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School of Social Work
University of Windsor
167 Ferry Street
Windsor, Ontario N9A 0C5
Email: cswedit@uwindsor.ca

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Responding to Neoliberalism: The Case of the Look at My Life Project

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Sarah Woods¹, Tina Nadia Gopal¹, Purnima George²

¹Amadeusz; ²Ryerson University

Abstract

Amadeusz is a non-profit organization in Toronto, Canada, focused on fostering the opportunity among young people who experience incarceration and/or are vulnerable to the involvement in violence, and/or crime to create positive change in their lives and communities. As a non-profit organization situated in the third sector (i.e., voluntary sector), Amadeusz did experience the impacts of neoliberalism. However, it was able to successfully respond to neoliberalism and carry on with its agenda of change by adopting a dual strategy in the form of two important initiatives: The Look at My Life Project (TLMLP) and Project Quiet Storm (PQS). This article narrates the story of Amadeusz's response to neoliberalism within prison, highlighting ways in which resistance was carried out along with embracing the current neoliberal practices, policies, and institutional culture that prevents access to education for young people on remand.

Keywords: neoliberalism, correctional education program, advocacy, community organizing, young people, social change

Introduction

Amadeusz, a non-profit agency based in Toronto, Canada, started as a grassroots, youth-led initiative born from young people organizing to create change. Now an incorporated non-profit organization, Amadeusz fosters the opportunity among young people who experience incarceration and/or are vulnerable to the involvement in violence and/or crime, to create positive change in their lives and communities. A significant focus of Amadeusz's work is to create change within the correctional system by organizing and paving the way for increased access to education for young people who are incarcerated. Amadeusz's organizational philosophy is grounded in the core values of social work, in particular social justice and dignity and worth of all individuals.

As a community-based organization, Amadeusz is a part of Canada's third sector (i.e., voluntary sector), which consists of cooperative, non-profit organizations, civil society, credit unions, and social entrepreneurship that work together to achieve development in social and economic spheres (Amyot, Downie, & Tremblay, 2010; Evans & Shields, 2000). As of 2010, Canada's third sector was the second largest in the world employing over two million people (11% of population) and contributing \$79.1B (7.8%) to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (Amyot, Downie, & Tremblay, 2010, p. 14). Services offered within the third sector are privately operated; yet maintain a close working relationship with the state, helping to shape the social, cultural, and economic aspects of Canada (Evans & Shields, 2000). Corresponding to Amadeusz's origins, the third sector often fills a need or gap that private businesses and state programs have not addressed (Evans & Shields, 2000). As a non-profit organization situated in the third sector, Amadeusz exists "primarily to serve others, to provide goods or services to those in need and exhibit some aspect of voluntary action, behavior, or shared commitment of purpose" (Scott, 1992, p. 35-36).

Outlined in greater detail in Woods, Gopal, and George (2014), Amadeusz focuses on a hidden group of individuals within the correctional population: young people, aged 18-30, on remand. In 2015/2016, younger adults (aged 18-34) accounted for the majority of admissions to both provincial/territorial facilities and federal custodial facilities: 58% and 52% respectively in 2015/2016 (Reitano, 2017). Consequently, younger adults are overrepresented in the correctional population as they make up only 28% of the Canadian adult population (Reitano, 2017). In addition to the high proportion of young adults in custody, Canada's correctional population is disproportionately represented among the less formally educated and illiterate (Harris, 2002). It is estimated that 75% of individuals do not have a high school education upon entry to a federal correctional facility (Correctional Service of Canada, 2015). More specifically, the Correctional Service of Canada (2011) found that 82% of individuals test below a Grade 10 level and 37% of males have a Grade 9 education or less. Similarly, 35% of incarcerated females in provincial-territorial correctional facilities and 48% of females in federal facilities have a Grade 9 education or less (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003, Trevethan, 1999).

