

## Strategies for Increasing Rigour in Community Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) | CIRCLE | Text Transcript

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This is a text transcript for the recorded webinar “Strategies for Increasing Rigour in Community Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL)” presented by the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) at the University of Guelph. The event was recorded on September 29, 2021. The guest speaker was Jeji Varghese.

### Sharada Srinivasan:

Hello everyone, welcome to the first of a collaborative joint webinar series that we will explore through this term and the next term. I am Sharada, I am the director of the Canada India Research Center for Learning and Engagement, and I will moderate today's session.

The Canada India Research Center for Learning and Engagement is located at the University of Guelph, for those of you who are new to our event for the first time, and to learn more about CIRCLE please visit [canadaindiaresearch.ca](http://canadaindiaresearch.ca), that should give you a good sense of who we are and what we do, and CIRCLE is only about a year and a half old, so we have basically existed virtually and we've been able to do a very successful, very well attended and a rich webinar series, and do take a look at the upcoming webinars as well at our website which is [canadaindiaresearch.ca](http://canadaindiaresearch.ca).

Now today's webinar is the first of the joint webinar series that's organized by CIRCLE and CESI both located at the University of Guelph. CIRCLE as you know is the Canada India Research Center for Learning and Engagement, CESI, again for those of you who don't know, is the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute also located at the University of Guelph. So, the two organizations, the two centers, have come together to explore community engagement, you know, in the context of India, South Asia, but also Indian and South Asian diasporas particularly in Canada.

So, this will allow us to explore the sort of, the rich traditions of community engagement called, you know, the vocabulary varies but I think we all understand what we mean by community engagement, the rich tradition of community engagement, community development in India and in other South Asian countries.

So, our first speaker in this series is Dr. Jeji Varghese who's a faculty member with the department of sociology and anthropology, Jeji is an environmental sociologist and her talk today is titled Strategies for Increasing Rigour in Community Engaged Teaching and Learning. And Jeji actually teaches most of her courses within the broad framework of community engaged teaching and learning which is why that is the focus of our talk today.

Just sort of some practical matters, Jeji will speak for about 20 to 30 minutes, and then we have about 20 to 25 minutes for question and answers, you can post your comments and questions as they come to you in your mind in the chat section, or you can wait 'til the floor is open for questions, either way we welcome lots of questions and comments and I'm sure Jeji is really looking forward to engaging with those questions and comments. We all know the etiquette of Zoom by now so please stay mute—muted and your video should be off, with that over to you Jeji.

### Jeji Varghese:

Thanks everyone for joining us. Thank you Sharada and thank you to CIRCLE and CESI for this opportunity to share and to reflect on my experiences with community engaged teaching and learning in relation to rigour. So, I'd like to begin by grounding myself and land as a settler to Turtle Island, I'm grateful to land for sustenance and I acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of first peoples.

The University of Guelph where I'm currently located is on the Treaty 3 lands and territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit and is part of the Dish with One Spoon Covenant, and I recognize that we're connecting virtually and that we're all indifferent places, so I'd like everyone to take a moment to acknowledge the specific peoples and the territories that you're on, the ancestors that have walked before you, those that walk along with you and those that are still to come.

As a gathering place these lands are also home to many past, present, and future First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples and I respectfully acknowledge their languages, their cultures, their histories, their resilience as they continue to enrich our lives through different ways of knowing, doing, and being, and sharing with us and given the current Truth and Reconciliation week events I'd also like to recognize the ongoing trauma of residential schools on survivors, their families and communities, and the many tears collectively shed for those that didn't survive.

And although my current talk doesn't explicitly focus on indigenization or reconciliation and resurgence, indigenization and decolonization have been foundational to my teaching practice for a number of years, and so it's within that context that I share with you today. Miigwech, aaniin. Thanks again for the opportunity for being here.

So, I think you know given the context of colonial histories and the need for thinking about ethical research, community engaged research fits within that context and part of what I want to focus on today is what does rigorous research look like when you're engaging students in that research as part of their learning?

And so, when we talk about rigorous research, we're really focusing on ensuring that the quality of that research ensures that the outputs that are going to community partners reflects the high standard of quality in terms of the research process, so I'm encouraging students to think about what it is that they're doing, and how they're conducting the research and why, and paying attention to all those pieces as we go through the course.

