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Who is Represented in the Teaching Commons?: SoTL Through the Lenses of the Arts and Humanities

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Abstract

As the community of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) scholars has flourished across Canada and around the world, there has been a growing sense among humanists that SoTL work has been dominated by the epistemologies, philosophies, and research methods of the social sciences. This is a view that has been supported by SoTL journal editors and resources dedicated to introducing faculty to SoTL. To quote Nancy Chick (2012) in a recent book on the current state of SoTL in the disciplines, "while many well-known SoTL leaders come from humanities backgrounds …, the on-the-ground work largely marginalizes the practices of their disciplines" (p. 15). The question then follows: "How does the apparent under-representation of (arts and) humanities-based disciplines affect expectations for SoTL, from norms for research design and methodology to the genre and style of its products?" (McKinney & Chick, 2010, p. 10). This paper, which frames the special issue looking at "SoTL through the lenses of the Arts and Humanities," explores the difficulties with, and opportunities provided by, creating an inclusive teaching commons where the scholarly traditions of the arts and humanities are recognized for the value they bring to the SoTL research imaginary.

Alors que la communauté des universitaires qui oeuvrent dans le domaine de l'avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage (ACEA) s'est épanouie à travers le Canada et dans le monde, on constate l'éclosion d'un sentiment, parmi les humanistes, que le travail de l'ACEA a été dominé par les épistémologies, les philosophies et les méthodes de recherche des sciences sociales. C'est une opinion qui a été appuyée par les rédacteurs de revues sur l'ACEA et par les ressources consacrées à l'introduction des enseignants à l'ACEA. Pour citer Nancy Chick (2012) dans un livre récemment publié sur l'état actuel de l'ACEA dans diverses disciplines, « alors que de nombreux leaders éminents en matière d'ACEA proviennent des sciences humaines …, le travail sur le terrain marginalise grandement les pratiques de leurs disciplines » (p. 15). Ce qui nous mène à la question suivante : « Comment l'apparente sous-représentation des disciplines du domaine des (arts et des) sciences humaines affecte-t-elle les attentes pour l'ACEA, allant des normes de recherche et de méthodologie au genre et au style de ses produits? » (McKinney & Chick, 2010, p. 10). Cet article, qui encadre le numéro spécial consacré à « L'ACEA à travers le prisme des arts et des sciences humaines », explore les difficultés qui existent à créer une commune d'enseignement inclusive ainsi que les opportunités créées par cette commune, où les traditions de recherche en arts et en sciences humaines sont reconnues pour la valeur qu'elles apportent à l'imaginaire de recherche de l'ACEA.

Keywords
scholarship of teaching and learning; Arts and Humanities

Athena is an experienced scholar in literary studies. After completing a four-year honour's degree, six years of graduate school, two years as a post-doctoral fellow, and one year as a visiting scholar, she earned a tenure-track position at a respectable university, where she thrived. Her publication record and teaching scores were so impressive that she sailed through the tenure and promotion process with ease and is now an Associate Professor.

Post-tenure, Athena attended a symposium on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), curious about this new-to-her field of study. During the symposium, she was inspired to consider dipping her toes into the waters of SoTL. The speakers were emphatic about SoTL's inclusive, multi-disciplinary nature, about the importance of faculty members from all disciplines contributing to this growing body of literature – and Athena, justifiably, believed she had a lot to contribute.

Seven years later, Athena has given up. Her experience in SoTL has left her disillusioned. It turned out that the world of SoTL did not want a literary scholar. Most of her articles were rejected, reviewers commented that her work did not seem to have a methodology, was formatted incorrectly, was atheoretical, and lacked rigour. One of her articles was eventually accepted in a SoTL journal – but reclassified as an essay and buried in the back of the issue.

At one point, still hoping to contribute, she led a large multi-institutional project that involved student surveys and "well-validated" research instruments that "measured" student attitudes toward learning. The results were published, but the experience left her feeling inauthentic. This was the closest she had come to being accepted in SoTL, but that acceptance had come at the price of abandoning the scholarly identity she had spent years cultivating – the education, experiences, the nuance and complexity of her understanding. The study made her feel like a fraud and an amateur. It was poor scholarship because she'd had to transform herself from an expert humanist to an amateur social scientist. She knew it. And she expected those who read the study could see it as well.

Athena's story is not unique. While fictional, it represents the experiences of many scholars from the arts and humanities who have found themselves unwelcome in the SoTL community.

The Current State of the Teaching Commons

"Advocates of a scholarship of teaching and learning argue that it is time to develop a new vision of higher education in which some of the expert practitioners in each field actively contribute to the generation and dissemination of pedagogical knowledge" (Pace, 2004, p. 1175). David Pace wrote that call to action, urging historians to contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning, 14 years after the publication of Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Yet, historians and other humanists have often found themselves marginalized within the SoTL community – hardly what Boyer and his colleagues had in mind.