Canada's shared responsibility of adult correctional services between the federal and provincial governments has resulted in two types of custody: sentenced and remand (Dauvergne, 2012). The federal government is responsible for overseeing the incarceration and care of individuals sentenced to two years or more and provincial/territorial governments are responsible for individuals sentenced to two years less a day and remand/pre-trial detention (Christian, 2006;

Dauvergne, 2012). Remand status is reserved for individuals who have been charged with a crime and ordered to detention as they await a further court appearance (e.g., bail, hearing, trial). It is important to note: under Canada's presumption of innocence, individuals on remand have not yet been tried and are considered innocent until a verdict has been delivered (i.e., innocent until proven guilty). Amadeusz specifically focuses their efforts on the remand population for three main reasons: 1. The number of individuals on remand continues to outpace sentenced individuals resulting in a large underserved population (Reitno, 2017); 2. There is a significant lack of effective programming available for the remand population (Woods, Gopal, & George, 2014); and 3. There is substantial evidence linking education to successful life outcomes (e.g., employment, family, health, no criminal activity) and reduced recidivism rates (Correctional Service of Canada, 2015).

In recent decades, Canada has experienced what researchers have termed a 'narrowing of the social'; this withdrawal of state participation in social services is a defining characteristic of neoliberalism. Considerable research has focused on neoliberalism's impact on the third sector, with most finding sizeable negative impacts and barriers. Despite neoliberalism and its influence, Amadeusz has successfully carried on with an agenda of change by adopting a dual strategy in its work. This article will share the dual strategy employed – using neoliberal discourse, strategies, and principles while also engaging in advocacy work - by highlighting two different initiatives housed under Amadeusz: The Look at my Life Project (TLMLP) and Project Quiet Storm (PQS). From the beginning, Amadeusz has strategically worked to create change from within and resisted the current neoliberal practices, policies, and institutional culture that prevent access to education in custody facilities.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism can be viewed as an framework that places the market at the centre of economic, social, and political governance and embodies policies that strengthen the private market and individual responsibility for social problems (Baines, 2010b; Viswanathan, 2010). Key discourse within neoliberalism includes market, individual, client, competition, privatization, and devolution, mirroring the private sector. Harvey (2005) specifically defined neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills ...characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 301). Amable (2011) further argued the individualistic nature of neoliberalism results in citizens who are expected to be self-sustaining; social protection is only afforded when a citizen provides something back to the society, such as work.

Neoliberalism is manifested in state/non-state partnerships, such as privatization, deregulation, and downloading. The neoliberal agenda is advanced by the state and is developed through 'structural adjustment programs' including shifting responsibilities of the state onto the market, third sector, and individual citizens, where alternative service delivery models become the standard (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). Compared to previous state-society dynamics, neoliberalism shifts the relationship between the state, the market, and individuals such that there is a retrenchment of the state in providing direct social service delivery programs (Amyot, Downie, & Tremblay, 2010). This new state/non-state dynamic

results in decreased autonomy and increased accountability mechanisms for third sector agencies as a result of the arm's length relationship with state actors (Evans & Shields, 2000).

Most English-speaking industrial countries began to elect neoliberal governments during the 1980s (Baines 2010a, 2010b; McBride, 2005). Many scholars have reviewed Canada's transition from a welfare state to a neoliberal society (see Amyot, Downie, & Tremblay, 2010; Evans & Shields, 2000; Goldenberg, 2004; McBride, 2005). Evidence of the Canadian shift to neoliberal policies is found in the 1990s when the federal and provincial governments enacted significant structural changes affecting a wide range of sectors and programs (Viswanathan, 2010). Specific to Ontario, structural shifts in retrenchment of the social safety net was evidenced by "funding cuts to affordable housing, income supplements, employment programs, youth recreation service, and settlement programs for new immigrants" (Viswanathan, 2010, p. 263). Toronto's defining moment of neoliberal structural changes occurred in 1998 with the amalgamation of the six former municipalities into one megacity, Toronto (Viswanathan, 2010).

Neoliberalism's Negative Impact on the Third Sector

Much research outlines the negative impact of neoliberalism, in particular to the third sector (Amyot, Downie & Tremblay, 2010; Baines, 2010b; Evans & Shields, 2000; Goldenberg, 2004; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). The main criticisms are that the basic premises of neoliberalism (e.g., privatization, devolution, and competition) are flawed and the altered state/non-state relationship has had a substantial negative impact on the most vulnerable citizens,

Devolution, privatization and competition are powerful forces that erode social citizenship and threaten the autonomy of civil society as a mobilizing force that advocates on behalf of poor and the marginalized. Under the new economics and politics of care, human service organisations conceptualize their clients as customers rather than citizens. As a result, the organizations obscure the importance of the state in protecting social rights. Neoliberalism evokes the image of local empowerment in rationalizing devolution and privatization. In reality, it disempowers the poor and vulnerable by turning them into consumers rather than citizens, a shift that can deprive them of their already precarious social rights (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012, p. 317).

