

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

The art of partnership: Expanding representations and interpretations

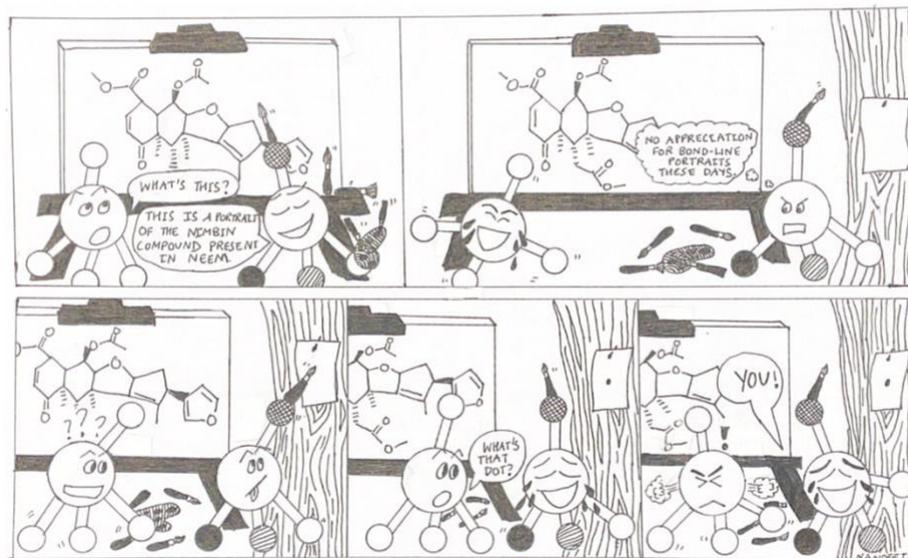
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This third iteration of Voices From the Field branches into a new arena. The goal of this section remains the creation of a venue for a wide range of contributors to address important questions around and aspects of students-as-partners work without going through the intensive submission, peer-review, and revision processes. The new arena into which we are branching is artistic genres/visual representations of partnership. This branching is in keeping with arguments that several *IJSaP* editorial board members, advisory board members, and authors have made regarding the need to expand the set of respected genres (Healey et al., 2020) and to be more inclusive of a diversity of authors (Cook-Sather et al., 2020), particularly student authors (Felten et al., 2013), in explorations of teaching and learning. Challenging Western ways of knowing and being in research and representation (Yahlnaaw, 2019), this specific expansion of Voices From the Field aims to contribute to decolonizing efforts that move beyond the primacy of the written word in white-supremacy ways of thinking in general and in representing pedagogical partnership work in particular.

It was Nandeeta Bala—*IJSaP* communications officer, Vassar College class of 2022, and co-editor of this collection—who inspired our expansion into the artistic realm. Co-facilitator of [STEPP, Vassar College's pedagogical partnership program](#), Nandeeta has brought a number of forms of creativity to her work while she was an undergraduate student there (see Bala, 2021, 2022). Specifically in the realm of visual representation and as part of a conversation on ways of communicating complex subject matter and engaging students, Nandeeta had shared with participants in STEPP some of the cartoons she created for her undergraduate chemistry courses, like this one:

*BOND-LINE STRUCTURES**How do they resemble molecules?*

Nandeeta and Alison Cook-Sather (*IJSaP* US-team faculty co-editor) brainstormed possibilities for diversifying our efforts to communicate about partnership work through *IJSaP* by expanding representations of experiences and understandings of partnership into the visual realm. In doing so we were also inspired by others who have used artistic renderings to represent and analyze partnership, as Lucy Mercer-Mapstone and Sophia Abbot (2020) did on the cover and in the section overviews of their edited collection, *The Power of Partnership: Students, Staff, and Faculty Revolutionizing Higher Education*. Sarah Slates (*IJSaP* US-team student co-editor) enthusiastically joined this brainstorming, helping to introduce the idea to the *IJSaP* editorial board. With approval secured from the editorial board for this expansion of *Voices From the Field*, the three of us composed the following invitation to extend to prospective contributors: "Submission should include artistic/visual images/videos that represent, describe, or explain your experience of partnership and up to 200 words of context/additional explanation."

