

Fall 09-30-2020

A World Café Discussion on Well-Being: Considerations for Life in the University

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<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2020.2.8337>

Recommended Citation

McDermott, M., Simmons, M., Lock, J., & Kenny, N. (2020). A world café discussion on well-being: Considerations for life in the university. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2020.2.8337>

A World Café Discussion on Well-Being: Considerations for Life in the University

Abstract

How are universities conceptualizing and mobilizing well-being on their campuses? Our qualitative inquiry explores growing challenges of addressing educator mental health and well-being on university campuses. As part of an effort to increase awareness and support around issues of mental health and well-being at one university, a campus-wide strategy was announced in 2015. This article follows up on that strategy to understand how university educators come to identify with well-being. We collected composite anonymized data from a World Café discussion with a range of educators. The goals of the World Café discussion were to: (a) highlight campus-wide conversations on educator mental health and well-being; (b) explore multiple perspectives and make sense of how educators experience mental health and well-being; (c) create a space to nurture meaningful relationships; (d) inform the continued development of research, strategies, and policies to support educator mental health and well-being. We share four themes that emerged from the discussions to consider well-being and life in the university: (a) affective, relational and holistic aspects “in search of well-being”; (b) working through the messiness of well-being: risks and vulnerabilities; (c) inviting people into a culture of well-being; and (d) the role of leaders in moving beyond policy towards enactment.

Comment les universités assurent-elles la conceptualisation et la mobilisation du bien-être sur leurs campus? Notre étude qualitative explore les défis grandissants pour répondre aux problèmes de santé mentale et de bien-être des éducateurs et des éducatrices sur les campus universitaires. Dans le cadre d'un effort pour accroître la sensibilisation et le soutien autour des problèmes de santé mentale et de bien-être, dans une certaine université, une stratégie mise en place d'un bout à l'autre du campus a été annoncée en 2015. Cet article assure le suivi de cette stratégie pour comprendre comment les éducateurs et les éducatrices universitaires en arrivent à s'identifier au bien-être. Nous avons rassemblé des données composites anonymes à partir d'une discussion de type World Café avec toute une gamme d'éducateurs et d'éducatrices. Les objectifs de la discussion de type World Café étaient de : (a) mettre en valeur des conversations qui s'étaient déroulées d'un bout à l'autre du campus sur la santé mentale et le bien-être des éducateurs et des éducatrices, (b) explorer les multiples perspectives et comprendre l'expérience des éducateurs et des éducatrices en ce qui concerne la santé mentale, (c) créer un espace où encourager des relations significatives, (d) informer le développement continu de la recherche, des stratégies et des politiques pour soutenir la santé mentale et le bien-être des éducateurs et des éducatrices. Nous partageons quatre thèmes qui ont émergé des discussions afin de prendre en considération le bien-être et la vie au sein de l'université : (a) aspects affectifs, relationnels et holistiques de la « recherche du bien-être », (b) travail à travers le désordre du bien-être : risques et vulnérabilités, (c) invitation à se joindre à une culture de bien-être, et (d) rôle des leaders pour aller au-delà des politiques et se diriger vers la mise en place.

Keywords

educator well-being, mental health, higher education, university culture, World Café; bien-être des éducateurs et des éducatrices, santé mentale, enseignement supérieur, culture de l'université, World Café

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) provides us with a unique opportunity to explore issues related to improving student learning and strengthening the quality of postsecondary education within and beyond the classroom (Hubball & Clarke, 2010; Kenny, Poppvic, et al., 2017; Poole & Simmons, 2013). Acknowledging the complexity of factors that influence teaching and learning across multiple organizational levels, Hubball et al. (2013) call for SoTL practitioners to embrace a more “expansive view” (p. 42) of SoTL inquiry in order to meaningfully influence classroom, program, and institutional-level change. Our qualitative SoTL inquiry explores the growing challenge of addressing educator mental health and well-being on university campuses (Catano et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2001; O’Neill, 2014; Sabagh et al., 2018). We ground our study within our local context (Felten, 2013), while also situating our approaches and the data generated more broadly across the Canadian postsecondary landscape.

Our university in Western Canada is committed to addressing the increasing focus on mental health and well-being on university campuses, as the below quote from our university’s Campus Mental Health Strategy indicates (see also, Gereluk, 2018; Russell-Mayhew et al., 2017).

Our vision – to be a community where we care for each other, learn and talk about mental health and well-being, receive support as needed, and where individually and collectively we realize our potential – is aspirational and inspiring. This vision will place mental health as an institutional priority and will require culture change on our campus. (Campus Mental Health Strategy [CMHS], 2015, p. 2)

In 2015, in an effort to increase awareness and support around issues of mental health and well-being at our university, a campus-wide strategy was announced, with the expressed intention of shifting our culture. We can attest to the increased willingness of folks to discuss their mental health and well-being more openly, even though reports such as O’Brien’s & Guiney’s (2018) indicate that in the highly competitive accountability regimes framing contemporary academic work, staff are reticent to seek out campus supports for fear of being penalized:

All six [respondents] gave the same reason that identification at work that you were stressed or anxious, for example, through occupational health or a visit to an available counsellor, could result in labelling and therefore have an impact on how they are perceived in terms of their capability to carry out their professional role. (p. 12)

While it is commendable, and we would argue necessary, that universities take steps to appreciate the healthy settings approach that guided the development of our Campus Mental Health Strategy (CMHS, 2015), the lived realities of educators on campuses continue to be described through discourses of intensification and anxiety (O’Neill, 2014).