The growth of SoTL has involved a vision, perhaps utopian, of a growing "teaching commons," a marketplace of ideas in which representatives from all disciplines congregate to better understand teaching and learning (Huber & Hutchings, 2005). The possibility of such a commons is predicated on "theoretical and methodological pluralism" and inclusivity, so that the various strands and schools, perspectives and paradigms, of academia may feel welcomed as both benefactors and beneficiaries (Hutchings & Huber, 2008, p. 233). Similarly, Huber and Morreale (2002) speak of SoTL as a "trading zone" among disciplines,

> where scholars are busy simplifying, translating, telling, and persuading 'foreigners' to hear their stories and try their wares. In this zone, one finds scholars of teaching and learning seeking advice, collaborations, references, methods, and colleagues to fill in whatever their own disciplinary communities cannot or will not provide. Their goals are to do better by their students, and they are willing (within limits) to enter the trading zone and buy, beg, borrow or steal the tools they need to do the job. (p. 19)

Humanists, among others, have been drawn into SoTL by its inclusive promise.

Yet, the interdisciplinary dreams of SoTL's earliest advocates persist for many in the arts and humanities as dreams only; the reality of SoTL for most of its history has been dominated by the methodologies, assumptions, formats, and concerns of the social sciences. Certainly, some have argued that SoTL's impact would depend on its integration within and across disciplines (McKinney, 2012), and others have focused on disciplinary approaches to SoTL and the importance of taking disciplinary context into account (Kreber, 2009; Riordan & Roth, 2005).

These claims resonate and give hope. So far, it has been a false hope for many. The humanities have been, and continue to be, largely omitted from the conversation. As a result of social science dominance in SoTL, many humanist faculty members and educational developers find that they are either excluded from participating or forced to adopt a different identity – with foreign assumptions, foreign standards, foreign methodologies – to be considered "legitimate" SoTL scholars. They have found it difficult, in the language of Mills (1959), to contribute to the broader research imaginary. Recent work by Wuetherick, Yu, and Greer (submitted) shows a significant difference in the visibility of SoTL from different disciplinary contexts, with the humanities being among those disciplines particularly under-represented. Among other impacts, this makes humanists less likely to participate in SoTL at what has been described as the macro (institutional) and mega (national/international) levels (Williams et al., 2013), or at the higher tiers of SoTL, as articulated by Ashwin and Trigwell (2004).

Although the exclusion of humanities-based SoTL has been recognized by some journal editors and authors of resources designed to introduce faculty to SoTL (Chick, 2012; Jarvis & Creasey, 2009; McKinney & Chick, 2010), a glance through the most recent issues of leading SoTL journals will reveal that the humanities continue to be marginalized. Social science standards are used to evaluate journal submissions. Social science norms (such as APA formatting and referencing) are used to impose what humanities scholars might consider an alien structure on any humanities article that happens to pass review. Even for this special issue, which was supported actively by the Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CJSoTL) Editorial Board, there was a struggle to reconcile the preferred writing style of our authors (particularly through the use of substantive footnotes) and the need to have a cohesive referencing style for the journal, which follows social science practices. Reviewers and journal editors, who are often from the social sciences, regularly offer criticisms that have little to do with the value of the submission, but much to do with its puzzling nonconformity to the norms they take for granted. Although referees were chosen very carefully and deliberately for this special issue, we heard back from a few reviewers that they really struggled to review the papers assigned because they "were not like any SoTL I have seen before."[1] When humanities-based SoTL is published at all in many journals, it is often relegated to the back in an "essay" section or an "opinion" piece –which means, for some humanities scholars, the publications may not

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[1] This is paraphrased from an email conversation between a reviewer and one of the guest editors for this special issue.

count toward their tenure and promotion. It also communicates a negative message about their value as scholars.

The SoTL Paradigm

The scholarship of teaching and learning behaves much like any research paradigm, in Thomas Kuhn's sense of the word, with key figures, foundational assumptions, gate-keeping principles, and tacit norms for distinguishing and ranking the worth of contributions. A paradigm, here, is a sphere of scholarship that rests on achievements that are "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of [scholarly] activity" and "sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve" (Kuhn, 1962/1996, p. 10). Upon these achievements grow (obviously) paradigmatic principles, assumptions, theories, methodologies, and other elements that define a research tradition coherently at its core, though boundaries may be contested and minor changes may be made at the fringes. This set of paradigmatic elements forms the basis for further scholarship, focusing investigations on certain phenomena to the exclusion of others, narrowing inquiry so that only the sorts of facts or methodologies that the paradigm has legitimized are considered salient – and thus noticed. And it provides the standards and criteria by which we judge scholarship within the field.

Although there may be legitimate arguments about precisely which set of achievements form the basis for SoTL, most would include *Scholarship Reconsidered* (Boyer, 1990), which first began to draw disciplinary scholars into scholarly inquiry about teaching and learning in higher education. That report set out an inclusive vision, but most of the early work that was inspired by Boyer and later influential figures used the existing general social science paradigm, which already dominated educational research. Over time, this social science paradigm contributed a wealth of elements that became part of SoTL's identity, and as that identity matured, SoTL's allegiance to, and reliance upon, the paradigm grew.

