

Anglers, Warriors, and Acrobats: The Journey of Learning in Cooperative Education

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Abstract

Each year, students who are newly enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs prepare for their first co-op work terms. In this period of pre-employment, students ask themselves important questions like, “What do I have to do to get a job?” and “What do I want to be?” As a co-op practitioner I am exposed to students’ experiences and the dilemmas they face but I still wondered what was hidden from my view and outside of my understanding. Thus, during one-on-one interviews that occurred prior to their first co-op work terms, six co-op students shared the photographs and stories of their co-op experiences with me and I shared my photographs and stories with them. Goffman’s (1959) theory of dramaturgy provided the theoretical framework to present, interpret, and understand the words and pictures that emerged from these interviews. What resulted were dramas, narratives, and allegories: six participant descriptions written as mini-biographies, verbatim transcripts prepared as a reader’s theatre script, and a set of five themes composed with vivid symbolism. The five metaphoric themes of co-op student experience are (a) journey, (b) circus, (c) metamorphosing, (d) anglers at sea, and (e) warriors. Taken together, what emerged was a deeper seeing and a richer understanding of what’s “really going on” in the time prior to students’ first co-op work terms (Goffman, 1974, p. 8) particularly with regards to legitimate peripheral participation, reflection, and experiential learning.

Keywords: cooperative education, work-integrated learning, experiential learning, legitimate peripheral participation, reflection, school-to-work transition, identity, imaged-based research, narrative, reader’s theatre, qualitative.

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Dedication

For Gethyn

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Chapter 1: Plotlines

I am interested in the experiences of students enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs (co-op) and in particular the experiences of students as seen and understood prior to their first co-op work term. My interest is unusual given that the discourse in co-op is typically focused on experiences *during* work terms and the benefits that result. But in my view, learning from experience in co-op begins as soon as students start the mandatory pre-employment training, and probably well before when students are deciding to apply for admission. In other words, I believe that the experiences of pre-employment are rich with meaning and consequently, they inspired me to ask: “What is it that’s really going on here” (Goffman, 1974, p. 8)?

I Wonder

Let me tell you about an experience I had that may connect you with me, with co-op, and this journey of pre-employment. It’s a story that exists but I haven’t shared because it’s a story of the imperfect, of the untidiness that goes on behind the scenes of my life. And, it’s a story that makes me wonder about others and their experiences of the time prior to work.

Red Legs

Several years ago I worked as an employment specialist for a private technical school. During my six months on the job I was sick for four, constantly ill and dragging myself from day to day. At night I awoke every few hours from the cries of my baby son. In the day I was driven down by the company and the way they conducted business.

It was a joke at one point. Staff from the office looked at my desk, with its line of pill bottles arranged neatly in front of my computer, as a little curious and funny. It made me laugh

but only because of my sadness. I knew I needed to leave my job, only I was too tired to make a change. I dragged on thinking that, once I got enough sleep, I would emerge and fix the problem I was in.

In the winter, when the bleak world outside my office window seemed to match my state of mind, an old friend and colleague gave me a call and invited me for lunch. We talked and he worried about me as I sniffled away and dabbed my nose with Kleenex. He suggested I work with the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs. He said I would be happier and invited me to send my resume. That week I was called for an interview and that week, my illness cleared. I was hired. I was well.*

In celebration I shopped for a new suit. As though I had been buried, I saw that the styles had changed since I had been to the mall: the waists were lower, the pants were longer. I chose a tomato red suit. It was saturated with contemporary style. I felt a little unsure but happy, glowing in fact.

The morning of my first day of work my husband was away. I got up early and readied my son. I put on my suit and walked around as though I was wearing white. I wanted to be untouched, sharp, clean. My son, crawling and tippy, was not on my mind. From a short distance I watched him, severed from the moment, as he rolled, rolled to



Photo 1.1 Red Legs

the edge of the stairs.

Down in an instant, he fell and I leapt after him to the landing. The pressure in my head released and I cried more pitifully than he.

“How could I go to work?”

“How could I stay home?”

He was all right. He wasn’t hurt, only surprised by the tumble.

I brought my child to day-care, arrived at my new job, and was given the office tour. I introduced myself to everyone with a smile and never said a word about the fall to anyone. I was installed in my office and began my work helping students secure co-op jobs.

What did my new co-workers see? What did the students see? Did they see me? Was it my red suit, my puffy eyes, or something else that made an impression? Did I want them to know the story that carried me to them? I didn’t reveal much. My husband only recently learned of the story himself.

*(*Narrative used with my colleague’s permission).*

Red Legs is a reflection on my experiences of pre-employment. It’s about intangible memories but they are made more solid through words and image. And, through these words and image a thread emerged to follow for this inquiry. *Red Legs* encouraged me to ask: “What about co-op students and their unseen lives?” “What is unobserved in the transition phase prior to new jobs?” “What are the meaningful experiences that exist in co-op but remain hidden from view?”

Each year, students enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs prepare for their first work terms. They write resumes, shop for suits, interview for jobs, and await results. As a cooperative education practitioner I am privy to some of this drama, but I wondered what’s not fully seen by me or by others, even when these students are in our

presence. I wanted to know: “What is it like to be in this grey zone prior to starting work?”

“What do students’ experiences look like, how do they feel, and what do they mean to them and to me?”

Narrative can help our understanding of student experiences. Like the account of my red suit, of my relief, and my anguish, there is a release and an opening created through story.

Writing is often a way into ourselves, a way to uncover what is concealed and if well composed, it can light our way and enable us to “see that which shines through, that which tends to hide itself” (van Manen, 1997, p. 130).

Like words, images also have the power to illuminate but unlike words, images can bridge “the gap between the limitations of language and experience” (Hodges, Keeley, & Grier, 2001, p. 390). They can show what we mean to say and sometimes a whole lot more. This is because “photographs can be used to create representations that express experiences and ideas in ways that written words cannot” (Pink, 2007, p. 163).

For instance, the narrative about my preparation for work is somehow complete with its beginning, middle, and end. It’s tidy and somewhat conclusive. The photograph of my red legs however, seems to be just a beginning, something more than a mere illustration (Banks, 2006; van Manen, 1997). The picture shows my world closed down around me and the little wooden duck seems to refer to my son and suggest a layered story of my life as a mother. As described by van Manen (1997), “beyond the range of our ordinary speaking and writing there is the rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us... We may have knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency” (p. 113).

Perhaps this is because ‘seeing’ is not only eyesight. The word ‘seeing’ “has connotations of knowledge as well as sight. For example, we say ‘I see’ when we understand something, and

the word ‘insight’ suggests a mode of knowing in which one sees into the nature of things” (Montgomery-Whicher, 2002, p. 41). ‘Hindsight’ indicates we know better now than we did in the past, while a ‘Seer’ looks into the future and knows through “divine revelations...made in visions” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 979).

Through my eyes and the eyes of co-op students, I hoped to see and understand the stories of students as experienced prior to their first co-op work term; what students go through as they prepare, often month after month, in order to work as a professional in their field. I wanted to know if their experiences of getting a job were like mine, a drama/theatre/stage of everyday life – visible and invisible, public and private, known and unknown, commonplace yet meaningful. I hoped to make sense of what was taking place on stage and behind the scenes of co-op students’ lives. In this endeavour, the work of Erving Goffman (1974; 1959) provided meaningful guidance.

Goffman (1959) explained that in everyday life we behave as though the world is a stage. The things that we do (our speech, gestures, and comportment) and the way that we look (our clothing, accoutrements, and even the décor we surround ourselves with) is consciously and unconsciously employed to create the “impression” we seek to give in varying circumstances (Goffman, 1959, p. 11). When others see us we are on show and consequently occupy ourselves with script, choreography, costuming, and staging.

In the “front stage,” the public region where audiences observe our character, we are more careful about what we do and how we look (Goffman, 1959, p.107). We seek to control how others perceive us with the goal of giving an idealized presentation (Fixsen & Ridge, 2012; Pickard, 2012). “The performance of an individual in a front region may be seen as an effort to give the appearance that his activity in the region maintains and embodies certain standards”

(Goffman, 1959, p. 107). When on stage – seen, visible, and exposed – the show, that includes our character and the associated drama, is proactively managed.

In the “back-stage,” the private region where our character is generally unobserved, we are less careful (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). We are concealed, somewhat at ease, and often preparing for the next front stage performance. “Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman, 1959, p. 113, *sic*). In the back region, the drama is hidden, less planned and practiced, but no less meaningful.

For me, the back-stage is where I applied my make-up, did my hair, and dressed in my tomato-red suit. It’s where I hid the tears that I had cried, kept private my fears as well as my excitement, and relief. It’s where the little wooden duck, a prop appropriate for the home sphere, remained.

Out front, with my new boss and colleagues, I actively managed the impression I was making: the happy, healthy, employee, as perfect as I could possibly be for that moment and place in time. I dressed for my part (as a stylish new hire) and behaved appropriately (as a mature but excited professional). I *acted* as though I had made the right decision and that so had they.

In cooperative education, students also experience dramas on stage and behind the scenes. Like me, they are at home, trying on outfits and attitudes, readying for the next performance. They are reviewing potential interview questions and developing responses – the best possible lines, scripted but not memorized. They are choosing props and clothing to best support their public character in action. They are practicing and preparing while keeping in mind that once on stage, they must never appear practiced or overly prepared but instead, completely natural and “impromptu” (Fixsen & Ridge, 2012, p. 1167).

Out in front of employers, co-op students are controlling their image with “a clear understanding that first impressions are important” (Goffman, 1959, p. 11). When on stage, attempting to give their finest performance, everything matters: attire, facial expressions, props, and saying one’s lines just so (Biehl-Missal, 2010; Goffman, 1959). Students, as young leaders coming face-to-face with potential bosses, are carefully choosing to present their best self by “[putting] on a self-confident, positive, and controlled mask” that discourages “divergent interpretations” (Biehl-Missal, 2010, p. 290).

Interestingly, this means that the co-op office, as a location, creates complexity in our understanding of what constitutes front stage and back stage because it is a region that can be both.

While there is a tendency for a region to become identified as the front region or back region of a performance with which it is regularly associated, still there are many regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region and at another time and in another sense as a back region. (Goffman, 1959, p. 126)

For instance, at the co-op office students attend pre-employment workshops and in these situations, are typically relaxed and less conscious of the impression they are making. Although they are in public, they are behind the scenes, learning how to analyze job descriptions, write resumes, and respond to interview questions. The students are with co-op staff and not employers, so they can slouch in their seats, eat their lunch, and forget their pen. They aren’t totally *on*, nor do they have to be.

When the job interviews begin, the co-op office is transformed from a training centre to a recruitment centre. Instead of attending workshops, students are attending job interviews with employers who seek to staff available co-op employment opportunities. Employers meet student after student and through their presence and actions shift the region from back stage to front stage.

In our midst, students change from calm workshop-attendees to stressed-out job candidates. As they wait to be called for their interviews they sit poised for their debut. Their posture is erect. They covertly run their tongue across their teeth and with pen in hand, try to appear the epitome of ready. The students breathe evenly with the goal of calming their nerves.

With the co-op office shifting back and forth between front and back stage there is a blurring that takes place. The drama, that includes characters, audiences, and performance, gets muddled, and the frame of reference becomes lost. In this blurring, our vision gets cloudy.

As co-op practitioners, what do we see? What don't we see? What stories are hidden behind the scenes, at home and in private? What's out front under the glaring florescent lights, but perhaps still hidden because the events are invisible to us? What's meaningful but not understood, commonplace but significant? What's right in front of us but overlooked?

Gathering and Uncovering Experiences

To explain how something significant can be overlooked, perhaps it would be helpful to “gather” and share a tale of a common place in co-op (van Manen, 1997, p. 37). This place would be the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room. It’s just a room on the 4th floor of a building where the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs is located. And yet, it’s much more than just a room. In this space and in the surrounding rooms, is an unfolding of the multiple stories of co-op, some of which go counter to the stories perpetuated through history books and marketing materials, or remain largely undocumented by academic literature.

Salle d'attente | Waiting Room

Not long ago, four young men sat together in the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room, two with their laptops flipped up, the others hanging out rather than working – languid yet on edge.

“Hello,” I said to them as I walked into the room, “Everything OK?”

“Yup,” the one replied overconfidently. His smile was broad but evasive like it had nothing to do with me, and everything to do with something just outside my understanding.

“OK,” I said but turned away and thought to myself, “Odd. Why are they here?” Usually students are not allowed to wait in the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room at this time of year. Something wasn't quite right.

With each phase of the co-op program, the room changes from one purpose to another and the chairs are reconfigured accordingly. When the room is used for pre-employment workshops, the stacks of beige chairs are set out and organized into eight neat rows facing the long wall where two white boards hang. The rows of chairs are spaced 16 ½ inches apart, measured for accuracy in accordance with established safety regulations.

At the beginning of each workshop the heavy door is wedged open and students, to a maximum of 53 are checked in against an attendance sheet. Sometimes 56 students are slipped in, unbeknownst to the fire marshal. At the start of the workshop the door is closed and automatically locks. The large group of students face the facilitator and the Salle d'attente | Waiting



Photo 1.2 Salle d'attente | Waiting Room

Room becomes a classroom for topics like resume writing, interviewing skills, and how to apply for co-op jobs.

When the room is used for the on-campus interview period it truly becomes a Salle d'attente | Waiting Room. The chairs are re-organized into four perfect rows. The door is no longer code-locked but instead, wedged open for the constant flow of people. Students scheduled for interviews enter and sit evenly scattered throughout the room to allow for the appropriate personal space. Employers conducting job interviews come out of the office they have been assigned and call their next co-op candidate, "Suzanne? Hi! I'm Karen, nice to meet you." Students and employers move freely past the doors and through the spaces. But, co-op staff is aware of who's in attendance, tracked as they are against the online booking system. Otherwise, the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room is left empty and is only accessible to co-op employees that memorize the door's four-digit access code.

Yet here were these four young men, the beige chairs they occupied pushed around to form a loose circle, out of context from the norms of the co-op schedule and the institution's regulatory compliance. Here were students that smirked and lounged, typed, and waited – their energy charging the environment like electric eels. Why were they here?

When I walked past them I noticed the school-issue clock, "11:23 p.m." A glance to the other clock, hung identically but on the opposite wall read, "11:34 p.m." Whether early or late, these students should have been somewhere else. There were no workshops scheduled and the on-campus interview period was over. They shouldn't have been waiting. But, I left them to their own and carried on my way.

The next day my colleague explained that she needed to meet with me.*

"What is it?" I asked noticing her urgency and upset.

“Yesterday four male students came into my office all at once and demanded that I explain myself,” she said in one breath.

“Why? What happened?”

“I had sent them emails about helping with the placement process, about meeting with me to do resume reviews or mock interviews. But, instead of booking appointments they ambushed me. They were angry because they felt I could do nothing and who was I to be emailing them?”

The young men entered her office as one. She invited them to sit and they refused. Instead, their bodies – bold, male, and dominating – filled her small tucked-away space. She felt vulnerable and alone. She thought of the aggressors she had dealt with in the past, of how things can quickly get out of hand, of how she would manoeuvre an escape if necessary.

They never sat down, but as she spoke and explained, they eventually settled and listened to what she had to offer their job search. Finally, she was able to calm them and show how she could provide practical support and guidance throughout the pre-employment process.

“What amazed me,” she said in exasperation, “was that they had no idea that I am here for them; that, that is my job.” She wasn’t a coach or mentor for them. Instead they received her email communications with contempt. They joined forces, waited for her in the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room, and then attacked.

*(*Narrative used with my colleague’s permission).*

I orientate myself (van Manen, 1997) within the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room. In here, and in the surrounding spaces, I see the variety of students’ experiences of waiting for co-op work terms. There is no specific name for this time. Students are pre-employed, not placed, or

not matched with an employer, as though their experience cannot be meaningfully and precisely labelled.

Goffman (1974) explained that, to understand experience and make it meaningful, we use frameworks to contain and define what's going on at any given time. The frameworks or schema, provide edges that enable meaning to be made of what is being experienced (Scherff & Singer, 2012). "Presumably, a 'definition of the situation' is almost always to be found" (Goffman, 1974, p. 1). We come upon an event, name it, and proceed to behave accordingly.

But, the time prior to work terms seems to be without definition, frameless in fact. It's as though pre-employment is something other, not yet named. Perhaps the preparatory period is an unknowable reality, like a nonsensical dream. Or perhaps like a nightmare, it is something that is best forgotten. It's certainly shifty, moving as it does between front and back stage, defying easy classification.

The Salle d'attente | Waiting room could also be too mundane to register as meaningful. It's only a room, so commonplace that it doesn't seem to necessitate a closer look where one must "locate, perceive, identify, and label" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) the activities that occur within. The space is just a site between point A and point B, a middle-zone flanked by life as a student and life as a worker.

And, when looking at cooperative education in terms of outcomes, a middle-zone may be of little concern. Students regard pre-employment training as beneficial for securing work (Reddan, 2008) and most are successful in that regard. What matters is the result and consequently, special naming or defining of pre-employment is unnecessary. And yet, there is an understanding of experience that seems to have been left unaccounted for. Unnamed equates unnoticed. It doesn't necessarily mean unimportant. The four male students who entered my

colleagues' office acted in anger and frustration. Something was happening that made them act out. *Something* was going on.

Conceivably there *is* more than meets the eye. Johnson (2007) explored the hidden curriculum of co-op pre-employment training and how the material reinforces the status quo. Rather than teaching students to ask questions and critically analyse their world of work, co-op pre-employment training tends to focus on how to accept the world as it is, to work hard, be good, compete against others, and achieve an individualistic goal.

In effect, the curriculum acts like a script for the actors. The role, expected and prescribed for each co-op student, is to play along and maintain the appropriate "personal front" for themselves and for the cooperative education programs (Goffman, 1959, p. 24). That is, to employ appearance (clothing, posture, speech, and facial expression) and manner (tone, behaviour, and attitude) as "expressive equipment" for the performance of co-op job seeker (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). Eventually, practice will lead them to being the perfect co-op employee who can employ "deep acting" at will (Learmonth & Humphreys, 2011, p. 112).

Did the four students who lounged in the Salle d'attente | Waiting room, the place where they attended each pre-employment workshop, sense this dimension of cooperative education? Did they see what's hidden in the co-op curriculum and feel deceived, lacking, jaded, or empty? Perhaps each individual realized that they were being required to play a part and felt duped, their perceived reality destroyed and rendered a deception (Goffman, 1974). Maybe they believed they weren't playing along so much, as being played.

In co-op, the *cooperation* is meant to be between the student, the academic institution, and the employment community (CAFCE, 2005). But, students may come to realize that the

cooperation isn't equal amongst the parties or a meaningful part of their experience. The power in the three-way relationship is unbalanced with students holding the least amount of pull.

Some time ago a student exclaimed to me, "For some reason I expected the co-op program to be different and I don't know why. Maybe it's the title ['Cooperative Education'] or something. Like, 'We're going to work together'" (Jones, 2006)! Her statement suggested that she felt left out, that the partnership included two rather than three. Perhaps this student, or the young men who waited for my colleague in the Salle d'attente | Waiting room, were coming to an awareness that the co-op programs were cooperating but not in a way that would be expected, valued, or recognized by them. Perhaps they smelled a collusion that they wanted to question or a handshake agreement they wanted to defy.

According to Goffman (1959) the individual does not perform alone but in "teams" with everyone playing a part in order to create the team (p. 79). Success is achieved when every team member behaves according to established norms. If everyone colludes and appearances are maintained then the performance is mutually profitable.

It is in this light that we can understand how the sifting and sorting of urban life brings girls with good grooming and correct accent into the job of receptionist, where they can present a front for an organization as well as for themselves. But most important of all, we commonly find that the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate *co-operation* of more than one participant. (Goffman, 1959, pp. 77-78; italics added)

Those who cooperate by employing the proper front are more successful, both as individuals and as members of the team.

With Goffman's theory of teams in mind, cooperative education can be regarded as an intimate cooperation between students, employers, and the academic institution. In cooperative education teams are actively being built. The sifting and sorting is constantly taking place. And,

the co-op programs, through pre-employment workshops and one-on-one consultations, facilitates this sifting and sorting through what is known as the “placement process.”

The use of the word “placement” is interesting to consider because it’s a word that can mean “a placing or arrangement” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 800). When students enrol in co-op, they can choose to find their own co-op job or they can participate in placement. When participating in placement, students have access to the jobs posted on the Co-op Navigator, the online job management system used by the University of Ottawa. Typically, those who are seeking their first co-op work term will choose this option as it carries less risk than conducting a job search independently. Entering into an arrangement of being placed is significantly easier.

But, students may realize that the *arrangement* has a price. It requires that they learn to accept and perform the roles of already established characters (who are not of their own making). By demonstrating a close fit with the expected character-standards, the students increase the likelihood of job offers. To this regard, the co-op programs provide instruction in line with employer norms (and not with students’ unique qualities). Through workshops and coaching, students learn to submit themselves to an arrangement that’s already been made. In short, through cooperative education students learn to *cooperate*.

Thus, cooperative education is a player who controls, influences, and makes arrangements. It’s an educational model that’s like a puppeteer manipulating invisible strings or like a covert operative on a clandestine mission. It’s slick, secretive, and somewhat sinister in its approach.

Or is it? Students have indicated that co-op, and the people who work there, are some of the most meaningful and positive aspects of their post-secondary education (Jones, 2007). Students want to work, employers want to hire, and co-op programs want to enable successful

matches between the two. The idea of collusion and secret handshakes is intriguing but it seems altogether too menacing for the altruistic goals of cooperative education and the people involved.

And yet, co-op may indeed have a plot. A plot can be “a secret plan or conspiracy” known only to connivers, racketeers, and schemers (Barnhart, 1988, p.807). But, it can also be a “ground plan, map, chart” or “diagram” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 807) used by travellers, adventurers, and explorers. In other words, a plot is something that creates an outline that can be followed. It provides coherence (Baddeley & Singer, 2007; Mishler, 1999). Thusly, a plot is also an important part of “a play, story, or novel” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 807). It’s the underlying design that can give meaning to disparate narratives, clarity to ambiguity, and structure to enigma.

What then, is the *plot* of co-op pre-employment? What *is* it that’s really going on? The story and image of the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room, of this *commonplace*, helps us see the tension that’s just below the surface and it becomes difficult to ignore the vulnerability of our understanding of it, of pre-employment, and of cooperative education. It’s just a room on the 4th floor of a building on the edge of campus and yet, it’s much more than just a room (Scherff & Singer, 2012). In this space, and in the surrounding offices, is the plot of cooperative education, a weaving of stories and dramas that need to be explored, unravelled, and potentially named in order that it may be seen and understood.

Chapter 2: Three-way Mirror

In cooperative education there are many stories. Most commonly, the stories are those of success, of when cooperative education functions as a means for students to learn a skill and to earn a living. But, there are other stories that, while not often shared, still hold importance to our understanding of co-op and what it means to be a co-op student.

A Conventional Story of Co-op

Classically, the storytellers of cooperative education begin at a time over 100 years ago with Herman Schneider. Regarded as a forefather of cooperative education, he established the first co-op program at the University of Cincinnati in 1906 as a reaction to the learning gaps he saw in civil engineering students' learning (Cates & Jones, 1999; Groenewald, 2004; Grosjean, 2003; Sovilla & Varty, 2011; UCincinnati, 2011a, 2011b). By adding work terms throughout their undergraduate education he believed that students would have a greater opportunity to learn the skills not easily conveyed in the classroom setting (Groenewald, Drysdale, Chiupka, & Johnston, 2011; Grosjean, 2003).

Schneider's ideas were brought to Canada in 1957 with the establishment of the University of Waterloo Cooperative Education Programs (Grosjean, 2003; McCullum & Wilson, 1988). Currently, Waterloo has the largest co-op programs of its kind in the world with an enrolment of almost 16,000 students (UWaterloo, 2011). The Waterloo program design, with students alternating typically between four-month work terms and four-month study terms, has been modelled at the University of Ottawa and in universities and colleges across Canada (Downey, Kalbfleisch, & Truman, 2002; Grosjean, 2003).

Schneider's beliefs may have been encouraged by John Dewey (1916, 1938) who promoted the value of removing the artificial separation between vocation and academia (Linn,

2004; Prentice, 2001; Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004). In his book *Democracy and Education* (1916) Dewey proposed that, “the only adequate training *for* occupations is training *through* occupations” (p. 310; italics in original). He believed that a learning model that integrated practical, educative experience would enrich students’ self-development as well as their learning potential and as a result he has continued to influence discussions about co-op and the value of combining work and study for many years (Giles, 1991; Heinemann & DeFalco, 1990; Heinemann, DeFalco, & Smelkington, 1992; Jabs, Jabs, & Jabs, 1977; Jones, 2007; Jones & Quick, 2007; Korowski, 1991; Linn, 1999, 2004; Prentice, 2001; Saltmarsh, 1992).

As a practice, work-integrated learning (WIL) has grown in popularity (Coll & Eames, 2007; Grosjean, 2003; Sovilla & Varty, 2004) and has emerged in various forms under various names (Smith et al., 2009). The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario reported that:

Numerous terms are used separately and interchangeably to describe types of WIL, including workplace learning, work-related learning, work-based learning, vocational learning, experiential education, cooperative education, clinical education, practicum, fieldwork, internship, work experience, and more. This means that the same term can refer to quite different programs across postsecondary institutions in Ontario, and different terms can refer to the same programs. (Sattler, 2011, p. 24)

Cooperative education has emerged as particularly significant amongst WIL types. According to a special report published by Ipsos-Reid (2010), one-in-seven Canadians with a post-secondary education has studied in a co-op program. In Ontario, co-op is especially popular with 24% of Ontarians with a post-secondary education reporting that they have been enrolled in a co-op program. And, many of those who did not participate in co-op wish they had. In 2012, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities published a discussion paper calling for means to improve post-secondary education with emphasis on experiential learning and cooperative education to achieve this objective (Ontario Ministry of Training, 2012). In-line with

the provincial government's emphasis, Algonquin College announced that every full-time student will have access to a cooperative education experience by 2017 (Howell, 2012). Given that Algonquin is the fourth largest publicly funded college in Ontario with an enrolment of approximately 16,000 full-time students, this represents a significant move towards co-op becoming a widely accepted educational strategy ("Choosing Algonquin," September 25, 2012).

At the University of Ottawa, cooperative education began in 1980 with a small co-op program in undergraduate-level mathematics. With each passing year, more programs have made co-op an option, including to a limited extent, programs at the Masters level (Rowe, nd). There are now 72 different programs within seven faculties participating in co-op for a total enrolment of 2,100 students ("Single work-placement project laid foundation for co-op program," 2003; UOttawa, 2011b). Programs offered are wide ranging and include such diversity as biomedical science, lettres français, accounting, international development and globalization, mechanical engineering, civil law, and much more. The goal of the co-op programs' administration is to increase enrolment further and over the coming years, make co-op available to as many students as possible in as many programs as possible.

Like many other co-op programs in Canada, the University of Ottawa adheres to guidelines set by the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE). As stipulated in the program accreditation criteria co-op work terms must be full-time paid jobs at least thirteen weeks in length and linked to students' academic disciplines (CAFCE, 2005, 2008; Groenewald, 2004; UOttawa, 2011a). Upon graduation, undergraduate students are awarded a co-op mention on their diploma if they successfully complete four such work terms (or exceptionally, three work terms) during their degree program. Masters-level students receive a mention on their

diploma for completing two work terms, as required by their program structure under the direction of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Ultimately, the goal is to enable students to learn from experience in their occupational field (Groenewald, 2007; Groenewald et al., 2011). Like other experiential learning programs, co-op is meant to provide opportunities for students to learn by doing and interrelate theory and practice (CAFCE, 2006; Coll & Eames, 2004, 2007; Eames & Bell, 2005; Groenewald, 2004, 2007; Ricks et al., 1990; Sattler, 2011). Various researchers in work-integrated learning have sought to demonstrate, more often using quantitative research (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Coll & Kalnins, 2009), that learning from experience attains various positive outcomes such as (a) personal development, (b) career development, (c) academic achievement, and (d) work skills development (Dressler & Keeling, 2004). While some studies have focused on all four areas (Braunstein & Stull, 2001; Ipsos-Reid, 2010; Parks, Onwuegbuzie, & Cash, 2001) others have looked more closely at specifics under one or more of the various subjects. For example, research has been conducted on work-integrated learning (WIL) and cooperative education in terms of enhancement in motivation, positive work belief, and values (Coll, 2004; C. Hayward & Horvarth, 2000); sense of power in the workplace (Owen, 2000, 2006); increase in grade point averages (Blair & Millea, 2004); development of relevant, practical experience, and therefore tacit knowledge and skills (Coll & Pinyonattagarn, 2004; Nasr, Pennington, & Andres, 2004; Sharma, Mannell, & Rowe, 1995; Van Gyn, 1996); and development of self-concept (Drysdale & McBeath, 2012) as well as development of intellect (Keen, 2001). Several studies have looked at improvement in wages, career progress, and career clarity (Gardner & Motschenbacher, 1997; Mertzger, 2004; Siedenberg, 1994). However, researchers have cautioned that positive outcomes associated with co-op may be due to other factors, for example, the type of students who choose

to enrol in co-op rather than the program itself (Drysdale et al., 2010; Keen, 2001; Ricks, Cutt, Branton, Loken, & Van Gyn, 1993).

In any case, outcomes are perceived as beneficial to students, the academic institution, employers, and society at large (Braunstein & Loken, 2004; Braunstein & Stull, 2001; Coll et al., 2009; Cullen, 2005; Egart, 1994; Fenster & Parks, 2008; Haddara & Skanes, 2007; Kerka, 1999; Moore, 1994; Parks et al., 2001; Weisz & Chapman, 2004). Co-op employers benefit from access to a motivated and energetic workforce while academic institutions benefit from being connected with the labour market (Peters, 2012; Sattler & Peters, 2012; Varty, 1994). Co-op students benefit from being able to build skills, knowledge, and a network of contacts that will help their employability post-graduation (Dressler & Keeling, 2004; Sattler, 2011; Sattler & Peters, 2012; Zegwaard, Coll, & Hodges, 2003) as well as the potential to remain debt free (Grosjean, 2004). Even with the costs associated with coordinating cooperative education programs (Downey et al., 2002) and the challenges associated with spanning the boundaries between work and study, the perceived benefits of cooperative education seem to warrant the effort of the various stakeholders (Peach, Cates, Ilg, Jones, & Lechleiter, 2011).

Today, the National Survey of Student Engagement (*NSSE: National survey of student engagement*, 2008) consistently recognizes experiential learning as a key means for enriching post-secondary education and indicates cooperative education specifically as a way to achieve this goal. Government has also come to recognize the value of cooperative education. In Ontario, employers who hire co-op students can benefit from a provincial tax credit that offsets the cost of hire. In 2011 this credit, which is based on co-op student wages, was paid to a maximum of \$3,000 for each 10-to-16 week work term ("Co-operative Education Tax Credit," 2011). A similar incentive has been put in place in the province of Manitoba along with an additional

incentive designed to encourage the hire of graduates from cooperative education programs ("Provincial and territorial corporation tax," 2011).

And so, what began over 100 years ago with a small civil engineering program at the University of Cincinnati has proven to be a stable and valued educational strategy that improves “employment outcomes and earnings” as well as the availability of “highly skilled workers” to meet labour market demand (Sattler, 2011, p. 11). And, with the growing volume of literature pointing to the impact of co-op (Marion et al., 2012) and in particular the impact on student engagement as outlined by NSSE, it may be reasonable to think that co-op will continue to be available to future post-secondary students in an ever widening array of academic programs here and abroad (Coll & Eames, 2007; *NSSE: National survey on student engagement, 2008*).

Expanding Stories of Co-op

With growing interest in cooperative education programs comes a growing need to understand the experience of being in co-op. Typically, experience in cooperative education is understood to be associated with work, starting and stopping with the beginning and ending of each work term. Sometimes the story of co-op includes one work term, sometimes more. And, this is for good reason. As is often repeated amongst co-op practitioners: “It’s not co-op unless students work.”

But, for this study I wanted to re-look at this idea and consider instead that co-op is meaningful to student experience even before the first work term begins. Co-op students who aren’t yet placed and have never worked in a co-op job before are still impacted and changed by their enrolment in the program. Thus, it’s an idea that pushes us to consider: “It’s co-op even *before* students work.”

In other words, the so-called pre-employment period or placement process is an experience of a special kind. From a Goffmanian perspective (1974) pre-employment can be understood as a strip within a long series of experiences. Goffman (1974) employs the term strip “to refer to any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity, including here sequences of happenings, real or fictive, as seen from the perspective of those subjectively involved in sustaining an interest in them” (p. 10). With this as our lens, experience does not and cannot begin with work. Work is just one “raw batch of occurrences” among the continuous flow (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). Experience persists regardless of whether students are working or not.

And so, other stories of experience in co-op, beyond just the experiences gained during work terms, need to be told so that we “nudge our awareness until we pay attention” (Ely, 2007, p. 584) to what’s happening right now rather than waiting for what’s to come in the future or recalling what happened in the past. The question is then: “What *is* it that’s going on in the time prior to co-op work terms?”

The young men who entered my colleague’s office waited for her in the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room, a seemingly appropriate location aside from the fact that they shouldn’t have been there and they certainly shouldn’t have been waiting. van Manen (1997) explained that “it is sometimes surprising how didactic language itself is if we allow ourselves to be attentive to even the most common of expressions associated with the phenomenon we wish to pursue” (p. 60). So, why is the space called Salle d’attente | Waiting Room if no one is allowed to get in and wait? With its access rights offered, denied, and occasionally breached, what does the name of this place tell us about student experience? What is it about the room that warranted this naming?

The words “waiting room” seem to name a place where people wait for medical attention or for an airline’s boarding call. What is it to wait (Fujita, 2005)? The word “wait” means “to

watch” and “to be awake” (Klein, 1966, p. 1726). In the time prior to co-op work terms, the students’ energy, most often optimistic and refreshing is sometimes uncertain, unpredictable, and suspended (Cameron, 2002). Students are keyed-up and attentive as though it’s time to receive the results of a medical test – to take it in, grapple with the news, and adjust – or to get on a plane – to take off, fly high, and begin anew.

Likely, co-op students feel the heavy pressure of the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Since kindergarten they’ve been asked the question and they have probably always provided an answer of sorts: a ballet dancer, a fire fighter, an astronaut. Now the question lacks the playfulness of days past. The time for an answer, spoken with clarity and conviction is upon them.

Idealism is replaced with pragmatism, or maybe pessimism and angst. When I shared the picture of the Salle d’attente | Waiting room with my research supervisor she asked if the bold exclamation mark on the door was to warn for hazardous waste. Her reaction is hardly ominous given that the three-way mirror was added after the incident with the four young men; to help co-op staff see students coming down the hall and prepare.

In the waiting there is a transformation, miraculous and mundane. Nothing is happening but simultaneously, *something* truly is. It’s like waiting for spring to arrive. This waiting room is a place of shifts, a place where becoming *is happening*, and the tension sometimes shimmers along my skin.

Blurring the Edges

Given what takes place in the Salle d’attente | Waiting room, it could have been named something else entirely. For instance, it could have been named Salle de classe | Classroom

because in this space several workshops are delivered on employability skills including resume writing and interviewing. And although the teachings tend not to include research, theories, or debate, students will frequently think critically about the employment strategies that are presented by the facilitators, question the nature of the employment market, as well as the expectations of the cooperative education programs. For example, students will ask, “Why are typos on resumes used to disqualify job candidates? People make mistakes.” “Why are students expected to dress up for job interviews? Clothing doesn’t indicate skill level.” And “Why do we have to express ourselves to employers as though the glass is half full and avoid suggestion that the glass is ever half empty? Bad days *do* happen.” As the students ask these questions, listen and respond, sometimes a heated discussion is sparked. Occasionally, students will go as far as asking incredulously: “Isn’t this all just lying about who we really are?”

The workshop facilitators, who are focused on enabling students’ employment success, often respond to the questions in terms of the competitive nature of employability. They indicate that it isn’t lying *per se*, but a presentation of one’s best self. And, the most successful candidates are those who can demonstrate their best self in an interview setting.

Therefore, the focus of the training is placed on how to successfully secure a co-op work term and not on why job search is the way it is. In this way, the pre-employment workshops are only a means to an end and not something in-and-of themselves where thoughtful reflection about the status quo is allowed or encouraged. Consequently, it is inadvertently reinforced that real experience can only be gained through work terms.

Hence, this unrecognized period of the co-op experience reminds me of the two school-issue clocks that hang on opposite walls of the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room. When one reads 11:23 p.m. the other reads 11:34 p.m. Those 11 minutes are there but unmarked and therefore not

recognized as a specific “strip” or “slice” within the ongoing activities of co-op student experience (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). Pre-employment is understood as non-time. As they say, “It isn’t the *real* world.”

The pull of this sort of thinking, where time in co-op is understood according to work terms, is felt with how co-op researchers have regarded the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Lave and Wenger (2007) described learning as tied to practice and advanced that legitimate learning is situated. Researchers have found it helpful to use situated learning theory to understand learning in cooperative education because each work term offers a situation where learning can occur through practical and hands on experience (Billett, 2007; Coll & Eames, 2007; Eames, 2003; Eames & Bell, 2005; Eames & Cates, 2004; Eames & Coll, 2006; Fleming & Eames, 2005; A. Howard & England-Kennedy, 2001; Raelin, Glick, McLaughlin, Porter, & Stellar, 2008; Zegwaard, 2012; Zegwaard et al., 2003).

Work terms do indeed provide opportunities for practical and hands-on experience but these opportunities are also present during study terms and the pre-employment period, where schoolwork is done and jobs are sought. As Dewey advanced (1916), it is artificial to conceive of work and study as separate. In co-op there isn’t a sharp divide at the point where study ends and work begins. Instead, co-op students experience a blurry transition as they go through the co-op placement process prior to employment. They are learning even before they start their work term, doing the practical and theoretical work of becoming.

Students, not yet on-the-job, are on the periphery of legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger, 2007). As they participate in their study terms they write resumes, interpret job descriptions and company web sites, apply to jobs, and interview with employers who have selected them over others. They learn what it means to be a scientist, a writer, or an engineer.

Situated in the placement process they try out the language, postures, and attire of their profession – the character they hope to play (Goffman, 1959). They are asking themselves: “Am I a scientist?” “Do I really want to be a writer?” “Can I be an engineer?” And they answer as best they can, learning as they go, who they are, what they want to be, and if they’ll be accepted. They are chosen for interviews and passed over. They are successful and they are not. It is competitive and intense (Sattler, 2011).

Consequently, students may wonder about their employability and feel the need to divide themselves in order to achieve the reward of successful placement – give up one thing to get something else. Since division is impossible and artificial, they may be asking: “What parts of me must I hide in order that I might emerge as a professional in my field?” “Can I truly be myself and do the job?” “What do I really want?” These tensions are worthy of our notice – worthy of being located, perceived, identified, and labelled as within the frame of the cooperative education experience (Goffman, 1974).

Trust

I orientate myself within the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room because I have been an employee of the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs for a decade. During my first few years in co-op, I stood in the Salle d’attente | Waiting Room facing the too-warm room of students and taught them employability skills: resume writing, interviewing, and job search strategy as well as objective setting, and competency based assessment. When the 56 co-op students that filled the space left at the end of my workshop, another 56 came in. And then another 56 replaced them, until all 900 students admitted to co-op that year had attended the four mandatory workshops that formed the pre-employment training. In my office, just down the hall,

I met many of these students for one-on-one consultations: resume reviews, mock interviews, and job search planning meetings.

As well, I have walked through the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room when students sat on the edge of their seats waiting for an employer to call their name for an interview. I've seen them tense up, look at me, smile in expectation that I'm the interviewer coming to call their name, and then relax and even slouch a little when they realize it's just me, someone from behind the scenes (Goffman, 1959). On these occasions I have smiled back in hopes of encouraging them, to show them that I believed in their success, and support their efforts.

Thus, the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room is a place of edgy energy – the expected mode for students to get and keep a job (Johnston, 2007). If there are discussions they are led by the workshop facilitator, they are formal, and focused on employability factors. If students are waiting for interviews they “assume an air of detachedness like an adult” and act both like they do and don't care (Fujita, 2005, p. 127). The students are cool blue with professionalism and red hot with agitation and anticipation like “actors experiencing first-night nerves” (Fixsen & Ridge, 2012, p. 1166). They are attendees that are expected, and are expecting, to achieve an employment objective. There's no time to linger. It's show time (Goffman, 1959).

