the study's design, I believe catalytic validity was achieved through the reflective process included in the focus group protocols, supporting learning for all agent groups not simply myself. Overall, thoughtful attention was paid to both internal and external credibility and trustworthiness, and I did my utmost to remain conscientious, caring and focused to study trustworthiness for the sake of all study collaborators. Trustworthiness is prioritized in this way not only in regards to analysis and outcomes, but also in regards to dissemination. Looping back to report to partnership stakeholders will be an integral part of dissemination (Alcoff, 1991). It allowed for all stakeholders to have access to co-created knowledge and allowed for more agency to create any desired change within the partnership. I was aiming for "research that moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it" (McLaren & Giarelli,

1995, p. 81). By design the study aims for a diversity of critical validity criterion, much of which will be revealed only after completion and dissemination.

Limitations

The study includes some relevant limitations, which are outlined in the following section. Firstly, the research was in some ways limited by partnership and participant time and resources, in particular, those limitations created by the COVID-19 pandemic, and by the inclusion of a single CBL partnership in the sample. Additional partnerships may offer many additional strategies for CBL praxis not surfaced by those participating. Any broad attempt at generalizability must be avoided., and for many communities that has often proven to be harmful instead of helpful (Zuberi, 2001). However, transferability of process to other CBL partnerships is a goal. In particular, I would recommend a similar focus group design with diverse partnerships for future research. Secondly, the number of participants in focus groups met standards of the literature for offering a robust data set and produced a general sense of saturation during analysis; however, due to limits within the structure of the CBL partnership, the restrictions of public health best practices at the time, and the resources and availability of many participants, there were limits for those who wanted to participate but were unable to, based on personal logistical and health concerns, unfortunately leaving their voices out. As well, a more robust inclusion of university institutional actors could be also be insightful. However, institutional actors are typically those that are included in CBL research, and more than half of participating community-members, i.e., Landing Student Residents did participate in the study. As well, as the findings of this study inspired many new questions for the

field of CBL, limitations of transdisciplinary insight were present; however, they also offer many opportunities for future discussion and research.

Conclusion

Research findings are needed to inform our understanding of the systemic nature of CBL partnerships, and their engagement and impact on all stakeholder groups, and to understand how partnership practices support agency from a community-member perspective. As Wheatley (2006) implores us to understand, information is not only power, it is nourishment. By including previously unheard perspectives from community-members, and previously unexplored systemic interactions in CBL partnerships, practitioners and participants may have the capacity to better self-organize, in other words, to better integrate insights, energy, and inevitable change with care and creativity. This investigation situated within a critical complexity conceptual framework is also explicitly work to nourish the micro-systems of a particular CBL partnership, The Landing. By uniquely centering the experiences of community-members, through invitations to share their perspectives, while also gathering insights from other agent groups, together we created a greater understanding of how to adapt the systemic nature of the CBL partnership. Further, by centering both critical theory and the complex organizational systems-thinking, the forthcoming findings may be applicable more broadly to other partnerships, and also for the greater PSU Senior Capstone program. Further, I hope to outline how both the study design, focus group formats, and resulting findings hold significant transformative opportunities for the macro-systemic practice of CBL in higher education.

Chapter Four: Study Findings

Emergent Agent Outcomes and their Significant Relational Inputs

A claim of this study was that if we could better understand more agents in a CBL partnership system, particularly essential and highly impacted agents like community-members, then we could better understand and improve the meaningful work and purpose of CBL systems. With that goal in mind, the findings from this project have both important practical applications, as well as perspective shifting consequences. Three research questions were used to direct this inquiry:

1. What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system?
2. How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system?
3. How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system's patterns and behaviors?

In the following findings, I share meaningful evidence that addresses all three questions, taking into account as many partnership agents as possible. I would like to note that the study was designed so that community-members were able to offer an equal amount of feedback and participation in the study as other stakeholder group participants, but not more. In order to address the study's questions of wider patterns and behaviors of the complex partnership as a whole, deep engagement with as many stakeholders as

possible was necessary. Although community-member data is no greater in quantity than the additional stakeholder groups, I have highlighted and foregrounded their shared knowledge in the following findings, in order to elevate their perspectives and participation.

Overview of Findings

The primary unit of analysis for this critical qualitative research project was The Portland State University “Landing” at First United Methodist Church, a CBL partnership within the Portland State University Senior Capstone program. The other focus on the analysis was on the agents of the partnership, with a priority upon the community-member participants. The primary methods of data collection to understand the CBL partnership and partnership agent experiences were three focus groups with stakeholder agent groups, and researcher-participant observation, as well as anonymous individual online focus group follow-ups. Table 3. Study CBL Partnership Stakeholder Agent Groups is included here again from Chapter 3, to outline the three stakeholder groups identified for the study and their specific corollaries within The Landing partnership, to assist in contextualizing the findings.

<i>Table 3. Study CBL Partnership Stakeholder Agent Groups</i>	
CBL Stakeholder Groups	Landing Partnership Specifics

Partnership Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PSU Faculty ● PSU Institutional Actors ● Landing Paid Staff (FUMC employees) ● FUMC Institutional Actors ● Landing Coordinating Team (FUMC/PSU)
University Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PSU Capstone Students (i.e., Landing Volunteers)
Community-Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Landing Student Residents (At various times, also Landing volunteers and paid Landing Staff)

A single partnership was investigated to better understand the patterns and behaviors of a CBL partnership system, in order to serve as a window into the functions of the socio-ecological systems at work in CBL. The Partnership Leadership group, addressed in Table 3, is often found as two separate groups in CBL research, creating a binary of CBL leadership and coordination perspectives, between those on the university and those on the community side. For this study, those two groups were combined into one Leadership group, in order to elevate student and community-member voices. An ongoing praxis of CBL and invitations in CBL literature suggested that a better understanding of more agents in the partnership system, particularly those agents often outside of positional power, would reveal more about partnership function and vitality.

The Primacy of Partnership Relationships: A Praxis of Relationality

Scholars and practitioners have been, more and less, leaving community-members out of the research about how CBL functions. The literature often explains that this is due to challenges of access, partnership complexity, and questions of causality. The findings

of this study were not strangers to those complications; regardless, the challenges appeared worth the goal of including community-members as equal agents in the effort to understand the partnership. Yet despite expectations, a clear finding did not emerge from the evidence that adding this particular agent group, as a group, was uniquely meaningful. What I found instead is that thinking about the participants of a partnership as grouped into static stakeholder roles – whether two groups (community and university), or three or four, or reworking and adding a new community-member group – was that the groupings themselves are at the heart of our misunderstanding. What the evidence of this study suggests is that our lens to understand the agents at work in CBL has indeed been too narrow thus far. We have not only left community-member experience out of our research and understanding of engagement, but have additionally been too focused on who participants are when they enter the partnership, versus who they are *becoming* as participants. We have been attempting to understand CBL's impact and outcomes, for individuals and communities, as if they are fully-formed and stagnant beings, representing only the paths from which they came. However, the evidence describes that what we have been missing is that CBL partnerships may exist to support our becoming, our purposes as yet unfulfilled, versus the people and purposes that existed for us before the relationships of partnership transformed us. Until now, it has been who the participants are when they enter the partnership that draws our attention, that makes for the invitations we create. Yet, the partnership agents that collaborated for this study, as they reflected on the purpose and meaning of it for themselves and one another, offer us the wisdom of the primacy of the partnership relationships. They shared that it is who

they are because of the partnership, and how they emerged from within those partnership relationships, that should demand our attention. The data invites us to consider that It is the relationships that we must start with, and that the relationships can offer us opportunities for transformation, connection, and community. This finding suggests radical new questions for CBL, concerning who we partner with, how we define our shared purposes, and how we can facilitate the most effective and expansive possibilities for social change.

Three Emergent Agent Outcomes

To illuminate the primacy of relationships as procreative in CBL partnerships, three particular findings from this study most prevalent across agent groups were emergent agent outcomes. The first emergent outcome for participants was the revelation of emergent identity developments, or the ways participants were transforming as an outcome of their relational engagement within the partnership. This identity development can emerge both as new relational identifications and as new collective identifications. The second emergent outcome was that participants' emergent identifications, within a changing awareness of their relationships, influenced their sense of accountability or care, what I will call the emergent outcome of an ethical agency, an ethical relationality or attunement to the relationships of the partnership. The third emergent outcome for participants was the generation of dynamic senses of belonging and alienation, senses of (dis)connection that morph and flex based on the various processes at work in the partnership, and its greater systems. Emergence is the formation of new properties,

processes, or outcomes of a system, which were not originally present in the original agents or elements of a system. Higher order emergence creates not only dynamic systemic change, but is also a process of mutual agentic causation (Lichtenstein, 2014), i.e. higher order emergence is when system-wide emergents also create related emergent change for individual agents. These three emergent outcomes for partnership agents are instances of transformation among participants of the partnership. The following section will demonstrate through a presentation of evidence from the study how these three outcomes emerged for diverse partnership participants, and hopefully, begin to outline how we might understand and define each type of agent emergent.

A note about “Stakeholder Groups”

All three of the emergent agent outcomes were present across all three initial stakeholder agent groupings. However, over the course of data collection and analysis, these initial three groupings (see Table 3) often fell short. In fact, the emergent outcomes for agents often crystallized in intra- and inter-personal ways across stakeholder groups, and individual partnership participants even moved between groups over the course of the study. This was both quite meaningful in itself in illuminating the primacy of relationships, but also presented a challenge in reporting the findings. Therefore, as each emergent outcome is presented in the following section, I will prioritize the feedback and evidence of those who became involved because of their initial role as Landing Student Residents, i.e. community-members. The findings suggest that the most relevant agent identities of partnership participants were in fact outcomes of the partnership itself;

however, each agent still entered the partnership as a bundle of other relational and collective identities. One's social location is cultivated across and within all of the macro and micro socio-ecological systemic relationships of which we are a part. However, it remains a priority of this project to elevate the voices of those partnership participants, often community-member, who are typically left out of the design, launch, funding and administration of CBL partnerships. In fact, when the community-member agents of The Landing were elevated to equal status as evaluators, reporters, and observers of the partnership, their collective wisdom revealed a truth about how interconnected our agency and identities might truly be.

Emergent Identities: Relational and Collective

As a result of partnership relationships, many engaged partnership participants emerged with newly cultivated and informed identities, both relational identifications and collective identifications. Relational identifications arise from interpersonal connections and developing role relationships with other members of a group, while collective identifications arise from identifying with the shared characteristics of a group as a whole (Zhang et al., 2014). Both relational and collective identification can be motivated by self-enhancement and development of a sense of belonging, in different ways (Banaji & Prentice, 1994). In the case of The Landing partnership, both relational and collective identification were clearly emergent for various participants. For Landing participants, these emerged through interpersonal relationships within and between stakeholder groups, but also among broader community and institutional identifications.

Relational Identity

The following quote is from a focus group during a debriefing and reflective process after co-creating a Landing partnership map. Two community-members, both past Student Residents of The Landing, are discussing the various roles, or relational identities, which emerged for themselves and among other Student Residents over the course of their partnership experience. The first student offers a perfect example of how the original static stakeholder groupings were insufficient to understand the dynamism of the partnership.

Relational Identity: Community-Members.

Z: I worked at the Landing, I volunteered at the Landing. I also lived at the Landing - I was a Resident. It was nice to be able to be involved in some way to help a little bit. And yeah, it was good for my self-esteem, it was necessary (emotional pause) it was good. I feel like I came back to myself.

T: It was cool to be a pioneer, but I wish that I had that experience for myself, of people who had been here, had had this experience, to come to me and be like...here's some of the boundaries in here, some of the things I run into, and here's who you can talk to... If someone had been able to be like - here are the ropes.

Z: You were that person for me.

Z names multiple emergent relational and positional identities that developed over the course of their experience. Additionally, there are some other unique or unnamed relational roles revealed here, like “pioneer” and a role that I will call here peer advocate, both of which emerged from authentic and vulnerable intra-actions with other participants, and which even seemed to crystallize further in the process of the focus group conversation. Z even closes their thought with a reflective statement about how developing their dynamic roles and identities felt like a sort of empowered self-knowing, a developing knowledge of self through the embodying their roles in relationship with others. T goes on to explain in more detail about the relational identity Z is articulating, the role of having a sharing experiential expertise of being and becoming a Student Resident. Powerfully, in the exchange Z endorses T’s understanding of a shared relational identity of peer advocate, assigning it to T, as well as having identified with it themselves initially. Additionally, this exchange demonstrates a sense of ethical relationality to one another, an ethical urge or need to be helpful to the community. The feeling of this moment in the focus group, when Z offered the shared peer advocate title or relational role to T, was one of generosity and care. It felt like a gift from one to the other, Z’s acknowledgement of the care or responsibility to the community that T had enacted as a more experienced Student Resident upon Z’s arrival. This sense of ethical relationality will be explored more in depth below, within the outcome of ethical agency. The entanglement of these two emergent outcomes is an example of the dynamism of the partnership system. What we do not see here is that the role of “community-member” or even “Student Resident” was the central identity. Instead, the dialog begins to reveal the

complex nature of the roles and relationships, as something other than what they were to themselves and to one another, before the opportunity to be in partnership with one another. This simple exchange illuminates multiple examples of the emergence of new relational identifications.

Relational Identities: Additional Agent Groups

Transformative experiences of identity emergence within the Landing partnership system were not unique to community-member participants. The following quote from a Landing staff member, during the Leaders focus groups, provides another example of the emergence of a relational identification with other individuals within the partnership. Here, after mapping the partnership with other Leaders, E is trying to articulate what was meaningful about the partnership.

E: There's just a real emphasis on those meaningful and ongoing relationships formed through conversation, that we had both as members of staff, *as people involved*, as well as between ourselves and our residents... There's also an emphasis in there, just sort of the creative process that was involved, where it was opportunity, and creation, and choice.

At the end of the quote, E highlights the feeling of a creative or generative process at work throughout The Landing partnership experience, reiterated later in the focus group discussion by other Landing leaders and staff. This feeling seems closely related to the broader study findings of the change and emergence that was at work in the partnership. As E articulates what was personally meaningful, E describes a series of

interconnected relationships that seemed in some ways amorphously outside of originally named roles, seen in their phrasing, “people involved.” It is also interesting that E’s discussion of meaningful relationships and conversations were immediately linked to the feelings of creation, and opportunities for change and (re)creation. For E, this articulation of their experience is reflective of how a relational identity was emerging, outside of the bounds of their assigned stakeholder group, and in a way that felt liberating and creative.

Collective Identity

Another manifestation of emergent identity development was found in examples of collective identifications, or identifying with a broader community through shared values, needs, experiences, behaviors, and more (Kieren & Simmt, 2009; Munday, 2006). Collective identification can often be observed when “achieving membership of a group is a rich source of facilitating positive self-views” (Zhang et al., 2014, p. 5). Collective identification is often connected to a sense of belonging; when personal and group interests align, the group’s best interests become a personal motivator or goal (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). These factors of belonging and group interest were both present in the emergent identifications of Landing participants. Two examples of emergent collective identification shared from both focus group dialogs and extensive participant-observation are explored in the following section.

Collective identification as a university student.

Collective identification as a college or university student was shared in multiple ways throughout focus group dialogs, as well as being more deeply contextualized by ongoing researcher participant-observations.

Community-members as university students.

The following excerpt from the community-member focus group was shared within the context of a collective visioning activity, in which participants were imagining the best possible future for The Landing partnership. A former Student Resident is discussing the emergence of collective identification as a student, something they expressed had not felt possible before their interactions with other students through the partnership. It should also be noted that this emergent collective identity seemed to allow them access to an emergent sense of belonging during their Landing partnership experience. They are speaking about the policies and practices of receiving access and moving into The Landing.

T: The pivotal experience here is that all you had to be was students. That's it. There were no other barriers. It wasn't like, well you have to be a student, but you can only make this much money, and you can only be this kind of person, and you can only be this gender. The main component was that you would be a human, who's learning. [crying, long pause]

And that's an aspect that I would love to keep, so that people don't feel so shamed and humbled in seeking assistance. Because their humanness makes them worthy, of a house, and a meal, and a place to scrub their ass.

T is connecting their feelings here of being supported and included as a student directly with their fundamental identity as a human, an essential feeling of dignity. Notably, T had re-enrolled in college as a returning adult student about a year before they began their Landing residency, coming from a successful career in local social services. T had reflected in conversations earlier in the partnership about the newness and discomfort of identifying as a student, sharing uncertainty about ever being able to see themselves as a student, or see themselves as belonging at PSU due to age and personal and professional life experience. So, the difference here is pronounced. Earlier in the focus group, T had discussed how they discovered access to The Landing while navigating a profound personal crisis.

T: The only reason I even heard about it was because I was literally just like, I can't do anything but seek information. So I looked at everything that was like, can I get money? Can I get? Can I get? And then I saw the thing about the Landing...

In the context of the conversation, T is sharing here that it took significant time and resource navigation to even consider PSU, and their identity as a student, as an avenue which might offer the needed support. At this point in T's process, their understanding of themselves as a student, a collective identification, was nascent if not

negligible. It is one demonstration captured in the focus group of how their starting point was different from the perspective shared above, a sort of starting and ending point marker to help us understand the dynamic relational process of their experiences within the Landing partnership. It might also be read that T's collective identification as a student here is also entangled with an emergent ethical agency, which I will return to in future sections of the discussion.

Capstone Students as university students.

An emergent collective identification process was also present in Capstone Student reflections, within a relationship development process with Student Residents. Earlier in the partnership data D, a current Capstone Student, had shared they had been discussing privilege with a Student Resident during some shifts at The Landing. The discussion has been in regards to social class, poverty, and economic opportunity afforded to some and not others, and is something D and the Student Resident found in common. The notable context is that D is both a full-time undergraduate student at PSU, and simultaneously holds a full-time position as a homelessness outreach worker. From my perspective, D also had a particularly evolved critical race and class consciousness.

D: Normally in these settings there is a stark difference between myself and someone I am talking to, at a shelter setting. While there were still power dynamics that were present, we were both PSU students. I had significantly less power/control over the individual. This allowed us to communicate within

circumstances that felt authentic and natural. It made me question how at my place of work I may sometimes forget about the human aspects of an individual.

In some ways, this was surprising for me, as over the course of my observations with D in our class time together, they were often the one drawing connections for other students between systemic injustices and the realness of individual human stories and experiences. Thus, this development of a deeper reflexive stance about a shared humanity felt profound. D, engaging with Landing Student Residents as a Capstone Student, shares here that because of this new form of relationality their identity as both student and outreach worker is emergently adapting. In other words, to be a student, and to share that identity in a relationship with a Landing Student Resident, has changed what it means to be a student for D, and what it means to be an outreach worker. D expresses a common collective identification as a student alongside the Student Resident, and from my stance, a collective identity even more nuanced as students challenged in similar ways by class barriers. Powerfully, it seems important to notice that D's identification with being a student is again merged here with their and others' humanness, or a dignified personhood. This entanglement between a deep sense of self and a collective identification as a student was also present in T's moving sentiments above about humanness and dignity. These examples of collective identification as students are representative of a wider pattern of this emergent identity development. Identification with a broader student community was also significantly relevant in the emergence of the

other two agent outcomes, and this entanglement between outcomes, and various influencing factors, will be explored in the forthcoming relevant sections and discussion.

Collective identification with FUMC.

The development of an authentic identification as a college student, for many Landing Student Residents and Capstone Students, was not the only significant emergent collective identification for Landing participants. As an insider of The Landing partnership from its inception, many emergent identities became present but seem to be difficult to demonstrate through direct focus group quotations. Therefore, much of the following data comes from my insider participant-observations, as well as from related written documentation. One powerful example of these cases of emergent collective identification is in The Landing participant's emergent identification with The Landing's community-based organization, Portland's First United Methodist Church (FUMC).

To begin, The Landing was a partnership between PSU and FUMC, a Christian religious organization. Relatedly, a significant number of Student Residents, and potential Student Residents from the referral side with PSU, shared strong nonreligious identities, fear of religious pressure or psychological harm from the church, and even experiences of previous harm done by other religious organizations. Similar concerns were also expressed during my interactions with Capstone Students and various Landing leaders and coordinating participants. Frankly, early on I also personally experienced concerns. Relatedly, The Landing itself, and FUMC more broadly, were explicitly and vocally non-evangelical. This was especially relevant as a significant amount of the

above concerns were shared by those who identified as queer, through expansive gender expressions and diverse sexual orientations. Therefore, to create an inclusive and respectful partnership, within the partnership it was often asserted that no identification, participation, or engagement directly with the church's religious activities, or otherwise, were required or expected to be a participant within The Landing partnership. Church leadership and policy expressed that FUMC was a "reconciling church," meaning that they "are committed to accompanying others in respect and mutuality, walking alongside those who both agree and disagree with us as we discern future directions for shared mission" (United Methodist Church, 2015, para. 1). This policy was in many ways emergent from a recognition of past harm and divisive actions in regards to the queer community. To cultivate and communicate a commitment to a sustained respect and mutuality, without expectations of participation or identification, this commitment was made clear in written language on The Landing website, in the partnership agreement with the Capstone course, Landing handbooks, and signage posted within Landing spaces, as well as verbally included in Student Resident orientations, staff and volunteer trainings, and Landing Coordinating Board conversations.

However, despite or possibly because of these sustained efforts of trauma-informed care, inclusivity, and respect, many Landing partnership participants began to identify collectively as a part FUMC, in nascent and emergent ways. As The Landing partnership evolved over time, during my participant-observation I heard participants across all stakeholder groups share that they had signed up for church email listservs, had

found themselves surprised to attend a church event and religious services, had found empathy with church leadership and their values and commitments, and had shared within outside relationships their confidence that the church felt like a safe and welcoming space for them, despite having had earlier concerns, or even deep trepidations. I heard people share that they were a part of something at FUMC. I heard them share that participating in The Landing had come to feel like something they were a part of, a community for them. I, too, felt an emergent empathy with and care for the FUMC community over the long course of my experience with The Landing. This data offers an ephemeral and emergent finding for The Landing partnership, however, what is clear to me is that the relationships, or as Barad (2007) would say, the *intra-relationship*, between the participants of The Landing and FUMC were material and meaningful.

What is quite clear within the findings regarding emergent identity development is that the word “community,” a significant identifier of relational and collective identifications, was included nearly 200 times in the data. Particularly for community-members, there were consistently ideas about developing a “sense of community,” “forming a community,” and “supporting our community,” when they spoke of their experiences with The Landing partnership. In order to better understand these outcomes around emergent identity transformations, it is also necessary to explore the dynamism of the emergent ethical agency, or relational accountability that emerged for agents of the partnership.

Ethical Agency

A second transforming outcome emerged for agents within the dynamic engagements and relationships of The Landing partnership. I have named this emergent outcome *ethical agency*, wherein the development, or revelation, of a relationship transforms the quality of our agency to contain a sense of normative or ethical accountability. Indigenous scholar Dwayne Donald of the Papaschase Cree (2009) has written about a very similar quality of relationality, and discussed it as *ethical relationality*. Another way to state this might be that a partnership relationship, or a relationship with the partnership itself, becomes entangled with a quality of accountability. To develop an authentic sense of social responsibility is often a goal of community-based learning (Kuh, 2009; Mitchell, 2015; Russell & Jovanovic, 2023; Williams, 2000), and therefore the nature and significance of this finding might recommend particularly relevant practices for CBL. In particular, the following findings may help us deepen our understanding of how and why participants (dis)engage with relationships and responsibilities within CBL partnerships at particular points.

Ethical Agency: Community-Members

As evolving identifications emerged for community-member participants, in relationship to these identities a connected sense of accountability also emerged among and between participants. Unsurprisingly, as people moved into relationship and kinship with one another, they also began to care more about one another and then to develop a sense of responsibility for those they care about. The following quote is a return to the

discussion above about relational and collective emergent identities, and demonstrates how this participant's identity development was entangled with an ethical agency. As discussed above, Z wore a wide range of hats during their participation with The Landing, initially as a Student Resident and over time also became a volunteer, and then Z moved into an employee role after successfully graduating from the university. In this quote, Z explores a choreography between their identifications and accountability.

Z: I worked at the Landing, I volunteered at the Landing. I also lived at the Landing - I was a Resident. It was nice to be able to be involved in some way to help a little bit. And yeah, it was good for my self-esteem, it was necessary (pause)... It was good. I feel like I came back.