So, although I, as Sharada mentioned, I do draw on community engaged teaching and learning in most of the courses that I teach I'm going to focus on a third-year qualitative methods course that I've taught for a number of years. The class size has ranged from 60 to 120 students and I'm just going to point out that all the examples I'm going to talk about are pre pandemic, I have not ventured in the scale of this kind of a project during the pandemic.

And this is really, as well, reflecting sort of an accumulation of my experiences over time, and so every strategy I've used doesn't necessarily apply to every iteration of the course but over time I've kind of built on what I've learned, and so I'm here to share that with you and I'm hoping that I can also learn from all of you in terms of your own experiences when we get to the discussion portion.

So, one of the strategies that I use in terms of ensuring that sort of attention to rigours, is making sure that rigour is one of the learning outcomes that there's attention to rigour within the learning outcomes for the course, and so you'll see here in three rigour is noted.

Within the course itself, we have an interactive lecture, we focus on rigour, I introduce the students to various criteria of rigour within a qualitative context, we talk about what that looks like, what kinds of questions they should be paying attention to, and I also talk about how the research design helps and the course design helps in terms of ensuring that they're taking and paying attention to rigour throughout the course.

So, the course, I was trying to figure how to explain the course to you in a short length of time, so the course in general parallels the research process, we start at the beginning of the semester focusing on research questions and then we move all the way through ethics, research design, we focus on data collection, analysis, and how to mobilize that knowledge indifferent ways.

And so, the beginning and the end of the semester we are together in the, in sort of, for the entire class and then for the middle of the class I have another slide that talks about how we break up the weeks.

So one of the pieces that we pay attention to, and thank you Lindsey I'm borrowing your slide, is focusing on principles of critical community engaged scholarship, and I know there's another session that's focusing on that I just wanted to acknowledge that part of what we're doing within this course is ensuring that students are aware of the principles, and that they're understanding sort of the various and ways the community partners are involved in the research project, and that varies from year to year depending on the project, but certainly they're involved in terms of identifying the research priorities, sometimes the populations, and you know sometimes they provide input in terms of analysis, and certainly they listen to the presentations at the end of the semester.

So, I thought first given the large size of the course I realized that that added dimensions of rigour that sometimes is harder to achieve in smaller classes, but also led to opportunities to think about rigour in different ways.

So, in terms of the course design, there's myself and the community partners that I generally focus mainly on the course design, and then with along with the community partner we think about the research design as a whole, and then I have what I'm calling here is community engaged teaching learning facilitators, they comprise of graduate teaching assistants and community engaged learning peer helpers that help guide the students from week to week through their research projects.

And just graduate teaching assistants, or graduate students that are basically paid in terms of that particular role, community engaged learning peer helpers are volunteers, and they generally are students that have taken the class in the past, either this particular class or another community engaged learning course, and they offer support to students in terms of being able to speak to their own experiences engaging in these types of courses.

And then each GTA and CL has a set of three to four student research teams, and I call them collaborative learning teams so that they understand that they're learning together, and these research teams basically conduct all the different aspects of the research throughout the semester together, and so the beginning of the semester we do a lot of focus on, you know, what it means to do work collaboratively and different strategies in terms of ensuring that that will be successful, and then work with the students throughout the semester in these workshops.

So, even though so in a given semester there's likely three or four of those CLT workshop breakout rooms, and three or four GTAs one associated with each, and then sometimes CLs depending on the course, sometimes the CLs will work between two classrooms and sometimes they will be focused on one. And then after the first year, things after the first year that I engaged in this, I added summer URA to the mix and that was directly in response to my trying to grapple with rigour.

So, it's a little daunting thinking about how to ensure all of these students that you meet, you know, once or twice a week depending on the course structure are going to undertake research that at the end of the day you're going to come out with high quality research. And so, part of my sort of thinking in relation to that was how do I, what are some ways that I can make sure that that product that goes to the community partners in the end is of the highest quality that we can have, recognizing sort of all of the parts throughout the process that we also need to be paying attention to.

