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Higher Education Leadership and the Internationalization Imaginary:

Where Personal Biography Meets the Socio-Historical

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Abstract

In this chapter, we explore how higher education institution (HEI) leaders perceive the relationship between their international background and their commitment to and vision for internationalization. Our 10 Canadian HEI participants thought there was a direct link between their international backgrounds and commitment to internationalization. While all spoke of the benefits of internationalization, some viewed internationalization through an ethical, socio-cultural lens whereas others privileged internationalization's instrumental values. We point to tensions facing some leaders in reconciling their ideal visions of internationalization with neoliberal pressures facing HEIs in a global era. We demonstrate the importance of attending to

the inter-relationships between broader socio-historical drivers of internationalization and the personal biographies of those charged with advancing internationalization agendas. Our findings lead us to develop a new theoretical concept, which we term the ‘internationalization imaginary’, to understand the interplay between the individual, local, national and global forces shaping internationalization in higher education.

Keywords: Higher Education; Internationalization; Leadership; Canada

Introduction

Today, internationalization is at the forefront of most higher education institutions (HEIs) across Canada with four-fifth of all HEIs identifying internationalization as a top strategic priority (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2014). With globalization shaping the field of higher education, HEIs in Canada and arguably around the world are engaging with internationalization to foster “global connections and [build] global competencies among their students, faculty, and administrative units” (AUCC, 2014, p. 3).

A burgeoning body of research literature on internationalization in higher education has emerged alongside the growing institutional and governmental interest in internationalization, which operates both to shape and reflect the nature of internationalization in higher education. One topic, however, seems to have been neglected in the research literature and that is the views of higher education leaders’ about their personal commitments to internationalization at their own institutions. This is peculiar given that the research literature is clear on the point that one of the most important catalysts in driving internationalization at the institutional level is the

executive head of the university/college (AUCC, 2014; Heyl & Tullbane, 2012; Kinser & Green, 2009; Smithee, 2012; Sullivan, 2011; Turner & Robson, 2008).

Specifically, our study set out to understand how HEI leaders perceive the relationship between their international background and their commitment to and vision of internationalization at their institutions. In this chapter, we first present an overview of the existing literature on higher education leadership and internationalization. Then we present the qualitative methodology of our grounded theory study, which involved surveying and interviewing ten individuals in higher education leadership positions on the topic of internationalization. We provide an overview of our findings and, in the final section, we analyze these findings. In light of the themes of this book, we review the commitments of some of our participants to the transformative potential of the socio-cultural dimensions of internationalization. We point to tensions facing such leaders in reconciling their ideal, educational visions of internationalization with the economic exigencies facing HEIs in a global era that focuses on competition and commodification. In doing so, we demonstrate the importance of attending to the inter-relationships between broader socio-historical drivers of internationalization and the personal biographies of those charged with advancing internationalization agendas in their higher education institutions. Our findings lead us to develop a new category to understand the complex individual, local, national and global dimensions of internationalization processes that we term the *internationalization imaginary*.

Literature review: Higher education leadership and internationalization

The existing literature clearly shows that higher education leaders are one of the most important catalysts in moving forward internationalization agendas at the institutional level (AUCC, 2014; Heyl & Tullbane, 2012; Kinser & Green, 2009; Smithee, 2012; Sullivan, 2011; Turner & Robson, 2008). Like the broader higher education literature, there is much focus on the skills and competencies of an effective higher education leader in advancing internationalization agendas. To begin with, not seeing internationalization as relevant in our current world is the biggest obstacle to the internationalization of higher education. In other words, leaders who think globally and communicate a global vision to university community are often the most successful at internationalizing their colleges and universities (Sullivan, 2011).

