Learning to Accompany Through a Self-Study of Critical Global-Citizenship Engagement

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ABSTRACT: Immersed in making sense of a global-citizenship experience while studying community-university engaged research, I happened upon the field of global-citizenship education. In 2010-2011, I lived in East Jerusalem for three months, accompanying Palestinians and Israelis who sought and continue to seek a just and peaceful end to the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestine. As a researcher/educator with a longtime interest in the concept of meaning-making, I struggle to make sense of my experiences, both cognitively and emotionally. Through a phenomenological self-study, I uncovered knowledge about myself as a learner in a global-citizenship experience. I identified five voices within my ecumenical-accompanier (EA) identity and now I am integrating them into my facilitation of lifelong learning. These voices are lyrical, ironic, relational, activist, and reflective. The voices run through four assertions about my learning: first-hand experience is essential; I use various meaning-making tools; accompanying learners is inherently relational; and I continue to ‘unpack’ meaning in the post-return home. My voices and assertions now inform my facilitation of learning about community-university engaged research. With this newly explicit knowledge, I feel better able to accompany learners. I realize the potential for describing more explicitly in workshops, courses, and experiential learning that I have had a transformative experience. I see the potential to model my own critical global-citizenship engagement as a way to create compassionate spaces for lifelong learners as they get involved in the global and local issues of the 21st century.

Introduction

Immersed in making sense of a global-citizenship experience while studying community-university engaged research, I happened upon the field of global-citizenship education. In 2010-2011, I lived in East Jerusalem for three months, accompanying Palestinians and Israelis who sought and continue to seek a just and peaceful end to the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestine. I thank the many who have accompanied me on this journey.
Palestine. As a researcher/educator with a longtime interest in the concept of meaning-making about identity, I struggled to make sense of my experiences, both cognitively and emotionally. Much of the direct and structural violence (Zaru, 2008) that I witnessed still lies ‘beneath the surface’ of my understanding, as tacit knowledge. Upon my return to Canada, I found myself looking at people as global citizens with rich life experiences. As a facilitator of lifelong learning about community-university engaged research, I regard myself as a citizen with a transformative global experience, bringing my own definition/meaning to the term, global citizen.

Until recently, I was unaware of transdisciplinary global-citizenship education (GCE). Once I returned from East Jerusalem and started to view my experiences through a scholarly lens, the 2011 abstracts call for an Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity conference resonated deeply. As I familiarized myself with the field (e.g., Shultz, Abdi, & Richardson, 2011) and how it has focused on the need to teach post-secondary students about global citizenship, I wondered how we might further educate ourselves, as facilitators of that learning. Some research exists regarding GCE and teacher education (e.g., Bottery, 2006; McCully, 2006; Syed, 2011) and collective institutional reflection (e.g., Shultz, 2011). Other points of reference come from those who may not be familiar with the term, global citizenship, yet study critical engagement internationally (e.g., Ward, 2010). What has been and can be learned through self-study, to inform facilitation of learning about global citizenship?

I lived in East Jerusalem as an ecumenical accompanier (EA) with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. Since 2002, EAs have “monitor[ed] and report[ed] human rights abuses and support[ed] Palestinians and Israelis working together for peace” (www.eappi.org). Upon return to home societies, EAs raise awareness about and respect for international law and United Nations resolutions, which are being violated in the occupation of Palestine. Through methodical reflection and analysis of the content of my EA web log or blog, I identified five voices within my EA identity: lyrical, ironic, relational, activist, and reflective voices. In this paper, I describe how I have become aware of them, and how I could use them as I facilitate learning about community-university research to achieve social justice. Compassion guides my practice as I re-imagine facilitation as accompaniment. I invite GCE facilitators to consider self-study research as a way to enhance awareness about how to engage lifelong learners in their critical responses to pressing issues in global and local society in the 21st century.

Focus of this Paper

I study community-university engaged research (e.g., participatory action research), or more broadly, critical engagement. The study of critical engagement is defined as research that focuses on understanding how committed researchers, service providers, policy makers, and interested citizens gather “to share … knowledge and learn with those who struggle for social justice, and to collaborate … respectfully and responsibly for the purpose of improving life” (Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2006, pp. xiii, 257-258). I perceive that global citizenship is a type of critical engagement, when the former is conceptualized in terms of shared responsibility for all humans and nature, and with a vision for a “just world” (Shultz & Jorgenson, 2008). Through this paper, I use the term, critical global-citizenship engagement, to refer to an interrelated area of research.
Discussions have been underway for over a decade about whether post-secondary faculty are prepared to facilitate teachers’ learning about “multicultural and global education” and what methods are used (Merryfield, 2000; Carson & Johnston, 2000; Conklin, 2008). In the GCE literature, teachers are called upon to serve as role models to “motivate and inspire” students (Syed, 2011, p. 212). This modeling requires a high level of consistency between the content of what is being taught and how it is facilitated. To aspire to and maintain this consistency requires some self-knowing, which can be hard work. In addition, creating spaces for learners to grapple with contentious issues can be emotionally challenging (Chickering, 2008) for facilitator-learner relationships, as the parties involved might not understand the full responsibilities all at once (Guimaraes-Iosif, 2011). Turning to a “pedagogy of compassion” (Carson & Johnston, 2000), to be wholly present in learning relationships, may be one direction in which to advance this area of research in critical engagement including GCE. In this paper, I consider how self-study of my global-citizenship experience is a step toward adopting this pedagogy.