Over the course of their time with The Landing, Z navigated a deep traumatic response to their experiences with homelessness, taking time to both recover and evolve into a new sense of psychological stability, before then also being able to recover a sense of stability as a student, and then in the working world and into managing the financial and administrative labors of independent living. Z is expressing here a sense of ethical agency within the partnership linked to their diverse identities and roles over the course of their Landing engagement. And, Z is also expressing a significant sense of coming back to self, or a deeper self-knowledge. Alongside Z's emergent identifications, a connection to knowing themselves was equated to being an agent of care and service for The Landing itself. The development of Z's ethical agency became a behavioral or action-oriented response to a development of relational emergent identities.

This agency of care or responsibility for one another was also present in many ways within the tone and peripheral interactions in the community-member focus group. Residents who knew one another took repeated opportunities to inquire about how life was going, what challenges they were currently navigating, even trauma-checks with one another to ask how they felt about particular focus group prompts. Further, Student Residents who had never met one another offered extensive small kindnesses to one another, a gentleness and patience in supporting each other when my instructions as facilitator were unclear. There were also many clarifying asides between Student Residents who had not previously known each other, to make sure they felt informed and included about a story that was being shared out. Reflections from the note-taker for this focus group also shared a quality of care, and shared feelings of support throughout the focus group. My sense of this significant pattern of interactions, which may have seemed peripheral to the discussions I was attempting to facilitate, i.e., the parts closest to the microphone or easiest to document, was that this pattern of care and inclusion was instead their central purpose for being present. This was particularly true for Student Residents who had “graduated” from The Landing (also referred to as “mentors” by those still in residency). In other words, community-members were present at the focus group for each other - to know each other, to offer kindness to one another, and with a feeling of hope that this might be reciprocated. Their shared relational identity seemed equated with a sense of responsibility for at the very least acknowledging one another’s challenging experiences and their humanity. At one point, after the close of formal focus group activities, J laughed and said, “I’m really just here to connect with old friends, to see how

everyone is doing, to hear about what is going on in their lives, and for the chocolate.”

More tangibly, when debriefing the partnership map that they had created, many community-members had included feeling words like “caring,” “relief,” “safety and security,” “helping,” and “supporting.” When reflecting on the map, multiple Student Residents noticed that those feelings and features of The Landing partnership had been paired on their partnership map with the names of Student Residents. Participants noticed that this exchange of care had been offered by The Landing through one another, not just via the services and staff at The Landing. As in Z’s feelings above, their relational identification was connected to a feeling of accountability to a relationality or entanglement with one another. In short, over the course of both observations within and before the focus group with community-members, I experienced a sustained sense that community-members, via their shared relational/collective identities, felt compelled to make each other feel heard and seen - to let each other know that they mattered to someone, even among the Student Residents whom they had never met before.

A similar entanglement between identity development and a sense of ethical agency can be seen in the following return to a quote shared earlier from a Capstone Student, about their collective identification as a PSU student. I return to this quote to show the relationship between these two emergent outcomes (emphasis added).

B: ...While there were still power dynamics that were present, we were both PSU students and I had significantly less power/control over the individual. This allowed us to communicate within circumstances that felt

authentic and natural. *It made me question how at my place of work I may sometimes forget about the human aspects of an individual.*

Here, the Capstone Student seems to share a feeling of being compelled to reexamine their ethical behavior and perspective, due to the relationships and identity developing within the content of the CBL partnership. Both Capstone Students and community-members shared in multiple instances an emergent sense of their accountability to the relationships of the partnership. It was not simply what might come from an initial obligation to help or serve, but an emergent sense of reciprocity of care as participants emerged as agents of the partnership, or even simply as more human.

Ethical Agency: Additional Agents Groups

An example of how an emergent ethical agency also emerged for a Landing staff member, expresses a similar sentiment about holding an ethical relationality within their role in The Landing partnership. This quote was shared anonymously by a participant of the Landing Leaders focus group, in the online follow-up after the focus groups.

Anon: One resident in particular I had ongoing conversations with whenever they had time to chat. These moments gave me a real sense of how lucky I was to have the job that I did...

...Knowing that my job did something - however small - to improve someone's day was something I treasured.

From this quote sharing a particular sense of what was meaningful about Landing partnership engagement, the significance of relationality and meaning is clearly related. Future research probing more deeply the dynamics of how developing partnership relationality and identity becomes entangled with a quality of accountability would be particularly fruitful in understanding the development of this emergent quality of relationality. However, the following reflection from a church leader, O, who participated in the Leaders' focus group, offers particular illumination on how this entanglement is dynamic and changeable, its quality and depth mediated by significant relational inputs to the partnership. O has held several high-level layman's leadership roles within the FUMC organization over the course of The Landing's launch and programming. For context, another focus group participant is sharing concern about how the congregation's commitment to The Landing, and interest in college student homelessness, has been inconsistent over time. In the following quote, O responds with their understanding of the dynamics of this inconsistency (emphasis added).

O: I don't think you could underestimate the amount of influence that the pandemic had on the fact that the congregation was very disconnected from The Landing as a project. From the initial vote to when it actually launched. [In the beginning,] we had the whole congregation have that conversation, but when it launched it was not the whole congregation who got to see it launch. It was a very small group of people who saw the launch and the rest of the congregation I think really didn't, *we lost that connection*. ...There was the pandemic, and there

was [the Senior pastor] retiring... It was sort of like the church had a lot of things going on and [The Landing] really just sort of fell off the radar. And it was hard for us to figure out how to get it back.

As opportunities to engage in the partnership and participant priorities shifted, so too did the congregation and the church leaderships' commitment. As church members' opportunities to cultivate Landing relationships, and as their exposure to their relationality diminished, so too did their sense of accountability to those relationships and the partnership itself. From my earlier participant-observations, I have learned that initial interest and energy among FUMC's congregation for The Landing partnership came from a series of church-wide discussions and exposures to the fact that many of those living outside around the church may very well be students from the college right down the street. Through these discussions, the people surviving and sleeping on the street which congregants walked by on their way to church became more identified and more related to congregants. Congregants had shared that those people had become their neighbors. However, after the eventual launch of The Landing and as time passed, congregants spent almost no time at or near the church during COVID. Over the course of this time, the relationality for congregants of both their Student Resident guests and their unhoused neighbors became less profound. In other words, their energy and commitments to offer care lessened, their ethical agency had diminished. One's awareness of a relational entanglement can imbue the relationship with at minimum a question of responsibility for what our agency enacts for the "other," at a more sustained or profound level it can

change the nature of our agency. However, a trend towards the opposite is equally possible. Our knowledge of a relationship changes the potentialities to interact within it, changing us in the process.

Dynamic Sense of Belonging & Alienation

The third emergent outcome from partnership agents was a dynamic sense of belonging and its related feeling of alienation. A sense of belonging generally refers to a feeling of connectedness or mattering to others (Strayhorn, 2018), a perception of being supported and receiving feedback, and even a shared faith that the relationships or groups we are a part of will meet our needs (Kutten, 2017; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In contrast, alienation can result when one's interpersonal or group ties do not provide feelings of acceptance or emotional support (Newman et al., 2007) resulting in episodic or chronic "conflict about one's integration into a meaningful reference group" (p. 527). To clarify, alienation is not exactly the same as feelings of isolation or loneliness, although they are closely related. Alienation is often a feeling embedded in a knowing of a relationship that does not or no longer feels welcoming, inclusive or caring. As we move through a relational world, these senses of both belonging and alienation are not stagnant or fixed. We know instinctively how intimately connected these senses feel to who we are and how we are in the world. The findings from this study suggest that the dynamism of connection is part of a feedback process within the relationships we are in partnership with, and further that it can help us understand the iterative and ongoing process of our becoming. For Landing participants, agents' sense of belonging and

connection, and alienation or othering, was a dynamic process shifting across time, systemic processes, and divergently across relational and collective identifications.

Belonging: Community-Members:

Through discussions of “connection,” sense of belonging was clearly thematic through-out focus group discussions with community-members. For those who shared the experience of residency in The Landing partnership, there was often an expression of a feeling of belonging among that identification, which was both relational for those who shared residency together, and was also a more collectivized identity across a similar but not shared experience. In a personal written reflection facilitated at the start of each focus group, participants had a chance to respond to various prompts and reflect on their own Landing experiences, both meaningful and challenges, before being immersively influenced by any larger focus group feeling on tone. In the online follow-up to their focus group, one Student Resident shared the following about one of the “most meaningful” aspects of their Landing experiences.

Anon: The friendships I made with my fellow residents. The resources we helped each other with and the support. People I never would have met if I hadn't lived at the Landing. I had people who witnessed my experience and validated those experiences.

This sense of connection was what this community-member found most significant to report, the giving and receiving of support and needs being met, one of the most prevalent markers of a sense of belonging. They also included a sense of mattering,

or being accepted and valued, both components that are often associated with a sense of belonging. Across these written stories, many community-members also shared phrases like “safety and security,” “helping one another,” and overwhelmingly “community.” After this initial activity, Student Residents were then asked to share with a partner and then verbally with the whole group, pieces of what they had written down. Although clearly grappling with articulation in the larger group, C, a newly arrived Student Resident shared the following heartfelt thoughts. The following quote from this shared reflection activity expresses how their developing sense of belonging was directly connected to a sense of purpose within the chaos of their present challenges.

C: Purpose. (long pause) As...students became involved, more involved in the Landing, just that, how that became a part of their goings on. And with the process of going to school, and the looming workforce, and in that sort of limbo zone where there's all these potential things, and there's all this uncertainty and self-doubt ... [The Landing is] something concrete. Just being a part of something that is meaningful.

C’s state of overwhelm in attempting to make some meaning of their current life situation was quite clear throughout their involvement in the focus group. I can imagine that trying to find some meaning in the midst of a situation that feels like chaos would be incredibly challenging. However, what I understood C to be saying is that something about the patterning of life among the community of The Landing offered a sense of life purpose, offered a sense of belonging to something that mattered among the chaos. C’s

emphatic agreement with the following dialog reinforced my understanding of the thoughts above.

The following dialog was among both former and current Student Residents, during the subsequent focus group activity discussion of “who” was a part of The Landing, a question of who were the agents in the partnership system. Conversation also included prompting envisioning the best possible future for The Landing, and who did community-members think should (or should not) be involved. The following dialog begins in the middle of an exchange discussing what identifying experiences staff and leadership of The Landing should need to have to be successful in those roles. The discussion swiftly evolves into exploring who is in the room right then, and what shared identities and experiences the community-members have among themselves, an acknowledgement of their own expertise and what they offer each other. Their dialog explores how their shared experiences emerged as relational identifications with one another *and* created opportunities for ethical relationality with one another. The quote is extensive simply to demonstrate the sense of consensus that existed at this point in the community-members’ discussion. (Point of clarification: Below T, a former Student Resident, references multiple “groups,” not because there was more than one focus group, but because T had also participated in a Landing practicum that offered co-facilitated experiences for Student Residents.)

- J: Having lived experience as a staff person is really important.

- T: I liked having these [Student Resident] groups together just because homelessness is not...I've been in the workforce for 25 years, so for me to come in and be like, "Hi, I work here and I barely make enough money to live indoors," (pause) - I'm in the same place and I meet my clients at the food pantry. That experience isn't something that you can always just take out into the world, you are not able to talk about it without having to teach a 101 class on how I got here, and what I was doing, and how much work I had to do to get through it.

So it's nice to have this community available so that you can have a little validation, and have a little camaraderie with people who have been where you've been. And they're not going to judge, and they're not going to ask dumb questions. They're going to go, yeah, me too, I deal with that.

- C: Feel like I can put some more asterisks there and exclamation points...yep.
- H: Yep.

In this quote, we find T in a reflective process of their own identity development. We see T making the comparison between one significant relational identity in their life, that of their “workforce” persona, and hear how even their experience working in the social service sector was not able to encompass or hold space for their experience with homelessness. T shares how their experience with the Landing partnership and its relationships transformed how they saw themselves, about a shift in where and with

whom they identified. T here shares about the emergent experience of coming into a new relational and collective identity, supported by a sense of belonging. We also see J, C, and H, one a current resident, one a former resident and current volunteer, and the other a former Student Resident, all confirming a similar experience. Interestingly, T was inspired to share this as a response to a discussion about who should have the role of being in a supportive and staff position, suggesting a normative position about the ethical responsibilities of those in relationship with The Landing. This quote in particular demonstrates some aspect of the emergent outcomes of the partnership relationships for participants. These quotes from community-members demonstrate the entanglement of ethical agency and emergent identity, along with a related sense of belonging.

Belonging: Additional Agents Groups

Although community-members shared often about cultivating a sense of belonging, additional agent groups also demonstrated developing a sense of belonging, albeit less often or in less certain or consistent ways. During the Leaders' focus group, a Landing leader shares here about a sense of belonging they experienced in The Landing partnership. After the activity in which participants collectively mapped aspects of the partnership, E lists map elements creating a theme around interconnections and their agreement and experience with this theme.

E: ...Discussions, conversations, articulation, connection; [these map elements] could be down here with: engagement, community, and relationship.

Because that was a big part of the story for me, and it was hard to tease out

exactly which pieces, but there were so many parts around articulating what we're doing and sharing that with others, and engaging with them to become passionate about this goal, this project...[emotional pause] that is what built relationship and community. ...We had shared language, shared understanding, shared commitment, and then community came from that.

E noticed collective patterns of connection and community, including both shared identities and a sense of belonging, and was emotionally moved. E even seemed to be expressing a sense of surprise to find that their feelings shared so similarly on the co-created map. From later analysis of the map elements, it was in fact very clear that a sense of belonging was present in large sections of the partnership map, with many of the terms and connecting lines E shared above repeated often. However, as I will share below, this sense of belonging for E was also mirrored by a deep sense of alienation. To come together in this focus group space with other Leaders and reflect on The Landing together, E truly found themselves surprised that their powerful early sense of belonging was a collectively shared experience, in light of the alienation they had been feeling when the focus group began. For many Leaders, the shared sense of belonging present in the map had since withered in one or more relational or collective partnership identity. This feeling was also clearly present in the map upon later analysis. Often, there seemed to be a sense of grief for the loss of a sense of belonging related to the partnership that was no longer felt. In many ways, the emergent identification from Landing relational experiences has held up, but due to dynamic partnership processes at work, or no longer

at work, a sense of alienation developed among participants. They had emerged as new people aware of new relationships and identities, yet had found themselves surprisingly isolated from said relationships or the collective.

Alienation: Additional Agents Groups

The following quote is from the same Landing Leaders' focus group, and was far from unique in its articulation of this dynamic sense of loss of connectedness. E is again referencing elements that had been written on sticky notes to co-create a map of the partnership system of The Landing.

E: ...The frustration around funding had more to do with the quality of the conversations that were happening... I wrote *othering*, because it seemed like there was an *othering* in the process. It wasn't we [opens a large hugging gesturing towards the room] as a community.

... "We" as a community sat and called us all together, and voted on the projects that we wanted and this [The Landing] was one of them. But when it came to the conversation around funding, it was like, "*You* haven't done this, *you* need to do this." It felt very sudden. Suddenly I felt like I'm not a part of this church anymore. I am The Landing, and therefore I am other. That was such a bizarre feeling to me to be like, I thought we were in this together.

In the second section of this quote, E is referencing the early process of the congregants, staff and leadership of FUMC that helped to launch The Landing, as the

“Next Big Thing” that the church community would commit to. E expresses how their sense of belonging came from a shared relational identity inclusive of an ethical agency in relation to The Landing. It is also clear that that early sense of belonging had morphed into a sense of alienation from those relationships over time. To me, it also appeared that in the process of information sharing within this focus group space, as Leaders shared perspectives, and care and concerns, was transforming agents’ senses of belonging once again. One piece of evidence that highlights this, is that after additional storytelling had been exchanged about the life of The Landing, a participant shared the following sentiment.

- T: [It] would have been a very different conversation had it been like, wow, we've been as a church struggling, and as a church maybe we can't sustain this because this is where we've been, and how do we move forward? But instead, what I heard was (pause)...

Well, I didn't hear we are all struggling together. I didn't hear that part [before]. But, you just said it really beautifully.

The feelings of both belonging and alienation are profound, yet deeply changeable. The dynamism of these senses can make them both ephemeral or sustainable, and in the following sections various relational inputs may help us understand how CBL practitioners might strategy for desired outcomes.

The dynamism of this emergent outcome was also resonant among Capstone Student participants. In the collective identity quotes above, we see one example of how Capstone Students emerged from partnership relationships with a developing collective sense of self in affinity with Student Residents, as *students* together. Over the course of both the focus group and earlier participant-observations, Capstone Students often expressed how they could imagine themselves as Student Residents. This was sometimes expressed through an empathic or shared sense of either a similar past based needs insecurity, or an uncertainty or precarity about the future and what it would hold for them. Interestingly, for Capstone Students, even as the collective identities of *student* and *PSU Student* developed, within relationships between Capstone Student peers and Student Residents, a simultaneous sense of feeling alienated from PSU as an institution also emerged. In debriefing the co-created partnership map with Capstone Students, this quote highlights a broader theme shared by the Capstone Student group that PSU as an institution should be a place where student needs were met, as students put it - where they “mattered,” but that that might not be the case.

Facilitator: When you look at your map of The Landing partnership, does it inspire any questions?

B: I guess “why not?” (pause) Why doesn't PSU do more?

E: For sure. Yeah.

G: Yeah.

B: Because everything falls on the church, it seems like. And then on the students in this class, us.

Another student articulated this confusion about being “relevant” or an important part of the partnership, from their own systemic lens on the partnership.

D: To build off of what B was saying, maybe on a micro and visual aspect it feels like we [Capstone Students] are really irrelevant...there's a constant rotation of students flowing through the system.... in that way [students] are very relevant with their irrelevance. Does that make sense?

The sense D seems to make here is that students, both Capstone Students and Student Residents are an integral part of the socio-ecological system, but yet they feel disconnected from mattering to the system, from being seen as meaningful. Yet, there also seems to be a claim that their actions and the quantity of them should matter more. There is a consistent sense of being in relationship with the system, and of impacting the system, but that they still feel as if their impacts do not matter, that they are alienated from the system to which they belong. Among Capstone Students, as they became more aware of the housing insecurity of their peers over the course of the term, both systemically through course materials and in personal relationships with housing insecure peers, this theme of alienation, or even “abandonment,” was ongoing in conversations about the university. Themes often emerged in class discussions that centered feelings about lacking trust that the university cared about meeting all students’ most basic needs, their personal basic needs, or questions of if they mattered to the university as any more

than tuition income or as future labor market participants. One thematic way this was expressed was that the university could not see or hear students' expressions of need or support around basic needs security, as can be seen in this focus group quote from a Capstone Student. In the group reflection about challenging experiences within The Landing partnership, a discussion emerged about the efforts it took for students to stay "connected," and about how both The Landing and PSU shared information.

H: It makes you tired...kind of like putting up with the same conversation, the same thing over and over. That's just exhausting, makes you not want to... to have fatigue, to make you not want to do it anymore.

Peers in the conversation corroborated H's feelings, reflecting on a co-created word bank about their challenges within The Landing. The discussion had moved to highlighting sentiments about how they felt within the complex PSU/FUMC system, including "an industrialism," "extremely blue," and "dark and cold." As students later continued to explore their own co-created word bank about the partnership and its challenging or harmful moments, another student added that it felt, "[Like] a lack of anything human. [Or] like humans, but just our human limitations."

Capstone Students further corroborated these feelings when pairing features and feelings about the partnership in their co-created partnership map. PSU, as an institution, was often paired with words like "frustration" and "anger" and a general theme of bafflement that the institution is not prioritizing, and is possibly even antagonistic to, financial support for students in crisis. When discussing visions for the future of the

partnership, there was also a significant theme of hope that PSU would “listen and learn from residents,” would learn more and become more “committed” and would provide partnership “funding, without delay or obstruction.” Capstone Students seemed to have strong sentiments of both their identification with PSU, an urgency about their nature and efficacy of their ethical agency, and yet alienated by an institution they feel alienated by.

Alienation: Community-Members

On the pattern of alienation, I return to the community-member participants that participated in the study. Although, the evidence suggests community-members felt an emergent sense of belonging among partnership relationships, particularly among one another, a sense of alienation was also a part of their partnership relationships. Quite often community-members felt alienated within the partnership by particular patterns of information sharing, or the lack thereof. Feelings of being alienated both from The Landing space and from the Landing community included quite diverse but thematically significant examples, and were often included as important contextual sidebars within focus group interactions about other topics. There were multiple accounts of staff or volunteers making insensitive comments or performing trauma insensitive body language, due to perceived or real lack of personal experience with homelessness. As well, there were multiple accounts of Student Residents showing up and waiting outside in the rain, because no one had arrived for the opening shift, or similar stories of no one turning on the lights for wake-up, because the morning staffer had not arrived on time. Sadly, there was also one particularly alienated Student Resident, A, who was so

uncertain about Landing rules or agreements that they were in constant fear they could be kicked out at any moment, and blamed their mental health and cognitive challenges as the cause of these threats. In contrast, when A shared about these concerns, other focus group participants immediately made reassuring comments that they felt similarly, that A should not “feel alone,” and that they had similar personal challenges to A and that information sharing had actually been the problem. These reactions offered a beautiful contrast to A’s concern, offering gestures towards belonging and a shared ethical agency among Student Residents. This collection of experiences seemed to be a perceived understanding that they did not matter enough to others, that their needs were not truly connected to the priorities of others. Remarkably, it did not seem that a sense of alienation within some relationships or dynamics within the partnership negated other feelings of belonging, or even developing identifications. In fact, the sense of alienation seemed to align with how one might feel when a group they collectively identify with does something that is disappointing or embarrassing to oneself, precisely because the group’s behavior is representative of your own. Student Residents often shared these feelings of alienation when they were also sharing visions for the future or ideas of how they might help to improve the partnership. When expressing the disappointment of alienation by partnership agents outside of their Student Resident circle, most were also quick to point out counterexamples of particular staff or volunteers that were particularly “inclusive” and “reliable,” with two particular long-term staffers who were thought of as both “welcoming,” and truly reliable at allowing people to “feel seen and heard.” This changeability within community-members’ senses of belonging and alienation is one

example of how dynamic and responsive this emergent outcome can be. In particular, there was a staff person brought up more than once, who was thought of as particularly relevant in this changing belonging/alienating sense for multiple Student Residents. The staff person was thought of as a changeable agent, who had learned over time how to be more “trauma-informed,” had become more sensitive over time to how their cis male gender expression might be perceived as threatening, and how they had become someone who the community-member group generally agreed was “someone you could go to,” and someone who “saw us.” From observations and focus group reporting, it seems that as this staff person developed their own emergent identifications with The Landing, both relational and emergent, and as their related ethical agency emerged, those on the Student Resident side had truly taken account, and it for some it had affected their own sense of belonging.

In the case of the participating community-members, there was also a theme of dynamic and changing senses of both belonging and alienation with PSU as an institution and partnership system agent. As Student Residents identified more as PSU students, they also expressed alienation or uncertainty of their belonging with PSU as an institution. During the focus group, when discussing a future vision of how The Landing, or the service and spaces of The Landing might be improved, C shared how significant the setting of The Landing was for them. Their discussion included the ideas of place for the FUMC campus, the PSU campus, and the feeling of Portland in between.

C: Just being in this space compared to campus, I feel like this is kind of [a] satellite to campus. ...I feel because of the traffic, and just the location and everything - it's difficult, for what it takes to be invested and included as a student, and [invested] in yourself and in the experience.

In a remarkable contrast to this particular participant's strong emergent identification as a student, they also felt alienated from the place where they were supposed to belong as a student. This is particularly powerful, as this Student Resident had recently enrolled in college later in life, after a significant family loss that had both obliterated their sense of place and homespace, while at the same time inspiring them to reinvest in their own future by returning to school.