So, in terms - so I've added this summer URA, and I'll talk a little bit more about their role. So the weekly class, the first class is more of an introduction to the course, to this community engaged research project itself, and then from weeks two to eleven generally the first half of the class or the first class depending on if it's a three hour class or two 80 minute classes, is an interactive lecture where I'm focusing on you know the part of the research process that we're focusing on for that week, and then they engage in weekly structured workshops that have two components, there's a formal instructional component where the GTAs and the peer helpers are leading through a set of activities, and then there's a time where the student research teams can work together on the various components of their research projects.

So that includes working on a literature review, completing an ethics application, coming up with their interview guide, whether it's for semi-structured interviews or focus groups, doing analysis individually as well as collectively, and then thinking about how they're going to present what they found and then practicing those components.

So there's a lot of sort of support pieces that have been embedded over time in relation to this course, so CESI has provided support in various ways including sometimes in terms of providing funding to help get research projects to a place where students can undertake that work, so it might be you know in terms of conducting a literature review that provides students with at least an initial understanding of what kind of work has been done in that area before they engage in the research projects and then they supplement that with their own searches.

It has included support post-projects in terms of helping if the summer URAsip for example goes into multiple semesters, it has also included in-class support in terms of providing presentations in relation to both community engaged scholarship as a whole, but also in terms of knowledge mobilization and...is there anything? That's, there are a lot of different ways that CESI has been involved in these projects over time. Oh, brokering, I knew that I missed one! Over the years there have been semesters where CESI has also been involved in identifying community partners that might be a good fit with this particular course.

So, I mentioned that the students work in collaborative research teams and I use collaborative research teams for multiple reasons, the size of the class I mean I don't really want you know potentially a hundred individual research projects to try to manage, but there is some comfort in students conducting these research projects in teams because they can learn from each other, so we within the workshops make sure that there's opportunities for students to be reflexive, to learn from each other, to pay attention to how what they're learning can help inform what they continue to do in terms of the subsequent components of their projects.

So those collaborative research teams provide opportunities both for students to practice what they're, you know, with peers, but also opportunities to work with others in terms of the research project. So, when they conduct their workshop, not workshops, focus groups or interviews they're always in pairs, one person will ask questions and the other person will be an observer, part of that's a safety piece and part of it is a pedagogical piece in terms of learning from each other.

I mentioned the workshop structure and I just wanted to, so in addition to providing sort of training in relation to each of those pieces there's also opportunity to provide feedback to the students before they submit, so that includes feedback in relation to their interview guides and their ethics application, feedback in relation to their coding strategies, as well as in terms of their poster presentation.

So, they actually in the second last week, and this is something that sort of happened over time, students had expressed that they'd like to practice within their workshop groups before they presented to the community partners and so that gave them an opportunity to also learn from each other in terms of things they might want to pay attention to in terms of their subsequent

analysis. I meet with the GTAs and the CL peer helpers at the beginning, like before each workshop, and it's sort of a train-the-trainer style meeting.

So they're, the way it's set up is I meet with the GTAs first to go over anything related to grading and then I meet with both the GTAs and CLs combined to talk about the workshop structure itself, and to learn from the experiences that students that are peer helpers that have been in the course before can offer in terms of their own experiences having been through the course, and then I meet with the CL peer helpers for a bit after because they have their own learning outcomes that they're trying to achieve, and so I meet with them afterwards. So that's a piece that they provide support for all of the students in terms of the project and then I try to support them in terms of their ability to do that.

I mentioned the summer URA, so the summer URA is an opportunity also for the student, for one student, to get additional experience in terms of qualitative research, in this case community engaged qualitative research, and over time, and they also, so they play sort of that pedagogical support role but they also play a role in terms of research design, in terms of the rigour pieces, because they have an opportunity - well I guess I'll talk about that in a second, but there's an opportunity for the summer URA to add additional analysis based on a larger data set that they work with that's based on the student research team's work.

And then I have over time also secured a learning enhancement fund in order to start this whole process in terms of thinking about brokering relationships, as well as in terms of providing the tools, the recorders, and other pieces that this, I started this sort of pre-everybody having cell phones, not that everyone does now but many more do and a lot of times they'll record on there.

And then I've also obtained a scholarship teaching and learning award to look at the impacts of this type of research in terms of student learning. So in terms of research design, when I first taught this course I had multiple partners, like I think there was five or six partners, and one of the things that I quickly learned was just— [sound of something falling onto the floor] —oops sorry.