As we initiate new scholars into SoTL, we do so using the paradigmatic elements that define the field, mentioned above, so new initiates come to accept those elements as "given," as fundamental truths or unquestioned operating assumptions. Those who fail to become initiated in this way find themselves unaccepted. Both the desire to be accepted and the anxiety that typically accompanies initial forays into a new field of scholarship serve to persuade initiates to accept the "ground rules" of the new field. Social connections – friends and colleagues who may have "recruited" the initiate – enhance those effects, adding in addition the persuasive power of trust. Initiates learn to model their work after the key achievements and landmark studies in the new field, and to model their identities after the key figures. We are all familiar with these phenomena from our initiations into our original academic disciplines, and this is in part how we initiate students into our disciplines when we teach, so it should not be a shock to see it happening in SoTL as well.

Thus has SoTL developed its own form of "normal scholarship": "research firmly based upon one or more past scholarly achievements, achievements that some particular scholarly community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice" (Kuhn, 1962/1996, p.10)[2]. The achievements are crucial to the paradigm's rhetorical power, because they demonstrate its problem-solving potential. "Paradigms gain their status because they are

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[2] We have replaced each instance of "science" and "scientific" in Kuhn's quotations with "scholarship" and "scholarly".

more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has recognized as acute" (Kuhn, 1962/1996, p. 23). The perception of initial success creates a promise that greater success is possible, a promise that animates scholars drawn to the paradigm, who extend its reach "by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself" (Kuhn, 1962/1996, p. 24) – rather than creating new theories and paradigms or identifying new phenomena. This has both positive and negative consequences, for while it blinds scholars within the paradigm to anything that exists outside of it, it also enables them to focus on solving difficult, detailed problems within the paradigm, problems that could not be solved without taking its foundational assumptions for granted. Results perceived as successes early in SoTL's development, using the social science paradigm, focused attention productively, contributing to SoTL's growth.

Kuhn claims that the development of a paradigm is the mark of a mature science, or form of scholarship. It is also, often, the transformative event that changes a field of study into a discipline – "the formation of specialized journals, the foundation of specialists' societies, and the claim for a special place in the curriculum have usually been associated with a group's first reception of a single paradigm" (Kuhn, 1962/1996, p. 19). We would argue that, on this basis, SoTL has become a mature form of scholarship – it has become a discipline of its own, and has developed its own, focused, sub-paradigm within the larger social science paradigm. As of 2015, SoTL has multiple national and international journals; countless regional, national, and international conferences; myriad societies and associations of varying prestige, many with memberships extended all over the world; courses taught on many campuses; and well-funded research institutes. It has even been making inroads in its bid for recognition in tenure and promotion decisions at universities and colleges.

Disciplines can be understood as being "fluid regions, with intermingling and conflicting currents," and, "insofar as they are taken up in the teaching situation, are always-in-the-making," even as they have a historical-social story in how they develop a common and "powerful way of knowing" (Barnett, 2009, pp. xv-xvi). Indeed,

> Disciplines have contrasting substance and syntax . . . ways of organizing themselves and of defining the rules for making arguments and claims that others will warrant. They have different ways of talking about themselves and about the problems, topics, and issues that constitute their subject matters. (Shulman, 2002, pp. vi-vii).

Perhaps without realizing it, Shulman was writing about SoTL as a discipline. If, with Schwab (1964), we distinguish between disciplines based on their substantive (concepts and ideas) and syntactic (methods of investigation and verification) structures, SoTL is also, clearly a *social science* discipline. It relies upon methods of inquiry from the social sciences, presents arguments and results using social science conventions, uses social science norms to judge scholarship, includes primarily those who conform to social science norms in its conversations, recruits editors and reviewers primarily from the social sciences, makes contributions that would not be out of place in either content or presentation in any social science setting, draws primarily from social science literature, and relies primarily on the concepts, ideas, assumptions, theories, principles, and conceptual frameworks of the social sciences. Most significantly, it does not challenge the social science paradigm in which it operates – but rather, takes it as a given. Thus, gradually, over the past 25 years, SoTL not only developed within a social science paradigm, it became a social science discipline. As Poole (2012) argues, "a discipline's beliefs about the

purpose of research and the nature of knowledge help define that discipline and the people who align with it" (p. 147). SoTL has been defined in practice, in a way that prevents many humanists from aligning with it, no matter how much they wish to join.

When we think of SoTL as a discipline within a social science research paradigm, it is easy to see how the social science norms for research, implicitly and explicitly accepted as the standard for SoTL, clearly exclude the humanities. Perhaps the most telling indication is that SoTL's marginalization of humanists is unnoticed by those who are successful within this discipline. When we discuss the problem of the humanities' exclusion from SoTL with colleagues, or present on it at conferences, we are often met with puzzlement. Our SoTL colleagues struggle to understand the problem we perceive. Many SoTL scholars cannot envision what humanities-based SoTL would look like, what its methodologies would be, what sorts of theoretical frameworks it would use. This is to be expected when people embedded in a given paradigm are confronted with another: paradigms tend to obscure perception past their boundaries.

