# Graduate students cooperating:
# a cross case analysis of five student-run co-operatives serving graduate students

by

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BA, Concordia University, 1993

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# Executive Summary

Across Canada and the US, students use co-operatives to provide themselves with housing, food, books and school supplies. These co-operatives are student owned and operated, and aim to provide benefits ranging from cost saving on goods and services to involvement in environmental or social justice projects. Student co-operatives may include both graduate and undergraduate members, and in some cases, primarily in housing, offer specific services for graduate students.

As a student-led non-profit, the University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society (UVIC GSS) has much in common with student-led co-operatives. The UVIC GSS provides services to its members through a democratic, member-controlled system. Despite similarities, neither the UVIC GSS nor independently organized graduate students at the University of Victoria have a history of forming student-run co-operatives to provide services. This may be a missed opportunity.

This study explores the experience of student-run co-operatives providing services to graduate students. It describes five cases of student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US where graduate students are members. Data collected is considered in the context of literature on graduate student needs and services, the co-operative model, and student co-operatives. In doing so, this report aims to consider the experience of graduate student co-operators within the broader contexts of both the co-operative movement and graduate student service providers.

## Summary of literature review

The literature review begins with a brief background on the co-operative model. This section covers the internationally accepted definition of co-operatives, and the principles of co-operation. It also looks at co-operative sectors, comparing how Canadians use co-operatives to use of the co-operative model globally. The literature review then pulls together three distinct fields in order to provide the basis for understanding co-operatives that involve graduate students. The first two fields are areas of academic inquiry: co-operative studies literature, and student affairs literature concerning graduate students. The writing on co-operatives and graduate students also includes "grey literature" (Malina & Nut, 2000), or literature from sources that are not peer reviewed, such as co-operative websites, and internal reports from universities. The third topic is student co-operatives. This literature is a primarily grey literature from student organizations, and articles written by students about their experience in student co-operatives. Each of these areas provides insight into how to interpret the information collected on the cases.

The literature on co-operatives explores several of the key themes from co-operative studies:

- the ownership models used in co-operatives;
- the unique and interdependent roles co-operative members play as customer, owner and investor;
- the idea that there is a *co-operative difference* that sets co-operatives apart from non-profits and traditional businesses; and
- the resilience of the co-operative model.

The section on student co-operatives considers first the services students provide in their co-operatives. It then considers common concerns that arise for student co-operatives, notably:

- accessing capital and managing finances;

- ownership and autonomy of student co-operatives;
- training and associative practices; and
- building community through co-operatives.

Finally, the section on graduate students explores common topics in literature from the field of student services. This literature covers both the common causes of stress for graduate students, as well best practices in designing services for graduate students.

## Summary of research methods

As there is limited academic literature linking the themes of graduate student services and co-operatives, this research is exploratory in nature. The study surveys the field of student co-operatives with graduate student members in Canada and the US, and uses a case study method to explore in detail the experiences of five student-led co-operatives that have graduate student members. Data comes from interviews and review of public documents from each of the cases. Coding of the interview transcriptions provides the themes discussed in the paper, and these are tested for validity by triangulation with documents from the cases and the literature review.

## Summary of research findings

The study finds student co-operatives can successfully provide services to graduate student members. However, these co-operatives do not function without risk. Like other co-operatives, student-run co-operatives face challenges in ensuring they are effectively run, while members retain democratic control. Student-run co-operatives also face particular challenges due to their student membership, such as increased difficulty raising capital, inexperienced board members, and high turnover in membership.

Student-led co-operatives offer a more narrow range of services than the Canadian co-operative movement generally, and focus on campus services such as bookstores, cafés and housing. Student-led co-operatives emphasize associative practices—such as member involvement, democratic management, member education and information sharing—rather than the balance between business and associative goals found in literature on co-operatives. This creates a risk of privileging social ideals over sound financial management. They are learning organizations, where members have an opportunity to develop skills through their participation in governance and work for the co-operative.

Unlike many student organizations, student-led co-operatives do not run separately as undergraduate and graduate organizations, although they may offer services specifically for graduate students where warranted. Nonetheless, the co-operative cases have leveraged their graduate student membership to their advantage. They appreciate their maturity in governance, and they have drawn on their reputation as quiet and studious, when trying to repair relationships with neighbours who objected to co-operative houses that had rowdy tenants.

## Summary of discussion

The discussion section explores how the cases relate to literature on graduate students and co-operatives. It begins by exploring how graduate students are using co-operatives. Then, drawing on literature on the needs of graduate students, the paper considers whether co-operatives are an effective means to address these needs, and how well the co-operative model matches the models proposed in the literature for providing graduate student services. Finally, the discussion section proposes a *student co-operative difference* as a model to explore student uses of the co-operative model. This section goes on to explore how the principles of co-operation apply to the context of student-led co-operatives.

## Summary of recommendations

Co-operatives are an effective model for provision of services to graduate students, but the co-operative model does not function effectively as a subsidiary organization to a non-profit. As such, this report recommends the following course of action to the UVIC Graduate Students' Society:

1. **Act as a catalyst for the development of student-run co-operatives**

The UVIC GSS can provide support to graduate students wishing to develop co-operatives by hosting education events about co-operatives, using its networks to link students interested in starting co-operatives with each other, and connecting interested students with co-operative organizations.

2. **Providing training and support to student-run co-operatives**

As a well-established graduate student-run organization, the UVIC GSS is able to share expertise with students initiating new projects. Organizational management and governance, financial management, and the needs of graduate students are all areas where the UVIC GSS could provide the benefit of experience.

3. **Address graduate student needs with GSS services**

The literature review provided valuable insight into current academic work on graduate student services and the needs of graduate students. Financial concerns, isolation, and juggling responsibilities between academic and other areas of responsibility are all causes of stress for graduate students. This information, and future research on graduate student experiences, can provide a solid basis from which to evaluate current programming and plan future services at the UVIC GSS.

4. **Provide referrals to professional services**

This study found that student-run organizations benefit from sound legal and financial advice. The UVIC GSS has longstanding connections with auditors, legal counsel and university administrators. A referral to professionals who have experience working with graduate students could be beneficial to a new group of graduate-student co-operators.

5. **Form partnerships with local co-operatives**

The UVIC GSS could form partnerships with local co-operatives that offer services identified as priorities by their members—such as housing and childcare. A partnership could facilitate graduate student access to community co-operatives.

6. **Conduct further research on student co-operatives**

There is very little research conducted into student organizations, and even less on student-led co-operatives. While this paper provides a rich source of information on how student-led organizations function, as well as the creative approaches these organizations use to address their specific needs, further study on student-led co-operatives could be a valuable source of information for future members of the UVIC GSS and other student-serving organizations

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# Dedication

This study is dedicated to Dr. Ian MacPherson, 1939-2013, who shared his passion for co-operatives with so many students, including me.

# Introduction

In the past decade, enrolment in graduate studies has increased in British Columbia and at the University of Victoria (UVIC) (Province of British Columbia, 2013, University of Victoria, 2013, University of Victoria Faculty of Graduate Studies, 2012). Writing on student services in universities seeks to identify and the needs of students in these programs, and propose best practices in service models (Brandes, 2006; Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006; Rempel, Hussong-Christian, & Mellinger, 2011). Services are offered to graduate students by their universities (Brandes, 2006; Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006; Rempel, Hussong-Christian, & Mellinger, 2011), or by organizations created by the students themselves (Brandes, 2006; Corner, 2006). Student-run co-operatives are one such model.

## The Client

The client for this study is the University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society (UVIC GSS). At UVIC, all graduate students are members of the UVIC GSS, a well-established student-run organization that represents graduate students to the University and provides social activities and services to benefit its members (UVIC GSS, 2013).

## Study Rationale

The UVIC GSS is an organization dedicated to providing services to its graduate student members. Currently, the UVIC GSS offers free meeting space, extended health and dental insurance, access to low cost transit, social activities, and a restaurant. It also makes partnership with other organizations in order to provide additional services. For example, the university distributes grants and bursaries funded by the UVIC GSS (UVIC GSS, 2014).

The UVIC GSS has an interest in learning about the practices used to deliver services to graduate students in other venues. Graduate students at UVIC have consistently identified housing, food, and childcare as key service needs (UVIC GSS, 2010a; UVIC GSS, 2012-2014; UVIC GSS, 2011; UVIC GSS, 1990), and similar services are delivered throughout the world using the co-operative model (International Co-operative Alliance, 2013), and students in Canada and the US use co-operatives to provide housing, food, bicycle repair, and books (North American Students of Co-operation, 2008; Coopsco, 2009; North American Students of Co-operation & United States Youth Council, 1973).

While graduate students have not formed co-operatives at the University of Victoria, the UVIC GSS has an established collaboration with a local car sharing co-operative and a policy of banking with a local credit union, a form of co-operative (UVIC GSS, 2010b, 2014).The objective of this study is to learn about the co-operative model as it is being used to provide services to graduate students.

## Report goals and structure

The goal of this project is to deepen understanding of the co-operative model, and to consider the respective strengths and weaknesses of co-operatives through the lens of the graduate student experience. This report aims to:

- describe the co-operative model
- provide an overview of how co-operatives are used by graduate students in Canada and the US
- explore the experience of graduate students involved in co-operatives

- consider whether the co-operative model matches the service needs of graduate students as described in academic literature

Using the case study method, this report explores graduate student experiences in five student-led co-operatives. Data sources include interviews with graduate students or staff from these co-operatives, and an examination of public documents available on their websites. Use of a case study allows this research project to sketch the experience of graduate students using co-operatives, a subject that is not evident in the academic literature on either co-operatives, or student services.

The first section of the report is a literature review and explores the co-operative model, graduate student needs and services, and student use of co-operatives in Canada and the US. The second section discusses the methodology used in the report. Next, a literature review explores issues of co-operative governance and management, the experience of student co-operators, and graduate student services. The research findings follow. They include summaries of the five cases, and a review of themes arising in the interviews and document review. After the findings, the discussion section interprets the findings through the lens of the literature review. The report closes with recommendations and concluding remarks.

# Literature Review

## Introduction

While academic literature includes plenty of material on co-operatives, graduate students, and student services as distinct topics, research that links these three topics together is currently underdeveloped. As such, this literature review considers each of these three streams.

The first section introduces the co-operative model and explores the principles and values that ground the co-operative movement. A brief overview of active co-operative sectors and models of co-operative ownership is presented. This section then explores the unique aspects of co-operatives, the features required to make them a resilient form of organization, and the weaknesses of the model.

The second section examines literature on graduate student experiences and services. This section explores key themes that arise in literature on graduate students: the question of whether graduate students need separate services from those provided to undergraduates; isolation and the benefits of community involvement for graduate students; and graduate student concerns with managing time and finances.

The final section explores how students use the co-operative model. The types of co-operatives formed by students in Canada and the US are described first. This is followed by an exploration of common themes in writing about student co-operatives, such as ownership and control, training, and community building.

## Literature on co-operatives

### Introduction to the literature on co-operatives

This section draws on both academic literature about co-operatives and writing from within the co-operative movement. It begins with an introduction to the co-operative model—its vision, principles, and examples of how the model is used. This material comes from within the co-operative movement, which, with its instructional focus on values and principles, presents an ideal form of the model.

Next, literature on how co-operatives compare to other models is considered. This work focusses on categorization and distinctions between the co-operative, non-profit and business models. Co-operatives, as their members experience them in practice, may blur the lines between the co-operative and other organizational forms. Indeed some writers explore the concept of a *social economy* encompassing non-profits, community economic development projects, and social economy businesses in one diverse form (Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2009). While acknowledging that practice may blur the lines between organizational forms, this paper accepts the distinct category of co-operative for the purpose of analysing cases in the study.

The final section discusses the weaknesses and risks of the co-operative model. This section considers what can be learned from organizations that abandon the co-operative form. It also explores common problems faced by co-operatives. These include: low participation, conflicting ideas about board roles, and the difficulty in acquiring investment capital.

### An introduction to the co-operative model

Co-operatives include everything from businesses (such as a worker-owned bakery, or a gas station) to services (such as a housing co-operative, or a school) to financial services (such as a credit union or insurance company). While the type of business or service offered might vary widely, co-operatives share a set of common principles that set them apart as a distinct type of organization. The International Co-operative Alliance (n.d.a.) provides a widely accepted definition for co-operatives, their values, and a set of principles used around the world by them. This section explores these in detail, as they provide a context for understanding the student-owned co-operative cases explored in this study as part of a broader co-operative movement. It is important to note that these are guiding principles, and represent the ideals and philosophy underpinning co-operatives, an ideal not always reflected in practice.

### Defining co-operatives

The International Co-operative Alliance defines co-operatives as follows:

> A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically controlled enterprise (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a., para. 1).

This definition emphasizes three key features of co-operatives: their voluntary nature, the focus on a broad range of community needs, and their democratic governance. The voluntary nature of co-operatives is something that sets this type of organization apart from state run services (such as public healthcare). It also distinguishes co-operatives from unions or student associations where membership is mandatory for employees in a unionized workplace or for students attending a particular educational institution. The definition puts equal weight on economic, social and cultural goals, which emphasizes that a co-operative is neither a business nor a social service, but something in between. Finally, the definition draws attention to the democratic governance of co-operatives. These organizations may operate much like businesses or non-profits, but are differentiated by the fact their members have democratic role in its governance.

### Co-operative values

The International Co-operative Alliance's statement of co-operative values highlights the role of members in the co-operative, and the underlying values guiding operations.

> Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a., para. 2).

This statement requires both the organization to have ethical values and the members to take responsibility for ensuring the co-operative acts on these values. With this framing, the members have both responsibility and rights if a co-operative moves away from its values; therefore, the organization and its members share the duty to uphold the co-operative values.

## Principles of co-operation

In addition to the relatively short definition and statement of values outlined above, the International Co-operative Alliance has established seven principles of co-operation that offer insight into the philosophy behind co-operatives and the way they operate. These are based on the "Rochdale Principles", the principles of the first modern western co-operative, founded by a group of weavers in the UK in 1844 (Birchall, 2011, Fairbairn, 1994). The International Co-operative Alliance developed the Rochdale Principles over time at their international congresses, and adopted the current version in 1995 (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.b., Birchall, 2011).

The seven principles are:

**1. Voluntary and Open Membership** Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

**2. Democratic Member Control** Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

**3. Member Economic Participation** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

**4. Autonomy and Independence** Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

**5. Education, Training and Information** Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

**6. Co-operation among Co-operatives** Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

**7. Concern for Community** Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a., para. 3-10).

Taken as a whole, the definition of co-operatives and the co-operative values and principles provide the basis for understanding the principles and philosophy of these organisations. These principles are embedded in many laws governing co-operatives. For example, they are referenced in the Canadian Co-operatives Act (Canada Cooperatives Act, 1998) and have been formally referenced or adopted as part of laws governing co-operatives in locations as diverse as New South Wales (New South Wales Co-operatives Act, 1992), South Africa (South Africa Co-operatives Act, 1995) and India (India Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002).

While other types of organizations may share one or even several of these co-operative principles and values, adopting the co-operative principles *as a whole* sets co-operatives apart from other types of organizations. As noted, these principles and values represent a philosophical ideal for co-operatives. Problems in practice are considered below (sections 0, 0, and 0).

## Co-operative sectors and the Canadian context

Use of the co-operative model is more common than many might imagine. Co-operatives offer services and products in almost every sector, from cheese making to funeral homes to renewable energy (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008a). Co-operatives in Canada are no exception, and many Canadians are familiar with co-operatives such as the Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC), VanCity credit union or their neighbourhood Co-op gas station (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2012).

Approximately 9,000 co-operatives operate in Canada, with 18 million members (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008a). In Canada, 40% of the population are members of at least one co-operative, and in Québec that figure rises to 70% (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.c.). Canada has one of the highest rates of participation in credit unions with membership held by approximately one in three Canadians (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008a, International Co-operative Alliance, 2013, p. 15). Student co-operatives have existed in Canada for a century; the first, Guelph Student Co-operative, was founded in 1913 and is still operational today (Carrière, 2010, p. 3).

Data from the Canadian Parliament's Special Committee on Co-operatives (2012) shows the distribution of Canadian co-operatives across sectors. As the largest sector, housing accounts account for 42% of Canadian co-operatives. Agricultural co-operatives are the second most common at 21%. These offer “processing, marketing, and distribution” (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008b, para. 1), provide seeds or machinery, or share land and other resources among farmers (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2008b). As seen in Table 1, there are Canadian co-operatives in a diverse range of sectors. This table shows individual co-operative organizations as a percentage of co-operatives in Canada, and therefore does not speak to the size of co-operative or the number of members served in each sector.

**Table 1: Co-operative sectors globally and in Canada (Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012)**

| Sectors | % of Co-operatives in Canada |
|---|---|
| Housing | 42% |
| Agricultural & Food | 21% |
| Financial | 14% |
| Worker | 5% |
| Consumer & Retail | 10% |
| Services | 8%<br>(2% health, 6% childcare) |

## Co-operative ownership models

While co-operatives are always member-owned, they employ a variety of ownership models. The choice of model affects their governance structure, and determination of voting membership. The simplest form of co-operative is where the members are those who work in the co-operative (*worker co-operative*) or buy goods and services from the co-operative (*consumer co-operative*) (coopzone, n.d.). Models that are more complicated have diverse membership that includes staff, clientele, and other stakeholders. These are known as *multi-stakeholder co-operatives* (coopzone, n.d.) or as *solidarity co-operatives* in Québec (Girard, 2004). In other cases, the co-operative members may be businesses who form a co-operative to share equipment or marketing of a similar product. This is a common practice for *agricultural co-operatives* (coopzone, n.d.).

Canadian examples of these forms of co-operative ownership include:

- Mountain Equipment Co-operative is a **consumer co-operative** where the member-owners are customers who buy outdoor gear from the company. Members elect a Board of Directors to run the co-op, and have a vote in elections and referenda (Mountain Equipment Co-op, 2013);
- La Siembra is a **worker co-operative** that produces fair trade chocolate products under the Cocoa Camino label. The worker-owners each have one vote and participate in the decisions about how the workplace operates (La Siembra Co-operative, 2013);
- Agropur is an **agricultural co-operative**, founded in Québec but national in scope. The member-owners are dairy producers and dairy product manufacturers (Agropur, 2013); and
- The Aylmer Health Co-operative is a **multi-stakeholder co-operative** where the member owners are “citizens, doctors, and health care professionals” (Aylmer Health Coop, 2007, para. 1.). Members founded the co-operative to ensure health services remained available in the community of Aylmer (Craddock & Vayid, 2004).

Regardless of the form of ownership, the structure of co-operatives allows members to play a variety of roles. As shall be seen in the following sections, the participation of members is considered vital to the success of the co-operative, but is also a struggle for many co-operatives to achieve.

## Creating the conditions of co-operative success

Much of the theory developed about co-operatives explores what sets the co-operative model apart from other models. As with the values and principles of co-operatives put forward by the International Co-operative Association (n.d.a.), the categorization of co-operatives in opposition to other models tends to set up an essentialist description of all the models. This section explores how co-operatives are perceived in relation to other forms of organization, and will consider the features that are the basis of the distinction of the co-operative as a unique form: the integration of member roles, the importance of promoting involvement by members, the theme of a “co-operative difference” that sets it apart from other organizational forms, and the importance of balancing the dual social and business goals of co-operatives. Barriers to achieving these features are discussed in the following section.

### Integrated member roles

The co-operative values of member ownership and democratic member control (International Co-operative Association, n.d.a.) are the root of the co-operative governance model where members act as “user, owner, director, and beneficiary” (Sousa & Herman, 2012, p.2). As such, co-operatives need to bear these various roles in mind, and consider members as **users and customers**, by ensuring they are receiving the products and services they need; as **owners and directors**, by ensuring they have the training and information required for meaningful involvement in co-operative governance; and as **investors**, who provide capital and share in the co-operative's benefits.

Birchall (2012) argues the strength of the co-operative model is rooted in the interdependence of these member roles. Members are more responsive to customer needs as directors because they are customers themselves. As investors, they may receive a rebate based on the amount of business they do with the co-operative as a customer. He further defines the benefits of members' active participation and the integration of their membership roles as customer, director and investor as follows:

> 1. It guarantees that the benefits from ownership will be realized,
>
> 2. It aligns the interests of the members with those of boards and managers, and so is linked to business success.
>
> 3. It lowers risk-taking and so makes the business more durable.
>
> 4. It increases opportunities to pursue ethical aims as well as shareholder value.
>
> 5. It has intrinsic value to members, they may enjoy taking part and having a sense of control (Birchall, 2012, pp. 281-2)

He draws a distinction between ownership and control. It is not enough for co-operative members to be directors and owners in name alone; to have control of the co-operatives, members must be active participants. To achieve this, the ability of members to participate must be actively encouraged by the organization, and members must choose to participate actively.

Low participation in co-operative governance can cause the organization to lose the benefits of its democratic structure (Spear, 2004). Co-operatives face a dilemma when success causes them to grow, as direct member involvement is increasingly difficult for a co-operative as they grow in size (Birchall & Simmons, 2004, Malo, Vézina, & Auderbrand, 2012). The problem of low participation is explored in detail below (Section 0, page 13).

### The importance of associative practices

The literature on co-operatives refers to the combination of education, member-participation, and transparency in governance as *associative practices* (Côté, 2008, Birchall, 2012, MacPherson, 2002). Theories of co-operation often cite the importance of associative practices in facilitating the active involvement of members (Jussila, Byrne & Tuominen, 2012, Birchall, 2012).

Participation is increased by frequent contact with to the co-operative (Jussila, Byrne & Tuominen, 2012, Pestoff, 1991 cited in Spear 2004). Jussila, Byrne and Tuominen's (2012) research suggests three major factors build member commitment to the co-operative:

- "identification with the co-operative"(p.3), where members relate strongly to the values and purpose of the co-operative;
- "co-operative-based self-esteem"(p. 4), where members feel they are making a valuable contribution to the co-operative, and that the co-operative is a place where they are important; and
- "perceived control over the co-operative" (p.5), where members understand their role as an owner of the co-operative, and are familiar with how the co-operative works.

These factors increase when a co-operative educates members, encourages their participation, and recognizes the importance of their involvement. Members' sense of connection improves "the more transactions take place face-to-face" (Jussila, Byrne & Tuominen, 2012, p.5).

Associative practices link the co-operative principles of *Democratic Member Control* and *Education, Training and Information* (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a.) because democratic member control relies on members having the necessary education, training and information sharing in order to fulfill their governance duties. MacPherson (2002) describes the various roles of education within the co-operative movement as follows:

- recruiting new members (by providing information on co-operatives);
- training current members (to ensure they understand how their co-operative works);
- encouraging reflection on the philosophy behind co-operation and the role of co-operatives in society;
- creating new knowledge by drawing on the experience of co-operative members; and
- facilitating the capacity of co-operative members to learn.

Education can take place in workshops or seminars. However, education is also present in the act of working together as members manage their co-operative. As MacPherson (2002) outlines:

> Co-operative education in its glory years was also concerned with what was called by some at that time 'associative intelligence,' a belief that there is a special kind of knowing that emerges when people work together effectively; a conviction that people through working together could learn skills that would make collective behaviour more economically rewarding, socially beneficial, and personally satisfying (p. 372).

In his framing, education is changed—and improved—through sharing the experience of learning, and through their *association* with other members. His description of learning through participation suggests there is additional role for co-operative members—that of **learner**.

Co-operatives are unique in involving members in three roles, as customers, directors, and investors. Where members actively participate in these roles, and through the co-operative's use of associative practices to encourage this participation, the members can take on an additional role of learner within their co-operative. By providing the opportunity to citizens to learn to manage democratically, co-operatives contribute to the social capital of broader society, and thus benefit both the co-operative members and the community in which it operates. This unique structure has also proven to be very resilient (Novkovic, 2008, Birchall 2012). Literature on co-operatives uses the concept of the *co-operative difference* to describe the benefits and resilience of the co-operative model (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009).

## The co-operative difference

Much of the literature on co-operatives discusses a "co-operative difference" (Côté, 2008, p.7, Novkovic, 2008) or "co-operative advantage" (Birchall & Simmons, 2004). Definitions for the *co-operative difference* usually draw on comparisons with both businesses and non-profit societies (MacPherson, 1986, p. 13, Birchall, 2012, US Overseas Cooperative Development Council [USOCDC], 2007, Rasmussen, 1986, p. 152) and an examination of the purpose and structure of co-operatives as compared to other types of organizations. Much of what underlies the distinction between the co-operative, non-profit, and business model relates to how the *co-operative principles* influence the practices of co-operatives, the *integrated role of members*, and the use of *associative practices*. Table 2, below, summarizes these differences.

This co-operative difference is credited with providing many advantages, including the resilience of the co-operative model (Novkovic, 2008, Birchall 2012), member loyalty through their continued patronage of the co-operative business (Birchall & Simmons, 2004, Jussila, Byrne, & Tuominen, 2012), and the advantage of providing social good to the community in which the co-operative operates (Birchall, 2012, Novkovic, 2008, MacPherson, 1986).

**Table 2: Comparing the Co-operative Model to other organizational forms**

| | Business | Non-profit | Co-operative |
|---|---|---|---|
| Purpose | Maximize profit for shareholders/owners (USOCDC, 2007) | Serve its clients or the public interest (USOCDC, 2007) | Serve its members (Rasmussen, 1986, p. 152) |
| Ownership | Owned by shareholders or proprietor (MacPherson, 1986, p. 13, USOCDC, 2007) | Owned by organization itself, not individuals or members (USOCDC, 2007) | Owned by members (Birchall, 2012, USOCDC, 2007) |
| Control | Shareholder votes determined by number of shares held (MacPherson, 1986)<br>Daily operations made by corporate board or management team (USOCDC, 2007, Birchall & Simmons, 2004) | May be one member one vote or controlled by directors, depending on structure. (USOCDC, 2007) | One member, one vote. (MacPherson, 1986)<br>Daily operations may be board-managed or member controlled (USOCDC, 2007) |
| Use of surplus | Distributed among shareholders based on percent of shares owned (USCOCD, 2007) | Maintained by non-profit as a surplus invested in their public purpose or own operations. (USOCDC, 2007) | Distributed among member-owners according to use of co-operative. Surplus belongs to members and cannot be traded (MacPherson, 1986) |
| Source of capital | Investors provide through capital markets (US OCDC, 2007) | Funding agencies, donors, members, government<br>(USOCDC, 2007) | Members provide initial capital and may reinvest surplus in enterprise (USOCDC, 2007, MacPherson, 1986)<br>Borrowing from other co-operatives (credit unions) (MacPherson, 1986, p. 11) |
| Membership | Voluntary | Voluntary | Voluntary (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a.) |

Birchall (2012, pp 274-281) argues co-operatives can have advantages over private businesses in addressing members' needs as customers, namely:

- a co-operative can provide services where there is no other provider of the service, such as in a small town or remote area;
- a co-operative can provide members with the ability to undermine a monopoly business that does not serve them well; and
- a co-operative can address concerns of the member that go beyond accessing a product, such as fair labour conditions or supporting the local economy.

Notably, this framing assumes a failing in the business with which the co-operative competes or a lack of competition. Where the situation changes because competing traditional businesses begin to address these issues, the dynamics can change for a co-operative. In some cases, a co-operative member loyalty continues through change in the community because of "strong community roots" (MacPherson, 1986, p. 23) or a strong identification of the members with the co-operative (Sousa & Herman, 2012). In others a co-operative may not be able to compete and will lose market share, transform to a traditional business or fold (Johnston, 2012)

Many in the co-operative movement see maintaining a link to the *co-operative principles* as key to the competitiveness and resilience of co-operatives (Birchall, 2012, Novkovic, 2008, Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012). Novkovic argues that the principle of *concern for community*, and the rootedness of co-operatives in their community, leads co-operatives to "undertake costly practices to care for the environment, engage in the fair trade chain, employ marginalized population, provide social services, and so on" (Novkovic, 2008, p. 2175). Canada's Special Committee on Co-operatives (September 2012) relates the stability of the co-operative model during periods of economic crisis to the co-operative principles. The committee cites testimony from witnesses stating their belief that this resilience stems from the strong roots co-operatives have in their communities, their responsiveness to community needs and their democratic governance (2012, p. 9).

Murray (2011) notes the survival rate of co-operatives in British Columbia increased after 2005, and argues a possible reason for the improvement is the creation of the Co-operative Development Initiative, which provided technical assistance and small grants to co-operatives (Murray, 2011, p. 7, Co-operative Development Initiative, 2009b). The training offered through Co-operative Development Initiative, now closed (Co-operative Development Initiative, 2009a), was in keeping with the co-operative principles of *Co-operation Among Co-operatives* and *Education, Training and Information* (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a.).

