

Paid Education Leave Program and Development: The Canadian Auto Workers Case Study

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Abstract: The strength of a labour movement is connected to development as there is a linkage between the strength of workers' movements and the provision of social goods (Muntaner et al. 2004; Robertson and Murningham 2006; Coburn 2009; Camfield 2011). I examine the Canadian Auto Workers' (CAW) Paid Education Leave (PEL) program and its relation to progressive development in Canada. I explore the CAW's PEL program since it is arguably the most well-established and progressive PEL program in North America (Weststar 2004, 2006; Roth 2007). In particular, the CAW's four week Core Program (CP) is the focus since it concentrates on worker empowerment (Weststar 2004).

I employ Amartya Sen's (1999) definition of development based on the expansion of instrumental freedoms (Sen 1999; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Next, I broadly and briefly discuss how the labour movement is related to the expansion of freedoms through the life-ground ethical perspective which corresponds to instrumental freedoms being the means and ends of development (Noonan 2008, 2008b, 2009; Camfield 2011).

Given Sen's concept of development – empowering and increasing the capacity of individuals through the expansion of freedoms leads to progressive development – in tandem with the PEL's aims, I propose that the CP: a) contributes to political freedoms b) increases access to economic facilities c) increases transparency guarantees d) empowers workers to demand protective securities Based on these premises, I argue that the CP is an avenue to foster progressive development in Canada. I suggest that the main mechanism by which such freedoms are expanded is through worker empowerment. The CP is likely to promote development by increasing worker empowerment and engagement in their workplace and communities, and ultimately, strengthening the Canadian labour movement. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the CAW's CP.

Key Words: labour unions; education; Canadian labour movement; Amartya Sen

Résumé: La force du mouvement syndical est liée au développement, puisqu'il existe un lien entre la force des mouvements de travailleurs et la disponibilité de biens sociaux (Muntaner et al. 2004; Robertson and Murningham 2006; Coburn 2009; Camfield 2011). Nous examinons le programme de congé payé à des fins d'éducation des Travailleurs canadiens de l'automobile (TCA) et sa relation avec le développement progressiste au Canada. Nous explorons le programme des TCA puisqu'il semble le mieux établi et le plus progressiste des programmes du genre en Amérique du Nord (Weststar 2004, 2006; Roth 2007). En particulier, nous nous concentrons sur le programme de base de quatre semaines (Core Program) puisqu'il vise l'autonomisation des travailleurs (Weststar 2004).

Nous utilisons la définition de développement d'Amartya Sen (1999) basée sur l'élargissement des libertés instrumentales (Sen 1999 ; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Ensuite, nous discutons brièvement et de manière générale comment le mouvement syndical est lié à l'élargissement de ces libertés à travers la perspective éthique du milieu de vie (life-ground ethical perspective), qui signifie que les libertés instrumentales sont le moyen et l'objectif du développement (Noonan 2008, 2008b, 2009; Camfield 2011). Les syndicats et le mouvement des travailleurs font pression en vue de, et obtiennent une distribution plus équitable des biens au sein de la société canadienne (Navarro and Shi 2002). Ainsi, le renforcement du mouvement syndical canadien correspond au développement progressiste de la société canadienne par l'élargissement des libertés (Sen 1999). Le programme de base du TCA est une des avenues vers l'augmentation de l'autonomisation des travailleurs et vers le développement en tant que liberté au Canada par le renforcement du mouvement syndical.

En considérant le concept de développement chez Sen - l'autonomisation et l'augmentation du pouvoir des individus par le biais de l'élargissement des libertés mène à un développement progressiste - en tandem avec les objectifs du programme de congé payé à des fins d'éducation, nous proposons que le CP: a) contribue au développement des libertés politiques; b) augmente l'accès aux infrastructures économiques; c) augmente les garanties de transparence; d) renforcer la capacité des travailleurs à demander des protections. Ces prémisses nous amènent à défendre l'idée que le CP est un moyen d'alimenter un développement progressiste au Canada. Nous suggérons que le mécanisme principal à travers lequel ces libertés sont élargies est par le biais de l'autonomisation des travailleurs. Le CP peut promouvoir le développement en augmentant l'autonomisation des travailleurs et l'engagement dans leur milieu de travail et leurs communautés, et finalement, en renforçant le mouvement syndical canadien. Finalement, nous discutons des limites du CP des TCA.

Mots-clés: syndicats; éducation; mouvement syndical canadien; Amartya Sen

Introduction

The strength of a labour movement is connected to development¹ as there is a linkage between the strength of workers' movements and the provision of social goods (Camfield 2011; Coburn 2009; Muntaner et al. 2004; Robertson and Murningham 2006). I examine the Canadian Auto Workers' (CAW)² Paid Education Leave (PEL) program and its relation to progressive development in Canada.

¹ Following Sen (1999), development is defined as the expansion of freedoms and increasing the well-being of persons by advancing human capacities to achieve individual potential. It is argued that this then translates to improvements in macro-economic indicators at the national level. Nonetheless, Sen (1999) would argue that the fostering of individual capacities should not solely be seen as a means to an end in terms of macro-economic development but also as an end in itself. Following this definition, *development* and *progressive development* are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

² As of September 2013, the CAW and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union merged, creating the largest private sector union in Canada, UNIFOR. However, as this paper was written when the CAW was an independent union, I will be referring to the CAW exclusively.

I explore the CAW's PEL program since it is arguably the most well-established and progressive PEL program in North America (Roth 2007; Weststar 2004, 2006). In particular, the CAW's four week Core Program (CP) is the focus since it concentrates on worker empowerment (Weststar 2004). This analysis is carried out through the interpretation of the written curriculum. I also extend my argument and theoretical connections via previous survey research which examines the before and after outcomes of PEL participants.

I employ Amartya Sen's (1999) definition of development based on the expansion of instrumental freedoms (Sen 1999; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Next, I broadly and briefly discuss how the labour movement is related to the expansion of freedoms through the life-ground ethical perspective which corresponds to instrumental freedoms being the means and ends of development (Camfield 2011; Noonan 2008, 2008b, 2009). Unions and the labour movement pressure for and gain the more equitable distribution of goods within Canadian society (Navarro and Shi 2002). Therefore, strengthening the labour movement corresponds to the progressive development of Canadian society by expanding freedoms (Sen 1999). The CP is one avenue to increase worker empowerment and development as freedom in Canada by strengthening the labour movement.

Next, I describe the emergence of the CAW's PEL program (Roth 1997, 2007; Weststar 2004). I also examine the curriculum by analytically separating and discussing the predominant themes as follows: i) education, ii) media, iii) history, iv) economy, and v) politics and democracy. I describe and analyse the CP's curriculum as an alternative workers' understanding of socio-political and economic issues which builds confidence and strengthens membership participation (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Carnoy 1974; Gramsci 2007). I then apply Sen's five instrumental freedoms to the CAW's CP. This program has the potential to further progressive development in Canadian society through the dissemination of knowledge that allows workers to situate themselves within the current political and economic milieu. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the CAW's CP (Gindin 1995; Livingstone and Roth 2004; Roth 1997; Weststar 2004).

Essentially, this paper will: i) describe and interpret key features of the CAW's PEL program, ii) explain how the aims and outcomes of CAW's PEL contribute to worker empowerment and engagement, iii) connect such aims and outcomes to Amartya Sen's conception of development as the expansion of freedoms, and iv) discuss the limitations of the CP and suggest potential avenues for future research. First, however, I will introduce and connect Sen's concept of development to the aims of the labour movement and then contextualize the emergence of the CAW's PEL.

Sen's Development as Freedom

According to Amartya Sen (1999), development is "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen 1999:3). Freedom is a means and end goal of development. Increasing freedom as the objective of development expands this project to 'developed' countries since "the richer countries too often have deeply disadvantaged people, who lack basic opportunities of healthcare, or functional education, or gainful employment, or economic and social security" (Sen 1999:6, 15). There are five instrumental freedoms that promote development by increasing the general capabilities of persons, which are: i) political freedoms, ii) economic facilities, iii) social opportunities, iv) transparency guarantees, and v) protective securities (Sen 1999:10). Indeed, the process of development lays in expanding the ability of individuals to achieve their potential capacity through the expansion of

instrumental freedoms. The attainment of expansionary freedoms at the individual level then translates to positive aggregate measure of development.