**Purpose of the Study**

With increased discussion among critically engaged scholars about the issue of post-secondary institutions having a moral obligation to respond to societal issues (Fear et al., 2006), I suggest that facilitators of learning about critical engagement reflect on how we are participating as citizens. Then, we might ask: how do we facilitate adults’ abilities to understand mutual responsibility in knowledge-creating and sharing partnerships, locally and globally? Awareness about justice issues is one thing; shared responsibility to act is another, as is described in the GCE literature (Davies, 2006; Guimaraes-Iosif, 2011; Jorgenson & Shultz, 2012).

I have a responsibility to make intentional and informed use of my voice(s) as a global citizen, an individual in my local community, and as a scholar. In this study, I ask: How are my experiences as an ecumenical accompanier shaping me, my facilitation of lifelong learning, and my study of critical engagement? Through a phenomenological self-study (e.g., Brown & Duke, 2006; Edmonds, 2010), I made explicit my understanding of my global-citizenship experience, through various lenses - not just as a feminist researcher/educator (thinking in her head) but also as a whole person (with emotions) who cares about social justice, human rights, and Canadian complicity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The purpose of this self-study is to uncover my tacit understanding of that wholeness and to consider how to apply that now-explicit insight to my facilitation practice.

**Significance of the Study**

In my practice, I introduce diverse adults to community-university engaged research and hope that they will share what they know with their research partners. After my global-citizenship experiences of injustice, I realized that I could serve as a role model in my practice, as I ‘listen for the truths and values at the heart’ of my identities (Chickering, 2008, p. 90). How do I access my tacit knowledge to be able to apply it in facilitating learning about critical engagement?

The significance of this study is that it is an example of self-study by a researcher/educator who seeks to integrate her experiences into the facilitation of lifelong learning about critical engagement. The study explores how a facilitator’s self-knowledge may inform the practice of “a pedagogy of compassion” (Carson & Johnston, 2000). Experiencing new and differing perspectives
about global issues may threaten our worldviews as learners, causing us to shut down. Choosing to study how we react, cognitively and emotionally, in these situations can enhance our understanding, helping us to live compassionately as global citizens and facilitators of learning. Seeking community, I invite self-study among other researcher/educators so that those who introduce adult learners to critical engagement have resources upon which to draw.

Framework for the Study

Exploring Explicit Self-Knowledge

By “giving ourselves to others”, we learn about ourselves (Fear et al., 2006, p. 296), at least at a tacit or implicit, unarticulated level. In choosing to accompany Israelis and Palestinians who are seeking a just peace, I shared part of my life. I know that I have learned a great deal, and yet, I feel as though I am learning how to learn, again, as I try to make sense of what I experienced in East Jerusalem. Here is what I know in an explicit way. I am a researcher/educator with a PhD in human ecology, working in the context of a local community-university partnership. My responsibility is the design and implementation of workshops, graduate courses, and experiential learning about community-university engaged research. To inform my facilitation, I study relational ways of making meaning (e.g., through dialogue). I facilitate in ways that rely on learners’ interactions, conceptualizing myself as a learner, too (Vella, 2008).

I support social justice. As ecumenical accompaniers (EAs), we live as internationals, from across faith-based and secular backgrounds, alongside Palestinians and Israelis amid their non-violent actions to achieve a just peace. For three months, I looked through the perspectives of diverse groups of people living under a particular oppression in the Middle East. I witnessed direct and structural violence (Zaru, 2008). The term, direct violence, describes the type of destructive activities that are profiled in news headlines (e.g., shootings; home demolitions). Structural violence refers to ongoing, systemic policies and practices that undermine the well-being of individuals, families, communities, societies, and nature (e.g., denying freedom of movement through a permit system; preventing access to water, a human right, through economic and political actions). Personally, I was yelled at, detained, physically searched, and interrogated. I described what I was experiencing on my blog, which served as a communication tool with friends, family, colleagues, and interested readers in Canada, Palestine, Israel, England, and the United States.

Trying to Voice Meaning

When I returned to Canada, I was asked by many about how I had been changed by the experience. My answer, “I don’t know”, did not satisfy me. In response to institutional support for my leave of absence from work, I agreed to study my EA experiences with a critical-engagement lens. As a result, I learned about self-study in teacher education. My self-study is helping me to learn the meaning of my experience, embedded in my poems such as this one from February 2011 after a visit to Hebron (occupied West Bank). The following is an excerpt:

One woman called out
“Shame on you!!”
Why?
Who do you see within this [Ecumenical-Accompaniment] vest?
Within this skin?
What do you see?
What label?
Me?

... I am guessing that you have more layers than this surface.
I can feel them. And the fear. And your shock.
Can you feel my shock?
Are you feeling a kind of oppressive pressure-like nausea, too?
Your accent sounds North-American, like mine perhaps...
What is your name...
My name is Sherry Ann...
I am a visitor here, too... who cares...
Perhaps, we will meet again...
Perhaps, we might find ourselves in a discussion about this place...
I hope that you might see me, then... I hope that I will be allowed to see and hear more
of your layers...
Until then...
Shalom
Assalaamu alaykum
Peace be with you.

Reading this poem makes me feel, again, the shock of that moment. Through my self-study, I
learned that I used my lyrical voice when I wrote that poem to express the emotional intensity of
that interaction. I have become aware of this voice, an artistic perspective that can carry emotional
dimensions. Since returning to Canada, I realize that I have been using this voice in my facilitation
of graduate classes (e.g., sharing prose-poetry to open a talking circle).