Because internationalization is a complex change process, leaders need to be flexible and creative in forging strong global partnerships (Rizvi, 2014). Research demonstrates the need for higher education leaders to develop cross/inter-cultural skills, and self- knowledge about their competencies, in order to work with people from a variety of backgrounds (Heyl & Tullbane, 2012). In particular, this entails working with a broad array of players in the HEI, including academic deans, key department chairs and faculty, as well as leaders of campus support/service units from admissions to the registrar. In this respect, successful internationalization needs to be viewed as a “team responsibility” (Simon, 2014) or a set of “collective actions” (Bogotch & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2010). To this end, higher education leaders need to be patient and persistent with the internationalization process as it can take time and negotiations skills to fully integrate an international and intercultural perspective within the university (Kinser & Green, 2009). Overall, the research literature tells us that the most successful HEIs with internationalization have leaders who think globally, fully support internationalization, and actively work with others

to promote internationalizing initiatives at their institution and abroad. However, the existing literature does not tell us about how HEI leaders perceive their role with respect to internationalization and how their vision for internationalization may be shaped by their international background.

Methodology

Our study draws upon grounded theory method to contribute to existing theories about leadership in higher education internationalization in ways that are embedded in the data of this study. According to Kathy Charmaz (2005), “grounded theory methods are a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development.” (p. 507). In this respect, we aim to use grounded theory method to generate a middle-range theory, which we term the ‘internationalization imaginary.’ Middle-range theory is contrasted with grand theories in the social sciences, given that it is generally concerned with less abstract and more specific phenomenon, and is more grounded in the systemic analysis of empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Advocated by sociologist Robert Merton (2007) who asserted that middle-range theories “lie between the minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance in day to day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behaviour, organization and social change” (p. 448).

Specifically, our study was a qualitative interpretive study and in this respect was interested in the perceptions of our participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). The study

involved two simultaneous phases; the first involved using the university websites to collect data on internationalization policies and practices at post-secondary institutions across Canada. We analyzed this documentary data to determine the extent to which Canadian universities and community colleges demonstrated a commitment to internationalization. In particular, we drew upon Graham Elkin, Faiyaz Devjee, and John Farnsworth's (2005) model for measuring the internationalization of universities to determine the extent to which the institution was internationalizing and the primary activities/strategies associated with internationalization at each institution. This strategy enabled us to determine that there were 21 HEIs that had demonstrated a commitment to internationalization.¹

The next phase of our study involved contacting leaders of those 21 institutions, including president or principals (in the case of affiliate university colleges). A letter of information explaining the aims of the study and consent form was emailed to each of the institutions. Participants were asked to respond to four questions, either through an online survey, phone, or Skype interview. These questions were:

1. What is your international background? (e.g. lived/studied/travelled abroad)
2. Why did you become interested in internationalization at your university?
3. What is your vision for internationalization at your university?
4. What is a relationship between your international background and your commitment to internationalization at your university?

Finally, our third data source included publicly accessible, online information about Canadian HEI leaders to supplement the data that we collected through the surveys and phone interviews.

Limitations of the Study

We recognize that there are a number of limitations to our study. It is not a correlational analysis that makes rigid claims about a leader's background and their commitment to internationalization. As a qualitative study, we are concerned with our participants' perceptions about the relationship between their international background, commitment to and vision for internationalization at their institution. Moreover, some may question whether or not we can generalize given the small sample of our participants. We argue that since our aim is to gain in-depth knowledge about a very specific aspect of internationalization in Canada, we are more interested in how our empirical data can contribute to the development of middle-range theory about higher education leadership and internationalization in the Canadian context. We found that the most rich and detailed information was drawn from our interview data (and not the survey data) and would, in the future, recommend that researchers carrying out a similar study collect data through interviews. Finally, we are aware of the Hawthorne Effect whereby research participants change their behaviour when they know they are being studied. This is particularly relevant when conducting research with elites who have a public image to maintain. We recognize that our participants may have used the opportunity to participate in our study to present themselves in a positive light by distancing themselves from the economic rationales associated with internationalization, and advancing a more ethical and educational vision.

Participants

Participant inclusion criteria consisted of being in a leadership position at a Canadian university or community college that had demonstrated a commitment to internationalization.

Out of the 21 HEI leaders we invited to participate in our study, we collected data from 10 individuals in higher education leadership positions. This included four university presidents, two community college presidents; two university principals, and in two cases (where the president was not available), Senior International Officers (SIO), a term used to refer to the institution's lead international administrator. Out of our 10 participants, two were female and eight were male. Seven respondents completed the survey and three provided their responses through phone interviews, which lasted between 10 and 25 minutes, and were transcribed by hand. All participants who were interviewed received a copy of their interview transcripts to review before analysis took place. We have used pseudonyms for each of the participants (and their institutions), although participants were informed that given the nature of the study, we could not guarantee anonymity. See Table 1 for an overview of the 10 participants.

