

## **Integrating the Self and the Spirit: Strategies for Aligning Qualitative Research Teaching with Indigenous Methods, Methodologies, and Epistemology**

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**Abstract:** Many universities internationally now make concerted efforts to promote curriculum development and classroom and campus cultures that recognize diversity in student viewpoints and life experiences. Increasingly, these efforts have involved promoting recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledges in the university setting. If adopted in the classroom, the promotion of indigenous perspectives suggests exciting possibilities for teaching qualitative research critically. Existing educational resources, however, offer little guidance on achieving this through undergraduate qualitative methods teaching. Using examples of Canadian undergraduate teaching initiatives, I suggest that by integrating indigenous methods, perspectives, and epistemology, particularly through student opportunities for community-engaged learning and exposure to participatory action research, teaching qualitative research can promote critical recognition of multiple ways of knowing.

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## 1. Community Engaged Scholarship and Indigeneity as Emerging Post-Secondary Foci

Two important and powerful trends have converged within universities and colleges over the past decade—both in Canada and beyond—shaping how and what students learn, and how they situate themselves as learners in the broader community. Specifically, post-secondary institutions have worked to promote the recognition and inclusion of aboriginal<sup>1</sup> or indigenous knowledges and cultures, as well as encourage community-engaged and community-centered<sup>2</sup> research and learning strategies (including participatory action research) across disciplines. By indigenous knowledges and cultures, I refer to epistemological and ontological orientations that honor local place and culture, that are relational and emphasize the connectedness of all life forms, and that are holistic in their integrated understanding of kinetic, affective, and spiritual realms (KOVACH, 2009; SMITH, 1999). In contrast to positivism and western worldviews, indigenous knowledge systems are highly contextualized and emphasize story, local knowledge, and the experiential (GONZALEZ Y GONZALEZ & LINCOLN, 2006; ROMM, 2015). [1]

Together, these trends can help promote critical perspectives in teaching qualitative research (QR). In this article, I discuss teaching initiatives that take important steps toward aligning indigenous methods, perspectives, and epistemology with opportunities for community-engaged learning and exposure to participatory action research (PAR), and how these challenge positivistic domination in QR teaching. It is particularly vital and central to teaching QR as a transgressive practice that instructors from all identity locations recognize the importance of fostering indigenous knowledges through their teaching practices. Along with others who share my non-indigenous identity location and commitment to critical QR as supportive "allies" (e.g., BEEMAN-CADWALLADER, QUIGLEY & YAZZIE-MINTZ, 2011; KOVACH, 2013; LEWIS, 2014), I suggest that doing so effectively promotes inclusive, collaborative, and transformative pedagogy (DENZIN, 2011). [2]

That said, working to include participatory methods and indigenous knowledges and methodologies in QR teaching brings its own ethical and conceptual challenges, most notably tensions between time constraints and opportunities for relationality in students' introduction to participatory methods; efforts to include indigenous voices in one's teaching, research, and writing processes; and

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1 Although "aboriginal" is used in the Canadian context as an all-encompassing term that includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, I use the term "indigenous" predominantly throughout this article because it is internationally all-encompassing and reflects the applicability of my discussion to contexts beyond Canada (see INUIT TAPIIRIT KANATAMI, 2014).

2 I use the term "community-engaged" throughout this article in reference to experiential, community-based learning and research methods focused on direct involvement with local populations. While it is the term adopted and used by my institution for over ten years to refer to the first teaching strategy I outline here, I also recognize that students' levels of community engagement vary depending on the community organizations they work with. Further, the length of my institution's engaged learning partnerships with community organizations has varied, though some have existed for over five years. In some instances where students' involvement with the community organization is more limited, and/or the partnership with the community organization is less established, the term "community-centered" may be more appropriate.

pressure from colleagues connected to emphases on technique versus praxis in QR teaching. These are challenges that I continue to work through, and as such this article also serves as an opportunity for critical reflection on how I can plan for change and improvement in my pedagogy, and in so doing encourage others to do the same. As KOVACH (2013) cautions, certain indigenous knowledges cannot reside directly within western knowledges; we cannot simply "fuse" indigenous and western methodological approaches in pedagogical practices. With this in mind, I offer pedagogical examples that strive for fruitful intersections between participatory methods and indigenous ways of knowing. [3]

This article is divided into six parts. In the remainder of this section, I outline, with a Canadian focus, how university campuses are increasingly involved in promoting indigenous knowledge but do not offer explicit guidelines for how the changes can lead to innovation in QR teaching. Section 2 acknowledges efforts in recent decades of incorporating indigenous methods and epistemology into QR teaching, along with the strategies' limitations. Section 3 outlines core elements of indigenous worldviews, methodologies, and methods, and Section 4 turns to ethical and conceptual challenges central to indigenizing QR teaching. In Section 5, I offer two examples from undergraduate courses of how engaged learning and PAR can be used to indigenize QR teaching. Finally, Section 6 acknowledges the need for indigenizing QR teaching and the importance of recognizing multiple ways of knowing in the QR classroom. [4]

### **1.1 Changing campuses without curricular innovation in teaching QR**

The process of promoting indigenous knowledge on campuses has led to growth in physical spaces, events, and curriculum content (in terms of courses' thematic foci<sup>3</sup> and epistemological orientations, and entire degree or certificate programs) focused on fostering indigenous community and knowledge transmission. It has also resulted in increased numbers of indigenous scholars on faculty, currently at 1-2% nationally in Canada (CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS, 2010; KOVACH, 2009), as well as expanded professional development opportunities for faculty and staff from all backgrounds to learn about indigenous knowledges and culture and their potential place in the classroom. Finally, such promotion has resulted in more scholarship and bursary opportunities for indigenous students. All of these changes have occurred within the context of the general goal of increasing the visibility of indigenous cultures, knowledges, and ways of knowing on campuses (e.g., UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, 2012). [5]

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3 Although the term "module" is commonly used at my institution—and many other Western post-secondary institutions—in reference to sections of courses with distinct but connected thematic foci, I acknowledge that the term is problematic insofar as modules represent a Western, capitalistic structure complicit in efforts to standardize knowledge. Such efforts run counter to the aims of indigenous knowledges and pedagogy, and often impede students' exposure to local knowledge, issues, and concerns (see CHINN, 2007). Thus, I use the term "thematic foci" instead of module in reference to courses' interconnected themes, without implying that the courses are constructed in the rigid or standardized manner that the term module might imply.

