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ADDRESSING INEQUITIES

Addressing Inequities in the College of the 21st Century

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Abstract

Based on a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded study of college faculty and administrators in BC (part of a national study), we documented inequities that can be related to class, ethnoracial, and gender stratification. Participants in Early Childhood Education (ECE), practical nursing and literacy explained how government restructuring disadvantaged poorer women students, and placed heavy workloads on faculty and students. These feminized vocational fields are vulnerable to instability in the “new” college in which the “flexible” worker is the norm. Our interviews took place in former university colleges, and urban as well as rural colleges. We document how some strategies magnified these disparities after restructuring, while others attempted to address the problem. For example, faculty all took upon themselves the responsibility for delivering their programs; unions tried to protect vulnerable workers through new clauses in the collective agreement; and one institution repositioned itself as an elite college. We recount theories of interviewees about the basis of the inequities; some clearly identified the consequences of government interventions as a devaluation of women, children and the poor. Our paper begins to search for ways in which these structural realities might be addressed by various stakeholders.

Keywords: inequalities, higher education, vocational, government, vulnerable, class, race, gender, interviews, urban, rural, disparities, college, students, administration, British Columbia, Canada

Addressing Inequities in the College of the 21st Century

Introduction

This paper draws on a dataset of 45 interviews with faculty and administrators in BC colleges to document a set of inequities that can be related to class, race, and gender stratification in our society. In this paper, we report a history of restructuring which compressed or slashed the vocational programs in early childhood education (ECE), practical nursing and literacy in the colleges. Participants explained how poorer women students were disadvantaged by this restructuring, which also placed heavy workloads on faculty and students. Their accounts suggest that these feminized vocational fields are more vulnerable to instability in the college of the twenty-first century where the “flexible” worker is the norm (Levin et al., 2006). American authors have been particularly outspoken about how the state introduces these inequities in the process of implementing market liberalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Levin et al., 2016). Fields traditionally considered academic have historically been more protected given the funding system in BC, but there can be inequities in any division, as we discovered.

Funding and Organizational Splits

Basic structural aspects of the BC postsecondary system are important in explaining some college events in the 1990s. We describe briefly the most well-known of these, mentioned by many participants—the split between Langara and Vancouver Community College (VCC), as well as the specific effects on particular colleges during the restructuring that occurred when the Liberals took power in 2002. Historically, in contrast to vocational programs such as ECE, Arts and Science was differentially favoured by BC provincial funding (with what a union leader recalled was approximately 30 percent more funding for Arts and Science than any other division such development, career or vocational). This resulted in more funding for colleges with larger

Arts and Science faculties (or what are typically called transfer credit or feeder programs to universities) than others. In fact, Langara and VCC used to be one institution until Arts and Science faculty transferred to the Langara location and bargained from a different union local than the VCC campus. This arrangement resulted in a permanent split between the two which became different colleges. Langara retained the better funded academic Arts and Science faculty while VCC retained faculty in programs such as literacy and cosmetology. These latter programs differentially attract women and working class students. VCC also retained culinary and other vocational programs that are ethnoracially diverse. Langara College serves as a UBC feeder with the majority of their graduates attending UBC, the most elite postsecondary institution in the Province. This is the American junior college model. VCC does not sit in this prestigious position, instead servicing the surrounding poor communities where its campuses are located. It should be noted that not all colleges can be called feeder colleges, especially if their Arts and Science programs have been cut back during restructuring.

Similar to the situation in Vancouver, Okanagan, like VCC and Langara, used to be one institution and was eventually split apart after a few years as a university college with different regulatory arrangements. Nursing was split between baccalaureate nursing at the resulting university while practical nursing remained in the college half of the original university college. Similar to the situation in Vancouver, the university half of Okanagan retained the professors with PhDs from the former university college while the college half retained programs such as ECE (with no university transfer) and dental assisting, where faculty tend not to have doctorates, although they have work experience and may have graduate degrees. Again, the programs retained by the college differentially tend to attract women and working class students. An interesting wrinkle is that this former university college has had two bargaining units, a faculty

association representing academic faculty and a union representing vocational instructors, arguably a holdover from being a previous university college. The situations we discuss here are not as well-known as these two examples, but together, they provide enough data to raise questions about how the situation could be made more equitable for faculty across the Province.