The co-operative model has advantages where a community is not, or cannot be, served well by traditional businesses. Competitiveness can be enhanced through building customer loyalty through strong identification of members with the co-operative's values, and their role in the co-operative. To compete directly with traditional businesses, co-operatives must also have sound business practices. Côté (2008) describes the balance between associative practices and business practices as the *co-operative equilibrium.*

### Weaknesses of the co-operative model

When defining co-operatives, literature focusses on underlying values, and the distinctions between co-operatives and other organizational models. This process of defining and contrasting tends to suggest an ideal or optimal structure. However, like any organizational form, co-operatives have weaknesses and risks. This section considers common problems encountered with the co-operative model, and reasons why it may not be the appropriate choice for a given project.

### De-mutualisation: the choice to convert a co-operative to a private enterprise

*De-mutualisation* is defined as "the transition of ownership, control, and benefit from co-operative member to investor"(Sousa &Herman, 2012, p. 12). Sousa and Herman (2012) argue that while some perceive de-mutualisation as a threat to the co-operative movement, it also reflects how an organizational structure can adapt to changing needs. Certainly, demutualization is a fruitful source of information about limits of the co-operative model.

Members demutualise for many reasons. De-mutualisation can occur when:

- changes to laws governing co-operatives reduce regulatory or tax advantages (Levi & Davis, 2008);
- improved access to outside investment is needed (Boland, 2012)
- the initial advantages of the model are no longer relevant or workable (Goodard, Hailu & Glover, 2012)
- selling the co-operative provides personal financial gain that is more valuable to members than maintaining the co-operative (Maclennan, 2008).

The demutualization of Campbell River, BC's television co-operative, CRTV, is an example of regulatory change, changes in advantage of the model, and the impact of personal financial gain. When the CRTC made a change in policy ("Policy changes set stage for Shaw expansion", 2008, July 2), the community of Campbell River became a new market for Shaw Cable, a private cable company. When Shaw offered to purchase CRTV, which was the community's sole source for cable for decades, the board of CRTV recommended de-mutualisation. The board argued that the co-operative could not compete effectively with a large business, and demutualizing by selling to the competitor immediately would provide the highest possible return to members (Maclennan, 2008). Although it was controversial, the majority of members agreed, and the co-operative sold its assets to Shaw (Maclennan, 2008).

Other co-operatives demutualize to allow investment in the business from non-members (Boland, 2012), a practice that is difficult in co-operatives because they do not offer return on investment in the same way as a shareholder business (Boland, 2012, Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012). Dakota Growers Pasta Company began considering de-mutualisation when poor weather and spreading disease in the growing area ruined their members' durum wheat crops. The co-operative required farmers to contribute wheat in order to maintain their membership, something that had become unsustainable. When they examined the option of demutualization, they found:

> The advantages of remaining a co-operative included being member controlled and not incurring the transaction costs of conversion. Significant disadvantages included an inability to access capital markets beyond the member-owners, a lack of liquidity for stock shares, and the inability of many members to deliver durum wheat (Boland, 2012, p.43).

They opted to change to a publicly traded corporation with a goal of bringing in investment from outside their membership base, and eliminating the requirement to deliver wheat.

For Lilydale Poultry Co-operative, demutualization was a means to refinance a struggling business, while coping with the retirement (and equity redemption) by a generation of members. As an agricultural co-operative, each member farm had one vote and access to equity to manage debt was restricted. Demutualization meant larger farms could purchase more shares and increase their influence in decisions, and employees could also become shareholders (Goodard, Hailu & Glover, 2012).

In each of these cases, a co-operative model had been useful to the members, but changing circumstances forced members to revisit their structure. In the case of CRTV, the co-operative was completely disbanded, and members each received about $3,000 from the sale of the co-operatives assets (Maclennan, 2009). In the other examples, de-mutualisation allowed the businesses to continue, but in a different form.

### The problem of low member participation in co-operatives

As discussed earlier (see sections 0, 0, and 0), member participation is seen as central to the philosophy of the co-operative model. However, direct participation in co-operatives can be very low, especially when they are larger (Spear, 2004).

In medium and larger sized co-operatives, direct participation is often limited to electing a board and participating in a general meeting (Spear, 2004), while voting often declines over the lifespan of a co-operative (Spear, 2004, Diamantopoulos, 2012). A study of UK consumer co-operatives shows a participation rate of 1 – 5% of members in general meetings, “with larger organizations tending to have lower participation levels” (Spear, 2004, p. 39). Even when large co-operatives are successful in drives to increase membership, there is not necessarily a matching increase in participation (Spear, 2004).

Associative practices are commonly proposed as a strategy to improve participation (Jussila, Byrne & Tuominen, 2012, Birchall, 2012), and some large UK co-operatives have had moderate success with this strategy (Spear, 2004). However, associative practices alone are not be enough to ensure participation and effectiveness of members in governance in governance. While associative practices can provide information on the co-operative and education, this may not prepare members sufficiently to take on governance roles, and some members prefer to defer authority to board members with specific training, or professional staff (Allemand, Brullebaut, & Raimbault, 2013).

Birchall (2012) suggests “diluted ownership” (p. 286)) —spreading legal ownership across many members in a co-operative—is a disincentive to participation. He argues that while low-cost membership share prices may seem like a good way to reduce barriers to membership, they can also contribute to a lack of interest among members, who have little incentive to become involved or remain a loyal customer when investment is minimal. Another result of diluted ownership he cites is the lack of financial incentive to support the development of capital through either re-investment of dividends or increasing share purchases.

A common means for measuring involvement is active participation in governance. As a co-operative grows larger, the majority of decision-making is usually delegated to an elected board of directors (Birchall & Simmons, 2004). The shift from small co-operative with many members active in decisions to a large co-operative with authority delegated can give rise to debates about the role of the board.

### Conflicting ideas about the role of the board

As an organization grows and becomes more complex, concerns about representativeness of a board may be trumped by concern about “the possible lack of expertise of board members” (Spear, 2004, p. 47). A complex organization needs expertise to ensure it can manage its operations, but a board made up of experts may decrease a sense of ownership among members who do not share technical expertise. This, in turn, can result in a cycle of low interest of members in elections and governance as only a small number of members vote or pay attention to the decisions made by the board.

Different philosophies about the role of the board can lead to conflict; a stewardship model proposes the board act in an expert-advising role, whereas a stakeholder or democratic model holds that the primary role of boards is to represent the members (Cornforth, 2004). This can create a dilemma for board members who must choose between representative and advising roles (Cornforth, 2004), and conflict between members who support different philosophies about board roles (Diamantopoulos, 2012).

One concern about a stewardship model is that a focus on recruiting experts to the board can lead to decreasing diversity in the members participating in governance.

> Issues of *representativeness* of the 1-5% that do elect the board must also be raised since they are often dominated by people from the same social or cultural group, having higher incomes, better education, and being members of community elites (thereby further reducing trust and legitimacy) (Spear, 2004, p.43).

In this scenario, Spear is referring to “trust and legitimacy”(2004, p.43) among the general members, whereas a supporter of the stewardship model may feel expertise lends legitimacy.

#### Difficulty raising capital

As noted in section 0, one reason co-operatives might de-mutualize is to access investment capital. Co-operatives can face barriers to raising capital because of their structure, and because of lack of knowledge about the model. According to the report of the Canadian Parliament's Special Committee on Co-operatives (2012),

> … [I]t is generally not possible for an outside investor to inject seed capital intro a co-operative by acquiring and owning its share capital. The impossibility of both attaining the kind of capital growth that would occur in a conventional private business and realizing substantial capital gains by selling shares on the market makes co-operatives unattractive to angel investors (p.29).

This problem is particularly difficult for newly formed co-operatives, but all co-operatives may be considered a risky investment by lenders (Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012). As a result, co-operatives generally rely on capital “provided by members through initial capital investments, retained margins, members depositions or subordinated members loans” (Robb, Smith, & Webb, 2010, p. 11), especially when they are first founded. Students have particular barriers to accessing capital, which are discussed later (see Section 0).

### Summary of literature on the co-operative model

Proponents of co-operatives value their stability, trustworthiness, innovativeness, and commitment to community. They believe co-operatives provide a venue for members to learn through their participation in governing the co-operative and this learning in turn provides social capital to the broader community. The co-operative model is resilient and some studies indicate it has a higher rate of survival than traditional businesses (Novkovic, 2008, Birchall 2012).

However, co-operatives struggle to maintain the benefits of member involvement when the organization is large or complex. Member education programs may not be adequate to ensure potential board members have the expertise to make governance decisions, and a co-operative might struggle to balance the need for expertise with a desire for governance that is inclusive of all members. Conflicting ideas about the role of the board may further complicate member participation . Some co-operatives demutualize in order to allow members with a larger investment to increase their influence in the organization, or to diversify their financing options.

The co-operative model is suitable where high member involvement is possible and equal voice and economic contribution is the most advantageous option for members. Associative practices are positive, but may not be enough to ensure members participate effectively in the co-operative. Additionally, it is important for co-operatives to have a clear philosophy about the role of the board, and that members are comfortable with this philosophy. The best model for the board may change over time, as a co-operative becomes more established, grows, or becomes more complex.

## Literature on graduate students needs and services

Aside from Whiteson’s (2004) account of living in a student co-operative while in graduate school, no articles on providing graduate student services through the co-operative model were found in the literature review. Thus, this paper draws on the literature from the field of student services. Because the research is exploring service provision for graduate students, literature was selected for review based on whether it addressed why services are needed, and how services are provided.

The research on graduate student needs focuses on the graduate student experience, and sources of stress and anxiety for graduate students. Major sources of stress for graduate students identified are financial problems, a sense of isolation, and managing work-life balance. The literature about designing services for graduate students often explores how best to address the causes of graduate student stress, and considers best practices for service provision to graduate students.

Throughout the literature, the graduate student experience is contrasted to that of undergraduates. According to a study by the University of California, San Diego, "Most undergraduate students who do not complete their degrees cite academic problems” (2007, p. 9). Graduate students cite non-academic factors, such as “financial support, family pressures” as reasons for failing to complete their degree (2007, p.9). While undergraduates and graduates may share concerns, the problems causing the most concern for graduate students are distinct. A resulting theme in the literature on student services for graduate students is whether to provide graduate student services separately from those for undergraduates.

### Graduate student concerns

A key theme in this literature is the sources of stress for graduate students. These studies rely on surveys or interviews to collect data. Other articles feature a student’s personal account of graduate studies, or advice to graduate students from senior mentors. The literature identifies the primary causes of stress among graduate students as financial concerns, isolation, and work-life balance.

Financial concerns:

Financial concerns rank high among the causes of stress for graduate students (University of California, San Diego, May 2007, pp. 9-10, Schlemper, 2011, Longfield, Romas & Irwin, 2006). The University of California, San Diego (2007) identified affordable housing, in particular, as important for graduate students due to the high cost of rental housing in the area. Poverty tends to have a ripple effect, adding to other sources of stress. Students on low incomes find it harder to afford social activities (Longfield, Romas, & Irwin, 2006), increasing isolation. Similarly, students on low incomes may take on additional jobs to reduce financial stress (Schlemper 2011) which add to the difficulty managing academic workload along with work and other responsibilities.

### Isolation and the need for community:

Much of the literature focuses on the risk of isolation among graduate students, and the importance of finding ways to build community in order to reduce isolation (Manathunga, 2005, Brandes, 2006, Ricks, Kaldec, Corner & Paul, 2003, Rempel, Hussong-Christian, & Mellinger, 2011). The literature on graduate student experiences links isolation to several problems:

- leaving the program (Nesheim, Guentzel, Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Turrentine, 2006, Lovitts, 2001, Wright, & Cochrane, 2000);
- abandoning academia as a career (Mason, Goulden, & Frasch, 2009); and
- disconnecting from the student's academic department (Manathunga, 2005).

The graduate experience of the university is commonly described as existing in 'silos' (Pontius & Harper, 2006)—separate spheres determined by field of study. Each of these silos may have different resources to offer graduate students (Corner, 2006) and different research cultures (Wright & Cochrane, 2010) which may influence the amount of contact a student has with peers, faculty or other sources of support.

Even when a department has laboratories and offices where students may gather within their department, "[m]any graduate departments and degree programs lack diversity or a critical mass of women or students of color" (Brandes, 2006, p. 89) and these students in particular may struggle with a sense of isolation. Mason, Goulden, and Frasch (2009) surveyed graduate students who chose to abandon plans for future careers in academia, and found "feelings of isolation or alienation as a PhD student" were a factor rated as "very important" by 35% of women and 31% of men surveyed. Isolation is a particular concern for international students and students who are in a minority group (Brandes, 2006, Subanthore, 2011). In such cases, joining a student group, such as an international student groups (Subanthore, 2011), or an associations of women in their academic field (Fickey & Pullen, 2011) can provide an antidote. Alternately, graduate student spaces and events designed to encourage inter-disciplinary exchange may provide a sense of community (Brandes, 2006).

The structure of a graduate program is another source of isolation for some students. Corner (2006) found graduate students in her study were particularly vulnerable to isolation after the shift from course work, with its opportunities for regular contact with other students and faculty, to the relatively lonely experience of researching and writing a thesis. The shift from course work to managing a research project is also the point when time management becomes increasingly important.

### Time and work-life balance:

Graduate students interviewed about challenges faced in their studies list time management and workload prominently (Schlemper, 2011, Fickey & Pullen, 2011). Work-life balance was a key reason that doctoral students, especially women, opted out of academic career paths (Mason, Goulden, & Frasch, 2009). Schlemper's 2011 study found time management was the challenge identified most often (17%) among the 117 graduate students interviewed. She notes that "feelings of having too much to do and not enough time in the day are common in graduate school" (2011, p.68).

Work life balance can be a particular concern for graduate students that are also parents, especially mothers. Mason, Goulden and Frasch (2009) found "issues related to children" were a strong factor in the decision of PhD students to abandon academic career goals for 46% of women surveyed, but only 21% of men. This is a significant consideration as the demographics of graduate studies shift to include an increasing number of women and students in their late twenties and early thirties (Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009, Corner, 2006).

### Proposals for addressing graduate student concerns

There is little in the literature on addressing graduate students' financial concerns, which would involve scholarships and teaching assistant positions, as a means of supporting graduate students. Instead, there is a comparatively generous amount of literature about building community, reducing isolation, and the question of whether graduate students need separate services from those for undergraduates.

#### Providing spaces for graduate student to interact:

The need to reduce isolation and create connections for social interaction across departments and academic disciplines is often tied to the availability of campus spaces dedicated to graduate students (Brandes, 2006, Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006, Humphrey & McCarthy, 1999). This supports the call for graduate student spaces in one sense, but it also suggests that the problem may not be universal across fields of study, since some fields require the students to share lab space, which can provide a sense of community within a department. Independent graduate spaces can function as a "safe or neutral space where they a receive information and explore identities and experiences beyond their department or discipline" (Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006, pg. 102). A space that draws graduate students from across campus can be particularly beneficial for students who feel isolated in their departments (Guentzel & Nesheim, 2006, Brandes, 2006).

#### Separate services for graduate students:

Related to the idea of graduate student spaces is the idea of university service provision dedicated to graduate students. Brandes (2006) describes how universities increasingly aim to provide services to graduate students separately from undergraduate offices. Pontius and Harper (2006) argue this shift is warranted:

> [G]raduate students have specific needs and face developmental challenges that may differ from, but are as important as, those experienced by undergraduates. While many academic departments provide some support for graduate students, they often suffer from a building-bound silo effect that isolates them from the larger university. Academic units usually lack the human resources to adequately address many basic issues such as housing, counselling and wellness, and career development, let alone sponsor opportunities for engagement in educationally purposeful activities that reach beyond the department (Pontius & Harper, 2006, p. 48).

Graduate students themselves perceive separate, graduate-focused services as important (Nesheim, Guentzel, Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Turrentine, 2006, Rempel, Hussong-Christian, & Mellinger, 2011, Committee for the Formation of An Independent Graduate Student Society, 1966).

#### Building campus community:

A common recommendation in the literature on graduate student services is the creation of a strong campus community (Brandes, 2006, Corner, 2006, Fickey & Pullen, 2011, Subanthore, 2011). This is not surprising given how frequently authors identify *isolation* as a problem facing graduate students. Campus groups that include graduate students take diverse forms, the most overt of which is a graduate student association (Corner, 2006, Committee for the Formation of An Independent Graduate Student Society, 1966, UVIC GSS, 2013, Brandes, 2006). These organizations serve as official representation for graduate students (UVIC GSS, 2013), or represent graduate students within a particular faculty (Corner, 2006). Graduate student associations also manage graduate student centres (Brandes, 2006), and organize academic and social events for their members (Corner, 2006, UVIC GSS, 2013). Such organizations can provide a focal point for graduate students seeking a campus community. Corner's (2006) research on the Association of Graduate Education Students [AGES] at UVIC found graduate students joined AGES as a way to reduce a feeling of isolation by connecting with other graduate students in their faculty. She also found that graduate students most benefited from involvement in AGES during their thesis work, a time when these students felt increasingly isolated. While AGES and the UVIC GSS focus on a broad group of graduate students, other campus groups that involve graduate students look at different campus populations.

Academic associations, which publish journals or host conferences, are a place where graduate students build community with others who share their research interests (Corner, 2006, Schlemper, 2011). Academic activities, such as lecture series in a department can also provide a space where graduate students make connections with others in their field of student (Schlemper, 2011). There are also campus organizations focussed on supporting a particular sub-set of students, such as international students (Subanthore, 2011), women in a field traditionally dominated by men (Schlemper, 2011), or parents (Springer, Parker, & Leviten-Reid, 2009).

Section summary:

Supporting graduate students can take many forms, whether through provision of a dedicated space and services, or the formation of campus organizations. Writing reviewed for this paper differed according to authorship. While academic literature from student affairs journals generally wrote about student services managed by the university (Brandes, 2006, Pontius and Harper, 2006), articles authored by students often featured student-run organizations (Corner, 2006, Schlemper, 2011, Subanthore, 2011). That is not to say writing on university-provided services discounted the potential for student input. Some authors encourage universities to fund student-run activities because of their community-building aspect (Silber, Silverman, Stauffer, Wenger, Arnstein, Backus, et al.,1999), and others note graduate student input on service design and delivery helps ensure services meet student needs (Brandes, 2006). Whether discussing university or student-run services, however, the literature notes student involvement comes with both benefits and risks (Brandes, 2006, Corner, 2006).

### Benefits and risks of student-run services

Brandes (2006) and Corner (2006) see benefits and risks to management of student services by graduate students. They both found that student involvement in developing and running services for their peers provided opportunities for community building and reducing isolation. However, they also noted there are barriers to effective graduate student-run services arising out of graduate students' busy schedules and the fact that graduate students are not generally on campus for many years.

Student involvement in designing and running their own services can increase student engagement, self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Brandes, 2006, Corner, 2006). Further, students were likely to feel a sense of responsibility for each other as a result of their participation. This could translate into mentoring and a sense of collegiality with the faculty (Corner, 2006).

At the same time, some barriers to the effectiveness of student-run organizations exist. These can include high turnover in leadership roles as students graduate and leave the university. This makes continuity of programming and maintaining relationships with other groups difficult. It also means the organizations were continually training and orienting new members (Brandes, 2006, Corner, 2006).

### Summary of literature on graduate student needs and services

Many graduate students struggle with financial stress, a sense of isolation, and the competing responsibilities of their studies, job, and home life. Living on a low income can compound these problems, by increasing the need to take on additional employment, or reducing the opportunity to socialize. Research suggests universities and campus organizations can address many graduate student concerns by building a campus community, providing space, and offering separate services for the graduate student population. Including graduate students in the design and delivery of their own services increases their effectiveness, but also adds the work of recruiting and training a new cohort of participants annually.

## Student co-operatives

### Introduction

In order to identify student co-operatives with graduate student members for this study, data was first collected on co-operatives led by post-secondary students in Canada and the US, regardless of whether they had graduate student members. The information helps situate graduate student co-operatives in the context of a broader context of student-run co-operatives, co-operative movement generally. This allows comparisons of the services offered and ownership model selected.

**Table 3: Types of services offered by student-owned co-operatives in Canada and the US**

| Service | no. of co-ops offering the service | % of co-ops offering the service |
|---|---|---|
| Bookstore | 47 | 53% |
| Supply store | 31 | 35% |
| Housing | 30 | 34% |
| Food services | 30 | 34% |
| Copy/Print | 16 | 18% |
| Workshops | 6 | 7% |
| Boarding | 5 | 6% |
| Facilities for member use (computer lab, kitchen, meeting space) | 5 | 6% |
| Food Store | 4 | 4% |
| Network/Association | 3 | 3% |
| Pub | 2 | 2% |
| Media | 2 | 2% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Student Association | 1 | 1% |
| Bicycle repair and rental | 1 | 1% |
| Recreation | 1 | 1% |
| *Co-operatives that include graduate student members* | *47* | *53%* |

Data collected found 89 student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US offering a wide variety of services (APPENDIX B). These are summarized in Table 3, above. Students form co-operatives for several reasons—to provide basic services (housing, food), to supply academic needs (bookstores, stationary supplies), to create community space (cafes, meeting space), and because of a particular interest among a group of students (bicycles, local or organic food).

There are more student-led co-operatives in Canada (60) than in the US (29). This is due to Québec's 47 "cooperatives Québecoises en milieu scolaire" (Coopsco, 2013) which provide bookstores and other services at most post-secondary institutions in Québec (for a breakdown on regional distribution of student-run co-operatives, see APPENDIX C). These student-led co-operatives are federated under the Coopsco network, and account for 80% of student-led co-operatives in Canada.

### How do students use co-operatives?

Students use co-operatives in a variety of ways. The primary form of student co-operation is providing for the necessities of student life: low cost housing, food, and school supplies. Sometimes, however, this extends to addressing political concerns through the co-operative, as with a food co-operative promoting organic food or supporting local agriculture. Less frequently, student-led co-operatives focus on services related to recreational activities, such as bicycle repair or community kitchen spaces. Finally, in some cases, student organizations are the members, forming federated co-operatives to share resources and training. This section introduces the diverse ways in which students are using the co-operative model.

#### Housing:

One of the most common services offered through a student co-operative is housing. At some universities, student-led co-operatives provide a significant amount of the available student housing. Some Canadian examples are the Waterloo Co-operative Residences, which houses nearly 1,000 students (Waterloo Co-operative Residences, n.d.), and the Commonwealth Terrace Co-operative, which has 58 buildings with hundreds of apartments for students with families (Commonwealth Terrace Co-operative, n.d.a.). Housing co-operatives can offer significant savings in rent, especially when considered over the long term (Jones, 2005, Clark, 2007). Housing co-operative members save money by buying food in large quantities, handling minor repairs, sharing equipment and facilities, and using less space per person (Jones, 2005, p. 139). Members of student housing co-operatives also save money relative to university-run dormitories by handling the administrative work of the co-operative themselves (Anonymous, 1973, p. 23).

#### Food:

Student-led food co-operatives are diverse in their forms. There are stand-alone dining co-operatives, organic food shops, by-donation lunch stands, campus cafés, and food buying groups. Housing co-operatives often include a boarding service, where members join the house for meals only. Dining co-operatives provide cafeteria-style food, or food appropriate for specific diets or cultural groups such as Oberlin Student Co-operative's Kosher Halal Co-operative (Oberlin Student Co-operative Association, 2012, Silverman, 2012). Food stores are often opened on campuses using a co-operative model, and these serve to provide either low cost groceries, act as a venue for environmental food activism, or both (UBC Sprouts, n.d., Wilson, 2005, Tozer, 2012).

### Books and supplies:

Book and supply stores are the earliest form of student co-operatives in North America. Founded in 1913, Canada's first student co-operative was a store at Guelph University, which still sells textbooks to students today (Guelph Campus Co-op, 2013). While student-led bookstore co-operatives are uncommon in the US and in Canada outside Québec, a federated group of bookstores known as Coopsco serve the majority of Québec's post-secondary institutions (Coopsco, 2013). Some Coopsco stores focus on basic supplies, such as textbooks and stationary. Other Coopsco member have a diverse range of services, including technology sales, copy services, convenience stores, and cafeterias.

### Co-operative as student society:

At the Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the campus student association is a co-operative, which is unique in the US and Canada. The co-operative is very large, offering restaurants, meeting space, and running the official campus bookstore. They also own a fitness centre, transit system, hair salon, ski lodge, driving range, sailing club and campground. It produces the official university student ID cards, as well as community library cards.

The co-operative has developed a membership structure that is an uneasy fit with the co-operative principles, but neither does it fit with a strict non-profit model. Some students are automatically made members of the co-operative when they enrol, and have membership dues collected with their tuition. In other cases, students may join the co-operative by paying a membership fee as in any other co-operative. The difference between the students is the nature of their registration—courses taken, location of the courses, and whether they are on practica. The co-operative exempts graduate members from membership fees once they have completed coursework and register solely for their thesis work (Co-op Association, 2007). In addition to student members, faculty, alumni, university staff, may join, and family members of any of these members may also join.

All members may enjoy the many services of the co-operative. However, while there are seats for faculty on its board of directors, students hold the majority of votes.

### Student co-operative federations:

In order to support each other, student co-operatives and other student organizations sometimes form co-operative federations. Federations provide a means for networking, joint training programs, and shared services. Some examples of these are the Canadian University Press (CUP) (2013), North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) (n.d.), the Fédération des coopératives Québecoises en milieu scolaire (Coopsco) (2009, 2013) and Ontario Student Co-operative Association (OSCA) (n.d.). CUP is a student-led co-operative owned by a group of Canadian student newspapers. CUP's primary service is a newswire, but they also offer training workshops with professional journalists at their annual meeting featuring (Canadian University Press, 2013). NASCO, OSCA, and Coopsco are all federations of student co-operatives. Their main activity is networking and shared marketing and training. NASCO also created NASCO Properties, which can provide assistance in financing a student-housing co-operative facing a financial crisis (North American Students of Co-operation, n.d.a.)

### Common themes in writing about student co-operatives

Literature on student co-operatives is scant, but what there is speaks to the role of co-operatives in student life, the barriers facing student co-operatives and the contribution of students to the co-operative movement. Students face barriers to forming successful co-operatives (Carrière, 2010, Jones, 1993) but also gain from the *co-operative difference* in specific ways (Kummerow, 1970, Jones, 2005). Issues arising in student co-operatives include access to capital, maintaining autonomy and control, training and associative practices, and community building. A thread running through each of these issues is the transient nature of the student population and the impact this has on a co-operative's operations and purposes.

#### Student co-operatives accessing and managing funds

As with other co-operatives (Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012), Robb, Smith & Webb, 2010), obtaining capital is a barrier to students forming co-operatives (Jones, 2005, Carrière, 2010), due to the transience of the student population and their lack of personal funds. Lack of experience managing organizations, real or perceived, is also a barrier as it can increase a lenders' sense of risk when approached by a student co-operative (Carrière, 2010). As a result, students raise resources for their co-operatives through donations, in-kind contributions, fee levies, and by using the free labour of their members.

As their membership generally has low-income levels, student co-operatives usually aim to provide goods cheaply (Jones, 1993). A student co-operative can use member labour contribution to reduce cost (Anonymous, 1973, Bhimji, 2005). Prioritizing low cost services reduces the opportunity for a co-operative to provide rebates (Rasmussen, 1986), however, student co-operatives do sometimes issue rebates based on the amount a member has spent in the co-operative (University of Connecticut, n.d.).

Student housing co-operatives sometimes rely on donations of funds for their first property purchases (Mericle, Wilson & Jones, 1994, Anonymous, 1973a). In-kind donations can provide support, such as free or subsidized space on campus, to student co-operatives (Bhimji, 2005). Many student associations set fees by referendum, and allow students to run referenda to seek fees for their organizations and projects. In some cases, student-run co-operatives choose to run a referendum in order to obtain a source of secure funding. Two such cases are he Loaded Ladle Co-op at Dalhousie University (Lowe, 2012), and Frigo Vert, a co-operative organic bulk food store at Concordia University (Frigo Vert, n.d.). These fees are mandatory with tuition but are often refundable upon application by the student (Frigo Vert, n.d., Loaded Ladle, 2013).