In this context, we are interested in the circulation of discourses around well-being, notably focused moreso on the well-being of students, and we came together to get a sense of how educators on our campus are experiencing well-being: what are educators’ expectations of well-being, how is well-being cultivated, and who is responsible for educators’ well-being when we are tasked with supporting students’ well-being? It is well-established that large institutions like universities, prove quite difficult in “change the culture” efforts suggested in our CMHS (2015). Compound the size and bureaucracy

of universities with historical expectations and ways of being and doing higher education (Barnett, 2011), as well as the ways universities are intertwined with the political and cultural forces of broader society, and change has often been described as glacial, even as we sense acceleration in many of our roles within universities (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Neill et al., 2014; Vostal, 2015).

In this article, we describe our process of facilitating a World Café discussion (Brown & Isaacs, 2006; Kenny *et al.*, 2017; Prewitt, 2011) with educators from one university to understand how well-being is taken up, as well as to hear their suggestions for what could be done to better tend to their sense of well-being within the context of an institutional priority area identified through the CMHS (2015). The recommendations range from individual strategies to institutional and cultural shifts at various levels of leadership and organizational structure (Simmons, 2016). Invitations to register for the World Café were sent out to the entire university community, and participants self-selected their attendance. As such, those who joined the World Café discussion represented people who are already thinking about and inquiring into well-being. We recognize from the outset that more work is needed to invite those who are not prioritizing well-being in the same way, or who are reticent to add another thing to their ever-growing to-do lists. As suggested in a study on staff well-being in the UK:

Ironically, some respondents replied that they felt this was an important area for research investigation but, due to the current ‘demands’ and ‘pressures’ of their role, they did not have the time to take part in a semi-structured interview – as they felt that this would have a negative impact on their wellbeing. (O’Brien & Guiney, 2018, p. 4)

For the purposes of this article, we start with a brief overview of the contemporary university landscape within which well-being is becoming an increasing topic of conversation and institutional focus. We then describe the design of the World Café discussions where we collected data, and outline how we engaged in sense-making of the data. Following this, we discuss the findings that emerged and discuss implications and recommendations for future research.

Turning Towards Well-Being in the University

As this project materialized, we asked ourselves questions about the purpose of university (see also Barnett, 2011; Harward, 2016; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Neill et al., 2014; Vostal, 2015); we asked how the historical articulations of the university are both firmly knotted into the fabric of the institution and simultaneously being written over through new market-based managerialism (Barnett, 2011; Giroux, 2016; Vostal, 2015).

We noticed an increased focus on well-being in public, policy, and academic spheres; indeed, we might say that we felt this intensely, yet we wondered why, why now, what are the conditions of living and working in the university that are compelling this attention? We were interested in where responsibility resides for addressing this so-called turn towards well-being. Before we outline some literature providing a framework for well-being in our research, we briefly map the conditions within which we are working in higher education.

Shifting Temporalities, Rhythms, and Pace in Universities

The university as a societal structure can be traced back centuries in one form or another, and we believe that the structure ought to shift and be responsive to the needs of society through time. However, for those living the university presently, there is a sense of rupture or even loss in the very ideas of the university that drew us into this work (Barnett, 2011; Gereluk, 2018; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2014). This section resides within the dual purposes of uncovering the historically present conditions of living and working in the university to consider how we might do / be better, how we might become “the well-being institution” (Harward, 2016, p. 14).

When reviewing the literature on well-being in higher education, several themes resonated with our experiences in the university as well as the findings from the World Café discussion. With the ubiquity of technological advances in the 21st century, the concept, pace, and sense of time has changed. Frequently, the literature noted increased pace of work with an immediacy embedded in a networked global society (Menzies & Newson, 2007; Vostal, 2015). This immediacy granted by technology at once allows for more collaboration (locally and globally) as well as a sense of alienation (we no longer need to be face-to-face, sharing space, and building sustained dialogues) (Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; O'Neill, 2014). It also pressures on us into responding immediately when an email comes in, for example, which is a stress compounded by the ever-presence of technology enabling us to “always be on” (Gornall & Salisbury, 2012; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Neill, 2014; O'Neill et al., 2014). In a profession where the work-home-life boundaries are already blurred, where those in academic positions often have the ability to do work from off-campus, it can become difficult to know when and how to “turn the work off.” There is a sense that there is always more that can be done, and for those in precarious, contingent positions (upwards of 70% of instructors in the United States are on contingent contracts – Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Rhoades, 2017; Reevy & Deason, 2014), the stressors and anxiety around the need to keep doing more are even more concerning (O'Neill, 2014).

Some suggest, however, that this inclination is in part an aspect of academic dispositions—that academics enjoy staying in the work—at least what they imagine their core work as academics (see, for example, Gereluk, 2018; O'Neill, 2014), much like a vocation, that the blurring of home and work boundaries is one of the attractions to academic life (Gornall & Salisbury, 2012). Still, others are calling for a slow movement in response to this intensified pace of university life, with a focus not on speed, per se, but rather slow encapsulating “attentiveness, deliberation, thoughtfulness, open-ended inquiry, a receptive attitude, care-fullness, creativity, intensity, discernment, cultivating pleasures, and creating dialogues” (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018, p. 983; see also, Berg & Seeber, 2016; O'Neill et al., 2014).