Perhaps it's a time worthy of students' reflections. When waiting for interviews, students often have nervous and sticky bodies sitting in tidy, calculated rows of chairs. Perhaps reflection would make pre-employment less like something to *get through* and more like something to appreciate, an opportunity to ask, “Why we do what we do?” and “What might be done differently?”

To be sure, the work placement itself has emerged as a topic worthy of students' reflections whether the work forms part of cooperative education or another work-integrated

learning (WIL) program (Doel, 2009; L. Hayward & Blackmer, 2008, 2009; D. Hodges, 2011; Howison & Finger, 2010; Meehan, Thomas, & Turner-Walker, 2008; Todd & Lay, 2011; Van Gyn, 1996; Zegwaard & Laslett, 2011). Through reflection, it is believed that work can become less of an end in itself and more of a milieu for integrating work and study (Coll et al., 2009; Lucas & Fleming, 2012; Raelin et al., 2008; Schutte, 2007; Stellar & Porter, 2011; Varty, 1994), for learning about the self (Grealish & Stunder, 2011; Griffin, Lorenz, & Mitchell, 2010; L. Hayward & Kranz, 2001; Jaekel et al., 2011; Mundhenk, 2004; Smith et al., 2009), for developing new knowledge (Cates & Jones, 1999; L. Hayward, Blackmer, & Raelin, 2007; P. Howard & Jorgensen, 2006), and for developing the capacity for lifelong learning (Canale & Duwart, 1999; Harvey, Coulson, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2010). Reflection has even been considered meaningful as a strategy for challenging the status quo and bringing about change (Karlsson, 2010). As has been advanced by various researchers and theorists, contemplation is key to deeper learning and understanding, and meaningful action (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Dewey, 1933; Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983).

To facilitate students' reflection on work, WIL programs use several different methods. "Through reflective journals, observation logs, online dialogues, or group discussions, students may be asked to reflect on their learning objectives, their competencies, the impact of the placement on their career and future success, and how the experience could have been improved" (Sattler, 2011, p. 59). As is the case at the University of Ottawa, students in WIL programs are also typically asked for a summative assessment, more often in the form of a final report or presentation that requires reflection on the work experience (Sattler, 2011).

Extending this reflective-practice beyond the borders of work terms may be beneficial to students and their learning in cooperative education. Reflecting on pre-employment would

enable more open discussion of the “why” questions that student’s pose. For co-op practitioners this would mean being more alert to what is going on around us. If we distance ourselves and say that experience is over *there*, we miss what’s going on right here, right now. We miss the meaning making that’s taking place all the time, regardless of whether students are working or not.

And so, we need to get closer rather than further away from students’ experiences (Fujimoto-Ikuma & Ishida, 2008). Of course this means that practitioners must recognize the “implausibility of being able to truly distance themselves from what they come to know and understand and yet continue to act in integrity and demonstrate trustworthiness, virtuosity, and rigor” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 15). This means that when I embarked on this project I had to accept that the unknowns would continue and that any attempt at answers would generate more questions; that I would change and co-op would probably change alongside.

I have a relationship with this building on the edge of campus, the rooms on the 4th floor, and of course the students, employers, faculty, and staff that interconnect there. I am not objective, nor do I want to be (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). For this study I wanted to explore the site unbounded, as existing in time, and as a dynamic living place (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Can this be generalizable, valid, and reliable? It depends more on you dear reader, than me. Whatever I reveal changes me, the researched, the site, and perhaps you. We are in relation with each other and all “parties will learn and change in the encounter” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9).

For instance, this exploration may create awareness of students’ experiences that do not fit with current perceptions and beliefs about cooperative education. Looking behind the stage curtain, re-framing our understanding of what’s going on, and sharing these stories can be

somewhat uncomfortable. In fact, I worry that I will reveal a plot that has me exiting stage right, tomato red suit and all.

This “full-blooded awareness of the present” (Abram, 1996, p. 206) regularly tests my resolve, and may continue to do so as the stories become public. The project may test co-op practitioners too, especially if my inquiry pushes boundaries and sparks a reaction to the perceptions around what co-op is. If there is a ripple then I hope that the energy will create a sense of wonder that encourages the partners in cooperative education (the students, the academic institution, and the employment community) to come together in collective reflection about the meaning of learning from experience.

Chapter 3: Brass Bell

Against the back wall of the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room, just visible on the right, there is a brass bell. When a student has struggled to secure a job and has remained in the process for weeks upon weeks the co-op employee responsible for their placement will sometimes race down the hall and ring the bell signalling the triumph and relief of the student's hire. Cheers call out from everyone's offices and there is a collective exhalation. The waiting is over. The student *will have an experience*.

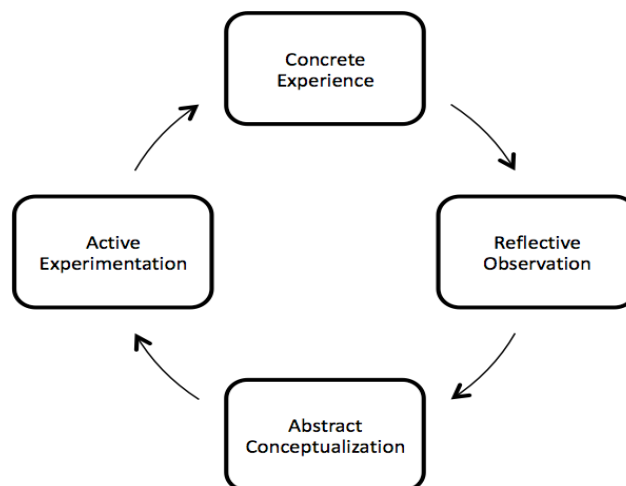
David A. Kolb (1984) and his proposal that “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38) emerges in the co-op literature (Cates & Jones, 1999; Linn, 2004; Martin & Leberman, 2005; McRae & Ramji, 2011; Schutte, 2007; Smith et al., 2009; Tener, 2004; Weighart, 2009), my own included (Jones, 2007; Jones & Quick, 2007) because he advances a learning cycle with four main components: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (see Figure 3.1). By recognizing concrete experience and active experimentation (and therefore, “learning by doing”) as meaningful to the learning process, his work encourages an inclusive understanding of learning where action is as important as, for example, theorizing (Dunn, Schier, & Fonesca, 2012; Kennedy, Ward, & Milne, 2010; Raschick, Maypole, & Day, 1998). As a result, gaining work experience is validated.

The work of David A. Kolb has therefore been helpful to advancing cooperative education because value is given to the learning that occurs during work terms (Bartkus & Higgs, 2011; Cates & Jones, 1999; Cooper, 2011; Eames & Cates, 2011) and the so called, real world (Marchioro, Ryan, & Cripps, 2011). To be sure, working in co-op jobs allows students the

opportunity to engage in concrete experience and active experimentation that can then be looped back upon for reflection and conceptualization (Dressler & Keeley, 2011; Griffin et al., 2010; Harvey et al., 2010; Lucas & Fleming, 2012) either during the work term or after the fact (Bates, Bates, & Bates, 2007; Howison & Finger, 2010; Woodley & Beattie, 2011). But, Kolb's words like "process", "cycle", and "structure" as well as the chunking of learning into quadrants has pulled our understanding of experience into divisions, separations, and polarities, and has consequently limited the co-op research community's interpretation of his proposal.

Figure 3.1

The Main Components of Kolb's Process of Experiential Learning



In the Salle d'attente | Waiting room, the students wait. The pervading belief: only while working at a co-op job can students start to learn by doing; have concrete experiences where they can actively experiment. Meanwhile, experiences are happening constantly. Working or not,

students are living: experiencing, reflecting, observing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and actively experimenting. Whether or not the brass bell rings, students are doing and they are thinking about what they are doing. These experiences are not clicking together in uniform succession (first study/theorize and then work/do) but instead, they are emerging like a starry night at sunset: a blanket punctuated by significant moments and difficult choices. In the Salle d'attente | Waiting room the students do much more than wait for experience to begin. In this space, and outside of it, at home or elsewhere, the students are continually, constantly, actively learning in all the ways Kolb has suggested.

And so, if there is a diagram for learning in cooperative education, then it may be quite different than the one drawn by David A. Kolb. His image is a cycle with one aspect of learning taking place after the other. It's a learning model that is structured and compartmentalized. When co-op researchers have interpreted this diagram learning-by-theorizing has been relegated to academic study terms and learning-by-doing has been relegated to co-op work terms. But, if learning-by-doing takes place prior to starting work, then the diagram may require reinterpretation, "adjustment," or perhaps, a re-plotting (Ricks et al., 1993, p. 14).

To develop alternative views of cooperative education I wanted to expand, or perhaps disrupt the classic story of co-op that's told from the administrator, historian, or researchers' perspective by seeing what's going on from the student's perspective during the pre-employment period. As such, I wanted to ask students to share their stories and images of co-op prior to their first work term so that they are our raconteurs. Only through their eyes and words can we get closer to knowing what it's like, what's really going on in co-op, and whether it involves anything more than waiting for concrete experience and active experimentation to begin.

Let me tell you a story and share a photograph to illustrate what I mean.

The Monarch

Some years ago, I worked with a student that I nicknamed The Monarch. She came to my office one day with a dilemma. She had a co-op job lined up. It wasn't what she wanted to do but it was a sure thing. If she accepted it then she could relax and focus on her studies. Her father was urging her to sign the contract and be done with it. It was a good paying job with a large and respectable company.*

But she wanted something else, something more cutting edge and exciting. She wanted her co-op work term to challenge her mind. She thought she had a chance with a better job, something closer to her ideal, but the interview had not yet been called. She asked me, "Should I take the sure thing or hold for a maybe?"

"Are you like your Dad? Do you value the sure thing?"

"No. I'm a risk-taker and a go-getter," she said.

I pressed on, "Could you sleep at night even if the better job never materializes? Would you kick yourself if you ended up with neither?"

She asserted, "I would sleep soundly. I would know that I had made the right decision and I would live by my choice."

The young woman left my office having decided to pass on the sure thing and wait for the job she really wanted. In the end however, I learned that The Monarch changed her mind. She took the guaranteed job with the respectable employer.

What happened? Did her father pressure her or did she lose her self-assuredness without help from anyone? Did she grow fearful? Tired? Empty? Old? Did she sacrifice the risk-taker she claimed to be or had she not yet become one, like a butterfly struggling against the walls of her chrysalis? Or maybe it was something else.



Photo 3.1 The Monarch

*(*Narrative has been modified to protect the identity of the student).*

The anecdote of The Monarch is my experience of working with a student as she seeks employment and waits for their first co-op work term. I suspect that aloud and quietly to herself she wondered, “What do I want to be?” “What do I want to do?” and “Who am I?” Likely her decision-making was anything but easy, and perhaps it is ongoing.

If The Monarch heard my story of what I understood about her career decision-making she might agree with my interpretation. However, she might as easily laugh and wonder where I get my crazy ideas. This is because *The Monarch* is my story, a narrative drawn from self-reflection and from journaling about my experiences of working with co-op students. But, “narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. Our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plotlines” (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000, p. 121). And so, it's an appropriate place to start to see things deeply, and perhaps differently than we have in the past.

Naturally, the Monarch might wonder about my picture of a person's upper body. Harper (2002) explained that when the researcher takes photos there is the opportunity to reframe mundane experiences to make them visible again. In this case I move in to see and show the threads of what could be the student's classic white dress shirt and the turn of her collar. Like the anecdote, it is *my* exploration of a young woman and her choices in professional attire that construct the truths and falsehoods of her image (Goldstein, 2007). If shown to The Monarch, the image might enable her experiences to be visible to her in new ways. Or, she might deem it unique or beautiful but distant from her lived experiences (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). Would it be a little bit of both? I'd certainly like to ask her.

I imagine that The Monarch would take a very different picture than I did and the reasons wouldn't necessarily be immediately apparent to me. This is because our photographs are about our personal stories. The reasons we frame something instead of something else is quite individual.

And so, to explore what might happen if The Monarch picked up a camera to photograph her own experience I took a snap shot with my digital camera phone. With the image I'm *attempting to be a study participant and photographer* that's comfortable with the "terrain" of digital imaging (Riley & Manias, 2004, p. 399). I'm *pretending* to be a student to *demonstrate* a potentially dissimilar outcome. And, as is shown, the result is quite different from the researcher photo.

Autophotography, as it is sometimes called (Riley & Manias, 2004), enables participants to visually represent their lived experiences because it offers a means to capture their symbolic

world (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Riley & Manias, 2004). In this case, the student-participant captures a grey view seen by so many other co-op students as they trudge along campus on their way to and from job interviews and career decisions. It is the student-participant's exploration of her own experiences of living the co-op placement process (*as I have imagined it might be*).

This picture, an image of what The Monarch might see, is quite different from mine as a researcher-photographer. We

followed the same photography protocol that guided us to capture the objects, people, places, events, and personal aspects of our co-op experiences (Clark-Ibanez, 2004) and what we regard as typical, important, and valued (Price, 2002) as well as ill fitting and upsetting.

But our choices are quite distinct.



Photo 3.2 What the Monarch Might See

And yet, I never believed that I had to choose between the participant's images and my own for this study (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Harper, 2002; Riley & Manias, 2004). Each offers a way *to* the phenomenon and *into* the phenomenon (van Manen, 2005). My exploration of the white dress shirt and the student's exploration of the dark road are our own but each is connected to the cooperative education pre-employment experience and together they enable an expansion of understanding. What's important is the story behind the pictures.

And so, for this study I wanted to ask students to talk to me about their images, to tell me what the eye sees, about the stories that are hidden from our view, and about the imagery that is

representative of their experiences. I also wanted to share my photos of co-op with these students and ask: “What are your thoughts on the pictures I took?” Taken together, my hope was to explore the phenomenon so that understanding became saturated, rich, and deep (Creswell, 1998, 2002; van Manen, 1997).

With the approval of the University of Ottawa Ethics Review Committee, I proceeded with the project as such (Appendix A). To recruit students I sent two emails to over 570 co-op students in early January 2010, a crucial point in co-op pre-employment as it is when students return from the winter break and start applying to co-op jobs. The first email was sent on January 8, 2010 with little success and so a revised recruitment email, edited in order to increase interest, was sent a week later on January 12, 2010 (Appendix B & C). From the two emails, six students showed interest from a pool that included seven faculties and 72 programs of study. Those who came forward were from the Faculties of Arts, Administration, and Social Sciences and all were very enthusiastic about the project with many expressing a personal interest in photography as the key motivator in their decision to participate.

The six who chose to participate in the study, first met with me to review and discuss the project (Appendix D) and informed consent (Appendix E). I explained that as participants they were to explore their thoughts, feelings, and seeing as they experienced the time prior to their first co-op work term at the University of Ottawa (Appendix F). To do so, they would take pictures (Appendix G, H, and I) and attend two one-on-one in-depth qualitative interviews where they would discuss their images with me (Appendix J, K, L, and M). I explained that I would also be taking pictures (Appendix G and H): a picture of each participant in their first one-on-one interviews and pictures of co-op pre-employment as seen through my eyes. Like the students, I

would look at my thoughts, feelings, and seeing with my images, and in addition, through my journaling, writing, and re-writing (van Manen, 1997).

All six participants that came forward agreed to continue with the project. They all signed the consent form but none wanted to use the disposable cameras that I had supplied at the group meeting. And so, over the length of the project the students and I took between 5 and 30 photographs each using our own cameras, sometimes with an SLR and sometimes with a camera/phone that was readily available.

Like the image of the young woman in the white dress shirt, some pictures were abstracted, planned out, and full. Like the snap shot of the road, other pictures were rough, spontaneous, and dark. Together, our images uncovered a range of the unforeseen, from the informational or artistic, to the shocking or emotional (Cronin, 2006). And, they depicted what is “both true and constructed” (Harper, 2005, p. 749). True because they showed real people, places, and things embedded in real moments (Ball, 2006; Banks, 2006; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2000; Pink, 2007; Riley & Manias, 2004; Stanczak, 2007). And constructed because the photographer and the subjects made choices about what is shown and what is concealed (Berger, 1973; Cameron, 2002; Hooks, 1995; Solomon, 2005) as we so often do (Goffman, 1959).

These pictures were shared in two sets. As planned, once the participants and I had taken our first set of pictures and had them developed, we met in mid-February for a one-on-one qualitative interview. During the interviews I asked the students for their reflections on what was in their images as well as for the stories and meanings behind their choices. I also took a picture of each participant.

The participants then took a second series of photographs and met with me in April and May for another one-on-one interview. Again, the students were encouraged to share the reasons

for their photographs. In the second interview I also shared my photographs: the pictures I had taken of the participant in the first interview and the pictures I had taken of co-op over the four months of the pre-employment period just past. I encouraged our sharing and interrelating, and the interpreting of our images for each other (Ball, 2006; Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006; Goldstein, 2007; Harper, 1994). This means that I asked the participants to show me their pictures and tell me about them. As well, I showed them my pictures, shared my stories, and asked for their reactions. Like handing the picture of the Salle d'attente | Waiting room to my research supervisor, the meanings of the phenomenon were deepened and challenged (Rogers, 2007). I listened and respectfully watched for multiplicity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and they listened as well and then responded thoughtfully with their anecdotes and opinions.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then shared with the individual participants. And, through the experience of transcribing the participants' words verbatim, analysis began in earnest –images made an impression, phrases became lodged in my memory, and words stood out. For example, one participant photographed her sister mouthing the word “sh-t!” while another said he wasn't “a bird on a wire,” and yet another kept describing her experience in co-op as “daunting.”

Interpretation was an on-going activity throughout this project, beginning with a research proposal that included my narratives and photographs and then continuing inductively over the length of the project. However, it became my focus during the quiet left by the departing participants. I looked carefully for meaning by reflecting on what had been shown, what had been described, and what had transpired as well as how these connected with the theories I had read (Bach, 2007).

Understanding grew from my personal experiences and then intensified through consideration of words and their etymology: idiomatic phrases and their deeper meanings (van Manen, 1997), as well as pictures and their intentions (Bach, 2007; Dahan et al., 2007). My experiences, as I had understood them through my journaled words and pictures, bumped with students' and enriched the meaning of the collage. Rather than putting something on top of something else, understanding and expressing meaning surfaced and resurfaced as a "back and forth" and expanded (Bach, 2007, p. 287). I wrote, reflected, and worked reflexively. I reasoned and analyzed, inducted, and even abducted, and allowed space for meaning to make itself known as each element of the study informed the other (Shank, 2002). I enjoyed the writing and pictures and revelled in narration as a living (de Mello, 2007; Rogers, 2007). I swam in a shadowy sea of yellow, magenta, and cyan.

As expected, the students' time prior to their first work terms, as seen and understood by students and me, is "richer and more complex than anything we could have anticipated" (Shank, 2002, p. 187). This complexity required that design decisions be made in "light of growing understanding" (Josselson, 2007, p. 557). What resulted were stories: six profiles (one for each participant), a reader's theatre script (that combines the participants' interview transcripts into a single dramatic work), and five themes (that focus our understanding of the students' experiences into a few significant areas). Each of these stories, whether told as biographical profile, theatrical presentation, or theme, is enriched with the visual power of photographs.

The six profiles include the anecdotes, thoughts, and feelings of the research study participants: Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel (all pseudonyms). The profiles are the individual stories of these young people, mini-biographies of their personal experiences, that

sometimes focus on cooperative education and sometimes not. Through these stories the uniqueness of the students is showcased and their individualism celebrated.

The six profiles are however, my telling of who the students are. Through the mini-biographies, the reader has the opportunity to understand where each of the co-op students are coming from, where they are at present, and perhaps where they are going in the future (Freeman, 2007; van Manen, 1997). But, this is of course from the subjective, “shaped” perspective that I take as the writer (Creswell, 1998, p. 174). Writing biography requires, and even asks for a certain amount of imagination and poetry, to ensure that what is written is interesting enough for others to want to read (Freeman, 2007). It is an art form that is “shot through with subjectivity, interpretation, and imagination” (Freeman, 2007, p. 128-129). Consequently, the profiles are direct and informative but also lyrical and metaphorical.

An artistic, imaginative approach also defined how the findings were presented in this project. Instead of a traditional format, the transcripts from the twelve interviews conducted with Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel were combined and developed into the reader’s theatre script titled “Seeing Cooperative Education.” Reader’s theatre is a form of stagecraft that’s focused on oral interpretation of the script rather than physical movement. The actors do not memorize their lines but instead, read the words of the script held in their hands (Coger & White, 1973; Latrobe, Casey, & Gann, 1991; Latrobe & Laughlin, 1989). The authors Coger & White (1973) stated that:

Through their vivid reading the interpreters cause the audience members to see in their minds’ eyes the characters in action in the world of literature. The readers may or may not be aided in their interpretive action by lighting, music, sound effects, simple costuming, and nonillusory staging. Primarily this is theatre of the imagination, theatre of the mind. (p. 3)

And in its simplicity, the art form allows for the complexity of meaning to emerge as well as the space to reflect upon it.

Typically, a reader's theatre script is adapted from dramatic literature (plays, poems, essays, and novels) that include "*delineated characters in a plotted dramatic action*" (Coger & White, 1973, p. 6; italics in original). But, as was done in this case, a reader's theatre script can also be composed using interview transcripts of research study participants (Sandretto et al., June 2007). Organized and developed into dramatic script-form, the verbatim words of the study participants become plump with personality and rich with story.

A reader's theatre script creates an interesting dynamic for both the readers and the audience. And, if the readers and audience have a stake in the topics and issues brought forward by the play then the results are even more compelling (Hurren, Moskal, & Wasylowich, 2001). And so, in late July 2012, I staged the reader's theatre script "Seeing Cooperative Education" at the bi-annual conference for the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE) in Whistler, British Columbia. The performers and the audience were co-op practitioners from across the country, each meaningfully connected to the student experience at their academic institution. This research report concludes with my reflections on this event using my personal narrative and photography.

The "Seeing Cooperative Education" reader's theatre script has 22 acts. These acts were analyzed and organized into five themes of co-op student experience (see Appendix N). The themes are: (a) journey, (b) circus, (c) metamorphosing, (d) anglers at sea, and (e) warriors. And, as might be gleaned from the theme titles, they are written using a creative approach, rich with metaphorical meaning.

The photographs taken by the study participants are included in the five themes, as well as the six mini-biographies, and the reader's theatre script. These photographs are also stories in their own right. They float, expand, and interrupt the words and provide a richness and depth of meaning not otherwise available. Although some of the photographs that were taken can be categorized into specific groups, other photographs are completely unique and consequently, open our understanding in new ways and beyond what is thematic (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Price, 2002). Thus, as information the photographs make statements, as art they "create space where the experience can be vicariously lived" (de Mello, 2007, p. 207).

Goffman's (1974; 1959) theory of dramaturgy provided the theoretical framework for this study. Referencing Shakespeare's famous quote, Goffman (1959) stated, "All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify" (p. 72). Thus, Goffman's concepts of theatre and stage, of actor and audience, of drama, setting and performance, provided a lens for my interpretation of the findings.

Goffman's theory of dramaturgy also influenced design decisions for this study. I made sense of the student's words and photographs, and presented them in this report, using creative, compelling, and dramatic forms that incorporated story, plot, and allegory. The six participant descriptions are written as mini-biographies that allow for each individual's personal plotlines to emerge. The set of five themes are framed in vivid symbolism allowing for parables of the experiences to unfold. And, particularly significant to Goffman's theory of dramaturgy, the verbatim transcripts of the six participants are written as a reader's theatre script complete with character notes, props, and stage direction. In so doing, the theoretical framework is deeply infused in this project.

Further, Goffman's theory of frame analysis guided my critical thinking. I asked and re-asked Goffman's (1974) question: "What is it that's really going on here" (p. 8)? Using this question I was able to better see the drama that's taking place and the real story within the frame. And, I found that in the time prior to students' first work terms, there is legitimate peripheral participation, reflection, and experiential learning.

Did I objectively separate myself from the study? There was a time not long ago when I would have said: "Yes of course. It's possible to do so, and I did." Now I'm not so sure. On some level, I attained a cool surrealism that enabled transcendence, a severing from the moment like so many years ago when at home, readying for my new job at the co-op office, I watched my son tip over the edge of the stairs and fall to the landing below. But mostly, I felt personally connected with the stories that I heard, saw, and wrote. There was a familiarity that seemed to grow.

Consequently, I feel that I was both too infused with the project and not infused enough. I suspect that this is some of the art of meaning making (Tobin & Begley, 2004). What I do know is that I watched and listened for an enlarging landscape of multiple realities of the time prior to co-op students' first work terms. And, I know that the elusive dark silence of truth may never fully open itself to me (van Manen, 2005).

Chapter 4: Birds on a Wire

The six co-op students who participated in this study are Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel. These students, from the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs, are unique individuals who also share many similarities. Their differences and similarities are explored in Chapter 4 with an aerial view of the participants that highlights demographic information and with six individual profiles that are written in narrative form. Later in Chapter 5, the students' differences and similarities are explored with a reader's theatre script written with the participants' verbatim interview transcripts, organized into 22 acts. The aerial view provides high-level, objective information about the participants. By contrast, the six narratives and the reader's theatre script provide more in-depth, subjective information about the participants and their experiences during co-op pre-employment.

Aerial view

Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel were all born in 1990 and were either 19 or 20 years of age at the time of the study depending in their birthday. All left home in order to attend the University of Ottawa and are therefore new to the Capital City. However, Amal travelled the furthest having emigrated with her family from Saudi Arabia. She is also the only Permanent Resident among the group that is otherwise made up of Canadian Citizens. Ben is the only male student.

Most of the participants speak both official Canadian languages (English and French), a skill that has significant value in the bilingual Ottawa employment market. The only exceptions are Rachel who is unilingual-Anglophone and Amal who fluently speaks both Arabic and

English. Mélanie is the only participant with French as her first language, but interestingly she is majoring in the English program with the Faculty of Arts.

Also with the Faculty of Arts are Cayla and Rachel who are both majoring in Communication. Ben is studying Communication as well but he is completing a Political Science/Communication double major with the Faculty of Social Sciences. Otherwise, the students are with the Faculty of Administration: Amal is studying Human Resources Management and Emma is studying International Management. All told, students from three faculties and four program-types came forward from the pool (see Table 4.1).

Given the range of students who were invited to participate in this study, it's interesting that half of the group are enrolled in the Communication program. But perhaps this is not surprising given that the research study specifically asked for involvement from those interested in photography (see Appendix B & C). As part of their degree program, Communication students can choose among courses like New Media, Image and Communication, Film and Video, and Public Broadcasting. Consequently, the project may have had particular appeal to this group of young people.

Table 4.1

Participant Faculties and Programs

Participant Pseudonym	Faculty	Academic Program
Mélanie	Arts	English
Cayla	Arts	Communication
Rachel	Arts	Communication
Ben	Social Sciences	Political Science/Communication

Amal	Administration	Human Resources Management
Emma	Administration	International Management

Regardless of academic program, at the University of Ottawa the co-op option is only available to those maintaining solid academic performance. Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel all required a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 6.0 (B) to be considered. Meanwhile, most of the group held a CGPA slightly higher than the admission cut off with Emma holding the highest CGPA at a few points above 8.0 (A).

Students are typically admitted into the Cooperative Education Programs during the second year of their undergraduate degree. Upon admission in their second year, all of the study participants attended the mandatory pre-employment training that lead up to the first work term, as is the norm. These workshops and information sessions include Procedures and Guidelines, Career Exploration, Resume Writing, Applying to Co-op Jobs, Interviewing, Continuous Placement, and Work Term Excellence. They also attended one-on-one consultations with co-op practitioners on the writing of their resumes, preparation for interviews, and strategizing their job search. This training took place concurrently while the students completed their academic studies and was delivered primarily in face-to-face workshops at the co-op office. A few exceptions include Continuous Placement, a training session that is delivered completely online, and Work Term Excellence, a workshop that is augmented with online pre-workshop activities and post-workshop self-assessment.

Once the placement process began, Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel all applied to a solid number of co-op jobs using the Co-op Navigator, the online job management system used by the Cooperative Education Programs. On average, the group applied to 64 jobs

but it is worth noting that Amal applied to 133 co-op jobs, was selected for only two interviews, and did not successfully secure a match. Meanwhile, Rachel applied to only 20 co-op jobs, was selected for five interviews, and successfully secured a match (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Participant Participation in the Placement Process

Participant Pseudonym	Co-op Job Applications	Co-op Job Interviews	Co-op Job Matched	Co-op Attrition
Amal	133	2	No	Prior to first work term
Cayla	78	10	Yes	Continued enrolment
Ben	69	8	Yes	After first work term
Mélanie	63	3	Yes	After first work term
Emma	22	3	Yes	Continued enrolment
Rachel	20	5	Yes	Continued enrolment

At the end of the placement process Amal dropped the co-op program and went back to her regular studies (an option because co-op is not mandatory at the University of Ottawa). However, Amal is not the only participant who did not continue their enrolment in co-op. Ben and Mélanie also dropped the program and did not go through the placement process in order to secure a second co-op work term (see Table 4.2). Like Amal, they remained with the University of Ottawa but returned to a regular undergraduate program.

At the time of publication, Cayla, Emma, and Rachel had all persisted with co-op and completed a second work term in winter 2011. Should they continue with co-op they will follow the alternating program structure of work and study. This means that they will experience work

during each season (CAFCE, 2006). They will finish on a study term and graduate at the end of December, two terms later than non co-op students (see Table 4.3). Should they finish their degree with four work terms they will graduate with a co-op mention on their parchment and will have an additional 12 credits on their transcripts (three credits for each completed work term).

Table 4.3

Co-op Work/Study Sequence

Year of Study	Fall Term	Winter Term	Summer Term
1	Study	Study	-
2	Study	Study*	Work 1
3	Study	Work 2	Study
4	Work 3	Study	Work 4
5	Study	-	-

*The term when this study was conducted.

Students in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs are required to work in jobs related to their program of study (CAFCE, 2005, 2008). But, there is significant breadth in terms of the jobs that might be a fit and there is overlap between differing fields. And, because the job search is competitive, particularly for those seeking their first co-op work term, students are also encouraged to be open minded and consider options outside of their aspirations and sometimes outside of their narrow career field. This means that during the placement process Amal, who is enrolled in Human Resources Management and Emma who is enrolled in International Management, were probably in direct competition with each other. And although

Ben is with the Faculty of Social Sciences, he would likely have competed for jobs against Mélanie, Cayla, and Rachel.

Within Ottawa, the majority of the job opportunities are with the Federal Government. For students in the Faculty of Administration (not including those enrolled in Accounting), government represents approximately 65% of the opportunities posted on the Co-op Navigator. Meanwhile, for students in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, government represents approximately 82% of postings. Fortunately, the opportunities with the Federal government are interesting and wide-ranging. For example, students in Administration can apply to jobs as diverse as Policy Analyst, Economist, and Project Manager. Students in Arts and Social Sciences can apply to jobs as diverse as Web Marketing Specialist, Editorial Assistant, and Media Monitoring Assistant (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Example Job Types by Faculty

Faculty	Participant's Programs	Example Co-op Job Titles
Administration	Human Resources Management International Management	Policy Analyst, Operations Coordinator, Management Assistant, Business Research Analyst, Junior Economist, Assistant Project Manager, Planning Support Officer
Arts	English Communication	Web Marketing Specialist, Graphics Communications Officer, Media Relations Assistant, Post Production Assistant, Project Officer, Web Writer, Editorial Assistant
Social Sciences	Political Science/Communication	Junior Writer, Program Assistant, Media & Public Affairs Officer, Internal Communications Clerk, Junior Trade Policy Officer, Media Monitoring Assistant

Another advantage to the Federal government is that, as an organization, there is commitment made to employment equity and to proactively seek candidates from one or more designated groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities ("Employment Equity," 2011). The government is also committed to hiring Canadian Citizens first and foremost ("Canadian Citizens," 2011) and those who are able to communicate effectively in either English or French with fluency in both official languages preferred ("Official Languages," 2011). Unfortunately, these commitments do not facilitate some students' employment and instead creates barriers depending on the individuals' background.

Portraits and Mini-biographies

To better understand students' individual backgrounds, it is important to learn about them through the "vividness" of their stories and how they understood both the barriers, and the opportunities they faced (van Manen, 1990, p.70). The six individuals that participated in this study, Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel, shared their personal stories and photographs with me during one-on-one interviews. I also shared a few of my stories and photographs with them, and took a portrait photo of each. From these interviews and photographs, I learned a great deal about each person, about their experiences in cooperative education, their background, and so much more.

These elements, the interview transcripts, photographs and portraits, provided the foundation for the narratives I wrote. The narratives – six mini-biographies – allow the unique qualities of the individuals and their experiences in cooperative education to be uncovered (Freeman, 2007; van Manen, 1997). As well, the narratives allow the reader to appreciate what the time prior to co-op work terms meant for them as individuals: where they have been, where they are now, and where they may be in the future.

Mélanie

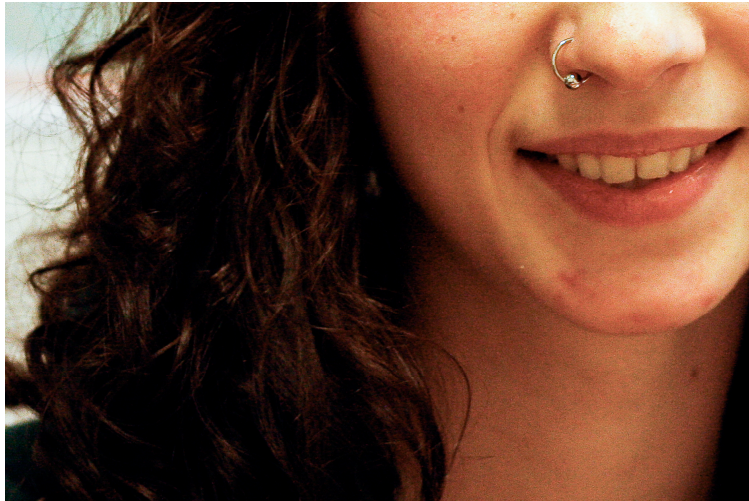


Photo 4.1 Mélanie

to see the world.

Also in Mélanie's bedroom are stacks of books that she has accumulated from her English literature courses at the University of Ottawa. The stack includes thick and well-thumbed paperbacks on Canadian and American literature, contemporary poetry, Latin, and key works from the Victorian and Romantic periods. Like travel, books nourish this young woman. They transport her to different times and places, or simply into the beauty

On a wall of Mélanie's bedroom is a large poster of Central America dotted with pushpins that mark all the places she visited in that country last summer. But the map only marks the beginning.

Mélanie is a traveller and she plans



Photo 4.2 Books

of language, its richness and depth. A favourite of hers is Canadian free-style poetry because it is innovative, open, and experimental. “Big fan,” she tells me, confident that more explanation isn’t necessary.

When it comes to work, Mélanie wishes that she could find something that she loves. She explained, “The job you take *should* reflect yourself and who you are as a person.” She went on to say that a job should have meaning and allow you to make a difference. In short, work matters.

Although idealistic, Mélanie is also shrewd and realistic. She has enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs because she sees the importance of working to make a living and doesn’t want to end up like some of her friends, stuck in retail or as a waitress. But she feels that co-op might not change anything and come what may, she will still be in the same boat.

She explained that studying English literature is somewhat “irrelevant and doesn’t apply to real life.” And with that, the real world seems to require that she show interest in areas where she has none and become someone she’s not. She knows that employers may object to her nose ring, curly hair, and casual style and she believes that changing how she looks means disguising her inner being into another version of herself.



Photo 4.3 Reflection

To illustrate Mélanie presented a photograph she took of her mirror reflection. Like a French Impressionist painting, the colours are muted and the shapes are soft and hazy. She is unrecognizable, obscured by the qualities of the image and by the camera that she holds in front of her face. She explained that the image is blurry because she wanted to show the blurriness that exists between finding a fit between available co-op job opportunities and her self.

It would seem that the real world demands a sharp, crisp image, a face and being that's simple to see and understand. And so for Mélanie, the demands of the real world can only be met if she conceals herself and instead, cultivates a fake persona complete with the *right* hair, make-up, and clothes. But it's not her. Mélanie, the *real* Mélanie, is natural, casual, and untamed. She is reflective, often contemplative, and sometimes pensive. She sees light and dark, empty and full, beauty and banality, and these visions slide into the other smudging the edges of what she is, both on the inside and the outside.

It's as though the real Mélanie and the real world are at odds. Again and again she's asked to make sense of her choice to study English literature in terms of employability, that she get serious and make a decision for her future.

"Are you going to be a teacher?" they ask.

"No," she responds.

"Are you going to do a Master's Degree?" they ask.

"I don't know," she responds.

"So why are you in university if you don't know what you want to be?" they ask, more agitated this time. "No one's going to pay you to read books, so what are you doing in literature?"

“I love it,” she says simply. She knows that her answer isn’t going to satisfy those who believe school is about getting a job rather than doing something you love but she’s not concerned about telling people what they want to hear. Mélanie is more concerned about authenticity than adhering to someone else’s preconceived ideas.

But while Mélanie pushes against stereotypes, she is thrilled that she might teach English overseas for her first co-op work term. She explained that when she saw the bright green TESOL Program poster advertising the free teach abroad seminar it was like a light bulb went on in her head. It was something that made immediate sense to her so she ran to the co-op office and asked for approval to take the training with the intention of teaching English abroad as her upcoming co-op work term.

Mélanie was given the go-ahead, signed up, and completed the training. As a graduate of the TESOL Program she had become qualified in curriculum design and teaching methods used with English-language learners. What it meant was that she might realize her dream to travel the world. Her next stop? Perhaps a small village in Asia where no one knows English and it’s up to her to teach them.

“Sign me up!” she laughed despite the possibility of culture shock and the myriad of other challenges she could encounter. “It sounds like an adventure and just so much fun and



Photo 4.4 Light Bulb

experience,” she said. “And maybe I’ll do this and realize that I’m not cut out to be a teacher but the only way I’m going to know is if I actually go out and try it.”

But Asia is only one possibility. Mélanie explained that she might get hired through the TESOL Program to work in Cornwall, England. If she’s accepted for the job and the co-op office approves, she would teach English to a medical doctor and his family who have newly emigrated from Greece. Five days a week for eight hours a day she would teach the language she loves in a gorgeous country known for its beaches, castles, mountains, and green grass.

In this scenario perhaps Mélanie will find herself in a small front room of a modest house with a view of the nearby hills. She’d be surrounded by the Greek family and by English dictionaries, thesauruses, and books stuffed with myriad types of writing-exercises. The family would dutifully study, a little confused by the English language but bemused by her and her obvious joy. They would be able to tell that she loves it: the words, the grammar, and the moments of beauty that the words can create. They would be able to tell she loves the ingenuity and the independence required to guide them along in their journey even as they gritted their teeth through the study of homonyms like ‘key’ and ‘quay’ and ‘sale’ and ‘sail.’

But these TESOL jobs are only possibilities and in the end, they may not come to pass because the co-op office discourages work abroad for students’ first work terms. It is considered too risky, particularly for those who have never done a work term before. And so Mélanie must continue to apply to jobs posted by the co-op office, jobs that are typically located in Ottawa and the surrounding region. If Mélanie is selected for a local job first then she is required by the co-op office to take it and leave the TESOL opportunities aside. Meanwhile, the competition for local jobs is fierce and there are no guarantees.

In 2009, 79% of University of Ottawa English literature students were placed for their first Co-op work term. In other words, students had to compete for a limited number of jobs that may or may not have matched their career interests. Many did not get a job at all.

“I felt like I got duped,” she said when she learned the statistic. “I felt like they made it seem so great and it’s going to be jobs specific to your field and you’ll get relevant work experience in your department...But they said, ‘Don’t apply to jobs specifically to your field.

Cast your net wide. Go apply in communications and marketing.’”

Mélanie visually described her emotion by posing and photographing her sister in an expression of anger and disbelief: eyes wide and staring, body lying prone,



Photo 4.5 What did I get myself into? (sh—t) mouth formed into an expletive. Was Mélanie so upset that she couldn’t blink, couldn’t even stand? Had her words, more typically poetic and thoughtful, become trashed?

Somehow Mélanie found a way to pull herself back together and apply for jobs, some related to English literature and many that were not. She called her family in panic and asked if she could send them her resume in hopes of securing something, anything remotely related to her field. “It’s kind of scary thinking I’m transitioning,” she said. “Going from something you’re so passionate and excited about in school, and then you have to go apply to the real world and it’s not what you had envisioned.”

In time, Mélanie secured an interview with a financial company in downtown Ottawa. At least it was an interview and reduced her fears of not getting a job at all but it did little for her hope of securing a job that she would love.

In preparation for the interview Mélanie chose to wear a white blouse with blue and pink flowers and a pair of white pants.