We learned from how we framed this initial invitation that both we and author/creators made assumptions about what we were expecting. The most basic definition of "art" does not prescribe any particular medium, only encompasses the expression of human creativity and imagination, typically in a visual form. What we learned, though, is that different people have different understandings of what counts as creativity and artistic representation. Furthermore, when understandings of this form of expression intersected with different ideas of pedagogical partnership, we found ourselves wrestling with two sets of complexities: what constitutes an artistic representation and what constitutes pedagogical partnership. Because the goal of this invitation was to contribute to decolonizing and expanding forms of representation of students- as-partners work, we embraced art's and artists' propensity to push the boundaries of creative visual representations and worked with authors to express as clearly as possible (in their chosen medium) and describe (in their accompanying words) how what they were representing

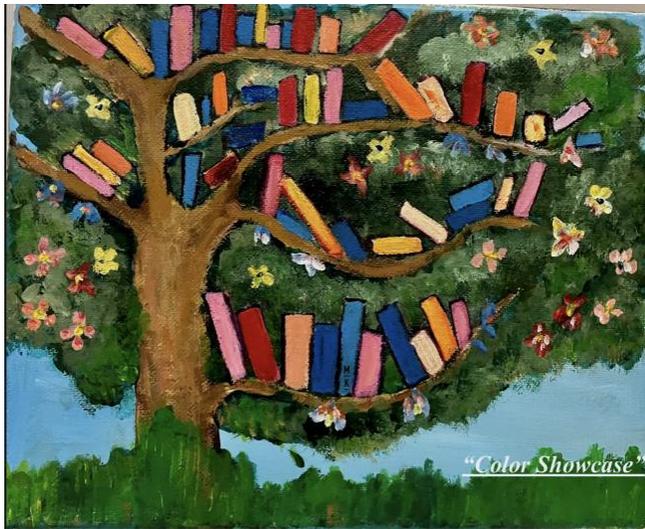
constituted partnership – a clarification process that deepened and expanded our own thinking.

This collection of visual and artistic representations of partnership includes contributions by nine faculty members, five doctoral students, three undergraduates, one teaching and learning fellow, and one staff member. These contributors are experiencing pedagogical partnership in universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, and the United States. They used the following media: paint, ink color pencils and Indian ink pen on pastel paper, digital images, photo grid, digital animation, pottery, Canva collage, mixed media, participatory map, audio, and video. In addition to this range of representations, we received inspiring responses from contributors. In early communications, some people wrote: “This sounds like a really creative project,” “I was very excited to learn of this wonderful project,” and “This is a wonderful idea, and the process was engaging and a welcome format to communicate understanding.” These expressions of appreciation and gratitude continued throughout the creation and editing processes as we worked through assumptions and ways to pursue all our shared and respective goals.

The affective dimension of these processes as it informed the intellectual and creative aspects was as important as the way in which this expansion of genres challenged and expanded our thinking. More than with written-word analyses only, contributors seemed to *feel* what they were capturing, and we as editors *felt* what contributors were aiming to capture in their representations. We felt different parts of our brains and bodies processing what we saw and heard, and these more fully embodied experiences also contributed to a more inclusive attitude and spirit. Not only did we expand our own understandings, we recognized, as one of our *IJSaP* co-editors, Amrita Kaur, noted, that these media are particularly helpful for introducing pedagogical partnership work to those unfamiliar with it. The various forms of art, the descriptions, and the diversity of contexts represented capture the power of partnership through emotional as well as intellectual stimulation and are worthy of attention.

As we endeavor to capture in this introduction, curating this collection—from articulating the call for contributions, through reviewing submissions, through working with contributors to honor the parameters as well as the spirit of the call and their work—was an educative, inspiring, and eye-opening process for us as editors. The range of representations and descriptions we received challenged us to think more open-mindedly about visual/artistic representation and about partnership—a welcome expansion of perception and interpretation. The diversity of representations challenged us—and will challenge readers/viewers—to be okay, as *IJSaP* co-editor Kelly Matthews noted, with contestation and uncertainty and holding contradictory thoughts and emotions, all of which are essential to moving toward inclusion and justice in today’s world.

