

EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION CASE STUDY

The following document has been developed to outline a process for collaborative, sustainable evaluation practices. The Atwater Library's *Addressing Rape Culture on Campus* Strategy Evaluation project is collaborating with Dawson College's Resist Violence Project to create an evaluation process that can be replicated and used to evaluate a range of strategies that address rape culture on campus. This document uses the Resist Violence Project as a case study to demonstrate how participatory evaluation can be beneficial in educational and community contexts.

Employing an Empowerment Approach to Evaluation with the Resist Violence Project

Through working collaboratively with the Resist Violence Project to implement an evaluation strategy we will increase the probability that the project will achieve their objectives by developing the capacity of project stakeholders to plan, implement, and evaluate their own programs. An effectively designed evaluation strategy can help to identify and contribute to the project's mission, measure the extent to which, and the ways in which a project's key objectives are being achieved, and provide data to refine and improve the effectiveness of the project. Additionally, an important and oft times overlooked aspect of evaluation is the process of manualization which involves documenting the strategy and creating manuals and resources to ensure the strategy can be shared and replicated. Carefully recording key processes and details about a strategy provides opportunities to sustainably and consistently continue the evaluation process as other institutions implement and evaluate the strategy. The manualization process also encourages the institutionalization of both the initiative and evaluation.

Overview of the Resist Violence Project

The focus of the Resist Violence Pedagogy (RVP) is on integrating critical thinking, media literacy and artistic expression competencies to address the violence that permeates our students' real and virtual lives. Developed in a Learning Communities paired course combining a Humanities world views course with a Cinema-Communications course, the project seeks to engage students intellectually, emotionally and creatively. The RVP is supported by an ECQ grant for 2018-2019 to complete the foundational work for this innovative initiative. The RVP website, <http://resist-violence.com/>, is a space where the Resist Violence Pedagogy and resources can be accessed and used by any educator and is appropriate for use in the higher grades of high school, CEGEP, university or in a Community context. The project is moving into the second phase where a community of practice (COP), with members drawn from ALC, GenEd and Social Sciences is being launched. The COP will further develop, apply and evaluate this pedagogy in

order to facilitate its transferability to a diversity of disciplinary contexts. To ensure a thorough and reliable evaluation of the pedagogy, the RVP is partnering with Eric Craven and Shanly Dixon, established researchers affiliated with the Atwater Library. The research component of the RVP will develop an evaluation framework designed to measure the pedagogy's impact on student's knowledge, awareness, attitudes, values and behaviour and gain an evidence-based understanding of how this pedagogy works in order to increase its effectiveness and transferability.

Key Features of the Resist Violence pedagogy

- An active learning, problem-based pedagogy that reaches the whole student (intellectually, emotionally and creatively) through its emphasis on critical thinking, medial literacy and creative expression.
- Students acquire the theoretical and empirical knowledge needed to deepen their insights into the problem of violence, including how it affects their own lives, while also gaining a profound understanding of why their own behavior matters.
- Through their own work in artistic activism (which aims to be transformative rather than confrontational) students come to see themselves not simply as consumers of culture, but agents of change.
- The value of bringing the “unexpected” into the classroom – through the use of art, story-telling, and inspiring examples of nonviolent activism, as a means to reach students and open them up to new ways of understanding the world.
- The pedagogy's grounding in nonviolent theory and practice offers an approach to discuss provocative/polarizing issues in an inclusive and non-threatening way to create a context where genuine discussion and understanding can take place.
- The project's relevance for both arts and research-based fields; the project has confirmed the value of bringing art into the social science classroom and key insights from the social sciences into creative, design-based spaces.

How Does the Resist Violence Pedagogy Relate to Rape Culture on College Campus?

The Resist Violence Pedagogy currently includes three different modules, focusing on rape culture, “othering” and media violence, while drawing out the interrelationships between different forms of violence. Each module includes resources that relate to gender-based violence, though the rape culture module is of particular relevance. The module teaches students to reflect critically on the problem of sexual and gender-based violence in contemporary society. The Media Literacy component focuses on examining how media technology and visual imagery can promote sexual and gender-based violence. Finally, students

employ artistic forms of expression to critique, disrupt and oppose sexual and gender-based violence.

Empowerment Evaluation and the Resist Violence Pedagogy

Empowerment evaluation is a participatory evaluation approach, which builds the capacity of individuals to integrate evaluation into organizational systems and/or project processes. In the case of the Resist Violence Pedagogy, an empowerment approach means that our project (The Atwater Library) is working in partnership with the developers of RVP to integrate evaluation into the project sustainably so that students, professors and facilitators collaboratively evaluate their own strategies in an ongoing iterative process. Rather than engaging an external evaluator, who gives a report at the end of the evaluation period, we are working collaboratively with project organizers and participants to develop evaluation methods that make sense to them, are embedded in the project and are sustainable.