Table 1

Participants, Institutional Affiliation, and Position

Name of Leader	Name of Institution	Position/Title
Adam Peterson	Chase University	President
Anand Choudhury	Winterfell University	President
Amy Bennett	Cooper College	President
Claire Joyce	Alamo College	President
David Whitaker	Stark University	Principal
Deepak Jeevan	University of Morgan Rivers	SIO
Donald Seymore	Knights University College	Principal
Gregory Patton	Meereen University	SIO

Matthew Brown	Charles Watson University	President
Philip Donovan	Van Den Berg University	President

Data Analysis

By drawing upon a variety of data-gathering sources and methods we utilized “multi-method triangulation approach” (Patton, 2012). Multi-method triangulation occurred through the analysis and cross-verification of the different data sources: online data about internationalization policies and practices at each institution, survey and interview data from our 10 participants, and further online data about Canadian HEI leaders and internationalization. Triangulation was deployed to cross-check data from “multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data” (O’Donoghue & Punch, 2003, p. 78), thereby enhancing the concurrent validity of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). We utilized a constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify categories and themes generated by the documents, survey and interview data to provide more robust meaning to the relationship and role of higher education leadership and internationalization.

Findings

In this section we present the findings from our study. We were interested in the reasons why participants claimed to be interested in internationalization at their institutions. Two themes were evident in their responses: their international background and the value/benefits of internationalization. Each of these themes is reviewed here and then we review our participants’ visions for internationalization.

Participants' international backgrounds. The data shows that all of the respondents have an international background. Six were born outside of Canada. All had travelled abroad to a variety of countries representing every major region in the world. While some of this travel was for personal reasons, most involved international travel for conferences, research, and editorial collaboration. Indeed, it appeared that international collaborations played a significant role in the academic work these leaders had been involved in.

Half of the respondents spoke a language other than English, and just over half (six) had studied abroad (including coming to Canada as international students). Half of the participants had international teaching experiences including teaching international students, teaching in an international school and travelling abroad with students. One SIO had experience doing consultancy work in approximately 20 countries, and similarly the President of Cooper College said that her experience working on a project with the Panamanian Government stimulated her interest in internationalization. Overall, our participants defined themselves as 'international' and, as David Whitaker of Stark University put it, "see most things through an international lens".

Given that all of our participants had international backgrounds, it is unsurprising that they directly linked their interest in internationalization to their personal backgrounds. The vast majority noted that it was their international background that stimulated their interest in internationalization. For example, Deepak Jeevan, (University of Morgan Rivers) saw a direct relationship between his international background, success through international collaborations and his involvement and leadership in internationalization at his institution.

Similarly, Gregory Patton (Meeren University) noted that his interest stemmed from his 35 year long career in the fields of global and international education. In his interview, he reflected upon the relationship between his international education background and internationalization work:

Well I guess it's critical. Everything that I've done throughout my career has been focused, to some degree on internationalization of education broadly, from K-12 through to higher education. So my interest in that has stemmed from my interest in global issues from ... when I started teaching at a high school. And so it's just extended and grown from that point. So everything that I do now has built upon that initial interest and that's become more developed in more enhanced as my career has progressed.

Both Jeevan and Patton are SIOs at their institutions, a position requiring not only a clear commitment to internationalization, but also an understanding of its many dimensions.

A number of the university presidents also spoke about the relationship between their international backgrounds and commitment to internationalization. Adam Peterson, President of Chase University spoke about a defining formative experience participating in a summer program that brought together 11-year old children from around the world. His explanation about how this early experience influenced his later commitment to internationalization is worth quoting at length:

[It] also quickly made me aware of the differences and what is interesting about the differences of people who come from different cultural backgrounds. So that was a

very formative experience for me as a human being and it no doubt had a big impact on expanding my sense of my universe, from being a Canadian or even a West Coast Canadian to being a citizen of the world. And I suspect that that has had a big impact on my openness to and enthusiasm for bringing international initiatives and perspectives being brought into the university and indeed encouraging students and others to look outside University as part of their education and research missions. The whole purpose of the village was to try to encourage kids who would hopefully fulfill leadership positions, to think or internationally, and to be more open to global perspective and foster global understandings. And I think in my own case, it clearly worked.