These analytically separable freedoms complement and enforce one another. In tandem, development requires the removal of unfreedoms like poor economic opportunities, neglect of public facilities and poverty (Sen 1999; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Ultimately, development gives priority to increasing individual capabilities, which enables individuals to lead the lives they value “and have reason to value” (Sen 1999:18). Sen also stresses the importance of individual and collective agency. Thus, public policy can enhance capability while being shaped and influenced by “effective use of participatory capabilities by the public” (Sen 1999:18). Development as freedom highlights the necessity of establishing a strong welfare state as a condition of development. This contrasts with traditional visions of progress that prioritise macroeconomic indicators of “aggregate increases in material outputs,” like gross national product (GNP), which tend to neglect the development of human capacities and distributive factors (Carnoy 1974:6; Nussbaum 2010; Sen 1999;).

The Labour Movement and Progressive Development

The labour movement is historically linked to the provisioning of the freedoms listed above, which not only benefit union members and the movement but society at large (Camfield 2011; Coburn 2009; Muntaner et al. 2004; Nesbit 2001; Robertson and Murningham 2006). Workers’ movements and more specifically union organisations are crucial for ethical reasons as a space where labour can collectively pursue its interests. Unions and the labour movement are a social good from the life-ground ethical perspective, increasing the ability to acquire ‘life-requirements’ based on the needs of physical, socio-cultural and free time³ (Camfield 2011:94; CAW Education Department 2011; Noonan 2008, 2009). Reflecting the prioritisation of developing human capacities, this approach to understanding the goals of the labour movement relates to Sen’s (1999) definition of development as freedom. I argue that the CAW’s CP promotes development within Canada by being a potential avenue to strengthen the decaying⁴ Canadian labour movement (Camfield 2011).

Although out of the scope of this paper, Taylor (2001) reviews the development of Canadian labour education, offering a rare historical rendering of the emergence and transformation of Canadian labour educational programs from the beginning of the twentieth century. The CAW’s CP is embedded within an array of formal labour and union educational programs, dating back to the Canadian Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) created in 1918, which was later eclipsed by the internal development of union programs in the 1940s (Taylor 2001). Below, I describe the emergence of the CAW’s PEL program.

³ Jeff Noonan (2009) describes free time as “the experience of time as an open matrix of possibilities” (376). The ruling value system, where “time is money,” restricts the development of human capacities and freedom by depriving individuals of free time (376).

⁴ Canadian union density has declined from its peak of 41.8 percent in 1984 to 29.7 percent in 2011 (Uppal 2011). In addition, it has been argued that Canadian unions have increasingly lost political power while workers are identifying less with unions as organizations (Camfield 2011).

Brief History: The PEL program

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) proposed Paid Education Leave (PEL) in 1974 as Convention No. 140 (Roth 1997; Taylor 2001; Weststar 2004, 2006). PEL was defined by the ILO as “leave granted to a worker for educational purposes for a specific period during working hours, with adequate financial entitlements” (Roth 2007:7). Two years later, this convention was supported by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the federal government in an attempt to quell tense industrial relations (Taylor 2001; Weststar 2004). Nonetheless, the federal government did not formally enact PEL as legislation, requiring the negotiation of PEL by unions through employers (Taylor 2001).

In 1977, the Canadian branch of the United Auto Workers (UAW) won the first contract including PEL with a small auto-parts supplier, Rockwell International (CAW 2008; Gindin 1995; Taylor 2001; Weststar 2004). In 1979, there was a successful push to establish PEL in ‘Big Three’ – Ford, General Motors and Chrysler – contracts. Winning such contracts set precedence for other contract negotiations (Roth 1997, 2007; Weststar 2006). Currently, the ‘Big Three’ contribute 7 cents per hour worked to PEL (CAW 2008). Smaller hourly contributions and lump sum payments have been negotiated at other local CAW bargaining units (Weststar 2004). Money collected is used to pay for lost time and expenses of those who attend (Spencer 1994). When excluding the CAW, PEL has not been widely implemented by Canadian unions (Nesbit 2003). Nonetheless, the CAW has heavily invested in PEL and “to date offers the most comprehensive of any paid education leave programs in Canada” (Weststar 2004:3).

In contrast to the American UAW, which conceded to allow employers to co-develop the curriculum and influence which workers could attend, the Canadian UAW refused this offer and won the bid to establish union and worker controlled PEL. With the CAW’s breakaway from the UAW in 1985, the PEL program has deepened and expanded (Roth 2007). The employer co-authored UAW PEL programs consist of skill development ‘tool’ courses, corresponding with mainstream models of adult education that are individualised, professionalised, employer-friendly and tied to an economic growth-oriented paradigm (Carnoy 1974; Friesen 1994; Nussbaum 2010; Taylor 2001). In contrast, while also offering ‘tool’ courses, the CAW’s four week Core Program (CP) is based within the human development paradigm which facilitates the empowerment of working people through a critical assessment of the economy, politics and equity issues (Brookfield 2005; Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Program 2011; Nussbaum 2010).

In the fall and spring, 100-125 workers participate in each of the biannual sessions at the CAW’s Port Elgin Family Education Training Facility (CAW 2011c). Each week is separated by a return to the workplace for several weeks (Weststar 2004:2). By 2008, the four week and one week programs provided a worker-centred education for over 19,000 CAW members, with over 5,600 graduating from the four week CP (CAW 2008). In addition, upwards of 450 workers were trained as instructors (Weststar 2006). In 2008, 90 percent of CAW’s members were covered by collective agreements which provide funding for PEL (CAW 2008).

Program Aims

Providing a counter-hegemonic, worker-centred education is stated as a main priority of the CAW, which claims that “The strength of our future is not only at the bargaining table and on the picket line, it is in the classroom” (CAW 2011b). Unlike the lengthy history of adult worker education programs

in Canada that denied class lines,⁵ the CP explicitly draws on class analysis (CAW Education Department 2011; Friesen 1994; Taylor 2001). Offering an alternative to adult education within Canada, the CP challenges mainstream education that is rife with class-related ambiguity (Carnoy 1974; Curtis et al. 1992; Friesen 1994; Sears 2003). The CP rejects the narrowness commonly present in internal union programs by offering a political, economic and ideological education based on empowering workers (Roth 2007; Spencer 1994; Weststar 2004).⁶ Indeed, the CP falls under the ideological model of union education, in contrast to instrumental or service models (Aronowitz 1990; Spencer 1994).⁷ More specifically, the CP's explicit pro-worker and redistributive message is a response to the Canadian government and employers, who, since 1972, have pursued policies and practices that eroded workers' incomes and working conditions which were won over the previous three decades of relative economic stability (Taylor 2001).

The CP does not revolve around facilitating capital, whether it is building 'workers' skills' through union 'tool' courses typical of business unionism or traditional education as a bourgeois socialising mechanism⁸ (Bowles and Gintis 1976; CAW Education Program 2011; Gramsci 2007; Massey et al. 2011; Roth 1997; Spencer 1994). In contrast, the curriculum focuses on developing labour solidarity founded on the commonality of having to sell labour for survival while holding the power to withdraw labour power through collective action (Roth 1997b). Despite discussions of the embourgeoisement of the Canadian working-class,⁹ the CP is one particular arena where an oppositional labour-based ideology is explicitly cultivated (Gramsci 2007; Nesbit 2003). In fact, researchers argue the CP program increases class-consciousness (Roth 2007; Spencer 1994; Weststar 2004).