#### Ownership, autonomy and control

As noted above, a sense of control over a co-operative can increase a member's sense of commitment to the co-operative (Jussila, Byrne, Tuominen, 2012). This holds true for student co-operative members as well. Successful autonomous management can be very important to students. In a housing co-operative, it can symbolize financial autonomy from landlords (Pennington, 2004, Kummerow, 1970) or student autonomy from the university (Kummerow, 1970). Where students are young and inexperienced in governance, however, they may struggle to assert their ownership and authority to govern, and thus hamper their own commitment to the co-operative project.

Mericle, Wilson and Jones (1994) describe the tensions that arose as student co-operators at ICC Michigan hired more staff soon after achieving autonomy from the university. “For students unsure of their own power and control, concentration of information in the hands of this increasingly anonymous group of employees led to certain misgivings” (Mericle, Wilson, & Jones, 1994, p. 7). Jones (2005) argues that control is a defining characteristic of student housing co-operatives. He notes that while some co-operatives are initially founded by “graduate students who lived in co-ops elsewhere” (2005, p. 139), for most students a housing co-operative is their first experience of ownership and control.

Student housing co-operatives respond to the high turnover in their membership with a mix of intense member involvement and strong sense of community (Jones, 2005). In this environment, inexperienced students become leaders where “their control is real, and they rise to the challenge” (Jones, 2005, p. 140), resulting in an “intense, living-learning experience” (Jones, 2005, p. 140). Therefore, the ability to attain control of a co-operative relates strongly to training, learning through participation and other associative practices.

### Training & associative practice in student co-operatives

Training and education within a co-operative greatly enhance the ability of students to take on leadership roles. Training provides members with information on the co-operative’s structure and decision-making process, and therefore improves member involvement in governance (Birchall, 2012, Altus, 2004). It can also benefit students as individuals, helping them to develop skills that will serve them throughout their lives (Whiteson, 2004, Scullion, 2005).

Because students often stay in a community only for the few years they need to complete their academic program, student co-operatives often have a high turnover in their membership, with students leaving–and new members arriving–annually (Stephenson, 2004, Jones, 2005). According to Jim Jones, long-time manager of a student-housing co-operative, “The high turnover in a student community results in a great emphasis on participation and intense involvement to hold the group together" (Jones, 2005, p. 139). Where there is high turnover in membership, even a small co-operative with member involvement in daily decision-making can suffer from lack of information and inadequate training (Altus, 2004). Altus (2004) recounts how her student housing co-operative took training in the co-operative’s practices and history so seriously they voted to give work credit to those attending training. This required senior members to pick up extra chores in order to allow new members to attend the training session, but the trade-off ensured high participation and involvement by all members.

A student co-operative also provides an opportunity for students to learn through participation in the management of a co-operative project. Students writing about their experience with co-operatives note the benefit to their personal skill development. Whiteson enthusiastically describes the skills learned by living in a co-operative as a “resume builder” (2004, p. 37), noting he can tell a future employer that he served as treasurer on a board with a million-dollar budget, and has extensive mediation experience. Scullion (2005) argues co-operatives can provide students with a place to learn skills for democratic leadership, echoing the argument in *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade* (International Co-operative Alliance, 2013) that co-operatives contribute to the social capital of the broader community.

Training and associative practices are a means to increase member involvement and commitment in any co-operative. For a student co-operative, training is paramount and is offered frequently to address member-turnover and ensure new students are integrated quickly and effectively into the organization. For student co-operative members, the ability to develop skills that are an asset in a job hunt can be an additional motivation for becoming involved in a co-operative.

### Building community

The ability to create a community is an important benefit of student housing co-operatives (Kummerow, 1970, Whiteson, 2004, Jones, 2005). This is especially true for students who experience a sense of isolation when moving to a new location to pursue their studies (Whiteson, 2004, p. 38, Kummerow, 1970). Kummerow suggests the university might seem overwhelming to a student and says, "co-operatives are a way to form warm, emotional relationships, and these are badly needed in the competitive fragmented, isolated and cold world of a big university" (1970, p. 16). In addition to providing a place to build connections, the co-operative can increase the capacity of their members to work and live successfully in a diverse community (Ritter, 2004). As one co-operator put it, a housing co-operative is a place to "meet new people who invariably broaden my perspective" (Whiteson, 2004, p. 38).

While students describe co-operatives as a source of friendships and support, these communities are not permanent. The transient nature of the student population creates challenges for community building efforts. A co-operative's history and organizational culture might be lost along with the members who move out (Altus, 2004). Student co-operative members may also feel a great loss when leaving their co-operative (Stephenson, 2004, Pennington, 2004, Whiteson, 2004). One result of the attachment formed with the co-operative is that student co-operative members remain active supporters of their co-operative after leaving the university. Omar Bhimji says of the AMS Bike Co-op, "when a member runs into a wall, there's often another member, present or past (something about this organization makes it tough for people to ever truly 'leave'), who can provide help, a new perspective, or timely advice" (Bhimji, 2005, p. 81). While the members move on from their studies, and thus leave membership in a student co-operative, strong association with the co-operative can create an opportunity for extending the co-operative's community and associative practices to its alumni.

### Summary of literature on student co-operatives

There are a diverse range of student-run co-operatives in Canada and the US. They generally provide retail and food outlets, or provide services. Most of the co-operatives focus on essential student needs—housing, food, textbooks, and school supplies. The services offers has some regional variation, with Quebec offering most of the bookstores, and housing co-operatives dominant in the US. For the purpose of this study, exploring student-run co-operatives in general provides a basis from which to analyse the services and models of co-operatives serving graduate students.

## Conclusion

Although this literature review draws on three separate fields of writing, there are several common themes. Like co-operative members, who act as customer, owner, investor and learner, graduate students play many roles as student, university employee, and campus community member. They may also have additional roles as parents, or as employees off campus, and while many graduate students find it stressful to juggle their various duties, international graduate students and graduate student parents may experience additional stress.

The importance of active participation is another common theme in these streams of literature. On campus, graduate students are important contributors to graduate student services as peer volunteers or part-time staff, and students who become involved in providing services see benefits in their self-esteem and develop a sense that they belong on campus. Graduate students who are actively involved in their department or campus are less likely to abandon their studies. Similarly, co-operatives benefit from direct member involvement in management of their co-operatives, and members who feel involved and valuable in their co-operative are more likely to remain involved.

For both co-operative members and graduate students, however, there are impediments to effective involvement. Notable concerns in the literature are the ability of graduate students to find the time and resources to run student services themselves, and the difficulty of sustaining leadership when the student cohort changes frequently. Student co-operatives, in particular, share these problems, and place a high value on active involvement and training to bridge the gap between generations of members. In the broader co-operative sector, co-operatives struggle to maintain member involvement as the co-operative ages and expands. Training provided internally is sometimes inadequate to prepare board members, and large and complex co-operatives sometimes opt to recruit board members with specific expertise.

Financial concerns were also evident throughout the literature. For graduate students, lack of funding is a cause of stress. Some may live on low incomes with reduced ability to participate in social activities, or have to take on employment in addition to their studies, thus increasing the number of responsibilities they must juggle. When students forming a co-operative have low incomes, it exacerbates problems raising capital already evident in the broader co-operative context. Lack of access to capital is one of the weaknesses of the co-operative model, and some groups choose different organizational models in order to allow investment.

# Research Question & Methodology

## Introduction

This project is exploratory in nature, as there has not previously been research conducted on the graduate student experience in co-operatives. The project uses a case study method to explore five co-operatives in detail. Data from the cases is triangulated (Cresswell & Miller, 2000) with academic writing from the fields of graduate student services and co-operative studies. This section describes the research question, the process used in selecting cases, and the methods used for analysis of the data.

## The research question

The original goal of this paper was to answer the question:

*Is a graduate student-led co-operative model a viable option for providing graduate student services such as housing, childcare, and food services?*

Once the research began, however, it became evident there would be problems addressing this question effectively. These arose due to incorrect assumptions about the available cases, and the exploratory nature of the research.

The research questions assumes that there are graduate student-led co-operatives providing housing, food and childcare. This proved to be incorrect. First, no graduate student-run co-operatives were found, although there were plenty of student-run co-operatives that include graduate students as members. Second, in the data collected, there were no student-run childcare co-operatives identified. Third, while it was easy to obtain interviews with students and staff from housing co-operatives, attempts to arrange interviews with those involved in food co-operatives failed. In the end, the cases selected for the study included four housing co-operatives and one bicycle co-operative.

With limited diversity among the cases, this study is not able to speak to the viability of the co-operative model as a whole. Further, since there are few other studies with which to compare, findings of this study cannot readily be tested against comparable case studies, or work on failed student co-operatives.

Due to these limitations, the goals of the project shifted to be more realistic about the outcomes possible with the available data. As such, this study is an exploratory description of the experience of five co-operatives that include graduate students. It does not measure viability of the co-operative model, but investigates the benefits and problems of the co-operative model for graduate students within examples of viable student-run co-operatives.

## Methodology

The case study method was selected for this project because it is suitable for providing an analysis of several student co-operative organizations (Cresswell, 2007). Case studies lend themselves to exploratory research, which is appropriate in this instance because there is little or no academic research available on graduate students within co-operative organizations. This paper uses a cross case analysis (Yin, 2009), which allows comparison of the experience of graduate students in the various cases and an assessment of whether the experience in one co-operative is applicable to other student co-operatives.

Data on cases was collected using interviews and a review of documents from the organizations. Interviews included discussion of governance systems, financial reporting, volunteer time commitment, links with outside organizations, and the experience of graduate students in the co-operative. Document analysis was used to triangulate the data from interviews, and to investigate areas not fully explored in the interviews. The document review examined financial documents, bylaws and policies, training materials, promotional material, websites, and where available, media reports. All documents in the review were publicly available; private and confidential material was neither requested nor reviewed.

## Identifying and describing student co-operatives

In order to identify cases for the study, a catalogue of student co-operatives in Canada and the US was compiled (APPENDIX B). The primary source for information on student co-operatives was the database maintained by the North American Students of Co-operation (NASCO). Additional sources of information were the website of the Ontario Student Cooperative Association, the Canadian Co-operative Association, and internet searches using key words. Information gathering on Québec co-operatives was hampered by this researcher's limited French skills, but with the advice of Dr. Ian MacPherson, I did find information on Coopsco, a large network of supply co-operatives in Québec. Once co-operatives were identified, their websites were explored to identify services provided by the co-operative and whether it included graduate student members.

Two additional co-operatives were identified by interview subjects, and were added to the data later. Finally, during the completion of this project, in June 2013, the Canadian Co-operative Association published a directory, *Student and Youth Co-operatives in Canada* (Canadian Co-operative Association, 2013), which resulted in the identification of four further student-led co-operatives in Canada. Data in this paper reflects this new information. As such, the information on Canadian and US student co-operatives in this report is accurate as of June 2013.

## Setting criteria and definitions for the study

The research question required decisions about what qualified as “viable”, “graduate student involvement” and a “student-led” co-operative. Further, in order to select cases, it was important to decide what counted as a single co-operative organization, and how graduate student participation would be determined.

### Identifying student-run co-operatives

In order to identify potential cases, and to assess the range of co-operatives being used by graduate students, a catalogue of student-run co-operatives was created at the outset of the study. Identifying co-operatives created a dilemma. Some co-operatives were clearly distinct and independent bodies. Others were umbrella groups through which students managed a variety of co-operative services, or a central body to govern several housing co-operatives in a region. Where a co-operative had a central governing body, it was counted as a single co-operative. Inactive and defunct co-operatives were excluded from the count.

### How this project defines “student-led co-operatives”

For the purpose of the study, a “student-led co-operative” is defined as a co-operative:

- **owned and led by students**: the co-operative's board has a majority of voting seats held by students or invests ultimate authority in an Annual General Meeting where students are the voting members;

- **providing a service for use by students:** although many co-operatives are useful to students, this study examined only co-operatives organized for the purpose of serving a student population;
- **associated with a post-secondary institution**: because this study is focussed on graduate students, only co-operatives run by students at post-secondary institutions were included; and
- **self-defined as a co-operative**: the organization clearly states that it is a co-operative, or includes “co-op” in its name.

To be included in the data for this study, a student co-operative was required to meet all of these criteria. Thus, students who formed worker co-operatives that served the community in general were excluded, as were campus programs managed co-operatively by students where the university had ultimate authority over the project. Co-operatives were also discounted if they included and recruited student members but were not dedicated to serving students as a primary function.

#### Determining graduate student involvement

Co-operatives were determined to include graduate students if they met one of the following criteria:

- the website mentions graduate student members or specific graduate services;
- the bylaws include criteria for determining graduate student enrolment status;
- the newsletters or promotional material mention graduate student members;
- the membership application includes an option to identify as a graduate student;
- or the co-operative is at a university that includes graduate programs, and the co-operative is explicitly open to all students at the university.

#### How this study defined “viability”

The research question sought to examine the viability of the co-operative model. As discussed above (see section 0, page 26), this proved problematic. Nonetheless, a working definition of “viability” was developed in order to select cases for interviews. This definition required that a case used in this study:

- is able to continue operating after the founding members have graduated from university;
- is run by students, and is therefore not reliant on outside partners to survive;
- appeals to a broad range of students;
- is financially self-sufficient; and
- has the capacity to grow over time.

Focussing on viable student-led co-operatives ensures the study is collecting data about workable models. However, selecting only viable cases does not provide insight into the factors that might cause a student-run co-operative to fail.

### Selections of cases for analysis

Several factors reduced the variety of co-operatives included in this study. The initial goal was to select housing, food and childcare co-operatives as case studies. However, the process of identifying possible cases revealed there were no student-led childcare co-operatives, while there were many food and housing co-operatives. Further, the vast majority of bookstores operated in French, reducing the possibility of finding interview subjects. Finally, potential research subjects were contacted in the summer, which favoured co-operatives that were active and reachable year round.

Requests for interviews were sent by email, and followed up by phone. It was relatively easy to reach housing co-operatives for interviews, but attempts to establish contact with the food co-operatives, student association, and campus bookstore, were unsuccessful. As a result, cases were determined based largely on the availability of willing interview subjects, the ability to contact the co-operative in summer, and the ability to conduct interviews in English. Every subject who completed an interview is included in the results.

### The interviews

Four of the cases are student-housing co-operatives in the US: Berkeley Student Cooperative , in Berkeley California; ICC Michigan, in Ann Arbor Michigan; ICC Austin, in Austin Texas; and the Student's Cooperative Association in Eugene, Oregon. The fifth case is the AMS Bike Co-op at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC.

All of the participants graciously consented to have their names and the names of their co-operatives included in this report. The author remains solely responsible for the accuracy of the findings and the validity of the interpretation. The participants are described in Table 4, below.

**Table 4: Cases and interviewees**

| Co-operative | Interviewee | Interviewee role |
|---|---|---|
| Berkeley Student Cooperative | Arlo Faria | PhD Student, board member |
| Berkeley Student Cooperative | Danny Fisher | PhD Student, active member |
| AMS Bike Co-op | Jean-Francois Carron | PhD Student, board member |
| Oregon Student Co-operative | Brianne Orr | Undergraduate living in graduate house, house membership coordinator |
| ICC Austin | Brian Donovan | Executive Director, Staff |
| ICC Michigan | David Carter, known as “Yes “ | Director of Member Services, Staff |

The interviews were conducted by telephone or by Skype and the audio was recorded. A. Faria and D. Fisher were interviewed together, and all other interviews were conducted privately. The interviews were open ended, but relied on a standard set of questions as a starting point (APPENDIX A). This ensured key issues were covered.

To interpret the interview data, the interviews were transcribed in full. The transcriptions were reviewed to identify commonalities or areas where interview subjects disagreed.

### Identifying themes

The transcriptions were coded using colour highlighters, using a code list of the themes anticipated by the research plan and a specific colour to flag issues raised in the interviews that were unanticipated. Flow diagrams (Tricco, Tetzlaff & Moher, 2011) were used to synthesise themes for each case, with a separate flow diagram for each co-operative on that theme. Finally charts were created for each theme to compare the cases on the theme. These categorized discussion on each theme as follows:

- "common", which were observations common to all the interviews;
- "divided", which were observations where the response differed among the co-operatives; and
- "outlier", where one co-operative had a striking difference from the other cases.

The theme described in these diagrams and charts provided the basis for reporting the findings.

### Document review

Review of documents from the co-operatives was part of the analysis of each case. The documents collected and reviewed included: governance documents such as bylaws and minutes; training manuals; the co-operative's website; and newspaper clippings. Three factors influenced the selection of documents for review.

- **Original research goals:** Organizational documents such as budgets and audits, bylaws, and policies were reviewed in each case where they were available. Where formal documents were not available, information on the co-operative's website or in other documents was relied upon to gather financial and governance information.
- **Issues arising in the interviews:** Where an issue was identified by the subject(s), an effort was made to find additional materials to compare with the data from the interview subject.
- **Areas that fell into the analysis of "common", "divided", or "outlier":** The co-operative's documents were used to test the researcher's comparative analysis of the cases.

## Limitations of the research

This study has several limitations. First, there may be gaps in the data collected to catalogue existing student co-operatives. While the North American Students of Co-operation, Coopsco, the Canadian Co-operative Association and the Ontario student Co-operative Association all have comprehensive membership lists, these may not capture unaffiliated student co-operatives. Second, there is no consistent definition for the term "student-led co-operative" so a definition was created for this study as described (see section 0). Third, the cases lack diversity in both type of service offered by the cases and among the interview subjects. The cases include four housing co-operatives and a bicycle co-operative. Inclusion of a third form of co-operative could have provided an interesting point of comparison. The graduate students interviewed all enrolled in a doctoral program and were male. A female graduate student or a student in a master's program may have had some different experiences. These gaps in the research are not representative of gaps in the co-operative cases or the knowledge of the interviewees. In fact, all of those who were interviewed spoke thoughtfully and knowledgeably about the work to make their co-operative inclusive, both in policy and in fact. However, the experience of a housing co-operative or bicycle co-operative may differ significantly from that of a student-run food co-operative, and therefore the findings in this study cannot be assumed to represent student-run co-operatives.

## Conclusion

This project uses a case study approach to explore the experience of graduate students within student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US. The interviews and document review from the cases are placed in the context of previous research on graduate student concerns, student services for graduate students, and co-operative studies.

# The Findings

## Introduction

The focus of this study is five cases of student-led co-operatives with graduate student membership. In order to situate these cases in the context of student co-operatives, data was first collected on active student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US. This data was used to identify the types of services student run co-operatives offer in general, discover whether they have graduate student members, and, if so, whether they offer specific services of any kind to their graduate student membership. This basic data on co-operatives with graduate students was then examined to understand what sorts of services they offered, and compare this with the general field of student-led co-operatives. (See APPENDIX B and APPENDIX C).

**Table 5: Types of services offered by student co-operatives in the US and Canada with graduate student members**

| Service offered | number of co-ops | % |
|---|---|---|
| Housing | 25 | 52% |
| Bookstore | 13 | 27% |
| Food services | 10 | 21% |
| Specific services for grads | 10 | 21% |
| Supply store | 8 | 17% |
| Copy/Print | 6 | 13% |
| Facilities (i.e. kitchen, meeting room use) | 6 | 13% |
| Boarding | 5 | 10% |
| Workshops | 5 | 10% |
| Food Store | 3 | 6% |
| Federation | 3 | 6% |
| Media | 2 | 4% |
| Pub | 1 | 2% |
| Student Association | 1 | 2% |
| Bicycle repair and rental | 1 | 2% |
| Recreation | 1 | 2% |
| Canadian | 27 | 56% |

As outlined in Table 5, housing is the service most frequently offered to graduate students through a student-led co-operative (52%). There are 47 student-led co-operative bookstores with graduate student members, making bookstores second most common service (27%). Of these, 43 are in Québec, and part of the Coopsco network. Noteworthy for this study is the fact that none of the student-led co-operatives offer childcare as a service. However, one co-operative, the Commonwealth Terrace Co-op at the University of Minnesota, prioritizes graduate student families as members, and is co-located with a University-run childcare which gives co-operative members' children priority placement (Commonwealth Terrace Co-operative, n.d.b., Community Child Care Center, n.d.).

From among the co-operatives with graduate student members, five cases are considered in detail. However, as noted earlier, the cases are include four housing co-operatives and one bicycle co-operative, a sample that does not represent the diversity of student-run co-operatives in Canada and the US. The findings draw on data collected through semi-structured interviews with students and staff, and a review of publicly available documents from the co-operative. This section conclude with an exploration of themes that arose in the case studies. Four major themes arose in the cases: turnover in membership; governance; associative practices; and graduate students role and experience in the co-operatives. These themes have many areas that overlap.

## Case Summaries

### Berkeley Student Cooperative (Berkeley, California)

The Berkeley Student Cooperative, in Berkeley, California, was founded in 1933. It provides low cost student housing and boarding—meals served at the co-operative houses (Berkeley Student Cooperative, n.d.c. Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2012a). In some of the houses, boarding is available to students who do not live at the house (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2012b). The co-operative's annual budget is $10 million (USD) and it has 1350 student members. As a long standing co-operative, it has managed to amass substantial assets. It owns $31.5 million in land, building and capital assets, and an additional $5.5 million (USD) in savings and investments (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2010).

**Services:** The co-operative has 17 houses, which range in size from 17 to 159 residents. All of the houses have large shared kitchens and some have large recreation rooms. The co-operative also owns three apartment buildings, where students have private one-, two-, three- and four- bedroom units with their own kitchen. Eight of the houses and all of the apartment buildings have rooms that are wheelchair accessible. Each co-operative has its own features, and several feature recreation rooms, workshop spaces, or music rooms. One apartment includes a large garden and basketball court, while another has a sauna. The co-operative also has many job opportunities for student members of the co-operative, which can provide a source of income as well as work experience (Berkeley Student Cooperative , n.d.d.).

In the 2013-14 academic year, living in a private room in Hillegass/Parker house, a graduate residence, costs $737/month, including room and board, or $872/month for a larger room. There are also single apartments for $493 to $869/month, depending on the size of the apartment. The apartment rates do not include meals. Dorm rates at UC Berkeley are $1,621.20 for a private dorm room to $$1,768 for a private room in a suite (University of California, Berkeley, 2013a). Berkeley dorms and some suite-style dorms include a basic meal plan with 10-12 meals per week (University of California, Berkeley, n.d.). Single apartment style dorms are also available without meals, at $1065/month. Residences are closed between semesters, and students must move out of university dorms at this time. The closure between Fall and Spring terms is December 21 to January 14. (University of California, Berkeley, 2013b)

**Graduate Students:** Two of the houses at Berkeley Student Cooperative are designated for graduate students, visiting scholars, post-docs and re-entry students (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013a, Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013d). Re-entry students are defined as students older than 25 years. One of the apartment buildings primarily houses graduate and re-entry students.

**Governance structure:** At Berkeley Student Cooperative the governance structure is designed to strike a balance between the overall co-operative, the individual houses, and stakeholders. The Corporate Board, which provides governance to the co-operative as a whole, has 29 voting members, including a seat (or seats) for students from the various houses at a ratio of one seat for every 70 house members. Staff and BSC alumni each have one seat on the Corporate Board. Further, the Berkeley Student Cooperative President can recommend two additional community members, who are either USC Berkeley faculty or Berkeley Student Cooperative alumni to the Board for election to the Board (Berkeley Student Cooperative, n.d.a., Berkeley Student Cooperative, n.d.b , Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a, Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b). The Corporate Board elects a Cabinet of 6 Vice Presidents and the President. Any member may run for the cabinet. The VP positions are: Internal Affairs; Operations; Financial Affairs; Education & Training; External Affairs; Capital Affairs; Member Advocate; ASUC-BSC Affairs (Employee Union Relations); and 2-3 at-large positions. The cabinet members each chair committees (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a).

The decision making process of the Corporate governance bodies is “Parliamentary Procedure, BSC style” (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a). This is a modified parliamentary procedure requiring motions and votes. A simple majority is all that is needed for most votes.

Each house at BSC has its own governing body, known as the House Council. House Councils include all house members as voting members. They set their own house policies and elect their own coordinators and representatives to the Corporate Board. Coordinators manage various aspects of house business, such as the kitchen, garden and building maintenance. House Councils meet every one to three weeks, and elect their officers each semester (Berkeley Student Cooperative , 2012c).

**Member participation:** Members have the right to attend all meetings of the co-op. Members may speak at all meetings, and may also make and second resolutions. Members also have the ability to petition for a referendum. At general membership meetings and in polls, every member has one vote (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b).

**Executive and Board compensation:** Compensation to executives can be approved by the Board of Directors “in the form of hours, partial or full room and board, money or any combination thereof”(Berkeley Student Cooperative , 2011b). Compensation cannot be retroactive, or for the current term. The Board votes to approve compensation every semester.

**Use of fines:** Berkeley Student Cooperative ’s member manual (2011b) describes several reasons for which the co-operative can issue fines. The board can deny Executive and Board compensation for failure to fulfill duties, failure to follow instructions of the Board, or misuse of funds. (Berkeley Student Cooperative , 2011b). Members can be fined late fees for unpaid bills or misbehaviour (such as prank fire alarms) (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b), or for failing to attend the orientation session for new members (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2014). Failure to complete house chore duties can also result in fines. Members may appeal, but “must win an absolute majority of the house population” (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b, Section III.A.3) in order to win an appeal.

**Openness and transparency:** The Berkeley Student Cooperative has a formal policy on transparency that includes principles of openness with the membership. All meetings of the co-operative are open to the membership. Weekly email notices to all members includes announcements of meetings, elections and committee vacancies. An extensive wiki is used to provide information to members, including minutes, budgets, historical records, and training on how to get involved in the co-operative's governance, or submit policy proposals. House representatives are sent meeting dockets prior to the Central Board meetings, and this docket includes a summary of the previous meeting to make it easy to share Central Board business with members at a house meeting.

**Budget process:** The Central budget process for the co-operative is led by the VP Financial Affairs. The budget is passed by the Central Board. House budgets are the responsibility of the house.

### ICC Austin (Austin, Texas)

ICC Austin (or Inter-Co-operative Council of Austin) was formed in 1932, and provides student housing and boarding in Austin, Texas. Students from any university or college in Austin may join the co-operative (ICC Austin, 2012a). ICC Austin has a budget of $1.3 million (USD) (ICC Austin, n.d, ICC Austin, 2013) and 188 members (ICC Austin, 2012a). The co-operative began as a dining co-operative, and then operated in houses owned by the university. It was several decades before the co-operative purchased its own houses. Today, the co-operative holds $2.5 million (USD) in assets, including land, building and equipment, and has reserve funds for emergencies, expansion, and renovations in the amount of $660,471 (USD) (ICC Austin, 2013).

**Services:** ICC Austin's primary goal is to provide low cost housing for students attending college or university in Austin, Texas. The co-operative owns nine houses, with each housing between 15 and 31 residents. The housing fees include the cost of food, and members cook their own meals (ICC Austin, 2012b). In housing where the kitchen size permits, non-resident students can join the co-operative as boarders, paying only for their meals, and eating at one of the houses with the residents (ICC Austin, 2011). Boarders share in co-operative duties. One of the houses has a swimming pool, which is available for all members to use from April 1 – October 15.

ICC Austin provides housing below market rate for its members. According to the ICC Austin website, room and board in the co-operative costs $6,507 for 8 months, while a similar situation in the university residence costs $12,098 (ICC Austin. 2012b)

**Graduate Students:** Three of the co-operative's nine houses are designated as houses for graduate and upper-division students.

**Governance structure:** The ICC Austin central governance structure is a Board consisting of 15 members. Of these, two are community trustees who must be approved by a majority vote of the board members and officers, and the remaining 13 seats are held by student co-operative members. Nine of the student seats are house representatives, one elected by each house. An Executive Coordinating Committee made up of four coordinators are elected by the general membership. (ICC Austin, 2012c). The Coordinators have portfolios for Executive, Operations, Planning and Development, and Outreach (ICC Austin, 2012c) and coordinators make up the Executive Coordinating Committee (ICC Austin, 2012d).

The bylaws instruct the Board members to employ a co-operative approach to decision making (ICC Austin, 2009). The standing rules stipulate that votes are by majority rule (ICC Austin, 2011).

**Member participation:** Members have the right to speak at all meetings, including Board meetings. Members have the right to participate in developing policies for their house, and to run for positions on the board. Meetings of the general membership are required in the Fall and Spring semesters. Members may seek to overturn any decision of the Board of Directors through a petition with 20% of the members' signatures to call a Special General Meeting.