Similarly, Anand Choudhary, president of Winterfell University, noted the direct relationship between his international background and commitment to internationalization. South Asian-born Choudhary moved to Canada to study engineering after studying in North Africa. On his survey he wrote, “I am a product of my own life and educational experiences. My thoughts have been shaped by the international experience that I have had. Thus my belief in and commitment to internationalization have been influenced by my own experience”. As Philip Donovan explained in his interview with us, it was Choudhary’s commitment to internationalization that helped to secure his appointment as Winterfell’s president. Indeed, we can say that all of our respondents perceived that there was a relationship between their international backgrounds and their commitment to internationalization.

Benefits/Value of internationalization. Respondents also spoke about the specific benefits of internationalization. All of the respondents believed there was great value in internationalization or, as Peterson put it “huge benefits.” A small minority (three) saw the value of internationalization in terms of revenue generation. Specifically, the two community college presidents were the only respondents who spoke openly about the economic reasons for their interest in internationalization. They noted the need for revenue generation through increased enrolment of international students. One university president (Brown) also claimed that internationalization was a means to increase revenues, but cautioned this was marginal to understanding his commitment to internationalization. This pragmatic approach to internationalization also aligned with two other respondents who noted the importance of global rankings for their university and need for brand recognition through internationalization. For instance, Whitaker, the SIO of Stark University, sought to enhance the university’s international “brand recognition” through various internationalization initiatives.

However, above all, respondents spoke about the socio-cultural and educational benefits of internationalization for faculty, students, and international partners. The vast majority (eight) indicated that they valued internationalization for the many benefits that came with increasing numbers of international students on Canadian campuses, as well as enhancing international opportunities/experience for domestic students and faculty. They spoke about the value of providing opportunities for faculty and students to travel abroad for studying, conferences, research partnerships, etc. Choudhary reiterated Winterfell’s official commitment to ensure that all students have a significant international learning experience. A few respondents also spoke/wrote about the value of internationalizing the curriculum so that faculty could “bring the

world to their classroom”. Indeed, most of the respondents noted that internationalization initiatives provided inter-cultural learning opportunities for members of their institutions and the benefits of such “cross-cultural pollination”, which, according to Donovan, “forces one to question one's own cultural assumptions and to interrogate them in ways but hopefully persuade one to consider how they can be improved”.

Finally, the majority (six) of participants also noted the value of international research collaboration/partnerships. For example, Donald Seymore, principal of Knight’s University College, claimed that mutually beneficial partnerships enabled the expansion of opportunities for student and faculty learning. Similarly, Jeevan explained the benefits of international research collaboration, which motivated his commitment to internationalization:

I see a great value in internationalization through research collaborations, exchange of students and faculty members, attraction and retention of international students ... I believe in fostering mutually beneficial and trusting partnerships with all partners including international partners, supporting international students for academic success while they on our campus, supporting our students when travelling to international locations for experiential learning, and supporting our faculty members in developing partnerships. These beliefs got me involved in internationalization.

It is interesting to note Jeevan’s emphasis on supporting ‘mutually beneficially’ and trusting partnerships involved in international research collaboration. This contrasts with the view of University of Toronto, president Meric Gertler (2013), who explained in his inauguration speech how becoming international would benefit his university. To emphasize his focus on the

benefits of internationalization for his own university, we have italicized certain words in the quotation below:

We as a university must think ever more strategically about how to leverage and strengthen *our* international partnerships and reach. ... Indeed, *we* can use our global networks to enrich and deepen *our relationships* locally. *We* are fortunate to have international partner institutions in every major region of the world. ... At a time when we are keen to expand *our role* as a city-building institution at home, it makes particularly good sense for *us* to leverage *our partnerships* with other great universities in other great world cities. Many of these institutions are engaging in their own city-building efforts, and can offer *us* entrée to their local projects, practices and partnerships. Not only does this provide access to fantastic research opportunities for *our* faculty and students, and encourage *our students* to become global citizens, but it also allows us to bring this experience and expertise to Toronto. Building on this logic, it makes sense for *us* to focus *our resources* on these institutional partnerships, allowing *us* to deepen and develop these relationships to foster not just student mobility and faculty exchanges, but also joint research projects, joint conferences, joint teaching and, yes, perhaps even joint degrees.

