

Contemporary criminological issues: moving beyond insecurity and exclusion

Author(s) Piché, Justin; Moffette, David; Côté-Lussier, Carolyn

Imprint University of Ottawa Press, 2020

Extent viii, 312 pages

ISBN 0776629913, 0776628704, 9780776629919, 9780776628707, 9780776628714

Permalink <https://books.scholarsportal.info/en/read?id=/ebooks/ebooks5/upress5/2020-07-28/1/9780776628714>

Pages 102 to 127

Downloaded from Scholars Portal Books on 2021-11-10
Téléchargé de Scholars Portal Books sur 2021-11-10

Collaborative Teaching and Learning: The Emotional Journey of the University of Ottawa's First Walls to Bridges Class

Jennifer M. Kilty, Sandra Lehalle, and Rachel Fayter

Walls are put up when curiosity ends.

—Inside student (n.d.)

A Brief History of Walls to Bridges

There is a long history of offering educational opportunities in prison, although these initiatives vary in context and focus. For example, in 1972 incarcerated men and women in the United States became eligible to apply for Pell Grants, subsidies provided by the federal government for students with financial need who have not earned their first bachelor's degree or who are enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs at participating institutions. Their eligibility was revoked in 1994, however, when Congress passed the *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act* that prohibits anyone who is incarcerated in a state or federal institution from receiving Pell funding, something Mark Yates and Richard Lakes (2010) describe as a "neoliberal assault on prisoners." At the executive level, in 2015 President Obama supported the Second Chance Pell pilot program, which allowed for a limited lifting of the ban for some prisoners. More often than not post-secondary education efforts in correctional institutions are initiated by individual educators and, as such, are typically grassroots in nature. For example, Karlene Faith (1993) describes

her work in the California Institution for Women in the late 1970s, which was sponsored by the History of Consciousness graduate program at the University of California and the Santa Cruz Women's Prison Project, as a form of education-as-empowerment.

In 1981, J. W. Cosman (1981, 40) described prison education in Canada as being "characterized by a general lack of interest in genuine educational achievement, by inadequate standards of teacher selection and training ... a lack of discipline and structure, and by a complete lack of educational research." Much has changed over the past forty years; notably, the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* has made a significant effort to document experiences of prison education, dedicating four special issues to this discussion: in 1992, volume 4, issue 1; in 2004, volume 13; in 2008, volume 17, issue 1; and in 2016, volume 25, issue 2. Long-time prison-education scholar Stephen Duguid (1997, 2000) has charted the ups and downs of education in Canada's federal penitentiaries, noting that these efforts are often configured as a task to incite moral reformation, moral rehabilitation, and recidivism reduction, and as a framework for teaching prisoners how to engage in better decision-making. Duguid (1997, 60, 2000) contends that Correctional Service Canada's adoption of the risk-needs-responsivity model of correctional management in the early 1990s was the end of an era in Canadian prison education, where university efforts were "now being asked to adopt 'correctional goals' and to identify the criminogenic factors that it thought its courses addressed." The effect of this shift was that "the evidence that authoritarian realms can evoke only compliance, that the imprisoned will not accept keepers as models, and that rehabilitation succeeds only when linked to the 'real' community" (Duguid 1997, 61) was ignored. Due to space constraints, we are unable to review the history of post-secondary educational efforts in the United States and United Kingdom, and instead zero in on the direct history of the Walls to Bridges program in Canada—which is the focus of this chapter.

The Walls to Bridges (W2B) initiative indicates that there has been some important ground regained in the universities effort to design post-secondary curriculum for incarcerated students in ways that promote security, inclusion, and the creation of ties to and bonds with the broader community without having to focus on correctional goals. The origin story of W2B begins with the Inside-Out (I-O) Prison Exchange program, which grew from a single course taught by Lori

Pompa at Philadelphia's Temple University in 1997—precisely when Duguid (1997) published his article on the demise of prison education programs in Canada. The I-O program enables university professors to teach post-secondary courses inside a carceral institution. This transformative teaching model is an example of experiential education within a community-based model of teaching and learning (Butin 2013). Classes are made up of both “outside” university-enrolled students and “inside” incarcerated students, on the premise that both groups will benefit and learn from one another by examining social issues through the “prism of prison.” As an alternative model of community-engaged learning and released from paternalistic notions of “charity” or “service,” the I-O model is grounded in dialogue, reciprocity, and collaboration (Davis and Roswell 2013).

In 2011, the I-O program was adapted for the Canadian context by Shoshana Pollack and Simone Weil Davis. Its first course was offered at the Grand Valley Institution for Women, a federal prison in Kitchener, Ontario. Subsequently renamed Walls to Bridges, the now autonomous W2B program similarly adopts a transformative approach to education and justice, and aims to generate deep conversations about crime, justice, freedom, and inequality between inside and outside students. There are, however, several key distinctions between the Canadian W2B and the American I-O program.

First, there is a profound difference in the scale of incarceration and average length of sentence in Canada compared to America, indicating a particular need for programs that address community re-entry and offer a continuity of academic support in the Canadian context (Davis 2013). W2B has worked to extend course offerings in halfway houses and on university campuses. Second, as Indigenous people are grossly overrepresented in the criminal justice system relative to their numbers in the general Canadian population (Balfour and Comack 2014), W2B built relationships with the Indigenous communities in Canada, inviting Elders to facilitate a session as part of the annual five-day instructor training and incorporating Indigenous pedagogy into its practice (discussed in greater detail below). Third, unlike I-O, W2B is more inclusive in the sense that it does not discriminate based on an individual's criminal conviction and permits individuals with sexual offences to participate. Fourth, W2B utilizes a feminist approach, striving for connection and empowerment through non-judgmental openness, critical thinking, and an anti-oppression lens (Follett and Rodger 2013).