The challenges in terms of managing multiple projects, there's just, there are a number of things that can happen at different points in time including community partners changing their mind about what their research project might, like what their research needs might be sort of mid-semester, and so after the first year I moved towards a focus on one or two community partners, and the other strategy that I've used is having that's in combined with that is having multiple collaborative learning teams working on similar research questions.

So every semester there's just, you know, one group that doesn't quite work as well together as others and so there's sort of a lot of extra pieces that need to be completed, and as a result I, in the end, I'm also concerned about ensuring that the quality of the research the community partners is at a level that's appropriate, so having multiple CLTs work on similar research questions means that there's just there's a little bit of leeway if things don't go quite according to plan with one of the CLTs, or a certain set of students within a CLT.

And then the other piece that wasn't necessarily intentional in terms of rigour but I realized sort of as opportunity presented itself, for the most part initially I was doing single year projects with one or two community partners and then had an opportunity to consider multi-year projects and realized that there were some benefits there in terms of students learning from the experiences and the research outputs from previous semesters and building on projects that way, so it added another level in relation to that.

So, the other piece that when I was talking about the summer URA is just in terms of analysis. So, the collaborative learning teams present their findings to the community partners at the end of the course, and then I have the community partners think about what they've learned and what further analysis they'd like to do, and so we build on the preliminary analysis the students focus on.

So the students are given abroad research question but then what they choose to focus on in terms of their analysis can emerge from the data itself and so what they all focus on, you know, tends to be different, but then rather than giving the community partner sort of, you know, twelve research studies, what we do is we merge that, we merge all of the CLT data sets into a larger data set and then recode it for consistency and quality control, and then we use that data set for subsequent analysis based on sort of the questions that may have emerged from the community partners learning about the preliminary findings that the students had presented at the end of the course.

So just to go back like in terms of those strategies for rigour, in terms of credibility I tried to sort of think about what aspects, or sort of more pedagogical strategies and which pieces were more research design strategies, and some of these probably cross-over in multiple places, but in terms of credibility there are specific workshops that focus on analysis and reflexivity that are within the time frame of the course, and then as I mentioned the summer URA has a piece there in terms of the research design strategies because the students are often not, I mean depending on the project, they might be working with different populations, they might be working in different neighborhoods, there's an opportunity there to pay attention to, you know, whether there's consistency in those sort of specific populations.

And then there's an opportunity in terms of research or triangulation, because each of the members of the collaborative learning team are researchers and then they're comparing what they're finding for their individual interview or the focus group that they would have analyzed, and then comparing that to what others in the group have found before they then merge their set to focus on a particular aspect, and then the students also provide an audit trail by keeping a CLT memo within NVivo, and so that's another piece that helps in terms of that credibility piece.

In terms of trustworthiness, I think part of my concerns in relation to rigour really stemmed from acknowledging that these were student researchers that were conducting research for the first time and that they may feel less comfortable, I guess? And so again, the CLT as a whole helps in terms of making students feel more comfortable and ensuring that they're interpreting and analyzing in a way that would be trustworthy, and we also have an ethics workshop and a

set of activities that are related to that, that are not just at the beginning of the semester but that are weaved in through the entire course.

I mentioned that, you know, every interview or focus group has two students there, so there's always an interviewer and an observer, and in something like a focus group they will alternate those roles sort of midway through the focus group, but with interviews they each do one interview and serve as an observer for a different interview. In terms of transferability, so we...

So a lot of these pieces, like in terms of pedagogical, we achieve through the workshops and so we have both workshops that focus on individual coding of their either segment of a focus group or the semi-structured interview that they might have conducted, as well as having a collaborative coding workshop where students can get input and sort of learn from each other, and see how what they might have seen within their context if that applies to other contexts, and then in terms of the research design I mentioned sort of the use of multiple collaborative learning teams in relation to that.

In terms of dependability, the findings being consistent over time certainly the multi-year strategy works in relation to that, but also just internally just going from one year to another drawing on GTA experiences and the peer helper experiences helps in terms of students seeing where there might be some pieces, they might want to be paying attention to.