Internationalization visions. Over half of our respondents embraced comprehensive visions for internationalization at their institutions. They expressed a desire to create campuses that were “truly global” or “truly an international centre”. As Patton explained, “[i]n general the vision is to get to a point where internationalization is no longer a term that is used because it becomes what post-secondary education is all about: broadening one’s understanding of the

world that we live in”. Others spoke about the need for the university to reorient itself outward to the world. Central to this goal was the construction of global citizens knowledgeable about the world around them and skilled in cross-cultural understanding. As Peterson noted, “students graduate and increasingly their knowledge should encompass global understanding, in order for them to be active and fulfilled citizens”. His vision of internationalization was to “foster a culture that is much more interesting and diverse, help to, within the university, promote understanding of people from different backgrounds”.

Peterson and a number of other respondents spoke about the responsibilities of the university community as global citizens to address both local and global issues of concern. For example, Choudhary said we need a better understanding of the complex problems facing our planet and participation in the political process: “We need creative solutions, which is easier said than done. This needs multi-dimensional thinking. And our education system, in my view, is challenged in educating our future citizens who are able to think that way” (Mayne, 2009, p. 2).

Donovan also embraced a broad, transformative model of internationalization. In his interview with us, Donovan spoke positively about AUCC recent initiatives on the ethics of internationalization, and his involvement with the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) on developing an “academically defensible and ethically sound approach” to internationalization. Donovan saw his role on the CBIE Board in terms of “cultivating international connections in a very, ethically sound way”. His commitment to an ethical and transformational vision of internationalization is captured in his words here:

I feel very powerfully the human and social implications of education and the potential that education has for the improvement of people's minds and the situation everywhere in the world. So I see education as the most admirable activity that one can be engaged in terms of international development and whatever contribution one wants to make to the future of the planet.

Discussion/Analysis

We clearly see from our data how HEI leaders' perceive the relationship between their international backgrounds, educational experiences, key formative moments in their lives, and their commitment to internationalization. This demonstrates the ways in which leadership emerges from personal values and a sense of what is important to the individual (Lowney, 2010). Indeed, personal examples and experiences give a leader more credibility in front of others and reinforce leaders as more than just using rhetoric to advance their agendas, and in this respect can be viewed as strategic. Using life stories to inspire others and contextualize the institutions' visions to support processes of change is one way leaders can lead their institutions (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007). For example, in accepting an honorary degree from Western University, the president of a Western Canadian university made reference to the "profound influence" her great-grand aunt in Sri Lanka had on her during her childhood (Samarasekera, 2013). And Choudhary has on numerous occasions referred to his experiences as an international student, which have informed his commitment to internationalization.

We can think of these examples (and others in our study) as reflecting a HEI leader's 'investment' in internationalization. This idea of *investment* derives from the work of Bonnie

Norton and Kathleen Toohey (2011) who argued that investment in language learning is closely linked with investment in the learners' social/cultural identities, both of which transform over time and space. Thus, we can posit that HEI leaders whose social/cultural identities are shaped by their international experiences are more *invested* in internationalization. This personal investment allows them to both promote and capitalize on current trends to internationalize HEIs, which subsequently results in further identity transformation over time.

If we examine our data more closely, we find that a small minority of our participants privileged an instrumental view of internationalization, while the majority championed a broader, more idealistic and ethical approach towards internationalization. To interrogate these findings, we turn to the work of Joseph Stier. According to Stier (2004), internationalization is “entangled with commercial, pragmatic and ideological motives” (p. 86). He referred to these as three ideologies: *instrumentalism*, *educationalism*, and *idealism*. According to the instrumental ideology, higher education is a means to maximize profits, ensure economic growth and sustainable growth, or transmit the desired ideologies of transnational actors. Steir argued that this approach tends to be advanced by administrators. Internationalization from the educationalist perspective focused on producing the conditions for engaging with difference, which may contribute to personal growth and actualization. This ideology holds to the intrinsic value of learning. Finally, the idealist ideology posits that: “through international cooperation, higher education can contribute to the creation of a more democratic, fair and equal world” (Stier, 2004, p. 88).