Shifting responsibility of social protection and assistance away from the state establishes a new dynamic, where citizens are expected to act as consumers, thus eliminating the state's responsibility in protecting and enforcing the rights of all individuals. Vulnerable citizens, who may already be at a significant disadvantage in navigating social supports and practicing self-advocacy, experience additional barriers and marginalization.

Evans and Shields (2000) argued that the altered relationship between third sector, state, and for-profit organizations, forces the third sector to act in a more entrepreneurial manner, to rely on fee for service activities, and redefine their mission based on a more business focused environment. Furthermore, Evans and Shields (2000) maintained that truly equal state/non-state partnerships cannot occur because the state will always have more control and power within a partnership due to the precarious nature and prevalence of short-term project funding that has resulted in significant financial cutbacks and sector wide financial stress. Fiscal constraint policies have led to decades of funding freezes and reductions in funding allocations to non-

profit agencies (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Devolution (transfer of power to lower levels of government) is claimed to bring local governments closer to their constituents and allow for community-responsive programs; however, the interests of political elites at the local level often result in unequal policies and decision-making across communities, again most often at the expense of vulnerable citizens and groups (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Furthermore, as outlined in Hasenfeld and Garrow (2012), privatization does not always provide better services and cost savings for government - some studies demonstrated shifting services to the private sector failed to improve quality of care (Lamothe & Lamothe, 2010; Sclar, 2000; Van Slyke, 2003), and in fact, were negatively associated with quality of care (Fernandez, 2007; Milward & Provan, 2000). The practice of short-term contract funding and increased accountability has resulted in tighter government control, as opposed to autonomous arm's length partnerships, where contract funding allows the state to dictate project outcomes, closely monitor activities, and finances (Baines, 2010b; Scott, 2003). This significantly reduces the third sector's ability to provide community-responsive services and address root causes of societal issues (e.g., poverty). Along this argument, Baines (2010b) stated that neoliberalism presents significant barriers for the third sector, in particular non-profit organizations, to maintain their mission by inhibiting flexibility and responsiveness in responding to evolving social needs.

Resistance to Neoliberalism by the Third Sector

Advocacy, ranging from general education of a specific issue to direct lobbying to influence state policymaking, is a critical component of both social work organizations' mandates and policy development. However, the impact of neoliberalism and alternative service delivery partnerships inhibits the third sector from meaningful advocacy due to the dependence of third sector on state funding (Evans & Shields, 2000; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Often times, funding contracts explicitly limit or prevent agencies from using resources for advocacy activities. Even if not explicitly stated in a funding contract, fear of reprisal from funders prevent agencies, in particular small agencies, from advocating against current policy agendas. This fear translates to limited inclusion of alternative perspectives within the policymaking process, potentially resulting in policy that is not fully informed by those who are on the ground doing the work. As the state retreats from direct service delivery, it is imperative that the voice of the service delivery agencies be included in the policymaking process. The decreasing role of the third sector in the policymaking process is again more detrimental to the most marginalized; there is no one left to advocate for the vulnerable and under-represented in our communities (Evans & Shields, 2000).

Despite the minimization of formal advocacy activities for third sector organizations, Smith (2007) argued individualized resistance practices and 'underground' advocacy has commenced. The third sector fights to maintain true to its original purpose and mission to engage in advocacy. The foundation of social work and the third sector is to address social issues; however, it "is inevitably at odds with neoliberal agenda and its exacerbation of social inequalities" (Wilson, Calhoun, & Whitmore, 2011, p. 26). Wilson, Calhoun, and Whitmore (2011) discussed ways in which third sector workers balance the opposing philosophies of neoliberalism (i.e., emphasis on outcome, efficiency, individualism and downloading) with social justice (i.e., emphasis on process and grassroots control). They looked at the effectiveness of advocacy in the Canadian neoliberal environment and identified respondents emphasizing "the importance of linking the personal and the political, of structural and conjunctural analysis, and

the compelling sense of being a part of something larger than oneself as they engage in this work” (p. 41). They further identified that ‘changing the world’ is still a primary goal for individuals and include small social and personal changes as part of this larger goal (p. 40). “Research suggests that global pressures and restructuring in the sector have curtailed possibilities for values-based, participatory culture in the non-profit sector, making it increasingly difficult to sustain or initiate liberatory and/or empowering services” (Baines, 2010a, p. 930); however, ‘underground’ tactics and new resistance practices allow organizations to continue engaging in advocacy work.