Uncovering Implicit Self-Knowledge and Five Voices

To understand how I was shaped by this and other moments as an ecumenical accompanier
(EA), I conducted a phenomenological self-study. This form of qualitative inquiry has two
dimensions. First, on the phenomenological side, the research is “a look at lived experience”
(Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 70). I regard phenomenology as an opportunity to study and
describe essence in rich detail relative to context (Edmonds, 2010; Groenewald, 2004). A
phenomenological approach helped me to study what I experienced, anew, as “the investigation of
experience as lived rather than conceptualized” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 73). By uncovering
assumptions and presuppositions, I also uncovered underlying cognitive and emotional dimensions
of my EA life.

Second, in terms of self-study, this work is “a look at self in action” (Pinnegar & Hamilton,
2009, p. 70). Through this self-study, I wished to become systematically aware of tacit knowledge
or of how I lived as an EA and learner. I studied what I wrote during my experiences and my
reflections about my experiences. I situated this content in various contexts of my accompaniment:
the local and regional socio-structural, cultural, historical, political, geographical, economic, and
aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle”
(p. 20). Each time that I prepare to share what I am learning through this self-study, I develop my understanding further (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Through a blending of phenomenology and self-study, researchers seek to challenge conventions, are in dialogue (through internal reflection and with other learners/practitioners), and make assertions based on the uncovered knowledge to inform action (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

Through this phenomenological self-study, I have learned that my meaning making has at least five types of voices or perspectives within my ecumenical-accompanier (EA) identity. My voices include:

- A lyrical voice that links conceptual, artistic, and emotional dimensions.
- A surprising (to me), ironic voice (with some darkness and bitterness).
- An activist’s voice revealing my social-justice sensibility.
- A relational voice that shares information with perceived readers.
- A reflective voice that observes my own lifelong learning.

These voices provide insight into my multiple selves, respectively as artist, researcher/educator, activist, and social, reflective being. This self-study has provided me with an opportunity to move into a new phase of self-understanding, amid immersion in the competing narratives of Israel and Palestine. Who wants to be challenged cognitively and emotionally to understand ongoing conflicts? Carson and Johnston (2000) wrote that, “The self resists dangerous knowledge, because it threatens the imagined coherence of the self” (p. 80). Humans wish to protect a self-concept from such challenges (Mead, 1934). However, self-study was an opportunity to consider how my multiple voices co-existed in East Jerusalem and again, back home in Canada (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

In contrast to my lyrical or poetic voice, my ironic voice reveals my perception of double-meanings, harsh juxtapositions, and bitter twists in history. For example, as Canadians engaging in national and global debate about the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestine, we need to be prepared to understand how the Canadian pass-and-permit system (restricting the freedom of movement of Aboriginal peoples) was a point of reference for the South-African apartheid system. Indirectly, Canada is complicit in Palestinian suffering. Regarding such connections, I see potential to engage Canadians in learning about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Since my return to Canada, I have been using my activist’s voice, speaking with the general public and special interest groups. I continue to post on my blog and realize that new readers continue to find my blog. In these ways, I participate in civil-society discussion at a critical time in Canada; various groups are debating how to exert pressure on the Israeli government (e.g., through boycott, divestment, and sanctions) for violations of international law (e.g., Fourth Geneva Convention). Self-study enabled me to realise that I have the voice of an activist and that I have been oriented this way for much of my life. Only in recent years have I felt empowered to act on my social-justice sensibility.
I see my relational voice in my blog as I write for readers, particularly Canadian ‘followers’ and ecumenical accompaniers (EAs), Israelis, and Palestinians with whom I am now connected. With this voice, I describe human suffering as the occupation separates Israelis and Palestinians from each other and leads to conflict within both societies.

Through my reflective voice in my blog, I realized that while I set out to accompany others, I was being accompanied in East Jerusalem. Palestinians and Israelis showed incredible patience for the ongoing, three-month rotation of ecumenical accompaniers (EAs) from around the world. Repeatedly, those living amid the occupation showed us compassion as we struggled to make sense of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its implications not only for local people but also for the Middle East, the east and west, the global south and global north. Through self-study, I am reflecting on how my global-citizenship experience has not been only about Palestine and Israel but that it is also nudging me to critique my own country of Canada (Davies, 2006). I realize that I write as a researcher/educator who seeks to be a partner, not an ‘expert’ isolated from society in ‘the ivory tower’. All of these voices are part of me, enabling me to “critique” responses to global issues (Fear et al., 2006).

Method

As a human ecologist, I assume that people live in interdependent relationships with various contexts; in addition, I have an explicit value orientation in that I care about people’s quality of life (Westney, Brabble, & Edwards, 1988). I bring a critical-constructivist worldview to research. From my perspective, multiple realities co-exist and people co-construct knowledge relative to explicit and implicit systems of shared beliefs, pre-existing knowledge about phenomena, and the seekers who are involved (Guba, 1990). I relate to phenomena in an iterative manner, by working back and forth reflecting on personal and shared understandings of a phenomenon and relative to my historical and societal contexts (Palmer, 1969). I identify with an emerging theory of knowledge for the scholarship of engagement as characterized by Ward (2010). She argues that this new epistemology:

has moved beyond the borders of the disciplines and even beyond the universities where what is called knowledge territory is shared with other knowledge professionals (Bjarnason, et al, 2001). These knowledge professionals are practitioners, researchers, consultants, legislators, and think tanks. The new epistemology requires that pursuit of knowledge takes place in the context of its application. It also requires that the epistemology is grounded in and driven by practice, is participatory and inclusive of community in the multidirectional and multidimensional ways Lynton speaks of, and is connected to a sense of social responsibility and the desire for positive social change (Lynton, 1992, 1995a; Sullivan as cited in Ehrlich, 2000; Fear et al., 2006). (Ward, 2010, pp. 49-50)

Given this way of thinking, I chose phenomenological self-study to enhance my understanding of my lived experience to inform practice of the facilitation of lifelong learners about critical engagement. I wished to enhance my understanding of the essence of being an ecumenical accompanier in East Jerusalem in 2010-2011. Further, I sought to learn how that lived experience was shaping: (i) my self-understanding; and (ii) my work as a researcher/educator.
For data, I turned to the text that I posted on my blog while living in East Jerusalem and after I returned home. In addition, I interviewed myself (winter 2012) and created theoretical memos throughout the study. My data set included: my blog postings from November 2010 to February 2012, my written responses to the interview questions, and my theoretical memos. Being a self-study, the data came from my writing.