**Executive and Board compensation:** Board members elected to the Coordinator roles are given rent credit for their work. The credit increases to recognize length of service as follows:

1st-4th month of service: 50% of one month's rent (to be paid each month)

5th to 8th month of service: 66% of one month's rent (to be paid each month)

9th – 12th month: 75% of one month's rent (to be paid each month)

2nd year full rent compensation for that year (ICC Austin, 2011, p. 8).

Compensation is approved by the Board prior to the start of each term, and is subject to submission of detailed written reports every month and Board approval of the report.

The co-operative recommends that, at the discretion of the house, their house representative may be granted full labour credit for their work on the central board.

**Use of fines:** Members can be fined for misbehaviour such as being on a roof, or use of a fire extinguisher inappropriately (ICC Austin, 2009).

**Openness and transparency:** All meetings of the co-operative are open to the membership, and minutes for board meetings are posted in all of the houses (ICC Austin, 2009).

**Budget process:** The budget for ICC Austin is approved at a general meeting of the members. House budgets are separate, and managed by the elected treasurer of each house (ICC Austin, 2009).

### Student's Cooperative Association (Eugene, Oregon)

The Student's Cooperative Association is a student housing co-operative in Eugene, Oregon. The co-operative began as an informal group of students living co-operatively in 1934 (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.b.). Today, the co-operative provides housing, boarding, and a public gathering space in three houses. The co-operative's purpose is to house students (Student's Cooperative Association, 1996), but according to B. Orr it also has some non-student members including one faculty member. It has 71 members and an annual budget of $220,780 (USD) (Student's Cooperative Association, 2012b).

**Services:** The primary service offered by the Student's Cooperative Association is low cost student housing (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.a.). Meals are included with rent charges, and are prepared collectively. Non-residents can join the co-operative as a boarder, and eat their meals at the co-operative. In addition, two of the houses have public events, and one of the houses frequently hosts of public music venue (Campbell Club, 2013, Lorax Manner, n.d., Student's Cooperative Association, 2012a). The house has many connections with the student activist community and several organizations host meetings in the house.

The primary purpose of the SCA is to provide low cost housing and to promote co-operation (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.a.). The co-operative's rent in the 2012-13 academic year ranging from $890 per term for a shared room to $1165 per term for a single room, including board. (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.g.). Living in the cooperative costs about 25% of a similar residence and meal plan through the university (Graduate student co-op ready for residents, 2005) which, in the 2012-13 academic year, costs $3598/term for a shared room with a meal plan that provides 19 meals per week (University of Oregon, 2013).

Students can also board at the co-operative houses. Meal prices in 2006 ranged from $2.58/day for lunch only to $5.61/day for all meals (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.h.). Boarders contribute three to five hours per week to house chores as part of their membership and the minimum length of boarder membership is two weeks (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.h.). When considering the work contribution required, the value of boarding for financial savings is significantly less than the savings gained by renting.

**Graduate Students:** One of the co-operative's three houses is dedicated to graduate and mature students, the first dedicated graduate housing at the university (Graduate student co-op ready for residents, 2005). This house does not host public events.

**Governance structure:** According to the Student's Cooperative Association Bylaws (n.d.a.), governance of the SCA consists of three types of bodies: the corporate board, the houses, and the general membership. The corporate board governs the co-operative as a whole, makes long term plans, manages staff and prepares budgets. The houses manage their internal affairs, including allocating duties and jobs, managing house finances, and setting house rules. The general membership meets twice per term and elects the Corporate Board, approves bylaw changes and major capital purchases. Every member has one vote at General Membership meetings.

House meetings are held weekly, and include every resident and boarder in that house as a voting member. Houses elect a president and house representative, who are both voting members of the corporate board. Houses also have positions to coordinate membership, maintenance, house jobs, and manage house finances. The house meetings set house rules and make decisions regarding house budgets and social activities.

Two representatives are elected from each house to the corporate board. The general membership elects five other corporate board positions: President, Speaker, Corporate Membership Coordinator, Corporate Treasurer, Corporate Maintenance Coordinator, and Corporate Secretary. Corporate Board vacancies are filled by elections at the start of each term, and the elected representatives serve one year. The Corporate Board meets monthly, and has special provisions for a summer board to meet with reduced size and powers. It uses consensus decision making process. (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.a, Student Cooperative Association, n.d.c.).

**Member participation:** Member rights include votes in elections, general meetings and house meetings, and the right to run for the Board of Directors. Members are able to petition for a special meeting, or submit proposals to change policy, and membership on all committees is open (Student`s Cooperative Association, n.d.a.).

**Executive and Board compensation:** Work on committees is compensated with work-credit (credit toward the requirement to complete ten hours of work for the co-operative each term).

**Use of fines:** Any member can be fined up to $5 for failure to complete house duties. Three fines in an academic quarter can result in eviction by the Board of Directors (Student's Cooperative Association, 1997).

**Openness and transparency:** The co-operatives' current budget, policy manual, job descriptions, and membership handbook are all accessible publicly on the website. Meeting notes are published up to 2008. The co-operative has active Facebook page, which is used to promote events and workshops. Meeting agendas are required to be posted in the co-operative at least 8 hours prior to the meeting.

**Budget process**: The budget is developed by the Financial Committee and approved by the Board of Directors. Any member may participate in the Financial Committee's work. The Approved budget is posted on the website. The bylaws require presentations of the financial statements and balance sheet, and a report on the financial health of the co-operative, is made by the Board of Directors at general membership meetings (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.a.).

### ICC Michigan (Ann Arbour, Michigan)

ICC Michigan (or Inter-Cooperative Council Michigan) is located in Ann Arbour Michigan. It is among the largest student co-operatives in the US, and one of the oldest, founded in 1932 (ICC Michigan, 2003c, ICC Michigan, 2003d). The co-operative provides housing, boarding, and also has a shared vehicle that is used by staff and the members. The co-operative has 600 members (ICC Michigan, 2003d), and a $2.2 million (USD) annual budget.

**Services:** ICC Michigan is a student housing co-operative, and offers housing with boarding, and one apartment building where residents cook for themselves. Graduate students living in a university residence and University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (2012-13 rates) would pay $1077.63/month for a shared dorm room with a meal plan, $1,614 for a large single room with meals, or $914 for a one bedroom apartment with a kitchen, not including food costs (Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan, 2012). Students living in dorms must vacate during the break between terms in December, and vacate their dorm within 24 hours of the last exam (University of Michigan, Student Life, n.d.).

At the co-op, graduate students living in the Baker graduate house would pay $701/month for a single room, including all their meals (ICC Michigan, 2003e), and the rate drops to $405/month in the summer (ICC Michigan, 2003f). Members must contribute 4-6 hours per week in labour as part of their membership and pay a refundable membership fee of $500 when joining (ICC Michigan, 2003g).

**Graduate Students:** ICC Michigan has one dedicated graduate student house (ICC Michigan, 2003b). When the co-operative was founded, in 1932, the first of its kind in North America, its members were predominantly "older graduate students, with more experience than most undergrads" (Mericle, Wilson, & Jones, 1994, p. 1).

**Governance structure:** ICC Michigan has house level and corporate level governance structures. Each house elects a representative to the Board of Directors in April, and these house representatives constitute the Board of Directors voting membership. The Board of Directors elects several non-voting positions: five Vice Presidents (Sustainability, Membership, Education, Recruitment and Retention, Diversity), a Treasurer, and a Recording secretary. Nominees for these positions come from the general membership. Each Vice President chairs a committee.

The co-operative's President is elected by and from the general membership (ICC Michigan, 2003h, ICC Michigan, 2006)The Board of Directors is responsible for the long term planning of ICC Michigan, holds title to all the houses, manages mortgages, legal issues, taxes and insurance (ICC Michigan, 2011). Decisions about mortgages, membership fees and tax payments are made by a finance committee, which is advised by a staff member with a background in financial management. ICC Michigan's Board of Directors also includes a "Michigan Student Assembly (MSA) Ex-Officio Representative" (ICC Michigan, 2006), whose role is to "foster connections" (ICC Michigan, 2006, section 1.2.12.D) with MSA committees and ensure communication between ICC Michigan and the MSA.

**Member participation:** Board meetings are open to all members. Members can also call a special general meeting with a petition of 10% of the members.

**Executive and Board compensation:** President, Treasurer, Vice Presidents and Recording Secretary are exempted from house work duties. Other officers and committee chairs and members may be compensated with reduced work schedules.

**Openness and transparency:** The ICC Michigan website includes comprehensive information on the governing structure and procedures of the co-operative, including the Standing Rules and policy manuals. Board meeting minutes are online, and are up to date to 2011. The bylaws require that meeting minutes are posted in the co-operative office and every house within five days of each meeting, and again along with the next meeting agenda (ICC Michigan, 2011).

**Budget process**: House budgets are approved and managed by the house, and development of the budget is led by the House Treasurer. According to Yes, who was interviewed for the study about ICC Michigan, the co-operative formerly kept a set of books for each house separately, but recently, all utilities costs were socialized to reduce the overall expense and make handling bills easier.

### AMS Bike Co-op

The AMS Bike Co-op is a student co-operative at the University of British Columbia (UBC), in Vancouver, BC. The co-operative began in 1998 as a project to build a fleet of shared bicycles for use on campus (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.a). Today, the co-operative has expanded its services to include bike tools and repair space, a shop, regular bike repair workshops, and a bicycle loan program. The co-operative has an annual budget of $60,000 (CDN) and 500 members.

The AMS Bike Co-op was founded as a club of the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS). As a result, its bylaws and formal procedures adhere to clubs policy of the AMS (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.c., AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.d.). At times, there is a difference between formal rules and actual practice. For example, The Bylaws state that only students of the University of British Columbia are eligible to serve on the co-operative's Executive, or sign a petition for referendum of the co-operative (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.c.). However, according to Jean-Francois Carron, a member of the board interviewed for this study, faculty and representatives from campus organizations served by the co-operative are elected as active voting members of the Board in practice and non-students may also purchase membership, but at a higher rate than students. This disjuncture is a thread running through many aspects of the AMS Bike Co-op's governance and structure.

**Services:** The AMS Bike Co-op is well known at UBC for its purple and yellow bicycles—a program of shared bicycles on the university campus (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.b.). Members of the co-operative have a key that allows them to access any bike where they find it on campus, and ride it to their destination. Since it was founded, the co-operative expanded to build a bike tool shed, and then expanded again to build a full service bike shop with sales of parts, a bicycle kitchen for members to do their own repairs, a library and a workshop space. The co-operative also rents bicycles designed to carry large loads, and provides bike fleet maintenance to other groups on campus.

The co-op provides modest savings over having a mechanic provide a tune up in a bicycle shop. Where the co-op is effective at saving money for members is by teaching members to repair and maintain their own bicycle, and providing low cost access to tools. PEDAL, a charitable non-profit association (PEDAL, n.d.b.) offers similar services in Vancouver (PEDAL, n.d.b.).

Table 6 summarizes the services and prices offered at the AMS Bike Co-op compared to PEDAL and the three private bike shops located closest to campus. From this data we can see that while the AMS Bike Coop offers some savings, price differences are modest on repairs. The primary difference between AMS Bike Co-op and private shops is the option to take workshops and repair one's own bicycle using the tools provided. When compared to PEDAL, the primary benefit to students is the convenience of an on-campus location and bike fleet. Some students might also prefer AMS Bike Co-op to PEDAL simply because it provides an opportunity to meet peers.

**Table 6: AMS Bike Co-op services and prices compared to other shops (Ace Cycles, 2014, AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.f., Bike Gallery, n.d., Pedal, n.d.a., West Point Cycles, n.d.)**

| | AMS Bike Co-op | PEDAL | Bike Gallery | West Point Cycles | Ace Cycle |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Membership fee | $15 (students),<br>$20 (non-students), or<br>6 hours volunteering | $20 or<br>10 hours volunteering | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Tool rental and use of bike kitchen to complete own repairs | 2$ to borrow tools, $7.50/hour to use the space<br>(membership includes free shop time Fridays, plus two additional hours at other times) | $6/hour<br>(membership provides 36$ of shop time) | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Workshops on maintaining bicycles | $10 for members<br>$15 for non-members | $40 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Assisted repairs | $15/hour with assistance | $12/hr. (verbal instruction only)<br>$18/ assistance and instruction | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Basic repair service provided in shop | $35 | $48/hour | $45 | $50 | $45<br>(sale rate $29) |
| Access to campus bike fleet | Included with membership and 6 hours of volunteering on bike fleet maintenance. | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

**Graduate Students:** the AMS Bike Co-op has many graduate student members, and has no services specifically for graduate students.

**Governance structure:** Of all the cases, governance structures at the AMS Bike Co-op were the least defined. The AMS Bike Co-op has a constitution (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.d) and bylaws (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.c.). However, since its roots are in the student association under which it formed, the interviewee perceived the AMS Bike Co-op as also accountable to the UBC Alma Mater Society's regulations for clubs (UBC Alma Mater Society, 2013). These regulations contradict each other. For example, the UBC Alma Mater Society stipulates the use of Robert's Rules for meetings, while the AMS Bike Co-op rules outline a consensus process with a fall back to a vote.

Structurally, the AMS Bike Co-op is a working board, with governance roles assigned duties to coordinate the projects and programs of the co-operative. Depending on the importance of the program to the membership, a program coordinator will either be elected at a general meeting, or the board would assign the roles from among at-large members. Meetings were held in tandem with volunteer bicycle repair sessions. This increased likelihood of participation, since the volunteer activities are the most popular.

**Committees and other organizational services:** The active committees of the co-operative are work-based. Committees meet to repair and assemble bicycles for the Purple and Yellow bike program, to organize the library, or to plan and give workshops on bicycle maintenance.

**Executive Officers and Board compensation:** Members of the Board of Directors are eligible for a discount in the co-operatives bicycle store.

**Openness and transparency:** It is very easy to find information on getting involved with the AMS Bike Co-op, or about upcoming workshops. Information on General Membership Meetings is equally accessible, and attendance is encouraged. The group has a Constitution and Bylaws available on the co-op's website. Budgets and minutes are not available online.

**Budget process:** In practice, the budget is developed by board members along with staff from the bike shop. The treasurer is responsible to ensure the budget is prepared, and submitted to the UBC AMS (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.d). There are financial updates provided at meetings of members, but the budget is not approved at a general meeting.

## Comparing the cases

A comparison of the cases is summarized in Table 7, below. The Berkeley Student Cooperative has significantly more assets and a larger membership than the other cases. The Student's Cooperative Association had the smallest membership, while the AMS Bike Co-op had the smallest budget. All of the housing co-operatives offer a designated house for graduate student residents.

**Table 7: Comparing the cases**

| | Berkeley Student Cooperative | ICC Austin | Student`s Co-operative Association | ICC Michigan | AMS Bike Co-op |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Services provided** | housing, boarding | housing, boarding | housing, events and workshops, meeting space | housing, boarding, | bicycle shop, shared bicycle program, |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | shared vehicle | bicycle rentals, repairs, workshops |
| **Annual budget** | $10 million USD | $1.3 million USD | $220,780 USD | $2.2 million USD | $60,000 CDN |
| **Membership** | 1350 students | 188 students | 71 members, primarily students | 600 members, primarily students | 500 members, primarily students (Co-operative Learning Centre, 2010) |
| **Membership share price** | $500 | $100, plus $37 for membership in NASCO | $150, plus NASCO membership fee.<br>Share is also used as a damage deposit. | $100 | $15 (students),<br>$20 (non-students), or<br>6 hours volunteering |
| **Graduate student specific services** | two houses are dedicated to graduate and re-entry students | three of nine houses are dedicated to graduate and mature students | one of three houses is dedicated to graduate and mature students | one dedicated graduate student house | none |

Like other co-operatives, student co-operatives do require member contribution in the form of a membership fee (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.f)

Savings from living in these co-operatives can be considerable when compared with campus dormitories. Table 8 compares monthly rates for the housing cases compared to the housing offered by the related university. In all cases, the prices reflect single private room. Where there was an option, the lowest price meal plan was used in the university residence pricing.

**Table 8: Rates for housing in the co-operative cases compared to campus housing at their university**

| | Co-op rates | Residence costs at nearby university |
|---|---|---|
| **Berkeley Student Cooperative** | $737/month, private room, includes food<br>$872/month for a larger room | $1,621.20/month including 10-12 meals per week<br>$1,768/month for a single bedroom suite, with basic meals.<br>$1,065/month for an apartment with no meals. |
| **ICC Austin** | $813.38/month, including food | $2016.33/month (including food) |
| **ICC Michigan** | $701/month private room (fall and spring), or<br>$405/month (summer), including food | $914/month kitchenette apartment, private room,<br>no food included |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **Student's Co-operative Association** | $1,165 per term, for a single room, including food. | $3,556/term for a single dorm room, including a meal plan. |

When considering the details of the cases and their operations the co-operatives have many points in common, as summarized in Table 9. All of the housing co-operative cases include the ICA's definition of co-operatives, statement of co-operative values and the co-operative principles in their bylaws or documents. At ICC Michigan, references the Rochdale principles, but has also developed substantial additional with its "Statement of Beliefs and Values" (ICC Michigan, 2003a, p. 3-4), which includes statements such as: "Self-reliance: The ICC is its own most reliable resource" (2003a, p.4) and, "Stewardship: The co-op should benefit both current and future members"(2003a, p. 4). The Student Co-operative Association has also adopted principles in addition to the ICA principles: "honest business practices … [and] a commitment to advance the common good" (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.e. para. 11-12).

In terms of governance, all the cases have an elected board where students retain majority control. In all but one case, non-students have seats on the board, including community members, alumni of the co-operative, a representative of unionized staff, or university and student association representatives. In all of the cases, management staff have the right to speak in meetings.

**Table 9: Comparing aspects of governance in the cases**

| | Berkeley Student Cooperative | ICC Austin | Student`s Co-operative Association | ICC Michigan | AMS Bike Co-op |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Formal inclusion of ICA Co-operative definition, values and principles in the co-ops' bylaws, rules or documents | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| Non student members permitted on board | yes | yes | no | yes | formally: no<br>in practice: yes |
| Board compensation | board members receive work credit (exemption from house duties) | rent credit; credit increases with length of service | committee work can be compensated with exemption from other co-operative work | exemption from house duties or reduced duties | store discounts |
| Frequency of board meetings | every 2 – 3 weeks | monthly | monthly | every two weeks | held along with biweekly bike fixing parties |

| | Berkeley Student Cooperative | ICC Austin | Student`s Co-operative Association | ICC Michigan | AMS Bike Co-op |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use of fines or penalties | yes | yes | yes | no | no |
| Member rebates | no | no | no | yes, when house food budget in surplus | no |
| Budget Approval | board | general meeting | board | board | Treasurer submits to the UBC AMS |
| Member participation in budget process | yes, Board approves budget, members can attend and move motions at board and committee meetings | yes, members can attend and speak at all meetings, and by attending general meeting where budget is approved | Yes, through participation in the committee | Members can attend all board and committee meetings | Unclear. |
| Budgets available to members | Yes | Yes | Yes, online | Yes | No. |
| Financial statements available to members | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | financial updates given at meetings |
| Audit conducted and available to members | Yes, posted online | Yes, posted online | None found | None found | None found. |
| Formal policy or rules on transparency of governance | yes | yes | yes | yes | no |
| Decision making process | "Parliamentary Procedure, BSC style" (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a) | board employs a co-operative process (ICC Austin, 2009), but votes are by majority rule (ICC Austin, 2011) | consensus | "Kwunsensus" a modified form of consensus process | consensus with a fall back to voting |

All the co-operatives compensate board members in some way for their time spent on governance duties. Compensation at the housing co-operatives includes work credit that reduces time spent on household chores, or rent reductions, while the AMS Bike Co-op offers discounts on goods sold by the co-operative.

The co-operatives differ on the use of fines and rebates. Three of the housing co-operatives use fines. These may be straight fines for misbehaviour, or it might be clawing back a rent reduction if a board member fails to complete their duties. One co-operative offers rebates to house members based on efficiencies in the food budget. In this co-operative, a food budget is assessed at the beginning of the term and collected with the rent. Each house uses their budget to buy food for common meals. If there are funds remaining in the budget at the end of the term, it is divided among the house members. Conversely, if the house goes over budget, each member must contribute to cover the difference.

The board of directors meets frequently in all cases, at least once per month. The decision-making processes vary among the cases. Two have developed their own processes with detailed rules. Two operate by consensus, although one of these has formal rules requiring use of Robert's Rules. Finally, one prefers to develop agreement co-operatively but defaults to a majority-rules vote when needed.

All of the cases have a central governing body that meets frequently, as well as meetings of the general membership to consider larger issues. The board has significant power in managing the finances in all cases. In three of the cases, the board approves the annual budget, while in others, budget approval takes place at a general meeting, or is developed by committee and submitted to a parent organization. In four of the cases, there is formal policy on transparency of governance that requires sharing of minutes and rules. In some cases, extensive training manuals are provided on line and in all cases, bylaws are available to the members on line.

## Themes arising in the research

The research design ensured discussion on, training, volunteer time requirement, connections with other organizations and the experience of graduate students. The findings reflect these themes. Within the interviews, interviewees raised additional themes. These are:

- the impact of turnover in the membership, especially as it related to organizational memory, governance and risk management;
- the use of associative practices;
- relationships with other groups, alumni, and stakeholders; and
- the role of graduate student members in governance.

The themes discussed share common threads because they are considered within a wider discussion about working with graduate students. As such, high turnover among members, the level of experience members contributed, and questions of autonomy in relation to other organizations or stakeholders arise within discussion of several topics.

### Turnover in membership

Interviewees describe frequent and high turnover among their co-operative's membership, with student members leaving due to completion of their studies. The interviewees link high turnover in membership to concerns about organizational culture, managing long-term financial goals, and effective member participation. The cases demonstrate three responses to high member turnover. The first is ensuring the organizational culture can cope with turnover, the second is providing ample training for members, and the third is safeguarding institutional memory.

### Member turnover and organizational culture

The interviewees suggest turnover in membership can create a situation where the co-operative's member-led activities are constantly in flux. New members bring new ideas, sometimes setting new priorities for the organization and abandoning the old. In the cases, there is evidence of two approaches to the impact of changing membership on organizational culture (or, the common values, beliefs and priorities of the members): the co-operative can remain flexible enough to adapt to constant change, or it can create a strong culture that draws new members who are attracted to this culture.

In some cases, interviewees discuss the importance of remaining flexible, and incorporating the ideas and excitement new members bring. J. F. Carron says "A co-op really needs to stay flexible and continuously review its own structure. You know, we have bylaws and a constitution, but we are willing to ignore those if we need to get stuff done". Similarly B. Orr describes how the Student's Cooperative Association prides itself that it will "make the co-op for people, instead of policy, and so you can change policy at any time". Both of these students see it as important for the co-operative to continually accept the input of new members, and prioritize this over constancy in policy or programming.

While Yes notes "[balance of culture can shift annually" because of high member turnover at ICC Michigan, he describes one exception:

> We also have a house that's substance free, by virtue of its own constitution. […] It's the only house that's … got an official theme [T]he culture of that house is stable […] it has a consistently stable presence, the way that some of our other houses don't.

Yes described the substance free house as very popular with graduate students and as having a more consistent culture than the other houses.

B. Orr contrasts the changing and consistent cultures at houses in her co-operative. At the Campbell Club house she says, "its membership and demographics, interests ... tend to vary a lot more widely and I see, you know, big shifts in just what people are interested in the house". She contrasts this changing culture with a more stable culture at the Lorax house, which has a strong activist and vegan culture. As in the substance-free house at ICC Michigan, members join the Lorax house because of an affinity to the established culture.

These accounts suggest that strong organizational culture can override some of the impacts of member turnover. Instead of changing with new members, the houses with strong cultural mandates attracted new members show shared the goals and culture of the house. While a constantly changing culture can make it difficult to manage long term planning, or projects that require attention over a period longer than one year, flexibility is valued because it demonstrates the importance of current members input, and the responsiveness of the organization to its members' opinions.

### Training in the context of member turnover

Just as co-operatives can respond to changing membership with either strong or flexible organizational cultures, training emerges in the cases as both stabilizing and responsive to changing member interests. Member training offered in the cases will be discussed in detail (see Page 49). In terms of high turnover among the members, training that supports the members' participation in governance acts as a constant, stabilizing force. However, training can also be responsive to the interests and needs of each cohort of members.

As the co-operatives rely on member participation, and members can turnover frequently, the board composition changes frequently. In the cases, boards turnover at least annually, and in one case, there are new members on the board every semester. A. Faria links the importance of training to high turnover in membership at the Berkeley Student Cooperative :

> There's a big emphasis on training, especially since there's so much turnover amongst student members at the central level. You know, we have students pass through co-ops for three maybe four years, usually, and so we're always kind of turning over members and we obviously have to keep training them.

ICC Austin takes a similar approach, conducting training on meeting process every semester, and board training sessions are offered at least twice per year.

While ICC Michigan also schedules board training annually in anticipation of board turnover, Yes also gives examples of how members' interests have sparked other types of workshops. In response to member interests, ICC Michigan has offered workshops on addressing sexual harassment, anti-discrimination, and accommodating members with disabilities. One year, an increase in mental health issues among members led to member-initiatives to offer training on understanding and addressing mental health concerns.

### Organizational memory and high member turnover

High turnover of membership makes it difficult to ensure each generation of student co-operative members is aware of their co-operative's history and past decisions. J. F. Carron identified institutional memory as a problem faced by the AMS Bike Co-op.

> [B]ecause we're students, our board is very transient. People will be there for two to four years, maybe, at the max four years […]. So, how do we deal with maintaining institutional continuity? To make sure we don't forget about stuff we just did last year when the board changes… We have a few mechanisms for that. We're not good at it. It would be nice if other people had working systems, we could copy them, and learn.

Loss of institutional memory is a common concern in each of the cases. In order to address this concern, the co-operative cases rely on staff, board members and alumni to play a role in maintaining institutional memory.

#### Staff and organizational memory

A. Faria says staff "serve as the institutional memory for the co-op" at Berkeley Student Cooperative , where responsibility for institutional memory is in the job descriptions for the Executive Director, Fair Employment Practices Administrator, and Health Worker Coordinator (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013b). B. Orr identifies planning for long-term financial goals an area where the co-operative's staff institutional knowledge is valuable to student board members. She gives the example of a discussion around saving funds for a roof replacement, where students focussed on immediate short-term repairs, while the staff person helped "keep it in perspective and balance out the short term needs of the houses and the long-term needs of the houses". At both the Berkeley Student Cooperative and the Student's Cooperative Association, staff members have a longer association with the co-operative than most members, and the students value the insight their long-term involvement brings.

#### Board members and organizational memory

Board members use a variety of strategies to communicate with future co-operative leaders. These strategies rely on effective documentation. The Berkeley Student Cooperative maintains a policy wiki to keep a current record of policies, as well as their histories, available to their members. Within the wiki is the “President's Living Documents”, which outlines best practices for ensuring transition of information to new board members, transparency, and record keeping.

> Because of the extremely rapid turnover rate amongst BSC student leadership (board reps, executives, and student-staff positions), it’s imperative to provide resources and support for new leaders to start where previous leaders have left off (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011c, para. 1).

Meanwhile, the Student’s Cooperative Association created a designated archivist position on their Board to help with organizational memory. (Student’s Cooperative Association, n.d.c.).

#### Alumni and organizational memory

All of the cases in this study made an effort to maintain connections with alumni. The Student's Cooperative Association launched their alumni association with hopes it would “become a way to give something back to the houses and further provide spaces for students of cooperation to learn and flourish” (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.d.). An alumni weekend in 2010 was a venue to share the co-operative’s history (Student's Cooperative Association, n.d.d.). ICC Michigan and the Berkeley Student Cooperative   have more established alumni organizations. The bylaws of the ICC Michigan alumni association include “Maintain historical continuity and a sense of history for current ICC members” (ICC Michigan, 2011, p. 145) as an organizational purpose. The Berkeley Student Cooperative   includes one alumni of the co-operative as a voting member of their board of directors (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a). Like staff, alumni can offer historical perspective on the co-operative that can put co-operative policies in context or assist with long-term planning.

### High turnover and managing risk

A theme that arose in some interviews is the importance of managing risk. Risk is present in board member turnover, board knowledge of their fiduciary duties, housing safety, and relationships with the university or other officials. The interview subjects both identified sources of risk, and proposed methods for mitigating it.

Both staff interviewed for this study identified board liability and student knowledge of the law as a risk. B. Donovan noted that, despite training, “there isn't an understanding of the law. No matter how much training there might be”. Yes echoes this concern, noting “the law is not fixed”, and keeping up with new regulations is important. High turnover among student board members amplifies this risk, as new members must learn not only their co-operative’s governance rules and the legal obligations of board members, but must also keep abreast of changes in municipal, provincial and federal regulations affecting the organization.