And then in terms of confirmability, again there are the knowledge mobilization workshops where, workshop I should say, where they're listening to each other's analysis gives them an opportunity to see whether how they're presenting their data and the evidence that they're using in relation to that holds, and if others sort of in the room can follow the logic, and then in terms of the research design again having multiple collaborative learning teams working on the same research question helps in relation to that.

And so that's everything that I had, I'm hoping that we'll kind of open the floor for discussion in relation to anything that I've talked about, and I see that there are a number of chat pieces which I haven't been paying attention to, but I will look at shortly, but I do want to just sort of leave you with the additional acknowledgement slide.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

Thanks, Jeji, so maybe a good place to start would be with the questions in the chat. So, one of the questions is, so do projects require formal ethics approval, so how do you ensure that you obtain the approval in a reasonable time frame so that the project can be conducted?

**Jeji Varghese:**

So at our institution we have a process for course-based research and so, basically what happens is I have the overall projects that students are engaged in, and indicate who the community partners are, and sort of the templates that I have students fill out in terms of ethics and all of those other pieces, and I submit those in advance and get research approval before, or ethics approval, before the course begins and then the students as part of that



process are required to submit, because they're working on slightly different questions often, they submit a research ethics document that comes to me, and I basically on behalf of the research ethics board then go through all of them.

I basically do it in the same format that the research ethics board does in that I give the students feedback they have to address it before they're allowed to continue on with their research project, and over the years there are certain pieces that I know come up and so I spend more time on those in class in terms of ensuring that students understand what kinds of things they should be paying attention to, and then every year there's you know at least one or two that, or maybe three or four, that kind of have to go through a couple of iterations before they can proceed.

### Sharada Srinivasan:

Thanks, Jeji, and you know since I'm on a research ethics board, usually classroom projects are fast-tracked, so the review process is slightly different from the review process for research projects per se, but the rigour is the same but fast-tracked.

I just wanted to say that none of our Indian colleagues, people from India who actually signed up for the event have been able to join Zoom, I've had tons of emails saying we are not able to join Zoom, we're not able to join the session. So Jeji, if you're seeing low numbers and if you're seeing familiar faces this is probably one of the reasons. We're trying to see what the problem is from our site, but it seems we are doing what we can, but that's for later, but I just wanted to let you know that it's frustrating that a lot of people that we had hoped would join are not here.

So, then we have another question from Tad and that is to what extent is rigour associated with the type of project chosen, then, because a rigour must be tied to the potential for success. So, what then do you look for in a potential project? Are there better topics or methods for successful and rigorous completion especially in twelve weeks for what is a very large research team?

### Jeji Varghese:

That's a good question. Certainly, I mean not every community project that comes forward works for this particular setting and part of the benefit I think of working with CESI is that projects that would make more sense as masters style research or would make more sense for an intern at CESI that those go there. So, I mean, I'm paying attention to what, like in terms of research projects you know, are the populations the students need to access accessible, right?

They can't work with vulnerable populations so there's certain pieces that I have to pay attention to before I even say yes to a research project.

And then I guess, just part of the - once we move to having one or two research partners it became easier in some ways to ensure that you know there's multiple either focuses within that research question, or populations in terms of working in different neighborhoods, we did a

project looking at drinking water for example options or preferences I guess, for immigrants, for I think they called them hockey moms initially or soccer moms, but basically you know sport - parents of kids that are in sports, along with seniors and so each you know CLT, there were you know three or four working on each sub population.

And so those, I mean certainly I am paying attention to what can be achievable within six weeks and what doesn't make sense at all, and what...knowing that if there's an opportunity for a summer URA to be involved some of the more complicated analysis gets done at another stage. Does that answer your question Tad?

**Tad McIlwraith:**

That's great Jeji, thanks very much and a really wonderful presentation it was. It was a treat for me to have your have the curtain you sometimes work behind pulled back a little bit for me to see what it is you do and just how incredibly, you know, demanding in the best of possible ways this kind of work is, it's really impressive, thank you.