Outside of this particular place-based example, community-members also often shared a sense of skepticism, or a lack of confidence in their belonging, or in a sustained level of care, from the institution. There was an uncertainty that the institution would reliably support. In visioning for the future, often emotionally, community-members charged the institution with an ethical responsibility to continue to improve their efforts to support their needs, and to demonstrate that they matter. However, these exhortations were shared simultaneously with uncertainty that PSU could continue to be counted on, sharing with phrases that included questions about "longevity" and "continued support." One former Student Resident even shared a persistent fear that PSU's commitment was so uncertain that one day The Landing would just be a:

T: “‘Whoops, we're out of funding’ kind of situation, where suddenly this is not a space that's available anymore. Especially because it was so important and necessary for me.”

T sees themselves as both a PSU student, and as a student is promoting the broader collective needs of the group in a deeply personally aligned way. Being a PSU student and a Student Resident seemed to provide a strong sense of collective identification for both T, that came with an emergent ethical concern for other PSU students. For Capstone Students and Student Residents, a sense of student solidarity seemed to emerge within their collective identification, while unfortunately not consistently or reliably generating a sense of belonging or affinity at the institutional level.

Finally, when it comes to the emergent and dynamic senses of belonging and alienation within this partnership, there was also limited but interesting evidence of mediating meso-systemic units. In particular, community-members often discussed a partnership-involved PSU institutional unit - the Dean of Student Life Office. They mentioned by name both its specific individual agents, its programs, how its involvement and identity has changed over the life of the partnership, and the resources it provided or did not provide. They included the unit in their visions for the future, expressing hopes that it would become more integrated into the partnership system, and that its agents would deepen their responsibility or accountability for their impact on the partnership. On the other hand, Capstone Students rarely mentioned particular institutional meso-

systems or units, and had little understanding or connection to institutional structure. For example, a typically eloquent and systems-savvy Capstone Student referred to the “PSU money controllers” when trying to discuss the financial decision-makers of the institution, lacking even a superficial understanding of the institution's diverse budgets and sources of income. Over the course of this study, Capstone Students never once mentioned the Capstone program or its home general education program, University Studies, as either partnership agents or as being involved in their understanding of the partnership. Both the name of their course, “Capstone: Housing & Homelessness” and the Capstone programs’ goals were included in course content and in the course syllabus. In fact, although the literature suggests connection to peers, faculty, and mentorship-oriented relationships is key to developing a sense of belonging for college students (Strayhorn, 2018), the lack of accessible understanding and transparency of institutional structures seemed to exacerbate Capstone Students sense of alienation from the institution, even as their self-identification as a student was emerging and deepening. This also extends to more macro-systems within which this partnership lives, such as the City of Portland and the greater social-ecological systemic impacts transforming the people entering and emerging from this partnership. One community-member captured this in a particularly powerful way. Again, when imaging the future of The Landing partnership, mostly focused on positive visioning, after fears of there simply not being a Landing in the future were broached, this student contextualized those fears across wider understandings of place and macro and meso-systems.

C: Unfortunately, right now with the crises of homelessness and COVID. And just with government's functionality, or how they're using tax dollars to support people... I can only sleep on the sidewalk right now, because there isn't affordable housing. What's involved with that? From that?

So, if you are a student right now, and you're making an effort, and you're in this institution, and...this experience [of The Landing], the only alternative is to rely on these tax dollar resources and the churches, or groups that facilitate this kind of need.

That experience is so extreme right now, there is no going out there and just feeling comfortable. So, if The Landing were not available... that is just so scary to go out into that. I mean that, for all people that are experiencing these hardships.

The City of Portland, various levels of the U.S. government, and the impact of a global pandemic, are all systemically impacting the particular micro-system of this partnership. The greater place-based impact, or the contextual factors that mediated the emergent outcomes of this partnership will be discussed in further detail below.

Partnerships live as systems - like ecological systems they grow and change, adapt and create. As vital partnerships function, as relationships emerge, they change people. People emerge as something they were not before, and as something that could not have been without the partnership and its concomitant relationships. As people

change, as their self-identities, their self-knowledge shifts, intra-relational processes also change, interactions and policies change. This study reveals, or maybe simply reminds us, that as our relationships adapt, we adapt, and then our sense of (dis)connection with others and with the world will also shift. These changes are not linear or contained by simple cause and effect, they are not monolithic but are mediated by the particular complexities of relationships, inter-nodal impacts, feedback, and energy exchange. These relationships are constantly happening, and so thus constantly changing us, allowing us to emerge - both process and person. Thus, our collective and relational understandings of ourselves are connected to the collectives to which we belong or hope to belong to.

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest the primacy of relationships as the starting point that matters for systemic understanding of CBL partnerships. The emergent outcomes of partnership relationships are likely to be abundant, but the three most prominent for this project were emergent agent identities, ethical agency, and a dynamic sense of belonging and alienation. Yet how did these three outcomes emerge, under what circumstances? Or in systems lingo, what system inputs, feedback processes and energy exchanges, generated these changes? In the complex system of community-based learning with The Landing, the evidence suggests four significant relational inputs influencing the emergence of these agent outcomes, which will be outlined in the following section.

Relational Inputs: Mediating Factors of Emergent Outcomes within CBL

Partnerships

As the study findings suggested three emergent outcomes for partnership participants, a further question emerged, how so? What were the conditions that mitigate, mediate, or influence what emerges? In systems science, the conditions for emergence flow from the reciprocal nonlinear relationships that exist between elements of a system, and emerge from what is already a part of the system, while creating something new (Lichtenstein, 2014). In this case, there were four dynamic conditions that mediated how and why the three above outcomes, identity development, ethical agency, and a dynamic sense of place emerged. Four of these significant relational inputs are: place as agent, information sharing practices, attention to and development of relational awareness, and the dynamism of systemic interactions. These factors function somewhat like dynamic energies or filters of system processes; they were creating, shifting, and moving what is at work in the system. This evidence suggests that within dynamic community-based learning partnerships, all agents may have access to strategically support the emergence of desired outcomes for themselves, as well as for those they are in relationship with. The evidence in this section is not consistently divided among agent groups, due to the fact that findings were present across agent experiences, yet were often at work in dynamic, cross-stakeholder group ways. However, the following section will outline what each of these four relational factors are, offer evidence from each of the three stakeholder groups broadly, and include evidence of how they were at work within the system outcomes for agents.

Relational input: Place as Agent

Place was found to be a significant factor impacting the emergent outcomes for partnership participants. To initially understand place, and to help illuminate these findings, we can understand place as a space or location that holds meaning, or interconnected and influential characteristics. As place emerged in the coding as highly significant, my analysis was supported by the application of both the study's theoretical framework of critical complexity, and the study's goal to widen our conceptions of who was at work in a systemic CBL partnership. This critical inquiry into who mattered in a CBL system unveiled the unexpected agency of partnership places impacting the dynamic processes of the Landing system. Sensibly, The Landing partnership is a particularly salient sample to understand the possible mediating influence of place in a CBL partnership, as the partnership itself came together with the purpose of creating a particular place. Additionally, The Landing partnership is centered around the purposeful transformation of a previously built space, and agents' work to newly signify meanings and goals for a particular complex of places, including the places The Landing services within the FUMC campus, and as connected to the PSU campus, and the greater systemic place of the City of Portland they are nested within.

Place: Community-Members

For community-members, The Landing's Student Residents experiencing severe housing insecurity, place and its access and meanings are central to their work of understanding their world and the relationships within it. This study is particularly suited

to investigating the influence of place among the three emergent outcomes, as it was so clearly related to The Landing's purpose of providing shelter and housing, a place-based purpose. The evidence from the study holds a variety of examples with both desirable and displacing outcomes. The partnership's purpose itself was to engage two institutions and their agents in place-making and developing a sense of place, in two ways. Firstly, to provide both a place to stay and a place to sleep; and secondly, to articulate and embody the partnership's stated values of: safety and security, autonomy, trust, respect, inclusion, and connection. In other words, to create place, mediate access to place, and to imbue place with meaning - to make it matter. These ideas were found throughout the background documentation of the partnership, and were often a subject of discussion during participant-observations.

At its heart for community-members, access to and engagement with Landing places equated directly with participation in the partnership. The evidence shows that trustworthy access to the places within the system of The Landing partnership was central to facilitating all three emergent outcomes for community-members, and made partnership relationships possible. Additionally, the limits of access to the space showed variations in the development of emergent outcomes. One way this was sadly evidenced became apparent as many Student Residents shared experiences with being "forgotten" or "waiting outside" in bad weather, when staff or volunteers arrived late to let them in at night. Particularly, when there was inconsistent or non-existent communication about how these entrance times might change on a particular day. These challenges were

exposed throughout my time as a participant-observer, and were known throughout the system. Examples of this access were also implicated by system processes including to whom and when access to The Landing was available, including open hour, curfew, and arrival and departure policies. Community-member reported that the policies and process regarding these access-based interactions with The Landing were linked to feelings of agency, and to “being seen” or known, in relation to a shared place. During the focus group with community-members, one of the activities included mapping how the agents of the system interacted within the partnership. After co-creating a map of agent-actors and their interactions, community-members engaged in one of the most sustained discussions of the ways in which agentic access to place created their partnership experience and what emerged for them. Below is a robust excerpt from this discussion including almost every community-members during their focus group (emphasis added).

T: I was going to say on one hand it is isolating. It is its own world, the clock strikes 6:45, and [The Landing] makes you scurry back to get to your place. There's an extra barrier to socialization. You can't be like, “Come back to mine, or eat dinner with me.” Or sometimes you're like, “Oh, maybe I want to hang out,” but then you're like, I have to call somebody and then I have to figure out what to do with my stuff. And there's that barrier.

J: “I have a curfew; I have to go home.”

T: And - understanding that the Landing is one of the most flexible places that you can be... You can say, “Let's hang out longer,” or “Let me go visit

my boyfriend,” or, whatever it is. But at the same time, sometimes even small obstacles are still obstacles. It could just be like, I need to call somebody and tell them I’m not coming back, and then you’re just like, eh, nevermind. I’m tired, I’m rage quitting.

H: I’m a grown up, I don’t feel like checking-in.

...

A: Why is there a curfew? I know that sounds odd, but why does The Landing want a curfew? Most of the other strict rules make perfect sense, but why curfew?

J: I think they have to know when to lock the door at night, to know you can’t just have people pounding on the door at 10 o’clock, 11 o’clock, two o’clock, wanting to get in because they just got home. The Landing doesn’t want residents coming in at 2:00 AM ripping open the locker when everybody else is trying to get some sleep.

T: It’s a feature of shelters too, that they have curfews and actually the Landing has the most flexible curfew of any of the shelters that I’ve dealt with.

C: If you had a job, they’ll work with you.

T: Yeah, I had jobs, I had side hustles while I was living here. I have two partners that I was interacting with, and so The Landing’s flexibility is one of

the keys. On one hand, I complain about the schedule being inflexible. I don't want to get up at 6:30 or I want to lay in bed for an extra half an hour or whatever it is.

C: Or it would be nice to have - well it's Sunday, and we're at the freaking church - why can't we have that day of rest or something?

H: Yeah.

C: It would be nice. Yeah, it's been nice. I know I'll come in, I'll just stretch out, and wow... stretching out and being horizontal. That's something that through this experience, wow... I didn't know...

T: One of the things I really value about my own place [now] is just being able to pull off my clothes, shut the door and be done. I leave when I feel like leaving.

Student Residents' emotional and energetic engagement with this topic of access to place both created a shared sense of solidarity, and supported the development of relational identification, with each other and also with those who created and facilitated the policies around access. Additionally, at times they also speak directly of their consideration of The Landing and its physical place, as having direct impacts of their experience, as in The Landing makes you scurry back, and The Landing is flexible. Their understanding of the changeability of The Landing space, as well as their own evolving identifications and relationships with other participants, dynamically affected their senses

of alienation and belonging within the partnership. The level of freedom of choice in regards to access policies was also connected to their understanding of self as being impactful and agentic in their own lives within the partnership.

Place: Additional Agent Groups

This same factor of accessibility to place was significant for many Capstone Students, particularly when it came to a sense of alienation or belonging. Unfortunately, similar to Student Residents, many Capstone Students expressed experiences with being “left out in the cold,” as they arrived for volunteer shifts and nobody was there to greet them and let them into the building. One student was particularly wounded as a result of being locked out of the space, after committing to volunteer on a significant holiday. When access was difficult, they felt harshly critiqued for interrupting a staff member via phone on the holiday when seeking support. The result for that student was a deep and sustained sense of alienation from the partnership, while simultaneously deepening their relational identification with particular Student Residents. It also significantly heightened their sense of accountability to Student Residents. The interactions with Landing place and a Landing leader activated the emergence of a heightened ethical agency in relations to Landing community-members. Although other factors may have been at work, this particular Capstone Student was one of the only from their term to continue to volunteer for The Landing after the course was over, but then shared in a later conversation that they could no longer volunteer because, “I feel like I really need to be there, to show up, *and* I don’t feel enough support to show up right now.” For me, this agitation stemming

from access to place demonstrated a dynamic tension between their ethical agency and their own sense of belonging within the partnership. Dynamic tension, much like for this Capstone Student, is a typical function of complex systems, wherein energy or resources move in opposite directions creating a competitive structure, and often stimulating emergent structures.

An additional example of the power of place in this partnership, came from another Capstone Student's complex reaction questioning the purpose that The Landing spaces should have based upon its values. This tension was mediated by their emergent ethical agency in relationship to Student Residents, within the context of their developing collective identification as both a peer and PSU students alongside Student Residents. The following quote is from that Capstone Student, D, who repeatedly expressed this emergent collective identification as a PSU student, one example of which was included above in the relevant section. Here in a group focus group discussion of meaningful experiences with the partnership, D engages others about their concern for how a particular use of The Landing seems incongruent with their collective identification and their emergent ethical agency. D is discussing the fact that Capstone Students can volunteer at The Landing for the course both during early evening shifts when Student Residents are arriving, and can also take on overnight volunteer shifts, in which to be an extra support to Student Residents should anything come up in the night and to help with early morning check-out. Although most Capstone Students choose shifts during the waking hours to interact with Student Residents, D chose to do overnight shifts.

D: Staying the night at a shelter was educational in some aspects, but I had this feeling that it was wrong. The context was wrong. Sleeping in circumstances that are different than my own privileges, in order [to have] an educational experience? Where do I fit into this system?

D expresses how their developing sense of identification and a related ethical agency was being challenged by a misuse of the purpose of a place, and in particular the meaning or values of the space. There is a question here of what values and what purposes *should* The Landing embody, engaging in a question of Landing agency. There is a significant concern here that if a shared and safe space is used in a particular way, it may be exploitative, and in fact alienating for a diversity of participants. This partnership in particular is coordinated around the co-creation of a place with very important and explicit functions and meanings to the participants, therefore, the possible misuse of the place here comprises all three emergent outcomes, from identification, to belonging, to participants' accountability to their relationships.

These examples of interactions in the shared place, the meaningful and co-created spaces of The Landing, were integral for many participants and for how they were transformed by their partnership relationships. The emergent identification as student, the dynamic sense of belonging and alienation that access and use of the space cultivated, and the deepening of commitment to the partnership and its community-members resulted from giving time to the place. In contrast, as can be seen in the following quote from the Leaders' focus group, a lack of engagement with place in its embodiment within

the partnership, was named as a reason for lack of an ethical agency and relationality with The Landing.

Anon: [The Landing] was not necessarily something any of us would ever see, or walk by.

This quote was shared by one of the Landing Leaders in the context of attempting to clarify reasons for the diminishing engagement of the FUMC congregation. In a related sidebar conversation during the Leaders' focus group, a Landing staff person also questioned how the structures of Landing place may have impacted identification and the ethical relationality of church members. They imagined that because The Landing only happened in the basement gym space and only happened at night, it had some sort of mystical becoming, which daytime engagement with the places in the church could not relate to in any significant way. In summary, there are significant instances when the place is recognized as being at work in the partnership, and among partnership relationality. The evidence explores how this happens through processes like access policies, relationality among participants, and through values, purposes, and engagement place acts upon the emergence of relational agent outcomes.

Relational Input: Information Sharing

The mediating factor of information sharing practices within The Landing partnership appeared to be a significantly revealing element in the data. Information sharing practices can be understood to include episodes or even habits of the exchange of meaningful information, and are often the basis of constructing meaningful socio-cultural

interactions. They can be understood as enacting meaning, and even to have the ability to create and constitute meaning. Across a variety of scholarly disciplines, information sharing, and more broadly discursive practices, are understood to be materially generative (Butler, 2011; Barad, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2018). Discursive practices are the systemic socio-ecologically constructed conditions that create and allow for practices of information sharing. In the evidence, we see that this information sharing practices are at work in defining partnership identities and creating both the epistemological and ontological natures of partnership relationships. By far, one of the most explicitly discussed and affective interactions within The Landing partnership was information sharing. Feedback processes was included in the original deductive code for data analysis, however, the addition of “information sharing/discursive practices” was one of only three inductive codes that were invaluable in thematic analysis of the data, as the generative processes of information sharing in the partnership were significant in reporting participant experiences across stakeholder groups. Who was ethically charged with sharing information? What were the impacts when it did or did not happen? Who did it, with whom, why and when? These were the sort of questions that were being debated and discussed throughout the study by a wide range of participants.

For Student Residents and Capstone Students, information sharing was most relevant when it came to how the lack of information sharing felt related to a perceived lack of respect and care and inclusion. As outlined in the findings regarding the dynamic senses of alienation and belonging, information sharing was particularly relevant and was

also often discussed in relationship to place. Also seen in previous sections, for Landing Leaders, particularly among FUMC-related participants and the Landing Coordinating Team, information sharing was also at the heart of feelings of alienation, as well as ethical agency. Information sharing was referred to twice as often in the focus group and online follow-up by Leaders' stakeholder group, as any other. Here is one particularly compelling quote shared during the focus group regarding information sharing from a church leader. O is speaking from the perspective of FUMC's Parish Council, the church's executive board.

O: [The Interim Senior Pastor] was like... where does The Landing fall under our church hierarchy, who works with them? And we [the Parish Council] were like, we know that there is a [Landing] advisory board, and we know that some of our church members are on that board? We had a couple meetings, there was a lot of like... [long pause]. It was a very weird thing. They [The Landing Coordinating Team/Advisory Board] do something, and we don't know what. It was like, well, who's in control?

...It was this big question of, somebody should know more about this and someone needs to... And I think part of that also was like, oh, we need to make sure that the congregation is aware of this. How do you go ask people for funding if they're like, wait, what are you doing? What is this thing?

This profound feeling of being unmoored from the information most essential to the practices and policies of The Landing partnership, was directly connected to other

leaders' feelings of being both alienated and "othered." The sense of confusion for some was transformed into a sense of distrust and isolation in others. In this case, the disruption or lack of an information sharing practice challenged and impacted the development of all three emergent outcomes for Landing Leaders. Below is another quote from during Leaders' focus group, from an FUMC-oriented Coordinating Board member, which demonstrates another way that information sharing was limited and challenged among those charged with leadership of the partnership.

E: ...One of the things I'm realizing is that no one ever (pause) - there was this charge to move forward and create this project, but there was never a training or discussion of how to go about doing it. Or, how do you engage other church members in this program? How do you go about communicating? ...We don't teach each other. How do you spread the word? How do you get a group together? How do you recruit volunteers? How do you keep volunteers? None of those kinds of conversations happen.

Although impacted by a variety of other mediating factors, the lack of information sharing was distressing on to many on many fronts. The overall sentiment during the focus group with Landing Leaders was shared quite concisely by this anonymous author in the focus group follow-up online.

Anon: ...it often felt confusing and frustrating to feel like we were tasked [with Landing leadership], but we didn't have all of the information needed to make decisions.

It is often hard to report when something is not happening, however, the sensation of being confused, excluded, and overwhelmed by the lack of information was so profound, it was clear to many that it had threatened the vitality and viability of the partnership itself. It had most clearly impacted the emergence of feelings of alienation and ethical agency for many Landing Leaders. From this data, it is significant to draw out that information sharing often happened among stakeholder groups, or subsets of these groups as with the more complex “Leaders” stakeholder group, but became more challenging across groups. As seen in evidence regarding all three emergent outcomes in previous sections, as agent identifications evolved, they often crossed stakeholder group boundaries and became essential trans-group information sharers. Thus, the challenges of universalizing versus localizing or personalizing information offers an additional opportunity for reflection that would prove meaningful for CBL partnerships. The imperfect practice of sharing information among partnership participants had a profound impact on the processes and the agents of the partnership. The dynamism of this factor, as well as other interrelated mediating relational factors, are significant when understanding the ebb and flow of the emergent outcomes for partnership participants.

Relational Input: Cultivation of Relational Awareness

The third mediating factor in emergent agent outcomes is the cultivation of relational awareness. What I am calling relational awareness is the practice of adapting awareness of the relationships we are a part of, whether this happens within the development of new relationships, or simply the revealment of relationships which we

already embody, but were not yet aware of. Relational awareness is the adaptation of our consciousness of connection and entanglement. There are many relationships in our lives that are clear to us, that hold center stage; those of partners, friends, families, or professional relationships. However, often we come into contact with a relationship we are a part of, which we did not acknowledge, know, or understand, but was there all along. For example, as many people return to a deeper relationship with Land or are forced to reckon with their relationship with ecological systems of which they are a part, they also often (re)engage with Indigenous ways of being in relationship with more-than-human kin and the sense of interrelatedness required to navigate the present times. This increased or adapting way of knowing mediates and mitigates our self-identifications, the complexity of our ethical engagements, and where and when we feel a sense of belonging.

Within the context of The Landing partnership, the adaptation of relational awareness was often significant in the emergence of the three specified agent outcomes. The following quote is from FUMC leader, O, who is sharing about the launch of The Landing partnership, and how it came into being within the FUMC congregation. It is one demonstration of how the revelation of a relationship may impact both our collective identifications, as well as ethical agencies.

O: When the proposal came in to start [The Landing] ...there were a lot of people sharing information. ...From sharing in the Sunday morning services, there were a lot of conversations that came about ...and

people were like. “We're sad to see this need [of college student homelessness], and there is also this opportunity to get connected,” And [many conversations happened] like this sort of conversation [the focus group].

It took a lot...what would the community be? How would this partnership work?

The story of The Landing launch above has been included from the perspective of other agents earlier. In the following analysis, I offer an additional layer of nuance and systemic dynamism as work, as related to the cultivation of relational awareness. Here, O discusses how the church had begun a process of their “Next Big Thing,” and so engaged in discussions of community needs and opportunities. One thing that arose was that some in the congregation were concerned about the people sleeping on the streets in the church’s neighborhood, sometimes on the church’s property. One particular congregant also began to learn of the homelessness crisis facing the students of Portland State just down the road. When the information was shared with the congregation that the unhoused, they were concerned about may be one and the same as the college students down the road, parishioners were distraught and inspired. Their unhoused neighbors became more known, more human - became interrelated and interconnected to them. The congregants became engaged and curious, and then they became activated and inspired to be in service, to act and to create. In this case, the only thing that changed was an adaptation of the congregants’ awareness of their relationship - the same people surviving

on the streets around FUMC became different people, or differently related to FUMC. As new information was shared and the relationship became something to which congregants might be accountable to, in some way the congregations' needs and those of others were aligned, even some way in which they may be collectively identified. Unfortunately, due to the variety of circumstances explored above, including but not limited to reactions of the COVID pandemic, the congregation's awareness of their interrelationality waned. The following series of quotes shared during the Leaders' focus group and online follow-up, explore various reflections on the dynamism of awareness or consciousness of various relationalities. The first is a revisit to a quote explored earlier linking relational awareness directly to ethical agency.

O: ... It was a very small group of people who saw the [Landing] launch and the rest of the congregation I think really didn't, we lost that connection. ... it was sort of like the church had a lot of things going on and it really just sort of fell off the radar. And it was hard for us to figure out how to get it back.

As this Leader expressed the impact of a diminishing awareness of relationality, a related conversation they had had one-on-one with a Landing staff member revealed to the staff member how relational awareness was at work in their interactions over the course Landing programming, or lack thereof.

K: [Our conversation] highlighted the degree to which I and other members of [Landing] staff had limited interactions with FUMC

leadership and congregants. Partly that's in the nature of the work we did...

This is an additional reference to the timing and place of The Landing (at night and in the basement), and its place among the awareness of FUMC members. This sentiment was repeated again in the online focus group follow-up.