Prison as a Neoliberal Institution

Neoliberalism can also be examined within particular sectors - in this case, the prison as a neoliberal institution. It is well documented that crime control policies, punitive perspectives, and use of imprisonment has risen or remained constant across Canada and other countries (Cavadino & Dignan, 2006; Garland, 2001, 2004; Reinto, 2017). The explanations for this, particularly the increased use of imprisonment and growing prison populations, are multi-faceted. Newbury (2007) provided a detailed examination of penal policy in England and Wales, and within this examination, he explored the question: what are the cultural conditions that allow and promote punitive attitudes and high incarceration rates? Within his examination, Newbury (2007) highlighted the growing amount of literature that looks at the increases in punitive perspective across different regions, looking specifically to the work of Garland (2001, 2004) and Cavadino and Dignan (2006) and concluded that cultural and economic conditions associated with neoliberalism appear to have provided the foundation for a “culture of control”. Garland (1996) outlined what he terms “responsibilization strategies”: the state minimizes response to crime through direct (i.e., police, court, prisons) methods and seeks to engage non-state agencies in the prevention (i.e., social skills programming, afterschool support programs) and intervention of crime (i.e., counselling and support groups facilitated by social work agencies to address substance use, anger management, or domestic violence) as the state cannot be effective in preventing and controlling crime alone; the state must depend on partnerships and convince private citizens of their role in preventing and controlling crime (p. 452-453). In a review of Garland’s (2001) *Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, Hogeveen (2003) specifically argued that parallels can be made between Canada and Garland’s explanation of what has occurred in the United States and Britain. He conceded that punitive practices are more pronounced in the United States and Britain however, Canada too has been increasingly using prison as a response to crime and has been shifting responsibility from state to community to prevent and control crime (Hoegeveen, 2003).

From a Canadian perspective, Hannah-Moffat (2000) examined neoliberal impacts on Canadian women’s prisons, recent policy changes within this sector, and the altered state-society responsibilities and outlined how this occurred: there are expectations that community and volunteer services are increasingly required to participate in rehabilitation programs and activities. Much of her first argument outlined how the state has made the community and ‘offender’ responsible for crime prevention and rehabilitation. In fact, specific task forces have noted, “Community partnerships are central to the production and implementation of long-term solutions to the problems that have plagued the Canadian federal female offender” (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, p. 515). Referring to Garland’s “responsibilization strategy”, Hannah-Moffat argued that the state is making the community and individual ‘offender’ responsible for

prevention and punishment of crime (i.e., rehabilitation and sentencing). She further argued that it is more than the state's strategic method of reducing costs of imprisonment by reducing program staff and showing the public they are getting tough on crime by becoming a more efficient system. The state is taking advantage of deregulation and "governing at a distance" through voluntary/cheap "labour and expertise" (Hannah-Moffat, 2000, p. 516).

Currently, there are a number of organizations in Ontario that fill the gap created by the retreat of the state in providing effective rehabilitation programming for individuals who are incarcerated, including social work agencies that provide substance use, anger management, and social skills development, reintegration supports, and mental health supports. Amadeusz is one such example of a direct service program that supports Hannah-Moffat's claims - a community service provider that is participating in prevention and rehabilitation programming for the population of people who are held in remand custody.

Amadeusz' Response to Neoliberalism in Remand Facilities

As Amadeusz celebrates 12 years of positive organizing for change, it becomes apparent that Amadeusz has deliberately taken steps to create change from within the system. The second half of this article shares the story of Amadeusz's response to the neoliberal agenda in the correctional system. Balancing between embracing and resisting elements of neoliberalism within the correctional system has propelled Amadeusz to successfully establish itself as the only organization providing educational attainment programming at the secondary and post-secondary level for the remand population across the Greater Toronto Area. A dual strategy embracing neoliberal discourse, tactics, and principles, while also resisting structures through advocacy activities, has manifested itself in two different initiatives: The Look at my Life Project (TLMLP), and more recently, Project Quiet Storm (PQS). In light of the challenges presented from neoliberal contexts, policies and institutions, we share our story to support others in their pursuit of social justice and balancing the philosophies of neoliberalism (efficiency, individualism) and social change (flexibility, grassroots control).