The scope and intensity of these two trends differ by post-secondary institution, but they can be observed throughout Canada. Further, aboriginal research is an area that is recognized as a priority among funding bodies in Canada (e.g., CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH, 2014; SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA, 2014). These trends are emerging within increasingly diverse campuses, a shift that is giving rise to new and more inclusive theoretical discourses (KOVACH, 2009). My focus here is on how these trends connect to indigenizing QR teaching in the Canadian context, but the trends can be generalized to other regions, in varying forms. [6]

I have witnessed a strong push for both initiatives in my own institution, as well as encouragement to integrate engaged scholarship with indigenous approaches in teaching and research, and to establish new partnerships in and with aboriginal communities. Further, faculty are urged to develop and exhibit aboriginal cultural competencies in all areas of work via familiarity with and respect for indigenous knowledges and practices (UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, 2012). This kind of development is supported through opportunities to participate in activities such as workshops focused on teaching. However, none of these pedagogical resources directly address the challenges of integrating indigenous knowledges and perspectives into teaching QR, either alone or as it might intersect with community-engaged scholarship. [7]

## **2. Current Limitations in Teaching QR**

Over the past forty years, pedagogy and research in the social sciences have increasingly included discourses from the margins, and have increasingly given voice to multiple ways of knowing the social world, challenging the dominant positivist science (e.g., ALEXANDER, 2006; ZAVALA, 2013). For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, QR (and its teaching thereof) was "largely influenced by positivism" (KOVACH, 2009, p.27), and played a large role in colonizing and oppressing various indigenous groups (GRAVELINE, 1998; MENZIES, 2001; RIGNEY, 1997, 1999; WILSON, 2008). According to Linda Tuhiwai SMITH, "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism," so it is not possible to discuss research and indigenous populations without reflecting on imperialism and how Western research and teaching has been carried out "through imperial eyes" (1999, pp.1, 56). [8]

Scholarship on indigenous knowledges and education has criticized curricula as colonial instruments; this kind of criticism is typically directed at elementary and secondary school course content (e.g., BATTISTE, 1998), but it also applies to the tools (concrete and theoretical) used at the post-secondary level to teach QR. Most social science textbooks lack indigenous content and perspectives. An in-depth analysis of fifty Canadian introductory sociology texts revealed systematic marginalization and omission of indigenous perspectives and research examples: indigenous issues were either absent or incomplete (i.e., non-holistic or semi-contextualized; STECKLEY, 2003). A detailed analysis of textbooks is beyond the scope of this article, but the dozen top-selling general social science methods texts I looked at recently had no sections or chapters focused on indigenous

ways of knowing. Discussions of indigenous research methodologies and methods<sup>4</sup> can only be found in specialized books (e.g., CHILISA, 2011; DENZIN, LINCOLN & SMITH, 2008a; KOVACH, 2009; SMITH, 1999; WALTER & ANDERSEN, 2013; WILSON, 2008) or more broadly-focused texts on critical approaches to social research (e.g., GOMM, 2008). [9]

Together, the push toward indigenizing post-secondary classrooms and campuses, and the limited extent of indigenous knowledge in QR teaching reveal a considerable disconnect between institutional aspirations and pedagogical realities. Indigenization of the classroom requires a deliberate plan of action—especially for teaching research methods in the social science field, which can offer some of the most powerful tools for seeing and understanding the social world critically. This kind of effort can build "a blended educational context that respects and builds on both Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems" (BATTISTE, 2002, p.3). [10]

When incorporating indigenous methods and epistemology into QR teaching, each instructor will need to explore various key questions and concerns depending on his or her own identity location (KOVACH, CARRIERE, BARRETT, MONTGOMERY & GILLIES, 2013; WILSON, 2008). An indigenous scholar might ask: *How can I align my teaching in a "mainstream" classroom with my own ways of knowing? How can I develop and teach research methods that are more fully integrated with or representative of an indigenous worldview?* A non-indigenous scholar might ask: *How can I show all my students the relevance and value of indigenous ways of knowing to QR? How can I instill in my students an awareness of worldviews and research techniques that might lead them to develop a better understanding of, and provision for, the needs of indigenous peoples?* And, most importantly as a means of enacting decolonized methodologies: *How can I, as a non-indigenous person, serve as an ally to indigenous students and peoples, without reinforcing tools of colonization?* For instructors with both indigenous and non-indigenous roots, the task of indigenizing QR teaching will give rise to different questions and self-exploration that stem from an insider-outsider standpoint (KOVACH et al., 2013). [11]

As a non-indigenous scholar of European ancestry with a commitment to critical social research and social justice, I have reflected on how I can use my identity location to work as an ally in the project of indigenizing my practice as a qualitative researcher and teacher. This entails moving from being culturally respectful to being culturally responsive of indigenous peoples and worldviews (LEWIS, 2014). It also involves respecting my embeddedness in multiple relationships as an academic, committing to research *with*—not *on*—communities, and acknowledging the spiritual and transformative dimensions of the research process (WILSON, 2014). Like KOVACH (2013), I find that respectful inclusion is complex and have at times felt uncomfortable with my

4 Here, "methodology" refers to the general theoretical orienting framework from which methods emerge, and which offers direction as to how research questions should be framed and research should proceed. "Methods" refers to the specific techniques and procedures used to carry out the research and address its central questions or problems (HARDING, 1987; KOVACH, 2009; WILSON, 2008).

limited exposure to integrating indigenous knowledges into the curriculum; this is largely because of my cultural complicity with past and current gatekeepers in the academy (WILSON, 2004). [12]

By culture, I am certainly an outsider to indigenous knowledges, but by the same token nobody can claim a 100% Eurocentric or 100% indigenous worldview (KOVACH, 2013, p.114; MUTUA & SWADENER, 2004, p.3). In my case, I was fortunate to have been welcomed as an ally in an indigenous participatory project at a young age: in high school, I was involved for a year in an engaged learning experience with Coast Salish and non-indigenous teachers, students, and artists. Our work culminated in the creation of a longboat and a visual art and poetry display focused on themes of journey, belonging, and the natural world. Along the way, I learned a tremendous amount about local indigenous culture. [13]

Years later, I find that this prior openness to include me has strengthened my confidence in my abilities to be an ally through my pedagogical practice. Further, as a teacher of sociology, I feel a natural (but heretofore insufficiently explored) affinity between the inclusion of indigenous knowledges in my teaching and my discipline's mission of critically examining power, privilege, and minority groups, with an aim of historically contextualizing inequalities. [14]

While it is imperative that indigenous scholars play a leading role in promoting indigenous pedagogy (MIHESUAH, 2003), I stress—alongside KOVACH (2013)—that leaving the task to indigenous instructors alone poses major pragmatic difficulties given that they represent only 2% of Canadian faculty members, even in regions such as Saskatchewan where the total indigenous population will reach 33% over the next generation. A parallel situation exists in the United States, where around 1% of scholars are indigenous (ROMERO-LITTLE, SIMS & ROMERO, 2014). It is thus advisable to enlist allies in the thoughtful incorporation of indigenous knowledge into post-secondary classrooms. In fact, working together from our varying identity locations is likely to promote a richer experience of teaching transgressively (PRYOR & AMPIAH, 2003). [15]