“You’re not going to wear that to go to a financial company interview!” her Mom said.

“Yeah,” she responded without concern.

“You can’t wear that,” her Mom insisted. So Mélanie changed into clothes that were grey, black, and white. A perfect choice she realized because the financial company was awash in monotone. She described the people as bland: “no flowers, no flashy colours, everyone was very put-together and very clean.” She described the work environment as equally anesthetized: “very black and white, no colour, cubicles and almost white-wash.” To Mélanie the place was bleached of colour and bleached of personal meaning.

The co-op office had listed the job as appropriate for English literature students but there was little that seemed to match Mélanie’s skills and interests. Her interviewers bombarded her with finance, computer, and management jargon and seemed pleased when she regurgitated empty information that she had read on the company web site. She would rather have been challenged to present her own thoughts and opinions and support her arguments with claims, to use her mind as her professors had taught her to do.

She left the interview and was confronted by a woman in the elevator who asked about her high-heeled shoes.

“Oh, you have cute shoes!” the woman exclaimed about her sleek, black, pin stripe pumps.

Mélanie was appalled. “I wasn’t ready to take a job where I’m talking about cute shoes,” she explained. “It made it seem real. That that’s what the real world is like and I’d rather be in a classroom talking about I guess, the artist in post-modern literature as opposed to talking about cute shoes in an elevator.”

In Mélanie’s black and white photograph, her pumps are framed by her favoured footwear: casual boots and shoes, flats that are practical and made for walking. Her favourites have been pushed to the edges of the image like a metaphor of her experience. Will her favourite shoes remain on the edges, and then get pushed out altogether, or



Photo 4.6 Shoes

will they find their way back to the centre? Will her high-heeled shoes become her favourite someday or will they always feel uncomfortable both literally and figuratively?

Despite questions and challenges, Mélanie remained optimistic. She photographed the



walkway under a bridge near her home to express her sense of hope. The walkway is at once light and dark, ugly and beautiful. It is decorated and desecrated with layer upon layer of spray paint, the last a random squiggle of white that

Photo 4.7 Light at the end of the tunnel

guides the eye towards the sun, literally to the light at the end of the tunnel.

With her picture Mélanie wanted to show that while there are experiences in co-op that she dislikes or finds difficult, she is looking for and finding the best that she can. There is art in chaos. There is something to look forward to.

What will happen? Will Mélanie get a co-op job and if so, where will she work, what company, and in what country? And most important, will her work reflect who she is as a person? Will she find something she loves? To be sure, Mélanie is a traveller and her journey will at the very least, enable her to explore the real world, the real her, and how they interconnect.

Ben**Photo 4.8 Ben**

Ben lives in a huge Cape Cod style house near the University of Ottawa campus. The three-story home is right in the market at the centre of the downtown where bars and dance clubs thump with music on Friday night and street vendors sell fresh vegetables and flowers on Saturday morning. In the warmer months it's a part of the city that smells at once like sausage, car exhaust fumes, and petunias.

Living in the massive house with Ben are six roommates. They all have plenty of space and easily spread themselves out over three floors. There's a large balcony and backyard, plus dormer windows, and slanting top-floor ceilings that add character to the place. And amazingly, they comfortably occupy only half of the house with the other half filled with eight more people.

But even with all the available space, it's not unusual for Ben and his roommates to congregate into one room for any number of activities. They might hang out together and watch *Glee* or play *Game Cube*, or convince each other to stay up until four in the morning playing *Risk*. They might do homework and study, just laze around and chill out, or party when the mood arises.

Two of Ben's roommates, Grant and Helena, are enrolled in co-op and oftentimes they hang out doing co-op activities together. Ben is completing a double major in Political Science

and Communications while Grant is studying English, having recently switched from Sociology. Meanwhile, Helena is in Mathematics. And so, they're looking for different kinds of co-op jobs but facing the challenges communally. "It was just good to have somebody else there to kind of brainstorm with," Ben explained. His friends were a sounding board or sometimes a shoulder to cry on.

Ben took a picture of his two friends in a scene that repeated itself regularly: Grant and Helena sitting cross-legged and hunched, each with a laptop and Helena balancing math homework on her knee. Ben framed the picture of the pair to include the soft pink blanket that



lies across the bed, the posters that adorn one wall, and the collage that Helena created last summer. Ben said that the collage is "essentially our entire first year of university. There's 200 or 300 pictures and they're

Photo 4.9 Another Normal Day

all hand cut like, actual pictures hand cut, and there's quotes and stuff in it. It's probably about 8, 10 feet long and 1, 2 or maybe 3 feet high. It's massive. It takes up almost our entire wall." And so, it's Ben's photograph of his co-op friends that captures hundreds of photos of more friends, shaped into an art-piece that dominates their shared space.

Typically, Ben would be a part of the scene as well. Together the three would sit together with their computer laptops open to the Co-op Navigator, the online job management system used by the University of Ottawa, and search through job postings, sometimes for an hour each night. As Ben and Grant are in the Faculties of Social Science and Arts respectively, they found

that there was some overlap with the types of jobs they could apply for. Together they'd brainstorm ideas: which jobs should hold top priority, how best to go about applying, what strategy to take in the interview. Mostly though, they took the tactic of "just spamming applications through the Navigator, just every government job. Apply! Apply now!" At one point Ben had reached 70 job applications.

In this regard Helena was more on her own. As a Math student there were a limited number of job postings and since most focused on computer programming and databases, very few fit her career interests. On top of that, Helena wanted a job in her hometown of Kingston, Ontario and had to do a lot of job search on her own outside of what was available through the Navigator.

Regardless of any similarities or differences in their career goals, the threesome shared in their experience with the Navigator and the multitude of problems that seemed to haunt

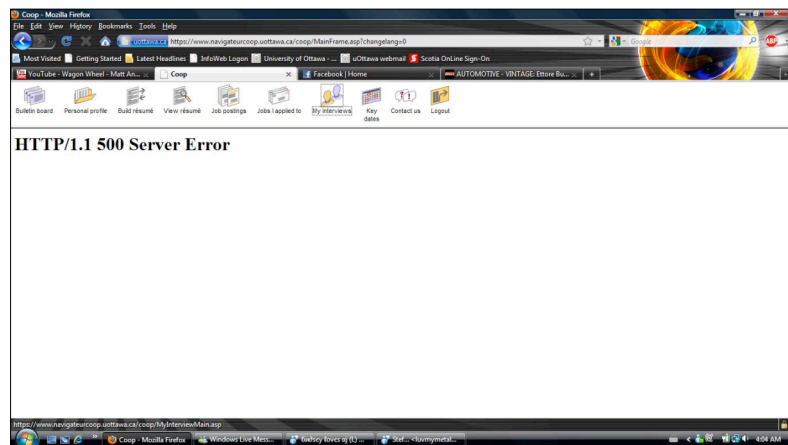


Photo 4.10 NAV Non-functional / Dysfunctional

it. The system is central to co-op because it is where students develop their resumes, search, view, and apply to jobs, and track their interviews. It's a system that drove the three of them crazy.

"Is it working for you?" they'd ask each other in frustration.

"No, it's not working for me either," they'd respond back relieved because at least they were in it together, and it wasn't their own laptop that was creating the malfunction.

Despite the technical difficulties they persevered and were successful in getting selected for job interviews. At one point it became fairly intense for Ben because he attended seven interviews plus one written test during the on-campus interview period, a ten-day stretch in mid-



Photo 4.11 Successful Interview

February during the thick of coursework and assignments.

But Ben's not the type to get stressed or nervous and become "a bird on a wire" like some of his friends. In fact, Ben was comfortable enough to photograph a few

of the employers who interviewed him and coincidentally, the employers who ultimately decided to hire him for his summer co-op work term.

Ben's picture of the three employers at the co-op office is distinct from his picture of his friends at the Cape Cod house. Although the employers are at ease and perhaps laughing at what Ben is telling them, they are formally grouped together, facing the camera, and smiling on queue. They expressed their personal style through their clothing but they are dressed in clothing that is tailored and appropriate for work. Meanwhile they occupy an interview room at the co-op office that is restrained: the walls are painted a soft yellow, the wood shelving is stained a rich mahogany, and decoration is limited to a professional certificate of some sort.

To Ben, the differences felt like distinctive worlds of which he played a part, weirdly switching from one domain to another and changing his clothes and behaviours along with it. Normally Ben would pull on some jogging pants and laughing, "Do the stereotypical college kid

thing, literally grab a t-shirt and smell it, ‘Nope. Not that one!’” He’d hang around the house and like Grant and Helena, sit on his bed doing homework. He wouldn’t concern himself about how he looks or acts. He’d be himself.

Ben’s desk area is like a snapshot of who he is, a casual tossing together of disparate likes and interests: DVDs by the

director and comedian Kevin Smith, a poster of a 1950’s Ford truck, films like *Fight Club* and *Inglorious Basterds*, a red cup from Frosh week, work gloves for handling lights in his video production



Photo 4.12 Me in a Nutshell

class, books on emerging mass-media like You Tube, a tie, deodorant, a gift for a friend, and pay stubs for the government job he held last summer.

Draped on the back of Ben’s chair is his Cape Breton flag, a reminder of the village of 300 people in Nova Scotia that he left behind to go to school at the University of Ottawa. Of the flag Ben laughed, “I did something that would make my parents very very ashamed of me and proud of me at the same time.” One night, Ben went with a friend to Pier 21, a bar in the market that was hosting a ‘No Pants Party.’ In place of pants, Ben’s friend wore a beer case with bungee cords for suspenders and won the ‘People’s Choice Award.’ Ben proudly wore his Cape Breton flag as pants and won ‘Best East Coast Costume.’

By contrast Ben carefully controlled what he showed employers of himself during interviews. The tie wasn’t an afterthought like it is in the picture of his desk. Instead the tie

became central to his highly conservative image that included a black suit and coordinating dress-shirt. He shaved and trimmed his goatee and even changed the way he spoke in order to make a connection with the professionals that interviewed him. He was himself but careful to only share what's considered acceptable in the work domain.

Ben's control over his image, what is seen and unseen, is revealed in the photograph he



took of himself in his interview suit. Although he took the photo at the Cape Cod house Ben angled the camera in a way that would keep his desk, chair, and posters out of sight. As best as possible, he hid the disarray

Photo 4.13 Blank Slate / New Beginning

allowing only a corner of a car poster to peek out from behind his bedroom door. There is no photo-collage and there are no roommates in the picture. Ben wanted a blank slate, a clean and unaccompanied image of himself embarking on the next steps in his life.

The next steps however, were not a linear and progressive marching forward into adulthood and professional life. Ben explained that doing co-op means feeling as though you are split in half or into layers of multiples and moving back and forth between these different selves. "It's like a complete disconnect from one side to the other. And I mean, I guess that's kind of the going from being a university kid to being part of the workforce is that there is a huge disconnect there. It's another step in life from being just in school to being out in the workforce but, it's still kind of weird to actually go through it in the span of a day." The differences in each domain, the

clothes, the environment, the expectations, and the attitudes, felt extreme but not necessarily unwelcome because it was part of growing up and having the opportunity to make a difference.

What is the next step then? As they approached the end of the academic term the roommates prepared to leave the Cape Cod house and head off in different directions. Ben met with his new co-op employers and finalized the details of his hire. As well, he and one of his friends were trying to get a place in a nearby apartment building. Grant finally secured a co-op job after weeks of struggle and got a place just off campus to share with two others. Emily was lining up a place down the road because she got a co-op job, but not in Kingston as she had hoped. The house of seven friends was splintering. “Everywhere essentially,” Ben said.

As they prepared to move, everyone started packing their stuff and piling it into an empty room in the house. At the beginning of the year the room belonged to their eighth roommate but he dropped out of university and moved home. The vacated space rang of emptiness and made them all uncomfortable. “It was freaky because we could hear the echo,” Ben explained. “Some things don’t always work out and sometimes university is too much for people.” To shut out the echo the roommates tried keeping the door closed but it didn’t work because it symbolized shutting each other out.

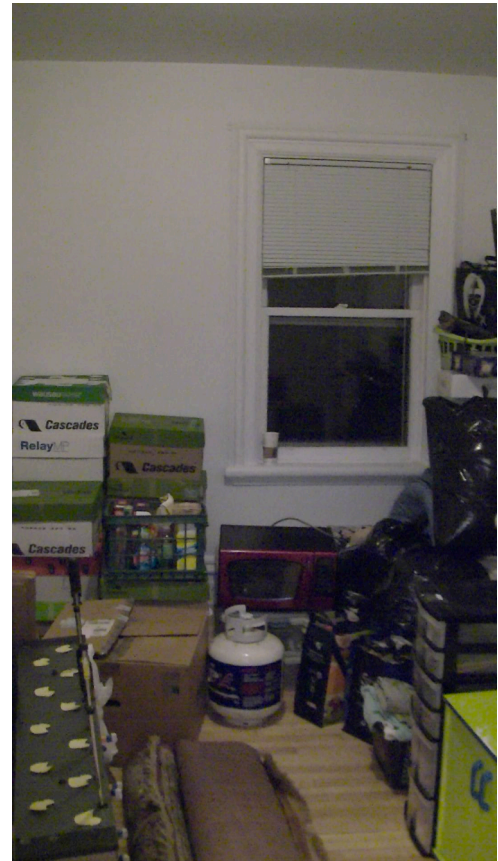


Photo 4.14 It's Not So Easy

Gradually the echo was muffled as the empty room was filled with people's things: boxes of paper and clothes, a foosball table, a microwave, propane tank, and two rolls of carpet. Ben added his guitar, hand drum, and snowshoes. By the end of April the Cape Cod house would be packed up entirely and all the rooms would be vacant. Everyone will have moved out and the whole house will echo from top to bottom. But the emptiness won't last long because the landlord was able to find new renters for the first of May.

Ben was unconcerned, even happy about the move, perhaps because he had left before and knew that it was just part of his life. "I moved from out East where there's plenty of universities that are very high level universities. All my friends went to them but I left and went to here. So, I was kind of the person who was gone," he said. Leaving wasn't a new challenge and with the Internet good friendships were rarely lost or forgotten. Perhaps moving, the back and forth and even circular transition that was sometimes difficult was also something to enjoy: from Nova Scotia to Ontario, from a small village to a large city, from old childhood friendships that began in grade primary to new friendships that began in first year university, and from being a kid and a student to being an adult and a professional.

Cayla**Photo 4.15 Cayla**

Cayla is originally from Burlington, Ontario but she decided to move away and attend the University of Ottawa because the Nation's Capital is her home away from home. As a child she and her family would frequently

make the seven-hour trip to Ottawa to visit Cayla's aunts and to participate in the many events that happen in the city. In February Cayla's family would go to Winterlude, an outdoor festival that includes skating on the Rideau Canal, watching ice-sculpture competitions, and eating Beaver Tails (a deep-fried dough that's covered with cinnamon and sugar, and if you like, a squeeze of fresh lemon).

In July, Cayla's family would make the long trip to Ottawa for the Canada Day celebrations that take place on Parliament Hill and in the surrounding streets. During the day they would have seen thousands of people dressed in red and white, their cheeks stencilled with a Canadian maple leaf. Many would have been calmly enjoying the events. A few, their thirsts quenched with liquid courage, would have been whooping it up, straining to sing the national anthem as they partied their way through the throng.

As sun set on Canada Day, Cayla and her family would have found a spot to sit at Major's Hill Park. There they would have been able to watch the spectacular fireworks explode

in the sky and reflect off the Rideau River, the waterway that flows between Ontario and Québec. And with each burst of colourful pyrotechnics Cayla and her family would have ‘oh-ed’ and ‘ah-ed’ with the crowd like an enormous chorus of a cappella singers.

Now as a student at the University of Ottawa, Cayla is only a few blocks away from the places where her childhood memories of the city were formed. And she feels excitement for what lies ahead in her future. Cayla shared her infectious enthusiasm with her younger sister Isabel when she came to visit her at school. Isabel will start her undergraduate degree next year and she has chosen the University of Ottawa not only because Cayla is enrolled there but also because of all the things that make it great, like living in residence and working as a co-op student.

“What are the kinds of jobs that co-op students do?” Isabel asked her sister.

“Probably something with the government. It’s the most likely option because we’re in the Capital,” Cayla said.

“That’s so cool! Like, working for the government!” Isabel replied excitedly. And while the young women agree that working for the Federal government isn’t something that everyone would like, it’s an opportunity they feel lucky to have and know that students from other schools wish they had too.

Cayla staged the picture she took of her sister to try and symbolically convey how they feel about living and working in Ottawa. The image is taken on Parliament Hill with Isabel standing and smiling beside the Eternal Flame on the path



Photo 4.16 Co-op Excitement

that leads to the Centre Block. At this proximity Isabel probably felt the heat that perpetually emanates from the fire, in contrast to the bracing winter air that blows like a current across the square. Isabel wears sunglasses, a long winter coat, and the famous red Olympics 2010 mittens with the white maple leaf on the palm. She raises her hands into the sky in a gesture that seems to say, “Look at this great place!” and “Here I am!” She’s like a champion standing on the winner’s podium exuding happiness, pride, and accomplishment.

In part, these positive feelings stem from the opportunity to speak in either of the two official languages of Canada. Cayla’s first language is English, and growing up in Burlington it is the language she used daily at home and in her community. As a French immersion student she developed fluency in her second language early on. But even though she visited Ottawa on a regular basis, she never really used French outside of the classroom environment. French was a subject she studied in school rather than a language and culture she connected with real people and real experiences.

The connection happened for Cayla in her second year of university when she started her cooperative education program. As a co-op student she was encouraged to create a resume and do a mock interview in English and French. Then she applied to jobs and secured interviews with the Federal government, the largest employer in Ottawa, and an organization that prefers, and oftentimes requires employees to be fluently bilingual. Cayla explained, “Sometimes I had people who were interviewing me who’s first thing was French. So it was more comfortable for them to speak French and I could kind of, you know, alternate back and forth between French and English to just show that I was a little more diverse and was comfortable speaking both languages.” For Cayla the experience was delightful. She was able to use her language skills to help her employability but more than that, she was able to communicate with people in their first

language, whether English or French, and in doing so, find a connection between what she had learned in school and what she could apply in real life.

This change in her appreciation and valuing of bilingualism can be understood through the photographs she had taken of the University of Ottawa sign. One night during Cayla's first year of university she and a group of friends were heading out to the bars and restaurants in the market. On their way they stopped at the big red University of Ottawa sign at the edge of campus for a group photo. They were happy and excited and probably laughing hysterically as they hoisted themselves up to sit on top. Cayla would have been laughing too as she snapped the photograph of her friends – a memento of camaraderie and a fun night partying together.

In Cayla's second year of university she took another picture of the sign but with a very



Photo 4.17 Your language, your choice

because it says l'Université d'Ottawa and University of Ottawa." The sign still reminds Cayla of the friendships she made in her first year of university and she hopes that she'll be able to get everyone together at the sign for another photo someday soon. But, it's also about bilingualism and the importance it holds for her now that she has lived it as a co-op student.

different intention. As a co-op student the sign was no longer a backdrop. Instead the sign had become the subject itself. There are no friends and the name of the school is clearly visible in both French and English. Cayla said, "I just thought it was important

Cayla's joy and excitement is tempered by the stress she endured as she tried to manage all the requirements and new experiences that are part of being in co-op. The picture Cayla took of Jennifer, a roommate and fellow co-op student, is about the stress of managing everything all at once. With her hair pulled back in a quick ponytail, Jennifer focuses on trying to prepare her co-op requirements. Meanwhile all the other aspects of university life crowd in on her: the shelves are lined with books, binders, DVDs, and documents, the walls are posted with pictures and several colour coded schedules, the desk is covered with a box of pens and pencils, a blue lamp, and a bottle of pills. The bright green of the walls, tissue box, and framed picture seem to vibrate with an energy all their own. Jennifer is surrounded.

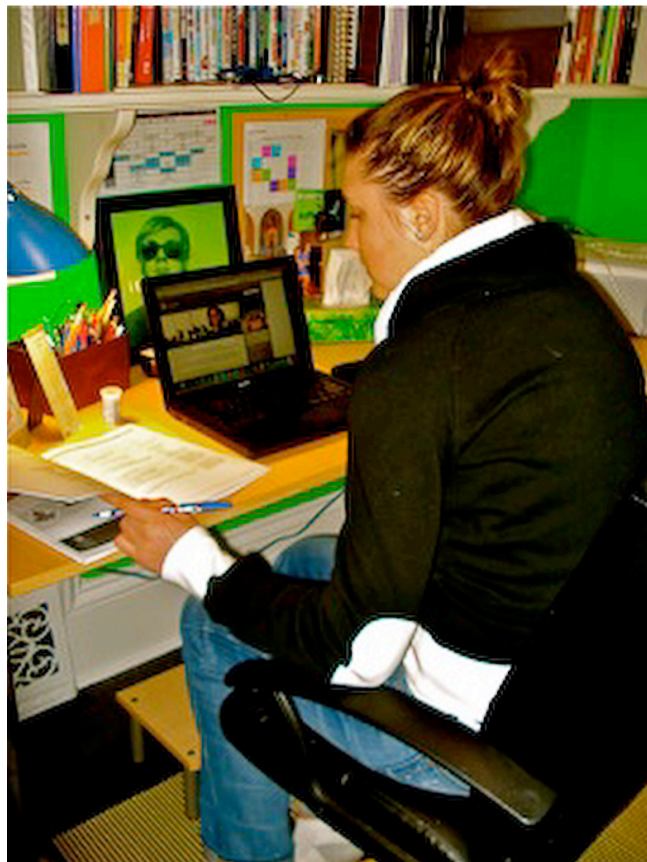


Photo 4.18 Preparation

And yet, she ignores everything and puts co-op front and centre, in her physical space, and also in her mind. She focuses on her co-op workbook and her laptop is open and ready to access the co-op web site. She reads, thinks, and prepares to write despite all the distractions that vie for her attention. Cayla explained, "It's not like, 'Oh well. I'll do co-op later' type thing, you know what I mean?" As a Co-op student she had to concentrate and prioritize, even if it meant completing schoolwork between 8 and 11 o'clock at night. Co-op required her immediate action and everything else has to wait.

For Cayla, the stress of juggling co-op, plus everything else in her life, lasted several months. She interviewed for co-op jobs during the on-campus interview period in February but she wasn't matched to a work term right away and had to continue applying for jobs and attending interviews over the course of several months. This meant that she had to get her resume reviewed again and attend more mock interviews to make sure she was competitive.



Photo 4.19 Organization

To stay focused over the long haul Cayla had to be extremely organized. The picture she took of her white board illustrates the level of commitment she exercised to maintain order in her life. Normally the board is a living record of her activities quickly

recorded with a dry-erase pen and a scatter of sticky notes. But for her photograph, Cayla erased all the writing from the board and removed the notes. Then with clearly legible penmanship, she rewrote her co-op to-do list with one activity on each note. Finally, she stuck the colourful pieces of paper on the clean board in what looks like an abstract artist's pared-down interpretation of her experience. She said, "Every night before I go to bed I make lists." For her picture, Cayla made her list once again:

prepare interview questions/answers

book mock interview

bring in two writing examples for job #142

update resume

Send cover letter

interview Mon. feb 10 10 am job #914

interview fri. mar 4 3:30 job #872

Check jobs everyday

Cayla's list is a demonstration of the perfectionism and compartmentalization required to avoid getting lost in the chaos of her life. It is a "record of the different steps and processes of the co-op experience." And, it is a beautifully crafted work that showcases the care of an artisan who's medium is organization.

And so, the stress of co-op is not one-dimensional. Cayla continued with co-op even when it was uncomfortable because she believes that feeling tense often happens when you're



pushing beyond your boundaries. Cayla explained, "My Dad always told me, 'If you're not, if you don't get stressed out, you don't get nervous then you're not human.' You know? Like, if you're not nervous then you're not trying hard enough, you're not challenging yourself because you need to get nervous and stressed out now and then or else you're just coasting..." Stress is part of personal growth and positive change, of setting a goal and reaching for it.

On several occasions Cayla marked important moments of this personal journey

Photo 4.20 What to wear?

through clothing and the emotional experience of dressing. From the beginning Cayla was aware that her appearance would impact her success in co-op. She believes that employers shouldn't pass judgment based on how someone looks but she knows that they do. If you look sloppy then employers may judge you as sloppy. "Your first interaction is obviously very important," Cayla said. "So, I think that's an important part of the whole co-op process, is to look professional." As a result of her beliefs Cayla worked at creating an image that would make a positive impression on employers and ultimately help her chances of getting hired.

Cayla took a black and white photo of her roommate to show the stress of creating the right image. In the picture she looks at her body in the mirror and tries to imagine herself in the jacket and top she holds up. Her face is focused, serious, and doubtful. She is alone with herself and appears to ask, "Does this look good?" and "Is this me?" Perhaps she also asks, "What will employers think?" She wonders if she likes what she sees reflecting back or, like the monochromatic image, if she needs to tone it down a bit for the interview.

Cayla took a colour photograph of the same experience to express another emotion altogether. Once again Jennifer holds a jacket and top up to her body but the moodiness of the black and white image is replaced with the energy of colour. Rather than appearing doubtful and self-conscious, Jennifer looks at herself in the full-



Photo 4.21 What to Wear?

length mirror, angles her body backward, and tilts her head forward in a way that is self-assured and at ease.

And although unseen in the picture, Jennifer's friends have gathered around her as though they are at a party. Jennifer tries on one outfit after another and everyone joins in with her decision-making, offering ideas.

"Should I wear this?" Jennifer asks her friends.

They respond by encouraging her and lending pieces of clothing from their own closets. Cayla explained, "Fashion is kind of a depiction of yourself and your personality." And it is creative self-expression that can be shared with friends.

In the springtime, when Cayla had finally secured a co-op job, she had her friend take a picture of her achievement. Again, the experience is a mixture of emotions and multiple layers of meaning that include stress, joy, fear, excitement, and so much more.



Photo 4.22 New Beginnings

Cayla's co-op job is quite different from what she had anticipated because she was hired by a private company as a Change Management Specialist to work on technology transition projects. She's not with the Federal government, she won't be downtown near the places that formed her childhood memories of the city, and she won't use her French language skills hardly at all. Instead, she will use the knowledge she gained as a Communication student in the Faculty of Arts in a way that never occurred to her. "You know," she said. "I never really thought that, obviously it's a big thing, smoothly transitioning from

different things.”

Transitioning is indeed a big thing. Cayla’s photograph is similar to one her mother took on her first day of kindergarten, so many years ago. Just like when she was five, Cayla is dressed in new clothes and slings a bag over her shoulder. She is happy but nervous. She smiles but isn’t yet vibrant kodachrome. She is embracing new possibilities and letting go of old ideas.

There are beginnings and endings. A professional career is about to start and jobs like camp counsellor and lifeguard are no more. Conservative sweaters and skirts replace casual t-shirts, shorts, and bathing suits. Co-workers will include older adults and not just young people. She is achieving her goal but not in the way she had expected. She is outside of her comfort zone but with the awareness that facing challenges isn’t easy. And so, Cayla closes the door to her apartment, stands firmly in the fresh spring air and smiles as if to say, “Here I am.”

Amal

Amal is a co-op student in the Human Resources Management Program with the Faculty



of Administration. And so, when she landed an interview for a co-op work term with the Canadian Revenue Agency she was thrilled. The posting was for a Junior Analyst responsible for investigating changes in demographics and workforce and

Photo 4.23 Amal

an almost perfect match to her skills and interests. But Amal was excited primarily because the interview would be the first she'd ever had in her life. "I don't care if I get the job or not," she said to herself. "I'm just going to practice for my interview skills. Whatever. If it comes it comes. If it doesn't, I really don't mind." She thought it would be wonderful just to have the interview experience.

The day after Amal learned of her interview with the CRA she woke up at 7:00 am and tried on all sorts of outfits that she might wear to the event. Normally Amal would throw on a pair of jeans or sweatpants and a t-shirt in some random mix of colours, unconcerned about whether anything matched or not. She wouldn't wear make-up and her hair wouldn't be styled in any particular way. At most she would take 10 minutes to get ready before going out. But that morning she wanted to find a look for her interview that was different from the norm. Even if it took extra time she wanted to be a woman: to appear wise, elegant, mature, and ladylike.

Amal took a picture of herself that morning. In her self-portrait she looks quite different from her typical “boyish” self. She is the lady she wants to be, dressed in her sister’s black and white dress and hair extensions. She wears make-up, and although not visible in the photograph, high-heeled shoes.

She is feminine. Her arms are open as though she might do a pirouette, her mouth is shaped into a soft grin, and her eyes look up as though she’s welcoming the viewer’s appraisal. The last time Amal wore anything like this was on her prom night, over two years ago. And like a debutante at her coming out party, she is a girl re-imaging herself as a woman.



Photo 4.24 Getting ready for first interview ever

When the day of the interview arrived Amal got dressed in her chosen outfit, went to the co-op office for the scheduled time, and sat in the waiting room. In the controlled quiet of the space, Amal looked at the empty chairs that surrounded her in neat rows and at the wall clock that ticked away at time, perpetual like an incessant metronome. She looked at the chairs and again at the clock. She looked at the doors that surround the waiting room and whenever any door opened she smiled a fake smile and checked that her hands weren’t sweating. She felt fear, a pulsing worry that she might be the only one left over at the end of the placement process

without a match to a co-op job. And with the click of the clock she realized that she was waiting for more than her first interview. The meeting would change her life forever.

At the appropriate time the employers from the Canadian Revenue Agency called Amal's name and invited her into the interview room. Once they were settled the employers asked Amal questions that she answered by drawing on her educational background in HR management and the research she had done on the organization. As well, the employers asked her to analyze a bar graph that reported changes in unemployment rates over time. Again she was able to respond effectively. Amal said, "I think it went well until they asked me about the French part."

"Do you speak French?" the employers asked expectantly.

"I'm not fluent," she responded. "I read and write well but..." She knew that one of the interviewer's first languages was French and that bilingualism really mattered, especially in the government sector. Regardless, she felt that she had the necessary skills for the job and an offer would certainly be made. It was a sure thing and she waited for matching day with excitement.

Matching day took place in mid-February during reading week. On that day Amal was with her boyfriend Kalil at the university library. They were studying on the fifth floor, sheltered by giant bookshelves and rows of cubicles occupied by fellow students that sipped lattes and text-ed each other while tackling everything from macroeconomics to conflict resolution.

Amal and Kalil decided to take a break from their schoolwork and log into the Co-op Navigator. They wanted to see Amal's interview results and to quietly celebrate her success. "Go and check it," Kalil whispered. "I'll take your picture." He held out his camera/phone and readied himself to capture her happy moment – her match with the Canadian Revenue Agency and the beginning of her professional life.

Amal opened the Co-op Navigator and saw the results on her laptop screen. Kalil took the picture.

“What’s wrong?” Kalil asked when he noticed that her expression was anything but happy.

“I didn’t get even ranked,” she replied as though hit in the stomach. “I was an X.”

“It’s OK,” he said encouragingly.

“There’s second round. You said not all students get placed in the first round, only 1/3 so it’s OK.”

In the picture Amal isn’t jumping up and down like her boyfriend was expecting. Instead she is rigid, her eyes stare at her laptop in anger and disbelief, and her hand is about to crunch her bottle of iced tea.

“WHY!?” she wanted to cry out. The job mattered to her, more than she originally thought. Amal was mad and yet she laughed when Kalil showed her the picture. She

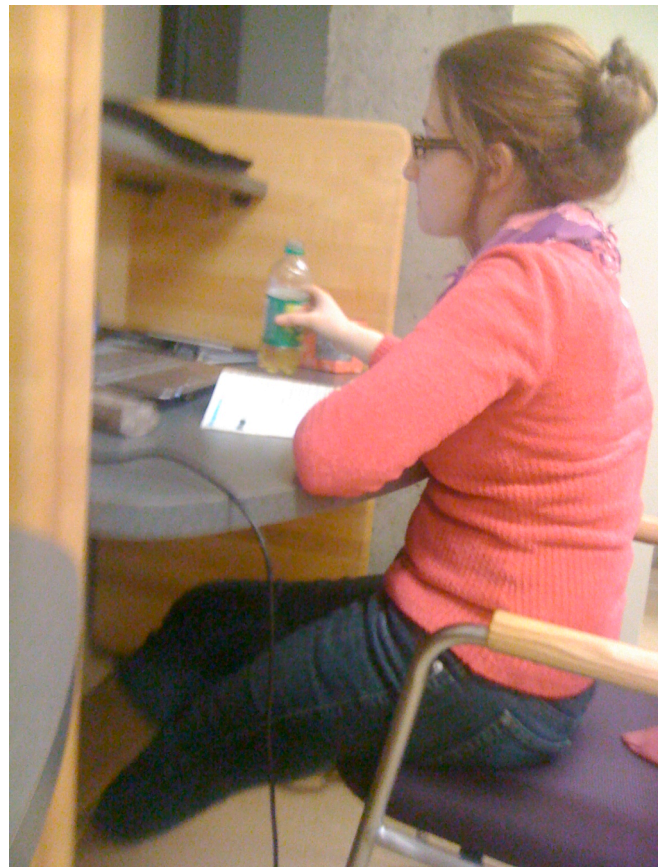


Photo 4.25 It’s not the end of the world
explained, “I like this photo because it’s random and at the same time it captures the moment.”

And from that moment, Amal struggled with being a co-op student. The challenges, already overwhelming for some students, were intensified by Amal’s personal story and her lack of summer job experience compared to her fellow Canadians. Amal is a permanent resident that recently emigrated from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. While growing up she attended an

American school with American teachers, which made it easy for her to adjust to the Canadian educational system and curriculum. But otherwise, “life” has been difficult in her new country.

Amal photographed a hallway in the basement of a University of Ottawa building to

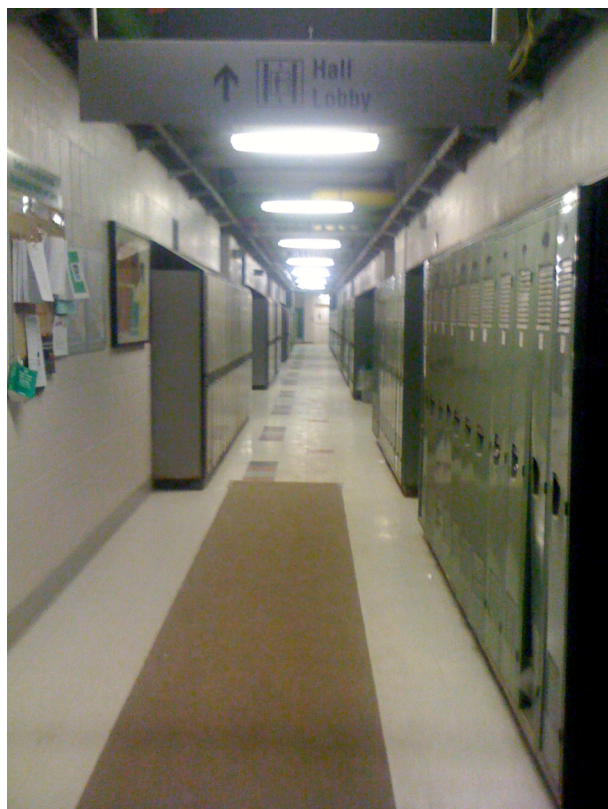


Photo 4.26 Hallway of my life

symbolize her feelings. In her picture the hallway seems gloomy and endless like the journey she is travelling. The lockers that line the walls seem constant, large, and bulky like the many obstacles that she deals with as an immigrant: the weather, the individualistic society, French language, time management, and so much more, including her role as a young woman seeking a professional job with no work experience.

In Saudi Arabia, Amal was expected to be a student and not to work. She gained experience by volunteering and by participating in student council but she never held a paying job. And as she applied to more co-op jobs in hopes of a second interview she wondered if whether she had missed the train, if professional employment opportunities were already out of her reach.

“You know in Egypt,” Amal said to her mother over the phone. “Whenever a girl, like she passes a certain age, she feels she’s really late to get married and have kids? Like she gets into her 20’s, early 30’s and then she feels that, ‘Oh my God!’”

“You’re only 19,” her mother said, confused by the problem.

“That’s what people make me feel!” Amal replied back exasperated. “Whenever I open the Co-op Navigator and I click on the jobs I applied to and I see matched, matched, matched, matched, matched, matched, matched and not selected, not selected, not selected, that’s what I feel. That’s what I feel!” Amal’s anger and disillusionment expanded with each passing day. She hated that others kept getting interviews and matched to jobs. She hated that she was continually overlooked.

In March, when winter had not yet turned to spring, Amal decided to set everything aside for an afternoon. She ignored the Co-op Navigator, skipped the last part of her math lab, and went shopping for dresses instead. Her boyfriend had seen her in a skirt and loved it and so she thought, “Yah, I could go for a change.”

At the mall Amal tried on several dresses and fell in love with one in a deep indigo blue.



Photo 4.27
Trying to hide my identity from others

It was beautiful with a flowing full-length skirt that flared out from the waist. But despite her attraction Amal couldn’t buy it because the expense would be too high for something so precious and so rarely worn. Such a purchase must be warranted, like her prom dress, or as she had learned at an early age, like a wedding dress.

Years ago, when Amal was only eight years old, she lived with her family in an apartment in Saudi Arabia. One morning she woke up very early. She could hear the sounds

of her sleeping family. She could feel the heat of the arid summer air that was rising like a wind off the top of a dune. She felt bored and so she got out of bed and went in search of something to entertain her.

Amal padded along the hall and came upon the closet at the far end of the apartment. Inside the closet was her mother's wedding dress, a white gown that Amal had never seen her mother wear. The young girl looked at the dress with detached curiosity and noticed that there was a red juice stain that her mother must have forgotten to clean. "I want to clean it!" she said to herself and without further ado took the satin dress to the sink, soaked it under the cool running water, and scrubbed the stain clean with Tide. Next Amal hung the dress out like a bed sheet from the ropes that were strung between the apartment windows allowing the garment to dry, suspended unceremoniously in the heat of the rising sun.

Amal's mother woke up and was stunned by what her daughter had done. "WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY DRESS?" her mother screamed.

"I cleaned it," Amal replied matter-of-factly. In her mind, she had been a good girl and her mother's appreciation was immanent, if late in coming.

"You ruined it!" her mother yelled. "I hope something happens to *your* dress!"

"Why?" It made no sense to Amal. It was just a dress with a stain.

"Because you ruined my dress. Do you know how that feels?"

"You're not going to wear it again," Amal said, still confused by the hurt and anger that her mother was expressing.

"When the day comes and you get married, your wedding dress is going to be the most valuable thing that you have, after your husband and your kids. Then you're going to understand."

“You people are so materialistic,” Amal thought. As a child, the dress was meaningless. It was her work and effort that should have mattered and been rewarded. But over time, and because of her relationship with her boyfriend Amal came to understand her mother. Except Amal’s understanding didn’t make it any easier.

In the mall, in the change room, in front of the three-way mirror, Amal considered the indigo blue dress. She wanted to buy it but didn’t want to make a frivolous purchase. She wanted a picture of herself in the dress and yet she wanted to hide herself from view. She wanted to be a Canadian woman: dressing as she pleased, pursuing a professional career, feeling independent, active, ambitious, and loud. But she also felt the pull of Saudi Arabia: wearing the black abaya that covered her from head to toe, living passively in the home sphere, pampered and cloistered from the outside world, feeling the power of the bearded Matuwas who sanctioned her movements and prevented her from speaking with any man who was not legally her relative or spouse. As Amal reflected, her cell phone rang. It was her boyfriend and immediately they started to argue.

“Where are you?” Kalil wanted to know.

“I’m at Sears,” Amal replied as she regarded herself in the mirror. “Trying on dresses.”

“You’re not going to get engaged tomorrow by the way,” Kalil said impatiently.

“Why are you being mean?”

“I’m not mean. But you have a deadline and you have to apply to jobs and you can’t just leave everything like that. And it’s not that I have your co-op password and your login information that I will go there and do that myself. You have to *do* what you have to *be*, at least with me.”

“Why?” Amal demanded. “I just want to drop co-op. I don’t feel like it.”

“No. You know you have to,” Kalil said with a sigh.