To make sense of the data, I worked with the concept of explicitation. In seeking to study the essence of a phenomenon, researchers study the parts of the phenomenon relative to the whole phenomenon (Hycner, 1999, citing Georgi, 1975). Following Groenewald’s (2004) lead, I proceeded through a basic explicitation process. First, I read through all of the data to develop a holistic impression of the data set. At this stage, interpretation begins with attention to words and tone (Caelli, 2001). Presuppositions are suspended (Groenewald, 2004) so as to work “with an openness to whatever meanings emerge[d]” (Hycner, 1999, p. 144). The intention is “to see the phenomenon anew as it was experienced” (Caelli, 2001, p. 276). Second, for each of the blog postings, the interview responses, and the theoretical memos, I highlighted general and then relevant units of meaning that related to understanding my lived experience as an ecumenical accompanier and how that informs my facilitation of lifelong learners about critical engagement (Hycner, 1999). Third, working iteratively across the three parts of data and with the list of units, I sought to identify clusters of meaning. In turn, working with these clusters, I identified “significant topics” (Groenewald, 2004, citing Sadala & Adorno, 2001). Fourth, I summarized separately: (a) the blog postings and (b) the interview. I asked myself whether I had captured the essence of my postings and interview: Were these summaries valid? Did they fit with my experience of this phenomenon? Finally, I looked for general and unique themes across the postings and the interview. I wrote a composite summary to include all of the themes set within the context of the whole. This required some initial theorizing in the form of assertions in terms of self-study, critical engagement, and the facilitation of lifelong learning.

**Summary of Insights from the Self-Study**

Relative to understanding my lived experience as an ecumenical accompanier and how that informs my facilitation of learning about critical engagement, I gained insight into how I processed difficult experiences and emotions through my blog. My postings include a mixture of:

- Direct dialogue with readers with ways for them to learn more and take action (my relational voice);
- Descriptive text regarding the situations, people, and places that I encountered (my relational voice);
- The voices of Palestinians and Israelis living under and with occupation (my relational voice);
- My “experiential” poetry that appears when I have been intensely impacted by an experience (my lyrical voice);
• An underlying discourse in the blog, created in terms of physical embodiment and the concept of place (my lyrical voice);

• Commentary with a particular thread of irony and double-meaning, sometimes connected with juxtapositions that I experienced (my ironic voice);

• Many questions, as much for me as for my readers (my reflective and activist voices).

Overall, the blog content carries two types of messages. On the one hand, the writing is explicit and addressed to Canadians. In effect, I urged: “Please see yourselves in the humanity of these experiences and act in support of a just peace and the ending of this occupation of the Palestinian territories and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem”. On the other hand, the blog carries an implicit message: “I am a woman who is highly sensitive to the world; however, I am not naïve, retiring, or simply an observer. Through my prose, poetry, and photographs, I ask that you read this blog and let the pain of this unjust humanitarian crisis touch you, relative to your own contexts and life experiences”.

Presenting Assertions Through Found Poetry

In self-study, assertions are made with the intent of applying what was previously tacit knowledge. Pinnegar & Hamilton (2009) write that self-study research is:

judged trustworthy by others when the assertions for an action or understandings seem plausible and when results can be used to guide action in practice. In this way, studies are valuable not so much for their contribution to knowing but because of their contribution to acting in practice. (p. 5)

Feldman (2003) adds that the way in which self-study researchers represent their findings is important for purposes of validity. A first step is to describe how the data were collected (as in the Methods section of the present paper).

A second step is to state clearly how representations of the data were constructed (e.g., as “found poetry”). Through my global-citizenship experience, I became aware that I turn to writing poetry when faced with emotionally intense situations. Given this awareness and given that I have learned through this self-study that one of my voices is lyrical, I am drawn to the use of poetry to represent my findings. Feldman (2003) describes this affinity for artistic representations of self-study in this way:

Scientific forms of representation of research (Eisner, 1981), while satisfying criteria for validity, do not allow for the subtleties required to present one’s way of being to others. It is for this reason that self-study researchers resonate so well with literary genres of representation such as narrative, autobiography, and epistolary exchanges. To put it simply, in self-study we delve into our existential ways of being in the world, which may best be made public through artistic representations of research (Eisner, 1981). (Feldman, 2003, p. 27)
One immediate way to apply significant topics in the data is by deriving a narrative from the data (Caelli, 2001) or creating “found poetry” to share what is learned. Such narratives “derive directly from the participants’ accounts of their experiences” (Caelli, 2001, p. 278). In addition:

When the researcher uses found poetry to distill the themes and main ideas as poetry, then it allows hidden, more tacit, themes to emerge in data analysis as much from the construction of the poetry as in the distillation of the elements from which it is constructed. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 131)

Whereas “experiential” poems are written from a poet’s internal reflection, “found” poetry is constructed from the text of the data (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

To derive “found” poems from the findings, I turned to the clustered data that had been organized according to four significant topics. Relative to each topic, I copied segments of data that particularly reflected each topic and pasted the segments into a new document. While I pieced the segments to be read in a fluid manner, I retained the data verbatim. In each new document was an emerging poem. I checked the overall meaning of each poem relative to its significant topic.