While technological advancements have played an important role in how we currently live and work in the university, there have been other significant socio-political shifts since the 1960s that re-shaped the landscape of higher education. In his analysis of the university through time, Barnett (2011) notes, in addition to the roles of teaching and learning in the university, new roles “have been successively *added* over the centuries” including, “scholarship, research, consultancy, knowledge transfer and public engagement, and several other functions as well” (p. 3, emphasis added). Indeed, he is suggesting that it is not simply that the role of the university, or what it means to be a university, has changed through time, but more-so that with each additional role, identity, and expectation, “responsibilities and duties placed upon staff have expanded” (Gornall

& Salisbury, 2012, p. 135). Gornall and Salisbury (2012) continue, while the academic workweek might still consist of 55 hours, more is being done in those hours.

Menzies and Newson (2007) map the shifts in government funding and policies in Canada that have reconstituted universities “from being the public serving, collegially governed, nation-building institutions that emerged during the post-Second world War period of expansion. They have reinvented themselves as institutions more integrated with the global knowledge economy” (pp. 84-85). Subsequently, in this reinvention, they have shifted to the temporalities of the fast-paced corporate world (Giroux, 2016; Menzies & Newson, 2007; Vostal, 2015), which arguably has shifted the kind of work that can be done and relations that can be cultivated (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Gereluk, 2018; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018; Menzies & Newson, 2007). These shifts contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety (O’Neill, 2014). In their study that surveyed 80 academic staff and interviewed 20, Menzies and Newson (2007) state,

It is clear, then, that there are many things academics do not like about the new environment. In the most decisive response in the questionnaire, 69 per cent said that they do not thrive on the time pressures and fast pace of it [...] Not surprisingly, the respondents reported many of the most common symptoms of stress, from sleep deprivation [...] to new allergies or food sensitivities [...], short-term memory loss [...] and problems concentrating. (p. 87)

Clearly, there is a need for increased attention on well-being in universities. Before we return to unpacking well-being as it is taken up in this project and on our campus, we provide some further indications on the need for addressing well-being for faculty and staff on university campuses.

Faculty Burnout and Faculty Stress

Faculty burnout and stress are two discourses that have paralleled with the increase in discussions of well-being on university campuses. One of the guiding impetuses for our CMHS (2015) was that “Mental health was the top presenting reason for employees at [the University] accessing the Employee and Family Assistance Program in 2014, and 16% of employee sick leave cases and 33% of employee long-term disability cases result from mental illness” (p. 1). Within the CMHS (2015), and throughout the broader discourses, mental health and well-being are often taken up simultaneously, under the premise of a holistic approach (see also O’Brien & Guiney, 2018), and as indicated in the above section, with the intensification of academic life, felt time pressures, individualized, competitive, and accountability cultures in the academy, we are not surprised to see a ballooning of feelings of burnout and stress.

Sabagh et al. (2018) describe burnout as “...a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion resulting from a prolonged response to long-term exposure to demanding situations” (p. 132). Catano et al. (2010) conceptualize stress, “...as a process whereby environmental factors called stressors may increase the likelihood a person will feel stress, an internal state characterized by arousal and displeasure” (p. 233). Those who focus on the concepts and sentiments of burnout and stress indicate an increased focus on faculty burnout and stress as academics report high and widespread rates of stress resulting from the shifting demands of their workplace environments (Catano et al., 2010; Gillespie et al., 2001; O’Neill, 2014). The prevalence of stress and burnout in academic staff in postsecondary contexts is widespread, and comparable to other education and

medical sectors (Watts & Robertson, 2011). This is significant because we are really addressing a much broader social phenomenon, one which we might argue, the university is socio-historically positioned to substantively address, if only they could recognize the need to go beyond offering strategies and resources (both of which are crucial, but not enough) (see also Gereluk, 2018).

The influence of high-levels of stress and burnout in academic workplaces can be far-reaching, leading to decreased job performance, innovation, and creativity; erosion in work relationships; numerous psychological and physical health effects; and, a lack of willingness to engage in extra activities beyond one's role (Gillespie et al., 2001; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; Reevy & Deason, 2014; Sabagh et al., 2018; Vostal, 2015).

In their comprehensive review of literature related to faculty burnout, Sabagh et al. (2018) identified several factors influencing burnout for academic staff, such as high workload and job demands, worklife conflict, and heavy teaching loads. Workload stresses among faculty are often associated with the challenges academics face in meeting their multiple research, teaching and administrative responsibilities, especially in light of increasing course loads and class sizes, new teaching modalities, and demands to increase research productivity and entrepreneurship (Barnett, 2011; Gereluk, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2001; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018). In addition to workload, other work stressors for academics relate to a lack of role clarity, perceptions of administrative and reward inequities, and work-life conflict (Catano et al., 2010). Among academic populations, women, those with higher teaching loads, individuals between the age of 30-59, and tenure-track faculty tend to be most susceptible to stress and burnout (Catano et al., 2010; Reevy & Deason, 2014; Sabagh et al., 2018; Watts & Robertson, 2011). All of these studies point to the need to further explore and act to address dimensions of faculty well-being, stress and burnout.