Strategies for aligning QR with indigenous worldviews must also seek to actively engage all students, regardless of their cultural background and identity location, in the process of learning about research *while doing research*. Strategies must move beyond the generally accepted position that indigenous peoples have their own ways of knowing, and toward "proving the authenticity of, and control over, [indigenous peoples'] own forms of knowledge" (SMITH, 1999, p.104). Integrating indigenous methods, perspectives, and epistemology into QR teaching, particularly through student opportunities for community-engaged learning and exposure to PAR, can promote critical recognition of multiple ways of knowing. While indigenous and "dominant" (i.e., Eurocentric; see WILSON, 2008) approaches to QR and its teaching will never fully overlap, they can nonetheless align with one another in a way that offers transformative potential and challenges positivistic worldviews. This process can be effective for various combinations of identity locations across instructors, students, and research communities. [16]

### **3. Core Elements of Indigenous Worldviews, Methodologies, and Methods**

Previous scholarship has provided rich information about various aspects of indigenous worldviews (for an excellent example, see SMITH, 1999). In this section, I focus on aspects relevant to PAR and community-engaged learning strategies, but note that indigenous methodologies will vary across communities, and each version should be "fitted to the needs and traditions of specific indigenous communities" (DENZIN, LINCOLN & SMITH, 2008b, p.323). Indigenous epistemology (i.e., how we come to think about and know reality; WILSON, 2008) is centered in relationality. Consequently, an object or empirical fact is not considered as important as one's relationship to it, and all people are held accountable to their relations, whether with people, the environment/land, the cosmos, or ideas (ibid.). Relationships are assumed to exist between all life forms in the natural world (KOVACH, 2009), and are spiritual (SMITH, 1999); thus, locating the self and the spirit through critical self-reflection and a holistic approach to the social and natural world are central to indigenous research and teaching (ABORIGINAL EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTRE, 2015; ABSOLON, 2008; WEENIE, 1998). [17]

Conceptions of the ownership of knowledge are broader than in Western thought, such that researchers are seen as mere interpreters of knowledge, which ultimately belongs to the cosmos (WILSON, 2008). Knowledge and research data, by extension, cannot be claimed solely by researchers and belong equally to research subjects (MENZIES, 2001). While empirical knowledge is vitally important to the indigenous worldview, complementary modes of knowing are also recognized (BATTISTE, 1998, 2008). Indigenous knowledge systems are holistic and encompass "the kinetic, affective, and spiritual" alongside cognitive knowledge (KOVACH, 2009, p.176). Methodologically, indigenous scholarship is rooted in a commitment to praxis and social justice for indigenous people and is based in critical theory (pp.44-45). This translates into a focus on teaching and learning through hands-on, experiential projects, qualitative work focused on oral tradition, and projects centered on independent learning through listening, observing, and participating (BATTISTE, 1998, 2002; CASTELLANO, 2000). Indigenous teaching and research emphasizes the value of working collaboratively with individuals and groups (ROMM, 2015). [18]

Taken together, these elements suggest strong possibilities for alignment between existing critical approaches used in QR and its teaching (see DENZIN, 2011) and research and teaching guided by indigenous methods and epistemology. Both are relational approaches, both stress accountability to others, and both recognize that our relationships make us who we are as people, researchers, and educators. Teaching QR critically involves a similar commitment to social justice and basis in critical theory; although QR has typically focused on non-indigenous populations and focuses less on decolonization, it encourages a commitment to locating the self and validating the affective and spiritual in a way that is similar (though less pronounced) to indigenous approaches (e.g., BRAUD & ANDERSON, 1998; EVANS & FINLAY, 2009). If teaching QR critically has

already opened the door to other ways of knowing in many research methods classrooms, then integrating indigenous perspectives and methods can help open the door a little wider. [19]

#### **4. Negotiating Tensions: Time Constraints vs. Relationality, Technique vs. Praxis and the "Third Pole" Agenda in QR Teaching**

While offering exciting possibilities for decolonization, integrating community engagement and participatory research in QR teaching brings with it considerable ethical and conceptual challenges. These challenges cohere around two main tensions: first, tensions between time constraints and relationality in pedagogical practices, and second, pressures related to institutional expectations of focus on technique versus personal desires to emphasize praxis and a "third pole" agenda of collaborative, community-based experiences in QR teaching (DENZIN, 2011). [20]

##### **4.1 Time constraints vs. relationality**

Whereas indigenous research methodologies rest on an expectation that research collaborations with communities must be organically developed over time, as mutual trust is established and research goals are collectively articulated (MENZIES, 2001; WILSON, 2008), the structure of post-secondary classes (often taught in twelve- or thirteen-week semesters) makes students' involvements with communities fleeting. With the exception of students who choose to continue their relationships with communities beyond their semester-long placements, authenticity is compromised when the affiliation is short-lived. To further compound this issue, many post-secondary institutions (including my own) have shifted—for financial and administrative reasons—from year-long to semester-long course structures. Fortunately, at my institution, many of our experiential learning partnerships are long-standing, and this has contributed to a more authentic continuity, at least in instructors' relationships with community partners. But, as succinctly stated by a community partner with whom I work every semester, "I just love working with [your institution] and meeting your students and bringing them into our daily routines and conversations. I only wish they could stick around longer." [21]

While I have not yet developed a formal feedback procedure for community partners—and all reports of students' contributions to the relationships with community partners are currently ad hoc—this partner identified the following major contributions: 1. practical, concrete assistance in meeting the community partner's service aims, such as provision of health care or employment skills training; 2. symbiotic skills development, as students develop mentorship skills, empathy, and hone sociological research skills while the organizations' clients develop various life skills; 3. development of longer-term commitments to the community partners through additional volunteer work once the semester is over, or referrals to friends who subsequently volunteer for the community partner. Despite the lack of a formal feedback system, these themes echo those noted by other community partners. [22]

Another core element of indigenous methodologies is the inclusion of indigenous perspectives and voices in any teaching processes or research outputs claiming to decolonize (MIHESUAH, 2003). On this front, I recognize a key limitation of my discussion and efforts. Although I had hoped to collaborate with an indigenous student who would work with me as a teaching and research assistant on two projects (i.e., the development of my QR teaching materials and the preparation of this manuscript), a collaboration was impossible. Although I had discussed the possibility with two students, both of whom were very interested, each student had heavy external commitments that precluded their involvement. In one student's case, her family/parenting commitments stood in the way of involvement in the projects. Ironically, in the other student's case, her part-time work at one of our community partner organizations prevented her involvement in the projects. Similar dilemmas between time pressures to disseminate research outputs and desires to include or foreground indigenous voices are noted elsewhere in the literature (e.g., PRYOR & AMPIAH, 2003). [23]

In light of recent talks to set up a graduate teaching and research fellowship at my institution targeted specifically for projects like this that promote curricular indigenization and indigenous voices in research projects, I hope to enrich future semesters with indigenous students' active involvement as teaching assistants. I also look forward to collaborating with them on a monograph about the experience and outcomes. [24]