The goal of the CP is "to build leadership within the ranks and to cultivate activists with a commitment both to the union and to social transformation in what is labeled social unionism" (CAW 2011; Gindin 1995; Roth 2007:9; Spencer 1994). The program also consists of activities outside the formal classroom as participants form committees on various social justice topics and facilitate events

⁵ For instance, Friesen (1994:174) notes

The leaders of the Canadian adult education movement were populists, community organisers, social gospel idealists, democrats. They used the codeword "citizenship education" to express their ideal of an involved, informed, creative population. They tried to transcend the class loyalties of other societies -- but especially the English-- and to incorporate citizens of all ranks into their groups [...] *For an illustration of the ways in which Canada's classness was denied, see Manitoba Royal Commission, Report, 1947. Unions in Canada were not a people's movement as in Britain, its authors reported [130], and clerical workers belonged to the middle class.*

⁶ Most Canadian unions which offer labour education are 'tool courses' which cover proper grievance procedures, workplace health and safety, and shop steward training (Spencer 1994).

⁷ Instrumental or service models focus on grievance procedures, committee person training, collective bargaining, arbitration, workers' compensation and health and safety (Roth 1997). In addition, this model more broadly aims to increase the mobility chances of individual members in terms of training and retraining opportunities. In contrast, the ideological model connects personal experience with a labour studies-like agenda, addressing class-centered historical and contemporary political-economic issues (Aronowitz 1990).

⁸ The PEL critiques mainstream education systems and curriculums for ignoring labour history while perpetuating a classless understanding of how resources are distributed. For instance, absent are discussions of how the socio-economic status of one's parents is a large determinant of not only an individual's success in school but also later in the labour market. Instead there is an emphasis on social harmony, compromise, and consensus while suggesting individual merit undergirds life chances and outcomes (Darder 1991).

⁹ It has been postulated that Western industrial workers' desire for social change is inversely related to their economic gains. Indeed, economic gains by Western industrial workers have been pointed to as a significant reason for the lack of class consciousness and, more grandly, socialist transformation (Gramsci 2007; Lipset and Marks 2000).

throughout the program (CAW 2008; Weststar 2006). Within the CP, education is inextricably linked to social change. Indeed, labour education, organisation and activism are related (Nesbit 2003; Spencer 1994). Thus, adult education “is at least as influential in social reproduction and popular resistance as the schooling of children” (Friesen 1994:164). With the decline in union density in Canada, this program is viewed as one path to the revitalisation of the labour movement (Camfield 2011; Weststar 2006).

Pedagogy

The CP’s curriculum is based on peer training rather than professional instruction while framing analysis through broader social justice issues (CAW 2008; Roth 2007). The core of the program is taught by over 100 discussion leaders from various local unions (Gindin 1995). Peer tutors labelled “Local Union Discussion Leaders” lightly guide the sessions, limiting the hierarchal nature of the educational experience (Roth 1997; Sears 2003; Spencer 1994). The CP is framed as learning amongst equals, relating to Freire’s (1995) “problem-posing” education, where the teacher-student educates the student-teachers. Indeed, this counters the unequal relationship that emerges between instructor and student, which is particularly problematic within adult education programs (Jarvis 2004; Sears 2003). The CP attempts to empower workers by creating an egalitarian and cooperative learning environment based on Subject to Subject communication (Freire 1995; Sears 2003). This participatory education program deconstructs the expert model of lecturing through a co-facilitator model which prioritises group activity and debate (CAW Education Department 2011; Sears 2003; Weststar 2006). Instead of professionals, the CP encourages curriculum development and communication by activists and workers.

While a basic structure and lead questions are presented, workers produce and apply personal knowledge to broader theoretical and practical conceptualisations (Livingstone and Roth 2004; Sears 2003). The top-down educational structure is negated by valorising informal learning that occurs after CP sessions, within the workplace and larger society (CAW Education Department 2011; Choudry and Bleakney 2013; Roth 2007; Sears 2003; Taylor 2001). The importance given to informal learning encourages “workers [to] develop their own analysis [...] [not] simply handed over as a gift, but rather [...] actively developed by workers themselves in the process of developing their ability to organise and act” (Sears 2003:247). The collective experiences of subjects are prioritised by connecting individual and group understandings to broader political and economic frameworks (Gramsci 2007; Roth 2007; Spencer 1994; Taylor 2001). This corresponds to a dialogical and spiral pedagogical method, rooted in workers’ experience and knowledge (CAW Education Department 2011; Freire 1995).¹⁰ A “self-active, self-educating person, in interchange with others” is nurtured through informal learning (Bleakney and Choudry 2013; Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011; Sears 2003:254; Taylor 2001).

Lectures are often conducted through group reading, focusing on creating a relaxed, communal atmosphere while disallowing participants from becoming “passive recipients of knowledge emanating from the front of the room” (CAW Education Department 2011; Gindin 1995; Sears 2003:248). In

¹⁰ The dialogical and spiral pedagogical method is founded upon informal conversational learning where key themes are continuously revisited while connections are drawn and reinforced. This is in contrast to the formal lecturing model (Freire 1995).

addition, the residency of the CP fosters solidarity and egalitarianism which accompanies living, eating, running events, and discussing complex issues together. Within this climate, trust is fostered and solidarity is built (Weststar 2006). The CP's democratic and communal learning environment confronts the undemocratic nature in which potentially transformative information tends to be "hoarded by the upper classes, and shared only within the confines of a university classroom" (Carnoy 1974; Livingstone and Roth 2004:125). With this pedagogy of adult education, the CP provides information in a safe space to open discussion and debate, resulting in an increase in worker confidence and worker-based identity (Weststar 2006).

Below, I discuss the curriculum in more detail.¹¹ Within the curriculum, class is presented as the primary social group regarding interests in the redistribution of resources and power. A working-class identity is presented as crucial in strengthening the labour movement that challenges the power imbalance between labour and capital through redistributive policies. Despite such an emphasis, discussions surrounding race, immigration, gender, youth, sexuality and the environment highlight that "real solidarity doesn't gloss over difference, it means build[ing] a movement based on common concerns and recognising difference" (CAW Education Department 2011). Nonetheless, the scope of this analysis centres on worker empowerment founded upon the cultivation of a labourer's perspective, focusing on the class-oriented nature of the program. After analyzing the printed curriculum, I extend the content analysis by examining survey research on worker outcomes before and after the PEL. This not only allows me to connect the PEL's written curriculum and aim to Sen's notion of development as freedom, but also program outcomes.

Hypotheses

Given Sen's concept of development outlined above – empowering and increasing the capacity of individuals through the expansion of freedoms leads to progressive development – in tandem with the PEL's aims, I propose that the CP:

- a) contributes to political freedoms
- b) increases access to economic facilities
- c) increases transparency guarantees
- d) empowers workers to demand protective securities

Based on these premises, I argue that the CP is an avenue to foster progressive development in Canada. I suggest that the main mechanism by which such freedoms are expanded is through worker empowerment. The CP is likely to promote development by increasing worker empowerment and engagement in their workplace and communities, and ultimately, strengthening the Canadian labour movement.¹²

¹¹ I do not engage the curriculum by interrogating the validity of its perspective; instead, I focus on it as a potential site for worker empowerment.

¹² More explicitly, the underlying premise of this paper is that the PEL program has a direct effect on progressive development in Canada (Sen 1999). This effect and theoretical connection is supported by previous survey research which examines the before and after impact of the PEL program on self-reported behaviour and worker empowerment measures.

Method

The following examination of the PEL curriculum is based on the 2011 PEL curriculum. I was granted access by the CAW Education Department, which mailed hard-copies of the instructor and participant booklets to my place of residence. Each week is kept in a large binder and I received four binders in total. An electronic version was not available. Typing out the manuals was also unfeasible due to its sheer volume and thus using content analysing and coding software, like MAXQDA, was not an option. Instead, I manually read the curriculum and organized and analyzed core themes of the course. These themes were chosen by the emphasis placed on and dedicated to a particular topic, which orbited and directly hit on class-based mobilization and consciousness.

