

## Summary of Proposal

Over the past two decades, a growing number of researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds as well as nonprofit organizations have embraced various narrative methodologies, such as storytelling and photovoice, as a way to investigate and illuminate social inequities. With greater receptivity on the part of funders, including the Tri-Council granting agencies, these approaches have proven effective in fostering insight and self-awareness of the individual at the center of the narrative and in collectivizing the experiences of individuals in similar circumstances. While it is generally assumed by those who engage in narrative research that enhanced public understanding about phenomena of interest would contribute to policy and social change, the evidence for this type of change is unclear. This project aims to systematically investigate how narrative forms of knowledge co-creation can inform and lead to such policy and social change.

The Centre for Research on Health Equity and Social Inclusion (CRHESI) is a community-academic initiative founded in 2015 to increase knowledge generation and sharing, and to promote social and policy change in five domains: poverty and inequality; discrimination, violence and marginalization; working conditions/ employment security; legacies of colonialism and contemporary realities; and health policy and services. These areas reflect the collective expertise among our partners, and many have used narrative approaches to investigate these areas. Thus, our aims are highly relevant to our partners, and more broadly.

Following a literature review to identify: common assumptions and practices in narrative approaches, conditions that have enabled participatory projects that cross sectors to flourish, barriers that have been experienced, as well as the theoretical approaches and effective strategies and conditions for moving knowledge created by narrative, art-based and storytelling approaches into social and policy change, we will conduct a comparative case analysis of multiple narrative initiatives and research projects to determine the most effective strategies and conditions for mobilizing narrative findings to create social and policy change at organizational and societal levels. These projects will be situated in various organizations, disciplines, and community-university initiatives, either completed or in progress in London.

Project objectives include an investigation of the process, coordination and challenges of narrative knowledge co-creation, as well as articulation of the most effective strategies. At its core, this project seeks to understand current and potential impacts of narrative methodologies, and create new, meaningful ways to evaluate these impacts, with particular attention to system-level change. We will develop a conceptual model that illustrates, explains, provides insight into the policy impacts of narrative-based research and articulates the most effective strategies, barriers, facilitators, and challenges to advocacy for change. The resulting insights hold the potential for application to other narrative-research initiatives at regional, national or international level.

Principal Investigators, Drs. Marlene Janzen Le Ber and Helene Berman lead a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral university-community team comprised of researchers at various career stages, community partners, and students. Through the PDG, conditions for the meaningful involvement, mentorship and professional development among student, academic and community researchers are being created. The strategic inclusion of policymakers, government officials, and political leaders at specific stages of the project ensures that the knowledge that is generated will have the potential for policy and social change.