Feldman’s (2003) third validity step is to, “Extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to include explorations of multiple ways to represent the same self-study” (p. 28). I did this by working with assertions (as in the next section of the present paper) and by framing the study with the five voices I had identified. Hycner (1999) described this alternative exploration in terms of phenomenological reduction and studying, “the matrices of that person’s [the one being studied] world-view in order to understand the meaning of what that person is saying” (p. 144). Fourth, Feldman (2003) advised that self-study researchers provide evidence of the effect of the self-study on practice.

### Significant Topics as Assertions

Working iteratively across the data set, I identified clusters of meaning. Then, I identified “significant topics” (Groenewald, 2004, citing Sadala & Adorno, 2001). In self-study, researchers make assertions to inform their action in practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). With four significant topics in mind, I assert that:

- First-hand experience is essential for my practice.
- I use irony, experiential poetry, and place-based language as a learner.
- My accompaniment practice is inherently relational.
- I continue to ‘unpack’ and am making meaning in the post-return home.

In response to my four assertions, I derived four found poems. In the first poem, I assert that, in my facilitation practice, I continue to draw upon experiences of my life amid the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestine.
“I lived these experiences”

As Ecumenical Accompaniers,
We seek to contribute to that resolution process by accompanying those who are experiencing the conflict first-hand. They are facilitating our learning …

I didn’t set out to be an ‘adult educator’ or a ‘facilitator’. Looking in my mind’s eye for the roots of this activity, I go to my professional work as a museum educator….

She helped me to see how the interpreter had created parameters for us learners (in part, the house served as a physical parameter) and then opened up control of the direction of our learning to us, as learners

thrust into a world of pain, survival, and joy…like the warm smiles of the students in Shu’afat Refugee Camp…

I felt joy, learning how to count in Arabic from two little boys in what was a battlefield in Silwan; we perched on the back of a bumper of a van, protected from the Jerusalem police on top of the illegal settlers’ apartment building. …media were there, some wearing bullet-proof vests with gas masks and helmets hanging off their belts…

I was incredibly self-conscious as an international…standing there watching the lines of men…form. I felt uncomfortable - what right did I have to come and stare at strangers who were commuting to work — but the Israeli government’s checkpoint made that commute incredibly degrading and humiliating. And, there I was to count them — But, over time, I began… to identify with them – to recognize our shared humanity in their eyes. I began to feel empowered to advocate…as the Israeli soldiers watched us all through the bullet-proof glass and cameras, deciding when to open the turnstile gates and … when not to. I drew back with some fear … I was re-assured … I felt helpless … I felt vulnerable … I felt violated … I worried further…Without the Arabic language, trying to help was really difficult. I felt angry … I took a photo of the mom and the baby – knowing that the incongruity of admiring this beautiful family through the metal bars also revealed their vulnerability to the world – and that was my ‘job’ - gave me great pain. I was angry and in tears. … She encouraged me to write about it and I did…

😊 “And, why didn’t I become a Muslim?” I responded that I would need to learn more … I felt honoured, respected, ‘seen’, valued…and I loved them, all…for being who they are…as the next generation of young women who have so much to share with their community, Jerusalem, the Middle East, and the world…I wonder if they’ll have a proper, real chance to do that…

They gave me a paper heart made up of hearts – they’d written their names on the hearts. … I miss them and hope that we might meet again…

Through this phenomenological self-study, I have come to understand how important experiential learning is to my meaning-making process as a learner and facilitator.
In the second poem, I assert that I coped with the intensity of EA life using meaning-making tools: a physicality and place-based language; irony (e.g., juxtapositions); and a poetic voice (e.g., my experiential poetry; others’ poetry).

“Meaning-Making Tools”

I am a woman, highly sensitive yet not naïve. I have been breathing irony. I ask that you read this blog and let the pain of this un-just crisis touch you, relative to your own place.

“Which side are you on?”

I was on both ‘sides’ of the Irish Troubles… north and south, with Protestant and Catholic roots.

The Palestinians and Israelis offered me patience, as a learner… patience is a space for people to respond to questions or to each other… – what right does this emotion have in presenting itself here, right now!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

I choose to stand with all those who are working toward a just peace. We are a diverse group,

Finding our way…we had to ‘learn our place’ in a larger collective …we had to learn quickly how to find our way…time could not be wasted, for advocacy and safety purposes…

Place…ment: Jerusalem

This division of the word, placement – “ment” – what is the meaning? Like accompany-ment, depart-ment, judge-ment, place-ment… to be part of the creation of that place?

And so the disappearing trick goes…This news just in from the EAPPI office in Jerusalem: “The Israeli military demolished Beit Arabiya”.

December demolitions…’tis the season

Israel occupied East Jerusalem along with the West Bank in 1967. Occupation is regarded internationally as a temporary situation. Permanent changes in occupied territory are not allowed … Destruction of property is not allowed …. Confiscation of property… not allowed. The forced displacement and inhumane treatment …not allowed. … The Israeli government has been moving its citizens into occupied East Jerusalem. This is population transfer and is a war crime [Article 49(6), Fourth Geneva Convention]. … house and infrastructure demolitions are a war crime … And yet, the Israeli authorities declare that homes built without building permits in East Jerusalem are “illegal” structures. Through this declaration, they issue demolition orders.