Class and Gender Implications of Historical Restructuring in BC Colleges

Early Liberal government cuts to the BC college system need to be seen against the backdrop of the college as a general social institution to increase access to postsecondary education for minoritized (gendered and racialized) populations (Muzzin & Meaghan, 2014). As it turns out, these cuts in the first few years of the Liberal mandate tended to be in what were termed “developmental,” which includes literacy programs at many BC colleges. As a union head commented:

We’ve had huge cuts in the last decade. And [the college boards] had the freedom to do that. We appealed to the provincial government...and they said “colleges have the right to do this the way they want to do it.” So they’ve put very few requirements into the block of what [we] had to do with this money. ...[Our college] decided with this block to say, “Well, we don’t want to do as much ESL (English as a Second Language) as we’ve been doing.... So they cut ESL about 16 percent over the last decade.... Actually, it’s a scandal because they actually saved money after those cuts and used it to build [a new building].... They weren’t accountable. They just had to become accountable for a gross figure.... “Deliver 6,000 full-time equivalents, and here’s your block to do it.”

A participant in our study recalled:

BCIT were hit very hard right at the beginning—they lost 100 ESL faculty.... It was basic education and I understood, of course, that these are students who are not paying that are poor, and so on, so it's an obvious equity move.... It started out with the developmental programs.

While faculty cuts accompanying this Liberal restructuring in technologies predominantly affected males, those in developmental programs were primarily female and contingent. At a northern BC college in our study, there were many cuts in these access programs, according to a participant: “We lost a volunteer adult literacy training program...that was the very most fundamental course for students. And then, of course, we lost faculty in what we call CCP college and career prep. ABE (Adult Basic Education), essentially. As a Business faculty member in an urban college commented:

some of the worst situations happened...when we had some downsizing. The [faculty in the pre-college] Business programs were let go...and there was no consultation. And there were somewhere between 100 and 200 faculty laid off.... [I]t was just an announcement.... It was very, very nasty.

As this statement makes clear, access programs were particularly vulnerable when these cuts were made. The best known example of these layoffs involved VCC, after its split with Langara, which contained many vocational programs and pre-college programs, as reported in many publications (Shen, 2014; Hyslop, 2015). The cuts to these programs selectively disadvantaged poorer and immigrant students, exactly those whom colleges were founded to service. (FPSE, 2008; Shen, 2014). A poignant part of this attack on the colleges was that rising tuition also disadvantaged poor students in rural colleges and enrolment dropped steadily as a

vicious cycle of closing programs and falling below enrolment targets continued for many years.

As a union leader at an interior college said:

The rural areas were far heavier hit by the Campbell government. ... They increased tuitions at [our college] by 77 percent within the first two years. ... [Interviewer: So that's a direct result of your increasing tuition, the enrolment drop?] I think so. I have that argument with the administration all the time. [Interviewer: What do they think it is?] They think it's the boom in the economy right now that people don't come.

[Interviewer: They go to the oil sands or something like that?... It would be nice to run some kind of correlation between the two...] Yeah, because we don't have any local data to try to tie them together. It's very difficult when students are leaving because they can't afford to come, you lose track of them.... So single mothers, in particular are affected and [our region] isn't wonderful for women's wages to begin with, so I used that example that it's very difficult to track students. But I've had some of my own students call and say "I'd love to be there but I can't afford it." You know, those on social assistance that were being funded to come. They're gone too.

Gender and Ethnoracial Considerations and the Status Hierarchy of Programs

In addition to those they serve, there are also gendered aspects to college programs themselves, with ECE participants often referring to themselves as being at the bottom of the status hierarchy, reflecting how women are poorly paid for working with children and their education is devalued accordingly. In addition to these observations, there were also more nuanced ones regarding gender. For example, it was pointed out by the head of the hospitality program at one college that although there were more women than men students, there were

more men full-time faculty than women faculty. The gender relations were reversed for contingent faculty, with more women. The administrator commented:

It's still an old boy's network industry. And the thing that's interesting to me is that the new old boys' are fiercely protective. You know, I'm gonna say it's third generation. ... We have people who are in their mid-50s who are what I call 'new old boys.' So they've been brought in and trained by the old boys and now they're the new old boys. ... Now there's a generation of old boys in the college system.... So there's the old boys and the new old boys and the young old boys... It's amazing how that system works... The ability for young women to move up through the system or to gain the same kind of status or job security as somebody that is an equal, but a male, is two totally different experiences.

Within this executive as well as the diploma program itself, there are profound gender inequities in that the student body is feminized in both while all full-time instructors are male and most contingent faculty are female.