Anon: Because of the pandemic, things have not gone as initially planned, and as a result it felt like the congregation was disconnected from the project, and it was unclear how much support there was to keep it running.

Due to the dynamism of other mediating factors like place and information sharing, the mindful awareness of the congregants' relationship to PSU students and the Student Residents waned. There were diminished and even unattained opportunities for congregants to interact in shared space with shared meaning, due to the pandemic and the night versus daytime nature of the way different partners used the same FUMC spaces. There was limited and inconsistent information sharing, due to the challenges of the pandemic, people avoided sharing space, meeting or interacting with new people or temporary relationships, limited staff hours and capacity limiting engagement with the congregants, a change of church leadership as a central information sharing figure. There are these examples, and so many more, that demonstrate how as other mediating factors shifted, relational awareness also shifted and, in this case, waned. As a result, the

emergent development of collective identification also stagnated, and the emergent sense of ethical agency or accountability to the partnership also became unsustainable.

Relational Input: System Dynamism

The dynamism of a system can be understood in one way as the energy of the system. Dynamism is not the agents or even the processes of a system, but the rate of interplay among them (van Geert, 2019). In this case, dynamism can be seen as a factor impacting all three emergent outcomes of the systemic relationships involved. Dynamism can include the changing directions of energy, and its rate of change of a system. At its root, that this partnership system is transforming, and transformative for the actors involved, for better or worse, is a result of its dynamism. This truth is at the heart of the findings of this study. The dynamism of the partnership's internal systemic structures system significantly impacted systemic outcomes. Examples of this dynamism are present across the three other mediating factors, and among the changeability of the three emergent outcomes. Examples from the data include, shifts and changing behaviors around policies about access to place, the shifting energy of exchanging information at different rates among different groups and relationships, and the deepening and shallowing of awareness of those relationships and the impact that has on ethically motivated engagement across time. Each of these, included in previous sections, are all examples of how dynamism of this system is a mediating factor of the emergent outcomes of this system. The external structures and systems this partnership is nested within are also mediating the outcomes of the partnership. Although the evidence

suggests that partnership participation directly generates emergent identities, the nature of identity development for partnership participants is of course mediated by the identities participants enter the partnership with, and their social, cultural and economic meanings therein, which themselves are enacted with significant dynamism. Shifting engagement with and regular changes of the broader policies enacted by the two larger institutions involved, FUMC and PSU, including those around membership/enrollment, diversity and inclusion, and resources and funding, directly affect the dynamic and variable senses of belonging and alienation emergent for participants. Additionally, those same external institutional structures impacted participants' and possible participants' development of an ethical engagement with the partnership. People who spent time connecting, listening, learning with and from community-members, developed a more active sense of ethical agency in relationship to the partnership and its participants. However, that was often those who were permitted to do so by COVID restrictions, those who were encouraged to do so by their faith and the structures of their church, and those who were obliged to do so by the values-driven requirements of PSU's community-based learning Senior Capstones program. Each of these examples of the dynamism, the changing and creative energy at work in and upon the partnership, are evident via our attention to the nature of the socio-ecological systems that define and contain us. As one participant shared, it was hard to pick just one meaningful story about their experiences with the partnership. Instead, they shared that it was the following list of iterative and complex interactions within partnership relationships that were most meaningful, including "partnering," "hiring," "articulating purpose," "developing," "engaging," and "creating community."

This series of generative and creative endeavors in partnership with others defined the ways in which they emerged transformed by the partnership. It was this dynamic assemblage of “powerful moments” initiated by the primacy of partnership relationships which created and held the meaningfulness and purpose of the partnership. The dynamism present in The Landing partnership is a consistent behavior of any complex system, an element of the transmutability of change and adaptation at work, and attention and care for this relational input offers generative and responsive opportunities for authentic relationality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to 1) understand the patterns and behaviors of the systemic nature of a CBL partnership, 2) understand how agents are in relationships with these patterns and behaviors, and 3) how those relationships vary specifically for engaged community-members. An answer to the study’s first question, an investigation of CBL’s systemic patterns and behaviors, were revealed within this critical ethnography as four Relational Inputs, which have been described above. The three Emergent Outcomes of identity development, the significant impact of participants’ senses of alienation and belonging, and the emergence of an ethical accountability, begin to answer the second study question. These three agent outcomes are evidence of the dynamic ways in which participants were in relationship with those systemic relational patterns, and further, were transformed by them. Further, in response to the third study question shining a light on community-member relationality specifically, the findings reveal the deep wisdom community-member perspectives offered us in understanding the

systemic nature of this CBL partnership. The evidence revealed that it was not just “community-members” we were missing from our understanding of these partnerships within our community-university engagements. The data suggests that there is a multiplicity of agents within and because of the partnership itself. The evidence of relational patterns and emergent outcomes suggest that our lens must be wide enough to include who we are becoming because of our partnership relationality, and the related behaviors at work in the partnership. What are the implications of these patterns on our practice of community-based learning, and possibly partnership development more broadly? If we bring to bear the dynamic system patterns or behaviors of the relational inputs of place as agent, our information sharing practices, attention and development of our relational awareness, and the dynamism of our systemic interactions, how might we engage and intervene differently? The following chapter will suggest the emergent strategies we might cultivate to encourage the meaningful and beneficial outcomes we hope to achieve within the systemic relationships of these essential and transformative partnerships.

Chapter Five: Discussion & Recommendations

The Praxis of CBL Partnerships: A Relational Paradigm Shift

The purpose of this study is to understand the patterns and behaviors of systemic community-based learning partnerships, and the diverse experiences of all partnership stakeholders, particularly elevating the community-members' experience. Through the lens of a critical complexity theoretical framework, three research questions guided this investigation:

1. What are the patterns and behaviors of a community-based learning partnership as a complex system?
2. How are the stakeholders, or agent groups, in a community-based learning partnership in relationship with the patterns and behaviors of their complex system?
3. How do community-member agent experiences specifically vary in relationship to the system's patterns and behaviors?

Using a critical qualitative research (CQR) approach, also referred to as critical ethnography, this study engaged one higher education community-based learning partnership, specifically "The PSU Landing at FUMC" (The Landing). The Landing is a collaborative, community resource that provides transitional safe-haven housing for Portland State University (PSU) students, who are navigating severe housing insecurity and homelessness. Through significant participant-observation, focus group and follow-up online interviews, and the analysis of background partnership documentation, the study engaged a diversity of stakeholder groups from the CBL partnership. The study

included data collection and dialog with CBL stakeholder groups often included in CBL research, including PSU students engaging via a curricular praxis, and leaders and coordinators of the partnership, from both the university and the community partner organization, as well as the often unheard voices of CBL community-members, the Landing's Student Residents.

Fundamental to the criticality of this project, the explicit actionable goal for the study is to positively invigorate the systemic nature of the community-based learning partnership and to elevate the agency of the often marginalized experiences of participating community-members. The following discussion of findings and recommendations have a multiplicity of audiences, yet I am constantly mindful of how what I “find” and share about The Landing partnership will be perceived by the community-member participants. What do these discussions mean to them as an audience for these findings? I am honored and very careful to acknowledge that I am in some ways a proxy voice for the community-members who have created this knowledge, and will inspire many to explore and learn from their experiences. Through the act of creating this leadership role for community-members to name and map this partnership, I hope that their sense of belonging in this unique community is amplified, and they know more deeply the power of their voices and their knowledge. Additionally, the following discussion is cognizant of the impacts of these findings for The Landing partnership itself. The CBL partnership and its agents were able to develop a deeper self-knowledge through the research process, which I hope will lead to greater purpose, resilience, and transformative emergency for all system agents, and support partnership leaders and

coordinators to make good use of what we have learned together for future work.

I also ask and attempt to answer these research questions for myself and my peers, in all the relevant roles and relationships that matter to me. Many of my roles, that of faculty, community partner volunteer, and researcher, are shared with those in the CBL community at Portland State, and among CBL practitioners in higher education across the nation. This work and this study have changed me, and my own work of “becoming” complicates, or rather, is entangled with the forthcoming discussion. We often bring to these roles an ethic of care, desperately trying to respond to the multidimensional crises in our communities and on our campuses. Yet, as (Quiroz, 2015) of the Movement Strategy Center reminds us, “these dark times illuminate what matters most” (para. 2). So let it be no surprise that these times are also marked by a surge in transformative movements grounded in racial and economic justice, movements often supported by community-based learning partnerships and higher education institutions, like Portland State. For those who understand how easy it is to get caught up in the logistical complexities of community-based learning, yet still remain in this work and on the ground - in the classroom and in the community - it is my hope that these findings offer strategies to move through dark times and into complex relational solutions.

The findings of this study, as well as the following discussion and recommendations, are deeply influenced by both the audiences above, The Landing partnership community-members, and more broadly CBL partnership participants with whom I share deep affinity. To understand and represent their experiences and knowledges is significant work. As feminist materialist scholars like Mazzei & Jackson

(2013) assert “that in our zeal as qualitative researchers to gather data and make meaning, or to make easy sense, we often seek that voice which we can easily name, categorize and respond to. We argue that a more fertile practice, . . . is to seek the voice that escapes easy classification and that does not make easy sense.” (p. 4). Therefore, although a significant purpose of this study was to open leadership opportunities for community-members, and the study design did serve to elevate and equalize community-member participation among stakeholder groups, the central finding for this study suggests that early stakeholder group differentiations was in fact a red herring. The data instead demanded attention to a primacy of the relationships made possible because of the partnership system itself, and what emerged as a result of those partnership relationships. Findings show that who and how agents emerge from partnership is deeply connected to the transformative potential of CBL partnership relationships, for all agents. Further, the findings include three particular emergent outcomes most prevalent for all partnership participants, outcomes which emerged from the partnership relationships within this community-university collaboration. The first emergent outcome for participants was the revelation of emergent identity developments, or the ways participants were transforming as an outcome of their relational engagement with the partnership. This identity development emerged both as new relational identifications and as new collective identifications. The second emergent outcome for participants was the generation of dynamic senses of belonging and alienation, i.e., senses of (dis)connection that morph and flex based on the various processes at work in the partnership, and the greater systems it was nested within. The third emergent outcome was that participants’

emergent relational and collective identifications, and their senses of belonging and alienation, also influenced their ethical agency, or a sense of relational attunement or responsibility to the relationships of the partnership. Further, the findings suggest that these emergent outcomes may be supported through strategic attention and care for four dynamic partnership inputs, including place as an agent itself, information sharing or broader discursive practices, attention and development of relational awareness, and the dynamism of systemic interactions. Recommendations for what and how CBL partners and practitioners can foster these systemic conditions may offer opportunities to mediate how and why the three agent outcomes emerge.

Therefore, the discussion begins with a broad (re)orientation to relationships and the nature of relationality. The primacy of relationships and relationality, as a major finding in this study, is reviewed within its connections to the CBL literature, then is explored through an invitation to consider the transdisciplinary insight of two other scholarly fields, new materialism and Indigenous literature studies. After this reorientation, I explore how these three literatures alongside my own analysis might further illuminate the three emergent outcomes for agents. I then offer recommendations about how all partnership agents might integrate and act on this knowledge to improve and support their CBL partnerships, in light of the significance of four relational inputs to the partnership system. Finally, I close with broader recommendations, implications, and concerns about how study findings might offer future opportunities for practice and research.

Major Finding: The Primacy of Partnership Relationships

When each of us imagines who we are, how we understand and name ourselves, what most often comes to mind is those who made us, those who loved us, harmed us, named us, let us in or shut us out. Those we are in relationship with make up the narrative and moral fabric of our lives. When we are understood, by ourselves or others, it is from within those relationships. Our relationships define and create the intra-active ways we move through, and are made by, the world. Even one's agency, a deep persistence toward selfhood, defined by our intentions and our ability to embody them, is contingent upon the wild, creative, and persistent networks of our world of relationships. These relationships do not always mean being seen or loved, do not always feel like a sense of belonging or connection, but can also often be defined by relationships that harm us in either personal or systemic ways, or no less harmfully, be relationships we inhabit that are even simply unaware of us. There are relationship intra-actions that define us, like losing a dad, a fetus, or a love, or finding a meaningful purpose, a home, or a community that sees us. The human and more-than-human agents within our relationships do not just create something in us, they are constantly the making of us, our ever constant becoming. The relationships of our lives are what make us, and what we make of others. In nearly every surviving place-based Indigenous culture on Earth, there has always been and still is an ancient ethic of kinship (Cajete, Tewa Pueblo, 2018; Donald, Papaschase Cree, 2021). Inevitably influenced by Indigenous ways, now at the leading edges of scientific and philosophical human-thinking about the nature of reality, complexity science and new materialist philosophies lead us into the future (and past) of a relational onto-

epistemological universe (Barad, 2017; Tynan, lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania, 2021).

The primary finding of this study very simply compels us to apply this relational knowing and becoming to our praxis of partnership in the field of community-based learning. In this study, across stakeholder groups (groupings challenged by the findings themselves) the evidence suggests that agents emerged from their participation in emergent and adaptive ways, because of the diverse relationships within the partnership. In future sections, I will return to the above referenced concepts of emergent self-knowledge, sense of belonging, and agential and ethical relationality. However first, the discussion begins with how the study's findings are mirrored in the community-based learning literature, wherein ideas of authentic relationships and relationality have long been centered; concepts which may also be deepened and informed by new transdisciplinary insight.

The field of community-based learning has long been attentive to relationships as core to effective community-based learning, in alignment with the study's core finding. Additionally, and more recently, CBL scholars have applied a critical lens to further understand who is engaged in these relationships, and how they have been constitutive of meaningful partnerships. Mitchell (2008; 2020), who coined the term "critical service-learning," names one of the three primary components of a critical praxis: the development and care of "authentic relationships" (p.58). Mitchell outlines how these relationships are the path towards development of critical consciousness for CBL student agents, and that relationships are particularly supportive in attending to differences in power and intersectional identities. Mitchell (2008) also cites Koliba, O'Meara, & Seidel

(2000) who confirm that the development of “genuine relationships” is required for both the learning process and a partnership’s social change agenda (p.27). When it comes to relationships from the perspective of community partners, Sandy & Holland (2006) found in their extensive literature review with community partner organizations (CBOs) that partners believed relationships are a primary priority for effective partnerships. CBOs shared various reasons why relationships mattered, including themes like making interpersonal connections, information sharing, and understanding community needs, identities and cultures. When relationships for or with CBOs’ community-members were addressed in their review with 99 CBOs, the minimal information that surfaced was simply meaningful relationships. In work to create a model for understanding these relationships, Bringle, Clayton, & Price (2009) characterized them by three qualities: closeness, equity, and integrity. Using these baseline characteristics, Clayton et al. (2010) developed the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) for CBL partnership relationships. The TRES attempts to measure the critical and change-oriented nature of relationships between diverse CBL stakeholder groups, moving from transactional to the most aspirational relationship being transformational. As measured by a quantitative rating survey designed for only CBO agents, transformational relationships appear to have generative emergent properties, including the abilities to “create new systems” and “create group identity,” similar to the findings of this study. Again, as demonstrated by the emergent outcomes generated by partnership relationality in this study, relationships are at the core of community-based learning.

This study's findings constitute an additional question of relationality for the field of community-based learning: How do those relationships change who we are, and in doing so, also change who we are in relationship with? Relative to this framework and this study's outcome suggesting relationships are the primary and prioritized structures of the partnership, various pedagogical and CBL scholars consider a critical social constructivist view of how our relationships socially generate knowledge and representations of ourselves, the world, and what we can know about it. Applications of hook's (2003) womanist relationality and Freirean (1970, 1992) popular education, manifestations of a critical emancipatory pedagogy, demand attention to how we embody our social locations, and their influence in pedagogical community-based settings, creating opportunities to shift one's reflexive awareness and worldviews. Gaventa & Cornwall (2008) apply a related critical, systemic, and social constructivist lens in thinking about community-based research and knowledge creation, noticing how once we cease holding participants within a subject/object gaze, making them static and separate, relationships evolve and can shift to (co)creative collaborations. This social constructivist lens may account for the relational outcomes for Landing partnership participants; however, an additional onto-epistemological lens of interrelations is also informative. Already from within the critical complexity framework, we have put aside the Cartesian binaries. These binaries divide us between who we are and how we think, and further, that we are individuated because we can think of ourselves as independent agents. The theoretical framework of this project demands more systemic non-binary ways of knowing and ways of being, which can inform how relationality is at work. When

subverting this binary, and in alignment with study findings, pedagogical scholars Lange (2004) and Dostilio (2012) both offer studies that reveal how these processes might be at work. Lange (2004) calls their pedagogical onto-epistemological process an “emergent dialectic” (p.134). Through Lange’s students’ experiential learning process, their study affirmed that for students “transformation is not just an epistemological process involving a change in worldview and habits of thinking; it is also an ontological process where participants experience a change in their being in the world including their forms of relatedness” (p.137). In other words, the college students in the study experienced a change in their way of being in the world, just as agents in all complex systems learn and adapt. Dostilio et al. (2012), also found how much relationships matter in partnership, highlighting that when the most radical form of reciprocity was at work, “generative reciprocity,” relationships developed co-creative structures, increasing transformation for individual agents, partnerships, and greater systems. This idea of generative reciprocity seems to affect not only what agents and entities do, but what they are and how they hold knowledge of themselves and their communities. Both of these scholars shared evidence of an onto-epistemological shift within their students’ experience with community-based learning and engagement. Therefore, based on similar findings in this study for all agents, including those outside of the college student stakeholder group, it suggests possibilities for a wider application of a more explicit onto-epistemological approach, which can be found in transdisciplinary influences like feminist materialism and various Indigenous onto-epistemologies.

Some Transdisciplinary Questions/Insights

The relationally generative finding of this study aligns in many ways with previous community-based learning research assertions, in which meaningful relationships are necessary in CBL for learning, feelings of purposefulness, and for overall partnership effectiveness, particularly as a social change endeavor. The literature often presents findings of CBL relationships as the outcome or purpose of the partnership. If done well, the bringing together of disparate perspectives and diverse people culminate in the creation of genuine and meaningful relationships. However, the findings of this study, as mirrored in the works of Dostilio and Lange et al, suggest another additional question about partnership relationality: What if we understood CBL partnerships as the creation of new relationships for a subsequent purpose of social and individual change? Or even further, what if we saw CBL partnership praxis as a deeper exposure of our already inherent and ongoing interconnectedness? If CBL research begins with the understanding that relationships are already existent, scholars/practitioners can then go on to see what they create, and what they make of us, through the work of partnership. Dostilio et al (2012) and Lange (2004) begin to take us down the road of generative relationships, however, the new materialism of feminist Karen Barad (2007), as well as diverse new/ancient Indigenous onto-epistemological frameworks like those of Tynan (2021), Donald (2021; D. Donald et al., 2012) offer unrecognized transdisciplinary insight to the field. Therefore, I proceed from the starting place suggested by Sarah Hunt of the Kwakwaka'wakw (2013), "Accepting the partiality of knowledge. Its relational, alive, emergent nature means that as we come to know

something, as we attempt to fix its meaning, we are always at risk of just missing something” (p.31). The following section will draw these ways of knowing and being into a nascent conversation with the pedagogical and partnership field of community-based learning, allowing practitioners to understand the impact of relationality more deeply, and begin to know in new ways that might offer support for deepening a partnership praxis for all CBL agents.

Barad’s Feminist Materialism

In this study’s work to understand what matters in the relationship of The Landing partnership, Barad’s (2007, 2017; Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012) new materialism asks us to understand that both what *matters* to us and the *matter* which we are made of, are part of “a dynamic articulation/configuration of the world” (p. 151). Barad’s ethico-onto-epistemology decenters humans but reinvigorates and includes humans as part of the material world. Their framework entangles their own transdisciplinary standpoint as both a feminist scholar and a theoretical physicist. Barad (2007) proposes a relational ontology in which real phenomenon emerges from the intra-action between matter, including human bodies, more-than-human bodies, diverse embodiments, right alongside practices of meaning-making, thereby “entangling” matter and meaning. In Barad’s “agential realism,” all are changed in a process of intra-active becoming, versus separate social and material interactions as a process between separate bodies, beings or systems. As Akomolafe & Ladha (2017) explain “[this] entanglement precedes thingness. In other words, there are no things, just relationships, and these ongoing relational dynamics are

responsible for how things emerge (p.819). Akomolafe & Ladha build on Barad by suggesting a praxis of intra-vention, or way to relationally “make room for radically new embodiments of justice, and to “open up radical spaces of possibilities once we accept the possibility of not-knowing” (p.820). In particular application to the findings of this study, this entanglement takes the idea of interbeing seriously (Kumar, 2002), and subverts any separateness of things at all, aligning with the primacy of relationships suggested in the outcomes for partnership agents. In fact, none of the participants of the study were “partnership agents” before the partnership began, let alone “study participants.” For Barad (2007), “Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating” (2007, p. ix). They continue, “relations do not follow relata, but the other way around” (p.136-137). We become who we are for the moment because of how we are related to others and the world around us, in a realist and procreative way. For each individual and all of their constitutive matterings before they became intra-active with The Landing partnership, they also then became anew and are still becoming, as a result of the relationships and the various mediating factors of those intra-relations. Within Barad’s new materialism, this intra-action, or becoming via our relationality, is also known as making “agential cuts.” Agential cuts are the cutting together/apart that create and recreate the beings and world we know, wherein our actions of knowing, being, or even being indifferent matter. As community-engaged learning scholar Ann Brooks (2019) explains, “The ‘agential cut’ each of us makes, whether it is a tree cut, a tweet sent, or one research variable selected over another, matters to the whole, in that it both

includes and excludes. Each ‘cut’ is an ethically weighted action in contributing to the world that emerges.” (p.45-46). Specifically, the outcomes of The Landing partnership for the agents were not static or fixed, but often repeated in a stabilizing pattern of emergence. These patterns and structures are called apparatuses, by Barad. However, unlike the often static fixedness of positivist experimental protocols and technologies, Barad’s apparatuses are not preformed, interchangeable objects that sit on a shelf waiting to serve a particular purpose. Apparatuses, are like the maps of a system, they are constituted through particular practices at work, yet are also “perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other reworkings” (Barad, 2007, p.170). The argument might be made that these apparatuses made up of the ways we understand our intra-relationships might also be thought of as an open system. An open system can be defined as a system that has flows of information, energy, and matter, which adapts to exchanges. As Coole & Frost (2018) assert, the logic of complex systems is “resonant with new materialist senses of contingent, immanent self-transformation” (p.14). Therefore, we can see a sort of symmetry between the original understanding of CBL partnerships, as socio-ecological systems with dynamic processes, and the way “new materialist analysis traces the complex and reversible casualties that run between different levels of the social system and especially between the micro level or everyday, and the macro level or structural” (Coole & Frost, 2018, p.32). The dynamics of intra-relations, the open-ended apparatuses to measure our understandings, and intra-actions that enervate ethical agency or relational attunement, all together provide powerful and intriguing new insights for the practice of a critically complex community-based learning.

Brooks (2020) draws these pedagogical and philosophical fields together meaningfully, alongside critical Freirean and Zapatista pedagogies, in her analysis of a community-based organization in Mexico. She suggests Barad's work offers "a philosophical grounding for a non dualist understanding of emancipatory learning theory that helps make sense of practices that take place in the material world of communities and the lives of displaced people." She goes on to state that, "Read through Barad (2007, 2010), emancipatory teaching and learning practices are embodied, ethically oriented, agential, emergent, and relational" (p.45). Barad's ethico-onto-epistemology, a framework that puts relationships in the center of our ethics, our being, and our ways of knowing, may tender essential insights about how exactly CBL partnership relationships literally transform us and our ways of being in the world.