The Curriculum

The curriculum challenges the “dominant ideology” or the ideology of the elite classes internalised by the masses (Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011).¹³ Such ideology justifies inequality and current power relations as inevitable, operating as common sense limits of societal constructions. Thus, the CP resists the internal and external colonisation of working people’s knowledge by increasing the capacity of participants to “understand and control the nature of progress and change in their own lives” and broader society (Carnoy 1974:25). The CP fosters labour solidarity via counter-hegemonic, worker-centred discourses while hoping to deepen membership involvement and participation by building confidence. I examine the curriculum via the themes of: i) education, ii) media, iii) history, iv) economy, and v) politics and democracy.

Education

The CP empowers workers through an examination of mainstream education, describing the education system as reflecting, maintaining and perpetuating broader hierarchal power relations. Group discussion begins with the lead statement that “Most workers do not have many fond memories of their years in school” (CAW Education Department 2011). Individual knowledge lays the premise for larger discussions, which situates personal experience as a class experience (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Curtis et al. 1992; Gramsci 2007; Sears 2003; Taylor 2001). These discussions highlight mainstream education’s subordination of the abilities of working-class youth (Carnoy 1974; Curtis et al. 1992; Davis et al. 1989). The participants tend to recall the stifling of creative and critical thinking capacities, which systemically negates the creation of agentic actors (Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011; Freire 1995; Livingstone and Roth 2004; Nussbaum 2010). Through this analysis, schools “justify and reproduce inequality rather than correct it,” acting as a mechanism of social control to preserve the hierarchical order (Bowles and Gintis 1976:102). Fostering hegemonic acquiescence denies the possibility of the redistribution of wealth and power (Carnoy 1974).

Describing the rise of mass education emerging from the industrial revolution, the CP frames education as maintaining and perpetuating the values upon which capitalism depends (Carnoy 1974; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Gramsci 2007). Serving business competitiveness, education is a disciplining tool founded upon following instructions and acquiring employer-defined skills. Socialisation to accept workplace discipline is contrasted with a critical education, which develops skills and capacities

¹³ For an in-depth discussion and analysis of hegemony, see Antonio Gramsci (2007).

to analyse and participate in society as citizens (Nussbaum 2010b). Thus, the CP emphasises that traditional education purposefully does not develop critical inquiry in order to maintain social order and control.

A normative educational experience solidifies positions of privilege and subordination by making class invisible, instructing acceptance of social and economic constructions versus their examination (Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011). This functions to the detriment of the working-class as success depends on inherited socio-economic status and bourgeois cultural capital (Carnoy 1974; Harker 1990). Through such socialisation, inherited class position as impacting life chances is replaced with the liberal citizen, implying that individuals entertain identical rights, obligations and opportunities (Curtis et al. 1994; Darder 1991). Under this rationale, stratification occurs and is justified through individual merit (CAW Education Department 2011).

The CP curriculum critiques the individualisation of social problems by exploring social boundaries that are erected and maintained by exploitative relationships, which are obstacles overlooked in mainstream youth and adult educational courses (Curtis et al. 1994; Friesen 1994). The individualism that mainstream education promotes creates and reinforces the logic of capitalist competition (Carnoy 1974). Dismissing the meritocratic ideals of schooling, there is an analysis of how one's class status at birth largely determines one's access to resources. Education as a means to class mobility is then challenged; instead, it is argued that mainstream education reproduces class immobility (Anyon 1980, 2014; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Carnoy 1974; Freire 1995; Roth 2007).

In light of these observations, the CP challenges the legitimacy of mainstream capitalist schooling and differentiates itself through an environment which explicitly develops critical capacities to challenge the hierarchical structure of society (Apple 1995, 2014; Brookfield 2005; Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011). The CP attempts to combat weakening class identification and the decline of the Canadian labour movement through education. Unlike traditional education that caters to capital, the CP is designed to "serve and advance the interests of working people" by prioritising the well-being of labour (Taylor 2001:214). Thus, the CP constructs itself as a learning experience which fills in what is left out – class analysis (Roth 1997b). As such, the initial attempt to foster camaraderie through a collective identity addresses unpleasant experiences in the traditional education system; these memories are juxtaposed to the CP's labour-centred curriculum, positioning the development of critical capacities as invaluable.

Media

The CP empowers workers through media literacy. Private media concentration and its impact on worker political participation is the focus of this section. The monopolisation of media ownership by few corporate shareholders results in the silence of workers' perspectives and interests in mainstream media. More broadly, the CP frames the conglomeration of media as undermining the creation of a healthy democracy. Dominant interests restrict the flow of information by censoring the conceptualisation of debates and limiting coverage to select events. Thus, the influence of corporate advertisers on media content all but eliminates a working-class perspective. To attract investment, media content stresses individual success and consumption at the cost of covering labour issues and other areas of social disadvantage (CAW Education Department 2011).

Limiting public access from a holistic breadth of information stunts participation as full and equal citizens. Unrestricted access to perspectives and information is necessary for democratic participation

within a society. The CP exemplifies how mainstream media has an active role in limiting perception and participation through a discussion of underreported stories, which include: how government tax breaks for the wealthy shifts the burden to middle and lower income earners and reduces the capacity to pay for social programs; stories of corporate activities which have adverse social impacts, like growing corporate intrusion into public healthcare; and the overwhelming use of business and/or conservative policy institutions as sources, representing the 'authoritative voice' on current topics. The CP exposes the vested interests and biases in the media which perpetuate the dominant ideology at the cost of labour interests.

To counter the mass media narrative, the CP emphasises getting 'our' voices heard. By practicing writing letters to media editors, crafting effective media releases and public speaking, the CP expects to strengthen the labour-based presence in media. In addition, this provides members with the tools needed to effectively participate in dialogue and debate surrounding issues of social, political and economic inequality (CAW Education Department 2011).

History

The CP empowers workers through a labour-centred historical rendering of society, challenging mainstream historical discourses by concentrating on labour history as human history. The CP offers a historical materialist approach to understanding transformations in human history through labour (CAW Education Department 2011; Curtis et al 1992; Darder 1991; Roth 1997; Sears 2003). Reinserting working people into history challenges the dominant history which removes the working-class from "all social and cultural responsibility" (Carnoy 1974:62). Since working people were crucial in making history, they too possess the capacity to transform the future through the present while reclaiming the past. Centralising labour history transgresses curriculums which support the dominant ideology (Carnoy 1974). Moreover, prefacing understandings of contemporary power relations with a historical context centred upon working people empowers participants, through connection and resonance, to become active in what? (Sears 2003; Spencer 1994; Weststar 2006).

Examining the interconnections between the transformation of social relations and the mode of production, this discussion covers a basic concept of class, egalitarian societies, the agricultural revolution, the slave mode of production, feudalism and capitalism (CAW Education Department 2011; Taylor 2001). The CP explores how, historically, people traded, bought and sold, but that the market was just one aspect of society. Under capitalism, conversely, the market became the dominant force in people's lives. Capitalism is examined as novel in that it is based on wage labour, where working people have the voluntary yet necessary 'choice' of selling labour to survive (CAW Education Department 2011). Through such discussions, many members shift from labelling themselves as middle-class to working-class, which can be cited as a process of dis-embourgeoisement (Carnoy 1974; CAW Education Department 2011; Roth 2007). Transformation is also fostered through a definition of class based on wealth, power and influence regarding socio-political and economic decisions along with the relationship to the means of production.

This learning experience centralises labour, both historically and in the contemporary milieu. The CP provokes the contemplation of "What would human history look like if told through the eyes of and in the interests of working people?" (CAW Education Department 2011). This fosters the development of a "historical imagination [...] as it allows the learning individual to locate in a dynamic process of change" (Sears 2003:255). Historical learning is crucial in defetishising the seemingly

natural, neutral and static appearance of current social relations while creating the possibility of inquiry and transformation (Carnoy 1974; Freire 1995; Sears 2003). The CP thus describes capitalism as a fairly recent development, suggesting that “by knowing that it wasn’t always there, it can be changed” (CAW Education Department 2011). Finally, the CP reviews worker struggles to transform society by creating alternatives to capitalism based on the interests of working people.

