

St. Francis Xavier University

Fostering Community Leadership in Place:

Exploring Informal Learning Through Auto-ethnography

by

Kevin Van Lierop
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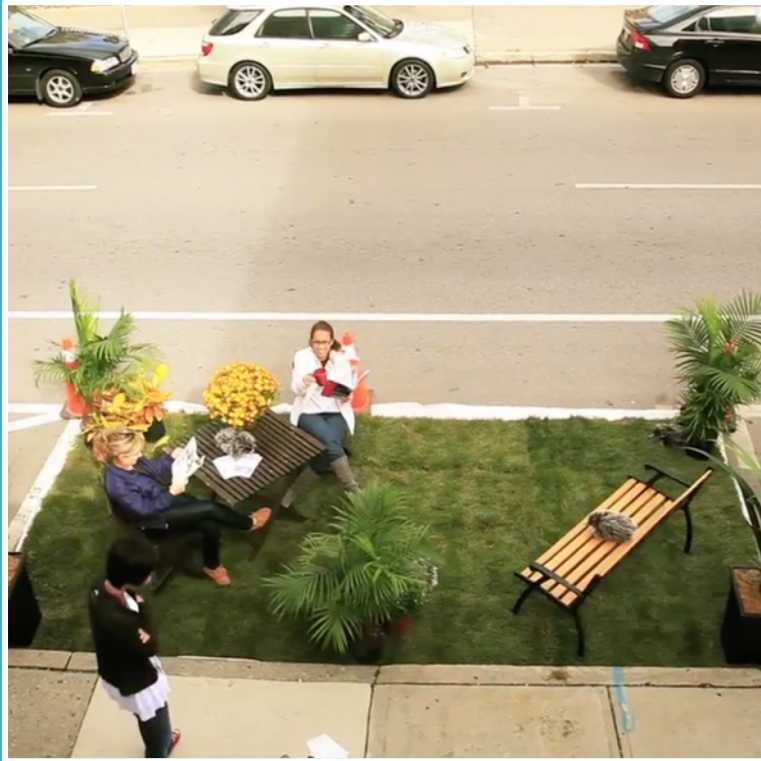
London, Ontario
February 28, 2020

AE 601
Synthesizing Oral Exam

DOES PLACE MATTER?

What role does *place* have in shaping the learning experiences most influential for developing leadership skills in community?





Park(ing) Day - London, Canada
September 18, 2010



Horton Street (looking west) - London, Canada
November 17, 2012



Great Law - Chicago, United States of America
August 4, 2015

LITERATURE ON LEARNING, SPACE & COMMUNITY

In valuing lived experience, every site—space or place—has the potential to be transformed into one of (informal) learning

(hooks, 1994; Lindeman, 1982; Kolb, 1984; McKee, 2014; Shor, 1992)

As understandings of leadership change, there is a need to better appreciate what it means to be a leader within community

(Delaney, 2010; Hanold, 2015; Schweigert, 2007; Wheatley, 2009)

Existing research has neglected to adequately connect spatial elements to adult learning for community-based action

(Foroughi & Durant, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Nesbit & Wilson, 2010)

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Primary

- How have learning experiences embedded within community development efforts impacted my leadership skill development?

Secondary

- What have I been learning? How?
- How does my understanding of place shape the learning I have experienced in specific spaces?
- How have I developed as a leader?
- How does my relationship to spaces in community impact the likelihood that I, or others, will view myself as a leader?

METHODOLOGY

Auto-ethnography is a form of qualitative research in which the researcher is an object of study, reflects on his or her personal experiences, and connects them to broader cultural, social, and political contexts

(Anderson, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Purcell, 2013)

METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION

description

(collection)

autobiographical reconstruction

Mitchell & Coltrinari (2001)

100 pages

01. 2007–2011: Civic Activist



In the wake of fizzling New Year's resolutions, people are turning to the Internet to help motivate and inspire their creativity in 2010

By Stuart A. Thompson

Having trouble sticking to your New Year's resolutions? You've got something on Kevin Van Liemp.

For each week in 2010 the London artist will be doing something he's never done before as his latest project, Fifty New Weeks Writing an erotic story, directing a movie and creating a full-body paper sculpture on his face.

"Any resolution I've ever made I've broken," the 28-year-old Ottawa graduate student said. "So I've not looking at it that way anymore."

Some of the wilder ideas include PARKING! Day, where an impromptu park is created inside a parking space with some turf and a bench. Another involves painting 100 notes in 100 balloons and setting them free. The notes would have a question and his email so people could reply if they find it.

He's also letting the public keep tabs on his progress, posting each week's mission online and asking for ideas through his Twitter account.

"I wouldn't have the motivation to say on top of it if I didn't have people checking on me," he said. "I don't want to look like a hack or that I can't complete anything."

Fifty new weeks may seem like a small number, but Van Liemp knows from experience these projects become more demanding as the year goes on.

In 2008, Van Liemp took a picture of himself every day and posted them online.

"I thought I could do it every

day, and I thought I could do it every day. I was going to do different experiments or wear a different hat but it gets old after a while."

He still finished the project—365 pictures strong—but he said he relied on online followers to keep

"I get really comfortable with anything I do in life. I enjoy doing stuff that's outside of it, but this is pushing it to an extreme."

—Kevin Van Liemp

bin motivated.

It's not only Van Liemp taking to the Internet for public, creating challenges as a solution to the half-hearted New Year's resolutions that quickly fade. Matt Devlin, a third-year student in film and media, information and technologies, is determined to watch 365 movies in 365 days and post about them online.