Finally, it is worth noting that one of the few women of colour that we encountered in the BC colleges we visited was teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). She was able to provide insight into how a college could prevent the "rollover" into full-time work provision that college unions have negotiated. In this case, Arts and Science were targeted by the president, whose vision for his college was as a trade school, not a feeder college. As the woman of colour said:

ESL classes vary in length—some classes are 6 hours/week and some are 7.5.... So I think I was teaching 8 or 12 hours a week or just under half. ... [I]t's kind of odd. If you teach 15 hours a week and you are Type 2, you are part time. But anything over

15, even if its 16, bang, they have to pay you fulltime. So they work really hard not to give you that sixteenth hour. Or else they give you 24—they want you to be teaching the maximum number of hours that you can for the number of hours you are being paid.

Because both of her positions were part time (ESL and a community job), she had great difficulty in completing her masters' degree in Women's Studies. However, she eventually (accidentally?) became regularized by working in both Women's Studies and ESL. This "rollover" into full-time status with a given number of hours, she argued, in general terms was a very advantageous clause in the collective agreement, although it did not work for her. As she put it,

a whole bunch of us got laid off even though we were regularized.... They said there wasn't enough funding and there wasn't enough of us. [Interviewer: Do you think that ESL always takes the hit when there is going to be layoffs?] I think it often does. ...[M]y layoff was rescinded at the last moment because there were enough students. There continued to be enough students and they kept extending the layoff and saying "OK, now you are not laid off until--", "Now you are not laid off until--", and they kept doing that and there is only so many times they can do that until they actually have to rescind your layoff.... [And did that happen to you?] Yes. Twice.... It's hard because they keep stretching it out.... [So what does regularization actually mean then? I guess the union has to fight for you?] Yes it does....but every once in a while, Arts and Science...would offer me a first year writing class because they laid off the English department, right?... So somebody else would cover my ESL hours. I really

enjoyed doing Women's Studies [which] counts for more. So every hour I work...is something like 1.5 hours of ESL work.

She went on to explain how some of those on continuous layoff eventually "got farmed out to other departments because I'm not the only one with other experience. So English and Sociology." Thus even though colleges with more Arts and Science programs have better overall funding, this does not protect Arts and Science faculty from not being rehired and being replaced with contingent faculty in BC. This woman of colour declared, "I am the lowest out of everybody at the College!" She found that the hardship brought people together, since "we are all women in [ESL]." She was also able to share her anti-racist teaching with other ESL instructors who then incorporated critical perspectives into their courses. Although we cannot fully explore in this paper the devaluation of college programs such as ESL and Women's Studies that stand at the intersection of class, race and gender, this one participant's career suggested it made her "the lowest" in status. It was telling when she explained that the grouping of ESL was with ECE and Culinary Arts, because that did not make sense to her. However, as we noted, these are the traditional women's roles of teaching children, languages and cooking.

Although most participants did not discuss class and gender with respect to devaluation of their work, as sociologists we could see that the location of one of the urban college campuses in our study was in the inner city, while its elite counterpart was located in a park-like middle-class area. One serviced the impoverished community as part of the college mandate; it does not aspire to become a feeder to a university. By comparing working conditions (workload, job permanence, and control over curricula) and remuneration (salary and benefits) of college faculty in general, the "academic" (Arts and Science and Business) programs of the more elite colleges in our study "fed" the universities and thus enjoyed a higher status than the urban colleges with

more “vocational” programs (ECE and Trades). In the next section, we explain how, during its brief lifetime as a university college, a split formed within one institution between university and college faculty and how college faculty still experience these status differences. In the next section, we present a more fine-grained analysis with ECE as an example of how the status differences feather out in what might be called “fractiles” (after Abbott, 2000).

Program and College Stratification Within a Vocational Field: The Case of ECE

As noted above, a particularly disadvantaged group of faculty in BC are ECE college instructors, who had their two-year diploma programs reduced to a nine-month certificate program by the Ministry of Advanced Education for five years. Why did the government impose this restriction? An interesting observation by one of our participants suggested that the BC government of the day was modelling the provincial curriculum after the 10-week curriculum of private colleges. This was part of what she called “letting the market slip in.” But ECE faculty, a group strongly identifying with the professionalization of ECE, protested the government’s policy and in some colleges, have successfully turned it back. Arguably, despite a vigorous professionalization project undertaken by this feminized profession (Howe & Prochnur, 2012), a deep devaluation of women and children conflated with social class underlies this minoritization of ECE and ECE education.