Indigenous Onto-Epistemologies

Barad's (2007, 2010) onto-epistemology and its bearing on our ethical and relational lives carries a deep similitude with many Indigenous frameworks that define being through a sustained practice of kinship with all, a knowing attunement to the complex and meaningful relationality of our lives. However, there has been relatively little articulation between these two literatures, new materialisms and Indigenous studies literature, let alone much work bringing both of them into a conversation with the field of community-university (a doubtful binary itself) partnerships. Per Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt (2014), one reason for lack of engagement might include the tension between many Indigenous place specific onto-epistemologies, versus the academy's

abiding interest in defining knowledge through a positivist essentialism. A positivist framework creates a scientific taxonomy that provides categories, binaries and abstraction, and thus allows for extraction and exploitation. Those extractive practices, or the structural colonialisms of the Euro-Western academy, “advance and consume arguments that parallel discourses in Indigenous contexts,” yet rarely “reference Indigenous thinkers in a direct, contemporary and meaningful way...without filtering ideas through white intermediaries,” (Todd, Red River Métis and Otipemisiwak, 2016, p.6). It is because of this specificity to place and the particularity of relational knowledge for many Indigenous thinkers, that I hesitate to apply these ideas to the findings of The Landing partnership, happening on what is now the complex urban space of the city of Portland. Although none of the scholars included herein are speaking directly of the place the sample partnership is in relationship with, for a pedagogical field predicated on a unique movement into the place of “community,” to ignore the call to integrate a relational onto-epistemology into our understanding of partnerships would be irresponsible and unwise.

One of the most deeply resonant characteristics underlying the systemic knowledge bases of many of the original and Indigenous peoples of the world is the concept of relationality, and its pervading inclusiveness of all. Trawlwulwuy scholar Lauren Tynan (2021), from lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania, defines it in this way:

Relationality is premised on a truth that ‘all things exist in relatedness’ and whilst this is a naturally occurring principle of many Indigenous worldviews, it is

a principle that is sustained and strengthened through practice... When all things exist in relatedness, it is inconceivable that an entity, idea or person could exist outside of this network, or be considered as ‘Other’ to this system of relationality (p.601).

This relationality compels a kinship that is also ethical and emergent in its nature. In this ontological form, it is not just humans in relationship with each other that are included. Country, Land or place is included, the nature of the framework is itself agential, the sharing and exchange of the framework has procreative power, those who read it are compelled to consider their own relational nature and the ethic it narrates (Watts, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe; 2013) Tynan (2021) relates her knowing to Bawaka Country including Suchet-Pearson et al. (2022), saying ‘human and more-than-human *beings* never *are* – not isolated, not static, not known – but only *become* as they constantly emerge together’ Tynan goes on to explain that “dynamic and generative, co-becoming explains how practices of ‘Caring as Country’ are not uni-lateral...but are relational practices that involve all entities" (p.603). Tewa Pueblo scholar Greg Cajete (2011) did connect this ontology to an epistemological framework during a talk with college students in Portland, Oregon, sharing Pueblo and Mimbres knowledge that, “the essence of epistemology is that it’s embedded, in the symbols that we create in art. It is embedded in the songs that we sing. It is embedded in the structures that we build. It’s embedded in the ways in which we create communities. The epistemology... is saying, we are, the human being, is the sandhill crane, and the sandhill crane is the human being.

There is an interdependence and interpenetration in those two life forces" (00:17:00).

Although in the particularities of The Landing partnership, there is a focus on intra-relationships among humans, these ideas demonstrate how the relational practices of a partnership enact a dynamic co-creation, providing additional insight into how Landing partnership agents emerged in transformed and newly intra-related ways from their experiences.

An application to pedagogical and community-based learning contexts of various Indigenous onto-epistemological paradigms have long been essential to cultural creation and reproduction for Indigenous nations. The practice of critical community-based and place-based learning, and the work of including non-Indigenous students into these partnerships is a strong and ongoing practice in diverse global settings, as demonstrated by extensive publications across Turtle Island (North America) (Bowra et al., 2021; Cajete, Tewa Pueblo, 2018; Donald, Papaschase Cree, 2021; Kato, 2018). However, for the purposes of application to CBL praxis, I found it important to investigate how this relational onto-epistemology may have been explicitly and appropriately applied in pedagogical settings by non-Indigenous practitioners. One example includes the actively anti-service-oriented CBL of Steinman (2011) and his students. In this praxis, he asserts the necessary practice of

Decolonizing *relating*, involving university and tribal participants, unfolding dynamically in social spaces deeply informed by Indigenous perspectives, constitute real changes in and of themselves. If emergent

interactions survive the discomfort of crossing the social distance created by structures of inequality and injustice, and are formed or reformed outside of hegemonic schemas and discourses, such acts of relating are not merely symbolic substitutes for structural change. How interactions, service projects, and joint events are organized conveys and creates a social reality (p.14).

Again, here at the center of the praxis of ongoing intra-relations between Steinmans' students and their Ohlone community-based hosts, relationality and its emergent creative nature were required for transformative experience and to take steps towards an effective social change purpose. Padmanabha (2018) suggests an explicitly ethical curricular intervention to support non-Indigenous students in moving towards "transformative dissonance" before and during their community-engaged learning. Her curriculum was informed by Indigenous research methodologies and ethics, including "relational accountability." Finally, I bring us full circle back to Tynan (2021) who reminds us that "relationality is not an end goal, nor a stand-alone practice, it leads on from and toward multiple practices... continuing to build a stronger relationality between entities, focusing on the relationships, rather than the objects (p.607). As evidenced by this study, an ethical relationality is a practice, one that can be patterned and sustained, and one that can be forgotten. However, an ongoing awareness within a critical CBL partnership praxis may allow for a deeper exposure and intra-actions with our already inherent and ongoing interconnectedness. The following section's analysis attempts to

understand how we might strategize to embody and enact this new paradigm of partnership, to promote meaningful agent emergents.

Three Emergent Agent Outcomes

Within the critical complexity theoretical framework, the following sections constitute an emergent theoretical explanation of three significant emergent outcomes for partnership agents: identity development, dynamic sense of belonging and alienation, and ethical agency. In the study, these outcomes emerged, in dynamic ways, for agents across all initial stakeholder groups, as participants were all dynamic relational actors within the partnership. In the following, an exploratory understanding of emergence and how it applies in this content will be shared. Then, the three findings will be situated within the understandings and explorations of CBL scholarship, while also introducing how the more procreative aspects of the three emergents might be informed by the CBL literature and thinking across traditions.

Emergence and Emergents

The findings suggest three particular emergent outcomes for partnership agents, new identity development, a dynamic state of belonging, and an ethical agency or attunement to those relationships. However, to understand these emergent outcomes, it is important to clarify the concept of emergence in complex social systems, as a way of understanding the onto-epistemological realism enacted in the partnership. Emergence is the formation of new properties, processes, or outcomes of a system. Emergents are system outcomes that cannot be predicted, but are something that is created as a result of

system dynamics. Further, emergents are a reorganization of what was already present in the system to create something new, and more than the sum of its initial parts (Lichtenstein, 2014). This procreative action enacts the adaptive potential of a complex system to become more resilient and purposeful. In higher order emergence, this is not only a system dynamic, but is a process of downward or mutual causation, creating related emergent changes for individual agents system-wide. An example of this is the formation of a V-form in a migrating flock of geese. Both the individual actions and choices of the geese interact to create the V, something more than the flight of each bird. However, the formation of the V then iteratively changes the flight experience and choices of each bird. As explored in Lichtenstein's (2014) extensive transdisciplinary review of emergence, there are various forms of emergence that come from fields as disparate as mathematics, ecology, and linguistics, yet there are particular archetypes across fields, and the one most relevant to this study and field is collaborative emergence. Collaborative emergence brings together diverse agents guided by local interactions to create "stable social emergents" (Sawyer, 2004) such as collective memory, group slang, or the geese's V-form. Collaborative emergence supports the integration of individual level emergence into the dynamics of organizations or partnerships. One incredibly relevant example of the mutual causality of collaborative and radical emergence was a study done by Plowman and her students (2007). Much like The Landing partnership itself, Plowman et al. engaged with and investigated a church-based homelessness services project. Mirroring the early aspirations and efforts of sample partnership of the study, one person's initial idea became an institutionalized endeavor with a life of its

own, which then generated a transformation of attitudes, the creation of new values for members of the church, and shifted leadership styles and priorities for church leadership. These emergents are similar in many ways to the agent emergents within The Landing partnership, as will be outlined in the following sections.

Identity Development: Radical Relationality

As our relationality is practiced in new settings and new ways, we are emerging anew in the eyes of our communities, within our personal connections, and even for ourselves. One way we might think of this is identity development, and it is central to the ongoing act of becoming in partnerships. In the findings, agents of the partnership found themselves becoming PSU students, program pioneers, peer navigators, neighbors, and housing advocates. Participants also began to self-identify with roles made possible only within the partnership, like Landing Resident, Landing Board Member, etc., which emerged from the ongoing practice of relationships created or exposed by the partnership and through a developing sense of community and ethic of care. These acts of becoming were both within interpersonal or small group relational interactions, and through greater awareness of the interconnectedness with larger institutional groupings; the former relational identification and the later collective identification.

In our understandings of socio-ecological systems, each agent's reality is defined personally, institutionally, and culturally, and is constantly evolving through a self-referential process of change, while also attempting to stay true and consistent to itself, much like any organism within its ecological system (Walby, 2007; Wheatley, 2001). For

Landing participants this held true for diverse participants in interesting ways, as the dynamics of the amount, rate, and quality of their engagement was significant. With a critical lens, I also had strong expectations that social identities like race, gender, sexual orientation, and veterans' status, would be more explicit and evident in the data, all of which profoundly impact housing security in Portland and nationwide (Zapata et al., 2019). Yet, in the context of the focus groups, even with Capstone students who had been explicitly primed with relevant coursework and reflection, feelings and thoughts about social identities were rarely articulated. This could be accounted for in various ways, with silence itself being meaningful (Rosiek & Heffernan, 2014). However, two oblique mentions of systemic social identities were shared by residents in sentiments that conveyed they did not experience practices and exchanges of exclusion because of often targeted identities. For many, partnership engagement did not hold a central focus in their ongoing lives, whether a minimally engaged volunteer leader or a busy Capstone student for example, and thus the identities they entered into the engagement with were less profoundly interrupted. However, for others who engaged more often and in ways that were more directly impacting their everyday lives, like those living at The Landing, this emergence was more profound. Yet, for those whose engagement came from feeling less agency or control over their lives, there was also ongoing discussion between residents over time about how much they did or did not want to identify with The Landing. It offered them mutually exclusive feelings of being cared for and connecting, and also feeling alienated and separated from previous systems of care that had been interrupted or let them down. Participants are processing their realities through socialization and

interaction, and like the living systems they are, as they are affirmed or rejected, nourished daily or monthly within the system, various engagement inputs impacted the rate at which identity emergence occurred. As CBL scholar Stocker (2014), explains this is quite typical in CBL partnerships, where “social structure comprises networks of connected individuals who for various reasons will form links of various strengths between each other” (p. 3). Boyatzis (2008) an organizational emergence scholar, has seen this type generative emergence at work in leadership development, when the “reorganization” of internal agent feelings and self-knowledge are supported by behavioral experimentation, and then followed by collective and affirming feedback. Complex adaptive system’s thinkers theorize these organizational and informal groups, like a CBL partnership, as a network of “interactive, interinfluencing, and intersynchronous” agents (Marion & Gonzales, 2013, p. 237). Barad (2015) has compelling insight into what may be happening in this emergent process for agents, which they name diffraction:

This play of in/determinacy, unsettles the self/other binary and the notion of the self as unity. The self is itself a multiplicity, a superposition of beings, becomings, here and there’s, now and then’s. Superpositions, not oppositions. Thus, Two does not necessarily imply separateness for it is never really equated with duality, and One does not necessarily exclude multiplicity for it never expresses itself in one single form, or in uniformity. Entanglements are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entanglings entail

differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings. One move – cutting together-apart” (p.36-37).

The ongoing processing of both becoming and the making of others through our relationships is a useful way of understanding one of the most meaningful processes of a CBL system, the cultivation of authentic relationships and their mutual purposefulness. Another feminist onto-epistemologist, Charis Thompson (2005) has extensively considered these ongoing processes of becoming in the complex partnership settings of artificial reproductive technologies, far outside of an explicitly pedagogical context. However, following the intra-actions between those engaging themselves in “becoming parents,” their medical providers, social and resource support systems, the literal places and objects of the process including clinics and their agential technologies, Charis so beautifully captures this process as an *ontological choreography*, so deeply relevant to the partnership work of CBL. As we understand and engage and submit to our and others’ subjectivities, the imposition and choice of becoming objectified, and all of the spaces in between that interrogate who we are and how we identify, “this ontological choreography changes how many descriptions we fall under, how many parts we are built of, and how integrated we are or *need to be* (p.182) [italics added]. The claim is that this ongoing entanglement is always at work in our inherently relational lives, but that the dynamism with which we engage, the quality of our engagement, impacts how transformed we might be by our relations. The rate, pace, and quality of our efforts and awareness impacts our own becoming. A return to Tynan (2021), reminds us that all things are intra-

related, but our practice, or praxis, of relationality matters. In the ontological choreography of The Landing partnership, PSU students were made real in new ways, housing justice activists were enacted, and Landing residents became Landing volunteers, became Landing staff, became PSU alumni. Once strangers, partnership agents became collectively and ontologically entangled. They did not unbecome what was meaningful to them before the partnership, yet they were transformed in a way only possible an ontological and epistemological dance with one another.

Ethical Agency: A Practice of An Accountable Relationality

In complexity science, agents “learn and adapt in interactions with other agents” towards collective purposes and ever emergent strategies (Holland, 2014, pp. 8-9). A surprisingly similar sense of agency and agent groups is found in critical social identity theories. Agents in this sense are also actors in a collective system, but here not all system actors access the same agency. This study found that there was a dynamic process between increased relationality between agents and increased care or accountability to the relationality emerging. In terms of critical community-based learning, the question of whether or not a sense of social responsibility is truly cultivated through a CBL praxis is a primary concern of the field. Often in the CBL literature some of the most lauded outcomes of the high impact practice of CBL (Kuh, 2009) are the interpersonal skills, like communication, intercultural competence and awareness, teamwork, and civic responsibility. On the surface, the finding seems clear; as we come deeper into relationships, we care more about those we are in relationships with. However, there is

also something counterintuitive to this idea - just knowing about a problem or someone suffering often is not enough to compel us to act, just look at climate change and the global refugee migration crises. This tension is seen in concerns around CBL praxis, and was likely one of the most formidable reasons critical CBL was conceptualized. What is it that makes these experiences “authentic” and “meaningful” for participants? Even critical practitioners of CBL Endres and Gould’s (2009) reflect on their own CBL course, where students were able to recognize themselves as having white privilege, but were not able to see themselves as agents of change or allies in antiracist struggles. Despite assumptions made by Endres & Gould as faculty that their CBL course and partnership were grounded in a critical praxis, they found that white student privilege was often reinforced and perpetuated by the experience. For Barad (2012), there is an interesting clarification towards the ethical response CBL hopes for situated in their agential realism. They note, “Ethics are not about right responses to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part. Ethics is . . . about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are part . . . even the smallest cuts matter” (para. 37). In other words, as we come into new relationships, deepen our relationships, even become aware of present entanglements we are already a part of but did not know or could not yet see, we become more attuned to our utter relationality with the world - and our relationality compels us to be a part of the fabric of our world. This ethical relationality, as Dwayne Donald of the Papaschase Cree (2009) explains “is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our

different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p.6). This form of relationality is ethical because it does not overlook or invisibilize the particular. The particular as Barad (2007) would claim “matters” - our stories, our language, our interactions, how we name ourselves, our roles, and our communities, changes them and changes us. “Ethics is not simply about responsible actions in relation to human experiences of the world; rather, it is a question of material entanglements and how each intra-action matters in reconfiguring these entanglements” (Barad, 2007, p.160). When CLB scholars consider the design and practices of their partnerships for mutuality or reciprocity, and work to understand what is at work that is more than equal exchange or transactional, what really makes the magic of that feeling of reciprocity, Donald (2009) suggests that there is an “interreferentiality” at play, where the histories, stories, cultural symbols of one is being cultivated as significant to another. Todd (2016) relates this to a reciprocity of thinking, a practice that “requires us to pay attention to who else is speaking alongside us. It also positions us, first and foremost, as citizens embedded in...systems of relations that require us to work constantly and thoughtfully across the myriad systems of thinking, acting, and governance within which we find ourselves enmeshed” (p.19). Sustainability educator, botanist, and Anishinaabe scholar Robin Kimmerer (2017) calls on us to reimagine even our language in regards to kinship, between ourselves and the world around us; to reimagine how our attunement to pronouns serves to build a relationality with our communities, human and more-than human. Reciprocity, kinship, intra-relationality are the particular moments and methods and cultural practices that recognize where our stories overlap, how our relations are each

other's relations, that develops our relational ethic. In Australia, the way many Aboriginal people greet a new person is to ask, "Who are you? Where are you from?" (Tynan, lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania, 2021). This practice of relationality is imbued with an authentic curiosity of how my past might overlap with your past, how my kin might be related to your kin? This simple beginning offers the practice of CBL just one of many intra-actions to shift attunement to a more relational way of being and knowing the world. In summary, through the particulars of seeing and knowing ourselves as interbeings (Kumar, 2002) and within aware practices of care for our intra-relationality and emergent becomings (Barad, 2007), we may engender generative and transformative relational ethic (Donald, Papaschase Cree, 2012), which succors and sustains deep knowings of kinship and practices of belonging (Tynan, lutruwita/Trouwerner/Tasmania, 2021; Kimmerer, Citizen Potawatomi, 2017). The ethical agency present for many Landing agents offered this iterative opportunity for interbeing and intra-relationality. The following section explores how both ethical agency and emergent identity development support a relational choreograph among and within our vital partnership systems.

Dynamic Sense of Belonging and Alienation

Partnerships live as systems - like ecological systems they grow and change, adapt and create. People emerge from their partnership relationships as something they were not before, and as something that could not have been without the partnership and its relationships. In this study, as people changed, as their self-identities, their self-knowledge shifted, their intra-relational attunement also changed. As they understood

both themselves and others in new ways, they considered and responded to how those identities and interactions made them feel. There seemed to be a partnership wide question at work. *You matter to me. Do I matter to you?* Questions of belonging and alienation emerged and reemerged over the course of both distant and more intimate relationships. Over the course of my analysis, this sense of belonging, and the closely related feeling of being alienated from a place you believe you should belong, was a central node of feeling across all agent groups in their experience of The Landing partnership. It seems that as our ideas of who we are shift in relationships, how we are in those relationships will also adapt and evolve. Based on the evidence, this emergent outcome was situated primarily in the idea of community. Over the course of the study community was mentioned hundreds of times, in a multitude of contexts, as would befit any practice of “community-based learning,” hopefully. These feelings of belonging and alienation were found inside participants’ ideas and experiences with others, both directly and systemically. For study participants, these feelings were connected to feelings of “connection” and “othering,” “mattering” and “irrelevance” - perceptions of being meaningful to others or not, supported or not, connected to whether they were being “seen and heard,” and communicated with in meaningful ways. All of these concerns are often found in the sense of belonging literature (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Strayhorn, 2018). At the center of the data around belonging and alienation, there lurked a question about meeting needs, getting one’s own needs met and meeting the needs of others - not only material needs, although those were present, but often emotional and relational needs. What a beautiful question this analysis evoked: Could a community-based learning

partnership meet the relational needs of diverse people as they change, while they hold diverse and evolving roles? The evidence revealed, or maybe just reminded us, that as our relationships adapt, we adapt, and our sense of (dis)connection with others and with the world shifts dynamically within those agential cuts, or relational intra-actions. These changes are not linear or contained by simple cause and effect, they are not monolithic but are mediated by the particular complexities of relationships. How might a CBL partnership be designed, facilitated, embodied to answer this question? Donald (Papachase Cree, 2009) offers some guidance in reminding us that enacting an ethical relationality, “does not overlook or invisibilize the particular historical, cultural, and social contexts from which a particular person understands and experiences living in the world. It puts these considerations at the forefront of engagements across frontiers of difference” (p. 536). Through this complex systemic relational process that is often nebulous and messy, a sense of kinship and affinity in vulnerability is sought out - created, cultivated, and then broken, stirred and sustained, or not. This kinship, or sense of an accountable belonging is a practice of attention and care, and most deeply maybe, gratitude. The recommendation that emerges from this finding is to bring that attention and care to our critical community-based learning practice. To notice that our partnerships create and cultivate opportunities to belong and to matter. And within a praxis that can stir and sustain us, is one that deserves and may be sustained by a practice gratitude for the potentialities of this emergent outcome. As the Haudenosaunee speak to each other:

“Today we have gathered and when we look on the faces around us, we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people. Now our minds are one” (As shared by John Stokes and Kanawahientun, 1993, as cited by Kimmerer, *Citizen Potawatomi*, 2013, p.113).

In CBL partnerships we might include a practice of gratitude for belonging to one another, and for how our practices of engagement for social change bring us opportunities to become new ourselves, to more deeply understand the ethical charge of our ongoing relationality.

In summary, the three emergent findings for agents of The Landing partnership include: participants renaming and understanding their identities in evolving ways, the emergent practice of ethical agency within the partnership, an attunement to care and relationship, and finally, that being in partnership relationships can create a feeling of belonging that sustains us. In concert, the best of these outcomes might offer a sense of knowing that we matter, that what we need and what we offer, matters to those we are in relationship with. If the work of social change begins within us, what a powerful recipe for doing inner work for external change together. While understanding that a CBL partnership holds these potentialities, the question that surfaced during the analysis was compelling: How? How do partnerships create the structures that ignite these new and powerful possibilities for all agents? Further, what might we do as practitioners to

cultivate these possibilities, how might we create containers that can nourish the best possibilities for individual participants and for broader social change? The following section discusses four particular relational inputs at work in The Landing partnership, which offer dynamic strategies for how to cultivate these emergent outcomes.

Relational Inputs: Opportunities for CBL Praxis Adaptation

The following section explores the evidence of four relational inputs that according to this study are impacting the emergent outcomes of our partnership intra-actions and relationships. These four factors are: place as agent, information sharing, cultivation of relational awareness, and attunement to the dynamic state of the partnership system. This evidence suggests that within dynamic community-based learning partnerships, all agents may have access to strategically support the emergence of desired outcomes for themselves, as well as for those they are in relationship with. Yet, it is essential to clarify that these outcomes are emergent, each agential cut matters, which by definition means that they cannot be planned for, made to happen through precise controls or policies. Instead, the study of emergence suggests we create containers facilitated through what adrienne marie brown would call emergent strategies (brown, 2017, 2021). In the case of The Landing partnership, agents exposed ways in which these four mediating inputs seemed to affect the possibilities and embodiments of the three emergent agent outcomes. Therefore, the recommendation is that these relational inputs may be an opportunity to adapt the practices of partnership in community-based learning. Alongside our human partners, engaging directly with the agentic properties of place, the

intra-action of information sharing, the cultivation of relational awareness, and practicing an attunement to the dynamic state of the partnership system, could sustain a deep vitality for our partnerships. Further, these four inputs can also be intra-enacted among all partnership agents, supporting and elevating the meaningful impacts and experiences of all agents including community-members, not only those who are convening, leading or coordinating CBL partnerships.

Place as Partnership Agent

*Hope then to belong to your place by your own knowledge
of what it is that no other place is, and by
your caring for it, as you care for no other place, this
knowledge cannot be taken from you by power or by wealth.
It will stop your ears to the powerful when they ask
for your faith, and to the wealthy when they ask for your land
and your work. Be still and listen to the voices that belong
to the stream banks and the trees and the open fields.*

Find your hope, then, on the ground under your feet.

-Wendell Berry

The relational input of “place as agent” is explored in the following section, as a mediating factor of emergent outcomes for Landing partnership agents. Place can often be understood as a particular area or location, which has meaningful interactions between the physical and human aspects of the location. In modern Western geography studies, place often includes three components: location, the geographically mapped points on the Earth; locale, the physically setting for relationships between people; and a sense of place, the meaning or emotional attachments humans develop based on experiences with

the place (National Geographic, 2023). Relatedly, this strongly anthropocentric view of place, its intra-actions and its meaning-making, is similar to how non-Indigenous scholars also often think about systems at work. There is consistently an ontological-epistemological divide, wherein many things are perceived as parts of an ecological system, but it is only us humans doing the doing, and definitely only us humans who are doing the thinking and knowing within the system. Compellingly, the (re)emergence of posthuman philosophical frameworks, as in Barad's (2007) feminist materialism, assert a more-than-human agency in our intra-actions. "All bodies, not merely 'human' bodies, come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity - its performativity" (p.152-153). The inclusion of place as agent is far from new in Indigenous literature studies, the knowing and being of place "is an Indigenous interface with two sentiences: the mind of the place, and the human mind that is convening and opening to it" (Marker, 2018, p. 4). Further, in Tuck and McKenzie's (2015) methodological treatise on including place in research, they mirror the invitation of Indigenous thinkers (Cajete, Tewa Pueblo, 2018; Todd, Red River Métis and Otipemisiwak, 2016), asking critical scholars to consider "the multidimensional significance of place(s) in social science research...as sites of presence, futurity, imagination, power, and knowing," (p. xiv). Based on the evidence shared by this study's participants, framed by the study's critical complexity framework, this discussion hopes to engage with the invitation to be transformed by Indigenous and new materialism worldviews, in this consideration of place as agent, and its significant relational input within The Landing partnership.