"Unless you put that kind of stress on it, it keeps you focused," he said. "If you want to change something about your life, you do that for a few weeks maybe, then you fall back into your normal

routine. If you commit to 365 days, then you have to stick to it and you can't be in a mood of schedule right now but said the toughest challenge is to find enough movies and watch them without breaking the bank. His blog will work like a journal where he can keep track of his thoughts, if people use it to keep tabs on his progress, so he is, he says.

Van Liemp is following in the steps of New York photographer Bill Waldman, who completed a 365-day challenge and 52-week challenge.

Waldman's projects included writing songs, taking photos and writing an owner's guide for himself.

"Bill Waldman likes to attempt new challenges, so don't be afraid to test his limits," he wrote in the third-person manual. "Especially if the task is creativity related."

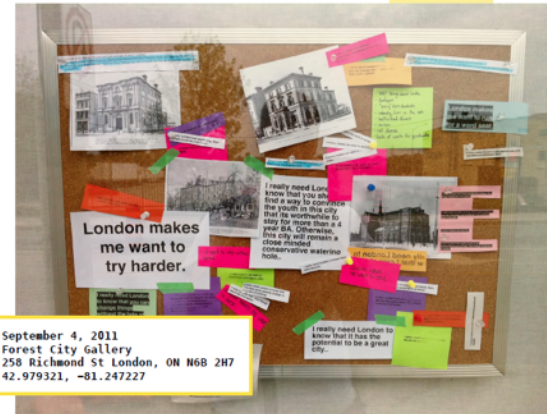
Creativity—or at a lack of it—is what motivated Van Liemp to take up the challenge.

"I get really comfortable with anything I do in life. I enjoy doing stuff that's outside of it, but this is pushing it to an extreme," he says.

Van Liemp still remains for his passions, he hopes others will take on a similar challenge to push their limits beyond their creative comfort zones.

"If you don't know what you want to do, just try a branch of something because you'll find out what you don't have any interest in doing, and you'll find out what your passion is."

What's on your list? Go to assignments and share your ideas.



"When you've lived in one place long enough (in my case, Scotland), you almost become immune to its beauty, blind to its charm regardless of how unequivocal it may be. I believe that we all subconsciously develop blinders; filtering out what's really around us and replacing it with what we've come to expect. I decided to remove my blinders for the day, fill my 'tank with gas' (as our American friends would say), blast Queen full volume, and take to the road with no real plans other than seeing something new, and photographing it. I urge you to do the same."

— Ashley Baxter



Thursday, February 03, 2011

Title:
Places Called Home

Subtitle:
a visual narrative of the spaces we inhabit

Description:
Each day we find ourselves living within unique environments; walking past store-fronts, residents and homes, occupying spaces that are filled with extraordinary possibilities. It isn't too often that we stop and take the time needed to appreciate these spaces for what they are at the very core, our homes.

Places Called Home is meant to be a visual narrative of the spaces we inhabit. Focused on London, Ontario, this collection of work will document the **places** we pass by while walking, where we go to complete our "work", and where we eat and sleep. **Places Called Home** aims to illustrate that there is more to these every day **places** than may appear at first glance.

METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS



autobiographical reconstruction

Mitchell & Coltrinari (2001)

100 pages

coded, categorized, and grouped

Lichtman's (2013) 6-step process

matrices



METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION



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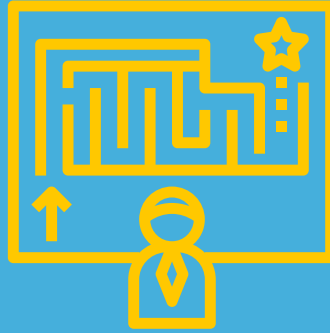
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experience & reflection

Kolb (1984) & Lindeman (1982)

Bolton (2014) & Schön (1983)





EXPERIENCE & REFLECTION

Every experience presents an opportunity for learning and growth—when enhanced by acts of reflection

RELATIONSHIPS, IDENTITY & LEADERSHIP

Relationships are central to forming an identity, developing as a leader, and deconstructing how we define place for ourselves



Classmates. Friends. Community. - Antigonish, Nova Scotia
April 11, 2017

“Places are fundamentally pedagogical because they are contexts for human perception and for participation with the phenomenal, ecological, and cultural world. What we know is, in large part, shaped by the kinds of places we experience and the quality of attention we give them.”

(Gruenewald, 2003, p. 645)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE



REINFORCES

place as an important concept in learning



IDENTIFIES

what may generate the defining meaning behind place



EMPHASISES

reflection as a tool for deconstructing informal learning

IMPLICATIONS FOR MY OWN PRACTICE

- Multi-dimensional understanding of place
- Robust vocabulary
- Appreciation of reflection
- Relational awareness



Yours to Discover – London, Canada
May 2, 2015

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER PRACTITIONERS

- Foster relationships among students
- Identify the learning within environments
- Provide time, space, & resources for reflection



"...and then the city was" – Broken City Lab
September 4, 2011

FUTURE RESEARCH

Learning Spaces

(Kolb & Kolb, 2005)

Elaborates on learning styles and how they develop between an individual and their environment

Situated Learning

(Lave & Wagner, 1991)

Considers the relationship between learning and the social situations where it takes place

THANKS!

Questions?

Kevin Van Lierop
x2017unn@stfx.ca

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