War crime vs. illegality…which holds greater weight…the one that is less inconvenient to the international community????

Can I go?
Go. Don’t ever come back.
Come back and see…
The freedom of this democracy.
Who is it that you say that you are?
No. Not your name.
Where is your number?
Ah, but are you that person?
She is Palestinian.
Have you asked her name, perhaps?
Leave. Now.
No. Wait.

“Most people – Christian, Muslim, and Jews – we just want peace.”

an international travelling on a Palestinian bus, into Palestinian neighbourhoods,…did I feel conspicuous?
I will write more on all of this in the coming weeks and months…from the City of Peace
[Jerusalem – Jer-u-shalom].
“No one will accept others’ control of Jerusalem; it’s a place of conflict.”
Do you see the barbed wire in the foreground of this picture?iv

The cited photo, from my blog, represents the harsh juxtaposition between an oppressed people’s collective cry for freedom (through graffiti on the Israeli Separation Wall) with barbed wire (in the foreground) (material evidence of the occupier’s presence).

In the third poem, I assert that my accompaniment and being accompanied are relational. I am in dialogue with readers, seeking to form relationships in support of a just peace. This requires connecting with others, sometimes with explicit invitations to readers, other times through a hyperlink, implicitly asking readers to inform themselves.

“Feeling Connected”

Accompaniment means being a companion to someone else or a group…to listen – to empathize with their experience – to be patient with my own needs so that I can put them in perspective to create space…

[What am I defining? Accompaniment or facilitation? Does it matter?] a concept that I can cognitively hang on to and emotionally experience and make sense of. I’m grateful for those who have been accompanying me in my life – without my understanding or appreciating that as much as I wish now.

One particular teen and I seemed to communicate so much through eye contact. Perhaps, we are alike in being kind-of-quiet observers.

For the past year, I’ve been trying to articulate another effect of my EA experiences, simply on being a human being. I feel like I’m looking more intently into people’s eyes now…seeking to know what they know…
…I have to remember that they may wish to know something about me, too
I continue to watch the news in East Jerusalem because I feel connected.... For example, see this recent story about two home demolitions. (Click here.)

Let’s move away from ‘either/or’ side-making. We are in ‘this’ together; people are hurting right now. Shall we focus on opening this door together?

“Of course!!” my mind, soul, and body cries. Of course! This is what I’m seeing...in the blatant differences in municipal infrastructure on one side of Road No. 1 (...the Green Line) – the West-Jerusalem side is spacious and bright – the East-Jerusalem side is cramped and crumbling. This is what I’m seeing as three types of armed personnel stand and roam the streets of the Old City... This is what I’m seeing when Israelis use only the Egged buses and Palestinians use the ‘Green and Blue’ buses. This is what I’m seeing on the Ministry of Tourism map of The Old City of Jerusalem – that shows only Israeli parts of the Old City and sketches in parts to be built after evictions and demolitions...This is what I see in the Separation Wall...

This is what I see...apartness, apartheid...

Please forward this information to those in your circles...to raise awareness...

I will need to be patient with them, just as Palestinians and Israeli peace activists were patient with me. A lonely place, at times... waiting for Canadians to see/hear...understand...

In the fourth poem, I assert that I live with many questions to ponder, emotionally, and cognitively. I need to continue to uncover dimensions of my experiences, through reflection.

“Needing to Unpack”

violence and destruction.. It’s just not right that people have to experience this. There’s such pain there – I’m struggling.... Clearly, I’ve got some more work to do to feel pain that I’ve kept stored up this year....

I’ve got many memories and feelings that I’ve not dealt with...unpacked...made sense of. ...one of the effects of my EA time is that I’ve experienced things that many Canadians will never experience. Yet some people, particularly First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples probably know very well, as an effect of European occupation of Turtle Island.

I think that I have a deeper awareness now and appreciation for all of the unknown aspects of life experiences and expertise that adult learners bring to a learning situation.

so, rather than being as shy..., I’m keen to make connection with that person who is new to me... what have they seen in their lives that inform how they make meaning and live their lives...?

Hmmm,

Respecting that each person may not completely understand how another person views issues...
Everyone wants peace, but what kind of peace?

I’ve experienced situations as an international observer/visitor, witnessing things that no one/being should have to experience. Yet, Palestinians are experiencing these injustices in almost every waking and sleeping moment of their lives.

As we were leaving, a younger son, about 12 years old, arrived from school. He looked stunned and was hanging close to his mother though not able to be with her because she was being interviewed by a journalist. [and I exposed his vulnerability through my photo yet should not the international community be aware of this vulnerability??]

Near the Central Bus Station [in West Jerusalem] with people coming and going. And standing.
She was hurt and died.
She Who is my mother.
Your mother.

We need to identify with each other as human beings…not as objects…but feeling creatures who can think…how might my roles as accompanier and facilitator help?

Can I go?
I’m looking forward to home
Please wait.

awareness of my freedom of movement in Canada and how I need to make use of that freedom in the interests of international humanitarian law and international human-rights law…

Another need for a poem – an intense experience that can only be communicated in the terse format of poetry and close-cropped photos…
I notice that the title for this posting is definite with that closed period… no ellipsis to suggest an openness…

Blank yet deepest wells for eyes:
Slight shrug. “We’re trying to move forward.”

Found poetry is one way to reveal layers of meaning and emotion within self-study assertions (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009); my lyrical, ironic, relational, activist, and reflective voices run through the poems. How might my assertions and my voices inform my facilitation of learning about community-university engaged research to effect social justice?