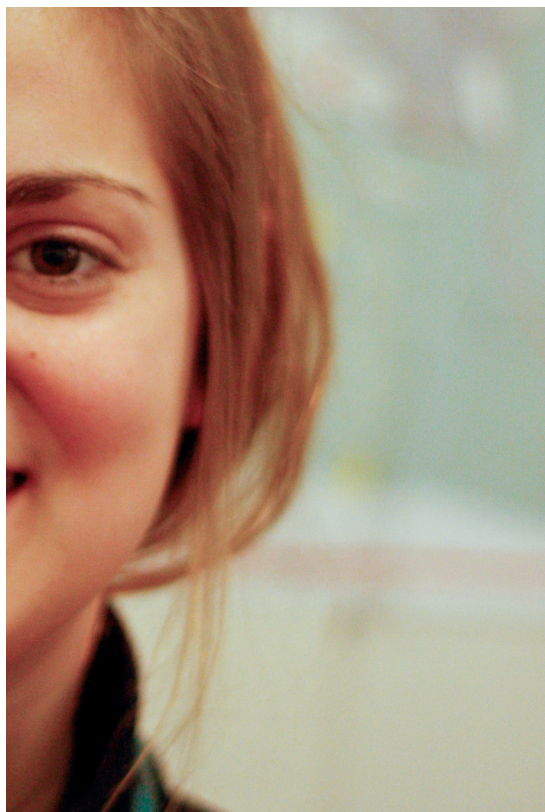
They hung up and Amal turned her camera/phone on herself. In her picture Amal lifts the edge of the blue dress like a princess about to curtsy, attempting to show her “girly side.” She is both present and absent, visible and invisible. She’s struggling, hiding in a room full of mirrors.

Co-op, for Amal, ended that day at the mall. It was the last time she photographed her co-op experience. She wanted to forget everything and taking pictures only served as a depressing reminder. It was over. She wanted co-op gone from her life and the faster she could get a “divorce” the better.

But the paperwork to drop co-op had to wait until May. In the interim Amal attended another resume review and was told that her document was excellent but that she should be consistent with her use of punctuation and perhaps write a French version (even though it would mislead employers with her level of bilingualism). Amal attended another mock interview and was told that her interviewing skills were great. If she wanted to improve she was advised to adjust her posture and avoid saying “um” and “like”. Amal was confounded: “Is this *really* what’s not getting me a job?” The feedback seemed so insignificant and inconsequential to have any bearing on her success or lack thereof.

By late spring Amal had applied to over 120 jobs and was selected for a second interview, but again she was not matched. Meanwhile it seemed that the co-op office didn’t understand her experience or care: the emails she received were generic and made her feel like a number on a list, the meetings she attended were empty and in one instance, more geared to encourage her departure than her retention. It was as if no one personally wanted for her success and it would be easier if she just went away.

Finally, Amal cleared the paperwork to drop co-op. Her parents supported her, knowing that she had worked hard and tried her best. And her boyfriend Kalil? They had since broken up. Amal carried on with her life, made decisions, and different choices. “But,” she reflected. “It could have been much better because it could have been a new experience for me.” With a co-op job, she could have been what she wanted to be.

Emma**Photo 4.28 Emma**

often feels peaceful, joyful, and blessed – emotions that emanate from her like the confidence and effortlessness of bright morning sunlight.

Emma is a goal-setter, and she's been a goal-setter from a time well before her enrolment in the Cooperative Education Programs. From an early age Emma worked to set and realize objectives and through her experiences she gained opportunities to grow personally and professionally; to develop a level of independence and ease that belies her youth. But for Emma, achieving goals means more than challenging herself to reach further than she had before. Goal-attainment means experiencing a sense of satisfaction, pride, and accomplishment. And while she sometimes feels anxious and stressed she

At fifteen years old Emma decided to move away from her home in Walkerton, Ontario to spend the summer living on her own in France. And each summer thereafter she left her family for another experience abroad or to live on her own at the family cottage. When she left home again to be a full-time business-major studying international management at the University of Ottawa she was concerned about moving from a small town to the big city of Ottawa but in general she was nonplussed about permanently living and working almost nine hours drive away from her parents. "I have a car for the summer," she said matter-of-factly. "So I'll probably be going to my cottage, which is four hours away and the odd time I'll be going home. So...and

when you have no homework, it doesn't seem that bad. You know, you can drive home on a Friday night and get home by 10:30." No problem, really.

In her late teens, Emma held a senior level job where she managed several programs and a staff of 70 people. And although this achievement is significant, Emma knew she could go further, be more efficient and effective than ever before. She enthused, "I can just continue on building skills and everything just pretty much systematic and I'm doing twice as much work as I did last year but I'm getting better grades. You know, it's just showing how much I guess I'm growing up in a way."

By the time Emma started her second year of university and participating in the co-op placement process she was already comfortable with hiring. She had completed a university level course in human resource management and more significantly, worked with HR professionals on a hiring panel. Education and experience told her that hiring, whether for regular jobs or for co-op work terms, is just a procedure that can be broken into steps and HR professionals are just people that are warm, laidback, and fun. "The [hiring] process, it's not cold at all," she explained. "Well, it can be brutal when you have to cross people off the list. It's actually very exciting if anything." Exciting indeed. Emma regarded competition for co-op jobs more like a thrilling opportunity than a burdensome obstacle, even when challenges presented themselves.

Emma photographed the screen from the Co-op Navigator that displayed the results of the job applications she made during the on-campus interview period. In her picture she shows that she is either 'not selected' for interviews or has the status of 'pending reply' (a note that indicates that there's no response from the employer). In one case she is 'not selected' and the job is 'cancelled' altogether.

In spite of these results Emma perceived the list as useful information rather than negative. She felt somewhat discouraged and judged by employers but not deterred by their judgment or the selection process that was used. On the contrary, Emma used the statistical knowledge provided by the Navigator as a strategic tool, a guide, and a motivator.

Public Service	Pending reply	1	Active	
International	Pending reply	1	Active	
	Not selected	1	Active	Interviewed 1 only
Social	Not selected	1	Active	Interviewed 1 only
International	Not selected	1	Cancelled	Interviewed 1 only
Government	Not selected	1	Active	Interviewed 1 only
	Not selected	1	Active	Interviewed 1 only
	Not selected	1	Active	Interviewed 1 only

Photo 4.29 Facebook

Like a Facebook-addict, Emma would log into the Co-op Navigator to check and re-check her interview status. She wanted to assess her pace against her fellow competitors with the goal of establishing a ratio of job applications to interviews that compared favourably to others. She said, “It only takes a second to check, but, and then you count how many things you weren’t selected for and you try to like, wager it out, type thing.” When Emma learned that she was falling behind she was intimidated but she adjusted her strategy and applied to more jobs, including ones that she had originally passed over. She would not be dissuaded.

Nor would Emma settle with just keeping up with the crowd. Each time Emma was selected for an interview she wanted to demonstrate to employers that she was the top candidate. She wanted to take the lead and consequently decided to get an edge on her competitors by developing a professional portfolio.

Creating a portfolio is not part of the Co-op Programs pre-employment training and consequently most students wouldn’t be aware of the concept. Additionally, most employers

wouldn't expect a job candidate to present a portfolio during an interview. Emma explained, "That's what I waged a lot of my interviews on. I put myself apart because I noticed not anyone really, I saw maybe one other person in the interview waiting room with a portfolio." The



Photo 4.30 Daunting

pulls back the slick plastic cover to reveal parchment coloured paper with the word *Resume* typed in cursive font. Although unseen, behind the cover page is a dossier that is both a record of her education and experience as well as a tool that's been customized for the daunting task of selling herself to employers.

For Emma, customization is essential for the portfolio to function as intended. During the ten days of the on-campus interview period Emma applied to 22 jobs and was selected for three interviews. Prior to each interview Emma analyzed the job requirements and modified the contents of the portfolio to best showcase her skills and knowledge. Emma would start the analysis process by printing the job description from the Co-op Navigator. As evidenced in her photograph with its rainbow of colours, she would work through the job description using bright florescent markers to highlight key information (which was almost everything) and important research areas (like the name of the Cabinet Minister for the government department in

portfolio provided Emma with a competitive advantage, only sharing the idea with her friends once she was matched to a co-op work term.

Emma photographed her professional portfolio with pride, allowing it to dominate the frame of her image. Her hand, tucked off to the side,

question). Next Emma would use the highlighted information to guide her in the development of her portfolio.

Whenever possible Emma wanted to say during her interviews: “Oh, I have hands on experience and here’s an example.” Consequently, if the job posting listed skills in PowerPoint then Emma included copies of PowerPoint presentations she had created for previous employers as well as public speaking awards that she had achieved. If the job posting listed skills in writing then Emma would include reports, memos, and other writing samples that best represented her writing ability. For one job Emma included an audit report that she completed for a past employer who regarded her work as exceptional.

The action of highlighting the job description and customizing the portfolio also helped Emma build excitement for the opportunity and convince her that she was right for the job. Emma said, “Well, you want to talk yourself into, ‘Yah, I’m going to be good at this job’ because you want to sell yourself for each job, right? So, if you can break it down and say, ‘OK. I have these skills for this part of the job’ then it’s like, ‘I can sell myself because I’m right for that job.’” Consequently, the portfolio was more than a collection of paper that proved Emma’s

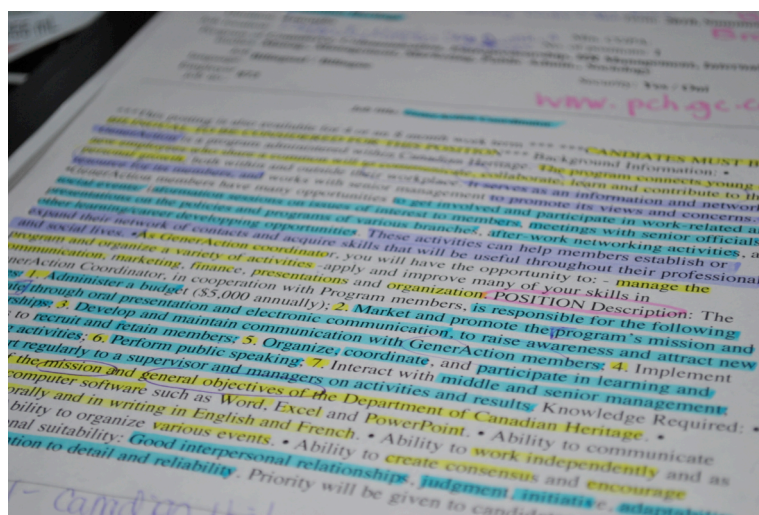


Photo 4.31 The Ministers

skills and knowledge for a particular employment opportunity. Once prepared it became a symbol of her capacity to succeed.

The night before her interviews Emma would be nervous, daunted by the scheduled interview, but she would look over to her

portfolio, placed carefully on the edge of her desk, and know that it was complete, she was prepared, and she had what it took to win the interview and excel on the job. She said, “I’m very confident when I go into interviews so, but it’s just like that freshly pressed suit, [the portfolio]’s just sitting there, ready to go...like the 30 page paper that I have due next week. It’s going to be sitting on my desk, ready to go. I’m not going to let anyone touch it until I hand it in.” Emma’s portfolio, tailored and complete, meant success was on the horizon.

On the day Emma was scheduled to attend the interview for the Co-op job she would ultimately secure, she felt physically ready. The opportunity was to work for Transport Canada as a Junior Program Analyst, and as with all her interviews Emma had analyzed the job description, organized her portfolio, and prepared responses to interview questions that would best demonstrate her fit for the opportunity. She also wore a suit, a choice that was appropriate but uneventful for her. A suit was so ordinary in fact that Emma didn’t feel her professional attire warranted a photograph. “I wear a suit at least three times a week to school because...I have my job, I’m an ambassador to the school, and then I do presentations on a daily basis so, it’s just, like for me to dress up for an interview is, is nothing.” Emma looked ready for her interview because professionalism had become her lifestyle, her day-to-day experience, whether part of co-op or not.

But that particular interview day stood out for Emma because she didn’t feel psychologically ready. Emma explained, “Sometimes you’re so ready and then in this situation I just, I had a really bad day, like *really* bad day, and I just couldn’t handle it.” Emma was in tears and she realized that her mindset would impact her chances of winning the job. “How am I supposed to go to an interview?” she asked herself. She knew she needed to relax and she knew

she needed immediate help or she wouldn't do well. Her solution was to call a friend and get support.

And Emma's solution worked. With the help of her friend Emma re-established her game face, went to the interview, sold herself to the employers, and was matched to the co-op job. She had achieved her goal, and well before most of the students who were participating in the co-op placement process for the first time. Emma was among the leaders of her cohort.

What upset Emma on that day? She didn't say. How did the phone call with her friend help her relax, de-stress, and overcome? Emma kept those stories to herself. Instead, Emma



Photo 4.32 Big Fish

talked about the photograph she took of a large tree near the Rideau River because she loved how, at that exact moment, it looked like the tree from the movie *Big Fish*, a movie about a man who tells stories that no one believes because the stories are so outrageous. "It kind of reminds me of

my father," she said. "He's that storyteller. He always says you have to have stories to sell who you are and like, and it's just, I don't know, it's just inspiring and when I saw [the tree] I just thought of the summertime and energy." The tree, burnished with the colours of leaf-buds, greets the early morning sunlight. The parkland, verdant from the warmth of spring, perhaps smells of growth, of vitality, innocence, and renewal. It's an image of Emma's narrative, of how she chooses to see possibility and opportunity regardless of what she encounters along the way.

How will Emma's story unfold? In the near future Emma would like to work for a private company where there is a greater risk of failure but also a greater chance to succeed because of one's personal effort and ideas. In years to come Emma would like to go after her dream job to

be a motivational speaker. For now she's excited to be doing her first full-time paid co-op work term in a large office building for a federal government department.



Photo 4.33 Big Giant

When Emma's parents came to visit she wanted to share her excitement and so she brought them to see where she will work during the summer. Mom and Dad looked up at the big skyscraper while Emma photographed the building's grandeur with a composition purposefully angled to emphasize the impressive height. "I'm working on the 19th floor I think," Emma said proudly. "I counted the floors: one, two, three, four, five six, seven, eight,

nine, ten, eleven, twelve...sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, yeah. So I'm almost the top so, it's pretty exciting to kind of be able to point that out like, 'I'm going to be working up there.'" Emma and her family felt pride in her achievement. She was on her way and her parents could brag a little.

During the summer, while completing her first co-op work term, Emma has another goal that she would like to achieve – to complete a marathon. And like her other goals, it's one that she's as excited to prepare for, as she is to accomplish.

Emma photographed the route she will run during the summer in order to train for the race. It's a path she loves because it's a perfect distance, a loop that when completed is exactly 10 kilometres. She also loves the route because of its beauty.

But the picture is about more than this. Although it's an image of Emma's running path, along the Rideau River and over the bridge to Québec, it's about the complex feelings she has about Cooperative Education and the opportunities that lay ahead. "I don't know," she said. "I just, I'm excited about the summertime and I'm excited about spring and I'm excited to start and to get experience but also to take a break from school and to be good to myself and hopefully that has a positive reinforcement on work and a positive return on my investment to myself."

Emma's picture is about a whole idea: of working, learning, adding new and interesting things to her life, and being thoughtful

about oneself. It's all

encompassing – circular in its

meaning like the loop that Emma

will run. And perhaps it's a loop

that will continue to expand. As

Emma races along the water's

edge she will likely be dreaming



Photo 4.34 Summer 2010

of other goals, some outrageous, some only outrageous for others. She will be striding forward, extending herself, breathing in the fresh morning air that's been warmed by the sun, filling up with the taste of success, step-by-step, one foot after the other, again, and again, and again.

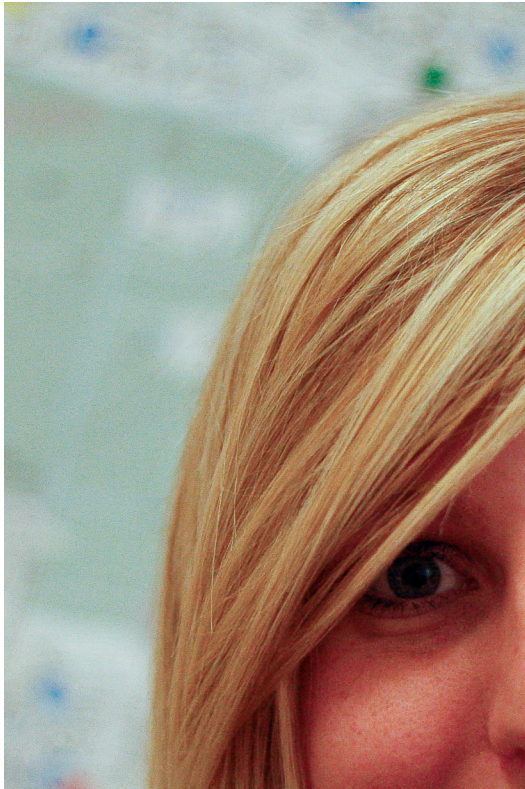
Rachel

Photo 4.35 Rachel

Rachel is a Communications student in the Faculty of Arts and a creative-type that likes to produce actual things. She wants to be hands-on, working in photography, video editing, or film. And ideally she would like to get a job at a TV station or magazine. She explained, “I’m really about working towards something and having something to show for it at the end of it.” It matters to Rachel if something is made for real.

Even when considering a gift for someone, Rachel would rather make it by hand than buy it.

Doing so means more to her and she knows it means more to others. For example, at Christmas she decided to make a collage as a gift for her Mom and Dad and also for her great-grandmother. Each collage is a mix of pictures of her, and her sister and brother when they were all little kids growing up together. Scattered around the photographs are construction paper cutouts of hearts and stars and other cool shapes glued in place to frame their youthful faces. It was a gift that Rachel knew would be loved, particularly by her great-grandmother – a work of art by the oldest of 22 grandchildren.

Rachel took the same imaginative and hands-on approach with the Seeing Cooperative Education research project. She thought carefully about the photography protocol and then created images that showed the viewer what she saw. To achieve this Rachel made several conscious choices. She never photographed herself and consequently, made herself the seer

instead of the one being seen. She is the viewer and never viewed. And as a result, when we look at Rachel's pictures of cooperative education we become her, as though peering out from her body at the world that she has lived. What we see are images, that in most cases have been manipulated using Photoshop, that portray how Rachel experienced what she saw, the feelings and thoughts that she had about the event. And these pictures are presented in an order that tells a story with a beginning, middle, and end as though we are travelling along Rachel's temporal journey.

Rachel's story begins with the stairs leading to the fourth floor of the Brooks Building where the Cooperative Education Programs are located. She took her picture at the base of the stairs as though she is about to go up, both literally and figuratively. She explained, "I took it from below looking up because I think I can only go further and I can only grow as a person and move up in life, that's why I didn't take it looking down, I took it looking up." Co-op is a progression, a meaningful step up towards the future and success.

Yet, Rachel altered the colours of her picture to show that she didn't feel

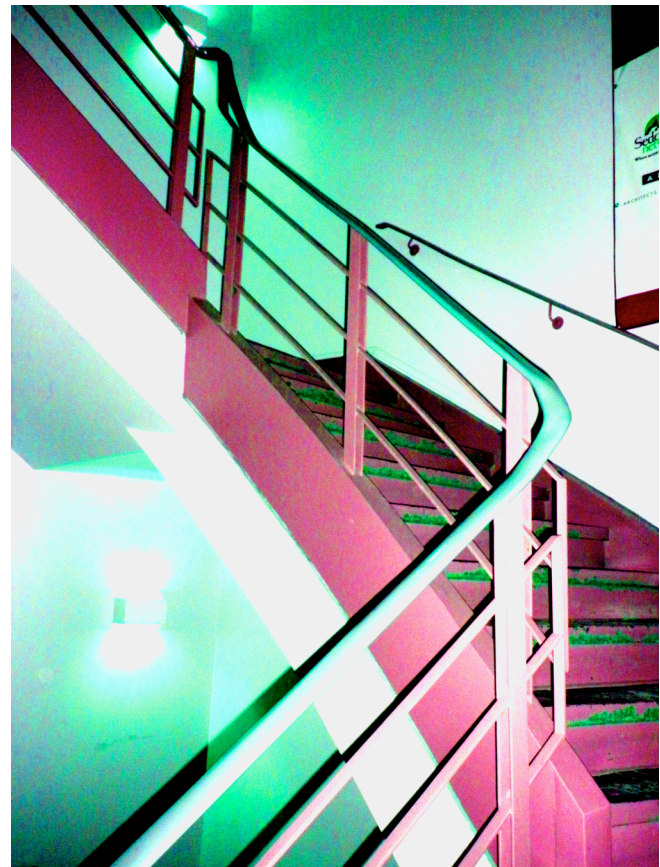


Photo 4.36 The Beginning / Starting Point

comfortable. Rachel saw the stairs as a grainy blend of red and glowing green and not the reality of grey walls and periwinkle stairs and stringers. Rachel said, "I made it all different colours

because I kind of wanted to make it like I was heading up to something that I wasn't really sure of, or I wasn't really, I don't, it's kind of like the unknown I guess. It's kind of like heading into another world because it's something I've never experienced before." For Rachel, participating in co-op was an awesome decision but one that was tinged with uncertainty.

At the top of the stairs is where Rachel's co-op job interviews took place. Her first interview was for a job as a Junior Marketing Officer with Service Canada and it turned out to be the best of all. The job description required someone that is creative and the hiring managers seemed relaxed and friendly – a perfect fit. They were "just very, very, very open," Rachel said. "So, I could totally see myself working for them especially as my bosses. I could see myself going to them and being able to ask questions and learn and everything." In fact, Rachel felt so comfortable with the Service Canada interviewers that she asked them, and only them, to be



Photo 4.37 Best Interview

photographed for the Seeing Cooperative Education research project. Later, Rachel converted her colour photo of the employers to black and white because all her interviews thereafter were contrasted against it – a dichotomy was created. "Every other interview after that I was kind of like, 'Well, yeah that job's cool' or, 'That interview was nice but *compared to* the first interview that I had it doesn't compare.'" Rachel went on to say, "Everything had to be bounced off of that and reflected off of that because I enjoyed it so much." The marketing job with Service Canada was the clear

favourite. She could picture herself there more than anywhere else because the employers demonstrated that they are willing to take a risk on someone that is young and inexperienced. Rachel would be encouraged to ask questions and would be accepted as a learner, new to the communications field.

For the Service Canada job interview, and the four additional interviews that she attended during the on-campus interview period, Rachel felt a little terrified because she knew she couldn't get by on personality alone. And so Rachel studied for each interview as though they were exams. "For every interview that I had," Rachel said, "I had at least, like two pages double-sided of like, research that I did for it because I felt like I never really had a *real* interview before, like the *real* world, like a *real* job. I've always had customer service jobs and jobs in the mall and summer camp jobs so it's never, I've never really been in the workforce before so I felt like the preparation was a huge thing..." Ensuring a successful co-op interview meant that Rachel had to thoroughly demonstrate to employers that she is the best candidate.

One of Rachel's interviews was conducted over the phone and she decided to prepare even more than she normally would because she knew that everything would be based on her verbal responses. She couldn't lean in



Photo 4.38 It's a Blur

towards the interviewers across the table or open her eyes really wide to visually portray that she was interested and eager. Whatever Rachel wanted to express she had to say it out loud. But,

doing extra preparation for the phone interview didn't make the experience any easier. As shown with her picture of the telephone, it was all a blur. Rachel didn't know what was going to happen during the phone interview and she can hardly remember what took place. She explained, "I was really nervous and just sitting there in that telephone room where you do the interviews is really nerve wracking because you're just waiting for the person to call and you're unaware of how you should answer the phone and you don't really know what to expect because I've never had a telephone interview before." Rachel wanted to do well, and probably she did, but all she saw was the phone distorting before her eyes, its numbers and letters smearing until illegible, her memory of the event soft, hazy, and swaying.

Sitting in the waiting room and waiting for a face-to-face interview felt much the same, like a world that's been distorted by tension. Even though everything was going smoothly, Rachel felt anxiety. While she waited, she worried: about the interviews she had already completed, about the one she was about to attend, and about those that were scheduled for later in the week.

Rachel didn't take a picture of the waiting room but shared that it is the "toughest place to be because you're nervous and people are calling your name." You are poised, dressed and ready: not too formal, or too grunged-down, nor too stiff, or relaxed. You are trying to be sure and feeling not so sure at all.

Rachel recalled: "One time where one of the interviewers came out and said, 'Rachel?' and two of us stood up and I was like, 'Crap! This is not going to go well.'" Fellow co-op students sitting in the waiting room erupted in laughter and Rachel felt all eyes on her, embarrassed by the situation. "It was just, just nerve wracking because you're so on edge,"

Rachel explained. “You’re waiting for someone to come out and call your name but when they do but it’s not you, it’s just, it’s just like, ‘Uh no. Now I just want to go home.’”

Fortunately for Rachel, the stress associated with the co-op placement process wasn’t long lived. Even though she isn’t bilingual Rachel was matched to the government job as the Junior Marketing Officer with Service Canada, and so she didn’t have to continue in the placement process through the spring. But it was hard to celebrate because a few of her friends had to continue applying for jobs, go through the hassle of off-campus interviews, and the repeated disappointment of not getting matched. Rachel said, “I try not to talk about it too much because I don’t want to rub it into my friends that haven’t gotten matched yet but...It’s just, I guess it’s just kind of luck like, if you rank someone high and they rank you low then I’m lucky if you rank them high and they rank you high then it’s lucky. It’s not like I’m more qualified than other people are. It just worked out that way for me, I guess.”

For Rachel, celebration was rather reserved and so what marked her achievement and the next stage in her life was the renting of a bedroom in a townhouse with friends. “I just thought it was kind of significant towards co-op because...the day before I started [my co-op job] I moved in,” Rachel said. “So, it was kind of like a whole new everything. Like it wasn’t like I was living where I’d been living for the whole year and then I was starting something new. It was like everything was new. Even my room was new...new job, new home, new room, new roommates so completely, like fresh start of everything.”

And yet, it wasn’t an entirely new place to be. Rachel had been to the townhouse many times before but always as a guest of her best friends. Rachel jokingly became known as the fifth roommate because she often chose to sleep on the couch if she didn’t feel like walking home after they had had a night out together. When spring arrived and a room freed up with the

departure of another renter, Rachel moved in with the feeling that she already belonged there. She immediately felt at home.



Photo 4.39 Home / Comfort-ability
wardrobe tucked against the

only available wall. Above her bed Rachel hung a canvas of her idol Audrey Hepburn, someone she regards as an amazing actress and advocate, having done work with the United Nations. Above the

Rachel took a picture of her new bedroom but she didn't alter her photograph with Photoshop. However, she did alter the small space itself by painting the walls a fresh coat of deep red to cover the weird lime green that was left by the previous person. And then, perhaps with the walls still wafting with a slightly chemical-clean smell, Rachel decorated and organized. She put up a few shelves, a picture of her friends taken on prom night, and in absence of a closet she stored her clothes in boxes under her bed or in the

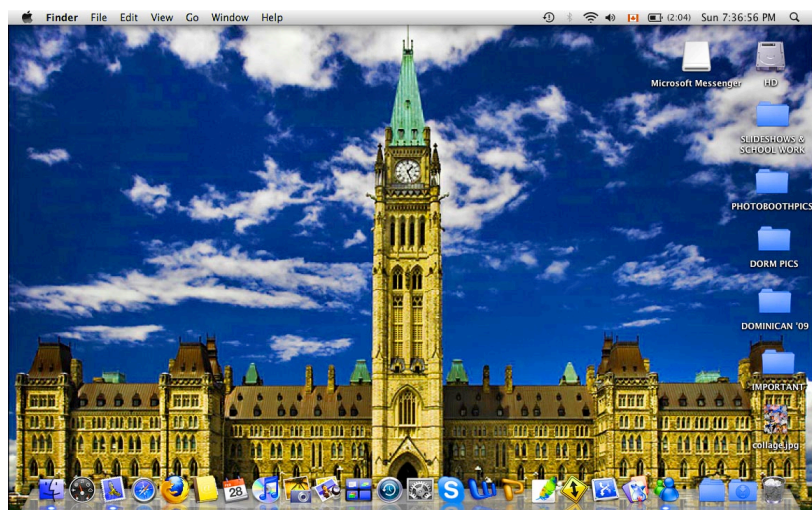


Photo 4.40 Life

canvas she hung the letter ‘R’ for ‘Rachel’, a gift that her sister had made for her.

Almost within reach of the bed but out of the frame of the picture is Rachel’s desk and laptop. And, on her laptop screen is a picture of the parliament buildings. Of her choice of pictures she said that as an employee with Service Canada, government is now part of her life and it is something to be proud of. She explained, “I’m not from Ottawa originally so I think it’s kind of a place where everyone, every Canadian should come once in their life just to kind of see it. It’s, maybe not all of the politics behind it, that’s probably more of the negative side, I would say. But just the buildings, it’s all so positive to me. I think it’s just, like being patriotic to your country and everything.”

Taken together, Rachel’s room is a small, stylish, unique, and tidy space that is a collection, or perhaps a collage of Rachel, of her friends and family, her tastes and values. It is the place from which she will start her new life proudly working for the Canadian government. It is where she rests. It is a place made by her and captured as an important marker along her journey.



Photo 4.41 Surreal

Another marker for Rachel is the street sign just down the road from the townhouse. But in this case she manipulated her photograph to show that she arrived at this place and time, this signpost in her life, so quickly that it seemed fake. Rachel explained, “I made it like a really high contrast and

boosted the colour and stuff like that. I thought it looked a lot cooler that way than just a regular photo would, but I don't know. I think, like the whole co-op experience has been pretty surreal, almost like it's not real." Rachel continued, "So, the reason I manipulate most of the pictures is because it doesn't really seem real to me. It's almost like cartoon-y almost. So, it's almost like it's not real. It's just a cartoon or something." And, it was unreal for Rachel because everything happened so quickly in abrupt succession:

Apply to jobs.

Attend interviews.

Rank jobs.

Get matched.

Move into a new place with new roommates over the span of two days.

Finish school on a Friday.

Start work on a Monday.

Become an adult with a career.

Rachel said, "It just went by like, so fast. Because one day I'm staying in my old room at my parents' house and the next day I'm in a new room taking the bus to work that I've never been to before." One minute Rachel was a girl, the next she was a woman.

And what should a professional woman wear? To find out Rachel emailed her new employer. "Business casual," was the response and so Rachel chose dark jeans and a blouse for her first day of work. Quite right: she was a little more formal than the administrative assistants she would work with and a little less formal than her bosses who wore suits and met regularly with Deputy Ministers and the like.

When she arrived that first day, Rachel expected to be shown to a cubical but was surprised to be given an office to share with another co-op student. The office seemed a little old and run-down, having been populated by one co-op student after another, but there was a door, one filing cabinet, and two desks with computers and phones. To make the space function for their tastes and needs, Rachel and her co-op colleague re-arranged the furniture to suit. As part of Rachel's effort to personalize her corner she also changed her computer screen from the classic



Photo 4.42 Future

Windows-blue to a picture of a *Vogue* model. Rachel said, “In the grand scheme of things I would want to work for a magazine, something like *Vogue*, which is kind of why I have it as my desktop background, kind of like inspiration.” Her goal is right in front of her so she cannot lose sight of what she really wants.

And so, Rachel altered the space but in this case, she also altered the image. Using Photoshop she changed the photograph so that it is yellowed (to highlight the age and worn-out appearance of the office) and framed the scene with a vignette (to highlight her career focus). It is a picture of the now and the future. In the now, Rachel is working for the Canadian government and developing her skills in the communications field. She is part of the Design and Production Team getting experience with the photo library and doing creative work like photography and layout for brochures, posters, and signage.

In the future, Rachel is working for *Vogue*. In her future, she will have made her dream into something real.

Chapter 5: Seeing Cooperative Education

The mini-biographies of Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel are six narratives that celebrate the unique experiences of these study participants. Each narrative captures the individuality of the students and how they, on their own terms, made sense of cooperative education, and the various aspects of their complex lives. Following the writing of the mini-biographies, the students' words and photographs were regarded as a whole, organized thematically and temporally, and then brought together in the form of a reader's theatre script (Coger & White, 1973; Latrobe et al., 1991; Latrobe & Laughlin, 1989).

The script, titled "Seeing Cooperative Education," was created with the students' transcribed words and photographs. Their words were modified and edited (Coger & White, 1973; Sandretto et al., June 2007) but only to a limited degree in order to facilitate clarity, storytelling, and plotline within the play. The photographs weren't modified at all but choices were made on what to include and what to exclude to best represent thematic ideas.

There are 22 acts in the play with each act beginning with the title of the act and a photograph projected on the back wall behind the readers. Before the readers begin speaking their lines, the narrator provides a brief introduction of the act. The narrator also comments throughout the play in order to facilitate theatrical flow and to highlight key ideas.

In terms of the staging, the set-up is very simple. Although the study participants interviewed with me one-on-one, they sit on the stage with the narrator as though they are in one room together, and consequently appear to the audience as a group in conversation. They support and sometimes refute one another as they travel along the temporal journey of co-op pre-employment. The result is a weaving together of the participant's stories, words, and images into a powerful voice about the time prior to their first co-op work terms.

Seeing Cooperative Education Reader's Theatre Script

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Five Women and one Man, all around nineteen years of age, and a Narrator.

NARRATOR: *A good storyteller, man or woman, older than the other characters.*

MÉLANIE: *An introspective young woman.*

BEN: *An easy-going young man.*

CAYLA: *A cheerful young woman; somewhat nervous.*

AMAL: *A conflicted young woman.*

EMMA: *A goal-orientated young woman.*

RACHEL: *A cheerful young woman.*

THE PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE SCENE

The stage is arranged with five rows of eight chairs (for a total 40 chairs) plus one chair off to the side for the narrator. The readers are sitting in the chairs in a random and spaced pattern as though they are sitting in a waiting room. The readers located to the backstage may move forward when they speak and sit front stage to ensure they are visible to the audience.

o	o	o	X	o	o	o	o	
o	o	o	o	o	X	o	o	
o	o	X	o	o	o	o	o	X
o	X	o	o	X	o	X	o	
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	

Each reader holds a school binder. The school binders might have rigid sides to allow them to be used as props (for example, laptops or portfolios). Each character is dressed casually (for example, jeans and t-shirts). The narrator may be dressed in business attire. Throughout the play, different titles and photographic images are projected on a screen behind the readers in large scale. The title and image changes are noted within the script.

(As the presentation begins, the readers are sitting on chairs with their binders in hand. The narrator is sitting on a stool slightly apart from the other readers. Projected on the large screen behind the readers is the title of the play "Seeing Cooperative Education.")

SCRIPTING NOTES:

Participants' transcripts have been edited, to a limited degree, in order to maintain the attention of the listening audience. For example:

1. Words such as "kind of" and "like" were reduced to avoid repetitiveness.
2. Words were added to some phrases for clarity. For example, the line "I knew every single Minister and I never actually got asked it" was changed to "I knew every single government Minister and I never actually got asked about it in an interview."
3. Occasionally, repetitive sentences were omitted as well as longer passages that strayed from the main topic of conversation.
4. Some words not familiar to the listening audience were changed. For example, "the online job management system" is used in place of "the Co-op Navigator."
5. Scene titles are the titles of students' photographs. Occasionally, additional words have been added to the title for clarity. For example, "Preparation" became "Preparation (*for the chaos*)."

The narrator's introductory paragraphs were written specifically for the script and are not based on transcripts. The narrator's dialogue within the body of the script has been based on interview transcripts but edited significantly to connect scenes and concepts with fluidity.

ACT 1: The Beginning**Projected Title: Seeing Cooperative Education**

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) The script that will be read to you has been arranged from transcripts of interviews I held with six students enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programmes. I conducted these interviews one-on-one, in the time prior to the students' first co-op work terms.

In interview, the students told stories and shared photographs of their experiences. Mostly they shared their experience of being co-op students: applying to jobs, attending interviews, and getting matched, *or not*, to co-op jobs. But, they also shared stories and photographs of what it's like to be who they are at this point in their lives: living in the City of Ottawa, being away from home, growing up, and transitioning into adulthood. In interview, they told the stories that are unseen by others.

And so, although these students have never met, their experiences of pre-employment weave together and enrich our understanding of cooperative education and perhaps more importantly,

the lives of co-op students. Their stories, told with the pictures they have taken, uncover what is often hidden from our view.

Projected Title: The Beginning

NARRATOR: (motioning to the group of students) Let me introduce these students to you. They are all in their second year of university and around 19 years of age. They are all enrolled in full-time studies and simultaneously participating in the co-op placement process, and competing for co-op jobs.

Projected Image (Photo 5.1):



NARRATOR: (motioning to Cayla) Cayla is studying Communication within the Faculty of Arts.

CAYLA: (standing and speaking excitedly) I'm a very organized person. (sitting)

NARRATOR: (motioning to Ben) Ben is doing a double major in Political Science and Communication with the Faculty of Social Sciences.

BEN: (standing and speaking casually) I'm a person who leaves everything to the last minute because I kind of thrive under pressure... (sitting)

NARRATOR: (motioning to Emma) Emma is with the Faculty of Administration. She is focusing her studies on International Management.

EMMA: (standing and speaking with confidence) You want to sell yourself for each job, right? (sitting)

NARRATOR: (motioning to Mélanie) Mélanie is studying English Literature in the Faculty of Arts.

MÉLANIE: (standing and speaking with disillusionment) I'm not sure if I'm cut out for the real world. (sitting)

NARRATOR: (motioning to Amal) Amal is with the Faculty of Administration taking Human Resource Management.

AMAL: (standing and speaking with frustration) I'm a woman. I'm a visible minority. Hire me! (sitting)

NARRATOR: (motioning to Rachel) And Rachel is studying Communication within the Faculty of Arts.

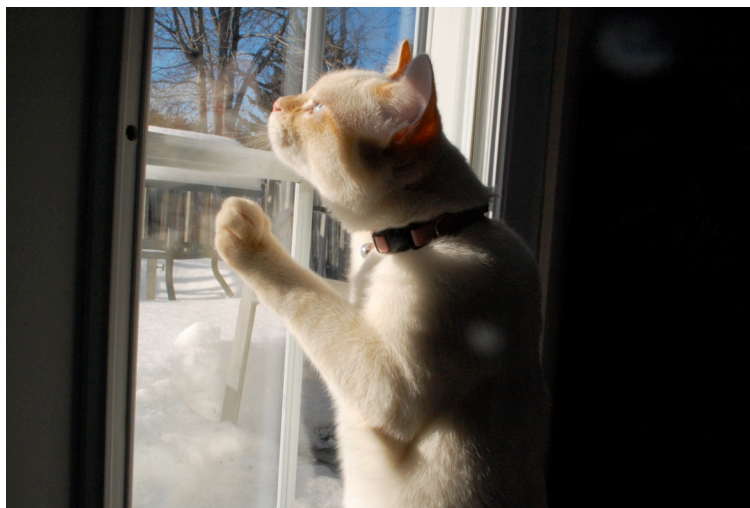
RACHEL: (standing and speaking matter-of-factly) I'm really about working towards something and having something to show for it at the end of it. (sitting)

ACT 2: But I Remember the Sun

Projected Title: But I Remember the Sun

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Deciding to participate in cooperative education and the placement process is exciting. For these students, it means deciding to do something important, to take the next step in life, and to gain meaningful work experience. Co-op is perceived to be an opportunity and an investment.

Projected Image (Photo 5.2):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) Mélanie, tell us about the photograph of your cat. What do we see in the picture and what does it mean?

MÉLANIE: (wistfully) It's very bright and sunny. So, this is me sometimes, looking and just finding jobs that just sound amazing to me and I'm like, "This is what I want to do" and I feel like I'm going to make a difference if I have this job.

CAYLA: (excitedly) I feel lucky that I get to be a part of co-op...I just keep expanding from here...it's just going to be so exciting to think, it's like, in the future, you know? I think there's going to be so much more stuff that I'm going to learn.

EMMA: I'm excited about the summertime and I'm excited about spring and I'm excited to start my Co-op work term and to get experience but also take a break from school and to be good to myself and hopefully that has a positive reinforcement on work and a positive return on my investment to myself.

AMAL: I was telling everyone I'm going to be a co-op student and I'm going to gain experience. I'm going to be unique by gaining this experience...

RACHEL: Yeah! I think it's awesome.

BEN: (apathetically) I'm very laid back, go-with-the-flow...

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) This exciting opportunity is not without challenges. It's an adventure, with all the highs and lows of a personal journey, even for those that go-with-the-flow. The co-op journey is about career: the opportunities, competition, decision-making, and realities of employability. The journey is also about transition: growing up and becoming an adult, and changing from being a student to a professional in the adult world of work. Oftentimes the journey is about identity. Students ask, "Who am I?" and "What do I want to be?" For better or worse, the possibilities can feel endless.

ACT 3: Endless Possibilities

Projected title: Endless Possibilities

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op students must apply to many jobs to hopefully secure a good number of interviews, and finally the first of four full-time paid work terms. This means that students are sometimes applying to more jobs and a broader range of jobs than they had expected. It means taking a wide-open approach, like an angler trolling the ocean in search of elusive opportunities that *if caught*, have the potential to change everything.