Fifth, W2B students are granted university credits for successfully completing a course (Pollack 2014); for I-O, credit-granting varies from site to site. Finally, W2B engages in advocacy and public education concerning issues of criminalization, education, and social justice (Pollack 2016a).

The overall purpose of this chapter is to describe the W2B process and the experiences that Jennifer Kilty and Sandra Lehalle shared as they arranged, designed, and co-taught the first W2B course offered by the University of Ottawa, which was held inside a provincial detention and remand centre in the province of Ontario (we are not permitted to identify the specific institution). To accomplish this goal, we mobilize the critical reflection journals written by students in the course, as well as the experiences of Rachel Fayter, who participated in several W2B courses while incarcerated in a federal prison in Canada.

The First Walls to Bridges Experience at the University of Ottawa

It took over two years to organize the Department of Criminology's first Walls to Bridges class at the University of Ottawa. The journey began by securing a small university grant earmarked for innovation in education and pedagogy that was spearheaded by the department director at that time, Bastien Quirion. Although it was a long and arduous process that involved multiple meetings with representatives from the correctional institution, as well as consultation with the university's Office of Risk Management and the legal teams for both the university and the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the two parties solidified a legally binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) in October 2017.

This chapter details professor and student experiences of the inaugural Walls to Bridges class in the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa. It highlights the unique and challenging pedagogy, and the transformational aspects of this collaborative teaching and learning initiative. Participant observations, journal entries written by professors and students, and anonymous course evaluations are mobilized as autoethnographic narratives that provide sources of knowledge and ways to illustrate our arguments.¹ Inspired by reflexive ethnography that allows the authors to "scrutinize, publicize, and reflexively rework their own self-understandings as a way to shape

understandings of and in the wider world” (Butz and Besio 2009, 1660), we intend to share our understanding of the emotional journey of our first Walls to Bridges class.

Part 1 outlines the value of Indigenous and circle pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of an anti-oppression framework that destabilizes hierarchical power relations and structures as a way to promote security and inclusion. Part 2 describes how the carceral class setting and dynamics structure the learning experience and exemplify the exclusionary politics that the circle pedagogy mobilizes us to critique. Part 3 considers the role emotions played in course content, design, facilitation, and management, and in our efforts to foster a safe, secure, equitable, and inclusionary classroom space. Notably, this course involved a great deal more emotional labour for students and professors than traditional lecture- or seminar-style classes. It included more creative and innovative methods of communication and mechanisms of appraisal and evaluation, as well as course oversight and student “check-in” that stretched far beyond the standard thirteen-week semester structure.

Part 1: Circle Pedagogy and Transformative Learning

Circle Pedagogy: An Alternative and Challenging Approach

The uniquely Canadian W2B approach utilizes Freirean principles; Indigenous pedagogy; decolonizing and intersectional analysis; and critical, feminist, anti-racist practices (W2B 2016). W2B courses use egalitarian circle pedagogy, emphasizing respectful and inclusive dialogue, experiential learning, and shared inquiry. So that no individual is perceived as having more power or expertise than another, and to thus promote feelings of security in the performative space of the classroom, W2B classes are structured with all of the inside and outside students, as well as the teaching assistants and facilitators/professors sitting in a circle formation. In a “circle of trust” we speak our own truth, while listening receptively to the truth of others, using personal testimony without affirming or negating another speaker (Palmer 2004, p. 114). Circle pedagogy involves deliberate, reflective communication, with each participant taking a turn to speak and actively listen so as to contribute authentic responses to the dialogue when it is their turn. The circle symbolizes interconnectedness within diversity, equality, and a joint responsibility for

the conversation (Pollack 2014). W2B's pedagogy is a unique approach to education and can be challenging for those trained in traditional academia:

My place in this class is so different from what I am used to. Forget about "having control of the content of the course," here my goal isn't to transmit specific content to the student in a specific order within a specific time frame. To succeed, I need to unlearn my years of teaching experience in order to forget the game plan and be flexible, forget the clock and trust the process. I am slowly discovering that doing only 2 of the 5 activities planned for a day just means that we succeeded at learning from what was happening and what was brought by each student that day. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-02-27²)

Contrary to the traditional academic, hierarchical, unidirectional, "banking model of education" that most university courses employ (Freire 2003, p. 12), a W2B classroom conceives of teaching and learning as collaborative, inclusive, and experiential (Pollack 2016a). W2B pedagogy transforms the one-way transmission of information into a reciprocal relationship where students become teachers and vice versa. This model requires students to become active participants in their education, rather than passive recipients of information, which enables them to become more invested in the learning process (Turenne 2013). These pedagogical practices analyze and reject structures of oppression, injustice, and inequality that create insecurity and exclusion, while empowering the voices of students who are typically marginalized and silenced (Perry 2013). Circle pedagogy is premised upon notions of interconnectedness, equality, respectful listening, and the shared exploration and acceptance of multiple perspectives (Graveline 1998). The circle format gives the space and time for everyone to have a voice and speak from their own experiences. No single perspective is considered to be more accurate or valuable than another (Palmer 2004). This is especially important for marginalized people who may rarely have opportunities to be heard, which promotes what Freire (2003) referred to as "conscientization," a liberatory education for oppressed groups.