We cannot emphasize enough that we locate the problem not in individual scholars, but in the limitations of the current SoTL paradigm. Huber (2002) writes,

> It must be said, too, that the problem is exacerbated by the dominance of social science methods in traditional education research and in evaluation studies – a fact that presents a significant challenge to new recruits from specialties where that approach is not much appreciated or used. One university participating in our campus program has actually set aside money for colleagues who do have statistical expertise to serve as consultants to those who do not. This is a wonderful idea: There is nothing wrong with this set of methods, and no doubt they open doors for those who master them. But it must be recognized that they can also be very discouraging to scholars with little interest or experience in this research tradition. (p. 36)

Notice the good will obvious in Huber's example. Those who have contributed to the marginalization and exclusion of humanists from SoTL (at times, perhaps, ourselves included) have not done so out of malice. Most are probably unaware that anyone is being excluded, and truly believe that the world of SoTL is inclusive and welcoming to all. Humanists *qua* humanists, existing outside the social science paradigm, are largely invisible until they conform to the dominant norms, so their exclusion goes unnoticed until they either mimic or transform themselves into social scientists, at which point they may no longer be excluded *because* they are no longer functioning as humanists.

The irony of such exclusion is that, as Chick (2012) recognizes, "while many well-known SoTL leaders come from humanities backgrounds ... the on-the-ground work largely marginalizes the practices of their disciplines" (p. 15). Many of the "expert practitioners" Pace (2004) alluded to are also from the humanities, yet insofar as they wish to contribute to SoTL they must wear the skin and speak the language of social scientists. Not only does SoTL encourage humanists to be inauthentic, therefore, it also presupposes that the social sciences are the best or only way to approach SoTL. Both assumptions are incorrect.

Of Whom Do We Write?

The diverse group of disciplines included in the "humanities" study elements of the human condition and experience (such as culture, languages, values and ideas) using critical, historical, analytical, comparative, or interpretive methods – often, in the process, employing metaphor, narrative, analogy, and other linguistic and imaginative devices. Philosophy, history, languages, literary studies, the fine arts, women's studies, religious studies, art history, classics, gender studies and rhetoric are most commonly regarded as humanities disciplines, some of them very ancient. Some traditions in sociology, anthropology, communication studies and cultural studies also use humanities approaches, though their most prominent traditions in contemporary academia may be more social science-based. This list is merely a sampling of the rich variety of disciplines contained within the humanities. As defined by the Ohio Humanities Council (as cited in Miamioh, 2015):

> The humanities are the stories, the ideas, and the words that help us make sense of our lives and our world. The humanities introduce us to people we have never met, places we have never visited, and ideas that may have never crossed our minds. By showing how others have lived and thought about life, the humanities help us decide what is important in our own lives and what we can do to make them better. By connecting us with other people, they point the way to answers about what is right or wrong, or what is true to our heritage and our history. The humanities help us address the challenges we face together in our families, our communities, and as a nation.

Beyond this definition, however, many of the humanities disciplines are also defined by their comparative and critical forms of analysis (Davidson & Goldberg, 2004).

As Daniel Dennett (1995) writes,

> Scientists sometimes deceive themselves into thinking that philosophical ideas are only, at best, decorations or parasitic commentaries on the hard, objective triumphs of science, and that they themselves are immune to the confusions that philosophers devote their lives to dissolving. But there is no such thing as philosophy-free science; there is only science whose philosophical baggage is taken on board without examination. (p. 21)

The humanities matter – generally, and particularly in relation to SoTL – because all disciplines, no matter how "hard" they imagine themselves, rely on reasoning, words, ideas, concepts, metaphors, analogies, assumptions, contexts, relationships, values, histories, and narratives. These are inescapable in SoTL and any other field of human inquiry, and these are the raw materials of the humanities, their objects of study. The humanities, then, are necessary for full understanding. They keep us from limiting our imaginations to what is immediately present or "obvious" to us by challenging our biases and assumptions, leading us to think in new ways, giving social and historical context to what is "given," and showing us alternatives.

As Huber and Morreale (2002) write, "the humanities . . . appear to host both the sparest and the richest conversations about teaching and learning" (p. 9). "Richest" because the approaches used in the humanities can result in a depth of understanding that the social sciences cannot, and "sparest" because of their unfortunate marginalization. The richness humanists can bring with them may add value to SoTL if we let them enter authentically. For instance,

> if historians are to inquire into the learning environments they are creating, it would be unwise to tax their abilities and patience by forcing them to learn a new language of evidence or even a new craft language specific to the scholarship of teaching and learning. (Calder, Cutler, & Kelly, 2002, p. 57).

Each humanities discipline may have something unique and useful to offer, using its own language and conventions.