Another risk the interviewees mention is safety, most notably fire and risky behaviour of house residents. ICC Austin has had three fires, a risk to members' safety as well as a financial risk for the co-operative. B. Donovan recounts:

> I think that it's easy when you're just budgeting and you don't really have an idea of the consequences—or cost of the consequences—of the kind of damage. That you can be hammered, like we were in 2000. And if someone would have died in the fire? Oh, my God.

Drug use and noisy parties that drew neighbour complaints were problems faced by three of the housing co-operative cases. In Berkeley Student Cooperative 's case, a resident suffered permanent brain damage due to a drug overdose, a tragedy that also resulted in the lawsuits, a breakdown of the co-operative's relationship with the university and their neighbours, and increased insurance fees (Diamond, Condit-Bergren, Hartman, Sutak, Kronovet, & Stokley, 2011, January 14). In all three cases, co-operatives closed houses due to ongoing problems with drug use, or the high cost of bringing a building up to code.

A real but less dramatic risk found in the interviews is university ownership of property used by some co-operatives. At Berkeley Student Cooperative , A. Faria and D. Fisher recount how the leasing relationship with the university varied by building. While the terms of most of their leases from Berkeley are very favourable, at $1 per year. In the case of the Convent, a graduate student residence, however, the lease is $89,250 annually, but the co-operative can apply to with the possibility property improvements reducing this cost (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2010). Additionally, there is no guarantee the university will maintain this arrangement if they need land for expansion in future (Associated Students of the University of California, 2012). The risk of a university withdrawing support for a student co-operative is increased by the co-operative's failure to manage other forms of risk, such as at Berkeley (Diamond, et al, 2011, January 14).

Although the risks identified are diverse, the staff interviewed for this study make suggestions that are apt for all scenarios. A student co-operative board needs independent legal and financial counsel, a good insurance package, and adequate funds to keep their assets properly maintained. This is especially true considering that risks increase with high turnover among student board members.

## Associative practices

Associative practices–information sharing, training, and member participation—are central to a co-operative's ability to weather constant turnover in its student membership, and to ensure the autonomy of a student-led co-operative. This section considers the cases' associative practices in more detail. It is evident that associative practices are valued, and each co-operative strives for a high level of direct member involvement.

### Information sharing

All of the cases provide members with their bylaws online through their website, and all four housing co-operatives had formal rules to ensure transparency of decision-making. Additionally, the three more established co-operatives—Berkeley Student Cooperative , ICC Austin and ICC Michigan—include guides to submitting motions to meetings, and information on how meetings work. Berkeley Student Cooperative , in particular, has an extensive wiki for members, comprised of training videos, historical archives, and agendas for upcoming meetings.

Sharing financial information varied among the co-operatives. All of the housing co-operatives have budgets posted on their websites and finance committee meetings that are open to he members. ICC Austin and Berkeley Student Cooperative also have recent audits posted online. The AMS Bike Co-op includes financial updates in meetings, but there is no formal presentation of the budget and no budget or financial statements on their website.

### Training and education

Each of the co-operative cases offers training workshops to their members. In some cases, offering a variety of skills training to both co-operative members and the public is a central purpose of the co-operative. In other cases, workshops are designed to empower members to participate in governing their co-operatives. However, the cases differ on whether they offer formal training workshops in governance procedures and rules.

### Training for new members

Berkeley Student Cooperative requires attendance at both an orientation to the organization, known as "central level" orientation and to the house or apartment where the student will live. Central level orientation "provides an overview of BSC's central services, such as member resources, housing, and accounting, as well as our organizational structure. At central level orientation you'll find out about:

- Your rights and responsibilities as a co-oper
- Paying your bills and applying for payment extensions (if you need them)
- Our President, Board of Directors, Cabinet, and House Officers (who are students like you!)
- Member Resources: support services, disability access, emergency preparedness, health education programs, conflict resolution, and member advocacy
- How you can get involved
- And, last but not least, you'll learn about our Alumni Association! (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2014, paragraph 4)

Members who do not attend central training are fined $25.

### Formal training in governance

Formal training in co-operative governance is a feature in three cases: ICC Austin, ICC Michigan, and Berkeley Student Cooperative . B. Donovan describes the extensive training provided each year at ICC Austin as follows:

> We have a new member orientation at the start of each term, so that would be Summer, Fall and Spring. We have a meeting we call the mega-meeting of all of the house officers that come together. It's usually about two hours. We try to make it social, but it's still a lot of content. So the first hour would be spent with all of the people who are in the same position at the different houses, [learning] together about that position. And being able to talk about how things happen in their houses, to the degree that they have experience. The second hour is spent with all of the house group working together and talking about their responsibilities of running and operating the house as a group, and the importance of communicating with each other, and supporting each other.

Additionally, he says, the co-operative provides "a board training at the start of each semester about the process that the board uses…and ground rules for civil behaviour". The Berkeley Student Cooperative provides elected board members with governance training every semester. A. Faria says:

> It's sort of a presentation, and making sure you understand that our co-op is legally structured as a non-profit organization—non-profit corporation—and in the case of a board member you have certain responsibilities as a fiduciary. That's the training that I received.

In these cases, training focuses on the roles and duties of members, and, for board members, on fiduciary responsibilities.

Berkeley Student Cooperative has a committee responsible for ensuring there is member training about the rules and structure of the co-operative. This committee is also responsible to ensure “that BSC education and training programs address the challenges posed by high turnover in student staff, student leadership, the Board of Directors, House Management” (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a, p. 72). Like ICC Austin and Berkeley Student Cooperative, ICC Michigan has staff dedicated to member training, an extensive training program covering governance, as well as workshops addressing effective interpersonal relations. Staff interviewees from ICC Austin and ICC Michigan both highlight the training resources the North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) offer for student members and co-operative staff.

Training in the two smaller co-operative cases in this study is more informal, with members receiving little or no training in formal governance roles. When asked if she had received training when she took on the role of membership coordinator, B. Orr replied she had not, explaining, “Even though we have things about the jobs written down, I would say it primarily leans towards more of an oral history”. Similarly, J. F. Carron reports there is no formal training in board roles or governance at the AMS Bike Coop.

Even where training was formalized, inexperience and failure to follow proper regulations could remain a risk. B. Donovan notes that “there isn't an understanding of the law… no matter how much training they might be”. Training, therefore, is not a substitute for expertise, and several interviews made recommendations in that regard. B. Donovan said participation in larger association of co-operatives “would be wise” and recounted a case of a new co-operative that failed:

> I don't know if you know about Grand House, which was a grand idea which failed because … of the way the architecture students move in and out on a semester basis from doing practical to academic work that it just didn't work. … OSCA said it wasn't going to work, and they went ahead and did it, and NASCO ended up putting some money into it and losing it.

Meanwhile, Yes noted that despite training on legal liability for the board, staff continued to provide advice and interpretation for the board members, and external legal counsel is advisable. He said, “Local housing laws, you know, change. You want to make sure that you’re functioning within the law. You want to make sure that you’ve got sound financial advice”. Student interviewees also noted the importance of relying on outside advice. B. Orr and A. Faria both noted the importance of staff to provide financial advice, and historical context to decisions.

### Informal training for board members

While neither the AMS Bike Coop nor the Student's Cooperative Association has formal annual training for board members, both hold training in useful skills for board members on an ad hoc basis. Content of workshops can arise from board member or volunteer interest, or the personal connections of a volunteer. For example, the AMS Bike Co-op organized a workshop on fundraising because a board member knew a professional fundraiser. The co-operative took advantage of this opportunity, and the result changed the co-operative's operations. J. F. Carron recounts, “through that workshop we identified the fact that we weren’t using an entire class of revenue—namely donations—because we were previously not really even asking for donations”. This workshop led the co-operative to undertake a new fundraising plan, in partnership with the university. While the AMS Bike Coop and Student’s Cooperative Association are less formal in their approach, the workshops they hold create opportunities for the co-operatives to improve.

### Training as a co-operative’s service

Public workshops are a core purpose of both the AMS Bike Co-op and the Student's Cooperative Association. B. Orr describes how the Student Co-operative Association holds public workshops regularly on topics like “non-violent communication, or anti-oppression”. J. F. Carron says that at the AMS Bike Co-op, “We [...] provide lessons for people. We have courses on bike mechanics. And less often we offer courses on cycling skills, like, for riding the bikes”. These workshops are for general interest, but for some members they also provide a bridge to greater involvement in the co-operative. Learning to repair bicycles, for example, can lead to participation in maintaining the purple and yellow bike fleet run by the co-operative, or involvement in the co-operative’s governance.

### Member participation in governance

Among the cases, it is evident the housing co-operatives are designed for high participation in governance, and there is ample opportunity for members to participate in decisions about their co-operative. Participation rates are not always as high as the interviewees hope, and members sometimes choose to participate in other ways than board roles. Board work earns rewards in some of the co-operatives with discounts in the co-operative's store, work credit to reduce household chore duties, or reduced rent.

In the smaller co-operatives, governance work mingles with the daily operations of the co-operative, although a central group or general meeting handles major financial decisions. J. F. Carron suggests AMS Bike Co-op members know the co-operative through using the bike kitchen and shop, but are not necessarily aware of the budget, or co-operative governance. Due to the structure of the Board at the AMS Bike Co-op, the visible work of the board is associated with coordinating program delivery, and members may join the board to take on a project coordinator role rather than a governance role. At the Student’s Cooperative Association, all members participated in weekly house meetings that might equally address policy questions or plan the next social gathering.

Despite opportunities to participate in organizational governance, members do not always partake, and the co-operative has to adjust. At ICC Austin, recent restructuring made committee work less burdensome. When asked the reason for the change, B. Donovan says, “the difficulty in getting quorum for six different committees that all had someone from every house on them was problematic. We were assuming something like a 40% participation rate in corporate governance. And it's now reduced to about 20%”. One means of encouraging participation is giving credit or incentives for participation in governance duties. In the housing co-operative cases, participation in governance can reduce work required on household chores. Even still, B. Donovan says, “I think the board doesn't tend to get credit from houses like they should for the amount of work it actually is. [...] Sometimes people only get one hour a week, even though they're probably realistically spending more like four or five”. Board members can also receive discounted services. At the Berkeley Student Cooperative , compensation for executive board members could be authorized “in the form of hours, partial or full room and board, money or any combination thereof” (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b). Board members at AMS Bike Co-op receive a discount on bicycle parts for serving on the board and at ICC Austin, rent discounts increase the longer a board member serves. A board member serving a second term could receive a full rent credit (ICC Austin, 2011).

Participation of members does not always involve running for a seat on the board. The willingness of members to participate in developing and to follow the policies of the co-operative is imperative. As noted above, Berkeley Student Cooperative struggled to manage drug use and excessive parties in their co-operative. The Board identified a lack of accountability and failure to take action to remove those creating problems as a source of the problem, and wrote to the membership to call for their involvement:

> Hopefully by now you have a sense of the very real urgency of our current situation and why it calls for the engagement of all of our members. Ultimately, the Board will have to vote on the actions we take. As a representative government, however, our decisions are only as powerful as the support of the people who will put them into action on a day-to-day basis (Diamond, et al., J. 2011, January 14, para. 20).

While the discount on bicycle parts, rent, or work requirement is appealing, it is clear from the experience of ICC Austin that it does not necessarily result in active participation of members in decision-making. Further, when calculating work credit, it is difficult to quantify and compare with other forms of volunteer participation.

### Governance structures that support autonomy

Autonomy emerges as a theme in the cases in three ways. First, autonomy is an internal governance issue in housing co-operatives, with members of houses wanting to ensure a level of autonomy from the central governing structure of the co-operative. Second, autonomy from related organizations such as the university or a student association and their impact on the co-operative is a concern. Third, the role of staff in helping students maintain control of the co-operative arises in some cases. The co-operative cases in this study use their bylaws and governance structure to protect student-member control, as well as though job descriptions of board members and staff.

#### Internal governance and autonomy

For the larger co-operatives among the cases–ICC Michigan, ICC Austin, and Berkeley Student Cooperative–autonomy of the houses as sub groups within the larger co-operative is a governance issue. At ICC Michigan, house autonomy is considered so important that until 2012 the co-operative maintained (and paid to audit) 19 sets of books—one for each house. Despite the financial cost of such a complicated financial system and audit, Yes says:

> member autonomy is so deeply entrenched … and such a core value, that members have not wanted to allow the centralization … They've been very reluctant to ... allow for the complete centralization of charges, inasmuch as ... that ability at the house level is diminished.

Three of housing cases use their bylaws to balance power between the central board structure and the houses. At the Berkeley Student Cooperative , house representatives hold all but two of 30 voting seats on the board, but committees cannot include more than one representative from a single house, and petitions from the membership will be considered only if no more than 1/3 of signatories are from a single house (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b). Similarly, ICC Austin's bylaws limit the representation of each house to two officers on the Board of Directors (ICC Austin, 2009), while the Bylaws limit the Executive Coordinating Committee's authority over the houses to central financial and bylaw regulations (ICC Austin, 2009).

At ICC Michigan’s a complicated governance process promotes consensus at the Board level, and defers to the general membership of the co-operative in the event of disagreement. While a motion requires 80% support at the board level to pass, 20% of board members can send an issue to a referendum of members (ICC Michigan, 2006). This process ensures high support is required when authority is delegated, and deferral of controversial issues to the general membership as the ultimate authority.

Protecting autonomy in this way is an expression of direct control of the co-operative by the members. The larger co-operative cases ensure the voices of individual members and houses are recognized, and balance power between the houses. The protection of autonomy within co-operatives mirrors concerns the student co-operatives have about their relationships with universities or even their own alumni.

### Autonomy and external partners

Both the AMS Bike Co-op and the Berkeley Student Cooperative have strong ties to other university bodies on their campus. This relationship provides many benefits, notably low cost space on campus. It also raises questions of the autonomy of the co-operative and its student-led governance structure.

At the AMS Bike Co-op, the involvement of the university in the student co-operative creates conflicting feelings for the interview subject. J. F. Carron is grateful for the contributions of the university to the co-operative's capital funding, but also regrets that an alliance with the university reduces the role the AMS Bike Co-op plays as a critic of the university's environmental and transportation policy. At AMS Bike Co-op, the question of autonomy also arises in the relationship between the co-operative and UBC's Alma Mater Society (AMS), which provides substantial free space to the co-operative.

The AMS Bike Co-op began as a club of the AMS at the University of British Columbia. Formally, it operates within the AMS bylaws, which require financial reporting to the AMS, the use of Robert's Rules of Order for decision making, and limit voting membership in the co-operative to UBC students. However, in practice, the co-operative uses consensus to make decisions, and meetings include non-students as voting members. J. F. Carron describes how the co-operative and AMS rules are disconnected:

> The AMS … requires us to say that we use Robert's Rules of Order...
>
> [laugh]
>
> ...which we do not. We've never even talked about them, but instead, in our constitution, we say that we first use consensus decision making. And then, if there can be no consensus, and a decision must be made at the time, then we may use Robert's Rules of Order. But we've never needed to [...] and I don't think we'd know what to do if we actually had.

Carron 's description shows the willingness to separate the co-operative's practice from its formal rules, and also notes the AMS Bike Co-op (n.d.c., n.d.d) has its own governing documents that contradict the rules required to operate as an AMS club (UBC Alma Mater Society, 2013).

Berkeley Student Cooperative leases some of its properties from the University of California at Berkeley. The co-operative is restricted in the use of these buildings in that the residents must be students at University of California at Berkeley, while other houses are open to students attending any post-secondary institution. Overall, the relationship provides a substantial benefit, since the university leases several of their properties to the co-operative at a rate of $1 per year.

The Co-operative's policy on University and Alumni relations is interesting to consider through the lens of member and organizational autonomy:

> UNIVERSITY AND ALUMNI RELATIONS
>
> The BSC has no legal or financial ties to the University, nor is it under the control of its alumni except through the influence of alumni representatives to the Board. In the early years the University began to recognize the significance of the BSC as a partner in solving the housing

> problems of the growing campus, and as a responsible voice of student opinion. In recent years, BSC representatives have worked closely with the University Housing officials and have helped implement liberalization of housing policies, resulting in a wider variety of living arrangements and better distribution of information about housing. […]
>
> Alumni have retained interest in the growth of the BSC and have contributed a great deal of time and money over the years towards a sizeable scholarship endowment fund for needy co-op students, building renovation campaigns, and other ongoing projects and programs. The alumni incorporated in 1996 and formed a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit association in order to support the BSC and its mission. BSC alumni recognize that the viability of the organization depends upon continued student control and have always refrained from attempting to control or unduly influence its operations (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a, p. 26).

The policy is notable for how it recognizes both the importance of positive relations between the co-operative and the university, and that of student-owners maintaining control of Berkeley Student Cooperative's operations.

Berkeley Student Cooperative and the AMS Bike Co-op both receive substantial benefits through their relationships with the university where they operated, and the AMS Bike Co-op benefits from free space from their campus student association. Both co-operatives, however, find it necessary to assert their independence within those relationships, either through policy that recognizes the importance of the co-operative's autonomy, or by choosing to operate less formally than their agreement with the external group allows.

### Links to Other Groups

One of the co-operative principles is "Co-operation among co-operatives" (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a.). Some of the cases had strong connections with co-operative networks, but some had stronger links with campus organizations related to their activities. Formal links were also made with university groups through the allocation of seats on the co-operative's board.

Among the cases, a co-operative's links to outside groups came through personal connections, co-operative connections, or shared commitment to work on a social or environmental issue. Some links develop to aid the function of the co-operative. The links could be formal and contractual, or informal and temporary.

#### Forming links through members' relationships

The Student's Cooperative Association has strong informal links to a student environmental group at the University of Oregon that included shared board members between the organizations and frequent use of a co-operative house as a meeting or event space. B. Orr describes the co-operatives long-standing relationship with a campus activist group, the Survival Centre, which includes shared membership, and overlap in board membership. This link to campus activism has created a deep connection to the activist community at one of the houses, the Lorax house.

Not just a house that enjoys social events, the Lorax house acts as a public venue for fundraisers, concerts and meetings. B. Orr, who has lived in the Lorax house before moving to Janet Smith House, the co-operative's house for graduate students says, "I would describe us [at Janet Smith House] as a little bit more protective of our home environment, maybe at the cost of providing less amenities or services to the community." B. Orr's comment is interesting as it shows she has thoroughly integrated the idea that the co-operative is *of the community*. Most of us would not describe it as a "cost" when our home is not used as a public music venue. In the student co-operatives, however, personal associations regularly create links between community organizations and the home that are very strong.

According to B. Donovan, informal connections at ICC Austin “depend on who's in our group. [...] you know, who moves in. They have their associations, which then we get tied to”. One such connection resulted in an ongoing relationship with international student programs at the university:

> Well, we work with English language learning groups in Mexico and China, and that's really just through relationships that have developed… Somebody found us who came and loved it. I told people, "you should send everyone there." [...] So, we have decent relationships with the International Office ... [...T]hey process everybody coming in, and we are on the list of housing opportunities that they put out. I mean, that doesn't cost us anything, they just, again, have gotten feedback that it's a good place. [I]t's kind of instant community, and particularly if you're trying to learn the language, it's kind of handy to have a bunch of people you can kind of learn it with.

The positive experience of one co-operative member, in this example, resulted in an ongoing connection with future international students and the university department that serves them.

The AMS Bike Co-op has developed strong issue-based links to campus and community environmental organizations. These informal relationships have developed into formal and contractual relationships in several cases. AMS Bike Co-op provides bicycles to Sprouts, a student food co-op, and to FP Innovations, a research group. J. P. Carron says

> With Sprouts it’s relatively formal because we do have an agreement for them, and they do pay us for the service, for the maintenance of the bikes and stuff like that. […] On campus there’s a company called FP Innovations, which does forestry related research. They’re basically on campus and the retired guy who’s on our board used to work there. And … another one of our non-student board members is a current employee there. And we have a formal agreement with them to maintain a fleet of loaner bicycles that their employees can use to get around campus.

In the Student Co-operative Association and the AMS Bike Co-op, two different forms of issue-based relationships are found. At the Student Co-operative Association, the link is through shared volunteers and space, and tends to be more informal. At the AMS Bike Co-op, however, the link goes beyond shared environmental concern and extends into the services of the AMS Bike Co-op, thus shifting the partnership into a formal, contractual arrangement. It is noteworthy, as well, that the relationship with FP Innovations involves both a formal agreement as well as inclusion of FP Innovation representation on the co-operative board.

In the case of ICC Austin, the ongoing relationship is associative, and based on a positive experience a member had with the co-operative and the way it addresses a unique need—that of “instant community” in English for visiting language students. Unlike the Student’s Cooperative Association’s link with the Survival Centre, and the environmental link between the AMS Bike Co-op and Sprouts food program, the ICC Austin relationship is not based in a shared political vision. The AMS Bike Co-op’s partnerships are the more formal, involving a contractual agreement to provide services to the other organizations.

### Relationships with community stakeholders

The Berkeley Student Cooperative has an External Relations committee dedicated to fostering positive relationships with the community. The committee is expected to:

> … make proactive, positive efforts to engage the press, city officials, university officials, students and student associations, BSC neighbours, and community as necessary. Consider not only what these bodies can do for the BSC but also how the BSC can/does serve these bodies (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011a, p. 72).

Berkeley Student Cooperative also has an opportunity for community stakeholders to have a seat with a vote on the co-operative's Board of Directors. Relationships with a housing co-operative's neighbours and with city and university officials can be very important, especially if behaviour of co-operative housing residents creates hazards or a crisis.

### Relationships with alumni

Alumni are a source of support in several of the cases, and provide financial contributions as well as advice and leadership. They can also be a source of information on the history of a student co-operative. Berkeley Student Cooperative and ICC Michigan have established alumni associations while the Student`s Co-operative Association and ICC Austin have new alumni associations they are hoping to expand.

Some student co-operatives create formal roles for alumni within their governance structure. In some cases, the alumni play an advisory role, as in the alumni member of the Board at Board of Berkeley Student Cooperative (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2011b). At ICC Austin, a co-operative alumnus holds the Alumni Liaison position, which is part of a committee that works "to ensure the maintenance of the relationship between the ICC and its alumni" (ICC Austin, 2011, Section 2.18.).

Alumni also play a role as donors to the co-operative after they graduate. At the AMS Bike Co-op, the university helped establish a means to receive donations through the university's own outreach. J. F. Carron said, "We're hoping this can become a significant revenue stream, from alumni, and people that used the service, and appreciated it. That's pretty new, though." Alumni of Berkeley Students Cooperative have established scholarships for students living in the co-operative (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013e). ICC Michigan and ICC Austin ask alumni to contribute to a scholarship fund as well as capital projects (ICC Michigan, n.d., ICC Austin, 2007).

### Membership in a federation of co-operatives

Student co-operatives jointly formed the North America Students of Co-operation (NASCO) as a federation of student co-operatives. NASCO plays a role in supporting the long-term viability of the housing co-operatives through NASCO Properties, a co-operative land trust that supports student-housing co-operatives in financial difficulty. NASSCO properties was instrumental in saving ICC Austin from bankruptcy. B. Donovan says:

> … we had eight properties by the mid-80s, although three of them were apartment buildings that after a land crash … were underwater on the mortgage and very high interest rates. We almost went bankrupt. But a national co-op land trust was started [NASCO] that bought one of our houses from us so that we would have the cash to sell these three apartment buildings we couldn't fill. […] After fifteen years, we ended up buying that house back. And we bought another property since then.

The oldest three housing co-operatives are active participants in the North American Students of Co-operation (NASCO), attending their training and conferences. In the case of ICC Michigan, the relationship between includes a shared history and, until recently, shared office space.

Neither student interviewee from the Student's Cooperative Association or AMS Bike Co-op identified NASCO as an organizational partner. Nor is AMS Bike Co-op a member of the British Columbia or Canadian co-operative umbrella organizations, or other Canadian co-operative networks (British Columbia Co-operative Association, n.d.a.).

### Links to graduate student organizations

When asking about the cases' links to graduate student organizations on their campuses, it is clear that there are not strong ones in any of the cases. What relationships there are with graduate student organizations tend to be informal connections between graduate student co-operative members and their teaching assistant union.

Three housing co-operatives note informal links between the graduate student house members and the teaching assistants union. These links are described in positive terms, but do not appear to be strong associations. This is a stark contrast to the deep integration between the Student's Cooperative Association and the campus environmental activist group, the Survival Centre, described above. In contrast, none of the co-operatives has strong ties with the graduate student associations on their campus.

Both co-operative staff members interviewed for the study had made efforts to connect with the graduate student associations with few results. Asked if ICC Austin had any sort of relationship with the graduate student organization, B. Donovan said, "No. I've personally presented to them on things other than the co-op, but, um, they have a pretty low participation rate in […] their own group". In contrast, the graduate students none of the graduate students interviewed had much interest in their co-operative working with their graduate student association. D. Fisher said that at Berkeley "They [the graduate student association] did conduct a survey this year, encouraging the co-ops […] to start a new grad and re-entry student co-op"; but when asked whether the graduate students offered to support the co-op to do this, he says, "I don't think so". While the interviewees agree there is a need to expand graduate student housing, the intervention of the graduate student association did not result in a real contribution to the co-operative's expansion efforts.

Where links with external organizations are positive and productive, the co-operatives tend to have a significant overlap in membership, as well as resources to share between the organizations. At the Student's Cooperative Association, the co-operative provides meeting space, and the AMS Bike Co-op provides a bicycle fleet and maintenance. In the case of the informal relationship with English language learners, ICC Austin built an ongoing relationship based on mutual benefit to both parties, and the particular strength of the co-operative in providing "instant community" to a visiting student. Where the links with external organizations are weaker, there appears to be no shared project with which to build a relationship, or a failure to communicate effectively.

## Co-operatives and graduate students

The graduate student experiences within the five cases are similar in many ways. In all cases, a mix of graduate and undergraduate members is the preferred model for membership, with interviewees identifying benefits for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as the co-operative as a whole, from a mixed membership. The inclusion of both graduate and undergraduate members did not preclude separate services for graduate students; in fact, every housing co-operative offered separate houses for older undergraduates and graduates. This section will discuss graduate student involvement in the cases, and how some of the co-operatives in this study leverage the reputation of graduate students to the advantage of their co-operatives.

## Graduate student members and governance

The interview subjects perceive graduate student involvement in governance as providing increased organizational stability, professionalism, governance experience and respect from the broader community. Staff and graduate students interviewees have different perspectives on the role of graduate students in terms of their contribution and the time they have to offer. Staff describe graduate students as highly skilled, but with little time to participate in governance. Graduate student interviewees see themselves bringing skills to their co-operative's governance, but are more critical of themselves as participants in governance than the staff. Graduate students interviewees think the duties of a regular member are manageable, even time saving, while their relationship to the time required for board roles is more complicated.

### A change in tone

Yes, a staff person at ICC Michigan, describes a change in tone with graduate student involvement in the co-operative:

> The presence of grad students in our houses has been very … well… what at least staff consider a positive impact [laughs].. you know… on the quality of the house. … [Y]ou get a certain level of experience which is higher, you get a certain level of—if I could say—seriousness.... These [graduate students] are people that have made even more commitments to what they’re trying to accomplish in their academic careers, and [...] renewed commitments to doing some of the hardest work they’re going to do. So they tend to be more focused, more organized, … have more professional working relationships within the houses… and [...] they provide a certain level of stability and leadership. … [I]t’s very helpful, very helpful.

Similarly, J.F. Carron identifies maturity and experience as a contribution that graduate students can make to their co-operative. He sees graduate students assisting the AMS Bike Co-op to set realistic organizational goals:

> I think part of what graduate students bring to organizations, but mostly student organizations, is just the level of maturity and experience. I see the new board members, and they’re really enthusiastic, and I let them be. But I know that in the end all the stuff they’re really excited about is not likely to happen if they’re excited about all of those things at the same time. [...] You know, pick one, do it right, and then it gets done. But if you’re excited about eleven different things, you’re not going to do any of them. So part of it is just bringing maturity. A little bit of world weariness, I guess.

Despite the experience graduate students offered, he did not think a group that included only graduate student members would be positive:

> I wouldn’t want it to be graduate students. Just… no. In a way we’re way to opinionated. … It’s harder to reach consensus. Much harder to reach consensus. … [W]e’re used to being experts about our particular field, and then we pretend that that transfers into student politics, or whatever. And we need to make sure that we acknowledge all other opinions for the co-op a work, right?