From the outset, this study was committed to widening our conceptions of who was at work in a systemic CBL partnership - a critical inquiry into who mattered in a CBL system. The evidence suggests that grouping agents into pre-partnership stakeholder roles and groups, in order to understand interactions and relationships was insightful, but overly narrow. This commitment to widen the attention, or attunement, to community-members, in fact inspired the creation of a theoretical framework that allowed for a much broader understanding of the many agents intra-relating and *becoming* as a result of the partnership, as seen above through emerging agent identity development. However, beyond the revelation of transformative outcomes for human agents, the lens of critical complexity unveiled an unexpected agency of partnership places impacting the dynamic processes of the CBL system. Included within the theoretical framework was the pedagogy of sustainability education, and in particular the Burns Model of Sustainability Pedagogy (Burns, 2011). As one of five key dimensions of the pedagogy, place is included as a central component of holistic learning “increasing students’ understanding of and connection with geographical place” (p.263). All five of the Burns Model dimensions were included in the initial deductive codes, Of the five dimensions, including ecological design, critical perspectives, experiential process, sustainability content, and finally, the place-based context, place/context was overwhelmingly present in the data collected across all agent groups. When investigating how, when, and why participants were referencing place and its significance to them, places seemed to act directly upon human agents, engendering feelings of belonging, actively controlling or influencing them and their actions, influencing their intentions and decision-making, and

intra-acting with their personal histories, stories, or visions for future action. For Landing Residents, place was often at the center of conversation, which seems reasonable as their sense of place in relation to their housing security had been severely disrupted and was being remade again through their relationality with the partnership and its other agents. In these discussions, place(s) appeared to be directly influencing the processes at work. Places were agentic with a history or narrative, with values, and possibly with a capacity for intentionality. Interestingly, the Burns Model (2011) does not explicitly address the ontological or agential nature of place. The dimension of context or place, as situated within her pedagogical framework, was foregrounded as a way of knowing, or epistemological factor, in the systemic nature of a learning community. In Burns' (2009) original research with the model, context was in fact one of the more difficult to transmit with students, and may have something to say about students' starting point relationalities with place, particularly the university where many students had migrated to in order to pursue higher education. In the model, there is a particular attention to developing a meaningful knowing required for relationship, or connection, with place. Burns (2015) expands on this in considering place as the dimension that supports learning from the spiritual aspect of self, gesturing towards both a feminist geographical turn towards the body as geography (Butler, 2011; Longhurst, 1995) as well directly referencing Indigenous Okanogan systemic aspects of self as connected to place (Armstrong, Okanogan, 2008). These ideas of place as informative to self and in relationship with humans are one dimension, however, the evidence appears to suggest that we pursue an even more radical realist understanding of the agency of place, wherein humans are both

inhabiting place, and are in ongoing intra-active relationships with places that inhabit us. The idea of kinship or relationship with an agentic place is often central to understandings of place, particular places, in Indigenous onto-epistemologies (Cajete, Tewa Pueblo, 2015b). Vanessa Watts (Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, 2013) asserts “the agency that place possesses can be thought of in a similar way that Western thinkers locate agency in human beings” (p.23), naming this Indigenous conception of the embodiment of place *Place-Thought*. “Place-Thought is the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts (p.21). Like Burns above (2015), and her engagement with Okanogan scholar Armstrong, Watt’s (2016) Indigenous onto-epistemology also reaches back to her scholarly lineage to understand place as spirit and to make sacred this understanding of intra-relationality between humans and Place-Thought. A possible limitation of this study was that explicit opportunities for conceptions of spirit and connection to Land itself were not included in study design or protocols. Regardless of explicit inclusion or not, the significance of place surfaced often in the data, and the conception of Place-Thought, or place as agent, offers a meaningful way to capture the thoughts and feelings of this study’s participants, and is also in alignment with the study’s goal to investigate a more expansive idea of partnership agency in a way that was unexpected.

Strikingly, The Landing CBL partnership is a particularly salient sample for developing an understanding of the mediating influence and agency of place in a CBL partnership. Place is at the center of the partnership's identity, because the purpose of the partnership for many agents was to create a particular type of space, in a particular place-based context. The purpose of the partnership was to create an accessible safe-haven space for students with place-based insecurity and trauma experiences. The goal to offer a space for students to meet their basic needs, was also within the context of creating a meaningful method to transmit care, safety, belonging, and agency for those students. The partnership also came together in a church space and institution that has its own long history as an agent. The Landing came into being within the context of that built-space, with the historical narrative of having previously been a children and family homeless shelter for twenty years before The Landing's launch. The Landing also came together within the greater external contextual story of what is now the city of Portland, a place imbued with narratives of place-based harm. Portland's current severe housing crisis is often characterized as a wave of homelessness, a severe place-less-ness. The causes of this reach further back towards place-based stories of gentrification and "urban renewal," a great migration to Portland for Black folks seeking both liberation and economic freedom through war machine industries, and further back towards place-made dreams of a "manifest destiny" and White utopian fantasies (Imarisha, 2013; Semuels, 2016). And those are only the stories of humans on the land within a colonial paradigm, after millennia of ongoing and ancient stories of the Land in a balanced relationship with her original peoples. These gestures towards stories of place holding Portland and Portland's

First United Methodist Church each make their own ongoing agential cuts, even bringing the readers of these words together/apart with this place, changing the bodies of self, and place, and story right now. Place has a purpose in its relationship with humans, it may not be able to enact this purpose without humans, but the same can be said for the goals of many human agents with each other. How could so many material multi-relationships not have agentic relationality with those who are co-embodied in these places? Further, who does it serve to negate this agency and intentionality, whose power and perspective is protected?

An agent or actor “embodies motivation and intention” in order to be acknowledged as agent, the invitation is to widen our acknowledgement that places, and even the stories of those places, also embody agency (Garrouette & Westcott, 2013, p. 72). A place leads, suggests, testifies to, teaches, and demands our attention. A place creates a container that impacts our understandings of the concepts that serve us, teach us, and change us. Places are not simply spaces waiting there for our inscription of meaning, they change us, motivate us, protect us. Design and praxis of CBL with Place-Thought included, if not prioritized, might support practitioners and participants development of social change agendas, and intra-personal emergent outcomes. Both Indigenous pedagogical practices (Wildcat et al., 2014), and practices of place-based pedagogies (Gruenewald, 2003), may offer insights for how CBL practitioners might elevate the “voice” of Place-Thought as an agent of CBL partnerships. If community-based learning practitioners and participants cannot incorporate an ethical and aware relationship with

the places that inhabit us, we compromise our own understanding of what emerges from our relationships with both places, and with one another.

Information Sharing

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

-Mary Oliver

Information sharing - the work of making meaning and exchanging it - is an act of making things matter in a partnership. According to the evidence from this study, who we do and don't share information with, when we share it and why, systems and methods for how we do and do not share information, even the creation of information, like knowing and articulating shared values, documenting transparent policies, and our (un)written scripts for interacting with each other, are all acts of creating our world of relationships with each other. In partnership, the act of creating relationships for a shared purpose, information sharing is one of the most influential and often chaotic inputs of a socio-ecological system. Wheatley (2006) in her discussion of meaningful information, couched in a complexity science framework, reminds us that "the role of information is revealed in the word itself: in-formation" (p.96). In systems-thinking, an open system is a vital and thriving system, and an open system is one that is permeable to new information, new inputs and understandings. Therefore, it is deeply sensible that a viable and vital partnership curates and sustains a thriving practice of information sharing. Life

across the planet is doing just this all the time, using new information not only to preserve itself, but to generate new capacities and formations of itself (Wheatley, 1993). Thus, the dynamic of information sharing is a key partnership strategy for emergence. In the findings, who was involved, and how information was shared, was often also implicated by structures of power within the partnership. Within study findings, a lack of inclusion in the process of information creation and exchange was interpreted as “othering,” a sense of being present but demeaned, or further a sense of being seen as outside of the system, as not mattering. So, it is not only that information sharing matters, but how it matters and for whom. As Barad’s (2007) ethico-onto-epistemology would assert, “intra-actions effect what’s real and what’s possible, as some things come to matter and others are excluded, as possibilities are opened up and others are foreclosed” (p.393). An Indigenous perspective of the ethical implications of the relationality of information sharing is similar in its understanding of what the iterative processes of information sharing create in community, in partnership. Pueblo Tewa scholar Greg Cajete (2015a) explains that “Community dialogue is not a one time event but stimulates an ever-growing spiral: shared thoughts lead to informed actions, which lead to new knowledge, understanding, competencies, and effectiveness, all of which motivate the community to keep engaging in dialogue. The process generates an ever evolving spiral of inquiry, action, and knowledge creation” (p. 215). This process leads to emergence, to the ongoing becoming of both agential information and the human agents which it provokes and procreates.

Barad (2007) would ask us to go further still, to consider that what is at work in what I am calling “information sharing” is exactly as described above, but not in some allegorical or analogical way. An agential realism means that there is a material enactment of information sharing. The discursive practices at work constrain and create potential for creating and exchanging information that is meaningful for us. Informed by Foucault, discursive practices are the socio-ecological, historically and locally constructed conditions that allow for information sharing of all types. The implications of discursive practices and regimes have long been a subject of both organizational theorizing and critical pedagogy (Apple, 2013; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004) as “discursive practices are the material conditions for making meaning” (Barad, 2007, p. 335). So neither information sharing, nor discourse, is simply a synonym for talking to one another, or even for all sorts of information sharing, it is how and what we are in relationship to one another that allows for possibilities of producing and filtering knowledge, exchanging it and understanding it together. “Discursive practices are [ongoing] boundary-making practices,” at the work of creating, and also being created by us (Barad, 2007, p.149). Barad goes on to assert that “making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds” (p.91). This more expansive idea of information sharing requires us to understand what is meaningful in our relationships and how we exchange meaningful information as an act of our becoming in relationship with one another.

Wheatley (1996) asks us to remember the childhood game of telephone, how charmed we were when the information changed in the process of sharing it. Information sharing is a key strategy to promoting the three emergent partnership outcomes for agents found in this study, but we must also remember that information has a dynamic nature, an unpredictable and constantly becoming character, just as we do. In fact, even our selves are made of matter organizing itself in reaction to information, as our bodies are constantly remaking themselves, it is ongoing meaningful patterns of information that allow us a personal geography of place at all.

Problems with information sharing are abundant in partnership work. Often when a partnership or organization is struggling, we have all heard the critiques: it was a failure or breakdown of communication; there was a disconnect; I tried to tell them; why didn't anyone tell me? Information sharing is also one of the most commonly cited challenges in community-based learning partnerships (Cress, 2013; Sandy & Holland, 2006), and also across a multiplicity of organizing and organizational endeavors (Wheatley, 2006). Practitioners can recognize its power in the structure and ongoing construction of our partnerships. The significance of information sharing in this study recommends that a CBL praxis cultivates curiosity, ambiguity, and relational practices and policies, not as afterthoughts, but instead to recognize information sharing as *the* work of partnership. A further recommendation is to understand information sharing as a democratizing force, as in the primary purpose of this project. Sharing information from new avenues and unheard voices changes the structure of our work, changes our relationships, and

therefore changes what we feel accountable to and what matters to us. I invite all CBL partnership participants to gift more attention both to *who* is sharing information and *with whom* information is being shared. Each time a choice is made on either of those fronts, it is an intra-action that matters.

Cultivating Relational Awareness

*How we are moved says everything
About what we are to each other
& what are we to each other
If not everything.*

-Amanda Gorman

The evidence demonstrates that the work of becoming more aware of our relationships with one another, how we are impacted and impact others, how we make and remake each other, affects the outcomes of our relationships, and therefore how we emerge from our partnerships. This seemingly simple finding is often an undernourished practice in our institutionally-driven partnerships. Yet, relational awareness is a significantly influential factor in all three emergent outcomes. Relational awareness can be manifested in a variety of ways, with examples from the study including: increasing the ability to imagine a personal future that looks similar to a partner's experience, developing an exchange of support or shared ethic of care, receiving information that reveals a shared affinity, background, or membership, and even learning that others have been discussing you or situations related to you. In organizational complexity theory, Manning (2013) reminds us that all partnerships include characteristics of diverse and possibly contested goals; radical, shifting and innovative technologies; and fluid levels of

participation amongst multiple and varying actors. In this study, when partnership agents were attentive to these seemingly chaotic factors of intra-relation within their partnership, it impacted their identity developments, their sense of belonging, and their sense of care or accountability to others in the partnership. These seemingly simple, but agentic, shifts in how one understands being in relationship with another changed the relationship.

Barad explains that “it is only through different enactments of agential cuts, [the happening of] different differences, that [one] can come to know the different aspects of [oneself]” (Barad, 2007, p. 432n42). The relational awareness moments that study participants shared explored shifts in their relational thinking and feeling, and created personal changes that also impacted the function of the system and its emergents, including community trust and cooperation, and (dis)embodiments of power and leadership. Barad (2015) asks us to consider the agency of our bodily engagements, of even our conceptions and enactments of our imaginations and desires, and how these might be at work in the (re)mattering of our lives. A bit like Schrödinger’s cat, the act of looking at a relationship in a new way changes the state of us, affects the life of us and the vitality of the relationship. The charge here then is for partnership agents to cultivate a practice of conscious and critical reflection within and about their relationships in the partnership. The evidence demonstrates that participants were often influenced by changing and developing relationality. Therefore, a recommended strategy to support desired positive outcomes for participants, is for partners to support and facilitate opportunities with one another to cultivate an awareness of this relationality, then further, consider actively the agential cut, or change-making, the awareness might be enacting for

them, and then further still, make active choices about resulting behavioral and perspective changes.

Another recommendation that emerged from this particular data is the impact of relational awareness manifested in situations where participants believed they were aware of a particular relationality, yet then learned that others did not have the same awareness or had understood their relationality in a different way. In other words, sentiments like, I thought they cared about me, but they didn't, or, I thought I 'knew' them, but I was wrong. Donald et al. (2012) explore this particular sort of absence effect of relationality in the related context of university research partnerships among Indigenous peoples and their communities. He names how often university-based practices of community-based pedagogy and research contextualize the community as "outside" the university. In Donald et al.'s framing, "the overriding assumption at work in these colonial frontier logics is that Indigenous peoples and Canadians inhabit separate realities. The inherent intention is to deny relationality" (p. 54). And the impact of that "frontier" logic of (anti)relationality is as powerful as one of knowing a deep intra-relationality. Another version of this dynamic can also be seen in Bell's (1980) concept of interest convergence. Interest convergence can be understood as an alignment of awareness and interests, which inaugurates a relational awareness between oppressed/targeted agent groups, for Bell in regards to the wounds of racism for Black and white communities, however, it only develops into a sense of ethical agency when those with more privilege are also affected by the problem. This may have been an element of what was happening in the development of relational awareness and ethical agency among Landing stakeholders, as

well. Although quite careful to avoid the pitfall of alienating and objectifying participants in this study, I found that even my belabored investigation and construction of partnership “stakeholder groups” in the end was somewhat of a distraction from the interconnected natures of participants across, among, and in transit between one stakeholder group and another. CBL partnerships would do well to heed Donald et al.’s insight and warning of how practitioners might be outside-ing or othering fellow partnership participants from even starting point frameworks and discourse practices. The relational input of cultivating a relational awareness is influenced by agential interactions with both place and information. As seen in the following section, these ongoing shifts between agents, over time and space, are themselves a system input with significant consequences.

System Dynamism

*And when you speak to me like this,
I try to remember that the wood and cement walls
Of this room are being swept away now,
Molecule by molecule, in a slow and steady wind,
And nothing at all separates our bodies
From the vast emptiness expanding, and I know
We are sitting in our chairs
Discoursing in the middle of the blackness of space.*

- Pattiann Rogers (1980)

The finding of the significance of systemic dynamism in The Landing partnership offers a sort of warning against any sort of blueprint application of these findings. The dynamism of a system is not a set of particular actors or agents, or even particular processes or policies within a system, that might be managed or mitigated. Systemic

dynamism is instead the condition of constant change, an ongoing becoming in the interactions and state of an open system. That the Landing partnership system is transforming, and transformative for the actors involved, is a result of its dynamism. Examples of this dynamism are present and interrelated across the other three relational inputs or mediating factors found at work in partnership: 1) The shifting and changing behaviors around meaning and access to place; 2) the shifting energy of information exchange at different rates, and among different partnership groups and interpersonal relationships; and 3) the vacillation of agents' awareness of their partnership relationships and the ethical impacts of that awareness, each of which is working interactively with one another, creating the fourth relational input, 4) awareness of these changes over the course of the partnership and among the agents and spaces they inhabit. For example, the evidence demonstrates that these relational inputs influenced the generation of emergent identities among participants, however, the nature of identity development for partnership participants is of course mediated by the identities participants enter the partnership with, and their social, cultural and economic meanings therein, which themselves are enacted with significant dynamism. Shifting engagement with, and regular changes of, the broader policies enacted by the two larger institutions involved, from the course registration policies at PSU to lost door key rules at FUMC, directly affected the dynamic and variable senses of belonging and alienation emergent for participants. Additionally, those same structures impacted participants' and possible participants' development of an ethical relationality among partnership relationships. This dynamism creates a level of unpredictability that requires attention and care, but is outside the scope of more

traditional forms of managerial or partnership leadership. This dynamism might feel like a sort of alchemy is at work, and most definitely negates an often typical leadership and strategic framework that suggests that if we follow some particular set of steps in a particular order we can control partnership outcomes. However, this does not mean that there is some supra-magical system or unknown force at work. There is a construction of meaning and structure that as Barad (in Juelskjær and Schwennesen, 2012) might say offers an inheritance and intelligibility to partnership intra-actions. “As the rings of trees mark the sedimented history of their intra-actions within and as part of the world, so matter carries within itself the sedimented historialities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming—it is ingrained and enriched in its becoming (Barad, 2007, p.85). A particular recommendation in response to this partnership dynamism is to develop capacities for holding space open for what system-entrepreneurs call the “long now,” (Ventresca & Sihna, 2014) – challenging praxis and patience with the knowledge that our time scale must become significantly more expansive, both a systemic and personal resilience for rest and for change must be strengthened. A sense of becoming and belonging may be elevated through a relationality that does not find paradox in plurality, but is resilient to the seismic shifts of becoming together, that dances the ontological choreography with spaciousness, attention, and empathy.

Summary of Findings and Strategies for Relationality

In summary, the purpose of this study was to 1) understand the systemic nature of a CBL partnership, and 2) to widen the lens on who matters and how they matter,

particularly for the community-members engaged in our CBL partnerships. As the discussion explores, the findings reveal that there is a multiplicity of agents within and because of the partnerships themselves, and that our partnership lens must be wide enough to reveal how our partnerships transform us, our understandings of ourselves and our communities, and our ethical agency with one another. The emergent outcomes of this CBL partnership are emergent identity developments, a dynamic and significant impact of participants' senses of alienation and belonging, and the emergence and generation of an ethical agency or accountability to the relationships that are created by the partnership itself. The implications for our practice of community-based learning are to cultivate emergent strategies to facilitate the relational inputs which affect those emergents, namely that of place as a partnership agent, discursive information sharing practices, attention and development of our relational awareness, and attention to the dynamism of our systemic interactions. Attention to the local and wider applications of these findings may also have much to offer the praxis of CBL partnerships.

Further Research and Engagement: Leadership for a Praxis of Partnership

The following section outlines four ideas or concerns for future engagement with this research, including the consideration of broader applications for CBL partnerships, additional investigation into the related consequences for the leadership of and with partnerships, additional respectful and reciprocal engagement with Indigenous scholars, communities, and ways of knowing for deeper understanding of our

partnership work, and finally, the offering of an update and concerns regarding The Landing partnership itself.

Broader application for related community-based learning partnerships.

This research project was designed with a wider application in mind than only the particular partnership sample in the study. These findings may also be meaningful for PSU Senior Capstone program leadership, faculty and staff, and hold opportunities for application within other CBL partnerships of the PSU Capstone program and its faculty and community partners. I believe the findings suggest powerful opportunities for application both within the site of this partnership, across the field of CBL in higher education, and frankly for the practice of inter-community partnership work in a diversity of fields. Above and beyond the possible influence of higher education ramifications, is a return to the central purpose and the prioritization of authentic agency for all partnership stakeholders. By simply engaging individual community-members in a process of reflection and articulation of their experience, a process required for college students in CBL partnerships, innovative positive outcomes emerge. When people have the power to define their reality, and their influence adapts their experience, we are doing anticolonial and transformative work. This study may function as a pilot in offering a process for community-members to regularly function in an advisory capacity to CBL course and educator-practitioners, by integrating the significance of their personal experiences and impacts into the course. Further, if a responsive iterative process can be revealed by which community member insights and information are integrated into a CBL

partnership, even become fundamental to all CBL praxis, community partner organizations, and more broadly members' communities at large, may move the marker in their journeys towards social justice. Within an ethical relationality of partnership, "responsibility is not ours alone. And yet our responsibility is greater than it would be if it were ours alone. Responsibility entails an ongoing responsiveness to the entanglements of self and other, here and there, now and then" (Barad, 2007, p. 394). If together we co-create our partnership experience, I encourage CBL partnerships, the leaders, faculty, coordinators, and particularly, their community-members to co-create practices for understanding ourselves and purposeful work with communities together. By fortifying community-members to be teachers of their own experiences and change agents in their communities, they become the best indicators of both partnership and community success for all stakeholders.

Broader application and investigation into related practices of leadership.

It seems reasonable to include that there are implications for wider organizational and leadership theories, herein, which are meaningful for practitioners in those fields. Broadly, various fields of leadership are rapidly finding themselves in an era of enhanced understanding of complexity, capitalism, and power. From developments in (and Indigenous reminders of) our understandings of the complex socio-ecological world in which we live, various new fields of leadership have emerged. These leadership fields address how we might move forward in higher education, and in organizational spaces more broadly. As systems-theories advance, so too have theories like systems leadership (Senge, 2004) and actor-network leadership (Latour, 2007). From advancing applications

of complex systems theory and the increasing impacts of a globalized neoliberalism, theories like adaptive leadership (Heifetz & Linsky, 2014) and sustainability leadership (Ferdig, 2007; Hull et al., 2018) then emerged. Most recently, as more scholars begin to understand the implications of emergence and relationality, and are confronted more imminently with planetary systems challenges and ongoing pandemics, ideas of “facilitating adaptive spaces” (Uhl-Bien, 2021) and “emergent leadership” (Andrew et al., 2021; brown, 2021) are being constructed and piloted. These emerging fields of leadership are iteratively grappling with our abilities to steward our communities, economies, polities, and those we care about, into a future we would like to imagine. As we consider how these fields have influenced education leadership and vice versa, some educational and pedagogical scholars wonder if even the name of the field Educational Leadership is ready for a change. Many scholars begin to consider if the concept of leadership as a whole, rooted in a legacy of nationalist patriarchies and dualist enlightenment anachronisms, is something we must “move beyond,” in this relational turn of the social sciences (Eacott, 2018). I suggest that the emergent outcomes for partnership agents outlined in this study, as well as the findings of the four strategies suggested to influence or mediate the relational intra-actions of a community-based learning partnership, might also inform a praxis of leadership for ethical relationality and meaningful agent transformation in a variety of partnership settings and at a variety of scales. Further research to understand the facilitative, coordinating, and emergent leadership practices that might support the emergence of transformative agent outcomes is recommended.

Further partnership engagement with diversity of Indigenous onto-epistemologies.