Projected Image (Photo 5.3):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Cayla) Cayla, you photographed office buildings after one of your Co-op job interviews. What's the title of this image?

CAYLA: "Endless Possibilities" or...(pausing). Yeah, something like that just because that's how I was feeling at the end of the day. There's just *so* many different directions that I potentially, in my co-op experience, could go.

AMAL: Exactly. Yeah because this one interview can change your whole life...

EMMA: I'd only applied to 13 jobs in the beginning and then someone told me, "Well, you know you only get three interviews out of 26 job postings that you apply to." And so, then I was like, "Oh no." And then I went back and re-applied to jobs. Actually, the job I re-applied to I got hired. So, it was a good thing that I kept applying because at first I was very picky...

BEN: (laughing) We were just spamming job applications...so, just every government job, just apply now, apply now, apply now!

MÉLANIE: (frustrated) I felt like the co-op office made it seem so great and it's going to be "jobs specific to your field and you'll get relevant work experience in your department and your employment sector." And then when you show up they're like, "Don't apply to jobs specifically to your field. Cast your net wide. Go apply in communications and marketing." But I was like, "I thought I signed on to Co-op to be specific to my field and not for communications or marketing jobs."

ACT 4: Life**Projected Title: Life**

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op students at the University of Ottawa are primarily applying for jobs within the city and surrounding region. The major employer is the federal government and consequently it is the employer that most shapes the experience of these co-op students. To some it's a joy: an opportunity to live and work in the Capital City, to serve Canadians in either French or English, and be patriotic. To others it's ill-fitting: a requirement to work in mundane jobs distant from career goals, to feel less qualified because of uni-lingualism, and less eligible because hiring managers choose Canadian Citizens over Permanent Residents.

Projected Image (Photo 4.40):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Tell us about your picture Rachel.

RACHEL: This is the background to my computer. When I moved to Ottawa last year I changed my background because I wanted to be patriotic. (laughing)...I just thought it was kind of relevant because this is where I spend...Like, all my time is on my desk-top of my computer doing everything and everything that I've done for co-op as well has been on my computer. So, I thought a print-screen of my dock and everything like that would be really cool and also the fact that it's of parliament and the fact that I'm going to be working in a government job is also really cool. It kind of all interconnects. I guess you could call this picture, "Life", because it is every part of my life...

CAYLA: We're so lucky to be in the heart of everything, getting those interesting experiences. I mean, not everyone gets to work for the government as their co-op jobs. I mean, some people may like this, some people may not, but I think it's just kind of an interesting experience to get to do that.

MÉLANIE: I think Canadian International Development Agency does a lot of really great things. So, I would really like to get a job with them...

AMAL: I have a friend who was in the same situation as mine: no relative work experience, no French, and she's a Permanent Resident, not a Canadian Citizen, so.

NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) Triple challenge.

AMAL: Yeah. And she still got a job. Well she was left at the end, the very end of the co-op placement process.

RACHEL: I had five job interviews within a week. So, I just consider myself really lucky getting that. I mean, I don't think I'm, I mean there's something that obviously stood out on my resume for this job. That was good, but I'm not bilingual...

ACT 5: Sunny Mornings

Projected Title: Sunny Mornings

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op students are often *making* their luck. They're certainly taking chances. Although already in their second year of university co-op students reflect on the break they are making from their childhood home, and of the journey they have embarked upon as young adults. With career on the horizon they are establishing themselves as independent from their families. They are leaving home: they have left, will leave again, and start anew.

Projected Image (Photo 5.4):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) This looks like a front step, a sidewalk, and a patch of dirt.

EMMA: (smiling) I know it doesn't look like much, it's mud right now, but I just seeded that. So it's going to be a lawn in about three weeks (laughing). So, it's exciting for spring. For me it's very exciting. My house is a student house. But the newly seeded lawn makes it look cool, even

though it's a student house. Parents look at the houses and they don't think they're very exciting. But for a student I mean, you know when you wake up in the morning and you're just smiling because of the sun? It doesn't really matter.

CAYLA: (excitedly) Doing co-op in the Capital and stuff, I always thought that would be kind of a cool experience. So, I decided, "I'm leaving home! I'm going far away."

BEN: I moved from out east where there's plenty of universities that are very high-level universities. All my friends went to them but I left and went to the University of Ottawa. So I was kind of the person who was gone.

AMAL: It's kind of hard to adjust from the life I had in Saudi Arabia, a very pampered life, where I did nothing, to this life where I have to do everything myself. It's exciting but it's a bit stressful and it takes time for me to adjust.

RACHEL: (resigned to the experience) I feel you have to go through being away from the people you want to be with in order to grow up or else you're just going to be reliant on those people forever and you can't, you can't do that.

MÉLANIE: (happily) I'm actually open to going anywhere in the world...

ACT 6: Panic!

Projected Title: Panic!

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op is about starting to understand career search: the competitiveness, the demand for certain skills and not others, the extensive amount of time required to secure a job, and the specificities of a particular employment market. With the City of Ottawa this means a high percentage of public versus private sector jobs. When these challenges emerge students feel fear, anger, and disappointment with the co-op programs. Some even feel duped, as though charlatans have swindled them.

Projected Image (Photo 5.5):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) Mélanie, your picture is titled “Panic!” Tell us why.

MÉLANIE: (with frustration) I took a picture of a cell phone and titled it “Panic!” because, when I went to one of the last co-op workshops, they finally told us all the statistics of how many jobs you have to apply to and what are the odds of you getting a job. And for my department it was very low, like 79%. And they’re like, “Oh, you won’t get placed first round.” Like, “A third of you will get placed but the rest of you will have to move on to second round.” And I got really scared. I was like, “Oh no.” Like, I felt like I got duped because I thought they made it sound amazing and then I show up and it’s like, “Open market jobs” and “79% get placed.” And you have to go through this whole co-op placement process and it’s not guaranteed a job, not even close to guaranteed...

BEN: Um, I don’t think I really got a great idea of how much time would actually have to be invested in co-op. It wasn’t a huge amount of time out of my schedule. Like it’s not like being in co-op and having to dedicate myself to co-op *compromised* other things but it would have been nice if there was more of an idea of how much time it actually does take and how many workshops you have to do and how much time it does take to go onto the job bank every day and check the 80 new jobs that are up that day.

AMAL: (angrily)...When you’re delivering something as important as co-op to students don’t just make them have really high hopes and then...you’re crashing their hopes in a second. And this is what I felt like. I felt that they were telling us *every* single person is going to get placed. Oh, they say 97% and there’s a chance that I’m in the 3% but usually, I’ll tend to look at the 97%...

EMMA: (with determination) I want to work in the private sector. The public/private job situation is very hard for a management student. Most management students that you talk to are wanting to get into private companies. Almost everyone is excited to work for their first co-op term in public but...they’re just waiting for an opportunity to get into a private firm...

RACHEL: (with frustration) I went in this completely blind. I had no idea what to expect. I mean the workshops, they help you and they kind of guide you but until you actually experience an

interview you *don't* know what to expect, at all. You have no idea. So, even if you've done interviews in the past for other jobs, it's not going to be the same because it's so much more pressure and everything like that.

(speaking directly to the audience) So, I think sharing our experiences in this research project will really help future co-op students with that.

ACT 7: What to Wear?

Projected Title: What To Wear?

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Blind? These co-op students want you to see what they see, and how others see them. Part of the co-op experience involves being judged by employers. Students are critiqued on how they look, the skills listed on their resume, how they perform in interviews, and even by their names. They are on trial and the facts are sometimes assumed.

Projected Image (Photo 4.21):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Cayla) You're picture is titled "What to wear?"

CAYLA: ...As much as you say, "Don't judge a book by its cover." If you come in looking sloppy then that's obviously a huge concern. You know people...your first interaction is obviously very important.

MÉLANIE: I feel like the way I look is a direct reflection of how I feel on the inside and my personality. So, I feel that if employers can accept what I look like on the outside and put more emphasis onto my qualities and my skills and they can look past appearances then that's probably the kind of employer I would like to work for.

EMMA: I guess it's just the whole aspect of someone judging you on paper. It's hard to take...

AMAL: (standing to tell her story) Oh during my second interview something really funny happened to me. I was the last one left in the interview waiting room and then there comes this employer, he comes really often, like every two minutes. He comes and he goes back and he comes and he's like, "Was there a guy in here who left?" And he mumbles to himself, "I'm looking for an Amal. I can't find an Amal. Where is *he*?" And I just looked to him and I'm like, "I *am* Amal." And he blushed and he's like, "Oh! I'm really sorry. I thought it was a guy because the name was not clear." I'm like, "It's OK. It's a random name, it's..." I was so embarrassed and he was embarrassed (laughing). It was such a...

NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) So all this time he was looking for you.

AMAL: Why would you assume Amal would be a male? Why? (laughing in disbelief)

NARRATOR: (sympathetically) Poor you. You're the only person in the interview waiting room.

AMAL: I know. And he's like, very, very sure that it's a guy because he came and he went back, and at the end he was hopeless so he thought of asking me, "Did you see any guy who was sitting in here? I'm looking for an Amal. Where is he?" I'm like, "Ohhh, K."

NARRATOR: He is me.

AMAL: Yeah, *he* is *me*. (sitting)

ACT 8: Monday to Friday

Projected Title: Monday to Friday

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) So, "Who am I?" students ask. "What should I wear?" Co-op students look in the mirror and gaze at their reflection. They wonder, "Is this appropriate?" "Is this me?" They evolve in front of their own eyes, sometimes with pride and sometimes with resistance.

Projected Image (Photo 5.6):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) Mélanie, is this a picture of you?

MÉLANIE: (contemplatively) This was a picture of what I felt I looked like on a regular day, just casual and not really put together. I don't know. I felt, if I go to a co-op interview for a job, I felt like I would actually want to present myself as I really am instead of putting on this fake persona and image of myself. So, to me it would be really important to find a job that would accept me for me and not for this put-together, other person that I pretend to be.

CAYLA: I think that's an important part of the whole co-op process, is to look professional.

BEN: The clothes are an evolution of me becoming an adult...

AMAL: (happily) Like, when I tried the dress on and the heels, yup (laughing)! I felt feminine. I'm a woman.

EMMA: I wear a suit on a daily basis so being formal is becoming more of a lifestyle and I respect it a lot more. Just changing from a teenager to the woman is kind of a big thing, even though this is very corporate looking. (laughing)

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Rachel, what are you thinking?

RACHEL: (dreamily)...Maybe I'll have to go get a whole new wardrobe of like, professional looking clothes. So, maybe I would take pictures of the store or me wearing something, a picture of me in the mirror...

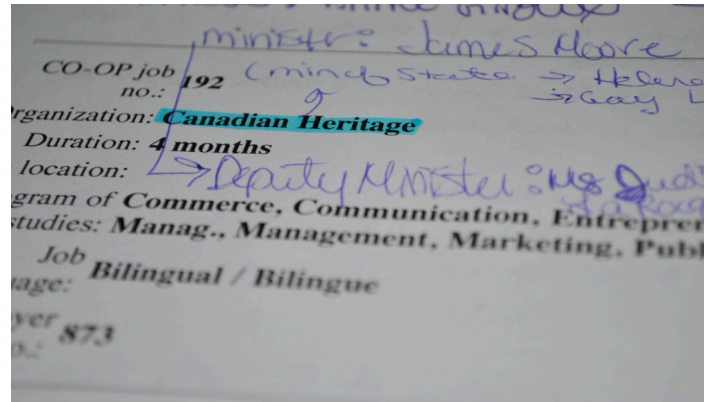
ACT 9: The Ministers

Projected Title: The Ministers

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) In front of the mirror or in front of their computer, co-op students prepare for interviews. And like actors blocking out the scene of a play, they

memorize, break the challenges into parts, develop their verbal and non-verbal means of communication, and try to stay calm.

Projected Image (Photo 4.31):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) Emma, this is a picture of a job posting. Why did you take a picture of this document and all of your jot notes?

EMMA: I found this humorous because the co-op staff kept telling us, “Know our Ministers.” And I knew every single government Minister and I never actually got asked about it in an interview. But I thought it was kind of funny so I took a picture of it. Because I’m like, “I know the Deputy Minister. I know the Assistant Minister.” So, that’s why I took a picture because it was actually very, very humorous to me because I didn’t actually need to know it for *any* of the interviews. And I made sure I knew it for all of them.

RACHEL: It’s almost like studying for a test. Like you go in, you’ve prepared for it before and you know you’re ready to...like the employer even asked me questions over the phone about their company so I was really happy that I prepared for it or else I would have probably not done as well as I think I did. (laughing)

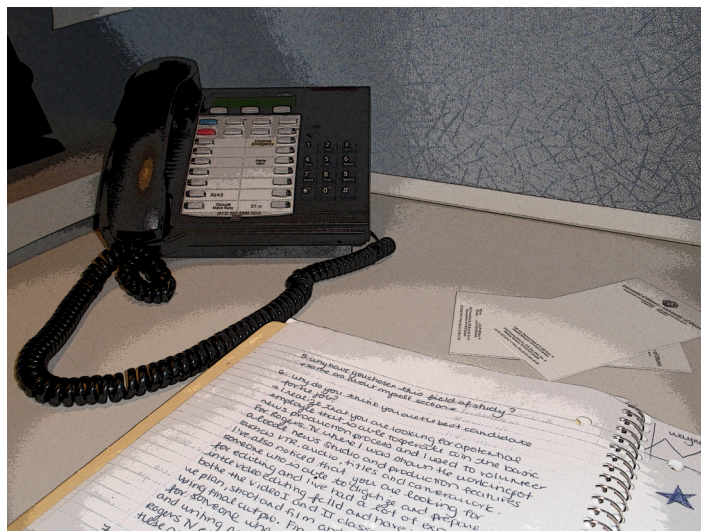
MÉLANIE: (with distaste) For my finance interview I think I just memorized the goals of the company and just kind of regurgitated it to her and she was like, “Oh it seems like you know a lot” and I was like, “Oh, OK.”

CAYLA: This is basically what I kind of do the day before an interview: print out the job description; highlight all the important things that I think I should relate to in my interview. If they say, you know, “enthusiastic”...How’s that? And I think in my head or write it down, “Well, how do I show that I’m enthusiastic?” “How am I going to express that in my interview?”

BEN: I get a lot from theatre and that you need to use nerves to channel your energy. You can direct it. You can be nervous the day before or even right before the curtain opens but then you have to direct your energy to whatever you need at that time: to be outgoing, to be upbeat, to be whatever.

ACT 10: Prepare Yourself (for competition)**Projected Title: Prepare Yourself (*for competition*)**

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op is competitive and consequently requires the resilience of a warrior. Co-op students compete against their friends and against more senior students. They tackle the obstacles because good jobs are hard to come by and because unemployment is an unacceptable but very real possibility. They fight to move out of the fog of neither here nor there, and win.

Projected Image (Photo 5.7):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Rachel, this is a picture of the notebook you used to help you research and prepare for your co-op job interviews.

RACHEL: I definitely learned that when I'm going in for a job interview, like a government job interview or something like that, you need to be prepared because if you're not, if you just go in and think, "Oh, I'll do fine. I'll get by with my personality," or something like that, it's not going to work! (laughing) It's not going to work out. You actually have to know what you're talking about...

MÉLANIE: (with seriousness) I've had friends that graduated and they've, they can't find a job. I guess because they haven't done any relevant experience over the summer, they've just been working like, waitress-ing, or working retail and have no, I guess, extra curricular activities that were related to their degree. So, they were finding it *very* very hard to get a job so, it's like, "I don't want that to happen to me."

EMMA: (with faltering voice)...It was just really daunting because like you have all these people saying, "You're not going to get a job."

BEN: We're kind of fighting with more senior students for co-op jobs.

AMAL: (recalling a past experience) It was time for us to check the interview results so it was during reading week and we were in the library studying and my boyfriend told me, “Go and check the online job management system for your results.”

He was expecting me to have the job so he wanted to take a photo when I’m happy or jumping. So, just when I saw the interview results, I was like holding my ice tea and about to crunch it because I was mad. And he was like, “What’s wrong?” I’m like, “I didn’t get even ranked for the job. I was an X.” He’s like, “It’s OK. There’s second round. You said not all students get placed in the first round, only 1/3 so it’s OK.” I’m like, “WHY!?”

EMMA: That’s the thing. You don’t really want to ask everybody where they’re working because you know they’ll ask you and a lot of them will be like, “Well, I’m not matched to a co-op job yet.” So, everyone’s in that grey area. They’re really excited, the people who have a job. But the people who don’t are really trying to get motivation to keep going. So, it’s really that couple of weeks yet and then everyone will be happy and we can...

NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) Celebrate.

EMMA: We can celebrate together, exactly.

ACT 11: Preparation (for the chaos)

Projected Title: Preparation (*for the chaos*)

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Preparation is important, if only to handle the chaos. Co-op is like a circus. Students feel they are juggling, doing a balancing act, or carrying a weight on their shoulders so large it might overwhelm at any point. They are on a precipice and do what they can to avoid the fall.

Projected Image (Photo 5.8):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Cayla) This picture of your friend is packed with items and packed with colour.

CAYLA: (with focus)...It looks kind of intense, I think. I'm just trying to show that sometimes you have to focus. You have to be organized type thing...in this photo, it looked like it was crowded. So many things in one, just to show that you're juggling all the things at once.

MÉLANIE: (agreeing) I felt like I'd taken on too much. (pausing in thought) But I guess in the real world everything sort of happens at once and you have to deal with it all at once. It's never going to wait for you to be ready for it so, you might as well get used to the chaos.

BEN: (with increasing intensity) There's a lot of other stuff we have to deal with that you don't really see in the co-op office when everyone's sitting and waiting for a workshop or waiting for interviews. There's a lot of back-story behind that. The interview is kind of the tip of the iceberg. But then behind the interview is the hours that everyone's spent on the online job management system trying to figure out why their resume won't post to the internet or why they can't apply for this job or what it means when a job has been matched but they haven't been matched to it and they don't know how to decipher the job ranking system. And then on top of that they have to do all their schoolwork and all their personal life on top of that. So, if they work or if they volunteer or whatever else...So I guess it just shows that there's more to co-op than co-op.

AMAL: (in agreement) I had to balance work and school...

EMMA: It consumed a lot of my life.

RACHEL: (standing to tell her story) It all went pretty smoothly for me but just, just the interview waiting room. I think that is the toughest place to be because you're nervous and people are calling your name.

There was one time where one of the interviewers came out and said, "Rachel" and two of us stood up and I was like, "Crap! This is not going to go well." I was like, "Great." And I was pretty upfront. I was like, "Rachel who?" (laughing) And he was like, "Rachel Something-else" and it was the other Rachel and I sat down and everyone started laughing in the room and I was like, "That's embarrassing!" Like, "That wasn't fun. Now I have to sit here and wait again and get called again."

It was just, just nerve wracking because you're so on edge. You're waiting for someone to come out and call your name but when they do but it's not you, it's just, it's just like, "Uh no. Now I just want to go home." (sitting)

ACT 12: Night Before...Daunting

Projected Title: Night Before...Daunting

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op students experience the ephemeral nature of self-confidence. They have it and lose it. They try to preserve it like a precious gift. Students wonder, "Am I good enough?" Then answer, "I'm not" or "I'm not sure." And then sometimes state, "I'm as good as others. I *believe* in myself. I have faith."

Projected Image (Photo 5.9):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) Emma, this is a picture of your interview portfolio. What did you decide for a title?

EMMA: “Night before”...“Daunting” because it’s crisp and it’s like a suit that’s freshly pressed...just waiting to put it on. It’s just sitting there, in a corner.

NARRATOR: Let’s go.

EMMA: Yeah. And it’s the night before your job interview and you’re nervous.

NARRATOR: Would the portfolio, prepared with your resume and examples of work, help you with your nerves, do you feel? Or, does it make you feel more nervous?

EMMA: (sitting up tall) Actually I’m very confident when I go into interviews. So, it’s just like that freshly pressed suit. It’s just sitting there, ready to go...like the 30 page paper that I have due next week. It’s going to be sitting on my desk, ready to go. I’m not going to let anyone touch it until I hand it in.

RACHEL: (with faltering voice) I don’t know. I like to embrace new experiences but I can still, you know, lose confidence and lose faith in myself a little on the way because new experiences can be hard sometimes and a little bit nerve wracking and you’re not always aware of what’s going to happen. So, I don’t know, I’m not too sure. Ah...I don’t know...

AMAL: (in agreement with Rachel) I feel that I’m inferior to other people who already got jobs, yeah.

CAYLA: (cheerfully) I felt like I was up to par...

BEN: (standing to tell his story) I had to do a writing test for one of my job interviews in the boardroom at the co-op office. It was really intimidating for some reason. Just because it looks like, well, it is a real boardroom but it looks like a legit boardroom and it’s not something you think you’ll be sitting in writing a writing test.

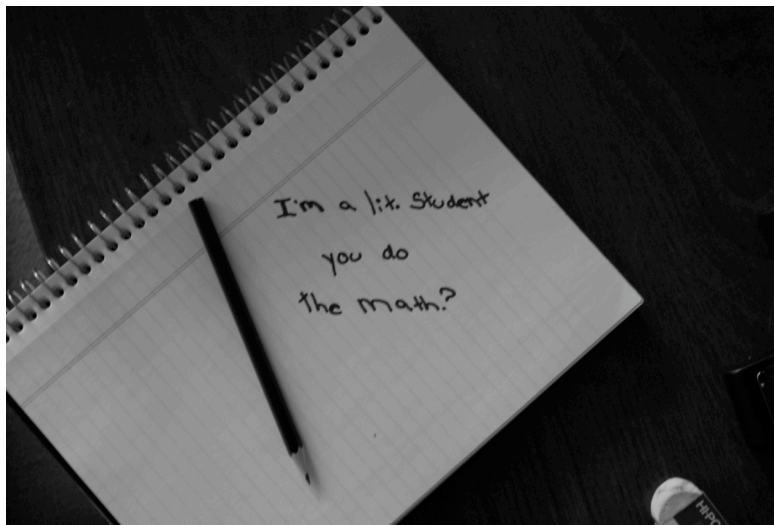
And everyone’s in suits and they’re all trying to figure out what they can write 450 words about. Like, it’s kind of a weird, a weird kind of almost surreal feeling. And it was really freaky for me because I write very quickly. So, I was writing and I was done and other people had like, four lines or five lines.

And I was like, “Did I write too much? Did I write enough? Did I just go through it quick? Did I go through it too quickly? Is it not going to make sense? Does it not flow right because I wrote it so quickly?” And then I was kind of freaking out for a second and then I just kind of took a step back and said, “Wait. I’m not a guy who freaks out about this kind of stuff. I just write fast and I believe in my writing. It’s the one thing I’m good at.”

So, I was able to kind of go, step back and just be like, “OK. Take the paper and pass it in.” And I knew looking at other people that they were freaked out and intimidated just by the room, just because it’s leather and hardwood and cool looking stuff...(sitting)

ACT 13: I'm a Lit Student You Do the Math?**Projected Title: I'm a Lit Student You Do the Math?**

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) More questions? Yes. As co-op students travel along the placement process they weigh one job opportunity against the other. They ask, "What do I like and dislike?" "What do I want to be?" and even, "What *can* I be?" They learn to place each job opportunity on a scale and weigh it, measuring the value of one path over another. They wonder where they fit and where they would rather not.

Projected Image (Photo 5.10):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) Mélanie, you've written a message.

MÉLANIE: (standing to tell her story) This picture is about the interview I had with a financial company. They were throwing all these, I guess, financial terms and management terms and computer terms and I just wanted to be like, "I'm a literature student. I don't know anything about this. If you ask me about editing, writing, proofreading, grammar, I will answer any question." But, "Why are you throwing all these terms at me?" (laughing)

NARRATOR: Did you feel as though they weren't even sure why you were there?

MÉLANIE: I think they *assumed* I knew what they were talking about and I just kept nodding like, "Maybe when they stop talking I'll figure out what the job is about." But, nope.

NARRATOR: Students sometimes wonder if the interviewers read the resume.

MÉLANIE: I felt like they read it on the spot.

NARRATOR: While you were sitting there?

MÉLANIE: (incredulously) Yeah, like, “Oh, what do you learn in this class?” type thing. And, “How is that applicable to management?” And I was like, “Greek civilization class...?” (sitting)

CAYLA: I did well in one of my interviews and I just kind of bonded and stuff. I thought you know, “This would be a really cool place to work.” I met a bunch of people that worked there. In my interview, people kept popping in. So, I got to meet a bunch of people and so, you know I kind of didn’t want to do the other two interviews that I had scheduled that day. I was like, “I just want it to be this one.” And then luckily it was, so the other two were just for practice. (laughing)

RACHEL: I think through learning about the companies that I could potentially work for I learned about myself as well because I learned maybe what I like, what I dislike. When I read the job descriptions, when applying to jobs, I kind of read one and I’ll be like, “Oh, no. Like there’s no way I could see myself in this job.” And I kind of realized, “OK, I kind of know where I want to go from just reading these descriptions.” I can kind of say, “Well, I know for sure I could never *be* this or I could never do this and I know for sure that I would *love* to do this.”

I’ve never really been sure what I want to do after I graduate. So, even just applying to jobs and reading job descriptions of things that I applied for and didn’t apply for I can kind of narrow my path as to where I want to get to eventually. Because before I really had no idea and now I kind of have more of an idea of where I can go.

BEN: Each day during the application process when I was still applying, I’d go on and be on the online job management system for 45 minutes or an hour just going through different jobs and reading them and kind of taking notes on the side about what was good about each job and what was kind of the pros and cons of each job.

CAYLA: I think reading over the job descriptions, looking at the whole thing, thinking, “Oh, what will my job be like?” You know, those four months, I think that whole aspect is really, really interesting...

MÉLANIE: I guess it really opens your eyes to what is really out there once you do graduate. Like, I probably will get some ups and downs when I am out in the real world looking for a job and at times I’ll see really great jobs and at times I’ll see some that aren’t so great and I don’t really want to do. But overall, just really opening my eyes to, what someone with my degree can do. Kind of like a reality-check I think.

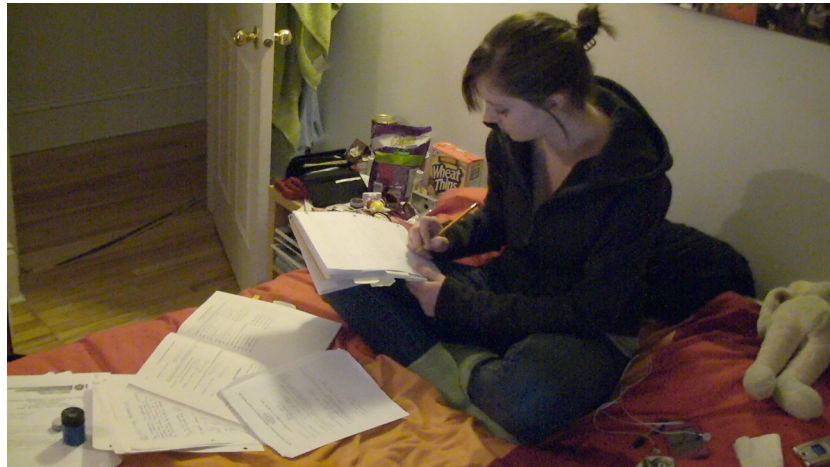
ACT 14: Wheat Thins, Tea, and Teddy Bears

Projected Title: Wheat Thins, Tea, and Teddy Bears

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Students are on route for the reality of adulthood. They transition from kids to grown-ups and are sometimes amazed and pleased that they are arriving at

their destination. Some wonder if they should disengage and stay a kid forever while others are adamant that their childhood hasn't ended quite yet.

Projected Image (Photo 5.11):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Ben) In this picture of your friend, I noticed that she has a teddy bear.

BEN: (casually) Yeah, it kind of shows, even though we're in university and whatever, we're still 18/19 years old, well she's 18 years old. We're not adults by any stretch of the imagination, no matter what the age of majority is. We're not adults yet. We're still trying to figure out how the world works. So...

MÉLANIE: I always planned to be a student forever and as soon as I couldn't be a student anymore, just go travelling. (laughing)

RACHEL: (amazed) It just went by so fast. Because one day I'm staying in my old room at my parents' house and the next day I'm in a new room taking the bus to work that I've never been to before.

EMMA: (in contrast) Yeah...I can just continue on building skills and everything, just become more systematic. Like, I'm doing twice as much workload as I did last year yet I'm getting better grades. You know, it's just showing how much I'm growing up in a way.

CAYLA: (dreamily) I thought of when I was in kindergarten and you have your backpack on and your Mom takes your picture outside the house of your first day of school. So, I thought I'd make it a little bit silly and take a picture like that for my first day at work. It would be kind of funny. Just a memory I guess, you know?

ACT 15: Getting started (with or without help from others)**Projected Title: Getting started (*with or without help from others*)**

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) And who are the people who surround these students' lives, who fill their thoughts and memories? There *are* co-op staff but they are in the background of students' stories. In the foreground are friends and family. They are the people with names and connections; they help the most, and sometimes hurt.

Projected Image (Photo 5.12):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) This is a picture of a tree outside your place. In the distance is a shopping plaza. What does the image mean to you?

AMAL: (calmly) What I liked about this photo is a lot of stuff. The weather was really bad and I wanted to go outside, there's a pharmacy over there. I was lazy because of the weather. But I was like, "Why am I lazy?" Like, it's just across the street and then I started thinking about myself during studies, during my search for jobs. I reflected upon a lot of stuff. I'm like, "You know what, you're a really, *really* lazy person. You're a couch potato!" (laughing) Like the pharmacy is just over there. You're going to wear your shoes and you're gonna go. "What's wrong with that?"

(reflecting on her photograph) I understood the street and the snow as the obstacles that I'm seeing. And the flash of light reflected on the window is like the sun that brings hope after a gloomy day...I think after this photo I decided to take the bus to the mall and to not be lazy.

(angrily) My Mom goes like, "Are you crazy? Like you're so lazy! You're so lazy. You can't find a job because you're lazy. You can't do extra work in school because you're lazy. You can't even go to the pharmacy, which is right across the street, because you are lazy." So that kind of hit me, yeah, hard.

CAYLA: (nervously) My Dad always told me, “If you’re not, if you don’t get stressed out, you don’t get nervous then you’re not human.” You know? (laughing)

BEN: It certainly helped a little bit to have support from friends even though we were all kind of doing interviews and not getting jobs and stuff. I know it really helped my friend Grant a lot to have other people there around him because he went to four or five interviews and they all went really well but he never got a call back.

RACHEL: My friends were always like, “Oh Rachel, she’s like the fifth roommate. She lives here basically.” Because I would sleep on the couch sometimes if I didn’t feel like walking home at night...

EMMA: (standing to tell her story) I was actually in tears before one of my interviews because I had the worst day ever and then I was like, “How am I supposed to go to an interview?” But it wasn’t the interviews fault. It was something else and so I think relaxing is like a huge part. I had to call my friend to relax me.

NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) It must be hard. You’re very busy with being a student. You probably have a job of some kind, relationships with friends, family, what have you, and then you have to pull it together for an interview. That’s got to be tough.

EMMA: Yeah, well I think it really depends on the day. Sometimes you’re so ready and then in this situation I just I had a really bad day, like *really* bad day, and I just couldn’t handle it. But I got to the interview and I actually got the job for that. So it worked out OK. I just needed someone to relax me. So if I didn’t have that support I don’t know how I would have done in the interview because I was lucky enough to be able to call a friend and they were there. (sitting)

ACT 16: Relief (*from the ride*)

Projected Title: Relief (*from the ride*)

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) There is very little respite for co-op students. Participating in the co-op placement process while going to university as a full-time student is frenzied. It’s like a ride at an amusement park: fast, dreamlike, and looping. It’s about being quick, and sometimes about not feeling quick enough.

Projected Image (Photo 5.13):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Ben) Ben, what's your friend doing in this picture?

BEN: I think he was watching a TV show. This was a couple of days ago when exams were winding down for me, but he was getting into a kind of a three-exam in a three-day rush or something like that. So, he was kind of burning the candle from all ends.

CAYLA: I definitely think, especially when talking to my roommate, just that two-week period of just applying, like accepting interviews, going to interviews, just that whole process. I think that was the most stressful thing, just because it was such a quick turn-around. You could find out two days before, "Oh, I have an interview, I have to prepare for that. Oh! I've got another one coming up."

AMAL: We have this expression in Arabic, "The train has passed away." Yup. So I'm telling my Mom I feel the same thing but in the work section. Like, I feel that I have lost hope in finding a job and this is what they make me feel like. Like, I am expired right now! And she's like, "You're only 19!" (laughing)

EMMA: (frustrated) I would get an email from the co-op office and it would say, "Co-op interview" and I'd think I got an interview and I'm so excited and then read it and it would be like, "Oh, Your times have changed." So then, "Oh no. I didn't get an interview." And then they change it to a time when you have something else going on and you have to adjust your whole life around it. So, it wasn't their fault at all or anyone's fault, it was just like, I mean you can't really expect everything to be set in stone...

NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) What I hear is rollercoaster. You're up, you're down, you're booked, you're not booked...

EMMA: Yup. That's exactly it...

MÉLANIE: (nodding in agreement) Some days you'll be so sure of co-op, that it's the best decision you've ever taken and some days you'll be like, "What was I thinking? Why am I even in this?" So, I feel like it's a rollercoaster. But, I guess in the end, you'll only know then if it was worth it or not.

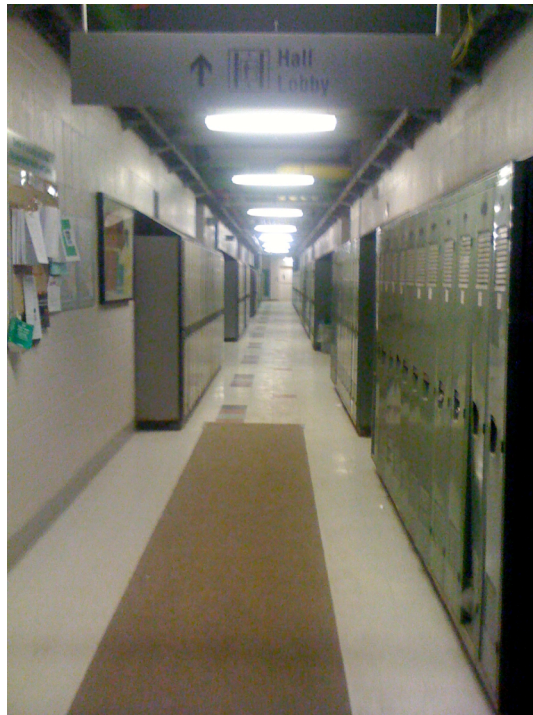
RACHEL: I think, like the whole co-op experience has been pretty surreal, almost like it's not real. It's just a cartoon or something...because it just happens so quickly. Like I found out I got a job in February in first-round and then it came so fast, like it just jumped from, "Oh, I have a job" to "Oh, I have an assignment due for my job." So it's just very like, I don't know, fast.

ACT 17: Hallway of My Life

Projected Title: Hallway of My Life

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) The co-op ride passes through some tunnels. The experience is described as dark, empty, and difficult. Sometimes it doesn't end well. Often there's beauty along the way and a light at the end. There is hope mixed with despair.

Projected Image (Photo 4.26):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) This is a picture of a hallway at the university.

AMAL: Eight years from now I might be married with a kid. So, it's a long way but at the same time there's some obstacles. So, I was just looking at this hallway and I was like, "It's empty. It's like an empty street but at the same time there is some obstacles and they're big obstacles. So, this might be my family, kids, time management, giving priority to family life or..."(laughing)

So that's how I saw this picture: as my life and this is like the red carpet to family life, to success and these are obstacles at the same time. And there's light, so there's hope...

MÉLANIE: (with contemplation) There's a bridge near my house and there, underneath the bridge there's a little waterway, and on both sides there's graffiti... The underpass is supposed to symbolize light at the end of the tunnel, which sometimes I see and sometimes I don't...(laughing dreamily)

BEN: (with seriousness) ... Things don't always work out and sometimes university is too much for people.

RACHEL: I think co-op is something that will change you probably for the better in the end even if you do go through hard times trying to get a job or worrying about it. I think that the experience of all these things in the end will help you further yourself. (laughing)

EMMA: (smiling) If you just open your mind up there are beautiful things along the way...

ACT 18: The Beginning/Starting Point

Projected Title: The Beginning/Starting Point

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) The adult world, the destination, is perceived to be an exciting worthwhile place: big, high up, the next step, and for that matter, pretty cool. It's also perceived as something rather awful: intimidating, restrictive, and even conventional, and mundane.

Projected Image (Photo 4.36):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) You took a picture of the stairwell that leads to the co-op office.

RACHEL: This is the stairwell, yeah. And I made it all different colours because I wanted to make it like I was heading up to something that I wasn't really sure of...it's kind of like the unknown I guess. And it's kind of like heading into another world because it's something I've never experienced before. So, that's why I made it different colours and I took it from below looking up because I think I can only go further and I can only grow as a person and move up in life. That's why I didn't take the picture looking down. I took it looking up.

BEN: It's another step in life from being just in school to being out in the workforce...

EMMA: I look forward to working in a really big building and being a big person. (laughing)

CAYLA: (recalling a past experience)...My interview was up on the 15th floor. So it was cool just looking down, looking out...

AMAL: (in contrast) What makes it sad here in Canada is that people work because they need the money not because they want to work.

MÉLANIE: ...You have to fit in that specific framework. And sometimes I'm not too sure if I would fit into that framework.

BEN: (agreeing)...When my friend starts work it'll be off to the grind...

EMMA: (with determination) We want to get out of the system. We want to be able to work our way up. We want to be able to do more than one job, more than one task at a time, multi-task... and just the chance to explore and also kind of a gamble.

ACT 19: Generations

Projected Title: Generations

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) The gamble is for better employment opportunities and a better life. Co-op enables career-like jobs, as opposed to junior jobs in retail, customer service, and camp counselling. And so, co-op jobs are authentic opportunities that are a stepping-stone to something that matters. They're not just jobs, but *real* jobs, valued but also resisted.

Projected Image (Photo 5.14):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) Emma, tell us about this picture you took of this pedestrian street.

EMMA: That's a picture of how I would walk to work in the morning. So, that's kind of exciting. And, it's kind of daunting at the same time because there's so many large buildings and it was late at night. It was right at sunset so it wasn't very bright outside. But, it was just really cool. It was exciting to be able to walk down and look up at the big buildings, taking the next step in life, which is neat.

BEN: I guess that's kind of the going from being a university kid to being part of the workforce is that there is a huge disconnect there. It's another step in life from being just in school to being out in the workforce... To go from being just a guy who's watching TV and laughing with my friends and then putting on a suit, and kind of going up to the co-op office and talking to people who work in government and talking to them on their level instead of talking to them like as someone who knows nothing...

CAYLA: I haven't done any jobs that would be anything similar to this kind of co-op job. They've always been camp counsellor jobs or retail, you know, the things you do in high school. And so this is just so exciting because I've never worked in an office before, you know, with a lot of adults too. Most of my jobs were with people the same age as me....

RACHEL: I never really had a *real* interview before, like in the *real* world, like a *real* job. I've always had customer service jobs and jobs in the mall and summer camp jobs so, I've never really been in the workforce before...

AMAL: ...It's stressful and it's a new experience. You're going to actually work and you're doing something new and you're now responsible. You're getting paid, you're working through the co-op and you have to maintain the university's reputation and your own reputation so that you can be more involved in the work environment and be, what do they say like, start your own career life...

MÉLANIE: I guess I'm not sure how I feel about co-op and about going into the real world and getting a job and if I'm ready to enter into the real world or if I just want to be teenager and like, work my little part-time jobs that are super irrelevant. And then I guess some days I see a point in taking co-op and I guess, progressing towards my future and what I want to be, I guess.

ACT 20: Future

Projected Title: Future

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Co-op students ask, "What *do I* want to be?" They wonder. They dream: envisioning their future, their adult life, and working in a job that reflects who they are. Sometimes the dream is attainable through co-op. Other times it isn't. And sometimes, the dream gets muddled along the way.

Projected Image (Photo 4.42):



NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Rachel, you took a picture of the co-op job you secured for the summer term. What's going on in this photograph?

RACHEL: I could maybe title this picture "Future" or something because in the grand scheme of things I would want to work for a magazine, something like *Vogue*, which is kind of why I have it as my desktop background, kind of like inspiration. I would probably have a desk similar to what I have now but instead of it being where I am now, it would be somewhere different and working for some other place. So, maybe like a snapshot of what my future might look like.

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) It's sort of a double layer here. To me this is your current career in Communications with the Federal government but the computer screen is...