Multi-level, Integrated Approaches

Like many other factors related to SoTL in higher education, we also recognize that the issues related to mental health and well-being in a postsecondary context cross multiple organizational levels (Kenny et al., 2016; Poole & Simmons, 2013; Williams et al., 2013). At the macro level, leadership commitment, visions, organizational policies and structures help to support and facilitate change (Hannah & Lester, 2009). At the meso level, faculty and departmental microcultures, informal and formal educational leaders, and cross-disciplinary working groups and social networks interact to share knowledge and implement action to support change (Kenny et al., 2016; Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016; Mårtensson et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2013). At a micro level, individual educators are provided with the programs, supports, and resources necessary to develop their expertise, capacities, and practices. All levels must be integrated and interact to help establish strong cultures, communities, and practices for mental health and well-being within our postsecondary institutions.

Conceptualizing Well-Being

From the previous sections, we have mapped the terrain of higher education from the shifts in what educators on university campuses are asked to do to the ways this is making some feel stressed and burnt out. Well-being is a common term and one that is not only gaining greater attention in educational contexts, guiding campus wide mental health strategies like our own. As this section amplifies, it is a rather contested and “complex, multifaceted construct” (Pollard & Lee, 2003, p. 222) with “blurred and overly

broad definitions of wellbeing” (Forgeard et al., 2011, p. 81). Furthermore, well-being tends to be “intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure” (Thomas, 2009, p. 11; see also O’Brien & Guiney, 2018). Within the contested terrain, institutions of higher education are increasingly expressing “a vested interest in supporting the well-being of their faculty as a means to promote individual and institutional health and vitality” (CMHS, 2015; Seipel & Larson, 2018, p. 154). The question that was a driving force in our research is: how are universities conceptualizing and mobilizing well-being on their campuses?

From the literature, there is no agreement with regard to a common or single definition for well-being. Liu et al. (2018) referred to well-being as a “complex phenomenon that involves myriad contextualized contributing factors” (p. 129). Yet, this lack of definition is complicated given a reliance on the use of various equally incommensurable descriptors. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) argued that there is a general understanding that “well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods ... the absence of negative emotions ... satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning” (n.p.). Add to this complexity that research from different disciplines investigate different components of well-being such as physical, social, emotional, and psychological (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

In their article examining the issues of defining this term of well-being, Dodge et al. (2012) concluded by sharing their definition of well-being as being the balance point of a see-saw. At one end is a person’s psychological, social, and physical “resources” and at the other are the psychological, social, and/or physical “challenges” (p. 223). A stable or balanced notion of well-being occurs when the resources meet the challenges.

Given well-being is not well defined but commonly used, one purpose of our study was to further explore how it is mobilized in our university context. What are the core attributes and how does this align with Dodge et al.’s (2012) perspective of the see-saw that strives to maintain an equilibrium of resources and challenges?

Conceptualizing Well-Being in Context

Harward (2016) set a bold vision for incorporating well-being as a core aim and purpose of higher education, as institutions grapple with the need to address mental health and well-being across their campuses (O’Neill, 2014). Many institutional initiatives focus on addressing growing concerns related to the student mental health and well-being (Bairk et al., 2019). At the same time, institutions of higher education have started to systematically explore staff and faculty well-being, acknowledging expanding rates of psychological distress, elevated physical health symptoms, and wide-spread burnout across the academic workplaces, as discussed in the previous sections of this paper (Catano et al., 2010; O’Neill, 2014; Sabagh et al., 2018; Watts & Robertson, 2011).

In 2014, our university recognized the need to further promote mental health and well-being for all faculty, staff, students, and postdoctoral scholars. Through this process, the institution established 28 recommendations to address six key priorities across multiple organizational levels. These priorities included: (a) raising awareness and promoting well-being; (b) personal resilience and self-management; (c) early identifications and response; (d) direct service and support; (e) institutional policies, processes, and procedures; and (f) supportive campus environment. Through the work of the campus mental health strategy implementation committee, the university identified a need to further explore and support educator well-being across the campus community.

In the entire CMHS (2015) document, well-being is named 40 times, and yet, at no point is it fully conceptualized. This approach leads to possible openings; by refusing to define well-being, we leave the concept responsive to the complexities embedded within it. As such, part of what we were interested in better understanding was how those who identify as educators on our university campus identify with and conceptualize well-being. In the next section, we describe how we went about uncovering these ideas through a World Café (Kenny, Popovic, et al., 2017; Prewitt, 2011).

World Café as a Method to Unpack Well-Being

Well-being is not only a concern in higher education. Our focus on well-being of educators started with a symposium hosted by three of the authors asking about the role K-12 schools play concerning the well-being of educators. This one-day symposium (described in more detail in Simmons et al., 2019) amplified the importance of creating spaces for educators to come together to talk about well-being. We were inspired by the response to our invitation and began to recognize some parallel concerns between the accelerated worlds of K-12 educators and university educators. Reflecting as a group, we decided to host another event looking into the role of the university in shaping the contours for well-being of its academic staff.