A minority of our participants viewed internationalization as a means to generate revenue via higher international student recruitment, and seek to promote greater domestic student mobility in order to enhance their global competencies. For example, both presidents of community colleges noted that international student recruitment was for “revenue generation” given declining domestic enrolment. Others emphasized the importance of effectively implementing institutional internationalization strategies and meeting internationalization targets. David Whitaker explained that his interest in internationalization at Stark University was to some degree influenced by the desire to improve the university’s “brand recognition overseas”.

Others articulated an educational approach to internationalization, emphasizing the inter-cultural learning opportunities provided for faculty and students. Phrases such as “create global awareness and cross-cultural understanding” (Patton) and “promote understanding of people from different backgrounds” (Peterson) are examples of this approach. And finally, some of our participants embraced an idealist approach to internationalization. They considered internationalization as a means to develop “meaningful, respectful, and mutually-beneficial partnerships” (Seymore) and “advance the cause of equity and prosperity everywhere” (Donavan). As such, internationalization becomes a way to “look at issues from different cultural and linguistic points of view” and that “promotes a greater sense of what citizenship is about”, and of “one’s responsibilities to others” (Peterson). Our findings contradict Stier’s (2004) assertion that administrators do not align themselves with the idealist or educationalist ideologies of internationalization. This may be the case because our participants do not want to be viewed as publicly aligning themselves with the narrower, more instrumental rationales for internationalization, but rather be seen as embracing a more idealistic approach.

Finally, some leaders seem to straddle between the ideologies and offer a vision that is instrumental, educational, and ideal. Choudhary is one such example. Drawing from his own life as inspiration, Choudhary's vision for internationalization mirrors his own life experiences as an international student, having been educated in four different countries, presented at various international conferences, and held visiting professorship positions outside of Canada. Irrefutably, Choudhary's experiences have clearly shaped his commitment to and vision for internationalization at his institution. Three of his quotations reflect the tensions and contradictions inherent in the processes associated with internationalization. First, in an interview with Choudhary entitled "Are we educating global citizens", he claimed that the role of the academy is to teach, and that means accepting "the noble cause of educating our future citizens". Second, in an article he authored on the "Importance of Internationalization", he claimed that: "international and domestic students benefit from the enriched educational experience of being exposed to a broader diversity of global perspectives and cultures" (Choudhary, 2013). And finally, his response to our survey question, "What is your vision for internationalization at your university?" he provided a simple sentence: "all Winterfell graduates will have a significant international learning experience", which directly echoes the vision set out in the university's official, target-setting internationalization strategy.

These three quotations suggest that some HEI leaders may embrace multiple understandings and rationales for supporting internationalization. Without knowing exactly what Choudhary considers the 'benefits' (in the second quotation) about internationalization, we can posit that his claims about the importance of internationalization could reflect an instrumental

approach (benefit by enhancing future job prospects abroad through building social capital), educational (benefit by developing inter-cultural competencies and other aspects of individual learning), or an idealist approach (benefit by developing greater mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and a commitment to social change).

As such, it is evident that a leader's vision can be broad, global and idealistic in its outlook, can be instrumental and focused on the pragmatics of internationalization implementation, and can be somewhere in the middle where the perspectives merge. Choudhary's vision for internationalization is informed by his personal experiences, official university internationalization policy, and the pragmatics of leading an HEI in Canada in the 21st century. In such a way, he illustrates the overlapping and interconnected nature of the three ideologies of internationalization and the need to consider both personal biography and broader political and socio-economic changes that influence the work that goes on in universities today.

Overall, there is much more emphasis in the research literature on the economic/commercial and political rationales of universities to internationalize. As Stier (2004) argued, the instrumental ideology shapes how the other ideologies take form. As noted above, only a handful of respondent spoke openly about the economic reasons for their interest in internationalization. Above all, the majority of our respondents spoke passionately about socio-cultural, ethical, and educational motivations underpinning their commitments to internationalization. They referred to their desires for internationalization to construct global citizens, knowledgeable about the world around them, able to engage with difference, and use their knowledge and skills to address global problems.