If we define SoTL as "the systematic study of teaching and learning, using established or validated criteria of scholarship, to understand how teaching (beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and values) can maximize learning, and/or develop a more accurate understanding of learning, resulting in products that are publicly shared for critique and use by an appropriate community" (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 2), certain inclusive implications emerge. For one, this definition does not tie SoTL to "evidence," thus sidestepping unproductive disputes over what counts as evidence and leaving SoTL open, productively, to multiple notions of evidence as well as forms of scholarship to which empirical preoccupations are largely irrelevant. It also implies, in the same way, that there is no particular research paradigm to serve as gatekeeper of SoTL.

The definition of SoTL shared above is useful for our purposes in large part because it focuses on SoTL as scholarship rather than "research," which leaves the door open for true multi-disciplinarity. Although there are some exceptions – such as Poole's (2012) "[r]esearch is an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry or systematic investigation" (p. 148) – the term "research" has unfortunately come to mean, in mainstream academia, a narrow set of activities that connote scientistic assumptions – and the marginalization of the humanities in SoTL is symptomatic of the marginalization of humanities in the contemporary academy. By focusing on SoTL as scholarship, we include research in that narrow sense, as well as other disciplined and/or systematic forms of study.

Previous attempts to use humanities-based research traditions in SoTL have resulted in some criticism by those who seek to serve as gatekeepers for "quality," typically from the specific perspective of the social sciences (Poole, 2012). Those firmly embedded in a social science research paradigm may see humanities methods as unreliable, unrepresentative, decontextualized, and atheoretical (Blau, 2003). Indeed, Guillory (2002) claimed, from this perspective, that many humanities-based articles or presentations are both "less conceptually developed" and "lack a measure of sophistication" (pp. 164-165). It should be noted that all of the criticisms listed by Blau and Guillory are also made by humanists about the social sciences. In addition, for many humanists, certainty or generalizability is an irrelevant goal, as it has no place in their research traditions. Instead they engage in "evidentiary reasoning" based on "compelling interpretive evidence" (Blau, 2003, p. 51). Others, such as philosophers, seek generalizability based on logic and sound interpretation, rather than inferences from empirical studies based on assumptions about sample size and "measurement." When applied appropriately to answering a question about teaching and learning, these methods can be at least as rigorous and robust as those common to the social sciences.

As a field of inclusive scholarship, SoTL should be open to new ways of thinking about, interpreting and drawing meaning from data; considerations of analogous situations in order to abstract principles from concrete contexts; rigorous conceptual and linguistic analysis; questioning common assumptions; investigations into the origin of ideas and how they have been used and understood in contexts other than our own; uncovering implicit meanings and subtext; and other forms of study that are the bread-and-butter of humanities disciplines. These are

contributions humanists can make, not to supplant mainstream SoTL as it has developed over nearly a quarter-century, but to enhance and enrich it.

The inclusive conception of SoTL that we are using is consistent with Glassick, Huber and Maeloff's (1997) *Scholarship Assessed*, which articulates six criteria for good scholarship, regardless of discipline. The criteria are:

- **Clear goals**—Does the scholar state the basic purposes of his or her work clearly? Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable? Does the scholar identify important questions in the field?
- **Adequate preparation**—Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field? Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to his or her work? Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?
- **Appropriate methods**—Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals? Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected? Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?
- **Significant results**—Does the scholar achieve the goals? Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field? Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?
- **Effective presentation**—Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work? Does the scholar use appropriate forums for communicating work to its intended audiences? Does the scholar present his or her message with clarity and integrity?
- **Reflective critique**—Does the scholar critically evaluate his or her own work? Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to his or her critique? Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work?

When applied to SoTL, these criteria are relevant regardless of the research paradigm or discipline within which one operates. After all, "we're all seeking the same goal of understanding and improving student learning" (Chick, 2012, p. 30) and teaching methods are "cultural practices that only become meaningful when seen in relation to larger social contexts" (Grauerholz & Main, 2012, p. 158).

In Chick's (2012) recent exploration of humanities-based SoTL and its affiliated research methods, she focuses on close reading, a research method common in fields of literature and philosophy that is defined by Bass and Linkon (2008) as "the careful analysis of the individual text" to discover what matters in the text and what kind of secondary data to consider. Blau (2003) describes close reading by asking a set of three key questions: what does the text say?; what does it mean?; and what does it suggest? The close reading process – reading, interpreting and critiquing text – is in some respects similar to inductive/iterative process of grounded theory in the social sciences. Chick (2012) gives an interesting example of using students' written work as a text to explore a particular question about teaching and learning. Our own original disciplinary backgrounds are history and philosophy. We will follow Chick's example by suggesting research methods from those disciplines that are suitable for SoTL.

SoTL through the Lenses of History

The traditions used across economic history, social history, intellectual history, and the various other subspecialties in the discipline of history are greatly varied, but many of those approaches could be applied to questions about teaching and learning. For example, archival research, which is used in many humanities disciplines in addition to history, seeks out and extracts evidence from original archival records stored in institutional, organizational, and/or personal records. These records were generally created for immediate practical or administrative purposes, not for the benefit of future researchers, and additional contextual research (from other primary and secondary sources) may be necessary to make sense of them.