RACHEL: Where I want to be, yeah.

NARRATOR: Your dream.

EMMA: (with pride) Oh, actually my dream job is to be a motivational speaker. That's my dream job for sure but I realize that's very unrealistic.

MÉLANIE: (with seriousness) It's kind of scary thinking I'm transitioning from something you're so passionate and excited about in school, and then you have to go apply to jobs in the real world and it's not what you had envisioned, I guess.

NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) What do you want to be?

MÉLANIE: I don't know. This is what I'm trying to figure out. (laughing)

BEN: I want to have business cards of my own one-day.

AMAL: (happily) Be unique, like. This is my goal in life. Be unique. That's it. (laughing)

ACT 21: Untitled

Projected Title: Untitled

NARRATOR: (speaking to the audience) Unique. Similar. The experiences of these co-op students intertwine and through story and image they help us understand what it was like for them in the time prior to their first co-op work terms.

In interview they shared what's behind their eyes and in their mind. They shared their experiences of this time in their lives: what they value, what they want, how they feel, and what they have learned. They told us what their journey feels like and what it looks like.

And although their stories were told to me one-on-one, they interconnect and create a picture of what it is that's going on here and what future students might experience.

Projected Image (Photo 5.15):

NARRATOR: (speaking to Cayla) This is a picture of the co-op office building. Tell us about it Cayla.

CAYLA: At first I thought it would be kind of silly to take a photo of the co-op office because obviously, you know, it's kind of the most basic idea, the co-op office. But I realize that I go there so many times a week, all the time, you know, going in for interviews, for meetings, for you know, all of the workshops and stuff. I thought this is a pretty important place for a co-op student. It's someplace that you're always going to and that you have to get very familiar with. It's kind of like another home.

NARRATOR: A place of origin, somewhere to begin.

ACT 22**Projected Image:**

[No image. Just a black screen]

NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) Amal, along the way you stopped taking pictures, when you didn't get matched to a co-op job.

AMAL: It was like having nothing about co-op in my mind.

NARRATOR: Just black.

AMAL: Just black. Although I wanted to continue in this research project (motions to the room and the group) and everything but it's just that I don't want anything that's co-op right now. Nothing. So I couldn't have really took pictures because I would be thinking about co-op when I take the pictures. So, I decided not to take pictures, not to do anything that has to do with it.

NARRATOR: Divorced from it.

AMAL: Divorced. That's the word. That's the word. Yeah, I was telling my friends, "Today I'm going to get my divorce from co-op."

NARRATOR: A place of departure, a place of disconnection.

Throughout the conclusion the readers stand, speak, and return to the chair that they sat in at the beginning of the play.

o	o	o	X	o	o	o	o	
o	o	o	o	o	X	o	o	
o	o	X	o	o	o	o	o	X
o	X	o	o	X	o	X	o	
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	

Projected image:

RACHEL: (standing, speaking calmly, and moving to her original chair) Co-op is obviously something that you have to put your whole self into. But if you do it and you do it right and you do it well and do it for the whole time then you're going to get something out of it and you're going to be able to take something with you and hopefully get to where you want to be eventually as a result of it. (laughing with uncertainty)

Projected title: Co-op Excitement

NARRATOR: (speaking to Cayla) Cayla.

Projected image (Photo 4.16):



CAYLA: (standing, speaking nervously, and returning to her original chair) I think there's so many different sides of the co-op experience that I tried to express here. Even though I did express a lot of stress in this, I think it is really fun, and just a really great opportunity that I feel lucky that I get to be a part of...

Projected title: Just because

NARRATOR: (speaking to Ben) Ben.

Projected image (Photo 5.16):



BEN: (standing, speaking calmly, and returning to his original chair) I'm not a bird on a wire...

Projected title: Big Fish

NARRATOR: (speaking to Emma) Emma.

Projected image (Photo 4.32):

EMMA: (standing, speaking with confidence, and returning to her original chair) There's a movie by Tim Burton called *Big Fish*. It's a story about a man who tells stories and he calls himself *Big Fish*. I don't know. It sounds funny but that's what he is. He tells people he did all these things and no one really believes him but they all kind of happened in his imagination and together with reality they make this fantastic story and in the end, when he passes away, he goes into the waters as a really big fish and he swims off...And, it's just a lot of energy. It's very vibrant. It kind of reminds me of my father, he's that storyteller. He always says you have to have stories to sell who you are...

Projected title: Reflection

NARRATOR: (speaking to Mélanie) Mélanie.

Projected image (Photo 4.3):

MÉLANIE: (standing, speaking calmly, and returning to her original chair) You know when you walk inside a lit-up building at night and you look in a window and you see a reflection of yourself but kind of, blurry? Kind of like French Impressionist paintings? I would take a picture of that but with my *self* and with the reflection as well.

Projected title: Trying to Hide My Identity From Others

NARRATOR: (speaking to Amal) Amal.

Projected image (Photo 4.27):



AMAL: (standing, speaking calmly, and returning to her original chair) I don't want you to see me.

Projected title: Surreal

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Rachel.

Projected image (Photo 4.41):

RACHEL: (standing, speaking calmly, and returning to her original chair) I thought of this research project as a journey and you're seeing it through my eyes as if you *are* me rather than *seeing* me.

NARRATOR: (speaking to Rachel) Who is this research for?

RACHEL: I think for future co-op students it'll be really helpful because I went in this completely blind.

(all six students sit)

THE END

CHAPTER 6: Windows

The mini-biographies of Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel explore the individuality of each of the study participants. The reader's theatre script broadly captures the themes that these students spoke of in 22 acts. When the mini-biographies and script were considered together, in mind with my own photographs and journal writing, five themes emerged. The themes include: (a) journey, (b) circus, (c) metamorphosing, (d) anglers at sea, and (e) warriors. Using a Goffman's theory of dramaturgy as a theoretical framework, these themes push our understanding of students' experiences and encourage new views of the time prior to co-op work terms.

Journey

The opportunity to become a professional is one of the reasons students enroll in cooperative education programs. For the students who participated in this study, becoming a professional is about arriving at a specific destination. This destination is the real workforce; the place where adults who are qualified and educated work in full-time paid jobs. Here, workers are not young people with low skills toiling in part-time or seasonal jobs that lead nowhere. Instead, it's a place in the world where jobs are tied to the notion of career, a progressive and thoughtful development of a livelihood. As Rachel explained,

I never really had a *real* interview before, like in the *real* world, like a *real* job. I've always had customer service jobs and jobs in the mall and summer camp jobs. So, I've never really been in the workforce before...

The setting of this destination, of this real workforce, is typically described as an office. It's here that professionals are gainfully employed in meaningful jobs. In some cases, it's a setting that generates feelings of pride and excitement. For instance, Emma described it both

visually and verbally as an idealized place that's high up (see Photo 4.33). She stated, "I'm working on the 19th floor [of an office building] I think. I counted the floors: one, two, three, four, five six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve...sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, yeah. So, I'm almost the top..." Others described the setting with feelings of dissatisfaction and cynicism. For example, Mélanie thought of an office as generic, depressing, and parochial. Her photograph about working in an office isn't of a big building captured on a bright sunny day but instead, a black and white photograph of generic office dress shoes (see Photo 4.6). The picture symbolizes her viewpoint that the office environment is colourless and also actively drains individuality from everything and everyone who enters the space.

From a Goffmanian perspective (1959) the real workforce can be viewed as a front stage or front region, the place where the performance happens. Out front behaviours must be professional: grown-up, serious, formal, hard working, goal-orientated, and knowledgeable. The setting must also be professional in order to fit with expectations and support the specific types of drama that unfold therein. Thus, it's a setting that's typically new and clean. It's decorated with desks and computers and perhaps an expensive-looking clock placed prominently for everyone to see. Like the disciplined behaviours of the workers, the palette of this environment is also disciplined, relegated to a range of blacks, whites, greys, navies, and beiges.

By contrast, the student workforce can be viewed as a back stage or back region, the place where "the performance is contradicted as a matter of course" (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). Out back behaviours can be more relaxed and youthful and goals can be distant or vague. Being high-spirited takes precedence over having advanced education and specialized work history. Unlike the front stage of the real workforce, the setting of the student workforce is more casual

and leisure-orientated: at a summer camp, at a pool, or in a shopping mall. Colours can be bright and patterns can be wild.

The young people who participated in this study understood cooperative education, and their first work term in particular, as a stepping-stone from the student workforce to the real workforce and therefore, as a way of making a move from the back stage to the front stage. Through their enrolment in co-op they had decidedly embarked on a journey to become professionals. And as happens with most journeys, the students had feelings of excitement as well as feelings of apprehension. Rachel expressed these dual emotions with the photograph she took of the co-op staircase, her symbol for her upward-orientated and alien journey (see Photo 4.36). She said, “I think I can only go further and I can only grow as a person and move up in life.” She then went on and stated, “It’s kind of like the unknown I guess. It’s kind of like heading into another world because it’s something I’ve never experienced before.”

Rachel and her fellow students practiced and prepared for this otherworld by readying themselves for each job interview that they attended during the co-op placement process. When meeting with employers as a potential hire, they knew that they had to look and sound as if they naturally fit in with the professional domain. And so, like actors “scrupulously” preparing for a casting call, they were concerned about their costumes and their lines (Fixsen & Ridge, 2012, p. 1166; Goffman, 1959).

Most took pictures of themselves trying on the clothes that they planned to wear for their job interviews, and ultimately for their place of work. For example, Ben took a photograph of himself dressed in a black suit, white shirt, red tie, trimmed goatee, and serious attitude (see Photo 4.13). And although Ben took his self-portrait at home, he angled the camera to ensure the background of the image excluded the messiness of his dorm room. As such, his professionally

costumed self was situated appropriately within a professionally decorated setting – a mock front stage that was created within the frame of the camera shot – like proof of his ability to perform.

As explained by Goffman (1959) “once the proper sign-equipment has been obtained and familiarity gained in the management of it, then this equipment can be used to embellish and illumine one’s daily performances with a favourable social style” (p. 36, *sic*). Like an actor and a director, Ben controlled which elements of his life were hidden from the audience and which elements were revealed (Berger, 1973; Cameron, 2002; Goffman, 1959; Hooks, 1995; Solomon, 2005). He had manipulated his attire, and with the use of his camera, he had manipulated the appearance of his setting to show eligibility for admission into the real workforce and consequently, his readiness for becoming a professional.

To round out their performances, Ben and the other study participants carefully developed the words and phrases they would use to express themselves in interviews. To create the appropriate script, they researched the interviewing companies: the organizational missions, departmental goals, and specific job requirements. As well, the students reflected on their candidature: their individual skills, knowledge, and personality. Then, they developed ways of connecting their candidature with the companies and demonstrating that they were the best fit for the job. Oftentimes they broke this process into manageable parts. For example, Cayla carefully reviewed her job descriptions and reflected on how she could address each point with an example from her background. She explained,

This is basically what I kind of do the day before an interview: print out the job description, highlight all the important things that I think I should relate to in my interview. If they say, you know, ‘enthusiastic’... How’s that? And I think in my head or write it down, ‘Well, how do I show that I’m enthusiastic?’ ‘How am I going to express that in my interview?’

For students, self-expression included not only the right words and phrases but also the right tone and non-verbal behaviour to deliver their message. In keeping with Goffman’s concept

of “dramaturgical discipline” (p. 216), Ben described how he achieves the best result by drawing from his theatre background. When the curtain opens he channels his energy to be outgoing or upbeat or whatever else seems to be required in the moment. With “presence of mind” (p. 216) he purposefully projects a front stage attitude, “ostensibly immersed and given over to the activity he is performing” meanwhile “affectively disassociated from his presentation in a way that leaves him free to cope with dramaturgical contingencies as they arise” (p. 216, *sic*). Thus, Ben would not only speak the right words in his job interviews but he would also deliver the words with the “decorum” of a professional, shifting as situations changed (Goffman, 1959, p. 107).

The theatre of interviewing is all the more challenging when it takes place over the phone. Rachel explained how important but difficult self-expression is when she is unseen. To compensate for this problem she did additional research and worked diligently to clearly verbalize her knowledge and interest. She stated,

I did a lot of background research on the actual jobs so that I would have questions at the end to ask them to make it seem like I’m more interested. Because when you’re talking face-to-face you can be very like...you can lean in, you can open your eyes really wide like you’re really interested and stuff like that. But, they can’t see that over the phone. So, I think since I prepared extra hard for that one because I wanted to be sure that they knew that I was really interested in the job and I even said, ‘I can’t wait to hear from you.’ Like, ‘I’m very interested in this position.’

Whether attending an interview face-to-face or over the phone, when the meeting is done, the curtain closes. Most students step off stage and go back to regular life (until the next interview is called). Thus, the journey to becoming a professional is not experienced as a single step-up on to the front stage. Students don’t prepare and then arrive all at once.

Ben explained that it’s more like a constant shifting back and forth from the one domain back to the other. He stated,

It's like a complete disconnect from one side to the other. And I mean, I guess that's kind of the going from being a university kid to being part of the workforce is that there is a huge disconnect there. It's another step in life from being just in school to being out in the workforce but, it's still kind of weird to actually go through it in the span of a day.

The steps to becoming a professional also include going back and forth with questions like, "Who am I?" and "What do I want to be?" As students try on different costumes and practice different ways of saying their lines, they ask, "Is this me?" Sometimes these questions are approached with joy and wonder, or simply with a sense of satisfaction. Other times these questions are approached with discontent, uncertainty, or melancholy.

Cayla enrolled in co-op because she believed it offered her a variety of job opportunities. The unknown made her nervous but she kept the belief that the possibilities presented by co-op were to be appreciated, even if they were unexpected. And, Cayla's lack of prior knowledge didn't stop her from considering different futures within the real workforce or what she could potentially be. "In Communications" Cayla explained excitedly, "I mean, there's such a range of things that they might want you to do. And this [job], I just never really thought about, you know, a 'Change Management Specialist.' You know, I never really thought that, obviously it's a big thing, smoothly transitioning from different things. I never really thought about that."

Mélanie enrolled in co-op because she didn't want a future where she would be waiting on tables or unemployed. Like Cayla, Mélanie wanted a real job in the real workforce and believed that co-op offered a way of achieving this practical goal. And yet, Mélanie expressed how the journey made her feel blurry like a French Impressionist painting. When asking questions like "Who am I?" and "Is this job me?" she generally felt a disconnection between herself, the employment opportunities offered through co-op, and the future she wanted for herself. She explained that in some cases the real workforce, and the office environment in

particular, seemed phony. Mélanie stated, “Everyone seems sort of fake like, ‘Oh, hi!’ and small talk in the elevators.”

The phoniness perceived by Mélanie unsettled her sense of the journey, its purpose, and its value to her as a unique individual. She explained that perhaps the real workforce wasn’t for her. While referring to a photograph of her cat looking out a window (see Photo 5.2) she said,

This picture represents me looking out into the real world and not really sure if what I see is what I really want to do. Sometimes I go in the [on-line job management system] and I see the jobs and I’m like, ‘I don’t want to do any of these jobs.’ ‘I’m not sure if I’m cut out for the real world.’

In the time prior to their first co-op work term, students sought the *real* workforce; meanwhile they *crafted* a professional persona, complete with props, costume, and script for their admission. As performers, they had to make adjustments to fit in and be accepted. Sometimes the adjustments were subtle and sometimes they were more dramatic, or in Mélanie’s case, even repellent. Either way, emerging along this journey of becoming a professional is the notion of learning the craft of the front stage – the dress, language, and behaviours of the real workforce. Success in this craft requires careful attention to detail as well as the ability to exert control over those details (Pickard, 2012). And, success requires that the performer buys-in to the value proposition of doing so.

Thus, the students in this study learned “the art of impression management”: the work of controlling how an audience perceives a performer (Goffman, 1959, p. 208). Goffman (1959) highlighted some of the “motives” for exerting control over the impression one is making by describing a candidate’s performance in a job interview (p. 15). He stated,

It is apparent that care will be great in situations where important consequences for the performer will occur as a result of his conduct. The job interview is a clear example. Often the interviewer will have to make decisions of far-reaching importance for the interviewee on the sole basis of information gained from the applicant’s interview-performance. The interviewee is likely to feel, and with some justice, that his every action will be taken as highly symbolical and he will

therefore give much preparation and thought to his performance. We expect at such times that the interviewee will pay much attention to his appearance and manner, not merely to create a favourable impression, but also to be on the safe side and forestall any unfavourable impression that might be unwittingly conveyed (p. 225, *sic*).

For co-op students, the motive for impression management is the opportunity to journey from the back stage to the front stage, and consequently to gain access to the real workforce, and become a professional. As Emma explained, co-op is an “investment” in oneself.

Ironically, the journey to the real workforce is not entirely about reality. As Mélanie highlighted, there can be something illusory about it and depending on the person, the illusions of the journey can be experienced negatively, as a series of awful deceptions with a cast of actors who are fake, phoney, and vapid. From this perspective, the truth and being real are perceived as second to the performance and even a hindrance to success (Biehl-Missal, 2010).

When perceived positively, the illusions of the journey can be experienced as something else entirely. Rather than deceptions, the illusions are openings to something wonderful, to career dreams and possibilities. The truth and being real are intact but dressed up. Costumes and lines are carefully chosen but not as ways to betray. Instead, they are symbolical parts of a meaningful performance, that of one journeying from the back stage to the front. For instance, Amal photographed herself as though reflected in a mirror wearing her interview outfit and feeling excitement for what lay ahead (see Photo 4.24). She explained,

I woke up Saturday morning. I was trying stuff for the interview and I loved this outfit and I loved the way my attitude was when taking the picture. It was like my first interview ever, ‘I don’t care if I get the job or not. I’m just going to practice for my interview skills.’

The students in this study gazed at themselves in mirrors and dreamed of their first co-op work term and their future careers. They posed for the camera dressed in their office-costume and pretended that they had arrived on the front stage. They blocked out performances and acted

like the professionals they had yet to become. They wondered about the unknown, sometimes with discontent and sometimes with happiness.

Rachel photographed the office at her new job to show present day (working in government for her first co-op work term) as well as her career dream (working for a fashion magazine) (see Photo 4.42). She stated,

I could maybe title [my photograph] 'Future' or something because in like, in the grand scheme of things, I would want to work for a magazine, something like *Vogue*, which is kind of why I have it as my desktop background, kind of like inspiration.

As planned, Rachel had practiced and prepared for the front stage, she had attended *real* job interviews, and secured a *real* job. She was hired and in early summer she started her first co-op work term in an office setting. Rachel, like so many co-op students, had been accepted into the *real* world and had become a professional. And yet, she imagined something still in the distance. This is because the journey of becoming a professional isn't about arriving at one specific and final destination. The first co-op work term is just the first step on a much longer career journey.

Rachel's journey stretched out past her four-month job and into the future where she hoped to someday work in her dream job with a fashion magazine. And so, Rachel's work term was only a stepping-stone that progressed her towards turning a dream into reality, a fantasy into a livelihood, and her experiences into the progressive development of a career.

Circus

The six individuals who participated in this study experienced a high volume of work, conflicting priorities, and pressure to excel. As full-time undergraduate students with the University of Ottawa, they attended classes and completed the necessary assignments and exams to exceed the cumulative grade point average necessary to hold their spot in co-op. At the same time, they attended mandatory co-op workshops, wrote resumes and cover letters, and applied to co-op jobs. If the students were selected for interviews, they practiced and prepared, and then performed in front of employers. Following the interviews, they waited expectantly for the hiring results. If they were not matched with a co-op employer then the process continued until a match was secured (if at all). Meanwhile, some of the students worked in part-time jobs. Some volunteered. All simultaneously maintained a connection with family and a meaningful social life with friends and partners. All told, they managed hectic schedules with little reprieve. As Cayla explained, “You can just get *lost* in everything you have to do.”

The chaotic nature of co-op pre-employment was fun and exciting but also anxiety-ridden. The students recurrently described the time prior to their first co-op work term as circus-like. They juggled their priorities, attempted balancing acts, and felt as though they were standing on a precipice. Like the strong man, the students said they carried incredible weight on their shoulders. Mélanie said, “I was like, ‘What did I get myself into?’ ‘Going to interviews during exams.’ I felt like I’d taken on too much...”

Dealing with the circus of co-op pre-employment primarily took place “back stage,” away from the view of co-op office staff and employers (Goffman, 1959, p.112). At home and elsewhere, students juggled their workload, problem-solved, and dealt with their stress. Hard times and worries were handled privately. Ben explained,

There's a lot of other stuff we have to deal with that you don't really see in the co-op office when everyone's sitting and waiting for a workshop or waiting for interviews. There's a lot of back-story behind that. The interview is kind of the tip of the iceberg. But then behind the interview is the hours that everyone's spent on the online job management system trying to figure out why their resume won't post to the internet or why they can't apply for this job or what it means when a job has been matched but they haven't been matched to it and they don't know how to decipher the job ranking system. And then on top of that they have to do all their schoolwork and all their personal life...So, if they work or if they volunteer or whatever else...So, I guess it just shows that there's more to co-op than co-op.

Away from the co-op office, students undertook the volume of work and myriad challenges of pre-employment. And, instead of co-op office staff and employers, students sought out their friends and family as support. With their personal connections they didn't worry so much about maintaining an "impression of infallibility" (Goffman, 1959, p. 43). They let their guard down, dealt with the messiness of being humans, and were "creatures of variable impulses with moods and energies that change from one moment to the next" (Goffman, 1959, p. 56). Occasionally students' personal connections were a source of stress but more often they relied on them as voices of reason, assistants in problem solving, and pillars of strength. For example, Emma called a friend right before she had a co-op job interview to help her calm down and get mentally prepared. She said,

I was actually in tears before one of my interviews because I had the worst day ever and then I was like, 'How am I supposed to go to an interview?' But it wasn't the interview's fault. It was something else and so I think relaxing is like a huge part. I had to call my friend to relax me...Sometimes you're so ready and then in this situation I just I had a really bad day, like *really* bad day, and I just couldn't handle it...So if I didn't have that support I don't know how I would have done in the interview because I was lucky enough to be able to call a friend and they were there.

Goffman (1959) stated that front stage performance is a “ceremony” or a “celebration” that’s very similar to a wedding (p. 36). Out front, characters are participating in a symbolic moment in time that requires a significant amount of preparation beforehand (Bates, Bates & Bates, 2007; Fixsen & Ridge, 2012). Prior to a successful front stage performance, rehearsals are run through, “costumes and other parts of personal front may be adjusted and scrutinized for flaws” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). Shortcomings can be softened or masked. Details are smoothed into near perfection.

Like brides and grooms readying for their debut, the study participants readied themselves for co-op in the back regions of their lives. Hidden from co-op staff and employers, they sorted out the chaos of co-op pre-employment and worked out how they would execute the epitome of their professional-form with perfect costume, script, props, and comportment. To do so, the students broke challenges into smaller parts, resolved problems as they arose, and burned the candle at both ends. While Ben worked on deciphering the online job management system, Emma disposed of her tears and gained composure with the help of a friend.

Cayla meanwhile, sorted out the jumble of conflicting priorities. To illustrate her experience, Cayla photographed her white-board to show the planning, organizing, and preparation she goes through at home (see Photo 4.19). For her picture, Cayla cleaned her white-board of its scribbles and pictures and then carefully placed colourful sticky notes in a way that is visually appealing. She explained,

I actually did design this [photograph] because I didn’t want to take a picture of my actual bulletin board because...it looks kind of like this except there’s a lot of pictures of me and my friends and it wouldn’t be something I want to include in the photo but...yah I just erased all the stuff that was on my white-board and just put [the sticky notes] up there. So, I thought this [photograph] kind of shows the importance of, like I said before, of organization.

Cayla's picture tells two stories. As she stated, her picture showcases how important organizing is for co-op students in the time prior to their first co-op work term. To keep things under control students must make lists and check off items as they are completed. It can be a satisfying process but it's one that cannot be overlooked if the stress is to be managed, and success is to be achieved on the front stage.

Because Cayla tidied her white-board for her photograph, she reveals something deeper about her experience. In addition to being organized, students must keep the reality of their behind-the-scenes-work hidden from public view. Cayla pulled back the curtain to show her back stage-life but she only revealed a perfected version. Still concealed from the front stage audience is the truth of her circus-like experience with all its disarray and complexity held barely in control, her personal relationships with friends and family stirred into the mix. As Goffman explained (1959) "when an individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of society, more so, in fact, than does his behaviour as a whole" (p. 35, *sic*). Thus, Cayla provides her audience with the consummate form: the diligent co-op student successfully managing the workload and associated stress, the professional who separates work-life from personal-life. Her image is a version of herself (and her experience) that she can share without losing her credibility, so necessary for her character's "personal front" (Goffman, 1959, p. 22).

The amount of work required back stage to allow for a successful front stage performance, suggests that the front stage reality is a "fragile thing that can be shattered by very minor mishaps" (Goffman, 1959, p. 56). At any time the performance can fall into pieces: lines can be forgotten, costumes can fail, and seriousness can tumble into humour or uncomfortable and halting exchanges. Everything counts and anything can happen.

The students who participated in this study were affected by this fragility. As they waited for co-op employers in the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room, they agonized about their upcoming interview. To be successful, they knew that everything had to come together from the moment the employer called their name to the moment the employer shook their hand goodbye. From start to finish, their front stage performance had to have the mark of excellence.

Rachel described a time when her comportment, a key element of her front, was shattered by a minor mishap. She explained,

The waiting room I think is the toughest place to be because you're nervous and people are calling your name. And, there was one time where one of the interviewers came out and said, 'Rachel.' And two of us stood up and I was like, 'Crap! This is not going to go well.' I was like, 'Great.' And, I was pretty upfront, I was like, 'Rachel who?' [Laughs] And he was like, 'Rachel Something-else.' And it was the other Rachel and I sat down and everyone started laughing in the room and I was like, 'That's embarrassing!' Like, 'That wasn't fun. Now I have to sit here and wait again and get called again.' It was just nerve wracking because you're so on edge. You're waiting for someone to come out and call your name but when they do but it's not you it's just like, 'Uh no. Now I just want to go home.'

Thus, for the students who participated in this study, co-op pre-employment was like a rollercoaster ride up and down, and rushing so fast it felt surreal. Priorities changed quickly, as did situations, challenges, and emotions. Like Rachel's experience in the co-op waiting room, students prepared diligently and then got destabilized regardless. And, despite this looping and frenzied journey, when acting as characters put on for an audience, the students could "not be subject to ups and downs" (Goffman, 1959, p. 56). Instead, they had to maintain a professional demeanour for co-op staff and employers.

While a few managed the dilemmas with aplomb, others wondered about overcoming the difficulties along the way. Amal photographed a hallway at the University of Ottawa to show the obstacles she faced in her present and her future (see Photo 4.26). She said,

Eight years from now I might be married with a kid. So, it's a long way but at the same time there's some obstacles. So, I was just looking at this hallway and I was like, 'It's empty. It's like an empty street but at the same time there is some obstacles and they're big obstacles. So, this might be my family, kids, time management, giving priority to family life or...' [laughing]. So that's how I saw this picture: as my life and this is like the red carpet to family life, to success and these are obstacles at the same time. And there's light, so there's hope...

The hope that Amal felt was not enough to carry her through the co-op pre-employment process. Perhaps she became lost in all that she had to do as she continued week after week unmatched to a co-op job. Her reprieve was to simply step off the ride. Without co-op, there would be no circus, no rollercoaster, and no front stage to stress out about. As well, there would be no back-stage overcrowded with responsibilities.

Stepping away from the chaos was not an option that others considered. Instead, most persevered despite having to deal with significant stress and an overload of work. Perhaps this was because, without the obstacles and challenges and all the pressure, something would be lost. As Cayla explained, "My Dad always told me, 'If you don't get stressed out, you don't get nervous, then you're not human.' You know?"

Metamorphosing

The students in this study were completing their second year of university, heading towards the halfway mark of their undergraduate degree. Meanwhile, they were seeking their first professional job through the cooperative education programs. At this juncture in time, the students spoke of the new experiences they were having and about how they were growing up (transitioning from childhood to adulthood) and growing out (stretching themselves beyond former roles and boundaries). And, they shared the feelings they had about their personal development: happiness, excitement, sadness, reluctance, surprise, and bewilderment.

For these young people, growing involved moving. That is, literally picking up and moving somewhere new. The students were predominantly from outside of the city, with the majority specifically choosing to relocate to attend the University of Ottawa. Some had travelled from only a few hours away from towns like Burlington and Walkerton, while others had come from greater distances. Ben had moved from the East Coast of Canada and forgone attending one of the many high quality academic institutions there. Amal, unique among the group, had immigrated from out of country.

For most, moving was a conscious choice that meant leaving their parents' home and creating distance. Being away was difficult and sometimes painful with the impact still felt several months into the second year of university. But, moving worked as a catalyst for the redefinition of self and formed part of a "personal rite of passage" (Fixsen & Ridge, 2012, p. 1170). Rachel explained, "I feel you have to go through being away from the people you want to be with in order to grow up or else you're just going to be reliant on those people forever and you can't, you can't do that."

Moving is a remarkable way to bring about maturity, but for the students in this study, the action provided an opportunity to be someone they hadn't quite been before. By leaving home, the students could unhook from family and high school relationships, as well as cliques, gossip, and former ways of dressing and behaving. They could step out of the familiar and make a fresh start.

Goffman (1959) explained that a character's performance must be consistent with what the audience expects and consequently, a change in character can sometimes require a change in audience. "Persons who are strongly upwardly or downwardly mobile accomplish this in a grand manner by making sure to leave the place of their origins" (Goffman, 1959, p.138). By moving, the students thrust themselves into a new venue and as a result, were presented with a new audience. Spectators understood the students in the now and so they could rethink their character, develop a new performance, and make a meaningful step towards adulthood unhindered by who they were as a child.

What more, the students could grow outwards, stretching their role beyond previously set boundaries. For Amal, moving meant leaving Saudi Arabia and the strict cultural expectations of female roles. In Canadian society, she could be expansive: wear whatever she liked, talk however she liked, have a boyfriend, and choose to come and go as she pleased. Amal pushed her parameters. Back home, none of this would have been possible because her audience wouldn't allow it. She stated,

If this very religious man sees me, he's called a Matuwas. He has a beard and he walks around in a mall. And if he sees me sitting with a guy who he suspects is probably going to be my boyfriend or is going to be, not my brother, not my father, not my husband, he's going to take me to the cops (laughs) because this person is legally not related to me so I can't sit with him...And I have to cover my head, my face, and wear this thing called abaya to cover me from head to toe.

By moving, Amal and her fellow co-op students could metamorphose – grow up and out from whom they had been before. As part of this experience, they could redefine their theatrical stage. Independent of their families, the students could set up home and design their spaces to their liking, taking a hand in the “furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22).

Under the students’ control were their apartments. Although a bit rough and limited in amenities, the apartments provided a backdrop for self-expression. Their new setting was their very own, created for their transitioning, more independent character. For example, Emma photographed her rickety porch with its peeling paint, framed by a patch of dirt (see Photo 5.5).

Emma said,

I know it doesn’t look like much, it’s mud right now, but I just seeded that. So it’s going to be a lawn in about three weeks (laughing). So, it’s exciting for spring. For me it’s very exciting. My house is a student house. But the newly seeded lawn makes it look cool, even though it’s a student house. Parents look at the houses and they don’t think they’re very exciting. But for a student I mean, you know when you wake up in the morning and you’re just smiling because of the sun? It doesn’t really matter.

Of course, the apartments were temporary arrangements. Some of the students had a place organized to last through the summer term while others did not. Moving, with all its excitement and challenge, was a going concern. Even during the school year the living arrangements changed. Ben shared a story about a roommate who left mid-term and how, with the room never taken up by someone else, it became a reminder of how difficult and impermanent students’ lives can be. When reflecting on his photograph of the vacated space (see Photo 4.14) Ben said,

We had an eighth [roommate] and he, he dropped out of school and moved home. So, immediately, since everyone’s moving now, [his room has] kind of become a storage room, just for people as they’re moving. Like if they packed something up

they put it into the room, so. It's kind of, he was there and then for like a week his room was empty and it was really weird because, like we'd walk past it and hear the echo because the room was completely empty, so like we kind of went through this kind of phase, were we'd be like, 'OK, we have to close the door. It's freaky because we can hear the echo.'

Thus, the students felt destabilized by their new experiences – the moves, changes, and myriad other unknowns and “disruptions” (Goffman, 1959, p. 243). Their equilibrium tipped on and off centre with an irregular tempo and with the shifts, they gained, lost, and then re-gained their self-confidence. Some blossomed with each new experience and learned to trust themselves more fully. Others felt their self-confidence wilt and found it difficult to recover. For example, Rachel shared her complex, unresolved feelings on the subject. She said,

I don't know. I like to embrace new experiences but I can still, you know, lose confidence and lose faith in myself a little on the way because new experiences can be hard sometimes and a little bit nerve wracking and you're not always aware of what's going to happen. So, I don't know, I'm not too sure. Ah...I don't know...

The not knowing, the uncertainty, and the imbalances were brought on by the students themselves. They had purposefully moved away from home for their first year of university, had moved again for the second, and expected to continue the upheaval for the next several years, along with their fellow roommates and friends. They had consciously decided to seek out novel and challenging experiences including those brought about through their enrolment in the cooperative education programs. Although tough and sometimes painful, the students pushed their own personal development by inviting (and enduring) new experiences. Planning her future co-op career Mélanie went so far as to say, “I'm actually open to going anywhere in the world.”

Students' emotions towards their new experiences and personal development were a complex mix. Cayla commemorated her coming of age with a photograph of herself (see Photo 4.22). In her picture, taken by a friend, she is standing on the front step of her apartment, dressed

as a professional heading off to the first day of her co-op work term. Cayla explained that she is like a child heading off to the first day of school. She said,

I thought of when I was in kindergarten and you have your backpack on and your Mom takes your picture outside the house of your first day of school. So, I thought I'd make it a little bit silly and take a picture like that for my first day at work. It would be kind of funny. Just a memory I guess, you know?

At once Cayla felt proud, excited, reflective, and silly as though her growth from child to adult was both wonderful and ridiculous. Perhaps this was because her development was something rather surreal, intangible, and distant, despite its temporal presence. One moment she was going to kindergarten and the next she was going to work. Rachel explained the feeling as such: "It just went by so fast. Because one day I'm staying in my old room at my parent's house and the next day I'm in a new room taking the bus to work that I've never been to before."

These mixed emotions, of happiness as well as absurdity, are perhaps tied to the notion of realization. Goffman (1959) explained that a character must "realize" their performance for it to be a success (p.76). That is, the performer must fully believe that they are the character they seek to portray and behave accordingly, particularly when facing an expectant audience. He stated,

The waiter in the café plays with his condition in order to *realize* it. This obligation is not different from that which is imposed on all tradesmen. Their condition is wholly one of ceremony. The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor, of the auctioneer, by which they try to persuade their clientele that they are nothing but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor (Goffman, 1959, p. 76; italics in original, *sic*).

Prior to their first work term, co-op students attempt to realize the dance of the adult and persuade their audience that they are nothing but an adult, ready to work in professional jobs. But perhaps, transitioning as they are, the students haven't fully realized this new character with all its associated ceremony. In the *midst of realizing*, their dance may seem wonderful but a bit odd, unpracticed, or put on.

Ben illustrates this idea with the photograph of his friend Helena, a fellow co-op student and roommate (see Photo 5.12). At home she needn't try to be someone she hasn't fully become, nor convince anyone to the contrary. Instead she can just realize her childhood performance, familiar and complete with toys, snacks, and homework, her legs curled under her like a cat. As Ben explained,

Yeah, it kind of shows, even though we're in university and whatever, we're still 18/19 years old, well she's 18 years old. We're not adults by any stretch of the imagination, no matter what the age of majority is. We're not adults yet. We're still trying to figure out how the world works.

In the trying, there is still a dance, back and forth, and side to side. Perhaps it isn't the dance of an adult, full grown and fully realized. Instead, it may be the dance of a young person, embracing new experiences trying to understand their new performance, character, and audience expectations. In the time prior to their first work term, we catch these students in the middle of growing up and out, from the person they were before to the person they will become. The students are in springtime and are at once pleased and eager, sad and resistant, and perhaps a little baffled by it all.

Anglers at Sea

When co-op students participate in the placement process they are given access to the online job management system and encouraged to apply to a significant number of employment opportunities from a wide range of areas. When applying for jobs, students must ensure that their selections link with their programs of study, but the link needn't be direct. For example, students majoring in Political Science are encouraged to apply to Political Science jobs, as well as jobs in International Management, Communication, Conflict Studies, or any other potentially related field. Thus, the selection of jobs span the gamut, with postings in the private, public, and para-public sectors and in local, national, and international locations. With all the available prospects, the students learn about the employment market, about who they are, and what they want to be. And like anglers fishing at sea, they do so with a blend of guile, optimism, apprehension, and exhilaration.

To illustrate the joy that can be felt when considering the various jobs available through the cooperative education programs, Cayla photographed the sparkling modernist office building where she had attended a successful job interview (see Photo 5.3). She titled the image "Endless Possibilities" and explained that while the picture was of a rather common subject, it represented the positive feelings she had about the choices that were open and available to her. For Cayla, the archetypal building shone like a beacon of light. She said, "There's just *so* many different directions that I potentially, in my co-op experience, could go."

Given the endless possibilities, the students in this study would sometimes apply to jobs without much thought. As Ben said, they would trawl through the lists and just, "Apply! Apply! Apply!" But more often than not, the students would think carefully about their choices and meditate on the pros and cons of each decision. Rather than simply applying to whatever flotsam

and jetsam drifted in, the students would selectively put their candidacy forward, even to the point of being overly choosy and negatively impacting their success. Emma explained,

I'd only applied to 13 jobs in the beginning and then someone told me, 'Well, you know you only get three interviews out of 26 job postings that you apply to.' And so, then I was like, 'Oh no.' And then I went back and re-applied to jobs. Actually, the job I re-applied to I got hired. So, it was a good thing that I kept applying because at first I was very picky...

This selectivity, regardless of any setbacks, was important to the students' experience during the placement process. When applying to jobs and attending interviews, Emma and her fellow students often felt they were confronted with something more than four-month work terms. Instead, these jobs were regarded as having the power to alter the lives the students were living and the futures they could have. Rather than short and therefore inconsequential, these jobs were part of a longer, as yet experienced personal story. Accordingly, the students thought carefully about the employment opportunities. As Amal explained, because a co-op job "can change your whole life..."

Inadvertently, making sense of the array of choices became a learning opportunity. During the placement process the students considered the different jobs in terms of their personal preferences. They thought about their interests, skills, and goals and as a result, learned about themselves and the direction they wanted to travel. Rachel said,

I think through learning about the companies that I could potentially work for I learned about myself as well because I learned maybe what I like, what I dislike. When I read the job descriptions, when applying to jobs, I kind of read one and I'll be like, 'Oh, no. Like there's no way I could see myself in this job.' And I kind of realized, 'OK, I kind of know where I want to go from just reading these descriptions.'

Like the job descriptions, the job interviews also presented students with the chance to learn about the person they are (and aren't), what they wanted to do (and not do), and what was

actually possible (or not). Face-to-face with the employer, they gained an appreciation for the personality of their potential manager and occasionally, the people who might be their colleagues and co-workers. By being in conversation and getting a sense of the people, the students learned about the fit between the different employers and themselves. For instance, Cayla attended one interview where she felt that she had “bonded” with the employer and the lively work environment. By contrast, Mélanie attended a job interview with a financial company who repelled her so much she was skeptical of them and troubled by the direction she might have to take in her co-op career, regardless of her interests and values, or the dreams she had for her future.

To illustrate her experience Mélanie staged a photograph to show her notebook with the message: “I’m a lit student you do the math?” It is a picture she designed with simplicity and power (see Photo 5.11). Although it’s just of a notebook and pen, her phrase is pointed and complex. Perhaps it’s meant for the co-op programs, the academic institution as a whole, or the hiring managers from the financial company who interviewed her. For whomever, the phrase at once states who she is, questions the logic of her experience, and demands a rationale.

For Mélanie, it wasn’t making sense. Although the opportunity with the financial company was listed in the online job management system for students in the English literature program, and Mélanie had freely applied to the job, she was surprised when the hiring managers had selected her for an interview. During the interview she wondered if they had even read her resume, and felt incredulous about their line of questioning and attempts to draw connections between the job requirements and the courses she had taken in her English literature program. She said they asked questions like, ““Oh, what do you learn in this class?”” and ““How is that applicable to management?”” Mélanie thought with irritation, “Greek civilization class...?”