The Look at My Life Project (TLMLP)

TLMLP was formed by young people, aged 18-25, organizing to discuss their ideas in organic ways. At first, there was no set purpose for meeting; it was simply a group of young people hanging out and venting about their issues. From 2003 to 2007, this group of 6-8 young people came together in spaces defined by them as safe (e.g., in apartment building staircases/local housing communities) to discuss their experiences, challenges, and needs of living in one of Toronto's most marginalized communities. Over the years, their frustrations and experience with violence, incarceration, and tragedy turned into a desire to make a difference. In true grassroots fashion, the youth organized themselves into a formal group. With the support of the project's first mentor, the Executive Director of a local youth-based, non-profit community agency, Amadeusz formalized group membership and established its roles and mandate: to foster the opportunity among young people who have been impacted by incarceration to create positive change in their lives and communities. In the early stages of Amadeusz, the most important identified issue was the minimal opportunities for young people in remand custody to access or complete their high school education. From personal experience of members and their peers, Amadeusz quickly recognized the significant amount of time individuals spend remanded in

custody (6 months to multiple years) and the impact this had on the individual, their family, and their community. With the recognition that young people were pushed out of the traditional education system, lacked economic opportunities, and returned to the community where they still faced challenges (e.g., poverty, immigration and settlement issues, criminal record), the hope was that formal educational attainment (high school education) would lead to positive change for both the individual and their family and community (Gopal, George, & Taylor, 2018). To help facilitate the search for resources to develop a pilot project, Amadeusz pursued mentors from local community agencies and individuals with research experience to support Amadeusz in grounding the need for education attainment programs. Amadeusz's first mentor provided guidance and support in writing a funding application to implement a six-month pilot in partnership with one detention centre. The application was successful and Amadeusz received a grant from Laidlaw Foundation. From this, TLMLP was born as a grassroots response to provide access to education for people 18-30 of age held in remand custody. TLMLP's mission is: 1. To increase literacy skills and formal education levels among young people while on remand; 2. To provide opportunities and activities to build life skills, develop self-esteem and develop healthy decision-making frameworks for safe/healthy choices; 3. To establish collaborative service delivery partnership; 4. To engage in program evaluation and dissemination activities and 5. To contribute to research and share knowledge.

The initial opportunity for TLMLP to provide high school educational programming for the remand population is grounded in neoliberalism. At one time, the school board offered adult high school education programs in Toronto's remand facilities; however, withdrawal of state resources resulted in the discontinuation of this program (Woods, Gopal, & George, 2014). Contrary to federal correctional facilities where educational programming is mandated, there is no requirement to provide programming for the remand population in Ontario (Woods, Gopal, & George, 2014). In youth custody facilities, education is prioritized in response to mandatory education laws for youth (under the age of 18). However, for young people (aged 18+) who reside in provincial adult custody facilities, educational programming is not mandated by law. As a result of the school board discontinuing their program, space was created for TLMLP to develop a service delivery partnership with the state and detention centre. Connecting with the Volunteer Coordinator at the detention centre provided a key access point for TLMLP. In partnership, TLMLP developed a collaborative service delivery model, implementing the initial pilot project in 2009, facilitating high school educational programming for three young people at one detention centre. Similar to the current service delivery structure, TLMLP conducted initial educational assessments to determine the educational plan (e.g., Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) credits or General Educational Development (GED) (high school equivalency). If participants are a significant number of credits away from obtaining their OSSD, GED is an alternative option. To date, the majority of TLMLP participants have attained their high school education through GED in response to low educational attainment rates among Canada's custody population (as previously outlined). TLMLP staff meet with participants twice weekly to conduct individual and/or group tutoring session in preparation for the GED exam or completion of OSSD credits.