Drawing on the findings from the first symposium, we decided to further the conversation with a different group of educators, this time educators within our university through a World Café framework. The World Café methodology is, “...designed on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges” (Brown & Isaacs, 2006, p. 4). It is a qualitative research method grounded in posing a series of open-ended questions intended to generate dialogue and conversation from multiple perspectives, and from within and across a number of small groups (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Kenny, Popovic, et al., 2017; Prewitt, 2011). The World Café is especially suited to generating knowledge and narratives related to complex phenomena in organizational learning contexts (Prewitt, 2011), such as well-being. Like focus groups, the World Café methodology takes a social constructivist approach to data generation aimed at engendering in-depth understanding and interpretations (Liamputtong, 2011; Prewitt, 2011). In relation to conventional focus group methodologies, involving at least three to five planned small group discussions and guided conversation with six to ten different participants attending each focus group session (Liamputtong, 2011), the World Café methodology provides an opportunity for larger groups (e.g., 20 to over 100 people) to engage in one in-depth conversation with evolving rounds of dialogue that link with and build upon each other.

During a World Café, participants engage in an evolving combination of small group table conversations and whole group debrief sessions (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Prewitt, 2011). For the small group conversations, participants sit at tables with up to six others as well as a table host (Brown & Isaacs, 2006; Prewitt, 2011). The table host remains at the table for the duration of the discussion, helping to facilitate the conversation, capture the participants’ stories, and summarize the conversations during each round. Groups will typically engage in up to three rounds of conversation for 15-45 minutes a round. During each round, groups address a broad open-ended topic with guiding questions. Some World Cafés are designed to address the same topic and questions multiple times, while others will be based upon different questions for each round. In between rounds, participants move, rotate tables, and mix groups to share and build upon the insights generated. Following each of the three rotating rounds of discussion, the whole group comes together to share, reflect on and add to the themes

generated in the smaller table discussions. Typically ranging from 90 to 180 minutes in length, World-Cafés are particularly suitable to SoTL where complex issues are explored from multiple perspectives and points of view (Kenny, Iqbal, et al., 2017; Dawson, et al., 2010).

Our World Café session drew together 25 educators across the campus for a 90-minute dialogue. The goals of the World Café discussion were to: (a) highlight campus-wide conversations on educator mental health and well-being at the university, (b) explore multiple perspectives and make sense of how educators experience mental health and well-being at the university, (c) create a space to nurture meaningful relationships, and (d) inform the continued development of research, strategies, and policies to support educator mental health and well-being.

Participants for the World Café were recruited by sending an open invitation via email to educators across the campus community through institutional and departmental list serves. The term educator was broadly conceptualized in our communications as: “academic staff, teaching assistants and staff who support instruction.” Although we did not track how many would define themselves as “educators” within the context of this invitation, there are approximately 6300 graduate students, 3300 support staff, 1900 academic staff, and 1100 management and support staff at our institution, all of whom were sent the invitation to participate in the World Café. On the day of the World Café, 25 self-identified educators participated. To peel open one layer of conversation about how well being is being thought of and enacted for educators on campus our focus was not to achieve a representative sample for this study, or to take a positivist, objective view to our research. Our constructivist approach recognized the complexity of the issues explored; it was designed to accept multiple realities, perceptions, and nuances related to exploring educator mental health and well-being in a postsecondary context and to engage in collaborative and social meaning-making in order to increase our depth of understanding (Berenson, 2018). The number of participants in attendance aligned with past SoTL studies which used World Café approaches to explore teaching and learning issues (Kenny, Iqbal, et al., 2017; Dawson, et al., 2010). There was a balance of academic staff and staff supporting instruction in attendance at our World Café session, with a few individuals identifying with dual roles as graduate students who teach sessionally. Because we did not ask folks to identify their role on campus, we do not have specific numbers for these roles, but rather are drawing from the narratives shared throughout the dialogues to capture a snapshot of who was there. The session was hosted in a flexible learning space, designed specifically to facilitate collaborative dialogue. All participants engaged in the World Café session voluntarily.

As educator well-being is a complex and vulnerable topic, after territorial land acknowledgements¹ and highlighting the session goals, we began by establishing collaborative intentions, and engaging in a grounding exercise. These initial activities were designed to help create a relaxed, trusting and comfortable environment (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Prewitt, 2011). We also had a member from our campus staff wellness unit available onsite for the participants, should they have required support during and after the session.

¹ As a part of reconciliation between the Indigenous peoples and European settlers, a territorial land acknowledgement is the act of recognizing the traditional territories of the Indigenous peoples on which we live and work.

Data Collection

There were four sets of data collected through the World Café dialogue: (a) sticky-notes and table discussion points on chart paper for each table; (b) whole group themes after each round; (c) graphic representation of themes; and (d) research team debriefing notes. The study received ethical approval from the University's Conjoint Faculty Research Ethics to collect composite data through the duration of the World Café. In order to participate in the World Café, an agreement to have notes captured in various ways, none of which included any personal identifiers, throughout the dialogue was signed by all. Below we describe the process of data collection through the World Café method. Three sets of questions were posed during our World Café to inspire conversation during each round of dialogue:

- Round 1: What does well-being mean to you as an educator at the University? What are other words you would use to describe well-being? When you hear well-being, what are the first words that come to you? How do you conceptualize well-being?
- Round 2: What helps and hinders your sense of well-being in your role as an educator at the University? As an individual? In your classroom or workspace? At your department or faculty? At the institutional level?
- Round 3: As an educator at the University, what does the ideal or imagined space that supports your well-being look like? How can we get there? What steps can we take? What is your role? What is the role of the department/faculty/unit? What is the role of the institution?