An example of archival research, applied to a SoTL project, might include looking through the outlines for all courses in a particular department's archives, which are collected annually in many institutions, in order to see how faculty have changed their assessment practices over time, and to see how the descriptions of specific assessment strategies have changed over time. This might help to illuminate different situations that helped instigate changes in assessment practices, for better or worse, particularly when secondary data like changes in student demographics or major curriculum changes passed through governance processes, are applied as a filter for the data analysis.

While this sort of study has not been conducted to our knowledge, one might anticipate that an archival project such as this could demonstrate that there might be a continued reliance over time on particular forms of assessment across the faculty members teaching in a given discipline (such as everyone relying on a final research paper or potentially over-weighting the overall assessments on final exams). It may demonstrate that as the enrolment numbers have increased over time, the assessment practices might have evolved to more efficient in terms of time (such as an increased use of multiple choice exams), but perhaps less authentic or efficient in terms of student learning (compared to, say, research papers). Alternatively, it could demonstrate that as institutional priorities ebb and flow (undergraduate research, community service learning, writing-intensive courses, and so on), assessment practices may ebb and flow with them, allowing for a conversation about appropriate processes of assessment and how they align with the overarching teaching and learning practices we might adopt.

How does this kind of scholarship meet our inclusive definition of SoTL from earlier? Archival research, as applied to the question about changing assessment practices in the discipline, would enable a systematic longitudinal study of how faculty choose to assess student learning. By using an established or validated scholarly approach (one known well in many humanities, and other, disciplines), it would allow us to use a comparative and critical lens to understand how assessment practices have changed over time. This would, in turn, allow for questions to be asked about how we best support students' abilities to demonstrate their learning through assessment activities.

Oral history is another research tradition that is common in the discipline of history, a method of gathering and interpreting historical information through recorded interviews with people and communities as participants (e.g., focusing on past events and ways of life). It is a method for researching personal perspectives and gathering detailed information on a wide range of subjects, providing one particularly useful way to uncover the kind of history that often goes unwritten. With some obvious similarities to narrative research approaches used in the social sciences, "oral history might be understood as a self-conscious, disciplined conversation between

two people about some aspect of the past considered by them to be of historical significance" and preserved for posterity (History Matters, 2015).

An example of oral history in SoTL might be an exploration of the teaching experiences and practices of sessional lecturers who have historically been marginalized within their respective academic units and, in many institutional and departmental contexts, bear a disproportionate burden of educating undergraduate students. Such a project might capture the voices of those who have often been silenced in curriculum and governance decisions, and are unfortunately often absent in the research literature on teaching and learning in higher education. Such a project, by empowering the sessional lecturers' voices and experiences of teaching in higher education, might allow for a critical exploration of how increased enrolments and declining tenure track appointments influences the practices of teaching and learning in higher education. It might expose the challenges faced by those intending to design a coherent and aligned curriculum at the program level when a (potentially significant) proportion of the individuals teaching that curriculum have marginalized and potentially temporary positions. It might allow potentially marginalized voices to be part of the broader teaching commons.

Again, how does this meet our inclusive definition of SoTL from earlier? Oral history uses a disciplined approach to bring out narratives of the participants' lived experiences in the context of issues of historical significance, particularly from voices that might be marginalized from the majority or dominant narrative, ensuring those voices form part of the record. An oral history project such as this may be a powerful tool for enabling marginalized voices to be part of the dominant discourse related to teaching and learning in higher education.

SoTL through the Lenses of Philosophy

Philosophy[3] is semantic and critical – that is, focused on the meaning of words and concepts, and driven by the motivation to reason well and draw defensible judgments in order to better understand the world and ourselves in it. In addition to rigorous argumentation, analytic philosophical methods of research involve methodological or methodical doubt, close reading (exegesis), and dialectic, in some combination; often one of these elements will be emphasized more than the others. For example, let us consider the set of SoTL literature extolling the educational benefits of critical reflection. Conceptual analysis might begin by questioning what is actually being studied. Are all of these authors investigating and writing about the same thing? What concept do they have in mind when they use "critical reflection"? This matters because if we use ten different social science studies to support the claim that critical reflection helps people learn, those studies may be irrelevant to each other or to the phenomenon of interest if some or all of them use different conceptions of critical reflection. And if their concept of critical reflection is different from ours, we cannot justifiably use those studies to support our claim. It would be dishonest.

With these considerations in mind, one could begin with a close reading of those ten studies. If authors have provided operational definitions of "critical reflection" for the purposes of their studies, we can use those. But we would not want to end there because sometimes the operational definitions proposed are inconsistent with what the study actually investigated, which makes the conclusions in those papers invalid for our purposes. Even so, the operational definition provided would have to be contextualized in light of what was actually being

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[3] Philosophy is diverse. Here we focus specifically on analytic-pragmatist philosophy, but other philosophical schools will have their own approaches to bring to SoTL.

investigated to determine the similarities and differences between what they purport to study and what they are actually studying. One would likely be interested in studying the latter, because the former would, in this case, be irrelevant.