As a result of the empowerment evaluation process, the participants evaluation capacity is improved and the strategy's ability to achieve its stated goals and outcomes is also improved. Ideally, through empowerment evaluation, evaluation will be established as an essential practice that is embedded within the Resist Violence Pedagogy. Empowerment evaluation mainstreams evaluation as a part of the planning and management of the Resist Violence Pedagogy. The evaluation is aimed towards increasing the probability of the strategy being successful because it provides critical feedback throughout the implementation of the strategy so that the organizers can respond to data and adjust the strategy accordingly. The idea is that the more people are participating in evaluating their own strategies the more likely it is that they will find the results credible, reliable and useful. Additionally, if they see results as credible and useful it becomes more likely that they will act on findings and recommendations.

The Atwater Library Project is supporting participatory evaluation through facilitating the various processes involved in planning, implementation, and use of the evaluation. An external partner can provide objectivity in the initial design of and implementation of evaluation. Additionally, throughout the evaluation process we will continue to provide resources and support in conducting evaluation, gathering and coding data, manualization of the pedagogy and disseminating findings. While empowerment evaluation provides the framework for the approach to the evaluation, the methods we will use to collect the data align with the transparent and democratic principles of the approach.

Some Key Empowerment Evaluation Principles that we are Employing with RVP

Evidence-based empowerment evaluation promotes the use of strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective through research. Evidence of the strategy's effectiveness, obtained through evaluative research, is collected so that organizations can use their resources to select, implement, and continue to evaluate strategies that have a high likelihood of preventing violence. Evidence-based strategies are often complemented by community knowledge to ensure that a strategy is compatible with the community context.

There are several principles that provide the foundation for empowerment evaluation, a few of which are particularly synergetic with our project. Achieving accountability through collecting data that can be used to determine whether or not the pedagogy has achieved its goals is a particularly relevant objective. Because we are using an iterative approach, collecting data and using findings to improve the outcomes, negative results will be used to inform changes in a strategy or the selection of a new strategy for the purpose of producing better outcomes. We view all results as useful, negative results provide opportunities for learning, developing and improving the Resist Violence pedagogy. We are continuously, collecting and coding data and then returning to the research process using that data to improve and strengthen the strategy as it unfolds.

Empowerment evaluation fosters a culture of learning within organizations. Stakeholders come to view both positive learning and negative evaluation results as valuable information that guides strategy improvement and to believe that every strategy can be continuously improved. Evaluators, students, professors and the larger community are collectively building knowledge both personally and for the larger community. This aligns with our objectives to develop evaluative practices that are both sustainable and are embedded in the organization. The democratic and transparent decision making process that are distinctive to the evaluation reduce the possibility of imbalances of power among stakeholders (for instance, between student and professors). Other types of participatory evaluation may not address imbalances of power among stakeholders at all. We should continuously consider the role of power in our choices of evaluation tools and processes.

A key consideration is making sure that diverse groups within the organization are part of the evaluation process i.e. students, student groups, administration, community groups. The evaluation will be iterative, so continuous input and collaboration is a valuable asset in getting the best results possible. Finally, a key reason that we chose to use an empowerment approach to evaluation is the emphasis on social justice which aligns with the goals of the RVP particularly focusing on how we can extend the potential benefits of both the pedagogy and the evaluation to all groups within the community, especially those groups who are considered underserved and/or at greater risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence.

Methodology

A qualitative mixed method framework will be employed to evaluate the RVP. This enables us to employ a range of innovative and diverse methods to capture the complexity and nuances that characterize the challenging social issues the pedagogy is designed to explore. While traditional methods such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups will be employed, the emphasis will be on developing creative arts based methods that align with the multi-disciplinary, collaborative learning approach that characterizes the RVP pedagogy. To the greatest extent possible the evaluation will be integrated and embedded in the curriculum. Evaluation will include both formative and summative assessment. This will enable the triangulation of data assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods and approaches to collect data.

Key Outcomes the Resist Violence Pedagogy is attempting to achieve

As a result of participating in the RVP Students are better able to:

- Challenge societal norms about violence (e.g. violence is inevitable, violence is effective, there is no real alternative to violence) and nonviolence (e.g. nonviolence is passive, ineffective)
- Increase student awareness in terms of recognizing the different expressions of violence, its consequences, and causes
- Change attitudes and potentially values (e.g. less support for violence, more support for nonviolence; students are more critical of pop culture/media representations of violence)
- Impacts behavior (through understanding the relationship between cultural violence and direct acts of violence and learning how to engage in artistic activism)
- Identify ways in which media glorifies or normalizes violence.