Small groups of 4-5 participants discussed each round of questions for approximately 15 minutes. At each table, a café host facilitated, created, and supported the conditions for ensuring multiple viewpoints, perspectives and interpretations were heard (Prewitt, 2011), and to help make the group's conversations visible by recording the ideas generated through textual comments on sticky notes and flip chart paper. As much as possible, the table facilitator captured verbatim notes from the participants and placed them on sticky-notes to organize collectively afterwards. Participants were also encouraged to add their thoughts and ideas directly on pieces of flip chart paper that covered each table.

An open debrief with all participants was held after each round of questions to capture the key themes and patterns in dialogue emerging within and across groups using the probing questions: "What stood out for you? What themes emerged? Is there anything you want to add?" The lead facilitator captured the key themes emerging during the debrief discussion on white boards. A graphic artist was also present to capture and summarize the key themes of each round visually to help further illuminate the patterns that emerged.

After each round of questions, the groups were asked to redistribute themselves into new groups to maximize the knowledge exchanged (Prewitt, 2011). This iterative process where participants build upon and weave together knowledge generated through each round is based on a series of "dialogic interventions" (Prewitt, 2011, p. 190), and leads to greater meaning making as each individual, small group and the larger collective dialogue about inherently complex issues.

Analysis

To prepare for the thematic analysis, we drew from Merriam (2009), Miles et al. (2014), and Saldaña (2016). The notes recorded during the World Café were transferred into a matrix and structured by way of the four data sets noted above. Members of the research team conducted multiple iterations of coding, individually and collaboratively to allow for trustworthiness, inter-rater reliability, and crystallization (Richardson, 2000). We began by naming portions of the data that directly linked to our research questions. Our process of naming and identifying codes was heuristic, revealing interpretive ways of knowing meaningful to our inquiry. The process of coding the data took place in four stages: descriptive coding, in vivo coding, process coding, and value coding (Miles et al., 2014). During the World Café discussions, descriptive codes were assigned to summarize each round of questions and subsequent discussions by way of topic. The topics took the format of a word or phrase that captured salient points or themes expressed during their narratives, which were then transferred to our organizing matrix. Doing this during the World Café with the participants' present, we were able to ensure that our initial themes resonated with the meanings and interpretations of the participants.

In vivo coding, stage two, provided a space to draw from the participants' responses through their specific language, terms, phrases, and words captured in the small table discussions during each round of questions. In vivo coding allowed us to broach ethical moments of credibility and authenticity; it allowed us to attend to what was materially there within the words and phrases of the participants.

Process coding, stage three, gave us the ability to interact with dynamic experiences of the participants that emerged through time and as situated within their everyday worlds. Process coding provided us with a tool to capture myriad actions as they dynamically occur in the moment. Through the use of gerunds, "ing" words (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña 2016), process coding provided the cognitive means to signify discernible and abstract measures tucked within the narratives.

Value coding, stage four, allowed three distinct pathways to interpret the data. By way of value coding, we honed in on the values concerning the different underlying assumptions regarding how participants come to know and how such assumptions diverge and converge to shape their identity, culture, and professional practice in relation to the literature; the nature of such ways of knowing and what ethical considerations are involved in coming to know. Due to the vulnerable position for academics to discuss well-being in a highly competitive workplace, no data was collected with any personal identifiers, but rather we took composite and anonymized notes to capture the discussions (as noted in the data collection section).

Findings and Discussion

As we returned to the various composite data (including the visual summary of the World Café presented in Figure 1) individually and as a group to discuss the findings, we were simultaneously surprised and not-so-surprised (at times even disheartened) by what our participants shared with us. Overall, there were four themes that resonated with us in the context of the CMHS (2015) and educators' senses of well-being: (a) affective, relational and holistic aspects "in search of well-being"; (b) working through the messiness of well-being: risks and vulnerabilities; (c) inviting people into a culture of well-being; and (d) the role of leaders moving beyond policy towards enactment. While there is overlap between the four findings, and some of the comments below could be situated in more than one theme, we offer this as one heuristic to understanding

leads to a form of inner peace or an enactment of spirituality. Key to these emerging relationships is the idea of permission to share experiences with peers, permission to be vulnerable, to share from those private narratives, kept close to the heart; all things that other studies have found academics reticent to do in a climate of high-stakes accountability (see O'Brien & Guiney, 2018). And such an idea warrants an accessible campus mental health strategy that invites a healthy open discussion, one which nurtures a safe space to share vulnerabilities, permissions and openness.

Working Through the Messiness of Well-Being: Risks and Vulnerabilities

Consuming questions for participants were: how do we as educators model vulnerability, yet at the same time invite students to share?; how do we walk and navigate safely along these political lines?; and are we willing to take risks to open ourselves, our lives, what is close at heart to the public? Concomitant to the necessity of safety when sharing about well-being was the lurking presence of stigma and judgement in the competitive market-driven enterprise shaping contemporary universities (O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2014). Participants were cognizant about power differential questions of reciprocity, trust and support, and the need for collaboration and communication. We were left thinking about some of the hindrances when talking about well-being, in particular, thoughts of not being taught how to work through the messiness in such a public space of teaching and learning.