According to one informant, immediately following the government compression of their ECE program, faculty and many students in an elite college in our study (including women in part-time jobs with children) suffered from burnout or decided to drop out in impossible attempts to carry out what their professional regulators prescribed for the curriculum. Thus as a strategy, attempting to keep the original curriculum within a truncated time frame worked, but the cost was high. Broadbent and Laughlin (1997) explain that this strategy in the face of

cutbacks involves faculty becoming an “absorbing group.” That is, professionals do whatever it takes to do their work properly. It is ironic that these problems were suffered by the students and faculty in that the BC government of the day justified its compression of these programs to get graduates “out into the workforce faster” because of the shortage of workers. They also wanted to keep salaries low to keep daycare fees low. Interestingly, they charged the same tuition for the truncated program. However, in the analysis of another one of our participants, who acknowledged that poorly paid ECE contingent faculty make it possible to attract ECE students who might otherwise not be able to afford the tuition, she argued that the shortage of ECE professionals has more to do with extremely low wages in the field (not lengthy ECE programs). As she commented:

There are still a lot of people working in Early Childhood who earn \$14 an hour. On the higher end, a new person coming into a field in a unionized setting might get closer to the \$18 to \$20 an hour.

In fact, ECE faculty at one of the urban colleges in our study attempted to retain its elite status in the ECE world during early restructuring by compressing its two-year curriculum into three very intensive continuous trimesters in order to satisfy the government’s policy. As one informant recalled under the contract, “faculty [were] required to teach two continuous semesters and have one non-teaching seminar.” Faculty could be asked to teach three continuous trimesters and could decline, though few did because they were committed to the professional project. She herself talked about working “24/7,” along with colleagues who, “spend hours in their prep, in their marking or their community work, with a very long history and legacy of community involvement.”

There was more to this restructuring of ECE in BC than creating jobs because a few colleges actually lost their ECE programs, ostensibly due to low enrolments. However, it should be noted that school boards in BC offer an ECE certificate, thus competing with local colleges. Although BC ECE programs have moved on from their period of restructuring, we discovered that over time, there were winners and losers. For example, Capilano College, now a university, kept its two year diploma when it became a university and now offers an ECCE degree (Early Childhood Education and Care). Kwantlen, when it was a college, lost its ECE program and has no ECE programming as a university. Okanagan College successfully went back to a two-year diploma with the goal of having its own applied degree in the future. However, New Caledonia College and Vancouver Community College still have only a certificate in ECE. Indicative of the marginalization of this program at one college, we found that all 15 or so instructors were employed in Continuing Education, meaning that they are contingent faculty who presumably work in day care centres during the day and teach at night. As a former CE director put it, “they get \$45 an hour for teaching a course, along with their hope this is an entry position to academia.” As is well known, such employees have no benefits even though the pay might be better than in the workplace.

Colleges located in upscale neighbourhoods have more favorable working conditions than other colleges in our study for historical reasons that have to do with board representation, power relations within the institutions, and the relationships among institutions in regions where they are located. However, as part of an administrative move, ECE faculty in an elite college, were encouraged to support the community (in advising to 100-150 day care centres in the area) as a form of professional development. The need for community development is presented in the college Strategic Plan as intending “to promote the program and to promote the college.” Thus

the kind of altruism towards the community that Levin and colleagues mentioned about BC colleges in his earlier study (2006) is recast as building the college reputation. Here, arguably, the professional project of ECE faculty resonates with the aims of the administration. One faculty member said that in any week, she worked 20-30 hours in the community of the 70 hours she worked for the college, often facing burnout. Thus although the extreme situation of early Liberal restructuring has given way to somewhat better conditions for some ECE faculty, overall there are caveats about inequities among colleges and new universities (which transformed from former university colleges during our period of study).

Historical Stratification: Academic vs. Vocational Credentials and Programs in Nursing

Nursing, another feminized program, is also a special case in the colleges because of its historical (some would say successful) professionalization process that culminated in the decision by nursing associations to make the baccalaureate the entry-to-practice credential. Part of this professionalization involves an increasing scope of practice as well as a workload that is at least as high as we have pointed out is experienced by many ECE faculty. Thus when the Liberals restructured BC college nursing programs to be one-year (as they did in ECE), nursing instructors, like their ECE counterparts, were faced with crushing workloads. Where 25 contact hours might be specified, as a nurse administrator estimated, “I would be guessing that there would be more people putting in more hours than 25. I am thinking 50 hours,” which would include course preparation, marking and attendance at meetings. Historically, huge cuts in the health care sector in Canada during the 1980s had forced many instructors in our research to flee to the US for a few years. They returned when a nursing ‘boom’ occurred in the 2000s. One of the corollaries of the boom is that, as one instructor put it,