In part, Mélanie's unhappiness surfaced because there was a disconnection between the available jobs and what she wanted to do as a career. While the opportunities made available by the cooperative education programs were wide ranging, as choices they didn't align with the trajectory she wanted to take for her life-path. For Mélanie, studying literature did not equal a job in the financial industry. She said,

I felt like the Co-op Office made it seem so great and it's going to be 'jobs specific to your field and you'll get relevant work experience in your department and your employment sector.' And then when you show up they're like, 'Don't apply to jobs specifically to your field. Cast your net wide. Go apply in communications and marketing.'

For Mélanie, the disconnection between career dreams and market realities, created a profound frustration. Goffman (1959) explained, "an individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretenses of being other things" (p. 10, *sic*). Mélanie had reflected on her likes and dislikes, her skills, values, and interests, and had made a commitment to being an English literature major and what that might have meant to her as a career (perhaps writer, editor, or English as a Second Language teacher). And with that commitment, she had a difficult time perceiving herself as a marketer or a communications expert (or someone working in the financial industry) even if these careers required superior writing and editing skills. To her surprise, she learned that co-op would not necessarily enable her to be what she *proposed* to be and therefore, felt duped by what the cooperative education programs had sold to her.

As they cast their nets in search of employment opportunities, the students in this study encountered several other surprises. While Mélanie felt duped, Emma was disappointed that few jobs were in the private sector, and Ben was amazed about the amount of time required to be well prepared and competitive as a job seeker. Rachel,

despite having attended co-op workshops on interviewing skills, was shocked at the professional-level of her interviews compared to what she had experienced for her previous, more junior-level jobs. Rachel said,

I went in this completely blind. I had no idea what to expect. I mean the [co-op] workshops, they help you and they kind of guide you but until you actually experience an interview you *don't* know what to expect, at all. You have no idea.

For Rachel and her fellow co-op students, the surprises were myriad and ongoing, even with the knowledge they had of the employment market in general and the co-op placement process in particular.

Perhaps the students in this study were surprised because they were on the outside of the employment market looking in. While in the placement process, applying to jobs and attending interviews, they were *pre*-employed, not placed, and not matched. And like anglers fishing in murky waters, each individual found that things didn't add up exactly as they had expected: a degree in business did not equal a job in the private sector, prior work experience did not equal immediate interview success, and enrolment in the cooperative education programs did not guarantee placement in a work term, nor a placement in a directly related or desirable field.

For the students in this study, the employment market seemed like a mystery of the deep, like a "secret society" that obscures itself from outsiders (Goffman, 1959, p. 104). They were at sea, focused and engaged in their fishing expedition and meanwhile, lifted up and down in the swells and buffeted by the unexpected currents and chop. Consequently, the students experienced a mix of emotions as the employment market was revealed. Sometimes they felt deceived, deflated, stunned, and even panicked. Other times they were intrigued by what they didn't know and delighted by the novelty of it all. Either way, the students gradually made sense of the employment market. By applying to jobs and attending interviews, the students' dreams and perceptions converged with reality and fact. The opacity began to clear and the truths emerged

like light – about the self, the potentialities, and the actualities, and of all the places they could and couldn't go. Mélanie said:

I guess it really opens your eyes to what is really out there once you do graduate. Like, I probably will get some ups and downs when I am out in the real world looking for a job and at times I'll see really great jobs and at times I'll see some that aren't so great and I don't really want to do. But overall, just really opening my eyes to what someone with my degree can do.

Warriors

Students enrolled in the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs are participating in a competitive program where placements are not guaranteed. And, because students who are newly admitted to co-op typically complete their first work term in summer, they compete against a larger group of candidates vying for a limited number of opportunities: for instance, co-op students from the same admissions cohort as themselves, co-op students who are more senior and seeking their fourth and final co-op work term, and all students seeking a summer job (whether participating in co-op or not). Thus, for the students in this study the competition included friends, classmates, acquaintances, and unknowns. And to win, the students had to become warriors who battled their opponents for personal and professional success. As Ben explained, everyone is “fighting” against one another to secure a co-op work term.

Sometimes the battles were won and sometimes they were lost. Amal’s boyfriend was poised to photograph her at the moment when she was to learn of her placement with a co-op job. He wanted a portrait to commemorate her triumph and the victory she had achieved. But Amal, sitting in the library, face-to-face with the online job management system and her hiring results, projected emotions of an entirely different kind (see Photo 4.25). She explained:

[My boyfriend] was expecting me to have the job so, he wanted to take a photo when I’m happy or jumping. So, just when I saw the interview results, I was like holding my ice tea and about to crunch it because I was mad. And he was like, ‘What’s wrong?’ I’m like, ‘I didn’t get even ranked for the job. I was an X.’ He’s like, ‘It’s OK. There’s second round. You said not all students get placed in the first round, only 1/3 so, it’s OK.’ I’m like, ‘WHY!?’

The image of Amal is grainy because of the subdued interior lighting but it retains a sharp-like-a-razor sensibility because of her raw emotion. As she shared her story she expressed anger, frustration, and hurt. She didn’t win the first bout and her only appeasement was that most students were in the same situation as she.

But, winning wasn't necessarily an easier experience. When Emma secured a job early on in the placement process she didn't celebrate her success. Publicly she wasn't overtly happy or jumping. Instead, she kept her accomplishment to herself and quietly waited for others to continue in the placement process until they too had won their match. She explained the dilemma as such:

You don't really want to ask everybody where they're working because you know they'll ask you and a lot of them will be like, 'Well, I'm not matched to a co-op job yet.' So, everyone's in that grey area. They're really excited, the people who have a job. But the people who don't are really trying to get motivation to keep going. So, it's really that couple of weeks yet and then everyone will be happy and we can...[celebrate].

From a Goffmanian (1959) perspective, this difficulty can be understood as the negative or downward maintenance of personal "front" (p. 22). There are "many different reasons for exercising systematic modesty and for underplaying any expressions of wealth, capacity, spiritual strength, or self-respect" (Goffman, 1959, p. 38). For Emma, her early success amongst a majority of students who remained unsuccessful warranted downplay and diplomacy in order for her to maintain her interpersonal relations. Blatant celebration and boasting, not to mention general discussion of co-op employment and workplace, needed to be deferred until everyone in her circle could participate equally.

Thus, the students experienced internal emotional battles as well. Wielding a subtle power over the students' resilience for success were self-doubts, worries, and second guesses. Prior to Emma's hire, the pessimism that others expressed seeped into her consciousness and made her question the likelihood of achieving her goal. She said, "It was just really daunting because like you have all these people saying, 'You're not going to get a job.'" Consequently, when Emma had achieved some success for herself she was sensitive to those who remained unemployed.

For Mélanie, the larger problem of unemployment and low-skilled jobs post-graduation loomed over her like a threat. She worried that if she didn't persevere and overcome the challenges presented by co-op she would be left with fewer options and a limited future. Mélanie explained:

I've had friends that graduated and they've, they can't find a job. I guess because they haven't done any relevant experience over the summer, they've just been working like, waitress-ing, or working retail and have no, I guess, extra curricular activities that were related to their degree. So, they were finding it *very* very hard to get a job so, it's like, 'I don't want that to happen to me.'

Although the co-op battles were difficult, they beat surrendering to the alternatives.

Perseverance was however, only part of what was required. Rachel explained that winning meant thoroughly planning, preparing, and strategizing, and not leaving success to serendipity. To illustrate her experience, Rachel took a picture of the notebook she used during the on-campus interview period (see Photo 5.8). The image, with the artefacts precisely arranged but blurred by a Photoshop effect, shows Rachel's notebook open to the page where she had written a response to the interview question, "*Why did you think you're the best candidate for the job?*" The question she chose to highlight speaks to the challenging nature of co-op interviews and the culture of competition. Her lengthy and thorough response written in clear and precise cursive, is telling of her tactic. Meanwhile, the smudging created with Photoshop hints at how difficult it is to perfectly control the chances for success under scrutinizing judgment. Rachel said:

I definitely learned that when I'm going in for a job interview, like a government job interview or something like that, you need to be prepared because if you're not, if you just go in and think, 'Oh, I'll do fine. I'll get by with my personality,' or something like that, it's not going to work! (laughing) It's not going to work out. You actually have to know what you're talking about...

Goffman (1959) stated, “In everyday life, of course, there is a clear understanding that first impressions are important” (p. 11). Thus, Rachel and her fellow co-op students thought carefully about their script. They selected their words and were careful to manipulate the pace, tone, and inflection used to say them. They also thought about their costume and props knowing that these too were “highly symbolical” and would be used by employers to make hiring decisions about them (Goffman, 1959, p. 225). Echoing Goffman, Cayla said, “If you come in looking sloppy then that’s obviously a huge concern. You know people...your first interaction is obviously very important.”

Consequently, the students prepared for inspection. Oftentimes, the necessary preparation was a positive experience because it meant shopping for professional clothes, trying out more mature ways of behaving, and developing a resume and cover letter that showcased their skills, abilities, and knowledge. The experience was exhilarating and fun and it fostered feelings of pride and accomplishment. In the whirlwind of it all, it was mesmerizing and the students came to believe that their own performance was “the one and only reality,” or at least a truth worth believing in (Goffman, 1959, p. 80).

Ben illustrated this idea with a self-portrait of himself dressed in his interview outfit (see Photo 4.13). In his picture he is wearing a conservative suit with a dress shirt, tie, and the face of fortitude. Simultaneously, he angles his camera shot to hide his messy student-life behind the edges of the picture frame. Resembling a young hero heading out into battle, he wore his professional attire like a mantle, revelled in the grandeur of control, and projected confidence about his place in the world and the path that he was on (Biehl-Missal, 2010).

Even so, Ben and his fellow co-op students weren’t blind to the strange, surrealist world in which they had found themselves, nor were they self-deluded about employability being much

more than good acting (Goffman, 1959). Regardless of some of the positive feelings associated with putting on a good show and winning, the students found it difficult to be critiqued on superficial, arbitrary, and immaterial details. To have the perfect clothes, the best resume, or the most cultivated behaviour seemed weird, sad, and even hurtful, a life lived in a shallow reality. As Emma explained, “It’s hard to take...”

To explore this idea, Mélanie photographed herself with a nose ring, tousled hair, and untailored clothes (see Photo 5.7). In her picture she isn’t a person well dressed or a character well played. Instead, she is her honest self: real, complex, and deep. It is the image of the person she would like to have accepted by others, and employers in particular. Mélanie said:

This was a picture of what I felt I looked like on a regular day, just casual and not really put together. I don’t know. I felt, if I go to a co-op interview for a job, I felt like I would actually want to present myself as I really am instead of putting on this fake persona and image of myself. So, to me it would be really important to find a job that would accept me for me and not for this put-together, other person that I pretend to be.

Of course, pretending to be another, more stereotypically acceptable type of person was only part of what some of the students struggled with in order that they may be competitive. Beyond the superficial attributes of script and costumes were specific job criteria required by employers. In the City of Ottawa, the federal government is the main employer and consequently, the most dominant force in terms of shaping co-op students’ experience of employability.

Rachel took a picture of her computer screen to show the importance of the federal government to her experience with the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs (see Photo 4.40). Centred on her computer screen is an image of the parliament buildings surrounded by a bold blue sky and a vibrant green lawn. She said:

This is the background to my computer. When I moved to Ottawa last year I changed my background because I wanted to be patriotic. (laughing)...I just

thought it was kind of relevant because this is where I spend...Like, all my time is on my desk-top of my computer doing everything and everything that I've done for co-op as well has been on my computer. So, I thought a print-screen of my dock and everything like that would be really cool and also the fact that it's of parliament and the fact that I'm going to be working in a government job is also really cool. It kind of all interconnects. I guess you could call this picture, "Life", because it is every part of my life...

However, this "life" wasn't always an affirming or moving experience for students.

While some felt lucky to be a part of what the National Capital had to offer, others felt like they were being left behind. Typically the federal government favours job candidates who are Canadian citizens, fluently bilingual in French and English, and appropriately credentialed in the field directly related to the employment opportunity in question. Thus, co-op students that best fit government hiring criteria tend to be rewarded with more interviews and earlier employment success. All others have a tendency to be less advantaged, even when the students' professional performances are at the highest levels.

And so, unlike Rachel, Amal wasn't enamoured with "life" in Ottawa. Like a Trojan horse, the beauty of the city masked the reality of government hiring criteria. As the placement process continued Amal compared herself to a friend who faced the same barriers as she. Amal said, "I have a friend who was in the same situation as mine: no relative work experience, no French, and she's a Permanent Resident, not a Canadian Citizen, so..." For Amal, the realities of working in the National Capital were far from encouraging. It was as though she was ill fitting, unwelcome, or sub-par.

Goffman explained that, "When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them" (1959, p. 17). Like her fellow co-op students, Amal had made an implicit request to employers to take seriously the impression she sought to project: that of a winner, a professional, and a knowledgeable and

employable adult. But, to no avail. Her script, costume, and props could not change how the local employment community measured her credentials and citizenship status.

Toward the end of the placement process, all of the study participants were placed in co-op jobs except Amal. As her discouragement grew, she stopped taking photographs of her co-op experience, disengaged from the placement process, and decided to drop out of the co-op program all together and focus on her studies instead. Amal conceded to her opponents (whomever or whatever they were) with a restrained and smouldering anger. All the while, her competition proceeded on ahead. Ben, Cayla, Mélanie, Rachel, and Emma all secured their place amongst the employed. They had won their matches by design, by circumstance, and with a little luck. And so, they stepped into the winner's circle, and looking around, found that they were well on their way to success.

CHAPTER 7: Flash Bulb

The stories and photographs shared by Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel have been presented in this study as six individual profiles written in narrative form and as a reader's theatre script written with the participant's verbatim interview transcripts, organized into 22 acts. The themes that emerged are: (a) journey, (b) circus, (c) metamorphosing, (d) anglers at sea, and (e) warriors.

What follows are the findings from this study, reviewed and discussed in three sections: (a) legitimate peripheral participation prior to co-op work terms, (b) reflection in pre-employment, and (c) journey of experiential learning. These findings either support, challenge, or extend the literature in cooperative education and in so doing, advance research and practice in the field.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation Prior to Co-op Work Terms

A significant finding of this study is that the students regarded their participation in the co-op placement process as being engaged in the domain of the working professional. Although they weren't yet on-the-job, they described being face-to-face with employers, and interviewing with hiring managers, as participating in the real world of work and unique from their student-life. These interactions were on the "front stage" and the students performed accordingly with the appropriate script, props, and costume required for success in that domain (Goffman, 1959, p. 107). Ben illustrated this idea best with the photograph he took of himself in his interview suit and his narrative of how being engaged with employers was important to his co-op experience and central to his transition from being a student to being a working professional (see Photo 4.13).

Given that students perceived themselves as active participants in professional-life, this study extends the work of various researchers who have looked to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to understand learning in cooperative education (Eames, & Cates, 2004; Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004; Zegwaard, 2012). Lave and Wenger investigated learning in apprenticeship and came to describe learning as situated in the social world and as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 31). They observed that when apprentices were learning on the job, they were doing much more than merely observing. Instead, the apprentices were learning by being engaged with full practitioners in a “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 29). Within the communities of practice, the newcomers were active in “legitimate peripheral participation” with the old-timers (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 95). That is, they weren’t at the core of the communities of practice, nor were they perceived as experts, but they were genuinely participating as active members (Lave & Wenger, 2007).

Researchers in cooperative education have valued Lave and Wenger’s approach to learning because emphasis is placed on learning in work environments. Like apprenticeship programs, co-op programs are centred on the notion that work-integrated learning (WIL) offers rich educational opportunities because students gain skills and knowledge by actually doing work rather than by simply thinking about it (Sattler, 2011). Within the co-op field, researchers have focused on Lave & Wenger’s research in several important ways. For example, Billet (2007) looked at students’ individual agency for learning within the workplace as well as the contributions for learning made by employers to students while they are on the job. Eames & Coll (2006; Eames & Bell, 2005; Eames, 2003; Coll & Eames; 2007) examined how students learn to become proficient in their field by working alongside experts while on placement, and in particular, how students learn to develop their identities as scientists within the science

community of practice. Coll & Eames and their colleagues (Coll, et al., 2009) also examined students' legitimate peripheral participation in fields such as engineering, business, and sport. Meanwhile, Fleming & Eames (2005) focused on how learning within communities of practice is affected by co-op program length and structure and Zegwaard et al. (2003) focused on how to best assess students' workplace learning given that it's socially-situated.

Along with Coll & Eames (Coll, et al., 2009) various co-op researchers have considered Lave & Wenger's approach to learning in terms of students engaging with other students in communities of practice. For example, to prepare for and evaluate co-op work terms (A. Howard & England-Kennedy, 2001), to learn and reflect together while on the job (Raelin et al., 2008), and to refine and develop the skills required for professional practice in-between work terms (Hayward & Blackmer, 2009).

Thus, there is growing emphasis on cooperative education as a milieu for students to engage in the "sociocultural" activity of learning with employers and with other students (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 29). Despite this growing emphasis, our understanding of students' learning in co-op continues to be hindered by the notion that students only interact with employers, and learn from them, during work terms. For instance, Eames (2003), who conducted a longitudinal research study that included qualitative interviews with students prior to their first co-op work term, focused on learning at work and did not explore the sociacultural learning between "newcomers" and "old-timers" occurring before work had begun (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 29).

Undoubtedly, work terms are the primary places for students to learn from professionals about how to be successful workers in their chosen field (Eames & Bell, 2005). But, work terms are not the only sites where students actively engage with the professional community. During the co-op placement process students interact with employers as newcomers in legitimate

peripheral participation. Although students don't produce work like an employee, they alter their language, clothing, props, script, and therefore performances according to the norms of the working world (Goffman, 1959). Or, in the words of Lave & Wenger (2007) the students engage in the "activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice" of employed professionals (p. 29). In the time prior to their first co-op work terms, students produce newcomer performances as might be expected once they have been hired and started their co-op jobs.

This apprenticeship (so to speak) for professional-life is most apparent when looking at students' experiences with co-op job interviews. The students in this study prepared in various ways so that once in the interview, they could communicate confidently and convincingly with old-timers about their industry specific knowledge and skills as well as their corporate fit. To do this successfully the students had to exert control over the impression they were making, and consequently learn the "the art of impression management" (Goffman, 1959, p. 208).

Mélanie illustrated the application of this art form with her dramatic change in attire. To manage the impression she was making on employers she learned to craft a professional look that was more suited to the old-timers' sociocultural practices than her own. For her job interviews, Mélanie didn't wear casual clothing with bright colours and floral patterns, and she didn't wear comfortable shoes. Instead she wore subdued and pattern-free office attire with a pair of conservative black pumps (see Photo 4.6). For Mélanie, changing her costume to create a favourable impression was an uncomfortable experience but she learned that doing so would enhance her credibility and therefore, her employability. Dressing as a community member helped her to fit in, be perceived as an appropriate newcomer, and become eligible to access "all that membership entails" (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 100).

Of course, being perceived and accepted as a newcomer required more than a change in attire. For the students in this study, it was also important to deliver specific words and phrases and to use exacting and practiced techniques. For example, during Cayla's job interviews she would thoughtfully deliver the script she had crafted that connected her skills and knowledge to the job requirements. Rachel would alter the pitch of her voice to express her level of interest whether connecting with employers in face-to-face interviews or over the phone. Emma meanwhile, would use a professional portfolio as an artefact to best showcase her skills.

In some cases, the students in this study had to complete work-tasks during their job interviews as though they were truly on the job. Although no students were ever put to work *per se*, several had to demonstrate their skills and knowledge on the spot. For example, during a job interview Amal was required to demonstrate skills in data analysis and knowledge of human resource management by correctly interpreting a bar graph that reported on changes in unemployment rates over time.

For the students in this study, learning to effectively manage the impression they were making on the employment community was a learning process. Through their job interviews and interaction with hiring managers, they learned what was effective (or not) and in turn, learned to produce appropriate performances that would admit them to the community as full-fledged employees. As a consequence, learning and then producing appropriate performances formed part of the "process of becoming a full participant" in the professional domain (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 29).

Thus, while the students in this study were not yet on-the-job, they were genuinely engaged with the real world of work and therefore, legitimately participating at the periphery of a community of practice. The work domain was understood as larger than just the co-op work term

and the placement process was understood as a rich milieu for learning about, and participating in, the professional community as an active member. Accordingly, co-op researchers who employ Lave & Wenger's theories of learning need to broaden beyond the confines of the work term and include the co-op placement process in their definition of what constitutes students' work learning sites.

The finding that the students in this study regarded their participation in the placement process as participation in the work domain, suggests that the practice of cooperative education would benefit from curriculum that better addresses students' pre-employment experiences with the professional community of practice. As with many co-op programs, students at the University of Ottawa attend various pre-employment workshops. These workshops focus on employability skills and include topics such as resume writing, interviewing, and more. Although these workshops teach students how to produce the appropriate performances for employers (with all the associated activities, vocabulary, and artifacts, etc.) they offer little to students in terms of understanding the meaning of these performances and how they are connected to learning to become full-members of a community of practice.

By developing workshops that incorporate discussions and class activities about communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, students would become attuned to the placement process as a sociocultural milieu for learning. With newcomer/old-timer roles made explicit, they would have the opportunity to connect ideas on the subject, solve problems, make meaning, and perhaps more smoothly transition from student-life to professional-life, particularly when encountering a disconnection between "their own sociocultural histories" and those of the community they are engaging with during the placement process, and later when they begin the co-op work term (Eames & Coll, 2006, p. 8). What's more, with the community of

practice brought to the forefront of their thinking, students could think critically about the status quo and perhaps take ownership of making change either immediately, or later when they have moved from novice to full community member with hiring and management responsibilities (Johnston, 2007; Karlsson, 2010).

The finding that students regarded their participation in the placement process as participation in the work domain, also suggests that the practice of cooperative education would continue to benefit from program structures that alternate between work terms and study terms (see Table 4.3). Like most programs accredited by the Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE) the University of Ottawa structures its programs on an alternating pattern whereby undergraduate-level students typically complete four work terms and graduate-level students complete two. The rationale provided for the alternating pattern is that the structure enables students to continually bring theory into the workplace and applied knowledge into the classroom (CAFCE, 2006; Ricks et al., 1990). Alternating is also encouraged because it allows students the opportunity to experience work with a variety of employers during various seasons and because it allows students the flexibility to change the direction of their academic programs to fit evolving career objectives (CAFCE, 2006).

From this study, it may be suggested that the alternating pattern also benefits students because it provides multiple opportunities for them to participate in the placement process. As they prepare for each of their work terms, the students directly connect with the professional community of practice, engage in legitimate peripheral participation, and learn fitting newcomer performances that facilitate their admission to the community as a full-member. Although the students in this study only shared experiences about their first co-op placement process, it is conceivable that repeating the process multiple times would improve their performances and

increase their admission success for each subsequent co-op work term and ultimately, for full-time employment post-graduation.

In addition to providing support for the alternating pattern of work and study, this finding suggests that the practice of cooperative education would continue to benefit from matching students to relevant jobs that are linked to their academic programs (CAFCE, 2006; Coll & Eames, 2007, Eames & Bell, 2005). Throughout the placement process, and particularly during co-op job interviews, the students in this study had to speak about subjects and complete tasks as though they were already members of the community of practice. To prove their eligibility for admission, students had to “talk-the-talk” and in some cases, they even had to “walk-the-walk.” When the students had academic knowledge that was unrelated to the requirements of the available job opportunities it was challenging for them to perform in a way that was adequate. And, lacking community-specific skills, knowledge, and vocabulary created negative emotions in the students about their career prospects, the co-op programs, and even about employers.

Finally, the combination of (a) matching students to relevant jobs that link to their academic programs and (b) following an alternating pattern of work and study is important to the overall perceived value of co-op as an educational strategy that is holistic in nature (Coll & Eames, 2004; Eames & Bell, 2005). From this study it may be suggested that, when students repeatedly engage with their specific community of practice, they continually deepen and enrich the sociocultural learning required for their chosen field. Over time, students gradually move from newcomer to old-timer and from novice to expert because they have multiple occasions to practice and refine their skills interacting with employers on the job, and also during the placement process when seeking employment opportunities. Consequently, students’ sociocultural learning experiences add up to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The students in this study were not yet on-the-job but they were already engaged as active members in a community of practice. Although not at work, the students were learning through “legitimate participation in socially mediated interactions, in the thinking and behaving of the community” (Eames & Coll, 2006, p. 10). And, these interactions were exciting, challenging, as well as uniquely educative for students because they offered learning opportunities that were totally different from those occurring in their academic programs. As Ben explained, the experience of interacting with employers was “another step in life...” Like his fellow students, when face-to-face with employers and interviewing with hiring managers, Ben wasn’t a student but rather, a professional actively engaged in the work domain.

Reflection in pre-employment

From this study it was found that students regarded the time prior to their first co-op work terms as a time for reflection. When on the “front stage” the students were active and involved with employers (Goffman, 1959, p. 107) and participating as members of a “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 29). But when “back-stage” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112), hidden from the professional world of work, the students reflected on their past, their present, and their future. They thought about their identities, career aspirations, and career realities. And, they contemplated their transition from student-life and childhood, to professional-life and adulthood. Mélanie illustrated the idea of introspection most directly with the self-portrait she took of herself titled “Reflection” (see Photo 4.3) and with the stories she told about her journey of becoming the person she hoped to be, both on the inside and the outside.

As such, this study contributes to the work of researchers and practitioners who have considered reflection as important to learning in cooperative education. Van Gyn (1996), an early advocate for reflection in co-op, explained that reflection leads to “different ways of thinking and interacting” (Van Gyn, 1996, p. 104). And, she suggested that if reflection is part of the co-op curriculum, then it allows for the development of a reflective professional who can effectively respond to complex, conflicting, and ever-changing problems (Van Gyn, 1996).

In keeping with this notion, co-op researchers and practitioners have advanced reflection as an overall strategy for developing students into professionals (Harvey, et al., 2010; Mundhenk, 2004; Schutte, 2007; Varty, 1994) who are able to think critically (Karlsson, 2010), learn from others through inquiry (Hayward, Blackmer & Raelin, 2007), integrate theory and practice (Coll et al., 2009; Stellar & Porter, 2011), and self-assess (Griffin, Lorenz & Mitchell, 2010; Hayward & Blackmer, 2009; Jaekel, 2011). To achieve this objective, some co-op

programs have incorporated reflective practice into on-line learning (Canale & Duwart, 1999; Howison & Finger, 2010; Sattler, 2011), in-class learning (Howard & Jorgensen, 2006), and on-the-job learning using an assortment of methods such as journaling, observation logs or blogs, portfolios, and discussion groups (Cates & Jones, 1999; Doel, 2009; Grealish & Stunder, 2011; Hodges, 2011; Lucas & Fleming, 2012; Raelin et al., 2008). More often, co-op programs have brought reflection into the curriculum by requiring students to write a report following each co-op work term (Sattler, 2011; Todd & Lay, 2011) and sometimes in advance (Stellar & Porter, 2011; Zegwaard & Laslett, 2011).

At the University of Ottawa, co-op students complete various reflection activities before, during, and after their work terms. Accordingly, the students in this study participated in reflective work as part of their pre-employment training. They wrote journal entries, participated in paired and larger group discussions, and completed on-line learning assignments. Through these activities the students reflected on how to best market their skills to employers, respond effectively to interview questions, and negotiate potential workplace challenges once on-the-job. Thus, the students in this study focused their reflections on job search and employment success (as would be the case throughout their enrolment and typical for students at other co-op institutions).

Yet when Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel were interviewed for this study, they went beyond discussions about jobs and employment and also shared stories and pictures of their personal journey with all the richness and complexity that that includes. They reflected deeply on their aspirations, their disappointments, and their coming of age. And, while it may be convincingly argued that the students reflected because they participated in a highly creative image-based research project, the specific topics for discussion were only prescribed in

the broadest sense. Without an explicit directive, the students contemplated the mosaic of their experiences and the paths they were taking as young adults.

As might be expected, the students thought about the jobs posted on the online job management system and in turn, reflected on the types of work terms they would prefer. Sometimes the students' reflections were quite simple, and focused on weighing pros and cons or evaluating likes and dislikes. But more often, the students extended their reflections beyond dichotomy and delved into the range of possibilities of *what could be*, in terms of their emerging comprehension of *what is*. Like a catalyst, participating in the co-op placement process pushed their thinking and allowed them the opportunity to understand their degree-programs within the context of the real world of work. As Mélanie explained, participating in placement “really opens your eyes.”

It is significant however, that the students reflected on much more than the immediate challenges of applying to jobs, getting selected for interviews, and securing their first co-op job. As they shared their photos and stories about work, the students also shared their memories of the past and dreams for the future. They disclosed their private hopes and personal histories. For example, Cayla took a picture of herself standing on the front steps of her apartment (see Photo 4.22). In the picture, Cayla presented herself as though heading off to her first day of work with all the appropriate props and costuming (Goffman, 1959). But, from her narrative she revealed that her image is layered in meaning and includes references, through her posture and attitude, to her childhood memories of heading off to the first day of kindergarten with all the positive feelings that that encompassed. Rachel meanwhile, took a picture of the office she would use while working at her first co-op job with the federal government (see Photo 4.22). Rachel's computer is in the centre of the picture displaying a *Vogue* magazine cover on the screen,

highlighted by a Photoshop effect. From her narrative, Rachel revealed that her picture captures the present-day at her new co-op job and simultaneously, her dream to one-day work in the fashion industry.

Interestingly, the students in this study took their reflections even further and through their photographs and stories explored highly abstract concepts and metaphorical ideas. For example, Mélanie photographed her cat looking out the window to symbolize her feelings of despair (see Photo 5.2), Amal took a picture of herself reflected in a three-way mirror as a metaphor for hiding her identity from others (see Photo 4.27), and Emma took a picture of a large sunlit tree as an allegory for her father (see Photo 4.32). These reflections are inspired by their co-op experiences but are not directly about it. Instead, they are the students' reflections on the meaning of their lives of which co-op only plays one part.

Thus, by participating in the placement process the students did much more than reflect on how to secure a co-op work term and perform well once on the job. In concert with applying to jobs, attending interviews, and reflecting in workshops on how to excel in these endeavors, they contemplated their personal stories and their identities. They asked complex questions like, "Who am I?" and "What do I want to be?" And through their reflections, they began to tease out tentative answers about themselves, and their lives. As Rachel explained, "I think through learning about the companies that I could potentially work for, I learned about myself..."

That the students openly reflected on an anthology of themes (including the meaning of their lives) suggest that the practice of cooperative education would benefit from frameworks or schemas that recognize what's "really going on" (Goffman, 1974, p. 8). At the University of Ottawa, the time prior to students' first co-op work terms is called the "placement process" or simply "placement." The students meanwhile, are referred to as "not matched" and "not placed,"

or as “participating in placement.” These words suggest that the time prior to co-op work terms is basically *not* something else. It’s as though the students are frameless, caught somewhere between student-life and professional-life waiting for a “placing or arrangement” (Barnhart, 1988, p. 800), or to be *processed* into something that is knowable and identifiable. Moreover, the pre-employment curriculum is shaped accordingly with workshops, on-line activities, and the associated reflective work emphasizing the achievement of a suitable placement, in a timely fashion, within a competitive and distinctive job market.

In spite of this, the students in this study participated in much more than their placement. They weren’t frame-less. Instead, they were actively participating in their personal and professional development through action and rich reflection. And so, to suitably “identify, and label” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) the time prior to students’ first co-op work terms, new words are required. These words might include “transition time,” “development journey” or simply “development.” The students meanwhile, might be referred to as “strategist,” “co-op learner,” or perhaps “reflective practitioner,” in recognition of Donald Schön (1983) and his influential work on the subject.

These suggestions, although just words, recognize the reflective work that’s already in practice. As frameworks or schemas, they alter the perception of what’s going on, and consequently have the capacity to influence behaviour (Scherff & Singer, 2012). For example, if alternative frames are used that better capture the reflective nature of pre-employment, then co-op students might understand personal and professional challenges more as opportunities for growth than as barriers to success, co-op practitioners might develop curriculum that fosters students’ reflections on their personal and professional journey, their identity, and their school-to-work transition, rather than their employability factors primarily (Hodges, 2011; Schutte &

Jewell, 2007; Zegwaard & Laslett, 2011), and furthermore, co-op directors might strategically position their programs towards developing reflective practitioners who have the capacity to navigate complexity, change, and divergent ways of thinking (Grealish & Stunder, 2011; Groenewald, Drysdale, Chiupka & Johnston, 2011; Van Gyn, 1996), rather than towards developing job seekers who learn to successfully perform within the status quo (Goffman, 1959; Johnston, 2007).

The recommendation for practice is therefore, a recommendation for the re-conceptualization of pre-employment. Students, not yet on the job, are already actively, seriously, and even playfully reflecting on work, school, family and friends, and so much more. They are taking the opportunity to “make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness” that they encounter (Schön, 1983, p. 61). The opportunity then, is to tap into students’ reflective work and, from the onset of their co-op enrolment, foster their development as reflective practitioners who find success as job seekers, and also as the leaders, problem solvers, and change agents so needed within the professions (Schön, 1983).

Journey of experiential learning

From this study it was found that students participated in experiential learning prior to their first co-op work terms. Although the students were not yet on-the-job, they were on the “front stage” and actively involved with employers (Goffman, 1959, p. 107) in “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 2007, p. 95). The students were also “back-stage” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112) and deeply reflective about their front stage activities along with their journey of becoming an adult, and a working professional. Accordingly, as the students stepped back and forth between the front and back regions and between their thoughts and actions, they learned through experience about the real world of work, about their own identity, and how the two connected together (or not). Cayla visually represented the control required to manage this frenetic experience with the photograph she took of her white board, covered in colourful sticky notes (see Photo 4.19). Each of her notes is carefully labelled with an important co-op activity, both reflective and active in nature, and then arranged like an artist’s interpretation of a juggler’s circus performance.

Given that the students in this study switched between the front and back stage during pre-employment and learned through action and reflection along the way, this study challenges the work of researchers who have looked to David A. Kolb (1983) and his work on experiential learning. Hitherto, the notion of learning in cooperative education has been accepted as a linear progression as illustrated by Kolb. However, from this study, it emerged that students’ experiential learning begins prior to employment and is lived more as an organic journey, than a sequential process.

Kolb (1983) advanced a process of learning that includes four learning modes or abilities: (a) concrete experience, (b) abstract conceptualization, (c) reflective observation, and (d) active

experimentation (see Figure 3.1). Concrete experience and active experimentation are about “present reality” and “doing as opposed to observing” (Kolb, 1983, pp. 68-69). These modes are therefore about the more practical, direct, and hands-on aspects of learning. By contrast, reflective observation and abstract conceptualization are about the more introspective aspects of learning including “logic, ideas, and concepts” and “reflection as opposed to action” (Kolb, 1983, pp. 68-69).

Typically, concrete experience and active experimentation are regarded as the key learning modes enabled through cooperative education. It is believed that when students are on-the-job, they are more engaged in practice, action, and “learning by doing”. When participating in study terms (and perhaps completing post-work assignments like the co-op work term report), students are more engaged in reflection, conceptualization, and learning by thinking about their action. Thus, by following a fixed sequence of work and study terms (see Table 4.3) co-op students have the opportunity to engage in an “ongoing and cyclical” educational strategy that enables experiential learning (Griffin, Lorenz & Mitchell, 2010, p. 45; Haddara & Skanes, 2007; Raschick, Maypole, & Day, 1998). Taken as a whole, through cooperative education students gain a richer educational experience overall because the various learning modes (or abilities) have been accessed again and again following a formalized alternating pattern of work/action and study/reflection (Dressler & Keeling, 2011; Eames & Cates, 2011; Linn, 2004; Ricks et al., 1990; Tener, 2004).

When interpreting Kolb’s experiential learning process, researchers in cooperative education have been careful to recognize that learning is complex and that it has its own “natural spontaneity” (Bates, Bates & Bates, 2007, p. 123). For instance, that “students will have concrete experiences through their academic coursework *and* their cooperative education assignment”

(Eames & Cates, 2011, p. 45; *italics added*). As well, reflection can begin during work terms (Howison & Finger, 2010; McRae & Ramji, 2011) and not just after the fact. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that it is the student, and not necessarily the location of the student (whether they are in a work space or study space) that matters most to learning since “the student is the site of learning, regardless of their geographical situation” (Woodley & Beattie, 2011, p. 23).

Yet, the emphasis in co-op research remains on work terms as the space where students are specifically engaging with the real world of work and grounding their learning in concrete experience and active experimentation (Bartkus & Higgs, 2011; Cooper, 2011; Dunn et al., 2012; Harvey et al., 2010; Lucas & Fleming, 2012; Marchioro, Ryan & Cripps, 2011; Martin & Leberman, 2005; Smith et al., 2009; Weighart, 2009). This interpretation of Kolb’s experiential learning process is enduring and it may continue to hold value over time, even for researchers like myself (Jones, 2007; Jones & Quick, 2007). This is because the geographical location of students’ learning and the connection to real problems and outcomes (rather than just theoretical ideas) does in fact change the educational experience in a meaningful way (Kennedy et al., 2010; Kolb, 1983; Marchioro et al., 2011; Woodley & Beattie, 2011). Co-op students, working as they do in practical jobs, gain access to learning opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable.

However in this study, it emerged that the students’ participation in the co-op placement process disrupted the accepted delineations of work and study (Dewey, 1916). Although not yet on-the-job, the students stepped onto the front stage and directly connected with hiring managers in legitimate peripheral participation. By doing so, the students experienced the real world of work and all the associated problems and outcomes that go along with it. Thus, the opportunity

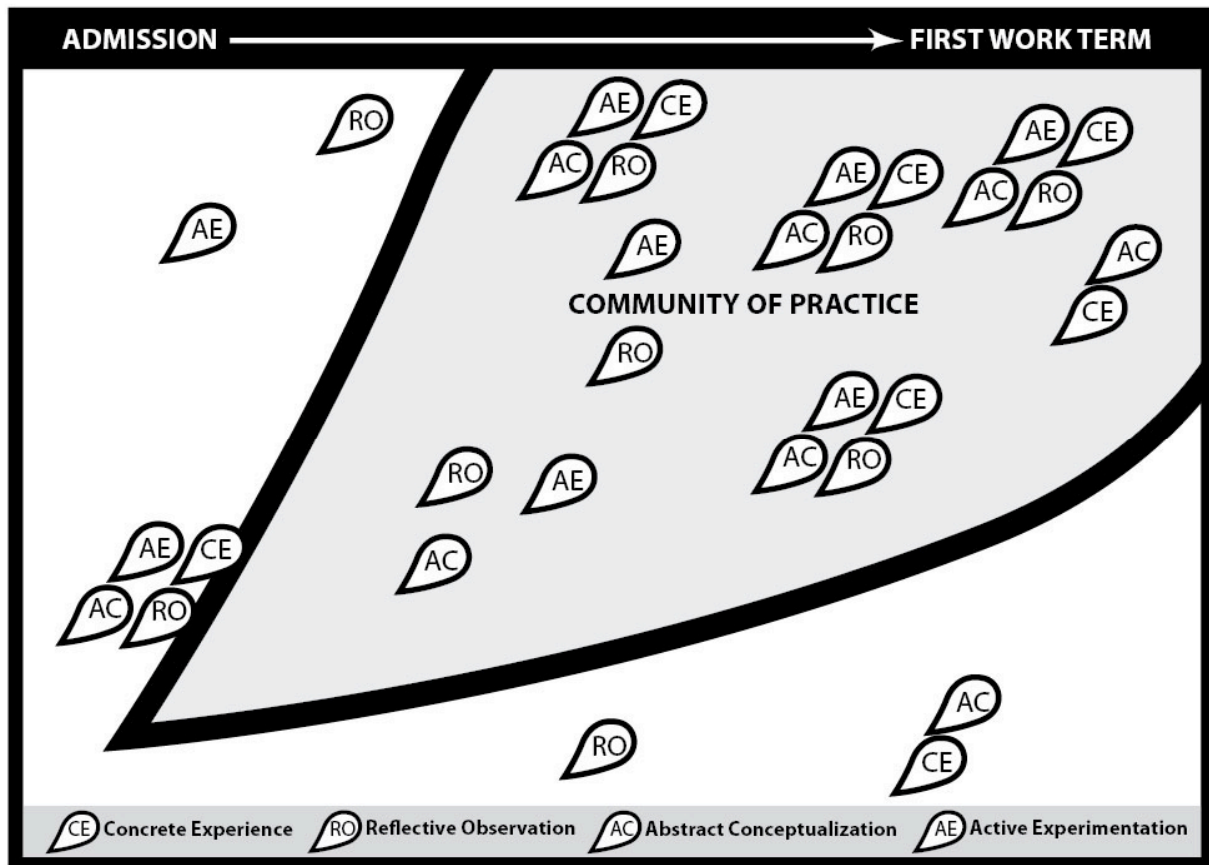
to engage in concrete experience and active experimentation as enabled through work, was already in their midst.