How then can we make sense of the tensions between more instrumental approaches to internationalization and broader ideal and educational visions expressed by our participants? We turn to the work of sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) to analyze our findings. We take from Mills' seminal work, the idea of the *sociological imagination* that enables us to “grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society” and so “understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals” (p. 5). It is this relationship between personal experience and wider socio-historical trends and forces in society that we see through our study. We argue that to understand the rationales and motivations behind internationalization in HEIs, we need to attend to both the broader historical, economic and political forces and factors that underpin this phenomenon, as well as the personal biographies of those charged with leading their HEIs.

Drawing upon the empirical data in our study, we call this the *internationalization imaginary* and contend that it is constituted and shaped by individual, local, national and global influences. This internationalization imaginary contributes to HEI leaders' investments in internationalization, and gives certain practices (including claims about internationalization) legitimacy. The idea of an internationalization imaginary relates to the notion of the *social imaginary*. Drawing upon the work of Charles Taylor, a Canadian philosopher, Robert Lingard and Fazal Rizvi (2010) explained how the social imaginary involves a complex, incomplete, unstructured, and contingent combination of the empirical and the affective. It is constituted by implicit common understandings that make everyday practices possible and legitimate. The social imaginary is an enabling concept that helps us understand the ways that people act to make

sense of the world around them. Through this collective sense of imagination, according to Taylor, “a society is created, given coherence and identity, but also subjected to social change, both mundane and radical” (Lingard & Rizvi, 2010, p. 9).

In *Globalizing Education Policy*, Lingard and Rizvi (2010) argued against the historical inevitability of the neoliberal social imaginary driving globalization, and challenge readers to consider a new global imaginary. They explained that attempts to understand policy in the age of globalization cannot overlook how our social imaginary is reshaped by both local and global processes. This connects to our conception of the internationalization imaginary, which is constituted and reshaped by not only by global processes, but also by national and local processes right down to the level of individual biography.

The point here is the need to consider the relationship between broader socio-historical, economic, and political factors underpinning internationalization processes today and the individual HEI leaders’ personal investments in internationalization informed by their international backgrounds. Canadian HEIs exist within a complex of local, provincial, national and international forces and factors that heavily influence how their institutions engage with internationalization. For example, Canada’s recent *International Education Strategy* clearly emphasizes that international education should be connected to job creation, economic growth, and Canada’s future prosperity (Government of Canada, 2014). Hence, there is tremendous pressure on HEIs to consider the revenue generation potential of private research partnerships and increasing numbers of full-fee paying international students, as well as their role in preparing students for work in the global marketplace. These pressures are particularly salient given

declining provincial government funding of higher education (Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations [OCUFA], 2015) and corresponding declining federal support for basic research in HEIs (Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT], 2013).

In his interview with us, Donovan spoke to the complexities of negotiating the tensions between these challenges and his vision of the transformative potential of internationalization for his university. He referred to the report of the Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education strategy, submitted 'to the federal government in 2012 (Minister of International Trade, 2012) which, according to Donovan, demonstrates a view of internationalization through "an exclusively economic lens." This perspective of internationalization has been embraced by the Canadian federal government, which has identified international education as being "at the very heart of [Canada's] current and future prosperity" (Government of Canada, 2014).

Various participants were aware about the economic dimensions associated with internationalization and how these may shape not so much their views and visions about internationalization, but the actual work that is done in their institutions to carry out internationalization policies. The pressures associated with government cutbacks to higher education and the need to compete in global rankings rub up against more idealistic visions of internationalization.

Moreover, the sense that internationalization is inevitable is driven by these kinds of pressures. Some of our respondents considered their commitment to internationalization in light of it being an inevitable, global phenomenon. A number noted that globalization is a feature of

today's world, and therefore HEIs have no choice but to internationalize. Choudhary, in an interview for Winterfell News, explained the need to educate students to become global citizens stemming from the fact that “[t]he planet has truly become a global village in every sense of the world. It is complex, diverse, and beautiful, but it is also in distress, with population growth, environmental degradation and political conflict” (Mayne, 2009, p. 2).