So really what has happened over the last few years is that the LPN graduate is almost like...the diploma RN program...but in a one-year program [now increased to 16 months]... in a much, much shorter period of time, so what tends to happen is that we have attrition for the inability of the students to...learn the information in the allotted time.... It is not just the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Advanced Education. It is also the College of LPNs that have increased the competencies.... We have hit the limit. We cannot add anything more. ... We keep getting given more money to increase our program and then we are struggling trying to get staff for that and placements.

In addition to the curriculum pressures, BC Nursing faculty face an increasing intake of students; as an administrator put it, “there’s just such need and people get stressed.” Faculty and administrators complained about the huge growth of private nursing colleges, which are turning out, in some cases, more graduates than the largest public colleges. Further, the BC government has mandated that all colleges, public or private, need to cooperate in sharing Nursing placements, which means that as the private college share of the pie increases, the numbers of placements reserved for public colleges diminishes. As one nursing coordinator commented, “the mandate of the...government is to have a cooperative system with deregulation and downsizing.... They love public-private partnerships.” In addition to the pressures put on public colleges by private colleges taking more placements, Nursing faculty pointed out that private colleges fall far short of offering the full provincial curriculum and tend to accept students who would not qualify for public colleges.

While their professionalization process has proceeded differently in each Canadian province, the goal of the Nursing profession overall has been to establish an academic degree in

Nursing as the entry to practice, not an associate or applied degree which is what colleges by legislation in BC are allowed to grant. In order for nurses to graduate with a baccalaureate, they must be taught by a certain percentage of nursing faculty with PhDs. Being taught by PhD-trained nurses can be accomplished through attending a college where one can ladder from a practical nursing diploma into a registered BScN program. Alternatively, one can attain a practical nursing diploma and transfer credit to a university to fulfill the requirement for an academic (rather than an applied) degree. In the case of one urban college in our study, which initiated its baccalaureate in 2008, the PN Coordinator explained that 12 members of her 17 fulltime staff had been recruited from the previously existing PN program. However, these are masters' trained faculty and the quality assurance board of the Ministry of Advanced Education required that faculty with doctorates be hired. Although four faculty were working on their doctorates, none had attained it at the time of our last visit. We heard this same story at an elite college in our study where nursing instructors working on their doctorates and trying to fulfill research responsibilities were unable to progress given their crushing workloads. Indeed, this "credential crunch" has also been found at universities (Muzzin & Limoges, 2009). Nursing programs include a substantial component of practice, which involves student visits to hospitals and clinics as well as clinical courses in the colleges supervised by clinical nursing faculty. Clinical faculty comprise up to 50 percent of nursing programs because of this supervision component. These faculty embody the experience component for nurses. Unfortunately, they tend to combine practice with teaching and so of necessity are contingent faculty with few benefits.

While large urban colleges such as those in Vancouver have problems recruiting PhD credentialed faculty, interior colleges in BC which lost their Registered Nursing (RN) programs (which were superseded by baccalaureate programs) were left with Practical Nursing (PN) diploma programs, which do not require that their faculty have masters' level training. This means that the faculty report feeling devalued compared to their urban counterparts. In one interior BC college in our study, this feeling of being devalued corresponded with being grouped with the "vocational" bargaining unit rather than the "academic" one. A nurse in the vocational unit there commented that this raised "a sore point with many that teach in the college." She saw the vocational instructors which included nurses like her as the "Cinderellas of the system." She pointed out that

teachers in the instructor area have similar and sometimes more credentials and job-related experience. Some of the guys in the Trades have substantive work experience. They have their skilled trades credentials and many now have computer related training and degrees as well as some who have educational degrees.... [T]his creates a lot of problems and tensions in the college.... [There are] two separate buildings, two different job titles and two different contracts.... We get paid less and there are fewer benefits. ... We have the same pension but we do not have the same sick leave benefits. You could argue that we do more of the heavy lifting—Nursing and the Trades are some of the heaviest teaching loads in the college. ... We are seen and we sometimes see ourselves as second class citizens. We are aware that we are not treated the same by both administration and our colleagues.... We've been told that the academics carry a lighter teaching load because they do research.... We think of it as an excuse and quite unfair.... We are [no longer a university college] but these

divisions remain... [It is] exploitation. ... With the exception of Business, I think most of the contract positions are found in the instructor group.