On top of the ethical ramifications of the tensions between time constraints and relationality, time constraints bring logistical challenges. Instructors need more time to develop and/or compile teaching resources and carry out engaged learning strategies (MACHTMES et al., 2009; POTTER, CAFFREY & PLANTE, 2003), and obtaining support from experiential learning coordinators and community partners is vital to the experiential learning component. Students also need to commit more time, especially when the practical components of learning take place outside scheduled class time (EISENHART & JUROW, 2011). Students' direct involvement in PAR-based projects may be most feasible during a year-long undergraduate or graduate course, where the considerable background preparation is offset by an opportunity for deeper learning and development of a "community of practice" between budding researchers, established researchers, and community members (MACHTMES et al., 2009). [25]

## **4.2 Technique vs. praxis and the "third pole" agenda**

The second area of tension concerns the constant tug that an instructor committed to transgressive teaching will feel between Eurocentric institutions' and colleagues' pressures to focus on technique-driven (i.e., "right pole") QR instruction, and their personal commitment to emphasizing praxis (i.e., the "left pole") as well as a "third pole" agenda of collaborative, community-based pedagogy (DENZIN, 2011). Teaching relational-based knowledge systems within outcome-based curricular models and institutions offers an opportunity to combat the teacher and student disempowerment that permeates test-driven, Eurocentric curricula, but is frequently met with resistance (CHINN, 2007; KOVACH, 2013).

Institutions' written and unwritten expectations about (relative) standardization across sections of compulsory undergraduate courses, their frequent preference for standardized evaluative criteria, and their tendency to favor module-based courses over holistic learning designs all chafe against the aims of pedagogical decolonization and indigenization. Paired with a paucity of relevant pedagogical materials for indigenizing QR teaching, these factors make technique-driven teaching an easy default position, and praxis-driven teaching a difficult or even risky alternative. [26]

Even at institutions that talk an excited talk of indigenization, instructors are not always appropriately recognized for taking the initiative to indigenize and decolonize curricula. Granted, instructors should pursue these pedagogical practices foremost out of a commitment to decolonization, but formal recognition of their efforts by means of their inclusion in tenure and promotion decisions, research grants, and other professional recognitions would do much to symbolically indicate that institutions stand behind indigenization efforts (MIHESUAH & WILSON, 2004). [27]

Apart from time constraints and logistics, it can also be challenging to encourage students to shift from the passive learning role typical during lecture-style teaching to the more active role required for experiential learning and in-depth discussions of the foundational QR learning pieces introduced here. Another troubling result that can emerge is that courses designed to expose students to alternative standpoints can result in some students' (re)alignment with dominant, Eurocentric worldviews (SCHICK, 2002). I personally have only encountered mild resistance from students during critical examinations of epistemological standpoints and identity locations—and while challenging the Eurocentrism within the academy—but this issue should be considered. SCHICK does not offer concrete pedagogical suggestions for addressing this problem, but it may be helpful to address resistance to alternative worldviews by emphasizing class discussions that may serve to promote openness to multiple ways of knowing. [28]

## **5. Engaged Learning and PAR as Foundational Pieces in QR Teaching**

The trend toward community-engaged scholarship has led to research and integrated research-teaching projects involving "collaboration, dialogue and shared power and decision making" between academics and broader communities (UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH, 2013, p.1). One type of engaged scholarship, PAR, refers specifically to "a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with a means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems" (STRINGER, 1996, p.15). PAR pairs "ordinary people" with external supporters (e.g., university-based researchers) and encourages communities to explore and address issues affecting their daily lives (TSEY, PATTERSON, WHITESIDE, BAIRD & BAIRD, 2002, p.280). PAR is process-focused and focuses more on developing a respectful approach to research, cultivating relationships with local communities, and offering purposeful representation of those communities than on the research outcomes (BEEMAN-

CADWALLADER et al., 2011; RIECKEN, STRONG-WILSON, CONIBEAR, MICHEL & RIECKEN, 2004; SMITH, 1999, p.128). It also involves "spiraling," in the sense that it iteratively cycles through reflection, planning, acting, and observation (GRUNDY & KEMMIS, 1982; McNIFF & WHITEHEAD, 2002). It can be exclusively research-focused, or it may include a teaching component by involving students in the research process (e.g., IRIZARRY & BROWN, 2014; PRYOR & AMPIAH, 2003). A key benefit of PAR for indigenous scholarship is that it enables indigenous researchers to carry out research and foster social change and empowerment within their own communities (SMITH, 1999). [29]

PAR-based approaches, which ultimately shift all direction over a research project to the community in which it was carried out, offer promising opportunities for social change and decolonization when integrated into QR teaching (BEEMAN-CADWALLADER et al., 2011; IRIZARRY & BROWN, 2014). As such, they are aligned with the principles of decolonized and indigenous methodologies. That said, institutional and environmental constraints such as the absence of sufficiently developed partnerships with local communities, insufficient time or latitude to include or obtain approval for a PAR project within the scope of one's teaching duties, and institutional discouragement to create such learning opportunities could make the inclusion of PAR in QR teaching difficult or impossible. Further, students who are exposed to and/or participate in PAR projects must be made aware that while PAR approaches have the potential to engage communities, they can equally fragment them by privileging or causing tensions between certain community members (IRIZARRY & BROWN, 2014; MENZIES, 2001). [30]

In cases where involvement in PAR-based research and learning experiences is not an option for students, opportunities for community-engaged learning can offer similar exposure to community projects and opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. Engaged learning shares PAR's aims of fostering meaningful social change in communities, championing social justice, bridging theory and praxis, and building reciprocal relationships between educational institutions and communities (CANADIAN ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING, 2014; UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT PRESQUE ISLE, 2015). It differs, however, in that engaged learning has a more explicitly pedagogical agenda of bridging students' classroom learning with experiential development of critical thinking and QR skills, does not always (but can) involve the creation of research outputs, does not mandate that community members act as co-researchers in any research outputs, and does not require that any resulting research project be ultimately handed over to the community. Further, engaged learning focuses more explicitly on promotion of civic involvement amongst students, and on their development of a sense of social responsibility through working on projects that will benefit the broader community. [31]

Whereas PAR, by definition, implies full collaboration of community members with researchers, in experiential learning there can be a range of students' length and degree of community and project engagement (with shorter time for relationship building and lesser degree of involvement entailing lesser alignment with

indigenous and PAR approaches). Nevertheless, there are several explicitly indigenous-focused engaged learning initiatives offered through Canadian campuses, including projects within Cree language and Native Studies classes (see UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY, 2015; UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN, 2014). While I will discuss the limitations inherent in using each approach in QR teaching, I stress that each one lays essential groundwork for students' exposure to other ways of knowing. [32]