Participants expressed difficulty with having the words to talk about their experiences. They expressed trouble with zooming in on the care issues and the need for a language to understand their ways of coming to know well-being, which often did not appear in the language of the institutional strategies such as the CMHS (2015). They shared that often there is the performative, a singing and humming that all is right with the workplace and one's well-being, to pretend all is perfect, much like the see-saw balance point conceptualization of well-being grounding this work (Dodge et al., 2012).

Inviting People into a Culture of Well-Being

While participants' comments in the above section allude to the difficulty mapping previously uncharted terrain of speaking openly about well-being as a part of teaching and learning (especially at the meso-level), this theme turns to macro or institutional considerations. Our second question in the World Café—What helps and hinders your sense of well-being in your role as an educator at the university?—sparked many of the institutional focused responses. Participants acknowledge[d] the role of the university with going forward to support educator mental health and well-being. For the university to show a willingness to discuss and allocate time toward mental health and well-being coupled with policies and strategic plans that help with providing educator agency. Participants also mentioned the importance of having leadership that is willing to talk about well-being and give time to discuss the roles we all play with supporting well-being.

Educator life, as experienced within the different divisions in the institution, was described in terms of hierarchy, pace, and volume (see also Berg & Seeber, 2016; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2014; Vostal, 2015). For many, the need to prove the self through titles and credentials could feel somewhat like a treadmill going faster and faster. Recognizing you can take time to recharge and to integrate compassion into the world of the educator can lend to quality of health (see also Berg & Seeber, 2016; Leibowitz & Bozelak, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2014). Participants also

made salient practices that limit well-being, including ineffective communication within faculty, lack of transparency, how students give feedback on course evaluations, unfair workload, lack of control over context in the classroom, reward and recognition based on the hidden curriculum, many of the same practices mentioned in the literature on the intensification and acceleration of work in universities (Berg & Seeber, 2016; Gereluk, 2018; Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2018; Menzies & Newson, 2007; O'Brien & Guiney, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2018; Vostal, 2015).

In terms of imagining the ideal, participants acknowledged the need to establish and foster a culture of trust. Within a trusting environment, open conversations can occur that identify issues and make sense of tension, as well as provide safe spaces for sharing ideas and strategies. Within this trusting environment, information can be exchanged with the various stakeholders so that people feel [they] have been heard. A critical component is that of developing relationships and the learning with others. By creating such a culture, it should also provide opportunities for people to see how we all play into that role of supporting well-being.

Participants did not support a banking model (Freire, 1970) notion to well-being—a model which implies community members are empty and bereft of generating well-being practices, and thus requiring a top-down approach where well-being is conceptualized and evaluated from above. In other words, participants rejected models that contradict the constructivist nature of the World Café and the ontological position grounding this research.

Furthermore, while participants appreciated the necessity of institutional policies and strategic plans, they recognized those top-down approaches alone were insufficient. Through cautious optimism, the participants noted that the policies and strategic plans opened space to address well-being, yet that they could not themselves cultivate the culture changes required to instill a sense of well-being throughout campus. Instead, the participants were advocating for inviting people into well-being. It is about the need for places and opportunities for shared dialogue (regularly sustained), for more democratic and constructivist approaches rather than universalized tactics. Leadership needs to be open to possibilities of dialogue and having a sense of permission given to self-sharing stories, narratives, memory, and public memory resources artefacts. To be able to share experiences and an articulation of needs takes courage and must occur within a trusting and positive environment. Through the commitment of an invitation to dialogue, the process yet might begin to shift from a deficit or superficial model embodied in the banking approach towards constructivist, democratic cultural change with regards to well-being.

When imagining a community of well-being, participants described the notion of open doors and supporting the development of different or communities of practitioners, and part of community development requires fostering a collective responsibility advocating for a wellness-based campus. A community of well-being is a dynamic process that evolves and grows over time, with participation and knowledge generated from all members of the community.

The Role of Leaders in Moving Beyond Policy Towards Enactment

As participants imagined a community of well-being, they also acknowledged various levels of leadership support. Leaders may not themselves be equipped to lead this dynamic process. It is important that training and support for leaders should also be considered. They may need to develop their capacity to be good listeners, to provide constructive feedback, to acknowledge and respect boundaries, and to set realistic

boundaries. There was an overall appreciation of the importance of mentorship throughout the World Café dialogues. Leaders need to be informed and equipped with the skills to facilitate conversation, to help support advocacy, as well as to model practices of implementation of action.

As participants reflected on what helps and hinders their sense of well-being, the notion of a line drawn between institutional support (macro) and the community of well-becoming for individuals (micro) emerged (Simmons, 2016). The institution plays a critical role in leadership and resourcing supports to mobilize an action plan (ideally one that is responsive to and respectful of the perspectives and experiences of community members with all roles in the university). At the meso level, that of department or faculty levels, participants identified a need for trust and reciprocity. At the meso level, participants envisioned leaders who act and model well-being. The concern was how to move policy to enactment. Through purposeful and informed actions, policy implementation should have a deep and meaningful influence on individual, department or faculty, and the larger institutional communities. Raising a consciousness is critical; there is also a need for creating conditions in developing, resourcing, and actioning a purposeful plan in support of well-being. Yet, since you cannot pour from an empty cup, building individual and collective capacity requires planning, commitment, connection, and community.