Circle pedagogy requires holistic learning: participants are invited to bring their whole self into the process. Corresponding

with the Indigenous medicine wheel, participants incorporate their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual “selves” into the classroom (Graveline 1998; Hart 2002; Pollack 2016a). Indigenous circles are essential for equalizing power relations and for community building, learning, and decision-making because the focus is on synthesis and integration, through self-reflection, attentive listening, and the collaborative construction of knowledge (Cowan and Beard Adams 2008). Pollack (2016a) found that students benefitted from circle work as the process assisted in shifting power imbalances between inside and outside students, as well as with the facilitator. The circle process values, humanizes, and respects the voices of all circle members; this degree of security and inclusion can often be a first for incarcerated people (Fayter 2016; Freitas et al. 2014; Pollack 2016a): “Being imprisoned, I was stripped of my identity, labelled an ‘offender’, and forced to silence my opinions or risk repercussions. But within the W2B circle I was a student who was valued for my perspective, supported in sharing my beliefs, and was able to reclaim my voice” (Rachel Fayter 2018-06-22).

A sharing circle requires a skilled facilitator to act as a “conductor” (Hart 2002), who must create a safe environment in which participants can share. This “engaged pedagogy” (hooks 1994, 15) involves teaching in a manner that respects and cares for the wholeness of each student—the union of mind, body, and spirit. The learning process involves not only sharing and receiving information, but contributing to one another’s intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth (hooks 1994).

Transformative Learning: Tools and Unexpected Moments

Facilitating and participating in a Walls-to-Bridges course can be a transformative experience in ways that teaching or attending a traditional lecture- or seminar-style university course is not (Fayter 2016). According to O’Sullivan and colleagues (2002, 18):

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class,

race and gender; our body awareness; our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

Adopting one of the tools discussed during the facilitator training, we asked the students to collectively create guidelines for the class. We were pleasantly surprised to see that they drafted mindful rules that were inclusive, rather than specific to inside or outside students. They discussed the importance of being respectful and appreciative of other peoples' thoughts and opinions, and of trusting the safety of the circle and space. They decided together to avoid being quick to speak or to feel forced to participate; to not give advice or try to fix something for someone else; to not assume things about people; and to not leave the class without talking about something if they felt it needed to be discussed. This exercise was a great way for students to get involved, learn about each other, and start the process of building a community that would eventually extend outside the prison. Using icebreakers at the beginning of each class was surprisingly useful to these ends:

I had serious doubts about using ice breakers. How will the students react when we asked them if they are more like a bowl of soup or a bowl of ice cream; a river or an ocean? I had a lot of fears. But as soon as they began taking turns explaining how their choice between these two options reflected their vision of their personalities, their perceived self or their life struggles, we all started to learn about each other. They weren't sharing their maiden name, GPA or criminal record, but their vision of the world and their place in it. I cannot remember the last time I asked myself such deep, insightful questions. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-01-28)

We began to see and feel the transformative potential of the W2B format very early on in the semester. This was particularly striking when we tried to address the orange jumpsuits as an obvious marker of exclusion, insecurity, and stark division between inside and outside participants, and proposed the idea of the outside students and facilitators wearing an orange t-shirt as an act of solidarity. Both facilitators wrote about this discussion in their journal entries for week three:

After laughing for a minute, the inside students kind of realized that we weren't joking about wearing an orange t-shirt. They gently said if we wanted it, they would be ok with it but that they were tired of orange and that seeing normal clothes on normal people gave them a sense of being human. Although we thought of it as sign of solidarity, they said they didn't need a t-shirt to feel it. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-01-24)

Despite hating the orange jumpers they are forced to wear, they said it was nice to see "real people" not just prisoners in orange and correctional staff in their uniforms—the "blue shirts and white shirts." I was surprised by our failure to see how important that small view of normalcy could be for an imprisoned person. Here we thought we were being allies, even in a symbolic way, and all the inside students wanted was a window to something beyond the prison. Apparently, even our clothes can be a part of the bridge. (Jennifer Kilty 2018-01-23)

This was a transformative teaching moment for the outside students and facilitators. Although we did not wear orange t-shirts as an act of solidarity, we did have the outside students hand-write their assignments to mirror the inside-student experience. While the unavailability of computerized tools such as proofreading helped to homogenize the student experience, it cannot create an equal working environment. In the next section, we describe in greater detail the challenges to engaging in transformative learning in a correctional environment, along with the interpersonal dynamics and tensions that can arise in this setting.

Part 2: Unique Class Setting and Carceral Dynamics

Holding a university course in a carceral setting creates a unique classroom environment and has an undeniable impact on the interpersonal dynamics at play—among the students, between the students and the facilitators, and between the group and the institutional officials encountered each week. In this section, we discuss how the carceral tour, panoptic surveillance, and staff presence during opening and closing circles impacted our classroom and interpersonal dynamics. We also discuss the importance of doing "boundary work" with staff and how this unfolded as a work-in-progress.

The Carceral Tour: Turning an Institutional Requirement into a Teachable Moment

We began the semester by holding separate meetings with the inside and outside students to prepare everyone for the journey we were about to embark upon together; this also allowed institutional officials to do a security lecture with the outside students and to give them a tour of the jail. As recounted by one of the facilitators:

As we walked through the pods where the inside students live, the max and min units, the women's unit, and segregation, the UO students were quiet—a few of them asking me the odd question or making the odd comment as we walked through the dreary concrete hallways. "I didn't realize the 'yard' would look like that." "How can they not give them winter clothes so they can go outside during the winter?" "I can't believe he was making jokes about the cells in that one wing being so cold that there was frost on the wall." "Is it normal to call prisoners 'clients'?" "I thought only American prisons would have bunkbeds and rooms where so many [36] guys lived." I was glad to see they were thinking critically already. Afterwards, we talked as a group for about ten minutes in the parking lot. S [Sandra] and I realized that the next time we do this course we will need to schedule a debrief session with the outside students to directly follow the security lecture. Despite studying criminology for four years and hearing their professors describe what the inside of a jail is like, seeing it is a different beast. They were nervous; perhaps even a little afraid. (Jennifer Kilty 2018-01-09)

The carceral tour became a major point of discussion. The first few joint classes revealed that the initial apprehension the outside students expressed stemmed from the image of prisoners that the security lecture and tour conjured for them (i.e., that they are all dangerous and manipulative), a point that is well documented in the literature on carceral tours (e.g. Piché and Walby 2010). Interestingly, and ironically, the "security lecture" created feelings of insecurity for the outside students. The inside students did a lot to assuage those fears, which allowed us to refocus the carceral tour discussion around what it means to come in to look at

prisoners where they live and what it means to be looked at (Mulvey 2009).