In line with Hannah-Moffat (2000) and Garland's "responsibilization strategies" discussed above, a key success of the pilot project was the openness of the custody facility to partner with TLMLP to deliver the education program. Despite their mandate to provide rehabilitative programming, the correctional facility did not have the resources to organize and

implement activities beyond safety and security priorities, thus TLMLP was a needed partnership. The pilot was a success for both TLMLP and the facility: two of the three participants obtained their high school education (Ontario Secondary School Diploma) and both participants and facilitators had a positive experience marked by no security concerns or incidents despite participants attending from different units. As safety and security are primary concerns from the facility perspective, this was key to their definition of a successful pilot. This and the completion of twice weekly meetings were the biggest successes of the pilot. The correctional environment provides a unique context to implement programs - the institutional environment and culture affords significant power to correctional officers. Their buy-in and assistance in implementing the program was a necessity as they helped with recruitment and escorting program participants to and from programming space. Without their involvement and dedication, programming would not have occurred. Observing incremental change in institutional culture and acceptance for programming, the custody facility acknowledged that educational programming could successfully operate and TLMLP was welcomed to continue providing educational programming.

Upon successful completion of the pilot project, Amdeusz prioritized two objectives: to establish service delivery partnerships and secure long-term funding. In building the collaborative service delivery model, TLMLP strategically searched for similarities in each partner's goals and objectives so that combined leverage could be amplified to achieve the same goal: increased access to education. The unique interaction of the correctional environment and educational programming exacerbated the challenge of choosing service delivery partners. It was imperative the right partners were chosen to continue building on the success of the program. Although the pilot project was an accomplishment, institutional culture and skepticism to the benefit and need of educational programming remained. As is often the case in correctional environments, there was a mix of support and resistance to programming. TLMLP was still building relationships with program participants and correctional officers and balancing the need for safety and security of the institution with the need for access to education. Establishing trust with both program participants and correctional officers was a key ingredient; TLMLP could not risk partners destroying that trust. TLMLP mapped out key areas where partners were required and commenced the process of establishing relationships: 1. Government ministries were approached for access to additional facilities and individuals who were remanded to custody (e.g., Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services of Ontario); 2. Formal education institutions were approached to grant high school education qualifications such as Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or General Educational Development (GED) (e.g., Independent Learning Centre, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board); and 3. An established community-based charitable, non-profit organization was approached to act as Amadeusz' administrative partner to provide administrative support, mentorship and access to funding opportunities as most applications require an incorporated partner to apply for funding (e.g., Albion Neighbourhood Services). The custody environment proved challenging in securing partnerships with formal education institutions; individuals who are incarcerated in remand centres cannot access online courses. Thus, TLMLP advocated (and continues to do so) against educational institutions move towards technology-based platforms to prevent further barriers to accessing education for TLMLP's participants.

The search for long-term funding partners proved to be the most challenging. Key funders who aligned with TLMLP's objectives, to increase access to education, to increase

educational attainment levels among the remand population, and to grow from a youth-led, grassroots framework, were identified. While TLMLP has not secured core funding partners to date, one key funder, Laidlaw Foundation, has provided significant financial and mentorship support. Despite short-term, project-based funding, Laidlaw Foundation has provided space for TLMLP to learn from their mistakes and have worked in partnership to support project development and expansion activities. Program expansion and short-term funding contracts are uniquely linked in TLMLP's development. The neoliberal approach of increased competition for funding dollars and minimized duplication of services has had both a positive and negative effect on the sustainability of TLMLP. Competition has forced TLMLP to establish an innovative program delivery model. The majority of TLMLP's funding has been short-term, project-based funding contracts, ranging from one to three years. These project-based funding opportunities allowed TLMLP to pilot and successfully expand to multiple detention centres and develop new service delivery streams, including female-specific programming and a post-secondary education stream. TLMLP strategically developed partnerships with post-secondary institutions in both Canada and the United States (e.g., Centennial College, Athabasca University) that were willing to maintain paper-based course materials despite the industry's move towards technology-based education platforms. In developing these partnerships, TLMLP advocated to these large educational profit-oriented institutions, convincing them there was value maintaining paper-based options and serving the remand population. TLMLP's current educational partners aligned in their mission to create equitable access to education for all citizens and recognized the unique opportunity to become a key stakeholder.