In his comments on sharing living space with undergraduates, D. Fisher expresses a similar opinion about the mix of undergraduate and graduate students at Berkeley Co-operative. He describes undergraduates as “generally less stress than graduate students”, and says it creates a positive dynamic to have both undergraduate and graduate students involved.

Experience and maturity are the main contributions graduate students make to their co-operatives. Despite expressing the idea that undergraduates were less skilled at planning and governance, graduate students are critical of their own participation as well, saying graduate students are more stressful and opinionated than undergraduates.

### Do graduate students have time for governance roles?

Yes saw graduate student involvement as "very helpful" but does not find that graduate students are consistently able to take on governance roles. He says, "[T]he work commitments, or leadership positions require a commitment that is sometimes not conducive to, [...] or attractive to graduate students". Similarly, at ICC Austin, B. Donovan sees graduate students having the potential to make a significant contribution, but with competing priorities that act as a barrier to involvement:

> [I]f you're married or have kids or are in law school or something that demands a huge amount of your time, the ability to devote the time to running the house and taking care of labour required may not be appetizing to a grad student. That doesn't mean… I think we've had excellent graduate students in the co-ops, excellent members who have contributed a lot to the co-ops.

While graduate students are "excellent members" and "very helpful", their other commitments compromise their ability to act as a board member. J. F. Carron describes his research work as both a help and hindrance to his involvement in co-operative governance. A research schedule can vary from rigid to flexible depending on the research project, and the type of research conducted. J. F. Carron notes:

> ...[A] lot of graduate students don't have flexible schedules. ... [W]hen we're taking data, when we're running, I have to be there at specific schedules and I can't take time—any time—off from that. But when the time is that I am flexible, I am very flexible.

While he sees his research offering flexibility to volunteer, board duties sometimes do conflict with his research work. His research involves travel, which can present barriers to his board work. After a first term on the board, he says, "I was then vice-president for a year, and then I was president for most of a year… but I had to resign because … I was being sent to a research lab [in Italy] for eight months". B. Donovan recounted a similar story about a graduate student who had to choose between academic and co-operative commitments:

> This last year … [a] grad student was elected to be board chair […], and she ended up resigning after a few months because of getting a fellowship.... that meant she just didn't have time to do it anymore ... unfortunately, because she's very good.

Graduate student work as researchers could provide a flexible schedule that allows a graduate student to participate actively in a co-operative. However, the research schedule, travel requirements, or funding commitments can also present a barrier to graduate student involvement, or consistent involvement.

### Do graduate students need separate services from undergraduates?

The need for graduate student services provided separately from undergraduate services did not emerge as a strong preference among the interviewees. In fact, two of the three graduate students interviewed preferred a mix of undergraduate and graduate students, citing the more relaxed dynamic compared to a group with only graduate students. The housing co-operatives all provided graduate houses that included older undergraduates and the AMS Bike Co-op had no differentiation in services or structure for graduate students.

Every housing case in this study offers designated graduate student housing. These houses were open to older or upper level undergraduates, often called *re-entry students*. According to interviewees, living with undergraduates could be problematic, but it could also be beneficial to be around people who were not involved in graduate study. D. Fisher and A. Faria at Berkeley Student Cooperative drew a distinction between "18 year old undergraduates in Southern California" and the older re-entry undergraduate students who live in the graduate student housing at their co-operative. A. Faria cited loud parties and cleanliness as potential concerns living with first year undergraduates, while D. Fisher said a mix of graduate and older undergraduate students brought a "nice dynamic" and said undergraduates were "generally less stress than graduate students". B. Orr, an undergraduate living in a graduate student house, also sees the social environment available in the co-operative house as beneficial for graduate students.

> I just see the benefits of being in a social environment where … even though you are in your office, or you're in the library, or, even in your room, most waking hours of the day, you can still come up from those spaces and socialize. And even if it's for twenty minutes, just to have people around you all the time, I think is really invaluable.

Like D. Fisher, B. Orr believes finding a balance between studiousness (and graduate student stress) and social connection is important. By saying "even if it's for twenty minutes" she tacitly acknowledges the limited time graduate students have, and suggests that the readily available social network within a co-operative house allows for short moments of connection that require no organizing or travel.

For his part, J. F. Carron is emphatic that he does not want the AMS Bike Co-op to be restricted to graduate student members. He describes graduate students as "too opinionated" and suggests a group with only graduate students would find it hard to reach consensus. Like D. Fisher, J. F. Carron suggests that undergraduates can provide a relief from the stressful culture of graduate studies, even when the graduate students find some undergraduate behaviour frustrating.

J. F. Carron also notes the bike co-operatives purpose is not specific to graduate students, and this meant a graduate-only model is not suitable. Among the cases, separate living space for graduate students is what constitutes separate graduate student services. According to data collected for this study, it is usually housing co-operatives that offer separate services to graduate students (APPENDIX B).

### Finding community in co-operatives

The interviewees report that friendship and meeting people is a central reason for students to become members of their co-operatives. Yes says of ICC Michigan, "The power of personal relationships is our number one marketing and outreach tool". He explains ICC Michigan conducted a survey of their membership, and learned "about 85% of our members ... come to the ICC … as a result of … word of mouth or personal relationships". All four students interviewed from housing co-operatives report learning about the co-operative through friends. Further, J. F. Carron cited meeting new friends and free food as his initial reasons for getting involved in the AMS Bike Coop:

> There were little flyers about this big that were really ugly and badly designed. … It was for purple and yellow night. And they said "free pizza". [...] I was a new grad student and I wanted to feed myself. And meeting people. I just changed cities too, so making friends.

Later he describes how the initial contact is positive, and leads to increasing involvement in the co-operative:

> I had so much fun I just kept going. And because I kept showing up, some of the board members noticed that I was consistent, and they said "Hey, do you want to join the board" and I said "Okay" so then I started going to the board meetings.

J. F. Carron's experience is similar to B. Donovan's description of how ICC Austin provides "instant community" to students coming to Austin to learn English. Finding and building community is a benefit of the co-operative noted in all the cases. Members join the co-operatives through friends. They also join the co-operative to meet people and establish a community of after moving to a new city. Once there is an initial connection, student interviewees become more active in the co-operative, going on to join the board, or refer other students to the co-operative.

### Graduate students perceived as "better neighbours"

Three of the housing co-operatives established dedicated graduate-student houses after behaviour at an undergraduate house became problematic. In each case, the undergraduate house developed a rowdy culture and problems with use of illegal drugs or parties that were the subject of neighbour complaints. The houses became unmanageable, and the co-operative shut them down. In all cases, the houses re-opened as a graduate student house with the belief this would improve the house culture, as well as the reputation of the co-operative.

B. Orr at the Student Co-operative Association describes the transformation of the Janet Smith House into a graduate-student house:

> I know the Janet Smith; it used to be an undergraduate co-op, I know that much. And about 10 years ago now, they got shut down because of drug issues [...]. Someone was selling, or making, some kind of drug in the house, [...] and so it got shut down, and re-opened as the, you know, more quiet, graduate student co-op, instead of what it was, which was [...] a really loud undergraduate party house.

This is not an isolated experience. Yes describes a similar history for a house ICC Michigan had owned and operated as an undergraduate house for thirty years:

> … I guess starting around 2000, the late 1990s, up through 2007, the house culture had become particularly irreverent and uncontrollable, and the house was physically being destroyed. … Illegal activities were […] continually being carried out of the house. It became an […] concern to the organization … that we were going to be sued and lose every house that we had, or that someone was going to destroy the property. The board made a decision to shut that house down; o not renew any of the contracts of members that currently lived in it, and not to allow any of them that had lived in it to live in it again. They spent several hundred thousand dollars - I think maybe ¾ of a million dollars – rehabbing the structure. They re-opened it as a graduate house. And they instilled… and they paid for I think a house manager for the first year to, sort of, turn that house around. […] and, you know, it's been marvellously successful afterwards.

The legal concerns Yes describes are not exaggerated. Several years ago, Berkeley Student Cooperative was embroiled in a costly legal battle with neighbours due to similar problems. According to a letter to the Berkeley Student Cooperative members, the co-operative has faced several crises related to drug use during its history, and heroin use resulted in one member suffering permanent brain damage (Diamond, et al., 2011, January 14) It is clear lawsuits related to drug problems within houses have indeed put student co-operatives at risk. The letter recounts one dispute with neighbours where re-opening the house was negotiated based on restricting the house to graduate students:

> A similar fiasco surrounding drugs occurred at Le Chateau in 2004 when a group of neighbours sued the USCA[1] claiming the house was a neighbourhood nuisance. One major element that contributed to the problem in Le Chateau was that non-members (aka squatters) took over and began to exert more control over the direction of the house [...]. There was no accountability, financial or otherwise, towards these non-residents who made their way into the house to participate in such activities. The legal claim against the USCA resulted in $200,000 in legal fees and a $32,000 settlement. The membership rates jumped another 12.6% from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006 in large part due to the costs associated with the Le Chateau fallout, which included legal fees, remodelling, and vacancies. The house finally re-opened as Hillegass-Parker House, but *the lawsuit was settled by an agreement that HIP House would only house graduate/re-entry students in single rooms*, thus reducing by one-third the number of rate-paying members living in the property and thus increasing the cost for everyone else to live in the BSC forever after [emphasis added] (Diamond, et al., 2011, January 14, para. 8).

Perhaps not surprisingly, given this history, the graduate students at Berkeley Student Cooperative describe graduate students as “better neighbours”:

> A. Faria: [...W]hatever [BSC] expand to next, there’s a good chance it will be graduate student housing, instead of undergrad. I guess reasons for that are we have very little graduate student co-op housing right now, and graduate students also sort of make better residents.
>
> D. Fisher: Better neighbours.
>
> A. Faria: Better neighbours, right, than undergrads, so it’s a little easier to get [graduate housing], because there is some opposition.

D. Fisher and A. Faria’s perception is that the potential for opposition from neighbours increases the likelihood the co-operative will choose to expand into further graduate housing rather than undergraduate housing.

The house members, staff, and neighbours all share a perception that graduate student houses are less problematic—a perception borne out by the experience of three co-operatives where designated graduate houses have succeeded in improving house culture. The co-operative cases leveraged the positive reputation of graduate students in order to win back public and university support for their co-operative when the co-operative faced a crisis.

### Time, workload and cost savings

Each of the housing provides cost savings to their members in the form of lower rent compared to campus dormitories. In some cases, membership in the co-operative could also help a graduate student structure their time more effectively.

The housing co-operatives in this study all use a point system to assign chores. Each house has an assigned list of chores, each with a point value, and each member must complete a certain number of points, or work credit, each term. Student interviewees from the housing co-operative cases estimate they spend about five hours per week on household duties. Both graduate students at the Berkeley Student Cooperative consider five hours per week to be comparable with living alone, and “not too

[1] USCA is the University Student Co-operative Association, another name for the Berkeley Student Co-operative.

onerous" for graduate students. B. Orr suggests the investment in meetings and chores results in overall time savings and quality of life:

> Even though we do have house chores, and sometimes you are in meetings on Sundays, [...] and sometimes [the meeting] can run for four hours—it's probably four or five hours at the worst, but it doesn't happen too frequently—but, after those meetings you're like "Omigosh this co-op takes so much of my energy and it's such a time suck!" But I think, you know, for most of the weeks when you are getting home and you have a home cooked meal on your dinner table that someone's prepared for the last two hours, [...] most of the time, you just realize how much time it's saving you and what a better quality of life you have because other people are helping you out with different things in the house. [S]ome of the division of labour makes it a lot easier, [...] in terms of time.

Coordinating duties with housemates makes it possible to accommodate the busiest times of graduate study. D. Fisher, a PhD student at Berkeley Student Cooperative , says, "[T]his semester I wrote my qualifying exams. We have a work shift manager. She was very helpful, rearranging my time commitments so I could write my exams and not be overburdened." While staff sees competing responsibilities as a barrier to participation in co-operative governance, membership in a student housing co-operative offered D. Fisher the opportunity to remove competing responsibilities during a period of heightened stress such as comprehensive exams.

The housing co-operative cases offer student members significant cost savings. According to B. Donovan, rental charges at ICC Austin are significantly lower than market, since co-operative rent increases to cover the cost of maintaining the co-operative, not in response to fluctuating prices in the housing market. Such a benefit can only be established through long term housing ownership. Berkeley Student Cooperative even lowered their rent for the 2013-14 school year in contrast to increases of 6—8 % in the local rental market (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013c).

Participation as a board member can reduce costs even further. Some co-operatives offer rent reductions in exchange for taking on governance roles. Similarly, as a member of the board at AMS Bike Co-op, J.F. Carron was able to purchase bicycle parts at a low cost from the co-operative's shop, a benefit he took advantage of by building several bikes at lower than market cost.

Reducing cost for core expense, like housing, and even making bikes more accessible, are a positive benefit of the co-operatives for students. By rewarding participation in governance with rent credit or reduced prices in the bike shop, the cases balance the time requirements of membership with the financial benefits.

## Conclusion

Member turnover, decentralized governance models, and the importance of associative practices are all major themes in the case studies. The co-operatives are seen as both serving graduate students and benefiting from graduate student members' contributions.

Struggling with high member turnover is common among student co-operatives, and this situation influences each organization and its structure. Members and staff pay great attention to associative practices such as training and decision making process because of member turnover, with a goal to ensure high participation and to support effective governance.

Governance models in the cases are decentralized, with individual members protected against centralized control through various rules. Bylaws and policies are used in the cases to ensure control is kept primarily in the hands of individual student members.

Training and associative practices are greatly valued as a means to increase involvement while addressing high member turnover. Frequent training sessions—sometimes every few months—ensure members have a means to participate in their co-operative. Likewise, general meetings of the members are also frequent, often held multiple times each year.

According to the interviewees, graduate students have much to offer governance. However, while staff and graduate students both see graduate students offering maturity to decision-making, staff worry that governance roles do not fit well with graduate students' busy schedules. Graduate students see advantages and disadvantages to their participation as board members. Flexible schedules an asset, while research responsibilities can make it difficult to commit to a full year on a co-operative's board. The graduate students interviewees are more critical of graduate student involvement in the co-operatives, describing graduate students as "too opinionated" and undergraduates as creating "less stress". Staff describe graduate students creating a positive, more serious, tone.

In many ways, the findings in the cases echo the writing on co-operatives in the literature review. The discussion section explores the relationship between the findings and literature on graduate students, student co-operatives and co-operative governance.

# Discussion

## Introduction

This section will integrate learning from the literature review and the information gathered in the case study, beginning with a summary of information gathered thus far. By exploring diverse areas of literature (co-operatives and student co-operatives, graduate student needs, and graduate student service models), the literature review provides a boundary for the discussion. Co-operatives, including the cases in this study, have a unique ownership model where members are customer, director and investor (Sousa & Herman, 2012). Associative practices are important to their success, and this suggests an additional role for members: that of learner. According to the writing on student co-operatives, the role of learner is especially important for student co-operative members, as their co-operatives rely on intensive involvement by a (generally) inexperienced membership.

Co-operatives are vulnerable when members do not participate in organizational governance (Spear, 2004, Birchall, 2012). As it grows, increased size and complexity may force a co-operative to choose between a high level of member participation and reliance of expertise in its governance (Spear, 2004, Birchall & Simmons, 2004, Malo, Vézina, & Auderbrand, 2012, Cornforth, 2004). Associative practices alone may not be adequate to prepare members for governance roles that require management of complex finances, or risk (Allemand, Brullebaut, & Raimbault, 2013). Co-operatives must also balance associative practice with sound business practice, as consumers prioritize price, quality and location. The co-operative model is not always the best fit for an organization, and sometimes members opt to demutualize when a co-operative model loses its advantages.

There are three dominant sources of stress for graduate students: difficulty managing time and juggling various areas of responsibility, financial stress, and feelings of isolation. A vibrant campus community is a means to buttress against a sense of isolation, and academic activities, campus clubs, and graduate student spaces can create a sense of community. Separate services for graduate students, and student involvement in design and delivery of graduate student services, are described as positive in the literature on university-provided services for graduate students.

The case study findings provide examples of graduate student involvement in five student co-operatives. The study proposes definitions for "*student-led co-operative* and *graduate student membership*, and, in order to select cases, catalogues the active student run co-operatives in Canada and the US. In the cases, graduate students can save money and time, and form a strong community when they participate in the organization's activities. Graduate students may not always have time to take on governance roles, and their work and travel commitments can disrupt involvement. However, staff believe graduate students bring more skills and experience to governance than their younger counterparts. Further, in some of the cases, the co-operative leverages the reputation of graduate students for maturity to its advantage.

In contrast to the literature on graduate student services provided by universities, the cases do not support the idea of separate organizations for graduate students. The graduate students who are interviewed all preferred a mix of graduate and undergraduate involvement in the organization. Additionally, while the cases had strong ties with other co-operative organizations and student groups, they did not have relationships with graduate student associations.

With the above in mind, the discussion section compares the findings from the cases with the literature on the co-operative model, graduate student needs, and graduate student service models. First, a summary details how graduate students use co-operatives. The discussion section then proposes a model for understanding the ways that the co-operatives adapt their organizational model to fit with the needs and capacities of their student members. In considering these adaptations, the student co-operative difference, how the weaknesses of the co-operative model affected the cases, and the factors that support or hinder student co-operatives following the co-operative principles are explored.

## How do graduate students use co-operatives?

Understanding how graduate students use co-operatives, and how this compares to the broader co-operative sector, helps put the cases into context. Students use co-operatives to provide different services than found in the broader co-operative sector. This difference could indicate a different set of needs among students as a distinct population. It may also suggest that students` capacity for organizing co-operatives suits some co-operative sectors over others.

### Co-operative services offered through student-led co-operatives

According to the catalogue created for this study (see 0 APPENDIX B), the determining factor for whether a student-led co-operative includes graduate student members is simply whether the institution where the co-operative operates has graduate programs. Table 10 (page 68) combines data collected on Canadian and US student-led co-operatives for this study (shown in Table 5, on page 32) with data on Canadian co-operative sectors from Table 1 (page 6). Using this comparative table, one can see student-led co-operatives are less diverse in the services they offer than co-operatives in the broader Canadian context. A primary focus of the student housing co-operatives in this study is providing cost-effective rental housing to their members in a consumer co-operative model. Student-led co-operatives offer similar services whether or not they have graduate student members; however, those with graduate student members focus more heavily on housing than providing food or books through retail co-operatives.

Student-led consumer co-operatives focus on academic supplies and food. These co-operatives include bookstores, cafés, food shops, computer stores, and school supplies. The prominence of bookstores in the data is almost entirely due to the Coopsco network serving the French post-secondary institutions in Québec, and the reason that these feature less prominently among co-operatives with graduate student membership is because so many Cégeps, which do not have graduate programs, have a Coopsco-affiliated co-operative bookstore. Meanwhile, Québec has very few student-led housing co-operatives, yet housing co-operatives account for over half of the student-led co-operatives with graduate student members. Thus the strength of the Coopsco network alters the data significantly in favour of service co-operatives, such as bookstores and food service outlets, which are not strongly represented in Canada outside Québec or the US[2].

Few service co-operatives are run by students. While service co-operatives in the broader co-operative sector tend to be health and education related, student-led service co-operatives in Canada and the US provide bicycle services (such as bicycle sharing and repair resources), skills training workshops (on bicycle maintenance, cooking, or activist skills), and meeting space. One service co-operative is a student association that functions as both a consumer co-operative (operating cafeterias and a bookstore) and service co-operative (offering athletic facilities, a bus transit system, ID cards, computing centre, and meeting space).

The cases in this study included four housing co-operatives, and a bicycle co-operative. Two of the co-operative cases offered both services and consumer goods. The AMS Bike Co-op operates a bicycle

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[2] For more on the distribution of student-led co-operatives across Quebec, the rest of Canada, and the US, see Figure 3, page 112

shop, where members receive discounted prices. They also offer services such as training workshops and access to tools and a workshop. The Student's Cooperative Association offers low cost housing as well as workshops and space for hosting community events.

**Table 10: Co-operative sectors in Canada, in Canadian and US student co-operatives, and in Canadian and US student co-operatives with graduate students. Data in this table combines research collected for this paper with data from Canada's Special Committee of Co-operatives (Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012).**

| Sectors | % of Co-operatives in Canada | Canadian and US student-led co-operatives[3] | Canadian and US student co-operatives with graduate students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Housing | 42% | 34% | 52% |
| Financial | 14% | n/a | n/a |
| Agricultural & Food | 21% | n/a | n/a |
| Consumer & Retail | 10% | 62%<br>(includes café, restaurant, food store, bookstore) | 38%<br>(includes café, food store, bookstore |
| Services | 8%<br>(2% health, 6% childcare) | 15%<br>(includes training, network, facility rental, recreation centre) | 12%<br>(includes training, network, facility rental, recreation centre) |
| Worker | 5% | n/a | n/a |

## Co-operatives and graduate student services

### Graduate students' involvement in service provision

Literature on graduate students and university services largely assumes the university provides services to graduate students, and does not generally consider student-provided services. The literature also assumes an operating model similar to that of a non-profit (USOCDC, 2007), where graduate students are the clients, and the university is the service provider. As in many non-profits, some graduate students may have a role in directing university-run service, but this not the same as a co-operative model where students are customer, owner and director(Sousa & Herman, 2012).

[3] Student co-operatives sometimes offered services from more than one sector. In such cases, the co-operative is counted in all relevant categories. For example, Guelph Campus Co-op offers both housing and a bookstore, and is thus counted in both the consumer retail sector and housing sector.

As student-led services, the cases in this study had similarities to and differences from the experience of graduate student services provided by universities described in the literature. The interviewees see benefits to graduate student involvement in student-led co-operatives. However, both the findings and the literature showed that high turnover in the student population had an impact on the consistency and manageability of programs where students took on leadership roles.

### Who benefits from graduate student involvement?

Where literature on student services suggests graduate student participation, the focus is largely on the benefit to the graduate student through providing an opportunity for involvement, and ensuring peer input on programming choices (Brandes, 2006). This literature also finds graduate student-led organizations are positive for graduate student self-esteem and reducing isolation (Corner, 2006). The cases show a mutually beneficial relationship, where students benefit from low housing costs, and the opportunity to meet peers, and co-operatives gain from graduate student participation in running the co-operative.

A benefit of graduate student involvement is the contribution of maturity and experience in governance. . Both staff and students interviewed for this study highlighted experience and maturity as contributions of graduate students. As a staff member at ICC Michigan, Yes sees graduate students having a “positive impact … on the quality of the house”. He says graduate students contribute a higher level of experience and “a certain level of… seriousness”. Because of this, he says, “they tend to be more focused, more organized, … have more professional working relationships within the houses… and [...] they provide a certain level of stability and leadership. … [I]t’s very helpful, very helpful.” J.F. Carron sees graduate students contribution as particularly relevant for an organization with student leadership. Experience can help avoid the common mistake of taking on too many projects:

> I see the new board members, and they’re really enthusiastic, and I let them be. But I know that in the end all the stuff they’re really excited about is not likely to happen if they’re excited about all of those things at the same time. [...] You know, pick one, do it right, and then it gets done. But if you’re excited about eleven different things, you’re not going to do any of them. So part of it is just bringing maturity. A little bit of world weariness, I guess.

As he frames it, graduate students can provide guidance and leadership to less experienced members and help a group of students focus their efforts and make more realistic plans. He is equally critical of graduate student contributions, however, saying, “we’re way to opinionated”, making it “much harder to reach consensus”.

Another benefit of graduate student involvement is an enhanced reputation for the organization. The strongest example of this in the cases is the three student-led housing co-operatives that designated certain houses for graduate in the wake of a crisis that forced the closure of undergraduate houses that became too rowdy and had problems with drug use In these situations, transferring the houses to a graduate student membership is a tactic that rebuilt trust with neighbours of the co-op, and increased the stability of the house culture.

### High turnover of students and the impact on student involvement

The findings from the cases and the literature on co-operatives and student services both show that services relying on student leadership struggle to manage high turnover among the students involved. In the literature, university-run services are found to benefit from graduate student involvement, but a constant turnover of graduate student volunteers or staff increases the work of program managers. Staff train and re-train new cohorts of graduate student volunteers to ensure they understand the program's goals (Brandes, 2006). Similarly, it is difficult for a graduate-student-led non-profit to maintain leadership in the face of high member turnover, and changes in student leadership can alter the culture of the organization dramatically (Corner, 2006).

The cases echo the literature. In the housing cases, training is a priority due to turnover in co-operative membership. The cases adapt to changes in membership through either flexibility or the establishment of a strong organizational culture. A flexible organizational style permits the co-operative to be responsive to the interests of each new group of co-operative members, but makes it difficult to complete multi-year projects. With a strong organizational culture, the values and projects already underway attract new members to the co-operative, who join to further the already established goals.

Whether it is the university or students themselves that run graduate student services, involvement of graduate students raises the issue of member turnover. Training, flexibility, and strong organizational culture are all methods used to cope with this problem.

## Co-operatives addressing graduate student concerns

Student-run co-operatives are effective at addressing some graduate student concerns relayed in the literature, but do not address others. Co-operative membership can help a graduate student establish a community, offer cost savings on housing, and help with a busy schedule by sharing the work of chores. By addressing financial concerns with lower rent and food costs, student-led co-operatives have an advantage over university run housing. However, the findings are more complicated when considering a graduate students' time management, the concept of separate services for graduate students, and the needs of student parents.

### Reducing isolation through involvement in co-operatives:

Social isolation is a cause of stress among graduate students (Manathunga, 2005, Brandes, 2006, Ricks, Kaldec, Corner & Paul, 2003, Longfield, Romas & Irwin, 2006) and both the writing on student co-operatives and the cases suggest student-led co-operatives are an effective means to reduce isolation. Involvement in a student-led co-operative can provide a regular space to meet with peers. This could be particularly helpful for students working on their research and thesis/ dissertation (Corner, 2006), for international students (Subanthore, 2011), and any students who lack established local social connections.

Student-led co-operatives, as a model, address the findings of literature on graduate student services that graduate student involvement in informal networks (Fickey & Pullen, 2011) and campus organizations (Subanthore, 2011, Schlemper, 2011) reduces isolation. Because they are student-led, student co-operatives emulate the model proposed by Brandes (2006), where graduate students are directly involved in providing graduate student services.

Graduate students are vulnerable to isolation when they face specific barriers to maintaining social supports they had previously because of changes to their schedule, lower income and lack of free time (Longfield, Romas, & Irwin, 2006), and when they move on from course work and begin the relatively solitary work of researching and writing a thesis (Corner, 2006). Students who become involved in co-operatives develop friendships, find community with fellow graduate students, and set aside the stress of their school while participating in the co-operative's activities. B. Orr and J. F. Carron both described their co-operatives as places to meet people and make friends, and this perception is born out in the literature (Whiteson, 2004, Kummerow, 1970). The cases demonstrate how co-operatives can reduce financial stress with lower rent and, in the case of the AMS Bike Co-op, volunteering can include free food as a benefit. Thus co-operatives provide both a structure that reduces isolation and a reduced a financial barrier to social activities.

Subanthore (2011) identified international graduate students as particularly at-risk to feelings of isolation, and suggested that finding a community of international students on campus can be a great source of support. Several of the co-operative cases make a special effort to be welcoming to marginalized students. B. Donovan described how the housing co-operative at ICC Austin acted as a source of “instant community” for those who had recently moved to the area, especially international students coming to Austin to learn English. Berkeley Student Cooperative gives priority to international students and students with a disability for housing spots. The AMS Bike Co-op offers “women and queer night” (AMS Bike Co-op, n.d.e., para. 1) workshops every month to make sure their workshop space is friendly and welcoming. With these choices, the co-operatives provide an opportunity to reduce isolation faced by marginal students, and embody the co-operative principle of *Open Membership*, where co-operatives are “open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination” (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a., para. 4).

In many ways, student-led co-operatives are already providing services using the models proposed by literature on student affairs. The services provide an opportunity for student involvement, building student community, and are student-led.

### Are separate graduate spaces needed?

Academic literature on graduate student services suggests separate services and spaces for graduate students are a best practice (Brandes, 2006, Pontius & Harper, 2006, Nesheim, Guentzel, Gansemer-Topf, Ross, & Turrentine, 2006, Rempel, Hussong-Christian, & Mellinger, 2011). The experience of the cases in this study suggests graduate students might prefer a model that includes both undergraduates and graduates, even if some of the services are provided separately. Graduate students interviewed enjoyed interacting with undergraduates in their co-operatives. However, they were also critical of their own participation, describing undergraduates as “less stress” and graduate students as “opinionated”. Interviewees found spending time with undergraduates provides a relief from a focus on graduate studies, reminds graduate students they are not always experts, and offers an opportunity to be a mentor. Staff interviewees suggest graduate students contribute more maturity and skills in governance roles, but cannot always commit to the time required for governance roles.