Given the inevitability of internationalization, some of the HEI leaders felt they had no choice but to be interested in internationalization. As Dr. Peterson explained, “you can’t really be a university president, probably anywhere in Canada...without being interested in internationalization”. Likewise, Matthew Brown, president of Charles Watson University concluded that: “the forces driving us towards increased global awareness, engagement, and competency are powerful”. So there was a clear recognition amongst the participants in the influence of broader forces and factors driving internationalization and the need to be committed to and publicly promote an internationalization agenda.

These findings speak to the fact that higher education leaders’ visions for internationalization exist within a complex assemblage of other practices, policies and processes that are not easily reconciled with their own more idealistic and educational ideologies. This assemblage constitutes what we call the internationalization imaginary, which operates in ways to shape and be shaped by personal, local, national and global influences. Moreover, our findings illustrate the challenges that particular HEI leaders may face in reconciling broader socially-just visions of internationalization with the pressures confronting higher education

arising from the neoliberal drive towards privatization, competition and the commodification of higher education.

Conclusion

We set out in our study to investigate how HEI leaders' perceive the relationship between their personal biographies and their commitments and visions for internationalization at their respective institutions. We found that they believe there is a relationship between their own international backgrounds and their commitments to internationalization. We argue that the research literature on higher education internationalization, especially that which focuses on the motivations, rationales and/or drivers of this phenomenon, need to attend to the personal biographies of those charged with leading their institutions, as well as the broader socio-historical, economic and political forces and factors driving internationalization in our global age. Having an international background is no guarantee that a HEI leader will be committed to internationalization. However, HEI leaders who value internationalization often draw on their own personal and at times, international experiences, in order to demonstrate their investment in internationalization. Whether it was an opportunity to study abroad as an international student or engaging with internationalization locally by interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, leaders in our study see a clear link between their international background(s), experiences, and their commitment to internationalization.

While our participants tended to either privilege the broader educational and idealist view or the instrumental values of internationalization, all believed in the potential benefits internationalization can bring to their institutions. Some even embraced all three rationales that

underpin internationalization. This points to some of the complexities and tensions associated with enacting leadership in higher education internationalization. Our analysis reveals that leadership in higher education internationalization is a contentious process that incorporates not only the leader's vision, but also their education background, lived experiences, official university policy/strategy, and arguably local, national, and global forces. Echoing the words of Peterson, "there is no way to be president ... and not be interested in internationalization. We are so immersed in international relationships of one kind or another." Quotations such as this and others we have presented in this chapter are indicative of the 'internationalization imaginary', a theoretical concept constituted and reshaped by not only by global processes, but also by national and local processes right down to the level of the individual and his or her personal story.

As the researchers, we appreciate the messiness and complexities associated with understanding leadership in higher education internationalization, and thus critique much of the existing literature, reviewed above, that frames effective leadership as an ordered checklist of skills and competencies.

As such, our study opens the doors for future, more elaborate studies in the areas of higher education leadership and internationalization. Using this study as a springboard, we encourage other researchers to examine leadership in new and critical ways that challenges the ordered narratives around what an 'effective' or 'good' leader ought to be. We challenge other researchers to explore ways in which leaders at HEIs are invested in internationalization policies at their universities, to examine leadership through a values-lens that privileges personal backgrounds over a checklist of individual skills and capabilities, and uncover the tensions

embedded within the leadership practices involved in steering higher education internationalization. Moreover, the ways in which higher education leaders' personal biographies intersect and sometimes clash with broader socio-historical and economic-political drivers in the production of internationalization agendas also demands further study. Only then will be able to fully appreciate the complexities and contradictions that inform what it means to lead a higher education institution in an age of globalization and internationalization.

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¹ Elkin, Devjee & Farnsworth's (2005) model for measuring internationalization includes the following dimensions: commitment to and prevalence of international students (undergraduate and postgraduate); support for international students; student and staff exchange programs; staff interactions in international context; internationally focused programs of study; attendance at international conferences; international research collaboration; internationally recognized research activity; overseas curriculum and overseas trained staff.