TLMLP recognized some challenges to fulfilling the mission of creating social change. This recognition began with a sound understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural systems and how they interacted and impacted the project, as well as the multi-layered understanding that the detention centres place principles of safety and security above all else. As a part of this understanding, TLMLP recognized the importance of leveraging the concept of neoliberalism to our advantage. Searching for stability in a capitalist, collaborative partnership environment has expanded how TLMLP sought out support and resources. Understanding stability through a neoliberal lens (e.g., short-term project funding, pre-determined community issues, competition) has allowed us to navigate and negotiate detention centre procedures and culture to gain access to these systems. As a small, focused project, TLMLP has more flexibility in navigating and remaining responsive to individual needs. TLMLP is creative in their projects, setting up committees and collaborations to breakdown competition and continue despite short-term project funding. Despite this success, significant financial uncertainty and stress resulted from responding to government proposals and priorities forced TLMLP to tailor activities to government priorities and hot button topics, while still maintaining true to the underlying mission of delivering formal education programs. The impact of short-term funding created a precarious work environment for TLMLP staff; short-term contracts resulted in high staff turnover. Continuously searching for funding support and significant time allocated to hiring activities negatively impacted service delivery and contributed to significant service delivery waitlists.

The key to long-term sustainability is to secure core funding, establish security, and maintain longevity; project-based funding was a resource for survival in the short term. TLMLP has not yet achieved these goals - TLMLP continues to receive one to three year contracts. Social issues are complex and broad, and the neoliberal concepts of project-based, short-term,

competition-based funding are not conducive to addressing these issues. Neoliberal discourse, driven by free market ideology, drives organizations to treat program participants as clients and implement profit-based business practices. Success is based solely on the number of individuals engaged by a project. From inception to present, TLMLP refuses to label participants as clients and resists the pressure to treat them as such. Furthermore, TLMLP actively works to remove such labels and demonstrate value to profit based institutions (e.g., university, college). Through organizational philosophy and leadership, TLMLP strives for quality of care and enhancing quality of services rather than serving a high number of individuals. This is accomplished through weekly reviews of waitlists and caseloads to ensure efficient and quality service delivery. Similar to Wilson, Calhun, and Whitmore (2011), TLMLP embodies the belief that positive social change can happen and value-based, human services are necessary and possible within neoliberal environments. Since the initial pilot project, TLMLP has expanded to multiple facilities, serving over 1000 young men and women in education attainment activities, increasing access and formal education rates among the remand population.

As Evans and Shield (2000) acknowledged, true advocacy cannot occur within state dependent partnerships, and funders often declare advocacy an ineligible activity. While TLMLP engages in general awareness and education activities (i.e., conferences), direct advocating to state and policymaking circles cannot occur due to restricted advocacy activities under current funding contracts. As outlined previously, this practice does not allow the third sector to address underlying broader and complex issues. TLMLP is an example of an expectation to fill gaps in services on a local or community level, however, TLMLP has failed to purposefully challenge and respond to larger, complex issues. TLMLP was launched to shine light and create change in access to education for the remand population in Toronto. Therefore, to achieve and advance an agenda of change, a dual strategy was adopted to practice the political advocacy needed to sustain access to education for the remand population in this current political and economic time. At times, pressure was exerted to change the program delivery method to meet the priorities of the state, however TLMLP has fought to maintain true to its purpose and work with committed partners and funders to do so.

Project Quiet Storm

Project Quiet Storm (PQS) is Amadeusz's effort to continue advocating against the limitations imposed by neoliberalism on the third sector (reduced advocacy), with the primary objective of establishing itself as a key influencer in advocating for equitable access to education. PQS is a coalition consisting of youth and caring adults from associated stakeholders (e.g., board of directors of ally organizations, ministries). This coalition was established to fulfill the recommendations outlined in *Look at my Life: Access to Education for the Remand Population in Ontario* (Woods, Gopal, & George, 2014) to ensure people held in remand will have equal and sustainable access to education. PQS will produce a strategy that outlines activities to fulfill each recommendation. In the balancing act of neoliberal ideology and social justice, PQS has embraced strategically planned resistance practices. It is able to engage in advocacy as it is not funded through typical service delivery contracts that prevent such activities. Through political advocacy, strategic planning, and executing tactics, PQS will be able to drive the change needed to protect and fulfill the right to equitable access to education on the inside. PQS advocates on behalf of the most vulnerable individuals in society. As the role of the third sector inhibits access to the policymaking process, the most vulnerable individuals are

further silenced (Evans & Shields, 2000). PQS embodies the knowledge gained from working in and understanding correctional institutional culture, policies, and procedures, where strategically planned and organized tactics will result in change to this culture and policies. Without this secondary, yet equally important strategy, TLMLP will remain a direct service program, achieving change at the individual and institutional level, but not ending the structural, legislative, and policy issues that create barriers to equitable access to education.