Student co-operatives do create separate services for graduate students where they find it appropriate. Housing co-operatives, for instance, find that separate housing for graduate students is popular, and provide a quieter, more studious environment. Separate services are also an advantage to the co-operative as an organization. Three of the cases established graduate houses after an undergraduate house in the co-operative became unmanageable. By turning the house into a graduate student house, the co-operatives could calm a raucous culture and convince angry neighbours to end their complaints about the co-operative.

### Graduate students, co-operatives and time:

Managing time is a major concern for graduate students (Schlemper, 2011, Longfield, Romas & Irwin, 2006). The cases showed there is a complicated relationship between co-operative membership and a graduate students' ability to save time.

At a housing co-operative, members contribute a certain number of hours per term doing housework. This could include cooking meals, shopping, cleaning, or making minor house repairs. Interviewees suggested the time spent on chores is similar to that spent if living alone, thus this requirement had little impact when compared to living elsewhere. In one case, living in a co-operative allowed the student to schedule his term to remove responsibility for chores in the weeks before his comprehensive exams, something that would be difficult to do in a different housing arrangement. This case demonstrates how a co-operative can facilitate effective time management by allowing a graduate student to allocate time for study, exams, and household chores according to their needs over a semester.

While chores may have little impact on time commitment, involvement in student co-operatives adds additional responsibilities and time commitments beyond those for students living in university residences or private apartments. There are conflicting ideas among the interviewees about whether graduate students are able to manage the time commitment participation on co-operative governance requires. A. Faria expressed no concerns about the time required for his duties as a board member at the Berkeley Student Cooperative , while J. F. Carron says he spends enough time on co-operative duties as president of the AMS Bike Co-op to make him concerned about what his supervisor would think. Nonetheless, he felt his flexible schedule makes volunteer involvement at the co-operative possible. The experience in the cases supports the themes found in writing by members of student co-operatives, which contrasts the possible negative effect of long meetings with the benefits of community, friendship, and pleasure of shared meals (Stephenson, 2004, Whiteson, 2004).

Co-operative staff interviewees describe graduate student time availability differently. Staff suggest graduate students' multiple responsibilities make it difficult to participate in governance. B. Donovan describes a graduate student board member who resigned after receiving a fellowship. J. F. Carron echoes this concern, suggesting that paying board members might make it easier to find undergraduates willing to take on governance duties, but would exclude graduate students who are restricted from taking additional paid work due to their research funding.

Graduate studies place a high demand on students, and students struggle to manage their time and the duties of graduate school. Co-operative housing can offer some support for time management by allowing students to allocate their time effectively. However, co-operatives rely on member participation in both service user and director roles in order to be effective. While graduate student schedules may be flexible enough to allow volunteer time, commitments to research projects or funders can make participation in governance roles difficult.

### Graduate student parents

Literature on graduate students shows that stress among graduate students who are also parenting can be particularly high (Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009). One finding of this study is that there are no currently active student-run childcare co-operatives. None of the housing co-operative featured as cases in the study had units for students with families. However, after the interviews were completed, one student-run co-operative for students with families was identified, the Commonwealth Terrace Co-operative (n.d.a).

### Co-operatives as a means to address graduate student financial concerns

Finances are a major cause of stress for graduate students (Schlemper, 2011, Longfield, Romas, & Irwin, 2006). Both the case studies and the literature on student co-operatives show that co-operatives can offer significant cost savings, especially in housing and food expenses (see Table 8, page 42), with

Berkeley Student Cooperative even lowering their rent charges in 2013 (Berkeley Student Cooperative, 2013c). It is important to note, however, that all of the housing co-operatives among the cases are well established organizations founded decades ago. A student housing co-operative is unlikely to offer immediate cost savings comparable to those in these cases.

As B. Donovan notes, however, significant cost savings in housing co-operatives are a benefit gained over long term property ownership. This benefit is not available immediately upon establishment of the co-operative. Instead, co-operatives offer rent at close to market rate when founded, but over time raise rents according to the cost increases in operating the co-operative rather than in response to the fluctuations of the housing market. This can result in steady, minor rent increases, and ultimately, much lower rents over an extended period of ownership.

Student co-operatives have a variety of means to offer cost savings to members. They reduce their own costs by using members' "sweat equity"; members do the cooking, cleaning and minor repairs that would be paid work in a university dormitory, and provide volunteer labour to the bike co-operative that would be paid work in a regular bike shop. These savings pass on to members in reduced rent and prices (see Table 8, page 42). Similarly, while it might be difficult to find time to participate in governance duties, rent credit or discounts in the co-op bike shop can be a valuable reward to cash-strapped students. Balancing member labour contribution with price reductions is an example of how student-led co-operatives find their own ways to create a co-operative difference.

## Problems with governance and risk

Every organization faces risk of some kind. However, these cases, especially the housing cases, demonstrate that student-run co-operatives face particular barriers to preparing for and addressing risk. In the cases there were instances of members ignoring rules and regulations, inexperience on governing boards, and failure to address risky behaviour. In addition, they face the overarching problem of high member turnover, so the organization's skill at managing risk must be constantly re-established.

### Rules seen as secondary to mission

While both B. Orr and J. F. Carron were clearly passionate about the missions of their organization, both prioritized flexibility over following policies and bylaws. The AMS Bike Co-op included non-students as members of their board a violations of their bylaws, and used consensus, a violation of their rules of their parent organization. B. Orr described how the members tried to "make the co-op for people, instead of policy". This approach could be a means of coping with high member turnover (why spend time changing the rules if a new group will arrive next year?) It may also indicate the co-operative has evolved beyond its current structure, but has not yet revised its purpose and structure.

Ignoring policy and regulations can be relatively harmless when decisions made are minor and the risk is low. However, once a co-operative has obligations to donors, is managing assets, hires staff ignoring policy and regulations becomes problematic. And when a co-operative is facing a crisis, the importance of clear policies and rules are significant. At ICC Austin, for example, the co-operative has had three separate fires, which highlights the importance of the board members knowing and following fire code regulations. In order to follow regulations, the co-operative board members need to be aware of what regulations exist, and be updated when they change. The co-operative members not only needed training, and sound advice from staff and experts who know the regulations. ICC Austin also benefitted from sound financial planning that ensure they were compliant with the latest safety codes—a fact that may have saved the lives of some residents—and had adequate insurance.

### Managing risk with inexperienced governance and diluted ownership

Problems with drug use or excessive parties is a problem identified in three of the housing co-operative cases. In the case of Berkeley Student Cooperative, it took significant external pressure from university administration and a lawsuit to force the co-operative's hand and deal with the problem.

As a result of the crisis at Berkeley after a resident was seriously harmed by an overdose, the Board wrote to the general membership to describe the issues facing the co-operative and its members. These included lawsuits, increased insurance rates, and the potential for the university to revoke leases. The letter says squatters "took over and began to exert more control over the direction of the house [...]. There was no accountability, financial or otherwise, towards these non-residents who made their way into the house to participate in such activities" (Diamond, et al, 2011, January 14, para. 8). It goes on to assert that successfully addressing the problem requires both sound decisions from the board and the active participation of all the co-op members in implementing decisions (Diamond, et al., J. 2011, January 14).

The crisis at Berkeley Student Cooperative is an example how a combination of weakness of the co-operative model and combine to create significant problems. The problem of low involvement among the general membership in addressing problems with drug use may be an example of "diluted ownership"(Birchall, 2012, p. 286), where no one member feels responsible to act or take responsibility to address problems. The board identified their own failed leadership as a contributing factor, an indication that board training does not necessarily result in adequate management skills. Ultimately, the board did draw on legal expertise and the advice of staff and university administrators in resolving the problem. They managed to address the concerns of neighbours, and maintain the confidence of the university.

### Competing visions about the role of the board

At the ICC Michigan and ICC Austin, members had competing ideas about the role of the co=operative's board. Until recently, ICC Michigan maintained 19 sets of books, all audited, because members wanted to maintain management for all house expenses within the house. At ICC Austin, a similar debate around the role of the central board versus that of individual houses is common.

At AMS Bike Co-op, the bylaws restrict voting and board membership to students. The actual practice includes non-student members with full rights.

### Obtaining capital

Literature on co-operatives describes obtaining capital as a problem for all co-operatives, especially during their formative years (Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. Special Committee on Co-operatives, 2012, Robb, Smith, & Webb, 2010). This problem is exacerbated for students due to their low incomes, lack of experience (Jones, 2005, Carrière, 2010). Over many decades of operation—they were both founded in the 1930s-- audits from both ICC Austin (2013) and the Berkeley Student Cooperative (2010) have been able to purchase property and establish reserve funds. All of the housing co-operatives set aside funds annually to contribute to their long-term needs. Additionally, alumni were asked to contribute to capital funds in all of the housing cases, and the AMS Bike Co-op recently started seeking donations with the help of the university development office.

## Is there a co-operative difference for graduate students?

The literature on co-operatives describes a *co-operative difference* rooted in the integration of the roles members play in their co-operative, associative practices, and adherence to the co-operative principles. The resulting co-operative provides a resilient model, with strong links to the community it serves. An examination of the cases finds that student-led co-operatives have a distinct approach to creating a strong co-operative, whether considering the roles of co-operative members, the use of associative practices, or the ability to implement the co-operative principles.

### Integration of graduate student member roles in student-led co-operatives

As in other co-operatives, graduate student involvement in student-led co-operatives integrates their membership roles as user, director, and investor. Each role tells us something about how a graduate student interacts with their co-operative.

#### Graduate student co-operative members as users

Student-led co-operatives reflect Birchall's (2012) argument that successful co-operatives set themselves apart for members as users by offering services where none exist, breaking a monopoly that gives poor service, or offering added value in their service. The AMS Bike Co-op and several of the co-operative bookstores offered services not previously available on campus. All of the cases offer added value, with low prices for members (Table 8, page 42), and “instant community” for students who are new to the area.

##### Providing services with added value

The inclusion of services at the Student’s Cooperative Association is one of the advantages offered by a consumer co-operative over traditional business models: the ability to address concerns that go beyond the product or low prices (Birchall, 2012). Similarly, the AMS Bike Co-op offers training, tools and workshop, but also offers support for environmental and transportation activism. Another advantage the student co-operative cases offer over the regular housing market is specific services for graduate students in the form of a “graduate themed house”. These houses address a need identified in the literature on the graduate student experience to reduce isolation and obtain support from peers (Manathunga, 2005, Brandes, 2006, Ricks, Kaldec, Corner & Paul, 2003).

The interviewees, both staff and students, perceived graduate and undergraduate student needs as different, and the housing co-operative cases offered added value for graduate students. One graduate student said his reservation about living with younger undergrads would be whether they kept the house clean, and whether they partied too much. B. Orr suggested the graduate themed house at Student's Cooperative Association is “more protective of the home environment”. All the students living in graduate student themed houses drew a line between younger undergraduates and more mature undergraduates. B. Orr suggested the graduate themed house provided a balance between a quiet place to study and easy access to social connections. D. Fisher said a mix of graduate and mature undergraduate is preferable as the older undergraduates were “generally less stress than graduates”.

Literature on student co-operatives notes a sense of community as a primary outcome of co-operative living (Whiteson, 2004, Kummerow, 1970). B. Orr described the Janet Smith housing co-operative as protective of the need for quieter study, while providing easy access to social connections. Like the housing co-operative, the AMS Bike Co-op also offered J. F. Carron the opportunity to meet others and make friends.

Another significant added value provided by student-led co-operatives is experience and employment for students (Scullion, 2005). Berkeley Student Cooperative , for example, has many employment opportunities open only to the student members of the co-operative. All of the co-operative cases have opportunities for students to participate as learners, through their volunteer work or employment in the co-operative.

#### Breaking a monopoly with poor service

None of the co-operatives were competing with monopolies. However, the cases of housing co-operatives did offer lower prices than on-campus student housing provided in dormitories (Table 8, page 42). They also offered a strong sense of community, shared workload on chores and home-cooked food. This study found these advantages in both the cases and in the literature on student co-operatives (Clark, 2007, Stephenson, 2004, Jones, 2005, Pennington, 2004, Kummerow, 1970).

#### Providing services where none exist

Historically, students have formed co-operatives to provide services where none existed—Guelph Student Co-operative's bookstore is one example, as it was founded in 1913, prior to there being a source for textbooks or school supplies on campus (Guelph Campus Co-op, 2013). Today, this tradition continues, especially when venturing into innovative services. The AMS Bike Co-op is an example of a student co-operative providing a bicycle kitchen where members can do their own repairs where there is no other bicycle repair option on a very large campus. They also innovate by offering a bike-share program, centre for students to repair their own bicycles, and bike fleet services to campus groups, all services not normally found in a traditional bicycle shop.

### Graduate student members as owners and directors

It is the principle of democratic management and member economic contribution that sets co-operatives apart from other ownership models. There is a difference, however, between principles and practice. The student co-operative cases in this study face similar struggles in co-operative governance to those identified in the literature on the broader co-operative movement: difficulty in keeping members actively involved (Spear, 2004), struggles to maintain direct involvement as a co-operative grows in size (Malo, Vézina, & Auderbrand, 2012). Student co-operatives face an additional barrier to member participation as directors due to the high turnover in their student membership, with each year seeing a cohort of students graduate and another cohort arrive. As a result, they focus on associative practices and intense involvement. The student co-operative cases have strong commitment to direct member control of the co-operative through open meetings, easily accessible documents, and frequent training on co-operative governance.

As mentioned earlier, this study found graduate student member-owners bring experience and maturity to governance roles, but are restricted in their ability to commit time to co-operative governance. Among the interviewees, staff describe graduate students as contributing experience and a sense of seriousness to the co-operative, but as less able to commit enough time to board duties, while graduate students see themselves bringing experience to governance, but also describe themselves benefiting from involvement with undergraduates.

### Graduate student members as investors

Rasmussen (1986) argues there are two options for co-operatives in responding to the needs of their members as investors: they can manage the co-operative to keep prices lower, or they can stay close to market prices and offer member-investors a rebate. Rebates are based on the spending the member does in the co-operative over the year, and the co-operative's profits (Rasmussen, 1986). Student co-operatives compete with the prices of campus dormitories by having the members provide the labour to maintain, clean and administer their residences (Anonymous, 1973, Bhimji, 2005). The labour contribution of members is referred to as "sweat equity", and while there is a membership fee to join each of the co-operative cases the member investment of student co-operators can be heavily weighted toward the volunteer contribution.

Jones (1993) states that student co-operatives generally prioritize low cost over rebates, and this is in keeping with the findings. Member rebates were not central to any of the student co-operative cases included in this study. Among the cases, the housing co-operatives offered rental rates below the cost of dormitory options, with Berkeley Student Cooperative, ICC Austin, and the Student's Co-operative Association offering significantly lower cost options. ICC Michigan is the only case that reported offering rebate, but these were issued to houses with surpluses in food budget at the end of the year, and were therefore more of an incentive to save money than a rebate . In some of the housing cases, members could earn reductions in their rental dues through participation in governance as a board member. Again, this functions more as an incentive than a dividend.

An interesting feature of student co-operatives is that member economic contributions are sometimes made after active membership has ceased. Alumni donate funds to create scholarships for current members, and to support capital projects of their former student co-operative.

Students use co-operatives primarily to keep prices low on essential services of housing, food and textbooks. Where rebates are used, it is as an incentive to be frugal with budgets, or to be actively involved in the co-operative as a volunteer. As investors, student co-operatives contribute a small amount of share capital, and contribute through "sweat equity" while they are a member, and perhaps continue to contribute as an alumni donor.

### Business and associative practices

Côté (2008) argues that co-operatives must find equilibrium between business practices and the associative practices of training, information sharing, and member involvement. While this study found many instances of strong associative practices, such as regular training, easily accessible information about the co-operative, and strong encouragement for member involvement in governing bodies and the activities of the co-operatives, financial management did not have the same emphasis.

When asked about financial management, A. Faria noted the training he received in the fiduciary responsibilities of the board. Both staff members and students interviewed in the housing cases noted the importance of staff to provide expertise in financial management. Berkeley and ICC Austin both employ auditors to review the finances and provide advice on financial procedures. And ICC Austin, Berkeley Student Cooperative and ICC Michigan all have professional accountants on staff.

Participation in financial management was uneven in the co-operatives studied. Only one of the co-operatives, ICC Austin, approved its budget at a general meeting. The other housing co-operatives approved the budget at a board level. In these co-operatives, board meetings are open to all members, and at ICC Austin and Berkeley Student Cooperative, any member can speak at board meetings, and at Berkeley Student Cooperative they can also move motions. At the AMS Bike Co-op, board members work with staff to develop the budget, but the budget is not approved by the members. Instead, financial updates are provided at the meetings.

While Côté's (2008) argument for balancing associative and business practices is aimed at co-operatives that focussing primarily on the business aspects of their organizations, the cases in this study show that student-run co-operatives can focus heavily on associative practices, while financial management is largely delegated to staff. Staff advise the board and membership on long term financial planning and ensure daily financial procedures are completed.

### Associative practice, governance and graduate students

Members who identify with their co-operative's values and purpose, feel they are making a valuable contribution with their involvement, and feel a sense of ownership, are more likely to be strongly committed to their co-operative (Jussila, Byrne & Tuominen, 2012). This sense of being a valuable contributor and being in control of a co-operative is dependent on a member understanding how their co-operative functions, and seeing their contributions appreciated. Associative practices deepen members' connections to the co-operative (Brown & Windstanley, 2008), and the case studies show direct member involvement is strongly encouraged. Members' rights to participate in decisions about the co-operative are carefully protected in cases through bylaws that privilege member referendum and general meetings over board decisions.

While high participation is ideal, it is not always achieved, and the structures adopted by the co-operative must balance the right to participate with realistic expectations of involvement. For those who do become highly involved, there is a strong sense of belonging and involvement can increase. The student co-operative model of learning-by-doing and building "associative intelligence" (MacPherson, 2002, p. 372) by learning skills together, and the "intense involvement to hold the group together" (Jones, 2005, p.139) is very much in evidence in the cases. J. F. Carron describes how he joined the co-op for free food and workshops, but his involvement increased over time:

> There's free pizza for volunteers. And I felt like learning. But I had so much fun I just kept going. And because I kept showing up, some of the board members noticed that I was consistent, and they said "Hey, do you want to join the board" and I said "Okay" so then I started going to the board meetings.

B. Orr contrasts frustration at long meetings with the benefits of sharing the work, and supporting each other through the week.

> … after those meetings you're like "Omigosh this co-op takes so much of my energy and it's such a time suck!" But I think, you know, for most of the weeks when you are getting home and you have a home cooked meal on your dinner table that someone's prepared for the last two hours, [...] most of the time, you just realize how much time it's saving you and what a better quality of life you have because other people are helping you out with different things in the house.

In both of these examples, co-operative members associate the work of the co-operative with a sense of community—sharing a meal and making friends are part of the process of involvement.

Further, training efforts were uneven among the cases. While Berkeley Student Cooperative and ICC Michigan offered board training multiple times per year, and training for each of the roles a member took on in their house, other cases did not provide training in governance models or duties. In fact, B. Orr said she received no training in her duties as membership co-ordinator and was unable to contact the person formerly in the position.

The use of associative practices to encourage participation is one way that student-led co-operatives demonstrate their commitment to the Co-operative Principles of *democratic member control* and *education, training and information*. Adapting the Co-operative Principles to the situation of a student membership is the final way this study found that student-led co-operatives are creating a *student co-operative difference*.

### Student-led co-operatives, graduate student members and the Co-operative Principles

The seven principles of co-operatives (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.a.) are widely adopted in co-operatives around the world, including Canada and the US. This study finds that all of the housing co-operative cases include reference to the co-operative principles in their governing documents or training materials. This section describes how students enact the principles, and the factors that support or hinder their use of the co-operative principles.

#### Principle of voluntary and open membership

Student associations in Canada generally have mandatory, not voluntary, membership. Students in BC become members of the student association by virtue of enrolling in the institution for their program (University Act, 1996). Where a student co-operative forms with the support of a larger student association, their co-operative may prioritize members of the student association, and restrict membership for non-students. The AMS Bike Co-op was established first as a club of the university's student association, and continues to receive in-kind donation of space from the association. As a result of this relationship, students receive a discounted membership in the co-operative.

While this is not a finding in the cases, data collected on student co-operatives showed that in some cases a group initially formed as co-operatives, and then begins using mandatory fee levies as a form of funding. Frigo Vert food co-operative (Frigo Vert, n.d.) is one such example. The fee levy system can be a tempting source of capital for a small student co-operative, but is contrary to the co-operative principle of voluntary membership. Co-operatives making use of a student association's mandatory fee structure must be mindful to avoid violating the legislation that governs co-operatives. In BC, a co-operative must "permit the withdrawal of members from the association" (Cooperative Association Act, *S.B.C.* 1999, S. 33, 1(b)) and requires that members are "willing and able to accept the responsibilities of membership" (Cooperative Association Act, *S.B.C.* 1999, S. 8 (2 (a)). Identical language is used in the national legislation (Canada Cooperatives Act, 1998).

#### Principle of democratic member control

Democratic member control is evident in the philosophy of the co-operative cases explored in this study, but is uneven in practice. Governance models in the cases were designed to provide maximum opportunity for involvement—information is readily available through the co-operatives' websites, and information and extensive training is provided to members. Governance models are also designed to balance power, or ensure the central governing board does not have what is perceived as too much control.

However, evidence from the cases shows that the time required to participate in governance duties and the knowledge base of the members are both barriers to reaching an ideal of democratic control. Information sharing is similarly unbalanced in the cases.

When students are successfully involved in governance, there are benefits to both the organization and the individual students. Beyond the benefits to the co-operative, democratic member control has additional benefits for student members: participation in the co-operative is an opportunity for graduate students to reduce isolation (Manathunga, 2005, Brandes, 2006, Ricks, Kaldec, Corner & Paul, 2003), and involvement in coordinating their own services increases graduate students' well-being (Brandes, 2006, Corner, 2003).

The cases showed that, despite active efforts at training and information sharing, involvement in democratic governance is not always strongly supported. For example, B. Donovan reports ICC Austin is reducing the number of committees due to the difficulty of involving students, and at the Student's Co-operative Association, B. Orr noted that meetings could be time consuming and frustrating when decisions took a long time.

### Principle of member economic contribution

In the housing co-operative cases in this study, students clean common spaces and handle minor repairs to their homes as a means to keep costs down. Some students contribute office work to the central co-operative administration or work in kitchens that serve co-operative members. The AMS Bike Co-op members volunteer their sweat equity to build the purple and gold bikes that make up their co-operative fleets. Office work, meal preparation, repairs and janitorial services are paid work in university run student dorms, cafeterias and services. In contrast, the use of sweat equity allows students to rely on the associative practice of member participation to reduce the costs of managing the co-operative, and in turn, reduce their housing cost.

Long-term financial vision is also important to the success of the co-operative, and member economic contribution can be used to address long-term concerns. Members who invest with future members in mind can ensure a capital fund is ready when the roof leaks and new buildings can be purchased when it is time to expand. Another advantage of the co-operative model identified in the cases is that member control of the fee increases ensures the increases address real cost increases, and no inflation in the housing market. This means that over the long term, a co-operative's rental charges will be lower than in market housing where rates increase according to inflation.

Members can also make financial contributions through involvement with the broader co-operative movement. NASCO, owned by the co-operative members, created NASCO Properties, which can assist housing co-operatives who are facing a financial crisis. In this way, co-operative members who are part of NASCO contribute to each other's co-operatives as well as their own. Alumni can make similar contributions as donors once their time as an active member has passed.

### Principle of autonomy and independence

Student co-operatives benefit greatly from the support of outside parties. It is evident from the cases, however, that the student co-operators had some discomfort about whether these relationships limited the co-operative's autonomy. Student co-operatives found a balance between autonomy and accepting support from external organizations by creating formal consultative or voting roles for representatives of these organizations, while maintaining majority control of the co-operative with the student members.

Where a co-operative did not manage risk well—where co-operative members engaged in illegal or dangerous activity, for example, it is important for a co-operative reliant on the university for its lease to take the risk seriously and address the concerns of the university. In three of the cases, graduate student houses were established as a means of changing the culture of a high risk house, and addressing the concerns of the co-operatives neighbours and stakeholders.

Principle of co-operation among co-operatives

ICC Michigan, ICC Austin, and Berkeley Student Cooperative are actively involved in NASCO. NASCO properties offer financial support to help stabilize student housing co-operatives in crisis. Berkeley Student Cooperative also offers support in the form of seed grants, advice and training to new student co-operatives. Alumni are involved in some student co-operatives as board members or through an alumni association. Alumni provide advice, historical perspective, and donate to the co-operatives.

**Figure 1: Factors affecting students' ability to follow the co-operative principles**

| FACTORS SUPPORTING STUDENT ADHERENCE TO THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPELS | | FACTORS OPPOSING STUDENT ADHERENCE TO THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPELS |
|---|---|---|
| • legislation requiring co-operatives to be voluntary | **Voluntary & open membership** | • operating under a parent organization with a mandatory fee structure<br>• ease of generation of funds through mandatory fee levies |
| • frequent member meetings<br>• bylaws protect member control<br>• frequent training in governance | **Democratic member control** | • lack of knowledge or skills<br>• ability of graduate students to commit time to governance<br>• tension around centralized versus direct member control<br>• operating as a sub-group of a student association<br>• lack of member participation |
| • "sweat equity" reduces costs<br>• NASCO properties used to pool risk<br>• donations from alumni<br>• members contribute to long term building fund through fees | **Member economic contribution** | • students often have low income<br>• difficult for students to obtain loans or investment<br>• university ownership of property used by the co-operative |
| • managing risk effectively<br>• drawing on more experienced members' skills<br>• leveraging positive reputation of graduate students | **Co-operative autonomy** | • poorly managed risk<br>• dependence on university or student association contribution of assets<br>• operating as a sub-group of a larger student association<br>• member transience |
| • joining umbrella organization (e.g. NASCO)<br>• alumni support and advice<br>• established co-operatives support development of new co-operatives | **Co-operation among co-operatives** | • lack of knowledge of co-operative movement<br>• lack of links to co-operative organizations and networks<br>• lack of active regional network<br>• member transience |
| • NASCO conferences<br>• frequent training sessions<br>• training prioritized in staff and board duties<br>• online training videos, resource manuals and wikis<br>• encouraging training initiated through member interest | **Education, training and information** | • member transience requires repetition of the same training rather than long term development of member skills<br>• inconsistent or lack of formal training |
| • members informal links with community groups<br>• use of co-operatives resources to support community groups<br>• explicitly linking the co-operatives purpose to social justice or environmental goals<br>• co-operative principles of equity and fairness draws members with passion for community involvement | **Concern for community** | • tensions between members who wish to promote activism and those who wish to keep the co-operative neutral |

### Principle of education, training and information

Student co-operatives place a strong emphasis on training in order to counterbalance member turnover and inexperience. Training sessions are held frequently, and are often required for those taking on specific roles. Frequent training has the additional benefits of strong associative practice, increasing members' ability to participate, and community building. Members are also able to access governance documents, policies and training resources online.

### Principle of concern for community

Student co-operatives often have strong links to campus activist organizations. The Student's Cooperative Association and the AMS Bike Co-op both have strong links with campus organizations. The Student's Cooperative Association provides a venue for organizations to host events, while the AMS Bike Co-op provides bicycles to an environmental food co-operative. Scullion (2005) argues that the co-operative principle of concern for community is a reason young people are drawn to the co-operative model, and are seen as a means to create employment that reflects their ethics (Scullion, 2005, La Siembra Co-operative, 2013).

Berkeley Student Cooperative's Vice President External Affairs position provides an interesting model for community concern by charging the role with building positive community relations with university and city officials as well as the press. The role is extended beyond this, however, and the student elected to be Vice President External Affairs is also charged with finding ways for the co-operative to serve and support external partners.

### Students and the co-operative principles

The factors that assist or deter students from following the Co-operative Principles are summarized in Figure 1, above. Like other co-operatives, students use associative practices to encourage the effective use of the co-operative model. Students do face unique challenges. The context of campus organization, within a university or student association structure, can present problems for a student co-operative to maintain autonomy and to ensure members have democratic control of the co-operative. The transient nature of the student population can make it difficult to form connections to the community or the co-operative movement, making the principles of *Co-operation among co-operatives* and *Concern for community* (International Co-operative Alliance, n.d.b) challenging.