**Jeji Varghese:**

As I said I have a lot of help right, there are lots, GTAs, peer helpers, CESI there's definitely lots of support in relation to this work. There was a question about how many students per research team, it depends on the size of the class. I've had research teams as high as twelve students, ten to twelve students, those are more challenging, but I'm also limited by the number of GTAs that I have, and logistically the number of classrooms I can get in terms of breakout rooms and so ideally six to eight is what I would prefer, and there's some years where my numbers are lower, I can do the six to eight, but I have had as many as twelve students and ten to twelve teams.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

I mean I think even when you have all of this support it's the layers of work, right? So, when you think of, oh let me go into the class, do my lectures, and come out and grade assignments, it seems relatively less work than with so many moving parts and so many people, so it definitely is a lot more work than you know, the standard.

**Jeji Varghese:**

It is, and the reason that I continue to do this, or that I had for like multiple years I'm currently not teaching qual methods, but is that I just I taught it the more traditional way the first year where students did a research proposal, and did one observation or an interview that wasn't tied to a research question, and I just found that students didn't appreciate the process, they didn't understand or quite- So some of the comments students that came out of the research that I did in relation to this is, you know, students gained an appreciation of the iterative nature of qualitative research, they understood the messiness, they finally when they're reading the methods section of a qualitative paper that one line that tells about you know recruitment, they now appreciate what actually went into that process right?

And so, there's just a different level of learning I think that gets achieved and I recognize that it's resource intensive but I just, I can't, I think for me part of it is just the benefits and the ability to have something meaningful come out of that learning for the community partners is something that I- it's hard once you've had a taste for that to let go of that, I guess.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

So, the question that I have is Jeji, you know, one of the challenges we face is that not all students are able to complete a course or a task in the expected time frame right, you know twelve weeks is the class frame, a lot of student [audio cuts out] extra time, right? So how do you accommodate those sort of concerns in a course like this?

**Jeji Varghese:**

So, I yeah...like I do, like I - So you know the amount of time they have to do their data collection for example is three or four weeks and it's like one interview that they're doing in that time frame, and so I try to make sure that I've given them sort of the maximum amount of time in order to do those pieces and then, I guess the other pieces these workshops are class time, they're coming like it's not -The workshops are being done and a lot of the work they get other than the interviews they can actually, or focus groups, they can actually do in the classroom itself and so I'm giving them the time and the resources in terms of doing that work.

I've had less issues in terms of handing things in on time, I've had more issues in terms of students who where there's like SAS accommodations that I've had to figure out how to work through, so I've been the participant for some students because they just cannot, you know, have a conversation with, you know, somebody in the public, and so they go through the activity they're part of everything else, my data, like their interview never goes into the dataset but they can still participate on all those other parts.

So that's been sort of my experience I - because the students are working in groups, because they're, it's a semester-long project if students can sort of navigate the who's doing the written or the submission parts for each of the different components so they might not all be, I mean they need to all be involved in each of the aspects in terms of the workshops themselves, but in terms of actually writing or putting the poster together, there might be different people at different time that are focusing on that, and so they can work through their schedules in a way, or at least they have I mean, I haven't had that come up as an issue. I think in part because one step feeds into the other right, you can't really, you can't be doing your analysis if you haven't done the interview, you can't right, and so there has to be a flow that kind of goes along with that.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

Would it also be possible that students are self-selecting right? So, when they look at the course blurb before enrolling in a course-

### Jeji Varghese:

Ah yeah, I should mention that there's two, there's always two sections of the qual methods class and so my section is the more intensive, can be engaged teaching and learning, but the other section is has their own sort of pieces but it's not- so yes there is definitely a possibility that there's self-selecting going on in terms of that. They're not offered at the same time so it doesn't entirely work, but there can certainly be that.

### Sharada Srinivasan:

Okay, I have more questions but no, I shall not misuse my powers as the moderator. Okay, so here is another again a great question, is it possible to give a ballpark estimate of success rate for projects? What proportion of student projects require minimal additional work from any of the resource persons in order for you to feel comfortable sharing them with a community partner, or how often do you get a project that isn't shareable with a community partner and needs a lot of work?

### Jeji Varghese:

Yeah, so that became an issue definitely in that first year when I had multiple research projects for multiple community partners, so that meant a lot of time on my part post-course trying to get these projects to a state that I would feel comfortable sharing it. When I moved to the you know, one or two community partners and having a summer URA involved in that process, we were then able to you know go through the interviews and determine the quality of those before we included them into the larger data set.