A number of the inside students were upset by the fact that carceral tours are so scripted. We had a long discussion in class about this, with inside students making reference to “fakery” and what it feels like to have people come in to where you live just to look around, often “without acknowledging that we’re here.” Correctional staff direct visitors not to engage with prisoners during the tour (Piché and Walby 2010), despite the fact that they are walking through their residence without permission nor prior consultation. Rachel Fayter, co-author and a former prisoner, who was subjected to many such “tourists,” agrees with critics of carceral tours who assert it is a voyeuristic, dehumanizing practice to observe prisoners like zoo animals (Huckelbury 2009; Minogue 2009; Wacquant 2002). As one of the facilitators documented in her journal:

Prisoners regularly experience a lack of dignity and privacy. This discussion made me think of when we went inside over the Christmas break to recruit students and had to address prisoners housed in the pod in the open space common room while one man stood about 10 feet away shielded only by a half-wall as he showered in plain view of everyone. An everyday experience for the inside students that was shocking to the outside students when we recounted it. (Jennifer Kilty 2018-01-30)

Unequal power relations are inherent within the tour process. In a special issue of the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, Craig Minogue (2009) outlines a consultative process for carceral tours that could shift prisoners’ voices from the margins to the centre; however, we agree with Piché and Walby (2010) that it is not possible to grasp the relational dynamics and complexities of prisoners’ experiences in such a limited time. Even if tours were co-led by prisoners chosen by their peers, it is likely that correctional discourse would continue to frame this experience. For example, despite the fact that a more democratic process is used for some institutional positions, such as the Inmate Committee in Canadian federal penitentiaries where prisoners work as peer advocates, prison authorities still have the final say in terms of any decision-making.³

Having critical discussions about topics like the carceral tour facilitated the development of the empathy and trust among the

students and facilitators that is required for this course to succeed (Graveline 1998; Palmer 2004; Pollack 2014, 2016a). They also enabled us to challenge the perception of and discourse pertaining to prisoners that was advanced by corrections. It is important to note, however, that carceral tours themselves are not necessary to build empathy and trust, as these develop naturally throughout a W2B course due to the experiential nature of the program. Therefore, when students or facilitators are uncomfortable with the tour practice, it should be avoided, especially given that the epistemological limitations of the tour are as numerous as the ethical implications. While recognizing that carceral tours are often an institutional requirement, W2B is collectively opposed to them, which necessitates the development of measures to mitigate the harms they can cause. It is critical to brief outside students prior to the security lecture and tour, and equally important to spend time debriefing this experience following the tour, preferably within a W2B circle format to ensure the inclusion of the voices of prisoners.

Carceral Dynamics

Panoptic surveillance and a confrontational environment had become normalized for the inside students, and we were impressed with how they coped. As the one course facilitator documented in her journal (Jennifer Kilty 2018-01-30), one inside student stated that he responds to antagonisms from guards in a particularly enlightened way: "I will disarm these guys with a smile. They can never get me angry, even when they want me to be pissed. That's my secret." On the contrary, those of us going inside each week were unnerved by the hypervisibility we experienced passing through security at the perimeter gate and again upon entry into the main lobby of the institution. We also walked past the "bubbles" where guards watch the closed-circuit camera footage throughout the building on our way to class and watched as staff constantly walked past the classroom, which had a half-wall of windows along the hallway, meaning we were always visible—"eyes on" (as is the expression inside)—to correctional guards stationed just feet away. This created a kind of "fishbowl" feeling that became a source of empathy and acted as a foundation from which to build some mutual understanding of what it means to live in an environment where you are the object of an unmitigated correctional gaze. This in turn stimulated critical discussions about visibility, privacy, and security.

Interactions with staff were consistently a point of concern because we did not want to do anything to jeopardize the future of this initiative. The pilot project could be discontinued if something went awry. As research demonstrates (Pollack 2016a, 2016b; Pollack and Hutchison 2018), it is imperative to have at least one institutional staff member act as a “champion” for the program. We experienced the importance of this during our champion’s absence in the final weeks of the semester. While all staff members received a memo about the course prior to our first class, having hundreds of employees in a large institution inevitably means that some will forget about or fail to read the memo and that some will express concern about the initiative or respond unsupportively. Without a point person shepherding the process on the inside, we experienced security delays (e.g., on three occasions we were made to wait for an hour at the security gate, which cut our class time down by a third); snide commentary (e.g., “they [the inside students] don’t pay tuition and I am still paying my student loan!”), and misplaced and lost classroom resources (e.g., art and final-project supplies). One journal entry by a course facilitator gives a sense of the gaps in communication and our caution:

When entering the facility today one of the CO’s told us in a friendly and smiling way: “Oh, you are from the Bridges to Walls program.” We all looked at each other and didn’t know how to react. We didn’t even correct him. We couldn’t just laugh at what was a simple mistake because for us it was the symbol of the fact that the main core and message of the program was lost to some staff. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-03-30)

Nonetheless, we were grateful that no lockdowns occurred on the days that we were holding class and that we were never denied entry into the institution.