Professors & Students:

- Develop various creative means of expression to allow for new forms of addressing the complex issues connected to violence.
- Develop various creative means to explore personal understandings and document the ways in which understandings shift and evolve throughout the course
- Develop various creative measures to identify, respond to and critique violence

Initial Exploratory Research Questions:

Relevance:

To what extent did students find the pedagogy relevant in their everyday lives? Did they find the content relatable and useful in making sense of violence in the everyday interactions with media, technology and their communities?

Effectiveness:

To what extent has the Resist Violence Pedagogy achieved the stated desired key outcomes?

To what extent have unintended outcomes emerged from the pedagogy? What were these outcomes, and can they be useful in improving the effectiveness of the pedagogy?

How does change happen with regard to shifting attitudes and values around violence?

To what extent is the role of stories and the process of sharing and storytelling contribute to achieving the stated desired key outcomes?

Evaluation Process

Mission Identification Focus Group

This evaluation activity will be conducted with the students who are participating in the Resist Violence pedagogy. This activity will obtain data to define the Resist Violence Project's overarching objectives from a student perspective. A similar, related activity will be presented at the end of the pedagogy. The data from the first focus group would be used to create discussion questions for the second focus group in order to determine the degree to which student objectives had been met.

Questionnaire

A pre and post questionnaire will be distributed to both the students who are participating in the Resist Violence pedagogy and to students in a control group. The control group will be a class of students in a similar discipline and at a similar stage in their degree. The pre and post questionnaire will measure whether values and attitudes about violence change during the course of the semester.

The questionnaires would be designed to measure attitudes and/or values such as:

- Core ideas that normalize/legitimize violence
- Cynicism/individual efficacy/social commitment
- Violence in general and negative attitudes towards women and “others” (relationship between these two attitudes)

And to measure student’s knowledge and understanding about violence:

- What the participants learned (e.g. any new ideas/concepts)
- Have they learned knowledge or skills to use in their daily life
- Have their attitudes about violence changed?
- Have they applied their knowledge and skills in their daily lives (changed behavior)

The questionnaire could be used repeatedly with the Resist Violence pedagogy in order to establish a larger, longitudinal data set.

Photo Voice Journal

Photo-journal assignment, Photo-voice with weekly reflection posts. (The purpose of this evaluation will be to research how attitudes/values/norms around violence change over time when engaging with the pedagogy.

Example of a prompt: What does violence look like in your life? i.e. media, power dynamics, environmental violence, how does it impact you or the people around you?

Focus Groups with Resist Violence Pedagogy Alumni

Previous participants of the Resist Violence pedagogy will be invited to participate in a focus group to discuss how participating in the pedagogy has impacted their lives.

Media/Art Content Analysis

Art works that have been created by past participants of the Resist Violence Pedagogy will be analyzed.

Evaluation Community of Practice (COP)

An advisory committee will be established at the beginning of the project to ensure an inclusive and transparent evaluation process in keeping with the principles of empowerment evaluation. The committee will be made up of a diverse group of members of the Dawson College community. Empowerment evaluation is based on values of social justice. While it is an

objective approach it is not neutral. The evaluation is designed with a consideration that eliminating violence is a positive goal that we are working towards. It also considers how the organization can extend the potential benefits of the anti-violence strategy(ies) to all groups within the community, especially those groups who are considered underserved and/or at greater risk for experiencing or perpetrating violence. A primary mandate of the COP will be to guide the evaluation process to meet these objectives.

Manualization of Pedagogy

The pedagogy, curriculum, and related evaluation documents will be meticulously recorded, and relevant tool-kits and manuals will be created so that the pedagogy can be replicated and evaluated in other contexts

Process journaling

The professors will maintain a journal throughout the project to gather data to cross reference and verify findings (for example if several students were absent from the pedagogy for an extended period of time they may not have integrated the material, and this would need to be considered in evaluating data), to evaluate effectiveness, and to ensure replicability.

This case study demonstrates the ways in which evaluation can be:

- Embedded into the curriculum or activity in a way that supports your project as opposed to an additional task
- Used as an iterative process that can help identify problems and improve outcomes throughout the project
- Contribute to achieving project goals rather than as creating barriers
- Used as way to measure your work so you can advocate for yourself
- Used a way to share your strategies with others through manualization
- Used to include all stakeholders in defining what the goals and objectives of an activity