PQS is in its infancy and currently focuses on quick, time-limited project that support the overall goal of creating a strategy for action-oriented results. To date, it has engaged in knowledge and education campaigns to raise awareness of the inequitable access to education, as well as the benefits to providing access to education for the remand population. PQS has also organized a community event that convened local politicians, community leaders, and community members to participate in an information fair, youth performances, and fun activities to raise awareness for programming to address gaps in education for young people who are incarcerated and programming for those affected by violence and crime. PQS hopes to establish an alliance of organizations who are working towards similar goals in the correctional system, working to leverage many small groups into one more powerful advocacy voice. This coalition plans to meet on a regular basis to develop and implement strategic action plans to impact broader issues of access to education. The resistance, 'the quiet storm', navigates and negotiates current policies, procedures, and institutional culture that create barriers for individuals to participate in formal education activities. With a deep understanding of institutional policies, procedures and culture based on practical experience and foundations in evidence-informed educational approaches, PQS can be subversive in their approach to achieving their objectives and use the current political and economic discourse to their advantage. PQS is still at the start of its journey and continued action is required. PQS is Amadeusz's response and attempt to maintain autonomy and identity and prevent Browne's (1996) conclusion,

Contractual relations and partnerships between governments and non-profit organizations can involve some benefits for both parties. However, while the emerging contract regime is useful to governments for political, ideological, economic, and bureaucratic reasons, it is likely to prove most detrimental to voluntary organizations. Their autonomy and identity will be eclipsed as they are forced into the straightjacket of commercialized public sector's managerial norms and procedures (p. 69).

Conclusion

This article has outlined the journey of Amadeusz's TLMLP and PQS, and has demonstrated how these two entities work in tandem to operate within a neoliberal context of collaborative service delivery while maintaining autonomy and identity. With limited dollars and dependence on government funding, TLMLP has been forced to minimize advocacy work and focus instead on stability and financial security through service delivery. PQS was established to take on this advocacy role and reduce concern to engaging in political advocacy against the institutions that provide livelihood to TLMLP.

Collaborative state/non-state partnerships provided access to education for young people on remand. TLMLP faced significant constraints in their search for sustainability: reliance on partners despite their own precarious short-term contracts, limited dollars, and reliance on

government funding; no access to technology within the institutions and the move toward online distance education courses versus paper-based course work; and limited capacity building to enhance staff skills and strategies to fight limited access to education. Without the open support and access to custody facilities and their in-kind contribution of correctional officers and space, TLMLP would not be able to provide education opportunities for the remand population. Education partners are also key. The Independent Learning Centre is the designated provider of distance education in Ontario. Without them, TLMLP would not have access to the GED exam invigilation. TLMLP also relies on post-secondary institutions to re-adapt their current system, to allow for paper-based correspondence. Despite moving towards technology-based platforms, these partners adapt their policies and processes to accommodate access to education for people on remand.

In this journey, TLMLP and PQS have openly resisted human rights violations in the form of inequitable access to education. TLMLP and PQS continue to push for equitable access to formal education opportunities for the remand population. The individualized advocacy efforts require resisting complacency and ‘doing what we’ve always done’ and reject the notion that things cannot change. Respecting and acknowledging the correctional policies of safety and security and the larger environmental context, allows for focused efforts to organize for incremental change in the maximum-security facilities of a neoliberal prison.

In responding to a neoliberal environment, Amadeusz has adopted a dual strategy: it uses the discourse and principles of neoliberalism to provide a continuity of services to the most vulnerable and uses the platform of a coalition and specific strategy to carry out its advocacy and policy change initiatives. Amadeusz has gained knowledge through our experience working with, navigating and negotiating the policies, procedures, and institutional culture of the correctional system in Ontario. This has allowed us to operate in an informed and purposeful manner as we move forward – for the individuals we serve, as well as the systems we navigate.

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