Economy

The CP empowers workers by offering an understanding of current economic practices and potential alternatives. To begin, extensive quotations are read aloud from various philosophical, economic and literary writings that challenge the reification of the current economic system. This is an exercise to reimagine social relations and the functioning of economies. Capitalism is framed as based on maintaining and increasing competitiveness. The ideology of competition is in the interest of capital accumulation but is contradictory to the well-being of labour. Such a contradiction is particularly stark in an unregulated market economy where competition is amplified surrounding wages and working conditions. The CP wishes to open the possibility of shifting the prioritisation of capital competitiveness to a labour-centred worldview of the “democratic development of peoples’ capacities” (CAW Education Department 2011). Such a transferal challenges capital’s logic of corporate competitiveness and emphasizes developing the potential of working people, which hopes to empower workers to resist eroding working conditions and job insecurity (Seidman 2007). Indeed, the CP presents the ideologies of competitive capital accumulation as contradictory to ideologies that support the development of human capacities through social provisions. In relation, the CP confronts how the current “economy shapes the kind of society we are, rather than society and social values shaping the economy” (CAW Education Department 2011).

Developing a specific understanding of exploitation, there is a conceptualisation of labour creating value and profit, employing the term surplus-value to discuss the creation of capital (Spencer 1994). Exploitation is defined as follows: the “difference between the value created by living labour and the necessary consumption of the workers is surplus-value. The rate of surplus-value is a measure of the degree of exploitation of the working-class” (CAW Education Department 2011). Such an explanation directly links labour with the creation of profit, which is generated by not remunerating the true value of labour based on the price granted in the market. Instead, labour is paid what is deemed adequate by the capitalist for labour’s physical perpetuation (CAW Education Department 2011; Spencer 1994).

While examining the inequality of wealth distribution structured through the Canadian economy via fact sheets, the CP stresses the importance of a strong welfare state to provide social provisions like accessible unemployment insurance, disability coverage, housing, education, childcare and public healthcare. The welfare state is argued to be directly connected to labour rights while “trickle-down” models are refuted (CAW Education Department 2011). Challenging the concentration of capital that occurs through liberal, unmediated markets, the CP bolsters the welfare state while resisting the encroachment of privatisation and commodification of social goods. Such provisions are crucial in lessening the dependence of workers on employers to meet physical and social needs. Thus, the CP continually frames the development of a strong welfare state as vital for increasing the well-being and power of working people.

Social protections are described as beneficial for labour in contrast to individual protections based on the commodification of such services through market forces. By strengthening the labour and

union movement, dependence on employer and consumer ability to access services will lessen, framing unions as one avenue to limit “the harsh discipline of the labour market” (CAW Education Department 2011). This discussion connects the values of the broader labour movement with the importance of and the constant struggle to pressure the state to provide and maintain quality public services for all Canadians (CAW 2008; CAW Education Department 2011; Weststar 2006).

There is also an extensive discussion of the political projects of globalisation and neoliberalism as the latest phase within capitalism. Globalisation strengthens the logic of competition and decreases the distribution of social provisions through the supposed superiority of privatisation. This instills more precarious and competitive conditions for workers, tending to shield the “real culprits” – the logic of capital and free trade – from critique (CAW Education Department 2011). The CP examines not only the negative impact of globalisation on Canadian workers, but also its effect on workers and the impoverished around the globe.

The CP examines free trade agreements and the corporations and nations that make them possible. Contrary to mainstream narratives, the CP highlights that nation-states are powerful actors in globalisation, particularly in developed countries. Consequently, working people can mobilise to pressure the nation-state to increase the reregulation of capital. The CP states, “Globalisation didn’t occur against the nation-state but with the full co-operation of it. States should serve the popular interest instead of being an instrument of corporations” (CAW Education Department 2011).

Politics and Democracy

The CP empowers labour through an examination of Canadian politics and democracy. Focusing on democracy in terms of whether state institutions limit or expand workers’ rights and capabilities, the CP describes how the political system operates in terms of elections, passing legislation and the class composition of the Senate, House of Commons, cabinet appointments, members of parliament and civil servants. More generally, the discussion also acquaints participants with the differing parties on the political spectrum. For instance, ‘the right’ is associated with the private provisioning of services, equalling low taxes and limited control over private capital, versus ‘the left’, which is associated with public provisions, requiring higher taxes and a greater control over capital.

The CP also examines the relationship between capital and the state, illuminating how state and business elites are intertwined (CAW Education Department 2011; Roth 1997; Taylor 2001). Within this framework, the state does not hold the interests of working people but of capital. Inseparable from the interests of capital, the current manifestation of the state is contradictory to the interest of labour (Spencer 1994). It is proposed that corporations have redefined the purpose of government through lobbying and policy institutes while decreasing the redistribution of wealth. To exemplify this relation, the CP discussion manual includes the class position and connections of various Canadian Prime Ministers. In tandem, participants delve into an exploration of the exclusion of the majority of Canadians, the working-class, from pursuing their interests and influencing socio-political decisions that impact their material and social lives. Indeed, the state is treated as an instrument of the capitalist class, facilitating accumulation, legitimisation and coercion (Roth 1997; Taylor 2001). Thus, the CP highlights a conflict of interest between employers and workers and the subsequent ideologies that emerge regarding political affiliation and the role of the state.

The CP highlights the infiltration of politics in all aspects of life, attempting to address labour’s supposed political apathy, which largely stems from structural disempowerment (Apple 1995; Carnoy

1974; CAW Education Department 2011). As noted in the CP manual, “politics truly shape our lives in all kinds of ways and we need to be politically active and politically literate in order to shape key political decisions” (CAW Education Department 2011). The CP encourages workers to become active in the political arena since this can fundamentally reconstruct Canadian labour relations.

Politics and democracy are inextricably related to the economy as the CP defines democracy beyond voting to the capacity to freely participate and influence decisions in society. Thus “social and economic rights [...] are a logical extension of political inclusion” (Seidman 2007:19). Democracy is not only the form a government takes but also the form of society. As such, the struggle for democracy is continuous since democracy can be eroded in various ways through exclusion. Democracy is the struggle for inclusion and the elimination of structures that exclude citizens. Economic inequality contributes to political exclusion which further contributes to wealth inequality. As inequality increases democracy decreases since more citizens are disallowed from fully participating or having a substantial influence. The CP highlights the conflict between socio-economic inequality and the democratic vision. Democracy is thus further reduced as inequality increases in Canada through the retraction of social spending and the privatisation of social goods. Further inequality based on a concentration of wealth equates to an elite minority making decisions regarding the functioning of the Canadian economy which perpetuates the concentration of affluence, ownership and the power to influence.

Within the CP, the struggle for democracy primarily surrounds the inclusion of a working-class perspective in decision making. The CP suggests that working-class interests are not represented in Canadian politics or democracy and thus there is a democratic deficit where working people are excluded from shaping society to reflect their needs. Consequently, working-class interests are largely absent in current political choices. By increasing worker activism and engagement, the CP hopes to challenge this limitation in Canadian democracy. Through case studies concerning the gains of working people, like public healthcare, the CP stresses the power of worker resistance to reform and potentially transform the system. Working people can shape politics by struggling to maintain and increase such gains through education, mobilisation and electoral politics (CAW Education Department 2011).

In relation to democracy, the CP challenges participants to critically examine the differing ways – cooperatives, scientific management and lean production – the workplace is constructed. The manner in which workplaces are structured can increase or decrease workplace democracy (Apple 1995). The CP offers examples and strategies of how undemocratic and inhumane workplaces or workplace programs can be resisted through direct collective action and/or bargaining.

Within Canada’s current political and economic context, the CP presents exudes the working-class as a social group who require selling labour power to survive and can collectively withhold labour as a site of bargaining power with capital. This discussion focuses on the importance of collective action and struggle of the working-class over individual solutions and notions of success. As such, addressing social justice issues and strengthening the labour movement through collective action are highlighted. This is presented as necessary to challenge the concentration of wealth and create a more participative democracy.