To complicate matters even further, some of these ten studies probably will not provide an operational definition at all, just a mention of the term and a reference. One could find the source referenced and use the definition provided therein, if there is one, which would then need to be compared to the characteristics actually investigated or "measured" in the study. The next step would be to compare the definitions to determine the extent to which the authors are defining the same concept. If they are, the matter may rest there. If they are not, new questions emerge. Which studies are actually investigating critical reflection? To answer that, one would need to carefully design a defensible definition of critical reflection – another, more painstaking process of conceptual analysis which would require breaking the concept of reflection into its components and studying their relationships and interactions. Are there multiple kinds of critical reflection? One may find that there are different forms of critical reflection, all appropriately grouped in the category denoted by that term. This, too, will involve further analysis.

Perhaps a more important follow-up question would be: what implications does the first analysis have for the claim that critical reflection improves learning? Let us say the results of the first analysis showed that three studies were not investigating critical reflection at all, four investigated forms of reflection that were not critical in nature (and are thus excluded because they no longer support the claim), and three studied forms of critical reflection. One obvious implication is that the claim *appears* to have less support than it did originally, but since seven of the ten studies were discounted because they were irrelevant for one reason or another, that is illusory; they did not support the claim in the first place.

A less obvious implication is that those studies that survived the first round may not support the claim either. We need to take a closer look. This is the point at which a philosopher would use methodological doubt to examine the assumptions and reasoning used in those three studies. What assumptions does the author make, and are those assumptions defensible (about what constitutes learning, for instance)? What are the connections (or lack thereof) between those assumptions, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn? What further implications would we need to accept if we accepted the results of those studies, and how do those implications compare to what we already know? Which established beliefs or knowledge-claims would we need to reject if we accepted the implications of these studies? It is at the stage of methodological doubt that many studies fall apart, and it is for this reason that philosophers are generally unwelcome in polite gatherings -- or are invited by non-philosophers to be co-authors on scholarly papers with some trepidation.

Other philosophical methods focus on interpreting and drawing meaning from the world, which may involve theory-building. In this context, a theory is a systematic attempt to make sense of phenomena in relation to one another. Theories of this sort are necessary for understanding, as they are what turn raw experience or information into evidence, whether those theories are implicit and unarticulated (as is usually the case) or explicit and rigorously argued, as is the case in philosophy. Take, for example, the question of what we call learning. What does it mean to learn, and what sorts of learning are valuable? Answering this question philosophically will involve: articulating preconditions for learning, consequences of learning, and, of course, purposes of learning; consideration of counter-arguments and appropriate responses (and changes to one's own argument, when warranted); and close reading of relevant

texts – and all of these endeavours must be carefully, diligently, and honestly reasoned. The ends to which learning is put and the kinds of learning that are valued will be closely related, and from those relationships an educational philosophy can be developed. Philosophers may bring into the development of such a theory some considerations from prior philosophical work by some of the greatest thinkers in history, from ancient to contemporary times. That literature can inform the development of the new theory by illustrating potential dangers, errors, blind alleys, and productive paths. It can also suggest connections and complications that one might not have noticed alone. To what end? Because the theory we use to understand learning – and to differentiate between the learning we value and the learning we do not – affects our choices as educators and SoTL scholars. It always has, whether or not we recognized its influence.

Next Steps: SoTL through the Lenses of the Arts and Humanities

The question we put to ourselves and our contributors for this special issue of the CJSoTL was: "How does the apparent under-representation of . . . humanities-based disciplines affect expectations for SoTL, from norms for research design and methodology to the genre and style of its products?" (McKinney & Chick, 2010, p. 10). One might ask: what have we lost by being exclusionary?

As we have argued earlier, an inclusive teaching commons where the scholarly traditions of the arts and humanities are presented alongside social science paradigms has generative potential for the SoTL community. That said, inevitably, inclusivity will create complications. Even within a social science-based SoTL landscape, it is difficult to advance ideas because of the range of research methods (quantitative and qualitative) that arise from those scholarly fields, as well as from the multi-disciplinary audience within the teaching commons. The increasing presence of humanist scholarship may further complicate matters.

Thus, inclusivity is not without its challenges. So the flip question might also be asked: what might we lose by being inclusive? While we would contest the straw-person arguments that have been made against humanities research traditions regarding generalizability and rigour, serious questions may still arise about the negative consequences of inclusivity. For instance, Vermette (2012) has argued that there is a risk of losing control over Indigenous knowledge traditions when efforts are made to move them into the mainstream, which may result in a form of symbolic inclusion. Indeed, he argues that inclusion of Indigenous content, knowledge and traditions in higher education has often been enacted in such a manner as to stop Aboriginal communities and academics from complaining without any significant concessions from the dominant Western knowledge paradigms. He concludes that, in the context of Indigenous knowledge and communities, "inclusion is killing us" (Vermette, 2012, p. 18).