One point of contention with our champion did emerge: when they sat in, uninvited, for parts of the opening and closing circles in a few of our early classes. This usually only lasted for a few minutes and the circles became more engaged upon their departure. On one occurrence, however, they sat in for a lengthier period of time, which caught us off guard. Since we did not want to confront them in front of the students, and it was impossible to have a private discussion at the time, we said nothing. This staff member then responded to

comments made by the incarcerated students about the lack of programming opportunities and to their frustration that the Ministry is claiming to offer programs and services that they have never had access to.

These unexpected occurrences, in which jail staff enter the W2B classroom, present opportunities for a teachable moment. Sometimes it is necessary to have a circle discussion following this “invasion” into the space, since they created feelings of insecurity, to allow students to debrief about the obvious power imbalance. As the circle is designed to be a safe space, a staff member’s presence can make students feel uncomfortable to openly express their thoughts. While this was a rare occurrence—for the most part we were left alone while in session—it does signal the need for W2B facilitators to actively engage in what we describe as ongoing “boundary work” with staff. Having learned from this experience, we became more upfront about the importance of having closed circles in the future. We also responded more proactively when this staff member asked if they could read some of the inside students’ journal entries. While this request was made out of a sincere interest in how the prisoners were engaging with the course, it would have been completely inappropriate to share journal content with staff. Journal entries not only reflected on course readings, they were often personal in nature, and when we took care to explain this and our need to protect the facilitator-student relationship, the staff member understood. Interpersonal boundary work can be tricky, especially when it is conducted between groups of unequal power relations, but it is often necessary in a climate where privacy is at a minimum and prisoners experience insecurity on a daily basis (Freitas et al. 2014; Pollack 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Pollack and Hutchison 2018). In the final section, we detail the role that emotions played in this class—in terms of course content, as a learning tool, and as a frame of practice.

Part 3: Emotions as a Framework for Learning

We mobilized emotions as a frame of practice and thus as a way to structure class activities, interpersonal dialogue, and engagement. Not only do different practices stimulate emotion, but emotions also act as culturally and contextually specific practices. Scheer (2012, 193) contends that “emotion-as-practice is bound up with and dependent on ‘emotional practices,’ defined here as practices

involving the self (as body and mind), language, material artifacts, the environment, and other people.” This frame was omnipresent in every aspect of the course: reading material, discussion topics, pedagogy, student selection, and the ongoing relationships that were developed.

Walking the Line of Learning from and with Our Emotions

We built the W2B syllabus around the concept of “Othering” in the criminal justice system, and each week we worked as a group to unpack the divisive mentalities that, by creating feelings of insecurity and experiences of exclusion, pit groups in opposition to one another. The class activities, readings, group discussions, and journaling were aimed at deconstructing “the Other” in relation to race, gender, class, and poverty as they are experienced by different groups in their interactions with the criminal justice system and in the community. Students were asked to critically reflect on how they (individually and collectively) engaged in Othering, how Othering works, and what we are trying to protect or defend by Othering. We pushed the students to critically analyze their own emotions regarding how they are actors or subjects of Othering, and sometimes both. As the class urges participants to share knowledge about emotional and sometimes personal issues, we encouraged the students to find alternative and innovative ways to convey those experiences, and the results were powerful. As one professor noted in her journal:

Today, we tried a different way of addressing the difficult topic of segregation. We already knew that most inside students had experienced time in the hole and were eager to talk about it. We divided them into small groups and asked them to co-create a tableau, a frozen image using their bodies to represent “segregation.” It was eye opening to see how the three different groups physically expressed three different experiences of segregation. Even though we followed the exercise with a circle discussion, I am sure it is the visual images they created and experienced in their bodies that will stay in everybody’s mind for a long time.
(Sandra Lehalle 2018-03-27)

Sometimes we unexpectedly learned directly from the emotions revealed in circle:

Today, two weeks before the end of class, one of the most serious and quiet students suddenly opened up about how the topic of the week (touching on community belonging and nationality) triggered thoughts about his past and present struggle with Canadian institutions (from child services to immigration and penal authorities). This was a difficult and powerful moment for him to open up to the group, to allow himself to be emotional and to express in a safe space a relevant and well-articulated critical analysis of his experiences as they related to the course content. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-03-27)

Without transforming this student's suffering into an academic gain, it is fair to say that this moment was transformative for many of us. As one student recounted in their journal, sharing this particular moment was a gift:

As a criminologist, I had learn[ed] about these issues prior to taking W2B but no amount of reading, writing, documentary viewing or even guest speakers are as powerful as getting to know someone deeply and hearing their truth. This experience is felt deep within your heart and leaves a mark on your soul and spirit. The impact of these testimonies and sharing is not easily neglected or "shrugged off." Opening up and seeing someone else open up cannot be translated into written or spoken words but will remain with me far beyond any other course or reading I have experienced. (Student journal, n.d.)

Emotions truly became a valued tool as we learned from the emotions of others and from critical self-reflection. Students and facilitators shared knowledge on the process of Othering in past and present Canadian history, which helped us to develop a deeper understanding of how we mobilize our own privilege—consciously or not—to cast certain groups as different or dangerous. While this course was never about holding hands and expressing emotion in a cathartic sense, it was a safe place to bring our whole selves, including our emotions, as sources of knowledge because processes of Othering are produced by, and result in, strong emotional reactions. Consequently, emotions were always welcomed and addressed in class, leading us through what can certainly be qualified as an emotional journey.