Consequently, the students didn't wait to create knowledge "through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1983, p. 38). In front of their audiences and behind the scenes, they were doing, conceptualizing, observing, engaging, and reflecting, purposefully and also reflexively, in an organic and fluid flow that was sometimes delayed and emergent and other times, quick and tumbling like an aerial acrobat. For example, Ben shared a story about a time when he found himself in a brief, but significant experiential learning moment. He explained that he, and his fellow competitors were required to prepare a short writing sample to apply for a co-op job opportunity. As he was completing his work, he noticed that he was the only one in the room who had finished. He started feeling stressed and unsure and then, in that instant, he reflected on the quality of his writing skills over the years. In this way, Ben reflected on his experience as a writer *while* completing a writing assignment for the employer audience. In so doing, he calmed his nerves, learned to trust himself as a writer with professional-level skills, and without further ado, handed in what he knew to be a quality product to the expectant community of practice.

With this story in mind, along with the many others that emerged through this research, Kolb's experiential learning process would benefit from reinterpretation. Firstly, to recognize the experiential learning that occurs in the time prior to co-op work terms. Secondly, to better represent the more fluid (and less sequential or procedural) spirit of experiential learning. Therefore, what follows is a reinterpretation of Kolb's general *process* of experiential learning as a *journey* specifically incorporating co-op student experiences in pre-employment (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1

Journey of Experiential Learning in Cooperative Education (JELCE)



The *Journey of Experiential Learning in Cooperative Education (JELCE)* is a figure, a diagram, a “plan, map, chart” as well as a “play, story” or plotline (Barnhart, 1988, p. 807) that sketches learners’ experiences anew. Kolb’s experiential learning process, as well as his perspective that learning is a holistic “continuous, lifelong process” (Kolb, 1984, p. 33) directly informed the development of the JELCE. Additionally, the other key concepts that were addressed in this study, namely “community of practice” as advanced by Lave & Wenger (2007) and “reflective practitioner” as advanced by Schön (1983) were used as reference points. Most

importantly, the narratives and photographs, as shared by the students who participated in this study, took centre stage.

In this study, the students' experiences were presented in various ways: as mini-biographies, a reader's theatre script, and a set of five themes, explored through the theoretical framework of dramaturgy. The five themes are briefly summarized below along with select photographs that were particularly influential in the reinterpretation of Kolb's experiential learning process.

Table 7.1

Themes Briefly Summarized

Theme	Summary	Representative Photograph
Journey	Co-op students are on a journey from student-life to professional-life.	"The Beginning/Starting Point" by Rachel (Photo 4.36)
Circus	Co-op students experience a high volume of work and conflicting priorities.	"Organization" by Cayla (Photo 4.19)
Metamorphosing	Co-op students are transitioning from childhood to adulthood.	"Sunny Mornings" by Emma (Photo 5.5)
Anglers at sea	Co-op students learn about the employment market and their identity.	"I'm a Lit Student You Do the Math?" by Mélanie (Photo 5.11)
Warriors	Co-op students compete for full membership within the real world of work.	"It's Not the End of the World" by Amal (Photo 4.25)

The *Journey of Experiential Learning in Cooperative Education* (JELCE) is reminiscent of a scatter plot (although it wasn't created by graphing numerical data). Rather, it is a symbolic illustration of co-op students' experiential learning as they move through pre-employment towards their first co-op work term. The diagram includes all four of Kolb's learning modes: (a) concrete experience, (b) abstract conceptualization, (c) reflective observation, and (d) active experimentation. However, the movement and organization of the JELCE is quite different from Kolb's experiential learning process.

Instead of moving in a closed and orderly cycle, the learning modes move upwards in a flowing, open pattern. They appear to climb, like a journey to the top of a staircase. They are grouped in logical chaos, like a circus might be organized. And they occur organically, like a seedling's movements as it metamorphoses into a springtime sprout. Meanwhile, the learning modes are directional in their upward movement, like a warrior's forceful drive forward to learn and succeed despite the murky waters (or perhaps because of them). Thus, the JELCE is patterned more like a toss of wedding confetti, a dark night dotted with stars, or pods of schooling fish, than a bar graph or a SWOT analysis. As perhaps Kolb (1984) had intended, the diagram illustrates that "ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience" (p. 26).

The finding that the students in this study were engaged in a journey of experiential learning (as opposed to a structured process beginning with a work term), suggests that the practice of cooperative education would benefit from better supporting students in their learning from the onset of their enrolment. As has been already discussed, this might mean (a) developing curriculum that better address students' experiences with the professional community of practice

and (b) utilizing words, frameworks or schemas that recognize, enhance, and guide students' reflective work.

In addition, supporting students in their journey of experiential learning might mean recognizing the importance and impact of competition. In this study, Mélanie, Ben, Cayla, Amal, Emma, and Rachel had to actively compete like warriors for a limited number of employment opportunities. Thus, to survive and ultimately to succeed, it was necessary for them to learn. Waiting passively wasn't an option. Instead, they engaged in their experiences, fought through the challenges, and learned about the employment market and their own identities. Along the way, they transitioned from childhood and student-life to adulthood and professional-life and lived an experiential journey.

CHAPTER 8: Démanagement | Moving

After more than 35 years, the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs has moved. Our entire staff gradually geared up for the big day by going through the office space with planning, determination, and care. Most things were packed up, boxed, or bubble-wrapped including binders, documents, and files, as well as personal knick-knacks, posters, and pictures. Other things were dispensed with: archived, recycled, donated, shredded, or simply thrown out with the trash. The IT team labelled and unhooked all the computers, printers, and photocopiers. The phones were re-directed. An email was sent to students, employers, and faculty informing them of our new location at the other end of the campus.

While some felt at ease with the move and even eagerness, others struggled somewhat with worry, frustration, and even sadness. Probably we all felt a mix of emotions. For myself, as we planned and packed I felt motivated as though I was embarking on an adventure to an exciting place that had the potential of revitalizing us as an organization. Our new space, with its larger square-footage and better flow, would allow for an increase in staff, and as a result an increase in student admissions. Across campus, cooperative education would be made available to many more students than had ever been possible before.

But despite this view of things to come, I also felt emptiness for what was left. In the remaining days before the move, the Salle d'attente | Waiting Room and the surrounding offices hung like an old haunt – exposed, clearly in need of a fresh coat of paint, smelling of dust, and echoing sadly. It looked disorganized, worn, and not at all like the place that had impressed me on my first day of work, all those years ago. The future of the place would belong to others and what remained for me would be a tapestry of memories: of a red suit, a brass bell, monarch butterflies, and so much more.

Through my mix of emotions, I was reminded of the students' experiences of transition: Ben contemplating the echoing room left vacant by his house-mate; Cayla choosing to paint her apartment bright green so it would be vibrant and welcoming to others; Rachel dazzled by the surreal speed of change; Emma calculating and re-calculating her strategy for goal attainment; Mélanie letting go of what she loves and who she is; and Amal divorcing herself from the difficulty of it all, and forging ahead regardless.

"It's not that easy," said Ben.

"Obviously it's a big thing, smoothly transitioning from different things," said Cayla.

But, transition is like that. In the summer, at the bi-annual conference for the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education (CAFCE) held in Whistler, British Columbia, I saw the tension created by an altering point of view. There, with co-op practitioners from across the country as both my audience and actors, I staged the reader's theatre script "Seeing Cooperative Education." The response to the play was positive with at one point, more session registrants than seats. But as the play unfolded, and the co-op practitioners spoke the words of the six students, the audience shifted in their seats.

They heard the students' voices, saw the photographs, and contemplated the meaning. They knew the stories (or something like them) and felt concern, empathy, and understanding. They shared in the sadness, joy, and humour. But, they also felt discomfort and occasionally, the room of practitioners bubbled up in nervous laughter even though the scene on stage was anything but funny.

Perhaps they were seeing things differently or felt exposed to hidden layers of experience just outside of their knowing. Perhaps their laughter was a moment of seeing – more about insight, revelation, and vision than about sight (Barnhart, 1988). It's difficult to know. After the

play was over, I inquired amongst the practitioners. Most had reflected on the uncomfortable mood that had surfaced and dissipated, but answers didn't emerge, only speculations and wonder.

But, wonder is enough for now. With wonder, co-op practitioners may be inspired to evaluate what they do and how they do it. Co-op researchers may be inspired to ask new questions: about student success and failure, about the transition from student-life and childhood to professional-life and adulthood, about dreams realized and lost. Of course, dear reader, these questions may never find answers. My hope is only that they suggest paths to follow, and invoke continued inquiry. For myself, the journey of wonder has just begun.

As I went through my own office to sort, pack, and throw things out, I came upon some old binders filled with acetates

that were once used to give co-op pre-employment workshops, some 10 years ago or more. Piled on my floor, the pages were at once see-through and opaque, dull without the overhead projector humming behind them, but glistening from the harsh florescent lighting up above. Like a signpost, they marked our transition – that everything changes, and yet everything remains the same, that there are things that shine through, and things that continue to hide (van Manen, 1997).



Photo 8.1 Moving

And so, with an attitude of resolve and wistfulness, I threw out all the binders full of acetates, save for one called "Intro to Co-op." Although out of date and useless, I kept it because it reminded me that our story is always being told and re-told and in the re-telling, we have the opportunity to explore the meaning of what we do: through the classic stories of then, the contemporary stories of now, the symbolic narratives of anglers, warriors, and acrobats, and through the scripts of those who are in constant fluctuation between settled and unsettled, known and unknown, hidden and revealed.

Finally, after laughing with my colleagues about outdated technology like overhead projectors, mimeographs, and the like, I placed the old binder in one of my many brown cardboard packing boxes. Then, after looking around at the empty walls of my office one last time, like everyone else, I moved.

Appendix A: Researcher schedule

Event	Component	Date
Researcher participation	Write journal reflections and anecdotes	Jan 2010
	Use photography protocol and take pictures	Continuous throughout the project
	Analyze data	
Recruit student participants	Send recruitment email	Jan 8, 2010
	Send recruitment email reminder	Jan 12, 2010
Conduct group information meetings with students	Explain the project in a group setting	Group Session A
	Explain and secure informed consent	Jan 14, 2010 (1:00 to 2:30)
Researcher and students take pictures using protocol	Explain photography protocol and supporting materials	Group Session B
		Jan 15, 2010 (10:00 to 11:30)
Researcher and students take pictures using protocol	Send reminder email I	Feb 9, 2010
	Send reminder email II: Submitting photos and scheduling first interview	Feb 23, 2010
Gather images and schedule individual interviews with students	Gather disposable cameras or digital images; provide new disposable cameras to the students that require them; answer questions; schedule first interview	Late Feb 2010
	Develop/save photographs	
Conduct first individual interviews with students	Conduct first interview protocol	Late Feb 2010
	Take photograph of student	
Prepare data	Transcribe student's first interviews	Mar 2010
	Send transcriptions to students for review	
	Make changes as required	
Researcher and students take pictures using protocol	Send reminder email I	Apr 9, 2010
	Send reminder email II: submitting photos and scheduling second interview	Mar 2010
Conduct individual meetings with students	Gather digital images; answer questions; schedule second interview	Apr – May 2010
	Save photographs	
Conduct second individual interviews	Conduct second interview protocol	Apr – May 2010

with students

Prepare data

Transcribe student's second interviews
Send transcriptions to students for review
Make changes as required
Analyze images

Jun – Aug
2010

Writing up

Analyze data
Write and rewrite
Submit to committee
Make changes as required

Sep 2010 –
May 2013

Defend dissertation

Appendix B: Student recruitment email

Dear [*Student name*],

Do you enjoy photography? Are you interested in reflecting on your experiences? If yes, then you might be interested in participating in the research project ‘Seeing Cooperative Education’.

I am an employee of the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs. As well, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. As part of my degree I am studying the experiences of students recently enrolled in the co-op programs. To gather information about co-op students’ experiences I will ask participants to take photographs and discuss their photographs during one-on-one interviews. I will also take photographs of my experiences in co-op and a photograph of each study participant.

Participation is optional. If you decide to participate your contribution may enable a better understanding of co-op students’ experiences and improve the quality of the co-op programs for future students.

Would you be interested in this study? If so, please reply to me by Tuesday, January 12, 2010. In your response please indicate if you are available to meet at Group Session A Thursday, January 14, 2010 from 1:00 to 2:30 or Group Session B Friday, January 15, 2010 from 10:00 to 11:30. The sessions will take place at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Lamoureux Hall, 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street (Group A: Room 403) (Group B: Room 105).

During the session I will explain the research project in full and answer any questions you might have. Please note that the project will be conducted entirely in English.

Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Jeela Jones, M.Ed, PhD Candidate

Madame, Monsieur,

Aimez-vous la photographie? Êtes-vous intéressé à faire une réflexion sur vos expériences?

Si oui, vous voudrez peut-être participer au projet « Seeing Cooperative Education »

(Perceptions de l'enseignement coopératif).

Je suis une employée au service des programmes d'enseignement coopératif de l'Université d'Ottawa, en plus d'être aspirante au doctorat à la Faculté d'éducation de cette université. Dans le cadre de mes études, j'examine l'expérience des étudiants qui se sont récemment inscrits dans les programmes coopératifs. Afin de recueillir de l'information à ce sujet, je demanderai aux étudiants de prendre des photos et de parler de ces photos dans le cadre d'entrevues en personne. De mon côté, je prendrai des photos de mes propres expériences et je photographierai chaque étudiant participant à l'étude.

La participation à l'étude est facultative. Si vous acceptez de participer, votre contribution pourrait favoriser une meilleure compréhension de l'expérience des étudiants COOP et améliorer la qualité des programmes COOP dans l'avenir. Je mène cette étude de recherche pour les besoins de ma thèse de doctorat et je ne suis pas mandatée par le bureau des Programmes d'enseignement coopératif pour le faire. Votre choix de participer ou non à cette étude n'aura aucune incidence sur la qualité des services que vous recevez au bureau des Programmes d'enseignement coopératif.

Cette étude vous intéresse? Si oui, veuillez me répondre d'ici le mardi, 12 janvier et indiquer si vous êtes disponible pour assister à la séance du groupe A [le jeudi, 14 janvier, 13 : 00h à 14 : 30h] ou à la séance du groupe B [le vendredi, 15 janvier, 10 : 00h à 11 : 30h]. Ces séances auront lieu à la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa, au pavillon Lamoureux situé au 145, rue Jean-Jacques Lussier (groupe A pièce 403) (groupe B pièce 105)

Au cours de ces séances, j'expliquerai le projet de recherche en détail et je répondrai à vos questions. Veuillez noter que le projet se déroulera entièrement en anglais.

Je vous remercie à l'avance de votre collaboration et je vous prie d'agréer mes salutations distinguées.

Jeela Jones, M.Ed., aspirante au doctorat

Appendix C: Student recruitment email (Reminder)

(Le texte en français suit la version anglaise)

Hello Co-op Student,

Do you enjoy photography? Are you interested in reflecting on your experiences of preparing for your first work term? If yes, then you might be interested in participating in the research project ‘Seeing Cooperative Education’.

I am an employee of the University of Ottawa Cooperative Education Programs. As well, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. As part of my degree I am studying the experiences of students recently enrolled in the Co-op programs. To gather information about Co-op students’ experiences I will ask participants to take photographs and discuss their photographs during one-on-one interviews. I will also take photographs of my experiences in Co-op and a photograph of each study participant.

Participation is optional. If you decide to participate your contribution may enable a better understanding of Co-op students’ experiences and improve the quality of the Co-op programs for future students. Following each of the one-on-one interviews participants will receive a Chapters Bookstore gift card.

Would you be interested in this study? If so, please reply to me by Wednesday, January 13, 2010. In your response please indicate if you are available to meet at Group Session A Thursday, January 14, 2010 from 1:00 to 2:30 or Group Session B Friday, January 15, 2010 from 10:00 to 11:30. The sessions will take place at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education, Lamoureux Hall, 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street (Group A: Room 403) (Group B: Room 105).

Refreshments will be served.

During the session I will explain the research project in full and answer any questions you might have. Please note that the project will be conducted entirely in English.

As a note, alternate dates and times can be made if you are interested in participation but are unable to make either of the two group information sessions.

Sincerely,

Jeela Jones, M.Ed, PhD Candidate

http://www.coop.uottawa.ca/en/en-coop-students/en-staff-bio.asp?staff_id=1

Bonjour ,

Aimez-vous la photographie? Êtes-vous intéressé à faire une réflexion sur vos expériences de la préparation de votre premier stage? Si oui, vous voudrez peut-être participer au projet « Seeing Cooperative Education » (Perceptions de l'enseignement coopératif).

Je suis une employée du Régime d'enseignement coopératif de l'Université d'Ottawa, en plus d'être aspirante au doctorat à la Faculté d'éducation de cette université. Dans le cadre de mes études, j'examine l'expérience des étudiants qui se sont récemment inscrits dans les programmes coopératifs. Afin de recueillir de l'information à ce sujet, je demanderai aux étudiants de prendre des photos et de parler de ces photos dans le cadre d'entrevues en personne. De mon côté, je prendrai des photos de mes propres expériences et je photographierai chaque étudiant participant à l'étude. La participation à l'étude est facultative.

Si vous acceptez de participer, votre contribution pourrait favoriser une meilleure compréhension de l'expérience des étudiants coop et améliorer la qualité des programmes coop dans l'avenir. Je mène cette étude de recherche pour les besoins de ma thèse de doctorat et je ne suis pas mandatée par le bureau du Régime d'enseignement coopératif pour le faire. Votre choix de participer ou non à cette étude n'aura aucune incidence sur la qualité des services que vous recevez au bureau du Régime d'enseignement coopératif. Un certificat-cadeau de Chapters vous sera remis après chaque rencontre individuelle.

Cette étude vous intéresse? Si oui, veuillez me répondre d'ici le mercredi, 13 janvier et indiquer si vous êtes disponible pour assister à la séance du groupe A [le jeudi, 14 janvier, 13 : 00h à 14 : 30h] ou à la séance du groupe B [le vendredi, 15 janvier, 10 : 00h à 11 : 30h]. Ces séances auront lieu à la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa, au pavillon Lamoureux situé au 145, rue Jean-Jacques Lussier (groupe A pièce 403) (groupe B pièce 105). Des rafraîchissements seront servis.

Au cours de ces séances, j'expliquerai le projet de recherche en détail et je répondrai à vos questions.

Veuillez noter que le projet se déroulera entièrement en anglais. Pour ceux qui sont dans l'impossibilité de participer à une des deux sessions et que le projet les intéressent, il y a la possibilité d'ajouter de nouvelle session.

Je vous remercie à l'avance de votre collaboration et je vous prie d'agréer mes salutations distinguées.

Jeela Jones, M.Ed., aspirante au doctorat

http://www.coop.uottawa.ca/fr/fr-coop-students/fr-staff-bio.asp?staff_id=1

Appendix D: Student group meeting protocol

Title: Seeing cooperative education

Participant name:

Participant chosen pseudonym:

Participant's program of study:

1. Describe the project.
2. Explain informed consent and ensure two informed consent forms are signed. The participant retains one copy and the researcher retains one copy.
3. Explain each step of the research project schedule (requirements, dates, locations).
4. Have the participant select a pseudonym of their own choosing.
5. Step through the photography protocol.
6. Explain the photography guidelines and the subject consent form.
7. Provide one disposable camera*
8. Discuss next steps and answer any questions or concerns the participant may have.

Note: If the participant has access to a digital camera of his or her own then it may be used in place of the disposable camera if the participant prefers. The digital images must be submitted via email in jpeg.

Appendix E: Student consent form

Title of the study: Seeing cooperative education

Principle investigator: Jeela Jones, PhD Candidate

Research supervisor: Dr. Ruth Kane

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Contact details for questions or problems:

Jeela Jones

Invitation to Participate: You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a new cooperative education (co-op) student.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to better understand the experiences of students that have enrolled in co-op at the University of Ottawa. I am interested in what students experience before their first co-op work term.

I am a doctoral student with the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. I am also an employee of the University of Ottawa, Cooperative Education Programs.

Participation: Your participation will consist essentially of sharing your experiences as a new student in the co-op programs. The research project will run the entire length of the period prior to your first work term – from approximately January 2010 until May 2010. Please see the attached schedule.

Participation in the research study will include attending one 45-minute information meeting and then two 90-minute interviews. Additionally, your participation will consist of taking between 10 to 50 pictures about your experience with co-op and providing the pictures to the researcher at two points during the project. During the interviews you will be asked open-ended questions about the photographs you took of your co-op experiences. In the first interview I will take a picture of you and ask you to discuss the photograph in the second interview. In the second interview you will also be asked open-ended questions about the photographs I took of the co-op experience.

The interviews will be audio taped using a digital Sony recorder. You will be photographed during the interview using a digital SLR camera. The transcription of the interviews as well as the final report with the selected photographs will be emailed to you for your review and if necessary, for you to add further detail or make corrections.

Each meeting and interview, as well as the photograph I will take of you, will occur at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. The photographs that you take of your experience can be at the co-op office and other locations determined by you. A release form must accompany any pictures taken where people are recognizable (release forms are supplied by the researcher).

Risks: There are no known risks or discomforts for participating in this study. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions and there are no right or wrong photographs of your

experience. Your participation in this study will entail that you volunteer personal information, be photographed, and take photographs of your experience. These activities may cause you to feel emotional discomfort. You may be inconvenienced by the time commitment.

However, while it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research, the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

Benefits: Your participation in this study will help improve co-op for future students.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The information you will share will remain strictly confidential. The contents will be used only for research and your confidentiality will be protected. No meetings will take place at the co-op office. The information provided by you during interviews will be protected with a pseudonym and the photograph I will take of you will not be identifiable. The photographs you take must also protect the identity of others. A signed release form must accompany any photograph with recognizable subjects. Pictures may appear in publications, galleries, or other mediums for image presentation.

Conservation of data: The data collected including hard and electronic copies of interview recordings, transcripts, notes, and photographs will be kept in a secure manner. All information will be stored in a locked cabinet over the course of the study and will continue to be for five years after publication.

Compensation: As compensation for participation you will receive two \$25 gift cards from Chapters Bookstore upon completion of each interview. You will receive prints of each of the photographs you take as well as of the photograph I will take of you.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. There is no cost to participating in this study.

I am an employee of the Cooperative Education Programs but another staff person will manage your student file and I will not be immediately responsible for your progress. If you choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

This study is confidential. That means that no one other than members of the research team, will know that the information you give comes from you. We will keep private all research records that identify you.

Questions: Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Jeela Jones at [number] or her supervisor, Dr. Ruth Kane at [number].

If you have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5 Tel.: (613) 562-5841 Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

Acceptance: I, _____ agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Jeela Jones of the Faculty of Education which research is under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Kane.

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature:

Date:

Witness signature (*needed in the case where a participant is blind, etc.*):

Date:

Formulaire de consentement de l'étudiant

Titre de l'étude : *Seeing cooperative education* (perception de l'enseignement coopératif)

Chercheuse principale : Jeela Jones, aspirante au doctorat

Superviseure de recherche : M^{me} Ruth Kane

Université d'Ottawa, Faculté d'éducation

Pour toute question ou tout problème, s'adresser à :

Jeela Jones

Invitation à participer : Vous êtes invité(e) à participer à l'étude citée précédemment parce que vous êtes un(e) étudiant(e) nouvellement inscrit(e) à un programme coopératif (COOP).

But de l'étude : L'étude vise à mieux comprendre l'expérience des étudiants qui se sont inscrits à un programme coopératif de l'Université d'Ottawa. Je m'intéresse à l'expérience que vivent les étudiants avant leur premier stage de travail coopératif.

Je suis une étudiante au doctorat à la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa. Je suis également une employée au service des Programmes d'enseignement coopératif de l'Université d'Ottawa. Je mène cette étude de recherche pour les besoins de ma thèse de doctorat et je ne suis pas mandatée par le bureau des Programmes d'enseignement coopératif pour le faire.

Participation : Votre participation consistera essentiellement à partager votre expérience à titre d'étudiant d'un programme coopératif. Le projet de recherche s'étalera sur toute la période

précédant votre premier stage de travail, soit de janvier à mai 2010 approximativement (veuillez consulter le calendrier ci-joint).

Pendant votre participation à la présente étude de recherche, vous assisterez à une réunion d'information de 45 minutes et participerez à deux entrevues de 90 minutes. En outre, vous prendrez 10 à 50 photographies se rapportant à votre expérience dans le programme COOP, que vous remettrez à la chercheuse à deux étapes du projet. Au cours des entrevues, on vous posera des questions ouvertes sur les photos que vous aurez prises et qui se rapportent à votre expérience COOP. Durant la première entrevue, je prendrai une photo de vous et, lors de la deuxième entrevue, je vous demanderai de commenter cette photo et de répondre à des questions ouvertes sur les photos que j'aurai moi-même prises concernant l'expérience du programme coopératif.

Les entrevues seront enregistrées sur une bande sonore à l'aide d'un enregistreur numérique Sony. Durant l'entrevue, vous serez photographié(e) à l'aide d'un appareil photo Reflex mono-objectif numérique. La transcription des entrevues ainsi que le rapport final accompagné des photos sélectionnées vous seront envoyés par courriel pour examen; le cas échéant, vous pourrez ajouter d'autres renseignements ou faire des corrections.

Les réunions et entrevues auront lieu à la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa et je prendrai une photo de vous à cet endroit également. Vos photos se rapportant à votre expérience peuvent être conservées au bureau des programmes coopératifs et à d'autres endroits de votre

choix. Une lettre d'autorisation (fournie par le chercheur) doit accompagner les photos des personnes reconnaissables.

Risques : Il n'y a aucun risque connu ni désagrément lié à la participation à la présente étude. Il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises réponses aux questions de l'entrevue comme il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises photos de votre expérience. Dans le cadre de votre participation à la présente étude, vous serez appelé(e) à donner des renseignements personnels, à être photographié(e) et à prendre des photos de votre expérience. Ces activités risquent de vous causer un certain inconfort émotionnel et il se peut également que vous soyez incommodé(e) par le temps à consacrer à l'étude.

Toutefois, bien qu'il soit impossible de définir tous les risques potentiels associés à la recherche, les chercheurs ont adopté des mesures de protection raisonnables pour atténuer les risques connus et les risques potentiels.

Bienfaits : Votre participation à la présente étude contribuera à améliorer les programmes d'enseignement coopératif pour les futurs étudiants.

Confidentialité et anonymat : Les renseignements que vous partagerez resteront strictement confidentiels. Le contenu sera utilisé aux fins de la recherche uniquement, et votre confidentialité sera protégée. Aucune réunion n'aura lieu au bureau des Programmes d'enseignement coopératifs. Les renseignements que vous fournirez durant les entrevues seront protégés par un pseudonyme et la photo que j'aurai prise de vous ne pourra être identifiée. L'identité des

personnes apparaissant sur les photos que vous prendrez doit aussi protégée. Un formulaire d'autorisation dûment signé doit accompagner les photos de toutes personnes reconnaissables. Les photos pourraient figurer dans des publications, des galeries ou d'autres supports de présentation d'images.

Conservation des données : Les données recueillies, notamment les copies des enregistrements, des transcriptions, des notes et des photographies (sur papier ou support électronique) seront conservées de façon sécuritaire. Tous les renseignements seront conservés dans un classeur verrouillé tout au long de l'étude et pendant les dix années suivant la publication de celle-ci.

Compensation : En guise de compensation pour votre participation, on vous remettra les appareils photo jetables que vous aurez utilisés ainsi que des épreuves des photos que vous aurez prises et des photos que j'aurai prises de vous. Après chaque entrevue, on vous remettra un bon-cadeau de 25 \$ échangeables dans les librairies Chapters (soit 50 \$ au total).

Participation volontaire : Votre participation à la recherche est volontaire et vous êtes libre de vous retirer en tout temps et/ou de refuser de répondre à certaines questions sans subir de conséquences négatives. Il n'y a pas de frais de participation à la recherche.

Étant une employée au service des Programmes d'enseignement coopératifs, je ne gèrerai pas directement votre dossier d'étudiant et je ne serai pas directement responsable de vos progrès. Votre choix de participer ou non à cette étude n'aura aucune incidence sur la qualité des services

que vous recevez au bureau des Programmes d'enseignement coopératif. Si vous choisissez de vous retirer de l'étude, les données recueillies jusqu'au moment de votre retrait seront détruites.

La présente étude est confidentielle. En d'autres mots, personne ne saura que les renseignements que vous avez fournis proviennent de vous, à l'exception des membres de l'équipe de recherche. Nous garderons confidentiels tous les documents de la recherche susceptibles de révéler votre identité.

Questions : Avant d'accepter de participer à l'étude, n'hésitez pas à poser toutes les questions qui vous viennent à l'esprit maintenant. Si vous avez d'autres questions plus tard, vous pourrez communiquer avec la chercheuse Jeela Jones, par téléphone, au, ou avec sa superviseuse, M^{me} Ruth Kane, au.

Pour tout renseignement sur les aspects éthiques de cette recherche, vous pouvez vous adresser au responsable de l'éthique en recherche, à l'adresse suivante :

Université d'Ottawa, pavillon Tabaret

550, rue Cumberland, salle 159

Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5

Tél.: 613-562-5841

Courriel : ethics@uottawa.ca

Consentement : Je, _____, accepte de participer à la recherche décrite précédemment, qui sera menée par Jeela Jones de la Faculté d'éducation, sous la supervision de M^{me} Ruth Kane.

Le formulaire de consentement comprend deux copies, dont une que je dois conserver.

Signature du participant :

Date :

Signature de la chercheuse :

Date :

Appendix F: Student participant schedule

Event	Details	Timeframe	Time allotment	Location
Attend group session A or B	The researcher will explain the research project and informed consent The participant will receive a disposable camera*, the photography protocol, photography guidelines, and release forms	Early Jan 2010	30 to 45 minutes	Lamoureux Hall 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street Group A: Room 403 Group B: Room 105
Take pictures	The participant will take between five and 25 pictures of their coop experience	Jan – Feb 2010	Determined by participant	Determined by participant
Submit pictures	The participant will either drop off the disposable camera for developing or email jpeg images to the researcher and any associated release forms The participant will receive a new disposable camera The researcher will respond to any questions or concerns about the project and next steps	Jan – Feb 2010	15 to 30 minutes	If in person: Lamoureux Hall 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street Room: TBD Email:
Attend first interview	The researcher will ask questions about the participant's co-op experiences and how the experiences are expressed in their photos The researcher will take a photograph of the participant The participant will receive a \$25 gift card for Chapters Bookstore	Jan – Feb 2010	90 minutes	Lamoureux Hall 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street Room: 303
Take pictures	The participant will take an additional five to 25 pictures of	Jan – Apr 2010	Determined by	Determined by participant

	their coop experience		participant	
Submit pictures	The participant will either drop off the disposable camera for developing or email jpeg images to the researcher and any associated release forms The researcher will respond to any questions or concerns about the project and next steps	Early April 2010	15 to 30 minutes	If in person: Lamoureux Hall 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street Room: TBD Email:
Attend second interview	The researcher will ask questions about the participant's co-op experiences and how the experiences are expressed in their photos The researcher will ask the participant to reflect on the pictures the researcher has taken and the picture the researcher took of the participant in the first interview The researcher will discuss next steps The researcher will provide the transcribed interview to the participant for review The participant will receive a \$25 gift card for Chapters Bookstore	Late April - Early May 2010	90 minutes	Lamoureux Hall 145 Jean-Jacques Lussier Street Room: 303
Review transcriptions	The researcher will send the transcribed interview to the participant for review	Summer Fall 2010		Sent via email

Appendix G: Student and researcher photography protocol

Title of the study: Seeing cooperative education

Principle investigator: Jeela Jones, PhD Candidate

Research supervisor: Dr. Ruth Kane

University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education

Contact details for questions or problems: Jeela Jones

Taking Your Pictures

The purpose of this research project is to understand the experiences of co-op students prior to their first work term. I am interested in images of what's typical, important, valued, and ill fitting or upsetting to co-op students.

Some topics that you might consider include objects, people, places, events, and personal aspects of your experience. Please consider the following:

Topic 1: Objects and people

Photograph objects or people that are typical, important, valued, or ill fitting/upsetting with regards to your co-op experience.

Topic 2: Places, ceremonies, and events

Photograph places, ceremonies, or events that are typical, important, valued, or ill fitting/upsetting with regards to your co-op experience.

Topic 3: Personal

Photograph aspects of yourself, friends, or family that are typical, important, valued, or ill fitting/upsetting with regards to your co-op experience.

Discussing Your Pictures

During your interviews I will be asking you to talk to me about the pictures you took. For example, I may ask you to describe what the eye sees in your pictures, what the unseen stories are behind your pictures, and what you might title or caption your pictures.

Have fun!

Appendix H: Student and researcher photography guidelines

Stay Safe

- Don't take any risks.
- Don't go anywhere you wouldn't usually go, or do anything you wouldn't usually do.
- Take a friend.
- Be aware of what's around you.

Be Respectful

- Always ask first, even if this means missing the perfect shot.
- You must have permission before taking pictures of people.
- Remember, connect with others and share ideas. Don't upset people. This just gives the whole project a bad name.

Large Crowds, Landscape or Scenery

- You do not need a Release Form if people are too small to be recognizable.
- It is still a good idea to ask permission before taking a picture of private property (someone's house or yard, for example).

For Pictures with People

- Have your subjects sign a Release Form before taking any pictures.
- Be especially careful when taking pictures of children. Talk to the parents first, and have a parent sign a Release Form.

- Do not take pictures of people who are “in private”, such as through a window into their home.
- Ask yourself, “Would I mind if someone took a picture of me in this situation?”
- Remember to offer the person a copy of the picture.

Photography guidelines modified from:

Dahan, R., Dick, R., Moll, S., Salwach, E., Sherman, D., Vengris, J., et al. (2007). *Photovoice Hamilton: Manual and Resource Kit*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Community Foundation.

Appendix I: Release form

You are invited to have your picture taken by one of the photographers involved with “Seeing Cooperative Education”. “Seeing Cooperative Education” is a research project with the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education.

Pictures taken for this research project will be shown to others in a variety of forms including a final research report and possibly journal publications, galleries, and other mediums for image display. Others viewing the pictures may recognize you, but there are no names or contact information. Photographs will not be used to make money.

Please sign this form if you agree to have your photograph taken by a participant of “Seeing Cooperative Education”.

If you would like a copy of the photograph taken of you, please write down your address:

Name of Photographer

Subject Name

Signature

Mailing Address

If you have any questions about the study you may contact the investigator, Jeela Jones at, or her supervisor, Dr. Ruth Kane, at.

Release form modified from:

Dahan, R., Dick, R., Moll, S., Salwach, E., Sherman, D., Vengris, J., et al. (2007). *Photovoice Hamilton: Manual and Resource Kit*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Community Foundation.

Lettre d'autorisation

Vous êtes invité à vous faire photographier par l'un des photographes participant au projet « Seeing Cooperative Education » (perception de l'enseignement coopératif). Il s'agit d'un projet de recherche de la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa.

Les photos prises dans le cadre de ce projet de recherche seront montrées à d'autres personnes sous diverses formes, notamment dans un rapport de recherche final et peut-être dans des revues scientifiques, des galeries et d'autres supports servant à afficher des images. Des personnes pourraient vous reconnaître, mais aucun nom n'apparaîtra ni renseignements personnels. Les photographies ne seront pas utilisées à des fins lucratives.

Les photographies seront conservées dans un endroit sûr. Tous les renseignements les accompagnants seront gardés dans un classeur verrouillé pendant la durée de l'étude et pendant les dix années suivant la publication.

Veuillez signer le présent formulaire si vous consentez à ce qu'un participant au projet « Seeing Cooperative Education » prenne une photo de vous.

Si vous désirez recevoir une copie de votre photo, veuillez indiquer votre adresse ci-dessous :

Nom du photographe

Nom du sujet

Signature

Adresse postale

Si vous avez des questions au sujet de l'étude, vous pouvez communiquer avec

la chercheuse, Jeela Jones,

ou sa superviseure, M^{me} Ruth Kane, au.

Adaptation du formulaire d'autorisation tiré de la source suivante :

Dahan, R., R. Dick, S. Moll, E. Salwach, D. Sherman, J. Vengris et al. *Photovoice Hamilton:*

Manual and Resource Kit, Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Community Foundation, (2007).

Appendix J: Student reminder email I

Dear [*Student name*],

Thank you for participating in the study “Seeing Cooperative Education”.

As you know, the purpose of this research project is to understand the experiences you have prior to your first co-op work term – what’s typical, important, valued, or ill-fitting/upsetting to you.

Consider photographing objects, people, places, events, and aspects of your personal life with regards to cooperative education. “Use your emotions as a cue” (Dahan, et al., 2007, p. 37).

If you run out of film please let me know and I will gladly supply you with another disposable camera.

Remember, have fun with the project!

Sincerely,

Jeela Jones, M.Ed, PhD Candidate

Dahan, R., Dick, R., Moll, S., Salwach, E., Sherman, D., Vengris, J., et al. (2007). *Photovoice Hamilton: Manual and Resource Kit*. Hamilton, Ontario: Hamilton Community Foundation.

Appendix K: Student reminder email II

Dear [*Student name*],

Thank you for participating in the study “Seeing Cooperative Education”.

In the next few weeks I will be gathering the disposable cameras and digital photographic images in order that I may have the images developed, saved, and ready for our one-on-one interview.

Please reply to this message and let me know if you are able to drop off your disposable camera to me for processing or submit your jpeg digital images via email on [*date and time*]. If this date and time does not work for your schedule please feel free to suggest something more appropriate for you.

Meanwhile keep taking pictures of your co-op experience and having fun!

Sincerely,

Jeela Jones, M.Ed, PhD Candidate

Appendix L: Student interview protocol I

Title of the study: Seeing cooperative education

Participant name:

Participant chosen pseudonym:

Participant's program of study:

(Briefly review the project. Briefly review the informed consent form.)

Part 1: Interview

Main question: Tell me about the pictures you took.

1. Tell me about what is seen in your pictures? Describe what the eye sees.
2. Tell me about what is happening in your pictures? Describe the unseen story behind the images.
3. Could you give your pictures titles or captions?

Additional probing questions:

1. Tell me about the images that are significant to your cooperative education experiences?
2. What do these images say about you?
3. What do these images say about cooperative education?
4. Are there images you didn't get but wish you had? Please explain.
5. Tell me about the photographs you might take now that we have had this discussion?

Part 2: Photograph of the participant.

1. Tell me about what you're wearing. Describe what the eye sees.
2. Tell me about your look? Describe the unseen story behind your style.

3. If you could have the perfect outfit for cooperative education what would it be and why?

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and images).

Appendix M: Student interview protocol II

Title of the study: Seeing cooperative education

Participant name:

Participant chosen pseudonym:

Participant's program of study:

(Briefly review the project. Briefly review the informed consent form.)

Part 1

Main question: Tell me about the pictures you took.

1. Tell me about what is seen in your pictures? Describe what the eye sees.
2. Tell me about what is happening in your pictures? Describe the unseen story behind the images.
3. Could you give your pictures titles or captions?

Additional probing questions:

1. Tell me about the images that are significant to your cooperative education experiences?
2. What do these images say about you?
3. What do these images say about cooperative education?
4. Are there images you didn't get but wish you had? Please explain.
5. Tell me about the photographs you might take now that we have had this discussion?
6. Are these images connected in any ways with your first set of pictures?

Part 2: Photograph of the participant.

What are your thoughts when you see the picture I took of you?

Part 3: Photographs taken by the researcher.

What are your thoughts when looking at my images of co-op?

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and images).

Appendix N: Themes in the Reader's Theatre Script

	Theme	Reader's Theatre Acts
1	Journey	Act 2: But I Remember the Sun Act 8: Monday to Friday Act 9: Ministers Act 18: Pathway Act 19: Generations Act 20: Future
2	Circus	Act 11: Preparation (for the chaos) Act 15: Getting started (with or without help from others) Act 16: Relief (from the ride) Act 17: Hallway of My Life
3	Metamorphosing	Act 5: Sunny Mornings Act 12: Night before...Daunting Act 14: Wheat Thins, Tea, and Teddy Bears
4	Anglers at Sea	Act 3: Endless possibilities Act 13: I'm a Lit Student You Do the Math? Act 6: Panic!
5	Warriors	Act 7: What to Wear? Act 10: Prepare Yourself (for competition) Act 4: Life

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