The critical discussion of the political process presents the importance of workers becoming an active voice in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mechanisms for change (CAW 2011; Roth 1997). The CP stresses the importance of politically active participants since “What you win at the bargaining table, you can lose at the ballot box” (CAW Education Department 2011). Despite victories in

collective bargaining, such gains can vanish depending on which political party holds power. Without the working-class becoming a class-for-itself by engaging in parliamentary politics and social struggles, many of the benefits that have been fought for and acquired by workers, unions and the labour movement could be lost.

Through the fostering of class solidarity and worker empowerment, which in turn hopes to strengthen the CAW and the labour movement, the CP suggests that “Another World is Possible” by examining attempts to create different socio-political and economic models. Relatedly, the CP encourages participants to challenge and build alternatives by developing strategies for action. Such suggestions are prefaced through the manners in which change and transformation have been carried out nationally and internationally, the pros and cons of such actions and suggestions for the future. To lay a foundation for developing alternative societies, a collective vision of a “good” society for working people is collaboratively created. Visions of a “good” society from a labour perspective are portrayed as common to working people around the world (CAW Education Department 2011).

The CP also requires participants to undertake an activist project. A mock convention is also created to allow participants to debate and vote on resolutions they have constructed, preparing CP participants for deliberations in union meetings and other public forums. In summary, the CP’s goal is to instil confidence and desire within its members to act in the interests of working people through parliamentary and extra-parliamentary mechanisms.

Below, I apply Sen’s notion of development as freedom to the contents of the CP’s curriculum and the findings that suggest the CP increases worker empowerment.

Development as Freedom and the CAW’s CP

CP graduates return to the workplace with an enlightened and invigorated sense of their position as labourer within society (Weststar 2004). Indeed, the CP results in an increased desire to become an agent of change in the workplace and larger community.¹⁴ For instance, 66.7 percent of PEL participants indicated that they were more likely to become active in the community after attending PEL versus 50 percent prior to PEL (Weststar 2004: 4). More importantly, empowerment and understanding of class position can potentially diffuse throughout the workplace and community (Spencer 1994).

The CAW’s CP empowers workers, strengthening the labour movement (Weststar 2006). For instance, 77.2 percent of the participants state that their overall self-confidence increased as a result of the CP (Weststar 2004). Increased worker self-confidence strengthens the labour movement by creating a greater critical mass struggling for the distribution of social goods. The CP empowers its members to further the interests of working people and the development of Canadian society through public provisions. I apply Sen’s (1999) five instrumental freedoms – i) political freedoms ii) economic freedoms iii) social opportunities iv) transparency guarantees and v) protective securities – to examine the CP’s contribution to Canadian development.

The CP increases political freedom by empowering workers to directly impact decision-making governing bodies, corresponding to education for democratic citizenship (Nussbaum 2010). Based on establishing a working-class identity and worldview, the CP increases the ability of workers to translate

¹⁴ Data and discussion is limited since it is based on attitudinal indicators (Weststar 2004). Examining changes in behaviour would be beneficial and is a prospect for future research.

their interests through parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means, potentially impacting “who should govern and on what principles” from the union to the federal government (Sen 1999:38). Thus, exercising political freedoms cultivates “the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel progress” (Sen 1999:5). This echoes the former director of the CP who states that “the overall objective is to give workers the confidence to participate in the union and in their society to try to implement progressive social change” (Roth 2007:10). In sum, CP graduates become more active within the CAW and the broader labour movement as depicted in Table 1 (Weststar 2006).

Table 1

	YES Prior to PEL	NO Prior to PEL	MORE LIKELY After PEL	NOT MORE LIKELY After PEL
<i>Steward or Committee Member</i>	49.1%	50.9%	40.4%	59.6%
<i>Involved in Collective Bargaining</i>	8.8%	91.2%	33.3%	66.7%
<i>Attend Union Meetings</i>	75.4%	24.6%	77.2%	22.8%
<i>Attend Union Education</i>	64.9%	35.1%	87.7%	12.3%
<i>Engage in Union Discussion with Friends, Family or Co-Workers</i>	77.2%	22.8%	73.7%	26.3%
<i>Attend Union Organized Events</i>	64.9%	35.1%	70.2%	29.8%
<i>Active in Community</i>	50.0%*	50.0%*	66.7%	33.3%
<i>Interested in Politics</i>	45.8%*	56.2%*	63.2%	36.8%
<i>Attend Education Outside the Union</i>	N/A**	N/A**	42.1%	57.9%
<i>Teach Union Education</i>	N/A**	N/A**	49.1%	50.9%

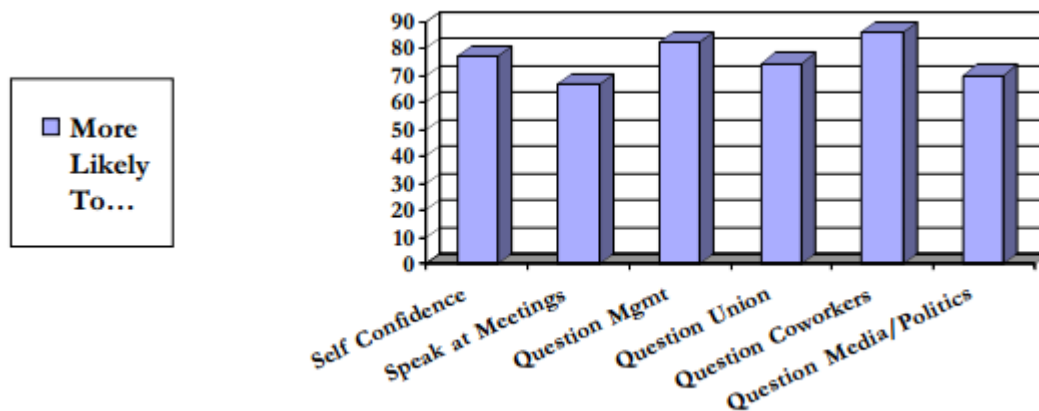
*Numbers obtained from different question format where ‘fairly’ and ‘very’ active translate to ‘Yes’ and ‘not’ and ‘somewhat’ active translate to ‘No’.

**Questions were not asked regarding prior activity in these areas.

Source: reproduced from Weststar (2004).

Participating in the CP strengthens worker identity while enabling their finding a ‘voice’ to participate in public dialogue (Roth 1997, 1997b). In relation, CP participants cite a significant increase in having the confidence to challenge authority figures and power relations (CAW Education Department 2011). Undermining the “culture of silence,” this equates to political freedom by increasing the capacity to scrutinise and criticise authorities (Apple 1995; Freire (1970) as cited in Carnoy 1974:19; Sen 1999). For instance, a significant number of participants state being more likely to question the decisions of management, the union and views of fellow workers while being more likely to speak at union meetings (See Figure 1) (Weststar 2004).

Figure 1. PEL's Effect on Confidence and Critical Thinking



Source: Weststar (2004)

The CP also equips labourers with the means to construct an effective argument, aiding in the creation of working-class intellectuals (Apple 1995; Gramsci 2007). Confidence is nurtured by acquainting participants with discourses that facilitate understandings of labour, politics and the economy through participatory learning. For instance, one participant notes that “what the [CP] taught me was what the words really mean and what they really refer to, like exploitation” (PEL Interview as cited in Roth 2007:10). Challenging “imposed restrictions on the freedom to participate in the social, political, and economic life of the community,” the CP furnishes participants with confidence to voice their interests (Sen 1999:4). With class interests as a focal point, the CP empowers workers and corresponds to development as freedom by arming members with tools to effectively practice their civil and political rights. Such practice revolves around challenging economic modes of development that undermine human capacities, the welfare state and labour. Indeed, the CP increases confidence to participate in critical debate of policies and actions that impact working people (Nussbaum 2010).