Our Collective Emotional Journey

There was a collectively felt emotional arc over the course for the whole semester. At the beginning of the course everyone was somewhat insecure, apprehensive, and anxious about what they could expect from each other and what was expected of them within the class. For the facilitators, every aspect of the course was new and challenging. Inside students were particularly nervous about their academic potential and their ability to keep up with the university-level readings and discussions, while outside students were apprehensive about what they would bring to the table given that they had academic knowledge about criminal justice but little to no experiential knowledge of criminalization:

We thought we were all going to be different. We were all fearful and anxious about this course. (Final project time capsule, n.d.)

I had my doubts, I felt like it was going to be some really conservative, judgemental students. (Inside student course evaluation, n.d.)

Pollack (2014, 294) uses Butler's (2006) notion of "rattling" or shaking things up to describe the important political dimension of W2B courses—namely the "reconstitution of incarcerated women (and men) as knowers, as university students rather than 'offenders' and 'inmates.'" We found that the classroom discussions "rattled" a number of the assumptions upon which insecurity—as well as cultural and socio-political attempts to exclude particular groups—rests. Despite their apprehensions, students were excited to participate in this unique learning opportunity. As the semester progressed emotions shifted to exhibit a growing sense of compassion, empathy, and respect for one another that was gleaned from ongoing efforts to promote active listening and shared meaning-making that was devoid of judgment and attempts to try to "fix" things for or provide advice to one another (Palmer 2004)—something the group discussed and committed to in the first week. The class developed a comfortable and supportive dynamic—a sense of cohesion and a care ethic that was wrought from this supportive listening approach. The facilitators were careful to steer students toward meaningful and respectful relationship development within the context of the course. For example, we went on a first name basis only and prohibited the students from

sharing their personal contact information (something the institution also requires).

As the end of the semester loomed, feelings of sadness became evident and the group expressed a sense of loss that we were coming to the end of our weekly time together. This is a consistent experience across W2B classes. Notably, three of the inside students were transferred to different institutions two to three weeks before the class ended because they were sentenced and moved to serve their remaining period of incarceration in another institution. Their departure weighed heavily on the group, and as a symbolic reminder of their importance to the classroom dynamic, we kept three empty chairs in all of our future circles. The effects were noted in this journal entry:

Today, group C was missing two inside students and it was obvious that the two outside students from the group were affected. They looked at their project and they didn't have the drive and joy to work on it the way they did in previous weeks. I realized that this happened a few weeks ago in group A when one inside student was in court and missed class. Only this time, for group C, it is a different feeling as they realized that they might never see or hear from their group partners again. Not even a chance to say goodbye after sharing so much. (Sandra Lehalle 2018-04-03)

The professors provided all of the course material to these students prior to their departure, and two of the three mailed in their final essays and journals to finish the class and earn their certificate of completion. This shows that an exceptional level of commitment was fostered through the interpersonal connections the group built over the semester. The example also supports findings in the existing literature that document the importance and value of prison education for incarcerated students (Duguid 1997, 2000; Fayter 2016; Freitas, et al. 2014; Pollack 2016b).

*The Difficult Task of Caring for the Emotions of the Group:
From Initial Screening to After Care*

The screening process to select the university students we would admit into the course involved a written application and interview to identify possible concerns that could be detrimental to the class or to student well-being. We asked prospective students why they were interested in taking this particular course, how they anticipated

responding to tension or discomfort, how they anticipated reacting to students sharing personal and possibly distressing experiences, and what they expected to gain from the mixed-class dynamic. Despite our efforts, we quickly realized that, because the course requires participants to bring their whole selves into the learning process, there was no way to anticipate what students would feel safe to share in a particular moment or how they would feel about specific issues discussed in class. As such, it is imperative that facilitators are well trained and prepared to guide the group through what can be an emotional learning journey.

The regularity of the journal writing exercise⁴ not only provided an ongoing account of each student's thoughts about the course material but also their personal thoughts and emotions about the issues we were discussing and how they were coping. This became one of the primary mechanisms for the facilitators to check in on student well-being. It is notable that students made multiple personal "reveals" in class and even more so in their journals about issues that they did not disclose during the interviews. Furthermore, the journals allowed the facilitators to witness the introspective ways in which the students were paying attention to one another's remarks. Many students included their reactions to comments made in circle and noted concerns about other students in their journal entries. Students who took responsibility for the emotional well-being of the group in this way demonstrated an investment in the learning community and shared with course facilitators the responsibility of managing the emotions of fellow students.

The fact that the students did not anticipate how this course might elicit certain feelings and memories demonstrates that facilitating and participating in a W2B course is a work-in progress. The inside and outside students who revealed difficult personal histories had a lot to process emotionally over the semester (and beyond) and they found that the course assisted in this regard, pushing them to critically reassess their views of past experiences and challenging them to find compassion for people they had strained relationships with. When certain outside students disclosed feeling some emotional distress, we encouraged them to connect with campus counselling services, and two did. It was a fine line between prying into the students' personal lives and checking in to see if they were okay, but it was important to follow up with and support our students outside of class time. We ensured flexible availability

so they did not have to wait to speak with us and organized a WhatsApp chat group so that the students could easily reach us and the group by chat or phone.

Commitment to supporting students was also why we co-taught the course. Not only did having two professors permit them to debrief and consult one another, it ensured that there were two people observing students, looking for any signs of triggering or distress; and it created a built-in sounding board and support system for the two facilitators/professors who met and spoke with each other multiple times each week. Unfortunately, limited access to the inside students prevented us from offering them the same level of support as outside students we could meet on campus. We could only hold individual meetings to check in with each of the inside students and to discuss their work in private over the mid-semester reading break and at the end of the semester.