Each contribution to the collection occupies a page of this single document. All references are collected at the end of the document. We invite you to move through the pages slowly, letting yourself experience the kind of whole-body response we did in perceiving visual representations. We invite you as well to attend to the insights you gain into how a diversity of people conceptualize partnership and convey practices and insights that are less likely to be captured in and conveyed through words. We hope to continue to expand ways of representing partnership, and we welcome ongoing dialogue about these efforts.



“COLOR” AND “NOIR” SHOWCASE OF THE ART OF PARTNERSHIP

The paintings represent two versions of partnership in teaching-learning. The tree’s strong trunk represents the staff because of their subject knowledge and research expertise and teaching-learning experience. The different levels and widths of the branches depict the assorted staff’s support to meet students’ needs. The books, differing in size, position, and color, represent the students. Each student/book on the tree embodies multiple life experiences and learnings. The degree and direction in which the books are leaning on each other or the tree represents students’ relations among themselves and with the staff during the learning process. When the staff acknowledges the uniqueness resulting from diverse experiences of both the learners and staff, it is a “color showcase” of partnership. The showcase conveys a complex process of establishing partnership among staff and students and among students themselves with the aid of staff’s facilitation. It celebrates and empowers each person’s experiences as knowledge within the whole act of teaching-learning. However, when the staff assumes the students and themselves as abstract entities devoid of diverse experiences, the outcome is a “noir (colorless) showcase” of the partnership. This showcase represents an oversimplified process of establishing partnership among abstract actors of teaching and learning.

—Mehak Kapur, PhD candidate, McMaster University, Canada (kapurm2@mcmaster.ca)



THE ALCHEMY OF PEDAGOGY

Focusing on shared inquiry, my experience of partnership with students is alchemical. This alchemy is here represented by the book and its symbols for gold (the sun) and the philosopher's stone (those shapes signify the four classical elements: earth, air, fire, and water). Partnership is alchemical as it involves the communion of ideas that create an empyreal-like whole greater than the sum of its (celestial) parts. This communion is symbolized through the depiction of the cosmos. Antonio Gramsci (1971) refers to formal education as part of a nexus of institutions that maintain hegemony; he distinguishes between the traditional intelligentsia that upholds power and an organic class who, through culture, articulate the experiences of the masses. The cosmos unfolds before the learners in the foreground, who represent knowledge from below (or the organic class traditionally dispossessed in the classroom). Critical pedagogy, first espoused by Paulo Freire, grows from Gramsci; it develops students' understanding of hegemony and their abilities to take constructive action. The surveilling eyes are confronted by the learners to symbolize partnership as an act of defiance against hegemonic classroom structures. Efforts to discover the philosopher's stone were known as the Magnum Opus or "Great Work"; in my experience, partnership is the great work constituting authentic learning.

—Chris Cachia, lecturer, Department of Sociology and learning strategist, Faculty of Community Services, Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada (ccachia@ryerson.ca)



[Video of UNCW AIDS Quilt Arts and Science Showcase](#)

ARTIVISM AS A MECHANISM FOR CREATING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS: THE AIDS QUILT ARTS AND SCIENCE SHOWCASE

The southeast region of the US has the highest number of people living with HIV due to disparities in access to health care, education, and funding, while many in the US remain unaware that HIV/AIDS is a global health crisis. For this reason, two faculty partnered with student musicians, dancers, researchers, visual artists, and HIV/AIDS activists to create the UNCW [University of North Carolina, Wilmington] AIDS Quilts Arts and Science Showcase. Faculty and students held brainstorming meetings to share ideas in open spaces as students explored processes of artistic expression in partnership with each partner involved in the project. Students engaged in cross-disciplinary work as artists, who became songwriter throughout the process. Personal experiences with HIV/AIDS survivors provided an understanding of the context around their work. Partnerships created meaningful relationships, as student musicians, visual artists, and HIV/AIDS survivors discussed the pain, loss, challenges in health care, and continual barriers to living a normal life with the disease. These partnerships created openness, empathy, and understanding, which supported the important link between experiential learning, process-engaged ideation, the creation of personal and meaningful music, and educational experiences built upon consequential impacts. The video offers glimpses into the many forms of ARTivism we co-created.