In the following sections, I offer two examples of strategies for aligning QR teaching with indigenous methods and epistemology, drawn from my own experiences teaching undergraduate sociology courses. Each example is meant as a foundational piece in QR teaching, and I focus on the undergraduate context given its lesser focus in the QR teaching literature to date. The first, within a 100-level sociology course, is a "cultural plunge" assignment meant to explore and interrogate cultural outsider views through experiential involvement with a community partner. The second, carried out in a 200-level sociology course, builds on students' emerging understandings of indigenous knowledges and participatory research through their exposure to and evaluation of an ongoing project claiming (but not necessarily adhering to) PAR orientations in local schools. [33]

### **5.1 Example 1: Community-engaged learning as an introduction to critical QR**

I introduce my undergraduate students to QR in an introductory-level course with thematic foci on "Epistemology and Ways of Knowing"; "The Sociological Imagination: Linking History and Biography" (see MILLS, 1959); "Public Sociology: Sharing Knowledge Beyond the Academy" (see BURAWOY, 2005); and "Exploring the Social World through Qualitative Inquiry." These thematic foci expose students to different research paradigms and explore how the paradigms conceive of the social world differently and inform methods of collecting and analyzing data. They include indigenous ways of knowing, and how these inform methodology and methods in QR. Three weeks into the thirteen-week course, when some of the thematic foci have been explored, students begin a community-engaged learning component of the course. [34]

This experiential learning begins when the student pairs up with a community partner of their choice, following ethics and criminal record clearance, to carry out twenty hours of participant observation at their placement. Students have considerable latitude in their choice of community partners (e.g., health clinics, social service agencies, cultural organizations). They are encouraged to participate actively in their organization's current projects (e.g., service provision, community outreach) while keeping a journal about their experiences and answering a series of reflective questions related to the fundamentals of qualitative sociological inquiry and use of the sociological imagination. Specifically, students are asked to connect particular challenges encountered by, or complaints voiced by, clients at community organizations to broader social problems. For instance, they might discuss how community partners' clients face

considerable challenges in finding jobs, and explain how this is connected to systemic labor market discrimination faced by members of minority groups. They are also asked to discuss connections between specific provincial or federal social policies and their impacts in the everyday lives of those served by the community organization. Despite the lack of a formal feedback procedure from community partners for finding out how students may have managed to inspire changes at the organizations, two overarching themes stand out in my ad hoc feedback: 1. Students emphasize the role of broader structural conditions or "hurdles" in their conversations with clients, and thereby provide reassurance that clients' struggles must not be dismissed as personal failures; 2. Students mention the value of grassroots activism, and encourage clients to consider involvement in activities that might promote local change (e.g., lobbying local legislators to enact social policies with their interests in mind). [35]

Students' journaling is not carried out at placements, because the intent is not for students to be detached observers sitting in a corner and evaluating the scene at their community placement. Rather, students journal after and in between time at their placements, and participate in their community association's daily activities to the extent that they can. Some community partners are fully aboriginal-focused; others serve socially disadvantaged groups and neighborhoods, often with a large aboriginal population. I have observed that self-identified aboriginal students tend to seek out placements in aboriginal-focused programs in community organizations, sometimes requesting a placement at an organization that has enriched a friend or family member's life or with which they already have ties. As one indigenous student commented to me in an e-mail communication when deciding on his placement: "I would really like to set up a placement at [indigenous-focused inner-city youth center] because I know some of the people there and I have had some family members spend time over there." I strongly encouraged him to set up his placement at the youth center, given its relevance and connection to his life and community. [36]

In keeping with indigenous approaches to qualitative inquiry and their focus on situating the self, these students begin their journaling by engaging in critical self-reflection about their identity locations and how these affect their experiences at their placements<sup>5</sup>. They are also asked to comment on the connections that their experiences enable them to make between history and biography (i.e., public/political and private/personal). Specifically, they are asked to answer questions such as: *Where do you situate yourself, in terms of your lived experiences and social location(s), in relation to those being served by the organization you are working with? Given our discussions about the shared ownership of knowledge under certain research paradigms, such as indigenous worldviews, how might what you have learned and experienced through your placement—particularly anything related to social inequality—be shared and*

5 Here, I refer to the critical self-awareness of identity locations—not the journaling exercise per se—as a hallmark of indigenous worldviews and approaches to social research. That said, I also stress the appropriateness of journaling to learning critical QR, given the practice's openness to reflexive writing (including storying, vignettes and stream-of-consciousness passages) and its goal of "mak[ing] visible our thinking processes" that is central to critical QR (KINLOCH & SAN PEDRO, 2014, p.22).

*addressed beyond the scope of your placement and beyond the university context?* [37]

In addition to these questions, students reflect on the potential for social change (i.e., reducing social inequalities) by leveraging existing resources within the community organization and the broader community. Concretely, leveraging often involves seeking out relevant funding or bursary opportunities for community organization clients, and matching clients to additional community programs or services that will help them with work and educational transitions or family demands. Further, it encompasses continued mentorship and networking opportunities, either formal or informal, on issues such as completing school and seeking employment. While I caution that a reflection exercise, in itself, is not a participatory or decolonizing act—and does nothing proactive in terms of empowering populations—I encourage students to reflect by means of thinking critically with an aim of *reframing* how they think and speak about social problems and indigenous issues. As one of SMITH's twenty-five indigenous projects (1999), reframing involves actively redefining and re-situating understandings of social issues as complex and rooted in history. In SMITH's words,

"The project of reframing is related to defining the problem or issue and determining how best to solve that problem. Many indigenous activists have argued that such things as mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, for example, are not about psychological and individualized failure but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination. Many community health initiatives address the whole community, its history and its wider context as part of the problem and part of the solution" (p.153). [38]

This reframing is admittedly on a personal level—and not on the state- or culture-wide level that constitutes SMITH's ultimate aim. Still, my hope is that their personal reframing will engender more public acts of reframing over time as the students live and work in their communities and argue openly for critical redefinitions of social problems. [39]

Building on classroom discussions about objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative inquiry, students also explore how their involvement with their community partner's activities has transformed them, and how (and to what extent) it has affected the organization. It is gratifying to observe students realizing and concretely articulating possibilities for mutual transformation through experiential learning, and to see their awareness of the lasting effects of colonialism on indigenous populations. For example, when answering assigned questions about structural and cultural barriers faced by individuals served by the community partners, students tend to write about their awareness of policies and entrenched prejudices that hinder the socioeconomic advancement and cultural acceptance of minority groups, particularly indigenous peoples, in their community and beyond. [40]

Students perceive their main impact on organizations to be through the provision of mentorship for clients that offers direct possibilities for improving their life

circumstances, such as completing their education, securing employment, or improving their health. In terms of its transformative impact on the students themselves, students regularly note that the experiences have (re)focused their goals toward the possibility of future work or careers in fields connected to their placements (e.g., community health care work and social work). Although I do not always remain in contact with my students after their placements are over, several do stay in touch and inform me that they are now enrolled in programs such as social work that hold promise to positively impact the same communities that they have worked with through their placements. As mentioned earlier, a formal feedback procedure for community partners does not yet exist, but my intent is to ask all community partners—in a structured way—to offer commentary each semester on how students' involvement has impacted the organization. This way, the feedback can be used in future classes to help students realize what members of organizations value and how they feel students' involvement is helpful. [41]