Having the emotional safety net of co-teaching the pilot course was a privilege, as the university refused our request to continue the practice due to the financial cost. Although we now teach the course separately, the Department of Criminology approved our request to have a teaching assistant help students with readings and assignments. The university's decision to prohibit us from co-teaching is in line with the austerity measures that are taking place across universities in Canada (see Turk 2000, 2008) and abroad (Cheyfitz 2009). Characteristics of post-secondary educational austerity measures include greater bureaucratic oversight; corporate investment and governance; funding cuts; reliance upon precarious contract positions over the long-term investment in full-time tenure track professors; increased classroom sizes; and streamlined learning objectives (Cheyfitz 2009; Turk 2000, 2008). These hallmarks of the neo-liberal corporate university create significant barriers to trying to engage innovative pedagogical styles and initiatives that require specialized resources. While securing external funding can help to support these initiatives, the ethical pedagogue must consider where these funds are coming from. For example, our university approached us about securing funding from a prison catering-service provider that has been widely critiqued for offering poor quality food to prisoners in Canada (see CPEP 2016), which we rejected.

Conclusion: Education as a Way of Moving Beyond Insecurity and Exclusion

We found being involved in W2B to be a transformative teaching and learning experience for a number of reasons. The collaborative nature of the course design situates the professor as a facilitator in the development of critical thinking skills and reflexive thought, enabling students and professors to challenge their own normative assumptions, rather than being the authority and educator “with all the answers.” The co-teaching model created a built-in mechanism of support and collaboration for the professors. Our decision to discuss the emotional nature of teaching and learning in a correctional environment facilitated the group’s ability to create a safe space where everyone felt comfortable to speak their truth without fear of judgment. Establishing a learning environment built on trust, an ethic of care, and the development of sensitive relationships among participants led to shared experiences of meaning-making and feelings of security and inclusion while in an oppressive prison setting. These transformative qualities were made possible largely by the circle pedagogy that is the foundation of the W2B format (Fayter 2016; Graveline 1998):

While I went into this course feeling uncertain about “having a voice” that was worth being heard[, w]hat I found instead was that it was not a voice I needed to find but a deeper ability to listen. (Student journal, n.d.)

It has been very helpful to me and [I] believe [to] the others as well. I related to a lot of the readings. I have a better understanding of how society sees me as an incarcerated person, which will help me upon my release to break down potential walls with non-incarcerated people, such as my kids. This course has opened my eyes to a whole new understanding, meaning of life as a whole. It actually has given me hope to be accepted back into society as a normal person and no longer a number. (Student evaluation, n.d.)

The course content and circle pedagogy were important mechanisms to move beyond exclusionary academic practices, although the personal impact the course had on all of the participants is

insufficient in terms of transforming structural practices of exclusion and marginalization. This is why we feel it is critical to create an Ottawa W2B Alumni Collective. This will allow us to continue to communicate as a group, arranging lunches and maintaining the connection that is an important part of building a community-based collective (Freitas et al. 2014; Pollack 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Members of the alumni collective contact inside students through letters and mailing them literature to read. We cannot stress enough the value of developing a W2B collective: it would facilitate a way to maintain rather than abruptly end contact—which was distressing for some students. Collectives hold much reintegrative and advocacy potential (Pollack 2014, 2016a, 2016b), because they can be rooted in the supportive and non-judgmental interpersonal connections that are fostered in class. They are, quite significantly, the continuation of the bridge from the jail to the community that began to be constructed in the first class.

Finally, it is worth commenting on how this initiative has come to fit within the broader criminology program at the University of Ottawa, which, as this collection deftly reflects, has long been committed to the principles of political and community advocacy and civic engagement. To help our colleagues better understand the importance and structure of these courses, two of the co-authors (Kilty and LeHalle) produced an annual report in April 2019 that outlined the course's successes and the concerns they have after having taught the course three times (once as co-facilitators and once each as sole facilitators). This report, which was also shared with management at the detention centre, seemed to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of this initiative among the correctional administrators, as well as our colleagues who, like the participating students, expressed a heightened commitment to critical criminological praxis. Demonstrating this support, the department voted to ensure that W2B facilitators would have a teaching assistant, despite the small number of students in each class. This vote to alter departmental resource allocation was in response to the University of Ottawa's decision to deny us full teaching credits should we co-teach the course again in future. Our colleagues' acknowledged the importance and value of critical perspectives and pedagogy as praxis by nominating two of us (Kilty and LeHalle) for the Faculty of Social Sciences Excellence in Teaching Award, which the faculty bestowed upon us in April 2019. It is also notable that, as more students learn about this initiative, we have seen

a significant increase in the number of applicants—both inside and outside students. This illustrates how W2B opportunities can heighten student commitment to critical perspectives and engaged pedagogical practices that strive to foster inclusion.

Notes

- 1 The professors asked the students for permission to quote their journal entries once the grades for the course and anonymous course evaluations were finalized. All gave their consent to do so.
- 2 Reflexive journal entries, in which the professors documented their thoughts and feelings each week after returning home from class.
- 3 The Inmate Committee is responsible for “making recommendations to the Institutional Head on decisions affecting the inmate population, except decisions relating to security matters” (CSC 2008).
- 4 A significant percentage of the course evaluation consisted of reflexive journaling, with seven entries totaling 35 percent of the final grade.