This study humbly engaged with the scholarly invitation to consider how Indigenous literature studies, including a diversity of ways of being and ways of knowing, might inform all of our research and knowledge creation in higher education, and in particular our community-based partnership work. Vicki Kelly of the Anishinaabe/Métis (2021) asks a potent question when it comes to developing an ethical relationality both across higher education and with Indigenous nations knowledges, “How can dialogue with Indigenous Knowledge Holders create ethical spaces that ultimately inform and transform our understandings of knowledge and ethics?” and “How can this ethically relational process create trans-systemic and transdisciplinary understandings that can be integrated into ethical action within our post-secondary institutions, and what are the implications for community engaged research?” (p. 197). Kelly’s work and that of others (Rosiek et al., 2020), propose both a pedagogical and inquiry-based relational ethic that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and practitioners might co-create together. I look forward to continuing to cultivate a respectful transdisciplinary praxis, informed by Indigenous knowledge and ethics, and deeply encourage other CBL practitioners to consider the same in future partnership and research projects. There is no path towards understanding all our relational entanglement makes possible, without a meaningful reciprocity and robust solidarity with Indigenous communities.

Closure: The future of The Landing partnership.

After more than two years of operations and community building, The Landing will unfortunately be indefinitely suspending its operations offering safe-haven supportive shelter for unhoused Portland State students at the close of the 2022-2023 academic year. This decision-making process was a difficult one for the partnership, and is due primarily to unsustainable and inconsistent funding. In a time when there is robust resourcing and attention to the housing crisis in the City of Portland, it is a difficult thing to see a community-specific service close. Many Student Residents of The Landing have persisted at PSU, some have completed their bachelor degrees and graduated, many have found permanent and stable housing, and one student is currently pursuing their master's degree in social work. This decision, and many of its precursors came after the second stage of data collection for this study. Therefore, this process of closure has not been formally included in the discussion, yet felt important to offer to readers. The Landing's relational and systemic nature offered powerful insights into the nature of CBL partnerships. And, although closing primarily due to restrictive funding, the significant relational inputs that the study of The Landing exposed, regarding the agency of place, information sharing, and relational awareness were at work in the emergent challenges for the partnership. It is with deep hope and gratitude to the partnership and the many people I have had the honor of working with and learning from, that the findings of this study might serve to strengthen understanding of this partnership in order to imagine a more sustainable future for its programs and programs like it.

Conclusion

Look up, and breathe in for a moment what the world's forests have breathed out. The air you breathe has literally moved across the entire face of the planet, has been the breath of more trees than you could count in your lifetime. And so, we remember where we began this study, within the metaphor of the nested systems of a vast forest, and its complex web of life. That broad forest macro-system you imagine paints a picture for the dense field of community engagement in higher education, and all of its concomitant community partnership work across the nation. The macro-system of community engagement has created an environment that influences each form and instance of CBL at work in over 1000 colleges and universities across the U.S. Can you remember back to that small white flower in the literature review, the three petaled trillium? That flower species serves as our metaphor for the nested meso-system work happening in the community-based learning within Portland State University's University Studies Capstone Program, and its partnerships across the City of Portland. And now, that single instance of a trillium flower, seeking light filtered from above, from below seeking nourishment from its home there on the forest floor? That single instance of a CBL partnership, the study's sample, that beautiful and specific partnership of the PSU Landing at FUMC, is implicated in the flaws of our paradigms of separation, and was inspired and (re)made in the light of each act of our relationality. This study's goal was to give the gift of deep attention to that single CBL partnership. In the end, the findings of this study seem to offer an exchange of meaningful attention, an ethical relationality, to those participating in the partnership at the micro-level, including myself as participant

and researcher. The findings can also simultaneously diffract the light in such a way that the entanglements of CBL partnerships are more broadly revealed, so that an enhanced ethical relationality might emerge for others.

When we come back to the forest as an ecological metaphor, it can be easier to remember how relationality is at work in the world around us. As agents of CBL partnerships, we are intra-related, we are enacting spirals of causality, and every single one of us matters. What we do, and what we don't do - how we care, and who and what we don't care about - is procreative. Systems work is patterned in similar ways across human understanding, from the mycorrhizal networks making forest life possible deep in the soil, to the emerging intersectional movements for racial and economic justice, to the trailing pass of a comet as it nears the atmosphere of Earth. How we understand what is possible in our relationships with the world, and with each other, is at the heart of a relational paradigm shift happening at so many levels of our current human experience. Let it also inspire our best and most creative selves in our relational and pedagogical partnership work in our universities and communities.

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APPENDIX A: Background Documentation – Course Syllabus



UNST 421 (Section 523)
Capstone: Housing & Homelessness
Fall 2022

Instructors:	Amie Riley, MA, EdD ABD Mercedes Elizalde, MA
Office:	Cramer Hall, UNST Office Room 117
Instructor Availability:	Mon & Wed 11am-1pm; Tues 1-4pm (In Person, Zoom, Phone)
Email:	Removed for Privacy; Cell Removed for Privacy Removed for Privacy
Course Title:	Capstone: Housing & Homelessness
CRN:	13932
Credits:	6 Credits
Course Location & Schedule:	Hybrid MON 9-10:50am on Campus (Cramer 158) WED 9-10:50am on Zoom (https://pdx.zoom.us/j/0000000000) CBL: PSU Landing @ FUMC (1838 SW Jefferson St, Portland, OR)
Required CBL Hours:	15 hours of Capstone Project Community-Based Learning (Evenings)

*PSU strives to value diversity and inclusion. My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, or you require accommodations (e.g. interpreter, note-taker, more time, etc.) please notify me. **I look forward to working with you to facilitate the support you need in this class.***

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your experience in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to ask about reasonable accommodations. Contact the DRC at 503-725-4150 TTY or Relay 503-725-4178, drc@pdx.edu, or <https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center>.

Course Description

The culmination of the University Studies program is the Senior Capstone course requirement. This 6-credit, community-based learning course is designed to create team-based opportunities for you to apply what you have learned, in your major and other university studies courses, to a real challenge emanating from the community.

One of every six PSU students has recently experienced homelessness. This Capstone considers the complex challenges of housing insecurity and homelessness, confronting our country and

our campus. The course is guided by our collaborators at [The PSU Landing at FUMC](#): A new PSU community resource sheltering students through housing crises and transitions. Capstone student projects will work to change narratives, implement creative actions, and advocate for effective housing policies. Students will critically analyze political, economic, and health systems, with stories and data, and by engaging directly with community experts.

Acknowledging Indigenous Peoples and Lands

As we prepare to engage in intellectual and emotional work this term, we will honor and be mindful to recognize that we live, work, and learn on and with the traditional and ancestral homelands the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Watlala bands of the Chinook, the Tualatin Kalapuya and many other Indigenous peoples and nations of what is now called the Columbia River Gorge and the Willamette River Valley. Furthermore, we acknowledge that these groups, along with other Indigenous peoples, continue to confront ongoing sacrifices forced upon them from a legacy of enslavement, colonialism, and genocide. In being mindful, let us honor the land, their legacy, their lives, and the continued resilience and brilliance of their nations and communities.

University Studies Goals

This course is designed to enable you to practice and learn skills needed to serve our community partners and to participate in civic/community engagement. These skills include: interpersonal communication, critical thinking and inquiry, social and ethical responsibility, collaboration with diverse populations and organizations, creativity, and the ability to create social change.

Inquiry and Critical Thinking:

Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

Communication:

Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways—writing, graphics, numeracy, and other visual and oral means—to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies.

Diversity, Equity and Social Justice:

Students will explore and analyze identity, power relationships, and social justice in historical contexts and contemporary settings from multiple perspectives.

Ethics, Agency, & Community:

Students will examine values, theories and practices that inform their actions, and reflect on how personal choices and group decisions impact local and global communities.

Course Goals & Learning Outcomes

(I&CT, D, E&SJ, and C - align with above UNST Goals)

- You will practice your ability to construct a project and policy through a participatory, reciprocal, and deliberative process that fosters agency and redistributes power for students struggling against housing insecurity. (I&CT; D, E & SJ; C)
- You will develop a nuanced comprehension of housing as an institutional and cultural system, developing your own sense of agency and social responsibility to maneuver systemic leverage points for positive change. (E&SR; I & CT)
- We will be exposed to and engage with diverse and interdisciplinary perspectives, centering those individuals and communities most impacted by housing insecurity. (C; D, E, & SJ)
- You will further explore your own social identities and your knowledge of basic needs (in)security, in connection with broader institutional and cultural structures of power through personal reflection and openings for authentic and listening relationships. (D, E, & SJ; C, E & SR)
- You will elevate and cultivate your systems thinking literacies, so you can effectively critique and respond to organizational, local, and regional housing policies. (I & CT; E & SR)
- You will research and analyze data and story from both academic and experiential expertise, in order to develop a critical and creative thinking response and written proposal to a housing services challenge. (C; I & CT; E & SR)
- You will facilitate a feedback exchange process that supports evidence-based and ethics-informed decision making and inspires sustainable action for positive change. (E & SR; C)
- You will develop your practices of reflection and gratitude, to nurture your skills for empathy or interbeing, in order to think, feel, and act from a sense of ethical self-knowledge and towards the arc of justice. (E & SR; D, E, & SJ)

Course Overview

Required Course Materials

All course resources will be available for free, via D2L as digital media, offered by visiting community experts, or sourced by student research. Students will need regular computer and internet access, students will also need a webcam and Google suite capabilities. If you need help accessing hardware or wifi, the PSU Library can help!

Assignments

Full Details in Assignment Descriptions and online on Canvas: 550 Total Points

Each grading category is worth about one-third of your overall grade.

1. Active Participation & Community Support - Individual (190 points)

Active and authentic participation in this course is essential. We will engage both in person, and *with cameras* on Zoom. For this course, learning is a collective process in which we have the opportunity to help each other generate meaning throughout the term. As we are responding to critical needs in the community, this always works better if we are building a community ourselves. As collaborators in this learning process, the richness of this class will

depend on the engagement, comments, questions, and insights that you bring to class. If you imagine you are unable to engage deeply and regularly, this might not be the best course for you.

Week 1 Community Building (30 points)

- a. Pre-Term Survey (9 points)
- b. Capstone Project Survey (5 points)
- c. I am From (15 points)

Active Class Participation (100 points)

100 points | 5 points per session x 20 session

In-Person Community-based Learning Hours (60 points)

60 points | 10 points per shift x 6 shifts

- Discussion Post with Hours/Dates Due 12/7 by 9pm
- Complete 6 shifts at PSU Landing shifts, evenings from 6-8:30pm (2.5 hours).
- Complete between Week 3 and Week 10, for a total of 15 hours

2. Understanding Housing & Homelessness - Individual (185 points)

These assignments will help you to track your progress, capture your reflections and questions, and document ideas, stats, and quotes which you can use directly to build your final Capstone Project.

What is Notable? Weekly Assignment

15 points each week x 8 weeks = 120 points

Due weekly before class on Mondays, Weeks 2 – 9

Community Research - Discussion Posts (20 points)

#1 Organizations with Insight - 5 points | Due 10/12

Portland Community Reflection Paper (#1) - Individual Paper

60 points; Due 10/19 by 8pm (2-3 pages)

3. Capstone Project: Housing Solutions Comparative Analysis & Reflection - Group (175 points)

Your project will be writing a Comparative Analysis Paper about Portland and your group's assigned Peer Community. Your project will include both a macro systems perspective and insight through the eyes of sample organizations in each community. Over the course of the term, you and your team will write three short papers, then after your feedback session, your team will integrate information between assignments, using what you have written earlier in the term, to compose your final paper.

Your final project will reflect on where you see themes, patterns, interconnections and differences between Portland and your Peer Community - and then make recommendations

for future actions and solutions. Your project will include reflection, analysis, and future thinking about all you have learned about housing & homelessness so far. Your project work will engage the course content and readings, you and your classmates perspectives, and community members insights. You will present these ideas at the end of the term to our class and community advocates for feedback.

Community Research - Discussion Posts (15 points)

#2 Peer Community Interview Protocol - 5 points | Due 10/26

#3 Table of Contents - Discussion Post (AKA Project Plan) - 5 points | Due 10/26

#4 Peer Community Interview Insights - 5 points | Due 11/12

Peer Community Reflection Paper (#2) - Group Paper

50 points | Due 11/9 by 8pm (2-3 pages)

Comparative Review and Recommendations Paper (#3) - Group Paper

50 points | Due 11/23 by 8 pm (2-3 pages)

Capstone Project: Feedback Session - Group Presentation

20 points | 11/30 in class (20 minutes)

Capstone Project: Final Paper - Group Paper

50 points | Due 12/5 by 8pm (10-14 pages, edited from previous content)

EXTRA CREDIT:

1. Attending the Housing Oregon Conference (9/28-9/29), and posting a WIN response earns EC!
2. Volunteering for an Overnight Shift at The Landing earns EC!
3. Posting approved extra sources to your WIN earns EC!
4. Scheduling a 30 min Office Hour check-in earns EC!

Full and detailed instructions for these assignments and their points (550 total) can be found on Canvas and in linked GoogleDocs.

Grading Scale: If you are taking class Pass/No Pass, you must receive 70% or higher to pass.

Letter Grade	%
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76

C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	<60
Pass/No Pass	>70

Course Policies

Flexibility Statement

We are all teaching and learning in unconventional times! I am letting you know up front that I may significantly modify course content and/or substitute assignments and activities in response to global, institutional, health, and student insight and information. Simultaneously, I want you to know that there will be an abundance of flexibility. Let's have open communication, and I will work hard to assure every student can be successful, taking into account the present stressful and ever-changing circumstances.

Late Paper Policy: To demonstrate respect and flexibility for the instructor, peers, and self, assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus or clearly amended by the instructor. Within reason, late assignments are often accepted, but only with prior communication and approval. ***Students never think I'm serious about this - please, let me know beforehand and we will work it out!*** Late assignments without prior notice will not be accepted more than two weeks after the deadline and will lose 10%.

Environment of Respect

Throughout this course, you will be working collaboratively with each other and your community-based learning partners. Disagreement and diversity of opinions are encouraged, while also respecting the opinions and ideas of others and maintaining respectful, constructive discourse. You will be challenged to think critically about the impact of cultural differences, which may include gender, race, socioeconomic status, physical and cognitive ability, gender and sexuality and other forms of being amazing humans. You are encouraged to ask difficult questions and share yourself. Please be respectful of others as we listen to and try to understand differences. Friends, just don't be mean or intentionally cause harm, and be willing to own your impact if you do accidentally. As a community of learners, we share a fundamental commitment to care, justice and inclusivity. These commitments can unite us throughout this endeavor.

PSU Student Resources: Here is a comprehensive list of everything I know.

Our school offers so many diverse and supportive resources for students, but most students never learn about half of them, or they find it difficult to access them and advocate for them. If you need any help accessing ANY of these resources, I would love to support you in advocating for yourself and getting what you need to be successful! Please just ask.

PSU Institutional Policies

Confidential Advocates & Reporting/Support for Harm and Abuse

ALL PSU employees, clergy, and law enforcement are by law “Mandatory Reporters.”

This means that if you share information with us about an instance of Interpersonal Violence, Self-Harm, or Abuse of a Minor, we are required to notify the Dean of Student Life’s CARE Program, which will also contact law enforcement. The CARE Program has an amazing amount of resources to support students facing personal challenges and dangerous situations, and is effective and supportive when reporting harassment, assault, and abuse.

If you are seeking full confidentiality, please reach out to a Confidential Advocate. Communications with a Confidential Advocate are privileged under Oregon law. This means that an Advocate will not be compelled to disclose your information without a court order. All PSU Advocates will report anonymous generalized data to the Title IX coordinator solely for the purposes of addressing systemic issues. This information will not include any identifying information and will not trigger an investigation. Confidential Advocates on the PSU Campus are available at the following sites (Please call or email and ask to be connected immediately with a Confidential Advocate):

- Women's Resource Center
- Queer Resource Center
- International Student & Scholar Services
- Diversity and Multicultural Student Services
- Cultural Resource Centers: The Pan-African Commons and Native American Student & Community Center

Incomplete Policy

Students do not have a right to receive or demand an Incomplete grade. The option of assigning an Incomplete grade is at the discretion of the instructor when the following criteria are met.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Required satisfactory course completion/participation.
2. Reasonable justification for the request.
3. Incomplete grade is not a substitute for a poor grade.
4. Written agreement. (See [Incomplete Contract](#))
5. Resolving the Incomplete.

For the full Incomplete Policy see <http://pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2016-2017/Bulletin/Graduate-Studies/Enrollment/Incompletes>

Recording Technology Notice

We will use technology for virtual meetings and recordings in this course. Our use of such technology is governed by FERPA, the [Acceptable Use Policy](#) and PSU’s [Student Code of Conduct](#). A record of all meetings and recordings is kept and stored by PSU, in accordance with

the Acceptable Use Policy and FERPA. Your instructor will not share recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, TAs/GAs/Mentors, and any guest faculty or community based learning partners that we may engage with. **You may not share recordings outside of this course. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.**

Academic Integrity & “Turnitin”

Academic integrity is a vital part of the educational experience at PSU. Please see the PSU Student Code of Conduct for the university’s policy on academic dishonesty. A confirmed violation of that Code in this course may result in failure of the course. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of Turnitin.com page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Classroom Requirements for All Students and Faculty Due to Covid-19

The University has established rules and policies to make the return to the classroom as safe as possible. It is required for everyone to follow all the Return to Campus rules and policies. To participate in this class, PSU requires all students to comply with the following.

Vaccination:

Be vaccinated against COVID-19 and complete the COVID-19 vaccination attestation form. Those students with medical or nonmedical exemptions or who will not be on campus at all must complete the process described on the “COVID-19 Vaccine Exemption Request Form” to establish those exemptions.

Health Check, Illness, Exposure, or Positive Test for COVID-19:

Complete the required self-check for COVID-19 symptoms before coming to campus each day.

If you are feeling sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to campus. Call The Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) to discuss your symptoms and situation at 503-725-2800. They will advise you on testing, quarantine, and when you can return to campus.

If you test positive for COVID, report your result to SHAC and do not come to campus. SHAC will advise you on quarantine, notification of close contacts, and when you can return to campus.

Please notify me (i.e. your instructor), should you need to miss a class period for any of these reasons so that we can discuss strategies to support your learning during this time. If I become ill or need to quarantine during the term, either I or the department chair will notify you via PSU email about my absence and how course instruction will continue.

Failure to Comply with Any of these Rules:

As the instructor of this course, the University has given me the authority to require your compliance with these policies. If you do not comply with these requirements, I may ask you to leave the classroom, or I may need to cancel the class session entirely. In addition, failure to comply with these requirements may result in a referral to the Office of the Dean of Student Life to consider charges under PSU's Code of Conduct. A student found to have violated a university rule (or rules) through the due process of student conduct might face disciplinary and educational sanctions (or consequences). For a complete list of sanctions, see Section 14 of the Student Code of Conduct & Responsibility.

Guidance May Change:

Please note that the University rules, policies, and guidance may change at any time at the direction of the CDC, State, or County requirements. Please review the University's main COVID-19 Response webpage and look for emails from the University on these topics.

Capstone: Housing & Homelessness **[Student Course Schedule. F22](#)**

Week	Theme	Day	Activities	Due Dates	Course Content Due
Week 1	Our Learning Community	Monday (9/26) On Campus	Community Building Course Structure & Project Intros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-Term Survey Due 9/26 by 8pm (9/25 for EC) 	<u>Syllabus & Landing Website</u>
		Wednesday (9/28) On Zoom	I am from... Syllabus PSU Student Resources Our Community Partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am from... (Share in class) Capstone Project Survey 	

			The PSU Landing @ FUMC: Intro & Volunteer Role		
Week 2	Our Portland Community & The Homeless Response System	Monday (10/3)	Understanding the Homeless Response System (Lecture) Our Community Partners: 3 Peer Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? = (WIN) 	WIN 1. Out of Reach Mini-Report (p. 4-17) 2. Point in Time Count 2022 3. Here Together Website (Understanding Homelessness & Solutions Tabs)
		Wednesday (10/5) On Zoom	JOIN Immersion Workshop!		Review Community Organization Websites: JOIN Portland Central City Concern
Week 3	Housing & Homelessness: Local Actions & Solutions	Monday (10/10) At Landing!	Landing Tour & Training Capstone Project Groups Getting Started!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? 	WIN 1. JOIN Immersion PPT/Journal 2. Voices of Homelessness (TEDx, 13 mins) 3. <i>Student Research:</i> Website or Secondary

					Source for your Annual Report Organization (See Discussion Post #1)
		Wednesday (10/12) On Zoom	PDX Shelter Site Panel: What does success look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations with Insight: Sheltering Program in Portland Annual Report (Canvas Post, Due by Class) 	Prepare for Community Expert Panel: Transition Projects (TPI) Blanchet House Dignity Village
Week 4	Solving Homelessness: What does success look like?	Monday (10/17) On Campus	Culture of Care & Trauma-Informed Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? 	(WIN) 1. Homestretch (Film, 1 hour, 29 m.) 2. According to Need , Episodes 2 & 4 (Podcasts, 1 hour) 3. Understanding Homelessness , Episode 3 (Podcast)
		Wednesday (10/19) On Zoom	Report Out: Organizational Insights & Annual Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portland Community Reflection Paper (#1) 	Prepare PSU Resource Knowledge: PSU Basic Needs Hub

			<p>What does success look like?</p> <p>Discussion: Defining our research questions!</p>		
Week 5	Housing & Homelessness, System-Thinking	Monday (10/24) On Campus	<p>Intro to Systems-Thinking</p> <p>Problem Mapping Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? 	<p>WIN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Systems Thinking (10 pgs.) Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) (1 pg) Impact of SDOH on Homelessness (14 pgs.)
		Wednesday (10/26) On Zoom	Group Work Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table of Contents Draft (Canvas Post, Due by Class) Peer Community Interview Protocol (Canvas Post, Due by Class) 	
Week 6	Housing & Homelessness, Policy Solutions	Monday (10/31) On Campus	Housing First & Community Driven Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? 	<p>WIN -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Housing First Approach (Film, 13 mins) Why am I Always Being Researched? Guidebook (pgs. 7-9, 20-26)

					3. Housing is the Best Medicine (p. 2-8)
		Wednesday (11/2) On Zoom	Social Identities & Systemic Inequities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview Highlights (Canvas post) 	
Week 7	Housing & Homelessness, Systemic Inequities	Monday (11/7) On Campus	Debrief Interviews & Peer Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable? 	WIN 1. <i>Student Research:</i> Recommended resource or Annual Report from your Peer Community Interview 2. A Matter of Place (27 min film) 3. Segregated by Design (18 min film)
		Wednesday (11/9) On Zoom	Mid-Term Evaluation & Discussion (Synchronous Online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Community Reflection Paper (#2) Paper Due by 8pm 	Veterans Day Extra Credit WIN: 5 Key Facts about Homeless Veterans

Week 8	Housing & Homelessness, Navigating Systems & Trauma <i>PDX Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week</i>	Monday (11/14) On Campus	PDX & Peer Community Comparison Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is Notable 	WIN 1. Trauma-Informed Design for Homelessness (Entire Webpage) 2. Shelterforce: Radical Housing Activism Article OR Podcast Version 3. Trauma Informed Community Building Article (2-3 pages)
		Wednesday (11/16) On Zoom	H&H Awareness Week Event - Residents Organizing for Change		
Week 9	Housing & Homelessness, Reflection on Our Knowledge	Monday (11/21) On Campus	Ways of Thinking: Review Course Literature Visionary & Emergent Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FINAL What is Notable Make-up WIN all due by 11/27 by 8pm 	WIN 1. What is Future's Thinking? (Video, 3 min) 2. "Signals" A Futurism Tool (Film, 6 mins) 3. <i>Emergent Strategy</i> , a.m.brown (Book Sections, p. 6-36) via Library ebook)

		Wednesday (11/23) On Zoom	Short Project Presentations (5 mins/group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparative Review and Recommendations Paper (#3) Due by 8pm 	
Wk 10	Final Proposal Feedback Session	Monday (11/28) – On Campus			
		Wednesday (11/30) – On Zoom <i>Mercedes</i>	Capstone Project: Feedback Session Course Reflection & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback Session Worksheets 	DUE Friday 12/2, by 8pm: ALL extra-credit & make-up work
Finals	Revisions & Reflections	Monday (12/5) – FINAL DUE DATE, No Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capstone Project: Final Paper Due Monday by 8pm 	
		Wednesday (12/7) – FINAL CLASS ON CANVAS	Online Synchronous Canvas Discussion (9:30-10:30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course Reflection & Evaluations CBL Hours Discussion Post by 9pm 	

APPENDIX B: Background Documentation – Partnership Proposal & Agreement

The following document was generated in for PSU’s University Studies Capstone Proposal Process in the Fall of 2020. It was then reviewed and agreed to in a meeting of the Coordinating Board of The PSU Landing at FUMC.