Implications for Practice

There is a shifting in the landscape of how we see universities in terms of where stakeholders and policy are taking up the work of well-being. Conditions are being created for all to see themselves in this work, as well as have opportunities to have voice and be engaged in the work. From the World Café, four key implications for practice emerged. First, there is a need to acknowledge how well-being fits into the academic community within higher education. What do we mean by well-being and what does it look like in practice? As we have seen in the discussions from this World Café, all stakeholders ought to have an opportunity to unpack what well-being is and what it means in their practice, as well as how it is valued across micro, meso, and macro levels.

Second, an integral part is a culture shift requiring multiple stakeholders to develop deeper and more complex understandings of what well-being is and can be through the engagement with well-being as part of the academic community. This requires an ongoing, strategic, and sustained process rather than a workshop or two where people walk away to return to their everyday practices (O'Brien & Guiney, 2018). Much like the concept of well-being itself, the work is complex and multifaceted. It requires a change in norms, language, relationships, and practices. The underpinning of this culture shift is that of trust where conditions are created to be open to and support vulnerability (O'Brien & Guiney, 2018). Within this new cultural milieu, individuals may begin to feel confident to talk about their own well-being, question, explore, and engage in practices that support individual and broader community needs. How this work gets operationalized, including where and how it happens, who leads it, and how it is implemented and integrated in each institutional context will remain an on-going topic of discussion, action, and future research. Our study, through the focus on exploring where we are, draws explicit attention for the need for ongoing research and action that purposefully addresses mental health and well-being within and across postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, questions of how this work materializes in different contexts is necessary and an important next step for future research and consideration as the design of the research presented here was unable to capture those details.

Third, there is a need to establish and support a multi-level approach to the organizational learning (Hannah & Lester, 2009) of well-being that broadens the scope of knowledge sharing and action from students to academic staff and all levels of the institution. This multi-level comprehensive approach across micro, meso, macro and mega-levels mirrors calls for suffusing SoTL throughout our institutions (Simmons, 2016; Wuetherick & Yu, 2016). It cannot be seen as something that is offered only to the student population or only to those individuals who may require leave from their employment given issues of well-being (CMHS, 2015). Well-being should not be seen as an add-on or something taken up when challenges or issues arise. It needs to be “woven into the fabric of our institutions” (Williams et al., 2013, p. 50) in terms of the everyday practices, process, and policies. Strategic plans, like the one prompting our World Café, are key. However, we cannot risk letting them sit on the shelf; they need to be mobilized and infused into the cultures. In other words, the strategic plans must be living documents that are there to support the required changes in cultural practices on university campuses. Although more action is still required, our institution has implemented strategies such as: (a) ensuring all new institutional policies are reviewed from a mental health lens, (b) implementing an annual campus-wide grants program to support mental health and wellness initiatives, (c) creating a postdoctoral position to further research and advance programs and initiatives related to educator and student mental health and well-being, (d) formally adopting the institution’s campus mental health strategy and creating leadership roles in faculties related to mental health and well-being, (e) implementing a mental health teaching and learning workshop series, and educators summer well-being series in partnership with the teaching and learning institute, and (g) creating an institutional-level teaching and learning subcommittee focussed on mental health and well-being.

Fourth, leadership at all levels within the institution needs to support policy that actions the various elements of well-being in the day-to-day work of all stakeholders. Leadership is required to create and implement policy, as well as to resource supports in terms of strategies that are actioned through processes and practices taken up at the meso and micro levels (Hannah & Lester, 2009). In addition, leadership plays a critical role in modelling well-being practices, crucially inclusive of deep listening to and with the community in their portfolio.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

We recognize a critical limitation to our study was the small sample of participants from one event. We need to ensure greater representation from various stakeholder groups (students, staff, academic staff, postdoctoral scholars, administrators) from all faculties and administrative offices, and, in particular, from those who are reticent to spend their already-intensified time pausing to contemplate and act on questions of well-being (O’Brien & Guiney, 2018). Furthermore, while our research allowed us to point to broad areas where culture shifts and institutional change might occur, due to the design of the study and the kind of data collected, we are unable to provide specific insights or suggestions for how others might do the work of cultivating a well-being university. There were additional reflections on the limitations of the method of capturing data (composite and anonymized), we are unable to disaggregate ideas, issues, and concerns related to specific portfolios and units. This also meant that we were unable to return to any of the participants to get clarification on their ideas. As well, there was the potential to miss important statements made since we did not audio record the discussions, leaving us to ask about whose voices and ideas resonated and were captured to summarize the “group’s position.”

Our study has provided us with an opportunity to identify directions of future research. We see the need to expand the study to include multiple higher educational institutions, so we gain insight into how they are taking up well-being. Exploring the commonalities, trends, and disconnects among and between institutions will be the focus of such research.

Conclusion

What we have learned from this experience, even while we benefited from the institutional opening through the CMHS (2015), is that it is not good enough to say something is a problem and then leave it to the individual to deal with well-being. It is time for institutions to acknowledge and to operationalize the meaningful implementation of strategies and policies focused on mental health and well-being. These strategies and policies cannot remain as documents, as texts that we point towards if someone asks how the university is addressing well-being. Finally, and importantly, we recognize that universities are slow moving institutions, even while we sense acceleration at the individual level. If we wait to see a final culture shift, we are likely to become disheartened, and as such, we need to acknowledge and celebrate the mini moments as part of the culture change; the World Café and this collaborative writing are two such mini moments for us.

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