So, I can't really say, like I don't know that, I can't - It's hard for me to say what proportion just because I only did it that one way one time, but in terms of the, I mean if I think about sort of the quality of the interviews -I'm like totally ballparking here, like maybe 10%?

Right, that the interviews are just really superficial they... it's like ask a question, answer, ask question, answer, there's no probing, there's no like all of these things that we talk about in terms of rich data isn't coming through and so you know, we look at that and we basically have you know, at this the summer URA and I go through and determine whether or not there's sufficient quality in order for it to be in that that larger data set, and so that's another sort of way in which we're ensuring rigour.

### Sharada Srinivasan:

Other questions, comments?

### Jeji Varghese:

Does that answer your question Sam?

### Sam Laban:

Hi Jeji, yes it does and I just wanted to clarify, so what I think I heard you say is that with this like, quite frankly really impressive, intricate, course design you have, you've really upped the kind of success rate, like it sounds like now you're relatively few with all these various supports, and feedback mechanisms, and quality assurance things you have, you actually you know for the most part, projects are successful in as much as they don't need this extra work.

### Jeji Varghese:

Yeah for the most part, I mean I think there were a few years where you know, the individual research projects were going to the community partners and we stopped doing that, we negotiated with the community partners that they would wait the extra you know three, four months and get a single output that sort of covered more of what they were interested in, and so I - yeah like I get - I should probably do a study focusing on just the quality pieces I haven't done that, I've focused more on the learning outcomes for the students, and the benefits to the community partners but in terms of, I'm sure there are still places where there can be additional improvements, but the community partners also recognize that these are students that are in training right?

That they understand that in terms of these research projects, but what they're getting out is still valuable for them in terms of the work that they're doing and so, there is a you know, that recognition is there, but as I said I do try to ensure that students aren't just doing the research projects to do them that there is some attention to why they're doing it, and the importance to the community partner, the community partner comes in at the beginning of the semester and talks about why this work is relevant to their focus.

### Sharada Srinivasan:

Thanks, Jeji. You know that kind of brings you know to mind this question, because I do most of my work in the development context is, you know the sort of you know we want our students to learn and we create opportunities for us, but what about the sort of -Are we in some sense burdening community partners right? Especially when they are stretched with a lot of things and scarcity of resources and then we say okay, we can do something, but then if the quality of material that's coming out of the work is kind of mixed. You know what I'm trying to get at?

### Jeji Varghese:

No, I – and that's why I pay so much attention to it right, like because I don't want at the end of the course for the work to not beat a quality that I would feel comfortable passing along to a community partner and so there are sort of, there are different ways in which I've tried to...What's the word? Mmm... Not duplicate efforts but it's sort of like...Ugh I can't think of the word right now.

But just the idea that there's redundancies I guess is what I'm trying to say right, that it - within the process itself I've tried to build those in so that there are both catches if the work isn't where it needs to be before they go out, there's opportunities to practice, there's opportunities

to be reflexive and get feedback, there's opportunities to try to put their best work forward in relation to this, and I think, and for me having them work in teams helps with that process right? It's not an individual student who's trying to do an entire research project, it's a group of eight to twelve students, and so the burden is different when it's shared.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

Thanks, Jeji. Since a lot of people have just not been, I think outside of the UoG I think, people have not been able to join this session. So, what we are going to do is of course make available the recording, and hopefully there will be questions which we can direct to you Jeji and-

**Jeji Varghese:**

Sure, I'm happy to answer any questions, any additional questions.

**Sharada Srinivasan:**

Okay, yeah, thank you very much Jeji and everybody else who joined the session. I have the good fortune of Jeji being my colleague and yeah, and she continues to inspire me towards, to get on this path. Our next webinar is also related to community engagement, this is a research that was recently successfully defended by one of our M.A. students - M.Sc. students.

A Case Study of Learning in a Community-based Organization in Rural Bihar that takes place on October learn more about this webinar and other events you can visit [canadaindiaresearch.ca](http://canadaindiaresearch.ca). So, thank you very much everybody, stay well, stay safe and have a great day. Thank you, bye.

**Jeji Varghese:**

Take care everyone!

[End of transcript]