This teaching strategy poses some challenges: as EISENHART and JUROW acknowledge (2011), it is time-intensive. However, it offers several benefits compared with teaching QR without indigenous worldviews or without an experiential component. Specifically, it enables active practice of critical QR skills (direct interaction with community members through involvement in projects of community organizations, participant observation, critical reflection and journaling), active engagement of the sociological imagination, exposure to multiple ways of knowing through exposure to indigenous methods and epistemology, and awareness of the suitability of a community-engaged learning approach to working with indigenous-focused community partners. It shares some similarities with community-engaged learning initiatives without an indigenous focus or component (e.g., MACHTMES et al., 2009; POTTER et al., 2003): it encourages well-rounded, critical students and motivates them via participation in a real-world project that affects their own community. [42]

However, it differs in its efforts to align "mainstream" and indigenous approaches to QR teaching, and in its introduction early in the curriculum. Instead of incorporating this kind of teaching method into a graduate course, it should begin as soon as possible in undergraduate courses, to introduce students to other ways of knowing and provide them with tools for questioning and countering the positivistic worldviews they will encounter in subsequent courses and disciplines. I suggest that it also enables them to see how community organizations' growing efforts at inclusiveness toward the indigenous populations they serve represent openness to diversity in worldviews and ways of life. As stated by a student in an end-of-term reflection journal:

"At my placement [at an inner-city inter-professional health care and outreach organization], I was part of the outreach team, so would welcome [drop-in clients] at the start of my shift. The staff and other students are wonderful, and getting to be involved with patients and children gets me involved with the community and allows me to see that nursing truly is the degree I would like to pursue. I appreciate that we would do a smudge at the start of the night, and that there are often First Nations

elders and mentors around. Many clients coming here have a First Nations heritage, so this is welcoming." [43]

Student journals also suggest increased awareness of social inequalities in their own communities and everyday lives, and application of analytic tools for assessing the origins of these inequalities. A student who spent his placement visiting and providing companionship to men at an organization focused on community reintegration of offenders commented:

"I interacted with many guys just a bit older than me, in their late 20s and early 30s. Several of them have been in and out of the correctional system since they were young. It seems that about half of them are aboriginal and what has gotten them to this [disadvantaged] point in life is not straightforward. As discussed in lectures, it is often tied to systemic discrimination that has affected their ability to achieve work and personal goals. Many feel they could have a 'normal' work and family life had it not been for the web of inequalities they find themselves in (ethnicity, low socioeconomic status, low education, poor access to healthcare and community resources). For me, this is where intersectionality and seeing intersecting oppressions became real." [44]

#### *5.1.1 Assessing learning outcomes and pedagogical impacts*

It is difficult (if not impossible) to quantify the success of this teaching strategy, in part because it may be the more motivated and academically oriented students who self-select into the experiential learning component. While I cannot demonstrate a concrete link between student achievement and community engagement, anonymously submitted student feedback from course evaluations suggests a correlation between experiential learning and self-perceived development of basic QR and critical thinking skills:

"For me, the experiential learning—mainly the many in-depth conversations I got to have at my placement—helped to clarify what we'd talked about in class about minority groups and the combination of institutional discrimination and social prejudice minorities face. Also, seeing how a social situation can be viewed from so many angles and be advantageous or disadvantageous to different people or social groups was valuable.

After going to my placement for several weeks, I now find I am thinking more critically about everyday situations and inequalities in them. This has been a great way of making the class concepts come alive, and just being deliberate when watching and interacting with others. I only wish it had been longer, to get to know the clients and volunteers at my organization more." [45]

Further, from 2012-2014, an average of 15% of student participants per semester have continued their placement beyond the thirteen-week course, working with the same community partner in a volunteer capacity. In one instance, a self-identified indigenous student continued her involvement in an inner-city vegetable garden project in a primarily indigenous neighborhood; several months after she had finished my class, she dropped by my office to tell me about her ongoing

involvement with the community project and the relationships she was building in the neighborhood. When I asked her to solicit feedback from the community members with regard to their perception of her involvement and their perception of the relationships that have been established, they offered the following:

"She has built a real bridge of trust between the university and our community. I would not have thought this could work as well as it did. She is having fun, learning for her classes, and we are all learning how to bring sustainability here. I hope she can bring some other friends from her classes to join, or even family."

"She feels at home coming here, and we welcome her whenever. No intrusions, she is not taking advantage of us or anything, just a positive help and role model for us and especially the teens [working on the garden project]." (See the Appendix for a summary of courses and perceived learning impacts.) [46]

Another challenge in evaluating this teaching strategy is assigning grades to students' work. Given the considerable personal/reflective dimension of the experiential learning, combined with its strong emotional component for many students (see LAWRENCE, 2008), I was initially unsure how to evaluate their work appropriately. I wanted to ensure I was taking into consideration their involvement in concrete experiences, their reflections on those experiences, and their ability to translate their reflections into knowledge related to sociological concepts and processes that could be applied or tested in new situations. Consequently, I used an experiential learning model developed for aboriginal learning contexts (SMITH & McGEE, 2005). Specifically, I used a rubric incorporating each element of SMITH and McGEE's model: 1. experiencing, 2. reflecting, 3. meaning-making, and 4. acting. Because students are unable to do as much in terms of acting within the framework of the short course, their assessment in this category depends largely on completing an action plan for what they think could be done at the community and broader state/policy level to lessen social inequalities for the population served by their community partner, and in such a way that would involve the community in the process. As noted earlier, my process for soliciting feedback from community partners as to how they experience students' involvement is currently ad hoc. My aim is to standardize it such that I am asking community partners for specific feedback each semester, and using findings to maximize community partner-student synergies. [47]

### *5.1.2 Informal and formal evaluations*

Through formal and informal student evaluations of the course, many students have indicated that the engaged-learning experience and self-reflection assignments are challenging, but not unreasonably so. Like me, they recognize that this component is a demanding approach to exploring QR, because it moves beyond textbook-driven learning and requires more synthesis of knowledge and perspectives as well as an affective dimension to learning:

"I appreciated how the experiential part was not just about the concepts but about learning them and seeing inequalities play out in real life. I went home from my placement with a lot of thoughts and feelings, trying to sort through what I had experienced that evening and sometimes feeling frustrated for the people there and their lives." [48]