Bibliography

- Balfour, Gillian, and Elizabeth Comack, eds. 2014. *Criminalizing Women: Gender and (In)justice in Neo-Liberal Times*, 2nd edition. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Butin, Gitte Wernaa. 2013. “Teaching Itself: A Philosophical Exploration of Inside-Out Pedagogy.” In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 93–102. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Butler, Judith. 2006[1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butz, David, and Kathryn Besio. 2009. “Autoethnography.” *Geography Compass* 3 (5): 1660–74.
- Cheyfitz, Eric. 2009. “The Corporate University, Academic Freedom, and American Exceptionalism.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108 (4): 701–22.
- Cosman, J. W. 1981. “Penitentiary Education in Canada.” In *On Prison Education*, edited by Lucien Morin, 34–42. Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre.
- Cowan, David A., and Kathy M. Beard Adams. 2008. “Talking Circles, Leadership Competencies and Inclusive Learning: Expanding the Frame of Business Education.” *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 19 (2–3): 135–65.

- CPEP (Criminalization and Punishment Education Project). 2016. "End Food Privatization at OCDC." OCDC Campaign. May 13, 2016. YouTube video, 00:3:25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE1bS51JOBM>.
- CSC (Correctional Service Canada). 2008. "Inmate Committees: Responsibilities." In *Commissioner's Directive 083* online. Last modified September 26, 2008. <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/policy-and-legislation/083-cd-eng.shtml>.
- Davis, Simone Weil. 2013. "Beyond Replication: Inside-Out in Canada." In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Weil Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 257–65. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Davis, Simone Weil, and Barbara Roswell. 2013. "Introduction—Radical Reciprocity: Civic Engagement from Inside Out." In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Weil Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 1–12. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Duguid, Stephen. 1997. "Cognitive Dissidents Bite the Dust: The Demise of University Education in Canada's Prisons." *Journal of Correctional Education* 48 (2): 56–68.
- . 2000. *Can Prisons Work? The Prisoner as Object and Subject in Modern Corrections*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Faith, Karlene. 1993. *Unruly Women: The Politics of Confinement and Resistance*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers.
- Fayter, Rachel. 2016. "Social Justice Praxis within the Walls to Bridges Program: Pedagogy of Oppressed Federally Sentenced Women." *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* 25 (2): 56–71.
- Follett, Kayla, and Jessie Rodger. 2013. "Trusting the Process: Growing and Liberating Self-Reflective Capacities Behind Prison Walls." In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Weil Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 131–39. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Freire, Paulo. 2003. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Freitas, Monica, Bonnie McAuley, and Nyki Kish. 2014. "Experiencing the Inside-Out Program in a Maximum-Security Prison." In *Criminalizing Women: Gender and (In)justice in Neo-Liberal Times*, edited by Gillian Balfour and Elizabeth Comack, 303–13. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Graveline, Fyre Jean. 1998. *Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Hart, Michael. 2002. "Deepening Our Understanding: Talking with Conductors of Sharing Circles." In *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An*

- Aboriginal Approach to Helping*, 61–103. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Huckelbury, Charles. 2009. "Tour de farce." *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* 18 (1–2): 126–28.
- Inside-Out Prison-Exchange Program. 2019. "Frequently Asked Questions" online. www.insideoutcenter.org/FAQs.html.
- Minogue, Craig. 2009. "The Engaged Specific Intellectual: Resisting Unethical Prison Tourism and the Hubris of the Objectifying Modality of the Universal Intellectual." *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* 18 (1–2): 129–42.
- Mulvey, Laura. 2009. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O'Sullivan, Edmund V., Amish Morrell, and Mary Ann O'Connor. 2002. "Introduction." In *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning: Essays on Theory and Praxis*, edited by Edmund V. O'Connor, Amish Morrell, and Mary Ann O'Connor, 1–12. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Palmer, Parker. 2004. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Perry, Paul. 2013. "Death of a Street-Gang Warrior." In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Weil Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 35–48. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Piché, Justin, and Kevin Walby. 2010. "Problematizing Carceral Tours." *British Journal of Criminology* 50 (3): 570–81.
- Pollack, Shoshana. 2014. "Rattling Assumptions and Building Bridges: Community-Engaged Education and Action in a Women's Prison." In *Criminalizing Women: Gender and (In)justice in Neo-Liberal Times*, edited by Gillian Balfour and Elizabeth Comack, 290–302. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- . 2016a. "Building Bridges: Experiential and Integrative Learning in a Canadian Women's Prison." *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 36 (5): 503–18.
- . 2016b. *Walls to Bridges: Report on the Impact on Students*. Waterloo: Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and the Office of Research Services at Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Pollack, Shoshana, and Jessica Hutchison. 2018. *Impact of Walls to Bridges Classes on Correctional Facilities*. Waterloo: Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and the Office of Research Services at Wilfrid Laurier University.

- Scheer, Monique. 2012. "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion." *History and Theory* 51: 193–220.
- Turenne, Ella. 2013. "Breaking through the 'isms.'" In *Turning Teaching Inside Out: A Pedagogy of Transformation for Community-Based Education*, edited by Simone Weil Davis and Barbara Sherr Roswell, 121–30. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Turk, James. 2000. *Corporate Campus: Commercialization and the Dangers to Canada's Colleges and Universities*. Toronto: J. Lorimer & Co.
- . 2008. *Universities at Risk: Politics, Special Interests, and Corporatization Threaten Academic Integrity*. Toronto: J. Lorimer & Co.
- Wacquant, L. 2002. "The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration." *Ethnography* 3 (4): 371–97.
- W2B (Walls to Bridges). 2016. *Training Manual for the Walls to Bridges Annual Instructor Training*. Kitchener: Walls to Bridges Collective.
- Yates, Mark T., and Richard D. Lakes. 2010. "After Pell Grants: The Neoliberal Assault on Prisoners." *Policy Futures in Education* 8 (1): 61–70.