Secondly, the CP contributes to development as freedom by increasing the understanding of economic facilities, which could alter the conditions of exchange (Sen 1999). Economic facilities concern the opportunities that individuals have for utilising economic resources “for the purpose of consumption, production, or exchange” (Sen 1999:39). The CP stresses that the capability to access and employ economic facilities is limited by the class structure. It is imparted that variable access to economic facilities depends on resources owned, how the market is structured and who this construction benefits. In fact, with globalisation, access to economic assets is decreasing for Canadian working people (CAW Education Department 2011).

Empowering workers through discussions of the inequity of economic entitlements, the CP highlights that, despite the economic growth and relative wealth of Canada, there is a maldistribution of resources. Thus, the CP prioritises the redistributive elements of economic growth and critiques the allocation of resources based on class. Also, the CP's discussion of surplus-value creates a counter-hegemony which empowers the worker and, if internalised and widely diffused, the labour movement

to challenge the logic of capitalism that limits labour's access to economic resources by privileging competitive capital accumulation over the interests of labour. Creating a critical mass around this counter-hegemony can translate into labour militancy and stern demands surrounding the valuing of labour. This pressure from the labour movement applies an upward force on wages, benefits and working conditions even for non-union workers, increasing individual capacities to access economic resources (Camfield 2011).

Thirdly, the CP increases social opportunities for participants (Sen 1999). Acknowledging the importance of continued learning, the CP creates a worker-centred educational experience which benefits the daily lives of participants (Weststar 2006). Valuing continued learning, the CAW's CP prioritises the linkages between individual experiences and broader economic and social justice issues. Self-expertise is valorised in contrast to the traditional education system which "locates knowledge outside the learner in the guise of the teacher" (Freire 1995; Sears 2003:255). The sense that individual experiences are situated in a system that can be challenged and changed is a major source of empowerment (Carnoy 1974; Livingstone and Roth 1998). Challenging the cultural capital thesis which privileges bourgeois habitus as formal and credible learning, the CP elevates both formal and informal knowledge of working people, which hopes to increase the opportunities of individual workers to "effectively shape their own destiny and help each other" (Apple 1995; Harker 1990; Livingstone and Roth 1998; Sen 1999:8). A rise in participant confidence based on formal and informal knowledge increases the social opportunities of labourers. For instance, after completing the program participants are more likely to run for elected office positions within the union (Weststar 2006).

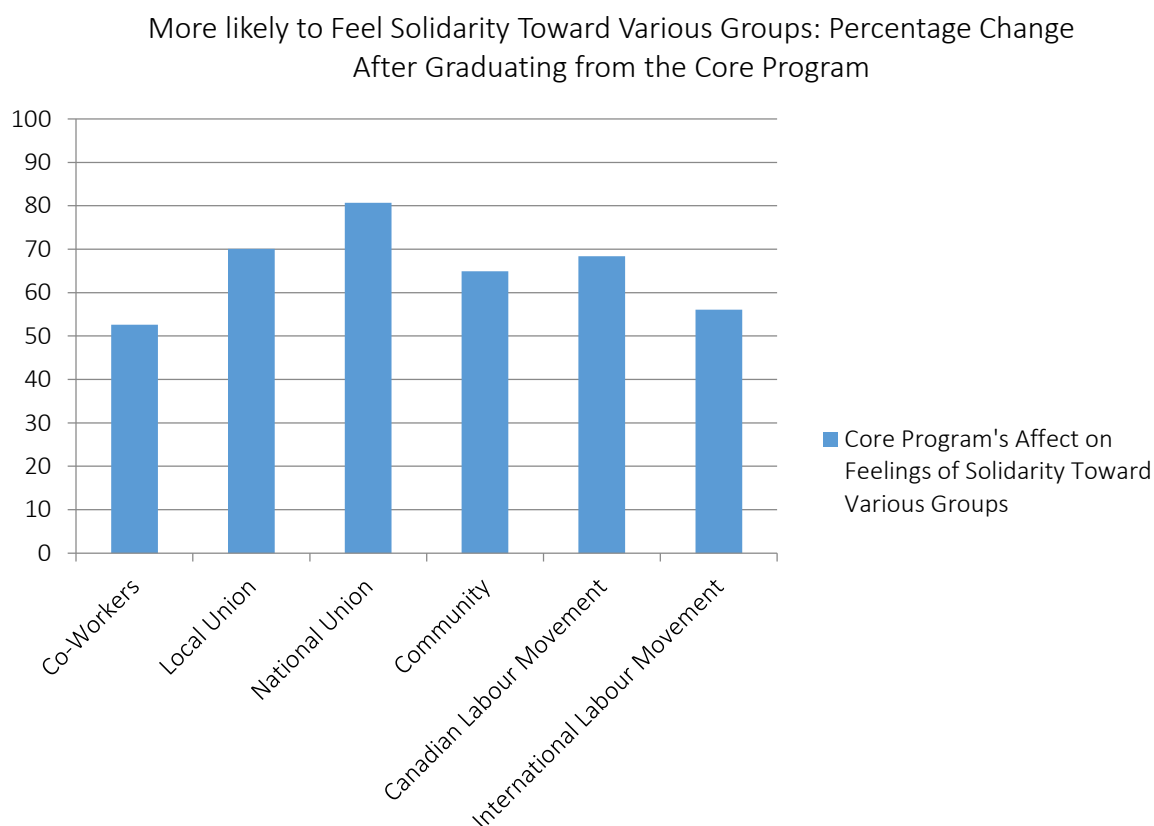
To effectively participate in economic and political activities, the CP stresses the importance of a critical labour education (Apple 1995; Sen 1999; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Indeed, the CP offers the opportunity to discuss and debate the values and priorities regarding the construction of current political and economic systems (Sen 1999:30). An increase in social opportunities corresponds to the program's goals to: provide a critical working-class perspective; develop individual skills of rhetoric and persuasion; and cultivate confidence to participate within the union and society to struggle for progressive social change (Roth 2007; Spencer 1994). Consequently, the CP's curriculum drastically impacts participant identity, expanding possibilities and roles (Spencer 1994). Valorising the experiences of working people fosters confidence and empowerment while increasing the intellectual foundation and social opportunities for the individual worker (Livingstone and Roth 2004). By increasing member opportunities, the CAW strives to strengthen the Canadian labour movement. More importantly, the CP highlights the labour movement as a site for increasing the life chances for the majority of Canadians by struggling for state investment in social provisions.

Transparency guarantees are also strengthened through the counter-hegemonic discourse promoted by the CP (Sen 1999). Sharpening critical thinking abilities, transparency concerning various mediums within society will be demanded by more workers, which is tied to maintaining a healthy democracy (Nussbaum 2010). The importance of transparency is emphasised in the CP's focus on media literacy, fostering a working-class scepticism of media and political commentary (Ferguson 2012; Weststar 2004). For instance, a participant states her new found distrust in corporate media, professing that "they taught about the class societies and how media can change things around to benefit themselves or whoever it is that's powerful. I don't look at the paper in the same way that I used to" (PEL Interview as cited in Roth 2007:13). By questioning the validity of messages imparted by powerful elites, the CP increases the viability of transparency guarantees within Canada. Since the concentration of power typically necessitates some sort of opaqueness, the CP aids in creating

working-class citizens who can be instrumental in prosecuting or even “preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings” (Nussbaum 2010; Sen 1999:40).