## Conclusion

Student-led co-operatives can be an effective means to address graduate student needs, and are an example of how graduate students can effectively participate in providing their own services. The findings from the cases included instances where student-run co-operatives were able to address the needs of graduate students identified in academic literature on graduate student needs. The housing co-operatives in this study have an advantage over university-run housing in cost savings for students. Housing co-operatives may help some graduate students manage their time by sharing household work with fellow co-operative members, but involvement in governance can be difficult for graduate students to manage. All of the co-operative cases in this study are effective at building strong community among peers, which can reduce graduate student isolation.

Areas where there is limited support for specific graduate students is the support for students with families. No instances of graduate student childcare co-operatives were identified in this study. While housing is the most common form of service offered by co-operatives that include graduate students, only one housing co-operative providing family housing was identified.

Graduate students involved in student-led co-operatives provide an interesting view into how student co-operatives adapt co-operative practices to their own needs and capacity. Graduate students act as customer, director and investor in their co-operative, and create strong associative practices to address high turnover in student membership. The study finds that student-run co-operatives have a distinct relationship to the Co-operative Principles (International Co-operative Association, n.d.a.) with factors supporting and opposing the ability to enact the co-operative principles.

While co-operatives have succeeded at providing services to graduate students in these cases, none of the co-operative cases had strong relationships with a graduate student association, and operating as a sub-group of a student association created conflict between organizational forms and expectations in the case of AMS Bike Co-op. As a result, this study finds that the co-operative model is unlikely to suit being a subsidiary of the UVIC Graduate Students' Society. With these considerations in mind, this study closes with a series of recommendations.

# Recommendations

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore how the co-operative model is used to offer graduate student services. The cases show it is possible to have viable, student-led co-operatives offering services effectively for graduate students, but cannot speak to the viability of the model in other situations or contexts, or the feasibility of creating a graduate student-run co-operative at UVIC (B. Pollick, Personal communication, February 12, 2014). Further, there is not evidence that it is effective for student-run co-operatives to operate as subsidiaries of student associations, although student-run co-operatives do benefit from support and resources provided by allied student associations. The situation of the UVIC GSS is similar; as a non-profit society with an elected board assuming liability for society operations, any subsidiary group would be required to operate within the confines of UVIC GSS policy, and under the auspices of the UVIC GSS Executive Board. With these factors in mind, this study recommends the UVIC GSS can provide support to the development of student co-operatives, but cannot house student co-operatives as subsidiaries.

## Recommendation 1: Act as a catalyst for the development of student-run co-operatives

The UVIC GSS has an interest in supporting the initiatives of its members. Support for graduate students interested in forming a co-operative could be provided by the UVIC GSS in the following ways:

**Hosting educational events:** The membership of the UVIC GSS includes many graduate students who study co-operatives and other organizational forms. It also has facilities suitable for educational events, and a mandate to provide events to its members.

**Linking interested students:** The UVIC GSS has the means to reach the graduate student population at UVIC through its departmental representatives and email bulletins. It also has contact with other student associations, who have similar access to their membership. Students interested in forming a student co-operative could take advantage of the established communication networks among student associations to form links with other students.

**Linking interested students to co-operative organizations**: This study demonstrated the importance of expert advice. There is plenty of support for developing co-operatives through co-operative associations and federations. The UVIC GSS can provide referrals to co-operative organizations that support new co-operatives, such as the BC Co-operatives Association, North American Students of Co-operation, and the Berkeley Student Cooperative (see APPENDIX D).

## Recommendation 2: Provide training and support to student run co-operatives

As a well-established student-run organization, the UVIC GSS has developed expertise in organizational management, effective governance, financial management and the needs of graduate students. The UVIC GSS can assist with budgeting and financial planning; development of policies and procedures, and can provide support and advice on a peer-to-peer level.

## Recommendation 3: Provide referrals to professional services

The UVIC GSS has established connections with professional services and could provide referrals to auditors, legal counsel, and other experts familiar with graduate-student run organizations their association with the UVIC GSS. The UVIC GSS also has links with relevant academics, and could also refer students to individual researchers or UVIC's Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economics.

### Recommendation 4: Form partnerships with local co-operatives

This study did not find examples of graduate-student run co-operatives, and found only one example of a student-run co-operative focussed on the needs of families (Commonwealth Terrace Co-operative, n.d.a). It is possible that graduate students are using off-campus co-operatives. There could be advantages to this approach, as use of established community co-operatives would not require graduate students, already struggling to juggle commitments, to initiate a new co-operative project.

The UVIC GSS could form partnerships with existing co-operatives in the broader community to meet the needs identified by their members for housing and childcare. A partnership could include negotiating a membership policy that is favourable to graduate students.

### Recommendation 5: Address graduate student needs with GSS services

This study provided an opportunity to explore the problems faced by graduate students, and the methods proposed for addressing these needs. Literature reviewed for this study showed financial stress, isolation, and the need to balance academic and other responsibilities are key sources of stress for graduate students. These are issues that UVIC GSS already addresses by offering low cost services and providing a means for graduate students to meet and form social connections. However, a plan to intentionally address these and other needs of graduate students could improve UVIC GSS services. To do this, the UVIC GSS can:

- allocate staff time to review student affairs literature on graduate student needs;
- subscribe to journals covering student affairs for use by staff and elected Executive Board members;
- incorporate recent research on graduate student needs into the strategic planning process for the UVIC GSS; and
- evaluate GSS services and programming in accordance with current best practices and research on graduate students.

### Recommendation 6: Further study

There is little research available on student-run organizations, and less still on student-led co-operatives. Further study on student-led co-operatives that include graduate students could provide a rich source of information for those interested in student services as well as those in the field of co-operative studies.

Possible topics for further research are: exploring why student-led co-operatives fail; exploration of further cases, with more diverse services than those in this study; study of federations of student co-operatives, such as NASCO and Coopsco, their model of operation and the services they provide to their membership; financial management and governance structures; and, exploration of student co-operatives outside Canada and the US.

Student-led co-operatives operate in different sectors than Canadian co-operatives and global co-operatives in general. For example, while there are many co-operative credit unions and childcares, this study found no examples of student run co-operatives in these sectors. Further study could explore how students in other regions use co-operatives, whether there is a barrier to these co-operatives being run by students, or whether this represents a missed opportunity for the student co-operative movement.

## Conclusion

The initial goal of this project was to establish whether the a student co-operative model could be a viable means to provide housing, childcare and food services to graduate students. However, lack of childcare co-operatives, the failure to find a food co-operative to include in the study, and the scarcity of peer-reviewed research on student-run co-operatives forced the revision of this objective.

The cases are examples of viable student co-operatives, but the existence of successful co-operatives in one context is not enough to demonstrate the feasibility of creating a graduate student-run co-operative in another context (B. Pollick, Personal communication, February 12, 2014). Further, while the findings included the example of the AMS Bike Co-op, where the university's student associations provided valuable in-kind support to the co-operative, the case also demonstrated co-operative model is not suited to being a sub-group of a larger non-profit society. Nonetheless, there are many opportunities for the UVIC GSS to learn from the student co-operative experience, and from the broader co-operative movement.

Student-led co-operatives have developed tactics to address the high turnover in leadership that affects student organizations with a focus on associative practices of training, information sharing and encouraging active member participation. Indeed, three of the housing cases had been in operation since the 1930s, yet provided their members services at a substantially lower cost than similar businesses or university-provided housing.

This study provided rich material for exploration of themes from the fields of co-operative studies and student services. Student-led co-operatives are finding their own way to create a co-operative difference. They are also successful at addressing some of the key concerns facing graduate students: financial stress, time management, and isolation. Further study on student-led co-operatives could be instructive to those interested in the co-operative model as well as those working in the field of student services.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX A

Interview questions

**SAMPLE Interview Questions for Co-operative Administrators**

**The following are the types of interview questions that may be asked of Co-operative Administrators who are subjects of this study:**

How long have you been involved with this co-operative?

When did you take your current position?

Can you describe your role in the co-operative?

Could you please describe the co-operative?

What services does the co-operative provide?

Who are the members? What is the split between graduate and undergraduate students?

How long has the co-operative been active?

How was the co-operative initially established?

Does this co-operative have any formal or informal relationship with other student organizations on campus? Can you describe the relationship?

Is there a graduate student association on campus? Does the co-operative have any formal or informal relationship with that organization? Can you describe the relationship?

What is the governance structure of the co-operative?

Who manages the finances for the co-operative?

How do members know the financial situation of the co-operative?

What training is available to the members of the co-operative?

How is the co-operative advertised? Does the co-operative make any special effort to recruit graduate student members or to advertise to graduate students?

Does the co-op meet the needs of graduate students? Why or why not?

Are graduate students likely to be members of this co-operative? Why or why not?

Are there any barriers to graduate student involvement in the co-operative? Are these similar to barriers for other members?

How much volunteer time is spent operating and maintaining the co-operative?

In your opinion, would a co-operative founded and run by graduate students alone be a good idea? Would it be possible? Why or why not?

What advice would you give to graduate students interested in forming a similar co-operative?

Do you have other comments?

Are there any documents, such as governance and policy documents as well as meeting minutes that might contribute to my understanding of this issue?

**Confirmation of Consent – To be used at the beginning of follow-up Interviews with Co-operative Administrators**

You have previously signed a consent form confirming you wish to participate in this study. The objective of this project is to examine the potential for student-led co-operatives to address graduate students' needs at the University of Victoria (UVIC). The research question is: *Is a co-operative model a viable option for providing graduate student services?*

Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

At this time, I would like to verbally confirm you continue to consent to participation in this research project.

[Wait for consent, note consent in interview notes.]

You may withdraw your consent at any time during this interview. If you withdraw your consent part way through the questions, you may choose to permit use of earlier answers to the questions, or to withdraw your participation entirely. If you withdraw your consent entirely all materials related to your interview will be destroyed.

Do you have any questions?

**Sample Interview Questions for Graduate Student Co-operative Members**

**The following are the types of interview questions that may be asked of graduate student co-operative members who are subjects of this study:**

How long have you been involved with this co-operative?

Can you describe your role in the co-operative?

Could you please describe the co-operative?

What services does the co-op provide?

Which services do you use?

Who are the members? What is the percentage split between graduate and undergraduate students?

How long has the co-operative been active?

How was the co-operative initially established?

Does this co-operative have any formal or informal relationship with other student organizations on campus? Can you describe the relationship?

Is there a graduate student association on campus? Do you personally have any formal role or involvement with that organization? Can you describe that role?

What is the governance structure of the co-operative?

Who manages the finances for the co-operative?

How do members know the financial situation of the co-operative?

What training is available to the members of the co-operative?

How did you find out about the co-operative?

Are graduate students likely to be members of this co-operative? Why or why not?

Does the co-op meet the needs of graduate students? Why or why not?

Are there any barriers to graduate student involvement in the co-operative? Are these similar to barriers for other members or are they different?

How much volunteer time do you spend operating and maintaining the co-operative?

Do you find it hard to manage the volunteer commitment needed to run the co-op?

In your opinion, would a co-operative founded and run by graduate students alone be a good idea? Would it be possible? Why or why not?

What advice would you give to graduate students interested in forming a similar co-operative?

Are there any documents, such as governance and policy documents as well as meeting minutes that might contribute to my understanding of this issue?

Do you have other comments?

**Confirmation of Consent – To be used at the beginning of follow-up Interviews with Graduate student members of co-operatives**

You have previously signed a consent form confirming you wish to participate in this study. The objective of this project is to examine the potential for student-led co-operatives to address graduate students' needs at the University of Victoria (UVIC). The research question is: *Is a co-operative model a viable option for providing graduate student services?*

Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

At this time, I would like to verbally confirm you continue to consent to participation in this research project.

[Wait for consent, note consent in interview notes.]

You may withdraw your consent at any time during this interview. If you withdraw your consent part way through the questions, you may choose to permit use of earlier answers to the questions, or to withdraw your participation entirely. If you withdraw your consent entirely all materials related to your interview will be destroyed.

Do you have any questions?

## APPENDIX B

**Table 11: Student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US and their services**

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Association Coopérative de la Collectivité de l'UQAM | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Association Coopérative D'Habitation étudiante des Forges | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Association Coopérative étudiant de L'Université du Québec a Rimouski | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coop Droit - Université de Montréal | | | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coop ETS (Ecole de technologie supérieure) | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | ● | | ● | QC |
| Coop HEC Montréal | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coopérative de l'Université de Sherbrooke | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coopérative de Solidaire des Cafés Etudiants de l'Université Laval | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coopérative étudiante de l'Université du Québec a Chicoutimi | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | ● | | ● | QC |
| Coopsco aménagement - Université de Montréal | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coopsco Outaousais | | | ● | | | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Coopsco Trois-Riviere | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Fédération des coopératives Québécoises en milieu scolaire (Coopsco) | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Frigo Vert | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | QC |
| Association coopérative du Cégep de Drummondville | | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Association coopérative du Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Association coopérative étudiante du Cégep de Rimouski | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Association coopérative étudiante du Collège de Valleyfield | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Co-op du Cégep de Matane | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coop étudiante du Cégep a l'Assomption | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coop Le Signet | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coop Maisonneuve | | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coop Rosemont | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative du Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coopérative du Cégep régional de Lanaudière a Joliette et a Terrebonne | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative du Collège André-Grasset | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative du Collège André-Laurendeau | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative du Collège Gérald-Godin | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative étudiante de Thetford | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative étudiante du Cégep Beauce-Appalaches | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative étudiante du Cégep de Sorel-Tracy | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative étudiante du Cégep de la Gaspésie et des îles | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative etuidante de polytechnique (COOPOLY) | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative etuidante du Seminaire de Sherbrooke | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopérative Marie-Victorin | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco Cégep-Granby | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco des Laurentides | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | ● | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco écoles secondaires et Collège d'Alma | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coopsco F.-X. Garneau | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco La Pocatiere | | | ● | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco Levis | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco Sainte-Foy | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco St. Hyacinth | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Coopsco Victoriaville | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Librarie Coop Ahuntsic | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Librarie coopérative des étudiants du collège Edouard-Monpetit | | | ● | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| Librarie Coopsco Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu | | | | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | QC |
| AMS Bicycle Coop (UBC) | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | | | | ● | BC |
| Campus Co-operative Residence (Toronto) | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Campus Cupboard (OCAD) | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Canadian University Press | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | | ● | | | | ● | |
| Guelph Campus Co-op | ● | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Harvest Noon (Toronto Sustainable Food Co-operative) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | ON |
| King's Co-op Bookstore | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | | | ● | NS |
| Loaded Ladle Co-operative | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | NS |

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neill-Wycik Co-operative College | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Ontario Student Co-operative Association | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Science '44 Kingston | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Sprouts Food Co-operative (UBC) | | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | BC |
| Waterloo Co-operative Residence Inc. | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ON |
| Berkeley Student Cooperative (BSC) | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | CA |
| Brown Association for Cooperative Housing (BACH) | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | RI |
| College Houses | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | TX |
| Commonwealth Terrace Co-op | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | MI |
| Community of Urbana-Champaign Cooperative Housing (COUCH) | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | IL |
| Como Student Community Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | MN |
| Co-op Housing University of Maryland (CHUM) | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MD |
| Coopérative Collège Boreal | | | ● | ● | | | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | ON |
| Co-operative Housing at the University of Virginia (CHUVA) | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | VA |

| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cooperative Living Organization | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | FL |
| Inter-Cooperative Council at the University of Michigan (ICC) | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | MI |
| IU Student Co-op (Indiana University of Pennsylvania) | | | ● | | | ● | ● | ● | ● | | ● | | | ● | | ● | ● | PA |
| Kent Cooperative Housing | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | OH |
| Lunik Co-op | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | ON |
| Maryland Food Collective | | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MD |
| Metro Living Student Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | NS |
| Minnesota Student's Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MN |
| Montie House Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | MI |
| MSU Student Housing Cooperative, Inc. | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | MI |
| North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | ● | |
| Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) | ● | | ● | | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | OH |
| Pacifico Student Cooperative Housing | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | CA |
| Santa Barbara Student Housing Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | CA |

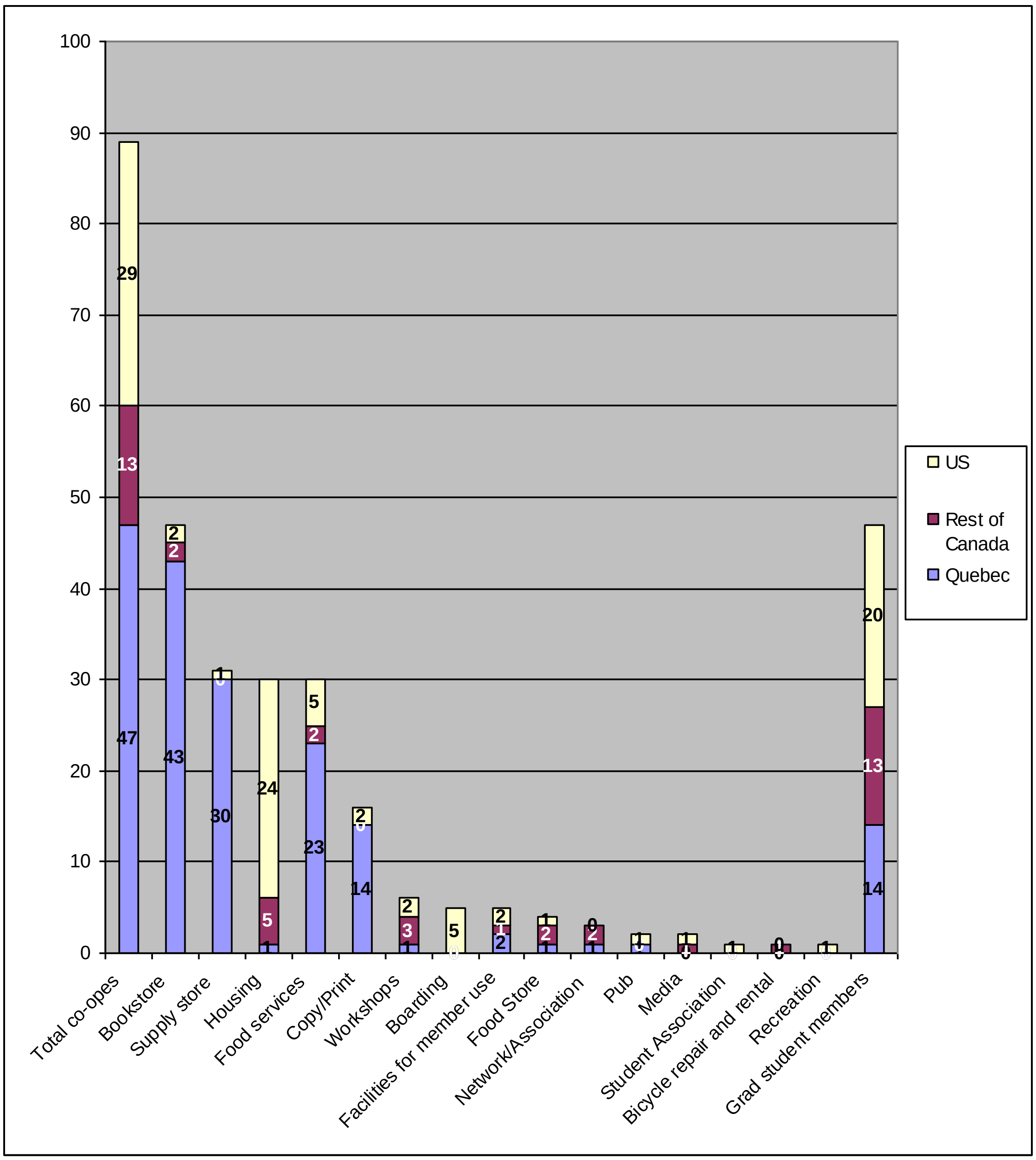
| | Housing | Boarding | Food services | Pub | Food Store | Supply store | Copy/Print | Bookstore | Student Association | Network/Association | Media | Bicycle repair and rental | Workshops | Recreation | Facilities use (e.g. kitchen, study space) | Grad-specific services | Grad members | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Santa Cruz Student Housing Cooperative | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | CA |
| Student Cooperative Association | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | | ● | | ● | ● | ● | OR |
| UKSHA University of Kansas Student Housing Association - coop | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | KS |
| University Cooperative Housing Association | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | CA |
| UT Inter-Cooperative Council (ICC) | ● | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | TX |
| Vine, The | ● | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | OH |
| **Number of co-ops offering the service** | **30** | **5** | **30** | **2** | **4** | **31** | **16** | **47** | **1** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **6** | **1** | **5** | **10** | **47** | |
| **Per cent of co-ops offering the service** | **34%** | **6%** | **34%** | **2%** | **4%** | **35%** | **18%** | **53%** | **1%** | **3%** | **2%** | **1%** | **7%** | **1%** | **6%** | **11%** | **53%** | |

## APPENDIX C

The context: student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US

According to the data collected for this study, the most common form of co-operative service offered through student run co-operatives in Canada and the US is that of a campus bookstore, and these are found almost exclusively offered in Québec. Student run co-operatives providing school supplies, and photocopies, and, to a lesser extent, food service outlets, are also primarily in Québec, while the vast majority of housing co-operatives are located outside Québec, mostly in the US.

**Figure 2 Services offered by student co-operatives in the US and Canada within and outside Québec**



Co-operatives serving graduate students in Canada and the US are operating within the broader context of this student-co-operative sector. The scope and distribution of services in graduate student-serving student co-operatives is somewhat different.

### A survey of Canadian and US graduate student co-operatives

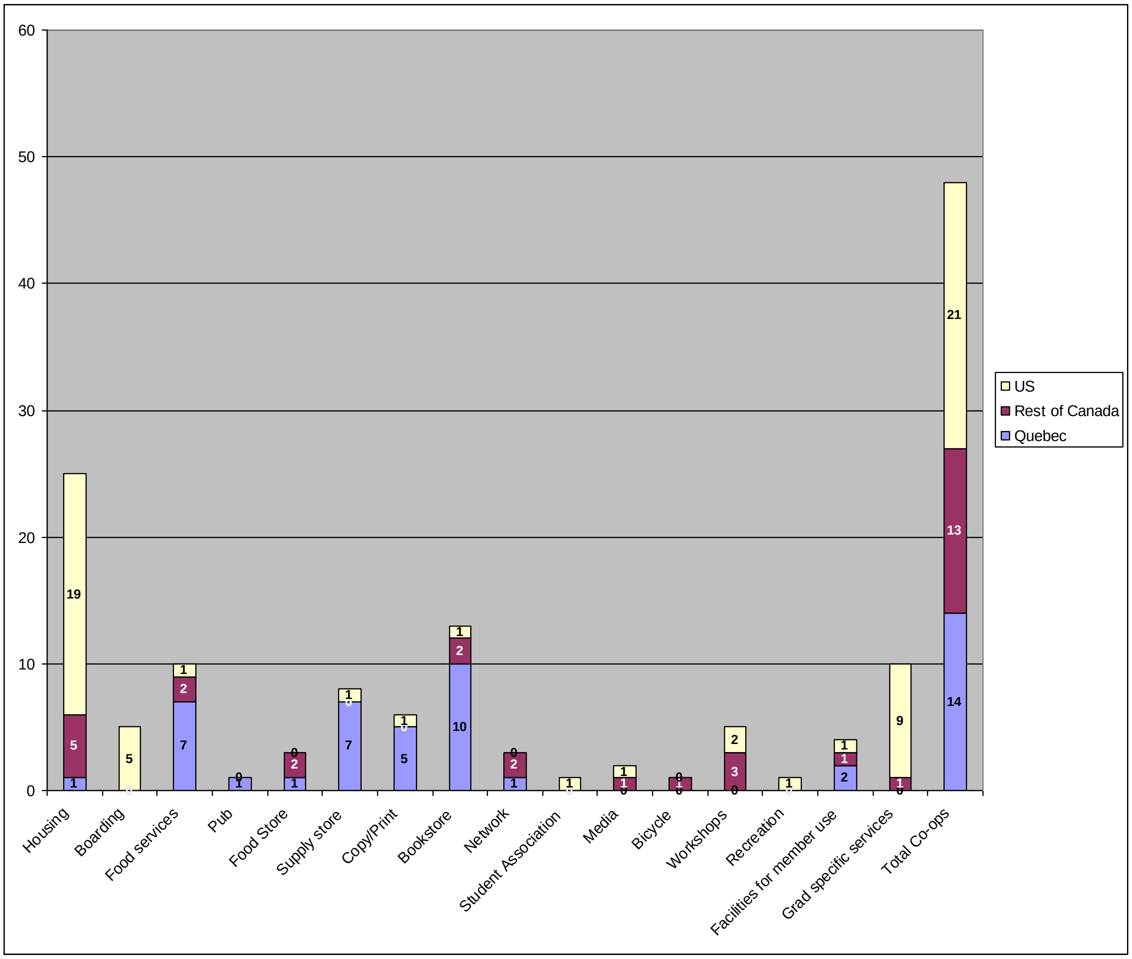
As this study is about graduate students, this report sought to identify student co-operatives that are serving a graduate student membership. For this reason, data is included only where:

- the co-operative is owned and led by students
- the co-operative membership includes graduate students
- the co-operative is providing a service for use by students
- the co-operative self-defines as a co-operative
- the co-operative is still operational

where co-operatives had a central governing body (i.e. several houses within an organization with a central board of directors), it is counted as a single co-operative.

When considering student-led co-operatives with graduate student members, the field looks somewhat different than the general picture of student-led co-operatives in Canada and the US. This study found that there are 48 active, student-owned co-operatives that included graduate students as members operating in Canada and the US (Figure 3, below, summarizes the information collected). Of these 27 were based in Canada, 14 of which were in Québec.

**Figure 3: Co-ops with graduate student members by service and region (US, Quebec and Rest of Canada (ROC))**




Whether a co-operative includes graduate students as members is largely a factor of whether there are graduate students attending the institution in question. By far the most common service offered by student-led co-operatives with graduate student members is housing, followed by bookstores. This differs from the general landscape of student co-operatives, primarily due to the large number of Québec Cégeps, which don't have graduate programs.

Of the student-led cooperatives with graduate members, 10 (21%) offered graduate student specific services. All but two of these were housing co-operatives with dedicated residences. The others were a food service co-operative located in a graduate student association's building, and a student association that waives membership fees for graduate students working on their thesis.

The co-operatives were split between those focused on offering a single service, and those with multiple services. Of 48 co-operatives, 27 offered a single services, nine offered two services, and 12 offered three or more services. The majority of single-service co-operatives (19) offered housing. Where a housing co-operative had two services, the second is usually boarding—dining privileges for non-residences. The exceptions were Guelph Co-operative, which offers both housing and a bookstore, and the Student Co-operative Association, which offers housing, boarding, public workshops and a public meeting space.

# APPENDIX D

## Co-operative organizations

### British Columbia Co-operatives Association

The British Columbia Co-operatives Association (British Columbia Co-operative Association, n.d.b.) has a new initiative called Momentum, designed to help co-operative development.

Address: 212-1737 West 3rd Ave., Victoria, BC

Phone: 604-662-3906

### Canadian Co-operatives Association

The national association of Canadian co-operatives. Conducts research and offers meetings, information and resources. Also lobbies on behalf of the co-operative sector.

Phone 613-238-6711

http://www.coopscanada.coop/

### Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economy, University of Victoria

The Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economy (n.d.) is a research centre at the University of Victoria.

Address: c/o University of Victoria, PO Box 1700, STN CSC, Victoria, BC, V8W2Y2
Email: rochdale@uvic.ca

http://uvic.ca/research/centres/cccbe

### Coopsco

A network of student co-operatives, largely bookstores and cafes, in Quebec.

Address: 7333, place Des Roseraies, bureau 501, Anjou (Québec), H1M 2X6

Phone: 514-352-1121

http://www.fqcms.com

### Ontario Student Co-operative Association

A network of student housing co-operatives in Ontario.

Address: 96 Gerrard St. E. c/o Neill-Wyick Co-operative College, Toronto, ON, M5B 1G7

Email: info@osca.coop

Phone: 416-977-2320

### North American Students of Co-operation

NASCO hosts an annual conference with training workshops and networking opportunities for co-operative members, board members, and staff.

330 S. Wells St., Suite 618-F
Chicago, IL, 60606 USA