While it would be a mistake to overstate the applicability of this analogy, something similar might occur in the context of a teaching commons focused on a *superficial* inclusion of the humanities. By trying to bring humanities traditions into the mainstream of the SoTL landscape as a token gesture, without changing SoTL's paradigm, we may lose the richness and diversity of perspectives that come through the lenses of those disciplines. This could result in a form of symbolic inclusion, where they are included as a pretense towards inclusivity rather than true inclusion in the teaching commons. And that would reify, rather than solve, the problem we are trying to address.

"If we seek a universal method for conducting the scholarship of teaching and learning, we are fated to be disappointed" (Shulman, 2002, p. ix). We may not be able to create a universal

method, but it does not imply that we cannot create an inclusive paradigm. To do that, we must return to the SoTL paradigm with a question: If SoTL was founded as, and is still largely perceived as, an interdisciplinary and inclusive field of scholarship, why are humanists excluded?

To answer this question, we will co-opt and adapt a distinction from Argyris, Putnam and Smith (1985) between espoused paradigm and paradigm-in-use. The espoused paradigm of SoTL is clearly inclusive and interdisciplinary, as the many quotations presented earlier indicate – a welcoming "teaching commons" that invites scholars from all disciplines to contribute, which embraces "theoretical and methodological pluralism." This is how scholars within SoTL see themselves and the discipline. However, as John Tagg (2003) writes, "While individuals are, by definition, aware of their espoused [paradigms], they are often unaware of their [paradigms]-in-use. At the same time, their [paradigms]-in-use govern their behavior, while their espoused [paradigms] do not" (pp. 13-14)[4]. Due to the perspective-limiting nature of working within a paradigm, they do not see the evidence that would lead them to question the espoused paradigm, though humanists do, thanks to their view from the outside. The paradigm-in-use is the one that governs the reality of SoTL, but the espoused theory is the public face, which is why humanists drawn in by the inclusive vision feel like victims of a bait-and-switch.

Because the espoused paradigm is believed to be the paradigm-in-use by those welcome within it, it is self-reinforcing. Huber and Morreale (2002) write,

> disciplinary styles empower the scholarship of teaching by guiding scholars to choose certain problems, use certain methods, and present their work in certain ways. But these styles also constrain one's willingness to read literature on teaching and learning from other fields, and they can limit pedagogical and scholarly imagination. (p. 4)

What they say about disciplinary styles as applied to SoTL applies also to SoTL *as a discipline*. Only the "other fields" in this case are the humanities. The imaginations of SoTL scholars are limited by the paradigm-in-use.

SoTL seems to have been envisioned as an interdisciplinary, rather than multidisciplinary field. That is, it is intended to draw disciplines together in an integrative fashion, to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts (Vess, 2002, p. 89). It could also have been envisioned as pluridisciplinary, intended to "bring multiple disciplines to bear on a topic and make an effort to compare and contrast methodologies and content" (Vess, 2002, p. 89), while adding the integrative component from interdisciplinarity. To us, it is clear that the set of "disciplines" involved was intended to mean more than disciplines from the social sciences. If we took the espoused paradigm of SoTL as the description of SoTL's reality, we would be forced to conclude that SoTL does not, in fact, exist. Accepting that vision as an ideal, however, and as an espoused paradigm only, leads us to a decision point: either we are content with SoTL as an exclusionary social science discipline, or we must reject it in favour of something that will bring the espoused paradigm and the paradigm-in-use into closer alignment. We favour the latter, but what will that involve?

To reform SoTL so that it is truly inclusive, truly interdisciplinary or pluridisciplinary, may require a revolution: the destruction of its present paradigm. For, if SoTL as a discipline has indeed already wedded itself firmly to a social science paradigm, piecemeal change will not

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[4] Consistent with our adaptation of Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985), we have changed each instance of "theory" in Tagg's quote to "paradigm."

suffice to transform it. The boundaries are too firmly embedded in the parent paradigm. The inclusion of the arts and humanities will not simply add new methods and new ideas, it will involve rethinking the foundations, the principles, and the operating assumptions of the entire SoTL enterprise. In other words, for SoTL to become truly inclusive, it must become something else.

Huber (2002) stated:

If scholarly attention to teaching and learning in higher education is to gain through multi- or interdisciplinary exchange, then a variety of questions need to be asked and a variety of approaches should flourish. … The challenge here is to reconceptualize relationships between the disciplines so that the lessons flow in all directions, rather than demanding the diffusion of one privileged way of knowing. (p. 37).

This is the challenge we face, to reconceptualize SoTL so that its paradigm-in-use approximates its intended vision, its espoused paradigm, and thereby create a truly inclusive, pluralistic, diverse, and productive teaching commons for all scholars.

We hope this special issue of CJSoTL will be a small step toward realizing the inclusive, multi-disciplinary vision articulated by Pace (2004) – indeed, that Boyer (1990) set forth – with expert practitioners and scholars in all fields of study, from all corners of academia, contributing to a SoTL commons that welcomes and values their insights. For "without a functioning commons, it is hard for pedagogical knowledge to circulate, deepen through debate and critique, and inform the kinds of innovation so important to higher education today" (Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p. 5).

We invite social scientists to take a broader view, and humanists to make their voices heard.

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