The PSU Shelter at FUMC [later renamed The Landing] is presently managed by a volunteer advisory board [later renamed The Landing Coordinating Team], composed of PSU stakeholders and First United Methodist Church employees and leadership. The advisory board requests student insight and guidance on the ongoing formation and review of “how” the shelter might create a safe haven for PSU students, offering autonomy and support to students presently challenged by severe housing insecurity.

The PSU Shelter at FUMC leadership hopes to engage PSU students in supporting housing stability for their peers. They hope to leverage student engagement and energy to collaborate and support shelter guests, through direct and indirect service. Depending on safety and wellness policies, this may happen in person or online.

Capstone Student Projects:

The PSU Shelter at FUMC leadership understands that long-term racist and inequitable housing systems across the U.S. are illuminated largely through governmental and organizational policy practices. To shift the status quo and create a housing resource that supports students and creates broader social change, they hope to leverage student insight and research to develop empowering and equitable organizational policies. Through investigation of local practices, in-person engagement and interviews, case study analyses, and reviews of present PSU shelter organizational policies, The PSU Shelter hopes that Capstone students will develop their understanding of the status quo and gain hands-on experience by collaboratively engaging in a policy process with the shelter to help continually learn and improve the shelter, and provide PSU student input and feedback.

Led by both student shelter residents and advisory board members, Capstone students will collaborate as policy actors to either reevaluate a present organizational policy or formulate a new policy, based on partner defined priorities and present needs. The advisory board and student residents will set the Capstone project agendas by identifying and establishing a list policy proposal topics. Capstone students will then do the heavy lifting, acting as research collaborators, draft writers, etc. as the group moves through policy formulation, adoption, and developing an implementation plan, or possibly piloting implementation. Presently, policy asks include: student resident feedback process, equitable student access to shelter, trauma-informed volunteer policy, and a shelter communications guide.

Suggested Process for Capstone Projects:

Based on piloting this Capstone projects in Winter and Spring 2020, the following offers an example of a Capstone project process and its timing over the course of one term. A small “Affinity Group” of Capstone students will choose from the list provided by the partner to help develop a policy for how to encourage and capture feedback from shelter residents (identify need or problem). Capstone students would meet with relevant advisory board members and student residents to hear ideas about the policy need. Opportunities for ongoing individual community partner members to be engaged are likely, based on the topic chosen. Capstones would then engage in an investigative process through critical readings, interactive course content, community-member interviews, engaging guest speakers, reviewing sample policies, etc. They would then write a summary of their insights and share highlights with the community partner to receive feedback during mid-term (policy formulation). An opportunity for additional written or phone call feedback with partnership stakeholders might also be arranged at that time. Next, they would write a draft of their policy proposal and share it in presentation and a feedback discussion format with community partner members. Capstone students would then work to amend, edit, and create tools for or pilot implementation for final policy adoption at the end of the term. Two examples of pilot implementation that came from the pilot courses included: the creation of an anonymous questionnaire that student residents tried to fill out and see if it worked for them, and a series of “dinner discussion” prompts that volunteers and residents might use together.

APPENDIX C: Stakeholder Group Consent Forms

Complexity & Critical Engagement in Community-based Learning Partnerships Informed Consent Form: Leaders & Staff

Name (First and Last)

Date

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The box below highlights the main information about this research for you to consider when deciding whether or not to join in the study. Please carefully look over the information given to you on this form and ask questions about any information you do not understand before you decide to agree to take part.

Key Information for You to Consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Consent. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to take part or not. There is no penalty if you choose not to join in or decide to stop your involvement at any time. • Why is the study being done? The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of those participating in the <i>PSU Landing at FUMC</i> partnership. We want to understand how partnerships work as systems, and to prioritize community-member experiences to understand this partnership and how it impacts all involved. • How long will it take? Approximately 2-4 hours. We ask that you participate in one or two 90-minute group conversations (focus groups). You will also be asked to complete an online interview form to offer additional insight into your experience with the partnership. This online form should not take longer than 30 minutes to complete. The researcher may also participate and observe during times when additional partners are engaged at The Landing. • What will I be expected to do? You will be asked questions about your experience as a community-member (student resident) participating in a PSU community-based learning partnership, The PSU Landing at FUMC. You may be asked to share your experience through talking, writing, drawing and/or choosing photos that highlight your experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Your perspective is so important, and we want to make sure people hear it and understand it. • Risks. Some possible risks of taking part in this study include being uncomfortable sharing, and I will work to create a space where you feel supported. Additionally, your answers when shared with others later will be anonymous. I will work to minimize risks of anonymity by ensuring the recordings and transcripts of the study are kept secure and that I do not provide detail that would link back to you. I will use a pseudonym for

you in the write-up. However, there is a risk that other members participating in the focus group might not keep your answers anonymous, although we will ask that all agree to do so.

- **Benefits.** An important benefit is the ability to have your perspective understood and amplified. What you share may shape the way community-members are empowered and have equity in partnerships with PSU and FUMC. You will receive a \$75 gift card for each focus group participation, and another \$25 for completing a maximum 30-minute online interview follow-up, as well as receive and share a meal with other focus group participants.

Process of Being Selected for a Focus Group

You were selected for participation in this study as a participant in a PSU community-based learning and Capstone course partnership between 2021-2023. This CBL partnership was selected to participate, based on details of the partnership.

What happens to the information collected?

Information from the study will be used in a doctoral dissertation, educationally, or for publication.

It will also be used to inform Portland State University, First United Methodist Church, and diverse local non-profits and educational institutions about community-based learning partnerships.

How will my privacy and data be protected?

I will take measures to protect your privacy including separating your personal information from your direct words or quotes, and using pseudonyms when sharing your experiences. All transcripts, recordings, and related documents will be kept in secure password-protected electronic locations, and physical documents will be kept in locked locations. The PSU Institutional Review Board may be permitted access to inspect research, and this may include private information. Confidentiality will be maintained except when instances of elder, child, or sexual abuse are disclosed.

What if I want to stop my part in this research?

Your part in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you may stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to take part in any study activity or completely stop at any point without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions or concerns, contact Amie Riley, at amie.riley@pdx.edu or her dissertation advisor (Principal Investigator), Heather Burns at hburns@pdx.edu.

Whom can I speak to about my rights as a part of research?

The Portland State University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) is overseeing this research. The IRB is a group of people who independently review research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants like yourself are protected. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Phone: (503) 725-5484, Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400; Email: hsrrc@pdx.edu

Consent Statement

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to decide to take part in the study. What I say will remain confidential, meaning it will not be connected back to me in an identifiable way. I understand that the study will create audio and written recordings.

☐

(Check Box) I understand that I am volunteering to take part in this research.

****For Researcher:** I have shared the study with the participant and answered all of their questions. I believe that they understand the information in this consent form and freely consent to participate.

**Name of Research Team Member
Group**

Date

Focus

APPENDIX C: Stakeholder Group Consent Forms (CONTINUED)

Complexity & Critical Engagement in Community-based Learning Partnerships Informed Consent Form: Community-Members

Name (First and Last)

Date

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The box below highlights the main information about this research for you to consider when deciding whether or not to join in the study. Please carefully look over the information given to you on this form and ask questions about any information you do not understand before you decide to agree to take part.

Key Information for You to Consider

- **Voluntary Consent.** You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to take part or not. There is no penalty if you choose not to join in or decide to stop your involvement at any time. decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the university or with me in any way.
- **Why is the study being done?** The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of those participating in the *PSU Landing at FUMC* partnership. We want to understand how partnerships work as systems, and to prioritize community-member experiences to understand this partnership and how it impacts all involved.
- **How long will it take? Approximately 2 hours.** We ask that you participate in one 90-minute group conversations (focus groups). You will also be asked to complete an online interview form to offer additional insight into your experience with the partnership. This online form should not take longer than 30 minutes to complete. The researcher may also participate and observe during times when additional partners are engaged at The Landing.
- **What will I be expected to do?** You will be asked questions about your experience as a participant in a PSU community-based learning partnership, The PSU Landing @ FUMC. You may be asked to share your experience through talking, writing, drawing and/or choosing photos that highlight your experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Your perspective is so important, and we want to make sure people hear it and understand it.

- **Risks.** Some possible risks of taking part in this study include being uncomfortable sharing, and I will work to create a space where you feel supported. Additionally, your answers when shared with others later will be anonymous. I will work to minimize risks of anonymity by ensuring the recordings and transcripts of the study are kept secure and that I do not provide detail that would link back to you. Also I will use a pseudonym for you in the write-up. However, there is a risk that other members participating in the focus group might not keep your answers anonymous, although we will ask that all agree to do so.
- **Benefits.** An important benefit that may be expected is the ability to have your perspective understood and amplified. What you share may shape the way community-members are empowered and have equity in partnerships with Portland State University.

Process of Being Selected for a Focus Group

You were selected for participation in this study as a PSU Capstone course student between 2021-2023. This CBL partnership was selected to participate, based on details of the partnership.

What happens to the information collected?

Information from the study will be used in a doctoral dissertation, educationally, or for publication.

It will also be used to inform Portland State University, First United Methodist Church, and diverse local non-profits and educational institutions about community-based learning partnerships. It may be used

How will my privacy and data be protected?

I will take measures to protect your privacy including separating your personal information from your direct words or quotes, and using pseudonyms when sharing your experiences. All transcripts, recordings, and related documents will be kept in secure password-protected electronic locations, and physical documents will be kept in locked locations. The PSU Institutional Review Board may be permitted access to inspect research, and this may include private information. Confidentiality will be maintained except when instances of elder, child, or sexual abuse are disclosed.

What if I want to stop my part in this research?

Your part in this study is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, but if you do, you may stop at any time. You have the right to choose not to take part in any study activity or completely stop at any point without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions or concerns, contact Amie Riley, at amie.riley@pdx.edu or her dissertation advisor (Principal Investigator), Heather Burns at hburns@pdx.edu.

Whom can I speak to about my rights as a part of research?

The Portland State University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) is overseeing this research. The IRB is a group of people who independently review research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants like yourself are protected. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Phone: (503) 725-5484, Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400; Email: hsrrc@pdx.edu

Consent Statement

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to decide to take part in the study. What I say will remain confidential, meaning it will not be connected back to me in an identifiable way. I understand that the study will create audio and written recordings.

☐

(Check Box) I understand that I am volunteering to take part in this research.

****For Researcher:** I have shared the study with the participant and answered all of their questions. I believe that they understand the information in this consent form and freely consent to participate.

Name of Research Team Member
Group

Date

Focus

APPENDIX C: Stakeholder Group Consent Forms (CONTINUED)

Complexity & Critical Engagement in Community-based Learning Partnerships Informed Consent Form: Leaders & Staff

Name (First and Last)

Date

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The box below highlights the main information about this research for you to consider when deciding whether or not to join in the study. Please carefully look over the information given to you on this form and ask questions about any information you do not understand before you decide to agree to take part.

Key Information for You to Consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Consent. You are being asked to volunteer for a research study. It is up to you whether you choose to take part or not. There is no penalty if you choose not to join in or decide to stop your involvement at any time. decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the university or with me in any way. • Why is the study being done? The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of those participating in the <i>PSU Landing at FUMC</i> partnership. We want to understand how partnerships work as systems, and to prioritize community-member experiences to understand this partnership and how it impacts all involved. • How long will it take? Approximately 2 hours. We ask that you participate in one 90-minute group conversations (focus groups). You will also be asked to complete an online interview form to offer additional insight into your experience with the partnership. This online form should not take longer than 30 minutes to complete. The researcher may also participate and observe during times when additional partners are engaged at The Landing. • What will I be expected to do? You will be asked questions about your experience as a participant in a PSU community-based learning partnership, The PSU Landing at FUMC. You may be asked to share your experience through talking, writing, drawing and/or choosing photos that highlight your experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Your perspective is so important, and we want to make sure people hear it and understand it.

- **Risks.** Some possible risks of taking part in this study include being uncomfortable sharing, and I will work to create a space where you feel supported. Additionally, your answers when shared with others later will be anonymous. I will work to minimize risks of anonymity by ensuring the recordings and transcripts of the study are kept secure and that I do not provide detail that would link back to you. Also I will use a pseudonym for you in the write-up. However, there is a risk that other members participating in the focus group might not keep your answers anonymous, although we will ask that all agree to do so.
- **Benefits.** An important benefit that may be expected is the ability to have your perspective understood and amplified. What you share may shape the way community-members are empowered and have equity in partnerships with Portland State University.

Process of Being Selected for a Focus Group

You were selected for participation in this study as a participant in a PSU community-based learning and Capstone course partnership between 2021-2023. This CBL partnership was selected to participate, based on details of the partnership.

What happens to the information collected?

Information from the study will be used in a doctoral dissertation, educationally, or for publication.

It will also be used to inform Portland State University, First United Methodist Church, and diverse local non-profits and educational institutions about community-based learning partnerships.

How will my privacy and data be protected?

I will take measures to protect your privacy including separating your personal information from your direct words or quotes, and using pseudonyms when sharing your experiences. All transcripts, recordings, and related documents will be kept in secure password-protected electronic locations, and physical documents will be kept in locked locations. The PSU Institutional Review Board may be permitted access to inspect research, and this may include private information. Confidentiality will be maintained except when instances of elder, child, or sexual abuse are disclosed.

What if I want to stop my part in this research?

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Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions or concerns, contact Amie Riley, at amie.riley@pdx.edu or her dissertation advisor (Principal Investigator), Heather Burns at hburns@pdx.edu.

Whom can I speak to about my rights as a part of research?

The Portland State University Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) is overseeing this research. The IRB is a group of people who independently review research studies to ensure the rights and welfare of participants like yourself are protected. If you have questions about your rights or wish to speak with someone other than the research team, you may contact:

Phone: (503) 725-5484, Toll Free: 1 (877) 480-4400; Email: hsrrc@pdx.edu

Consent Statement

I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information in this form. I have asked any questions necessary to decide to take part in the study. What I say will remain confidential, meaning it will not be connected back to me in an identifiable way. I understand that the study will create audio and written recordings.

☐

(Check Box) I understand that I am volunteering to take part in this research.

****For Researcher:** I have shared the study with the participant and answered all of their questions. I believe that they understand the information in this consent form and freely consent to participate.

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<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Name of Research Team Member Group	Date	Focus

APPENDIX D: Focus Group Protocol

**Project Title: Community-Member Experiences in Community-Based Learning:
A Critical Complexity Framework for Equity and Agency
Riley EdD Dissertation. 2020**

Semi-Structured Focus Group Format & Protocol
<p>Outlines protocol for one 90-minute focus group with community-based learning (CBL) partnership participants. The focus group format generally be as outlined below, generally be the same for every focus group session in the study. However, the focus group protocol is semi-structured to allow for the focus groups to be critical, collaborative, and flexible to each stakeholder group.</p>
<p>Purpose & Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The focus group session itself will serve as an opportunity for community-members to learn, reflect on, and analyze their own experience within community-based learning partnership. 2. The data generated will create accessible actionable information in the short term for the community-based organization or agency and the Capstone faculty. 3. The data generated will elicit meaningful information related to the six core characteristics of CBL, which include: relationships, voice, meaningful, purposeful, reciprocity and reflection.
<p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed consent forms • Scrap paper and pens • Sticky Notes, 4 colors • White board markers • Image Cards • Post-it markers • Tape • Recording device + Charger • Laptop for notetaker + Charger • Nametags
<p>Orientation for these focus groups will center community-member agency in community-based learning partnerships, beginning with a clear discussion revisiting consent and how community-member perspectives might influence or improve how community-based learning partnerships work for themselves and other community-members like themselves in the future.</p>
<p>1. Opening:</p>

- Focus Group Session Purposes
- Introduce Myself
- Consent/Voluntary Participation
- Agreements & Confidentiality
- Agenda and Introductions

2. Spectrum Activity: Meaning in Action

- Participants will be given a handout with a spectrum line drawn from left to right. The line will be labeled ‘Experience that was meaningful, purposeful or beneficial’ on the left, and “Experience that was challenging, difficult, or created an obstacle” on the right. *Included below*
- Participants will be asked to brainstorm two experiences from their partnership interactions, and locate them on the spectrum. Then make notes on the handout about the experiences.
- Participants will then be asked to share with the group about the experiences they noted.

The spectrum handouts will be collected and photographed for data analysis.

3. Storytelling Together Activity: Co-Creating a Word Bank

- After completing the first activity, participants will move into pairs to share their experiences.
- Participants may choose two images for a pedagogical image bank of cards. One image represents to them the aspect of their experience that was meaningful, purposeful or beneficial. The other image represents to them their experience that was challenging, difficult, or created an obstacle.
 - Note: The collection of photographs used will be found images, i.e. pre-existing to this research project, from a pedagogical photo bank (Alkezweeny & Fitzmaurice, 2020; Yanow, 2010). Images include internal and external settings, object and action images, and individual, interpersonal and group images. All images specifically avoid images of explicit violence, sexuality, or mature content.
 - The use of images is meant to elicit more complex reactions inspiring emotional and metaphoric thinking, they are processed faster than verbal cues and evoke different brain regions (Harper, 2002).
- Participants will share about the two experiences they documented in Activity 1, within a group of two (possibly three) participants. Together, they will brainstorm three words each for each of their stories, and write six words each on sticky notes. These twelve words per pair will then be written on a whiteboard for the group to create two word banks.
- Participants will then be asked to share with the group their reactions to images, word banks, and about the partnership experiences that they represent.

Photographs will be taken for data analysis of the two word-banks. Photographs will not be taken of participants.

4. Mapping Activity: Creating the Future Together

- Participants will be asked to brainstorm together features of their interactions in the partnership. Notes will be taken on whiteboard.
- Participants will then be asked to imagine that if all of the best features of the partnership were to increase and continue to improve – if their partnership became the very best version of a CBL partnership - what would that look like?
- Participants will be asked to share about what they imagined with the group. Follow-up prompts may be given that align with eliciting specific information regarding features related to the six core characteristics of CBL, including relationships, voice, meaningful, purposeful, reciprocity and reflection.

Whiteboard notes will be photographed for data analysis; post-its will be documented.

5. Closing

- Does anyone have any final questions or concerns?
- Thank you! (Distribute information regarding participant compensation.)
- [Reminder to complete the Online Focus Group Follow-up Interview](#) (Link Included, and will also be emailed to each of you.)

APPENDIX D: Focus Group Protocol (CONTINUED)
Spectrum Activity: Meaning in Action Worksheet (Printed for Participants)



APPENDIX D: Focus Group Protocol (CONTINUED)
Focus Groups Suggested Script & Timing (Agenda posted during focus groups)

Orientation Script Notes/Reminders: (15 minutes)

For these focus groups will center community-member agency in community-based learning partnerships, beginning with a clear discussion revisiting consent and how community-member perspectives might influence or improve how community-based learning partnerships work for themselves and other community-members like themselves in the future.

Introduce Self, relevant nodes of identity for each focus group. Introduce Note-Taker, and function.

So today we are going to have a reflection conversation about The Landing, and the complex Landing partnership. This conversation is a part of a group of conversations, a series of focus groups, trying to understand how things are going with The Landing, to understand the complex partnership at work, and to offer powerful perspectives to make it better. I am hoping this reflection process and conversation will do three things:

1. Serve as an opportunity for each of you and for us together to learn, reflect on, and analyze our experiences with The Landing.
2. Create some immediately actionable information, some qualitative not numerical data, most importantly for Landing community-members, student residents, and secondarily to improve the health of the greater Landing partnership.
3. Create a better understanding of community-based learning as a tool for positive social change, and to help communities and universities create healthy and sustainable partnerships.

In front of you, you have an informed consent form. I would like to capture what we talk about the maps we create on the whiteboard together, and I really would like each of your voices and insights to be a part of this project. But, it is completely up to you! Anything you share will be made completely anonymous, and whether you participate or not will not affect your grade or my feelings about you in this class. If you are here today, you will get full participation points just for showing up. So, I'm here today as a researcher working to support our student community and a community resource I care deeply about, and less as your professor. I am also happy to share anything we learn from this with you, when we are finished.

Agreements & Confidentiality

- What is shared here will remain confidential among us.
- We will be respectful, kind, curious and active listeners.
- We will speak for ourselves and from our personal perspectives.
- We will take care of ourselves, taking breaks or space when needed.
- We will accept that there may be some non-closure from this conversation.
- We will share the air, sharing responsibility for including all voices in our conversation.

- We will understand that this is an opening and a beginning to process of reflection and learning.

Our Agenda (Bolded was posted visually during focus groups.)

We will do 3 activities together today. One will be individual, the next will be with a pair, and the third will be with the whole group. If at any point, you need to take a break, please feel free to.

Orientation – 15 minutes

Activity 1 – 10 minutes

- Explain = 3 minutes
- Write = 7 minutes

Activity 2 – 30 minutes

- Share 2 minutes each person = 8 minutes
- Create word bank together = 10 minutes
- Share to board and ask What do you notice? = 10 minutes

Activity 3 – 50 minutes

- Instructions = 5 minutes
- First 3 questions = 15 minutes
- Imagine = 5 minutes
- Future questions = 15 minutes
- What do you notice? = 10 minutes

Closure, Check-Out, & Next Steps – 5 minutes

APPENDIX E: Provisional & Deductive Codes

Provisional and Inductive Codes:

Codes constructed from respective community-based learning and critical complexity theoretical framework literature. As literatures content and vocabulary often overlaps, codes may do so also.

Code Groups

(Data Type)
 (Data Type)
 (Data Type)
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 CBL Partners
 Burns Model
 Burns Model
 Burns Model
 Burns Model
 Burns Model
 Burns Model
 Community-based Learning
 Community-based Learning
 Community-based Learning
 Community-based Learning
 Community-based Learning
 Community-based Learning
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 CRT/CritPed
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity

Code

○ Challenging Story
 ○ Meaningful Story
 ○ Recommendation
 ○ Basic Needs Hub
 ○ Capstone Student
 ○ FUMC
 ○ Landing Board/Coordinating Team
 ○ Leaders, Coordinators, Staff
 ○ PSU
 ○ Student Res/Community-Member
 ● Content
 ● Context
 ● Ecological Design
 ● Learning
 ● Perspectives
 ● Process - Active, Experiential
 ● Meaning
 ● Purpose
 ● Reciprocity
 ● Reflection
 ● Relationships
 ● Voice
 ● Agent/Target Roles
 ● Cultural Community Wealth
 ● Interdependency
 ● Interest Convergence
 ● Intersectionality
 ● Power (Dynamics)
 ● Praxis
 ● Adapting
 ● Emergence
 ● Information Sharing

Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity
 Systems/Complexity - Data Type
 Systems/Complexity - Data Type
 Systems/Complexity - Data Type
 Systems/Complexity - Data Type
 Systems/Complexity - Data Type

- Interactions
- Structures, External
- Structures, Internal
- Viability
- Vitality
- Agents
- Feelings/Features
- Future Agents
- Future Feelings/Features
- Future Interactions

Deductive Codes:

Codes generated from the data directly, both in Stage One analysis suggesting inclusion of shared Landing values and language. Minimal additional codes were added in Stage Two, deducted from patterns and behaviors emergent from data analysis.

Code Groups

Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Deductive Code
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)
 Landing Values (Outputs)

Code

- Community/Sense of Belonging
- Discursive Practice
- Emergent Agent
- Empathy
- Ethical Agency
- Feelings - Attunement
- Feelings - Belonging
- Feelings - Identity
- place
- Place-Thought
- Autonomy/Agency
- Connection
- Housing/Shelter
- Inclusion (Social Identities)
- Safety
- Trust
- Voice/Respect