Finally, the CAW’s CP empowers workers and the labour movement to demand the maintenance and increased distribution of protective securities within Canada (Spencer 1994; Terry and Abdullat 2004). Debating and discussing political and economic issues from the lens of working people can

Figure 2. CP’s Effect on Feeling of Solidarity towards Various Groups



	Coworker	Local Union	National Union	Can. Mov't	Int'l Mov't	Community	Political Party	Prev. Union
<i>Greatly Decr.</i>	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
<i>Decr.</i>	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	1.8%	0.0%
<i>No Chg.</i>	42.1%	29.9%	19.3%	29.8%	42.1%	33.3%	57.1%	84.2%
<i>Incr.</i>	42.1%	56.1%	47.4%	50.9%	43.8%	47.4%	26.8%	10.5%
<i>Greatly Incr.</i>	10.5%	14.0%	33.3%	17.5%	12.3%	17.5%	7.2%	5.3%
<i>≥ Incr.</i>	52.6%	70.1%	80.7%	68.4%	56.1%	64.9%	34.0%	15.8%

Source: Data provided by Weststar (2004).

potentially influence public values and social mores for the redistribution of social goods (Carnoy 1974; Sen 1999). Such empowerment is fostered by critiquing the privileging of competitive capital accumulation over the development of human capacity (Nussbaum 2010b).

Corresponding to Sen's (1999) endorsement of a "support-led process [which] does not wait for dramatic increases in per capita levels of real income and works through priority being given to providing social services," the CP increases participants' likelihood of supporting a strong welfare state (30). Support for increasing public social provisions is initiated by cultivating solidarity and empathy for the struggles of others, increasing the sense of communal responsibility (Friesen 1994; Nussbaum 2010b; Sears 2003). Internalising shared struggle despite difference increases the likelihood to fight not only for self-interest but also on behalf of and in solidarity with others. This feeling of shared struggle results in CP graduates displaying increased activism and solidarity with other workers, communities and a wider range of social groups (See Figure 2) (Weststar 2004).

Connectedness increases empowerment by strengthening empathy and the desire for social change (Sears 2003; Weststar 2006). Empathy is fostered by deconstructing traditional models of education which promote a subject-object relationship to a subject-subject relationship (Freire 1995; Nussbaum 2010b). Indeed, the CP does not simply endeavour to foster support for CAW collective bargaining efforts, but strives to obtain a larger social justice agenda through "the ability to think about the good of the nation [and international community] as a whole [and] not just that of one's own local group" (Nussbaum 2010: 26; Taylor 2001). As Weststar (2006) notes, "respondents indicate increased or greatly increased solidarity towards their national union, their local, their communities, the Canadian labour movement and the international labour movement" (317). Solidarity despite difference increases the conviction that providing a strong welfare state is morally right (Kuisma 2007; Nussbaum 2010). Thus, the CP offers participants "the ability to have concern for the lives of others, to grasp how policies impact the opportunities and experiences of fellow citizens, of many types, and for people outside one's own nation" (Nussbaum 2010: 25-6).

The CP emphasises the importance of protective securities by establishing a counter-hegemony based on a "collaborative comprehension of problems and remedies" (Apple 1995; Sen 1999: 3). With labour movement strength there is a greater pressure on governments to create and maintain the social safety net. While the CAW negotiates for increased protective securities for their members, this struggle also has a positive impact on widespread access to the welfare state (Camfield 2011). Such access relates to the interconnections between economic inequality and socio-political exclusion (CAW 2008). Worker empowerment corresponding to increasing protective securities complements Friesen's (1994) conviction that "through a more effective workers' education movement [a] different 'social order' can [be mobilised], an alternative community, that builds community-based values" (187). The CP encourages participants to struggle against the hierarchical structure by providing potential "tools of change" through discussion and debate (Carnoy 1974: 18). Through such education, there is an increased potential for members to struggle against poverty, inequality and social exclusion while strengthening individual capabilities by increasing the distribution of instrumental freedoms (Sen 1999).

Limitations

The CP culminates in graduation and receiving a certificate, which may result in an environment of credentialism (Collins 1979). For instance, Roth (1997b) notes that “many graduates have gone on to assume leadership positions within the union, becoming elected committeepersons, plant chairpersons and executive members.” Instead of priority being given to creating agents to enact social change, the CP becomes a mechanism of individual entrepreneurship to ascend the union hierarchy (Livingstone and Roth 1998; Spencer 1994). While the two goals may not be mutually exclusive, emphasis and motivation based on the latter is problematic for the CP becoming an avenue of progressive change within Canada. Despite this concern, many graduates typically participate “at more rallies, join a community group, sign a petition, or generally stand up for issues on the workplace floor” (Weststar 2006: 310).

The potential for elitism resulting from credentials also relates to the selection process of who attends the CP. Currently, making the CP available to all members is unfeasible. Since access is restricted, stratification may occur regarding who is given the opportunity to attend. As such, the amount of politicking and potential nepotism surrounding who attends can negatively impact the progressive goals of the CP. This challenge can be confronted by establishing more concrete methods for applicant sorting while exploring avenues to increase access (Roth 1997; Weststar 2006).

Secondly, the skills cultivated at the CP typically do not translate into a sustained sense of empowerment. Worker desire to strengthen the labour and union movement is soon diminished since, once back in the workplace, it is difficult to implement progressive practice (Weststar 2004:6).¹⁵ It is of the utmost importance for the national and local unions to establish an agenda where returning workers can continue activism (Luce 2014). Without this, counter-hegemonic discourses will lose strength. If the CP wishes to develop leaders and activists to reinvent and revive the labour movement, it is necessary to provide outlets for graduates to engage their worldview and skills (Weststar 2006). This relates to providing a space for praxis, which links critical reflection with action to change concrete situations (Freire 1995).

Local leadership is also increasingly sending members to the one week ‘tool’ courses since it maximises the number of workers sent (Weststar 2006). This trend is detrimental, however, since the holistic development of critical capacities is not the focus of the week programs; instead, skillsets are prioritised. The tendency away from the CP to weeklong skill development may weaken the CP’s positive impact on the union and wider labour movement.

Finally, despite the CP discussing matters of diversity, the racial and gendered composition of those who attend the program perpetuates the image of a traditional union since most attendees tend to be white and male (Camfield 2011; Caraway 2007; Kirton 2002; Weststar 2006). The participants attending the CP do not represent the actual composition of the union. This is the result of new and/or smaller units lacking resources to send members (CAW Education Department 2011). Consequently, the composition of CP participants relative to the actual composition of the CAW’s membership seems to undermine discussions of unity and equality in diversity (Weststar 2006). The

¹⁵ Additionally, there seems to be a contradiction between CP philosophy and CAW campaigns. For instance, the “Made in Canada Matters Campaign,” which attempts to address Canadian manufacturing decline, promotes protectionist buying policies while encouraging competitive unionism (CAW 2006). Denying the ideals of the CP, this negates broader national and international labour solidarity (Goldfield and Palmer 2007; Panitch 2001).

CAW's Education Department is attempting to remedy this discrepancy through various means which include offering CP courses outside Port Elgin to increase access to non-Ontarian units and creating a \$100,000 subsidiary fund given annually to membership of equity seeking groups and non-auto bargaining units (Weststar 2006).

Conclusion

The CAW's Paid Education Leave (PEL) Core Program (CP) increases worker empowerment and solidarity by "developing the analytical skills required to move beneath the surface to understand the deeper processes" within the socio-political context (Sears 2003: 251). Following Sen's (1999) model of development as freedom, a counter-hegemonic educational experience has the potential to: increase political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, the demand and struggle for protective securities and impart an acute understanding of the power relations behind the distribution of economic facilities (Terry and Abdullat 2004; Sen 1999). The CP contributes to the development of instrumental freedoms at an individual level while providing the possibility to increase such freedoms at a broader societal level. Given this, the CAW's CP is one viable avenue for revitalising the labour movement in Canada. Such a renewal in the Canadian context will have a positive impact on the continual and dynamic process for development as freedom. To reap the full benefits of labour education, the most crucial and current challenge is bridging the gap between the CP's theory and sustained practice in the union, workplace and community. More recently, in 2013, the CAW merged with the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada to form UNIFOR. It would be of interest to see if and how the CP's curriculum has adapted to the increased occupational diversity of participants and to examine whether the CP is maintaining or increasing its effectiveness. Finally, a more in-depth longitudinal study of the program in terms of the before and after effects on worker engagement and worker identity would be of value. This would provide insights into the effectiveness of the PEL as a worker education program and could contribute to curriculum development and implementation in the future.

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