This overall learning approach can be adapted to different levels and subject matter. For example, similar experiential education programs involving self-reflection journal exercises have been implemented in social studies and First Nations culture courses in Alberta and the Yukon Territory at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, in learning environments with First Nations enrollments ranging from 25-65% (O'CONNOR, 2010). These are not QR courses per se, but they do teach fundamental elements similar to those taught in critical QR courses: strategies for observing the social world; looking for patterns and differences in observation of cultures; different ways of knowing across cultures and places, etc. Many also focus on developing working relationships with community organizations and learning about the relationship of the self to the community and society. [49]

## 5.2 Example 2: Analyzing PAR in theory and practice

Second year undergraduate students who learned about QR in the introductory course build on that foundation through a thirteen-week research methods course with a qualitative focus. The semester begins with an exploration of different epistemologies used in social science research, and moves on to explore the various methods and methodologies within these. I introduce indigenous epistemologies at the start of the course, and revisit them in more detail as part of a week-long focus on PAR. Because standard textbooks lack indigenous perspectives and research examples, and because SMITH (1999) argued convincingly that PAR is particularly suited to indigenous research agendas, I decided to incorporate both indigenous approaches and PAR into the curriculum. First, I assign readings on indigenous-focused PAR projects, and second, students participate in an interactive presentation on an ongoing project in local schools claiming (but not fully adhering to) PAR orientations and indigenous epistemological approaches. This exposes students to a mixture of local, in-progress research and non-local, completed projects, all while emphasizing their common elements and offering an opportunity for dialogical analysis of PAR orientations in theory and practice. [50]

After reviewing what we have previously discussed about core elements of indigenous worldviews, students consider questions such as: *What makes PAR a good fit for indigenous-focused research? Who can undertake PAR-focused indigenous research? How and what can researchers from various identity locations contribute?* To facilitate these discussions, I present SMITH's four models of appropriate research collaborations for non-indigenous researchers doing indigenous-focused projects: 1. mentorship of non-indigenous researchers by indigenous community members through the research process; 2. non-indigenous researchers' integration into the daily life of the indigenous community

central to the research project; 3. power-sharing of non-indigenous researchers and the indigenous community throughout the research process; and 4. research directed at issues that are of interest and benefit to indigenous communities (SMITH, 1992). Students learn that although such research efforts must involve indigenous participation, there can be a space for non-indigenous researchers interested in empowering indigenous communities through the research process. The bottom line, as we discuss, is that any research arrangement "should not expand the power and knowledge of the dominant society at the expense of the colonized and the excluded" (MENZIES, 2001, p.22). [51]

This discussion is also informed by two examples of research, which students are requested to read prior to class. One details a pilot PAR project involving the implementation and evaluation of a "culturally driven school-within-a-school" program for indigenous Hawaiian high-school students (KAHAKALAU, 2004, p.25); the other analyzes a PAR project in which researchers teamed up with an indigenous men's health group in rural Australia to develop and co-evaluate its activities (TSEY et al., 2002). In small groups, then collectively as a class, we discuss what makes each project's PAR design appropriate given its indigenous focus. With regard to KAHAKALAU's research, most students refer to the project's overall objective of bringing about positive change through cultural preservation and transmission for the local indigenous population, and the research team's efforts at establishing personal relationships with all research participants. Many also point out that KAHAKALAU, as an indigenous Hawaiian and a mother of children in the Hawaiian school system, was conducting research that she is personally invested in on multiple levels, and had to be accountable to her research subjects not just as a researcher but as a community member. Specifically, she exercised this accountability by involving her family in conversations about the research design and the project's cultural and scholarly significance. Further, over a two-year period, she held several in-depth conversations with community members about research plans and progress; colleagues, fellow parents, and grassroots activists were all included in discussions about the project. Some students note that KAHAKALAU was able to integrate indigenous research methods ("talk story," "dream learning") and presentation of her early findings (in story format), along with using more conventional QR approaches (semi-structured interviews, analysis of students' journal entries). [52]

With regard to TSEY's research, most students refer to the research team's commitment to working with the community to bring about positive change (i.e., addressing the region's low life expectancy and high suicide rates amongst men), and how the researchers encouraged participants to reflect on their own indigenous beliefs, attitudes, and values about health and men's place in the Yarrabah community. Generally, students come to a consensus that both projects involve rigorous research, and are also accountable to the local cultures. Although TSEY and colleagues focus their report on the PAR project's formative stages, and students acknowledge this in their accounts, students note early evidence from the project pointing toward overall improved mental health for the indigenous men in the region, and the men's increased efforts at being proactive

and mutually supportive in seeking employment, education, and training opportunities. Based on TSEY and colleagues' early findings, people in the community would agree with the student assessments that these changes ensued. [53]

Recently, when I asked students whether they perceived any tensions in the researchers' efforts to bridge PAR and indigenous methods and methodologies, one pointed out KAHAKALAU's awareness that she has to simultaneously honor (and in the student's words "live up to") her identity locations as both a researcher in a mainstream institution and an indigenous Hawaiian. KAHAKALAU wrote, "I believe that including both Indigenous and Western methods of research presentation can be identified as a distinct contemporary Indigenous research feature, because at the present time Indigenous scholars like myself have to justify ourselves in two worlds" (2004, p.30). Beyond familiarizing students with methods, methodologies, and epistemologies in indigenous-focused research, teachers must emphasize that research with and for indigenous populations poses "challenges that are simultaneously personal, institutional, and political" (MENZIES, 2001, p.20). [54]

Assigning readings of research examples is helpful in demonstrating the potential for good fit between PAR and indigenous approaches, and the applicability of the research approaches across geographic and cultural contexts, but it is also important to expose students to research in their local context. To this end, students participate in an interactive presentation led by a graduate student about an ongoing PAR-oriented project. The objective of this project is to assess how a group of middle-year students in local public schools perceive their relationships with nature, and exploring ways for educators to enrich or modify their teaching to foster spiritual relationships with nature among students. In keeping with indigenous knowledge systems and indigenous-focused curricula, here "spiritual" refers to a sense of wonder and connection with nature, and spiritual knowledge is seen as a valid knowledge system along with the cognitive knowledge traditionally valued by western educational systems (CAJETE, 2008; HAMPTON, 1995; KOVACH, 2009; SMITH, 1999). [55]

The research began with assessment of students' existing relations with nature through draw and write exercises and iMovie diary reflections, as well as semi-structured interviews with their teachers; subsequently, the researcher developed and implemented a workshop for students, with the aim of addressing any instances where students commented on feeling disconnected from nature. The workshop also took up the issue of students' epiphanic/transformational moments in their relations with nature, and aimed to connect these experiences to possible improvements in middle-years teaching on human-nature relations. The project was intended to continue with dissemination of students' drawings and iMovies at community-based public dialogues on indigenous and environmental education, as a means of soliciting broader community input (from indigenous and non-indigenous people alike) into the importance of place-based curricula. At this point, and in keeping with the tenets of PAR research (BEEMAN-CADWALLADER et al., 2011), control of the project's curricular change outcomes

would be left with the schools involved and their affiliated educational program partners. That said, I acknowledge that there is no harm in following up with them over time, and perhaps providing further support if needed. [56]