Implications for Facilitating Learning about Critical Global Citizenship Engagement

I am one who has been, and is, fearful of conflict. East Jerusalem is a place with direct and structural violence. With my ironic voice, I describe painful juxtapositions of privilege and pain evident across the international armistice line (i.e., the Green Line) between East and West Jerusalem. Yet, amid such conflict, I was treated with respect and compassion as a learner. With that first-hand experience, I can feel my way into an openness to demonstrate respect for other
learners’ diverse perspectives on issues (McCully, 2006) and fears about challenging injustice. We live amid an ever-oppressive norm, in neo-liberal society, to be passive and obedient citizens (Shultz, 2011). In this context, moving from talk to action can feel risky (hooks, 2003; Vogel, 2000). In being open about what challenges I have faced and how I have faced them, I create cognitive and affective space for a sharing of learners’ voices and emotions.

Through the course of this study, the concept of compassion has arisen, for example, in the self-study teacher-education literature, GCE literature, the critical-engagement literature, and in my own writing. For example, in my interview, I wrote:

Accompaniment means being a companion to someone else or to a group of people or to creatures or to parts of our world (e.g., fresh water, clean air). It means being in constructive relationship with that other being or thing in a supportive, encouraging, enabling way. It means to listen to that other, to hear with my heart (Steeves, 2012) – to empathize with their experience – to be patient with my own needs so that I can put them in perspective to create space to be more present with the other for whom I seek to be a companion.

Karen Armstrong (2010) wrote that “‘compassion’ means ‘to endure [something] with another person,’ to put ourselves in somebody else’s shoes, to feel her pain as though it were our own, and to enter generously into his point of view” (p. 9). When I revisited the website for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, I found that one essential description for the program is “to experience life under occupation” (Retrieved 26 March 2012: www.eapproi.org), to live with those seeking to end that occupation. Fear et al. (2006) observed that, “Without caring, compassion, and attentiveness, there can be no understanding; and without understanding, engagement is a cold, lifeless activity…” (p. 288). With my assertions in hand, I envision adopting the term, accompaniment, to describe a compassionate approach to facilitation of learning about critical engagement. Facilitation and accompaniment both rely on mutually influencing dynamics, trust, and respect. Both require patience, critical thinking, and an emotional openness to the possibilities of what can be achieved in relationship. With my reflective voice, I realize that I was accompanied through a dialogical approach, in my training as an ecumenical accompanier (EA) (Vella, 2008). I remember the facilitators listening at the edges of small-group discussions, as we, EAs, learned from and with each other. The facilitators waited for us to seek them out as resources, if necessary; they created space to think, feel, and act. Now, I am aware that as I accompany learners, not only am I listening, but I am also empathizing with their perspectives and individual and collective moments of cognitive and affective insights. In this way, I practise compassion.

With my self-study assertions, I can imagine ways to actualize Conklin’s (2008) “pedagogy of critical, justice-oriented teacher education that focuses on modeling compassion” (p.654). Conklin identifies the need for attention to affective components in teacher educator-prospective teacher relationships. I have begun a process of adopting such pedagogy as Conklin’s (2008), but with diverse adult participants who seek to learn about community-university engaged research. When I accompany learners in workshops, courses, and experiential moments, I adopt an interactive, peer-learning approach based on dialogue (Vella, 2008). Each program is designed with the resources adults may need and parameters for discussion.

Given how important first-hand experience is for me and how I need time to make sense of experience to inform my practice, I am aware of the need for time and space for learners to share
experiences, emotions, and expertise from their lives. Learners may not be aware of this need to reflect. Moon (2004) recounted that experience without reflection may not result in learning; students may not know how to make sense of their community-university engaged research experiences. For example, graduate students in my program often appear unfamiliar with articulating personal learning objectives for their practicum; I ask, “what would you like to learn?” and “how will you know what you are learning?” Then, I listen, appreciating anew how reflection is part of the action-research cycle (Carson & Johnston, 2000), which is one approach to community-university engaged research. My sense of juxtaposition resonates with Levin’s (2012) description of tension between involvement and reflection as action researchers strive for rigour and relevance. Prior to this self-study, I set a goal to describe how I mentor graduate students in their experiential learning, yet I did not have a plan for that goal. Post self-study, I started a journal to record instances of this accompaniment, particularly in terms of supporting students’ exploration of personal learning objectives and indicators.

I strive for consistency between the nature of the content of a learning moment and how people are learning that content. Conklin (2008) described this as “demonstrating in action the very practices one advocates” (p. 660). For example, to accompany is to be in relationship, and mutuality is critical in community-university engaged research with partners’ negotiations about diverse perspectives, values, and agendas. A shared vision – a unity of purpose –characterizes this work. As an accompanying facilitator, I highlight for learners that awareness of this unity is part of our context in Canada, where community-university engaged research is informed by Indigenous research methodologies. Steinhauer (2002) observed that even though research partners may gather as individuals who have been “taught to be responsible for ourselves”, in addition, “…we must never think of ourselves in isolation. Everything we do, every decision we make, affects our family, our community, [sic] it affects the air we breathe, the animals, the plants, the water in some way” (p. 77). Community-university engaged research is hard work; at times, power relationships are out of balance, frustrations arise, and conflict happens. However, learning moments can be designed and implemented with time and space for individuals to grow in relationship with each other – in ways that are consistent with the relational nature of community-university engaged research.