She went on to point out that “our building is old and the equipment is out of date” while all of the academic fields at this institution are housed in new buildings, and the “engineering department just got a number of new labs.” She had been able to leverage a government handout to address some of the worst of the inequity, but felt she should not have been forced to do so to get equipment equivalent to the academic unit.

Designing a More Equitable BC College System

In most discussions of BC postsecondary developments, the Province is lauded as creating a diversity of institutions among which there is ample transfer credit. However, our analysis suggests that faculty in the feminized professional fields of literacy, ECE and nursing have been marginalized. This marginalization is not due to overt discrimination because the unions in BC have negotiated equitable pay scales. However, as Munshi and Kurian (2005) argue, there is an “asymmetric hierarchy” embedded in public institutions that distinguishes what they call “core” vs. “othered” or peripheral statuses. We have argued in this paper that this asymmetry is linked to gender and to social class mediated by, for example, whether the faculty member works in a program that has transfer credit to a university; whether the program is listed in continuing education units that hire contingent faculty; or whether the faculty member is clinical or academic faculty.

These entrenched class and gender (and we would add ethnoracial) disparities should be addressed. In a former university college, faculty who belong to a union are called “instructors” and faculty who were part of the faculty association are called “professors.” A nurse in the college protested these status distinctions that split the profession; she expressed eloquently why

it is wrong to segment vocational instructors from professors within the profession of nursing. She made the obvious point that the use of the term professor for college members of professions marginalizes those teaching practical nursing with similar credentials to those teaching at the baccalaureate level. The term professor is a status and privilege usually associated with university academic freedom over curriculum and research, ownership of intellectual property and the institution of tenure, which provides full-time job security for life. She argues that these privileges should be extended to the professions in the colleges. We argue first, the fact that gender underlies the discrepancy needs to be recognized and second, at the very least, members of the same discipline with the same credentials should have the same privileges with regards to workload allocation and access to resources. Research done by college instructors also needs to be recognized.

One college in Canada that is known for its commitment to addressing equity issues is VCC. Frank Cosco (2014), formerly union president, has recently published an article arguing that:

in most North American advocacy forums...the disparate categories of part-time and full-time are set in solid stone with a next to impossible chasm between them.... Those on the part-time side of the chasm are not deemed to be real employees while the full-timers are.... The approach at...VCC...has been to build and strengthen a single career path for all faculty...[T]here is only one rank, instructor, and all instructors are on the same eleven-step scale. Pay equity is absolute: 30 percent and 60 percent instructors, respectively, make exactly 30 percent and 60 percent of a full-time salary at the same salary step over the same period of time. (p. 200)

The Cosco “college model” of equity leads from probationary part-time work transparently and automatically (eventually) to regular full-time work, as long as one wishes to be full-time or regularized. All faculty covered by the union agreement accrue seniority, professional development funds, protection from harassment, and transfer and recall rights under layoffs. As Cosco puts it, “there is nothing second class...about remaining [part-time].” (p. 201)

Workload is also an issue to be addressed. Rewarding community service and non-teaching duties would be a solution and such contributions should not be expected to be mandatory as they are in many ECE, nursing, and literacy programs. When colleges and governments such as BC turn a blind eye to these inequities within and between vocational fields, a viable alternative is public opinion and alliances with social justice groups. This would be a particularly useful solution for ECE, nursing, and literacy instructors, who have familiarity with advocating for the ill, immigrants and children, as well as performing significant public service outside their professions.

Summary and Conclusions

Levin and colleagues (2006) argue that the “flexible” worker in the “new college” finds various strategies to survive. For example, faculty in literacy, nursing and ECE all took upon themselves the responsibility for delivering their programs by various strategies when they were restructured; unions tried to protect vulnerable workers with new clauses in the collective agreement; and one college repositioned itself as an elite college, including its ECE program. At the level of the college, we have documented how, in BC, political restructuring magnified disparities among faculty working in the same profession in different institutions. We cited the theories of interviewees about the basis of inequities—they clearly identified the consequences of the offending strategies as a devaluation of women, children and the poor. Our paper

documents their arguments and begins to search for ways in which these structural realities might be addressed by various stakeholders. Government, union leaders and federations, leaders of professionalization projects in these disciplines, faculty in these fields and beyond and community groups can all be involved in addressing how employment structures for faculty can be made more equitable, beginning with the fundamental feminized areas of ECE, nursing and literacy in BC.

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