The schools involved in the study have a mixed aboriginal and non-aboriginal student body, and many students come from lower-income households with limited opportunities and resources, such as access to private vehicles, to get out of the city and enjoy nature. As noted by IRIZARRY and BROWN (2014), this type of research holds particular liberatory potential for youth in high-poverty urban schools. While initiated by the graduate student as researcher (and therefore not fully PAR-focused in the way that a study co-generated by researcher and community would be), the study does incorporate some design elements that strive to include students and their teachers as co-researchers. [57]

Namely, teachers had input into the development of research questions posed to their students, and the graduate student researcher—herself an "insider/outsider" who works part-time as a teacher in the public school system—initiated the project in response to her teaching colleagues' call for bringing more place-based, local knowledges into the curriculum to counter the teacher disempowerment that has arisen from increasingly standardized and test-driven curricula (see also CHINN, 2007). As such, the project is centered around a collective problem-solving focus. Still, the research design brings me to raise an important catch-22 about doing PAR-focused and decolonizing research: though we, as researchers, see community-initiated research as ideal and most potent in its decolonizing potential, BEEMAN-CADWALLADER and colleagues stress that:

"if we, as scholars, are not the ones initiating the work, would it happen? Most communities are simply too busy to put the scholarly work of empirical research at the forefront of their concerns. Compounding this reality is the sordid history of research in Indigenous communities. Therefore, we are uniquely positioned to engaged in desired projects" (2011, p.12). [58]

Thus, I emphasize the limits to the project's full co-participant possibility. [59]

In terms of students' participation in the project, I note a PAR-focused orientation through the graduate student researcher's attempt to cultivate an authentic relationship with the students over the course of a full semester (BEEMAN-CADWALLADER et al., 2011), and by inviting the students to analyze part of their own data by assessing, in a series of iMovie reflections, the themes they identified in images they had previously drawn about nature and their perceived relationship to it (see also PRYOR & AMPIAH, 2003). Although a detailed look at the students' perceptions of their involvement in the research had not been carried out, the researcher attested to students' excitement that they got to talk about "my feelings, not just what my teacher wants." [60]

This project is also not an example of exclusively indigenous research, but it rests on an epistemological foundation strongly aligned with indigenous worldviews. To assess whether and how students understand how the project reflects indigenous

worldviews, my students and I discuss questions such as: *What gives this project an indigenous focus?* Students have identified several important features, for example how the project invites participants (the high school students) to locate themselves in the process of the research and to focus on their experiences of connecting with nature. They have also identified how the project emphasizes relationality and the spiritual, how it is place-based as a result of its focus on a local community and encounters with nature in a generally local context, how it invites teachers, students, and the researcher to work together for change, and how it encourages students (many of whom are indigenous) and teachers to have a say in how and what is taught about human-nature relations and the appreciation of nature. As with TSEY's PAR research, this research is still underway and the full extent of changes spurred by the project is not yet known. That said, students and community members alike note three main changes: an improved fit between students' cultural backgrounds and curricular foci, greater opportunities for students' hands-on learning, and a movement away from standardized curriculum toward recognition of local knowledge and context. This project also makes critical personal narratives (i.e., the students' reflection exercises) central data in the research process, and connects narratives to students' knowledge and experiences of spirituality (see MEYER, 2003; DENZIN et al., 2008b). [61]

Students have further acknowledged the project's emphasis on alternative worldviews that differ from positivistic understandings of reality (i.e., by emphasizing students' epiphanic and spiritual encounters with nature). They have referred to it as challenging the traditional monopoly of cognitive knowledge in the classroom, by championing the value of spiritual experiences and knowledge. Given the significant aboriginal population in the schools involved in the project, they have also noted that it is directly relevant to aboriginal students' worldviews and relationships with the social and natural world. [62]

## **6. Challenging Positivist Science by Indigenizing QR Teaching: Final Reflections**

In the current post-secondary education context, the convergence of the increasing desire to recognize indigenous culture and worldviews and the increased emphasis on experiential learning presents exciting opportunities for teaching QR critically and subversively. Scholars have recently made valuable contributions to the literature on QR teaching from indigenous perspectives (e.g., DENZIN et al., 2008a; KOVACH, 2009; SMITH, 1999), but integrating indigenous knowledge and worldviews into the "mainstream" social science classroom (especially undergraduate courses) is an underexplored teaching strategy seldom suggested in general QR and research methods textbooks. By integrating indigenous methods, perspectives, and epistemology into QR teaching, particularly through student involvement in engaged learning and exposure to PAR, instructors can promote critical recognition of multiple ways of knowing and teach to transgress (HOOKS, 1994). [63]

Planning for pedagogical change and improvement through indigenization, however, must be sensitive and responsive to two major ethical and conceptual challenges. First, all efforts must strive to privilege indigenous voices and develop relationships as organically as possible in the face of institutional time and resource constraints. Second, instructors must emphasize their commitment to praxis and "indigenous, collaborative and community-based" inquiry (DENZIN, 2011, p.55) from within a system that has long privileged technique-driven instruction. Resistance may be encountered from colleagues and administrative bodies, even in a post-secondary environment that is explicitly receptive to the integration of indigenous knowledges. As with confronting student resistance, I suggest that the best way to meet it is not to back down, but to continue to promote multiple ways of knowing through critical pedagogies and administrative changes that might ease the major tensions and challenges addressed here. However complex, the task is an exciting one, particularly with the support of local communities. [64]

## Appendix: Learning Impacts of Exposure to Engaged Learning and PAR in Undergraduate Courses

Course	Learning Impacts
<p><b>100-level intro sociology course with engaged learning option (13 week course)</b></p>	<p>Exploration and interrogation of cultural outsider views through: Engaged learning placement with community partner (20 hours), including ongoing feedback from community partners regarding placement experiences OR Exposure to classmates' engaged learning experiences through class presentations and discussions</p>
	<p>Exposure to different research paradigms, including brief introduction to indigenous knowledges (IK) and methodologies</p>
	<p>Introduction to how IK inform methodologies and methods in QR</p>
	<p>Critical (self-)reflection about identity locations, "otherness," and cultural and structural roots of inequality; reframing of understandings of inequality</p>
<p><b>200-level sociology research methods course (13 week course)</b></p>	<p>Exposure to different epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in social sciences research</p>
	<p>Introduction to principles of IK and PAR</p>
	<p>Guided reading and discussion of two studies incorporating elements of IK and PAR orientations; discussion of affinities between IK and PAR</p>
	<p>Application of emerging understandings of IK and PAR through evaluation of ongoing local projects that incorporate elements of IK and PAR orientations</p>
<p><b>100-level course and 200-level course</b></p>	<p>Ongoing feedback from community partners regarding placement experiences and suggestions for effective implementation/inclusion of IK and PAR elements</p>

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