Since preparing for and undertaking ecumenical accompaniment, my relational and activist voices have grown in confidence; for example, I have dedicated time at the beginning of graduate classes for talking circles. Participants are invited to pass a talking stick as a physical reminder of whose turn it is to speak – valuing each individual within that immediate collective. Recently, I sought information about facilitating collaborative, creative conversations ‘in the round’. As a global citizen, I recognize incongruities between contemporary society’s linear structures (e.g., sitting in rows; hierarchical organizational charts) (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010) and the desire for circle-based consensus (e.g., the Occupy movement’s consensus decision making) (Meerkat Media Collective, 2011). In response, I use my ironic voice to name these incongruities and offer learners what I am learning about iterative, democratic approaches to social change.

This past spring, I began integrating reflective and experiential learning (e.g., Moon, 2004) into my curricula (e.g., five-minute moments for individual reflective writing; collective reflection through large-group debriefing; personal learning objectives for experiential learning with integrated journaling). For example, for a full-day workshop, I created a Reflection Worksheet with key questions and prompts for individual writing (e.g., in set moments during the workshop). I
Learning to Accompany Through a Self-Study of Critical Global-Citizenship Engagement

anticipated empathizing with participants, as they grappled with juxtapositions (e.g., trying consensus decision making amid hierarchical work contexts); the Reflection Worksheet was a way for participants to reflect initially within themselves before engaging in small-group discussion in which peers might offer challenging perspectives. In this way, I mediated participants’ learning, “signaling” (Moon, 2004) what to do: Reflect as individuals; consider key concepts in terms of work/life contexts; ask: “What am I learning through this reflection? How is it relevant?” My purpose was to support potential insights regarding what participants already knew about the workshop content.

As I reflect on learner feedback over the past years, my reflective and relational voices are affirmed as participants note that I create space for many voices so that we might all, as learners, hear each other as we co-construct meaning (Vella, 2008). The feedback reflects that I am quiet; I perceive that I sit back rather than ‘play the expert’. With my activist voice, I self-identify as a feminist with an interest in social and environmental justice. With my lyrical voice, I identify with fluid ways of thinking and gathering; I strive to follow learners and their interests, even as I remain faithful to the objectives of that learning experience. I now initiate graduate classes with readings (e.g., from bell hooks) as foundation for seminar discussions. Through various media (e.g., prose poetry), I model how emotions are attached to thoughts in learning.

In dialogue with others who seek to accompany learners in critical global-citizenship engagement, we can enhance our self-knowledge for society’s benefit (Bottery, 2006). As we seek to contribute to global justice, we have an opportunity to describe “what we are doing and why—offering it up for public witness and scrutiny” (Vogel, 2000, p. 18). Should any one of us feel embarrassed by self-study, Bottery (2006) offers this: “professional self-reflection does not mean an appeal to introversion, but precisely the opposite; for greater self-knowledge is only possible where the person is situated within contexts and when the impact of such contexts is appreciated” (p. 112). Learners need facilitators “who are psychologically, physically, and temporally accessible” (Chickering, 2008, p. 91). Yet, I note that in the field of teacher education, only a small body of research appears to exist regarding the practice of modeling of co-constructed, dialogically oriented learning (Conklin, 2008; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007). I invite others to engage in self-study to uncover tacit knowledge. Understanding how we react cognitively and emotionally in challenging moments can make us more compassionate as accompanying facilitators.

Strengths and Limitations

A strength of this self-study is that I was able to draw on my newly understood affinity for writing with a lyrical voice. Hycner (1999) describes an “artistic” aspect in clustering relevant units of data and cites Colaizzi who wrote: “‘… the phenomenological researcher [is] engaged in something which cannot be precisely delineated, for here he [sic] is involved in that ineffable thing known as creative insight’ (1978, p. 59)” (pp. 150-151). That artistic aspect is related to artistic representations of self-study (Feldman, 2003) and enabled me to derive found poetry to communicate emotional aspects of the data.

Regarding limitations, my lived experience as an ecumenical accompanier is relatively unique in Canada; in 2010, I was only the twelfth Canadian to participate in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). I have not created a research
committee to which to turn with members who are familiar with phenomenological self-study and who are familiar with ecumenical accompaniment. This type of committee could serve as a check on the analytic process that involves “creative insight” (Hycner, 1999, p. 151, citing Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59). However, this limitation is motivation for me to engage colleagues as I did during the Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity conference in April 2012.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, I recount how I arrived at the study of global-citizenship education (GCE), from a need to make sense of my lived experience in Palestine and Israel. Through a phenomenological self-study, I uncovered knowledge about myself as a learner in a global-citizenship experience. I identified five voices within my ecumenical-accompanier (EA) identity and now I am integrating them into my work as a researcher/educator. These voices run through four assertions about my learning: first-hand experience is essential; I use various meaning-making tools; accompanying learners is inherently relational; and I continue to ‘unpack’ meaning in the post-return home. My voices and assertions now inform my facilitation of learning about community-university engaged research.

This self-study has helped me integrate learning moments as an EA when I recognized shared humanity amid the Israeli government’s occupation of Palestine. I shared in some of the vulnerability of life there. With this newly explicit knowledge, I feel better able to accompany learners as they grapple with community-university engaged research toward effecting social change. I realize the potential for describing more explicitly in workshops, courses, and experiential learning that I have had a transformative experience. I see the potential to model my own critical global-citizenship engagement as a way to create compassionate spaces for lifelong learners as they get involved in the global and local issues of the 21st century.
Endnotes

i Centennial College, Toronto, ON. See: http://www.centennialcollege.ca/citizenshipandequity/HeartsMinds2012

ii The United Church of Canada is an EAPPI-partnering organization for Canadian ecumenical accompaniers in Palestine and Israel. See: http://www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/global/overseas/invitations#ecumenical

iii EA Stories4Peace. See: http://peacingstories.wordpress.com


References