—Jonathan Kladder, Ph.D. (music), UNC Wilmington, USA (kladderj@uncw.edu) and Michaela Howells, Ph.D (anthropology), UNC Wilmington, USA (howellsm@uncw.edu)

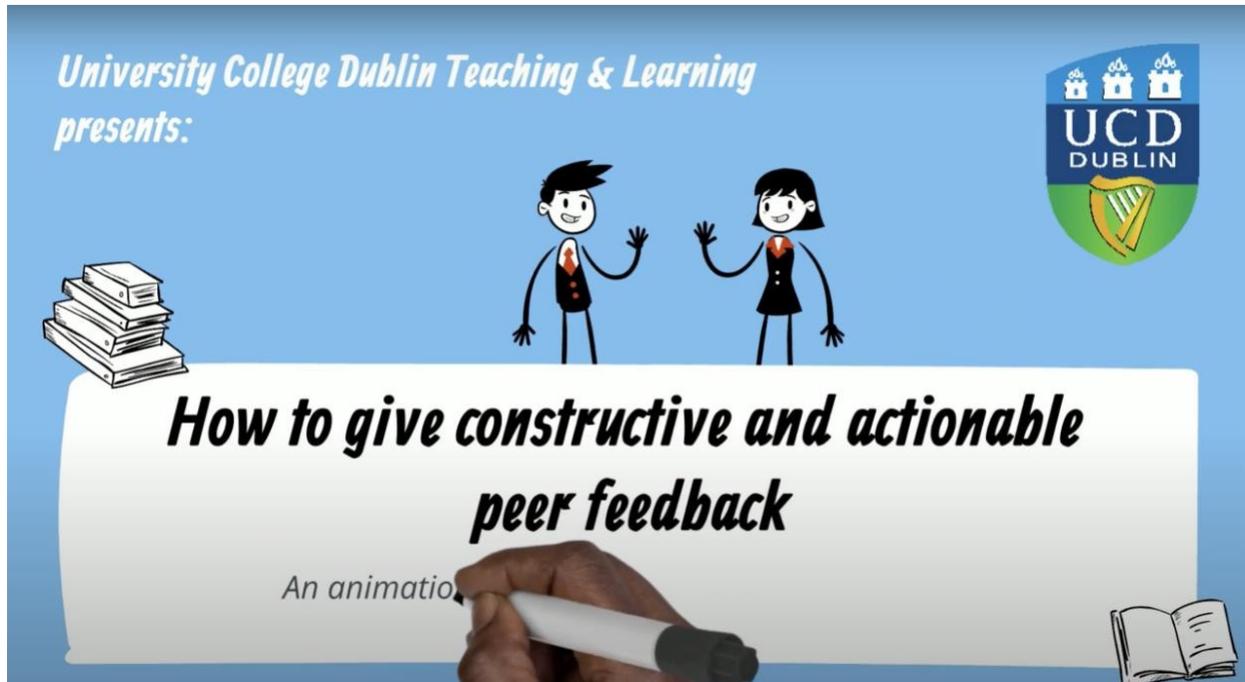


GROWTH OF WISDOM

I draw upon surrealism to express the conceptual complexity of students-as-partners approaches when your students are also your colleagues. Identities are fluid, multifaceted, performative, and influenced by the dynamics of intersectionality. I work within

academic and professional development of university teaching staff, supporting their reflective practice, growth, and recognition as teachers in higher education. People often perceive a division between the roles of student and teacher, but in this type of space, this false dichotomy is broken down into a dynamic learning partnership that enables a shared learning journey and a deeper examination of self as simultaneously both student and teacher. For some this can be unsettling; for others, exciting. In either instance, an unlearning of traditional power dynamics is necessary to achieve genuine reflection and growth as a teacher, and, in turn, return to one's own students with fresh eyes and renewed vision. Partnership then, is shared, dynamic, challenging, exploratory, and inherently essential to quality teaching practice. Here, the Janus head of classical teacher/student identity is being smashed by the living fractal of the learner as a seed and tree in one, enabling the dawn of wisdom to occur.

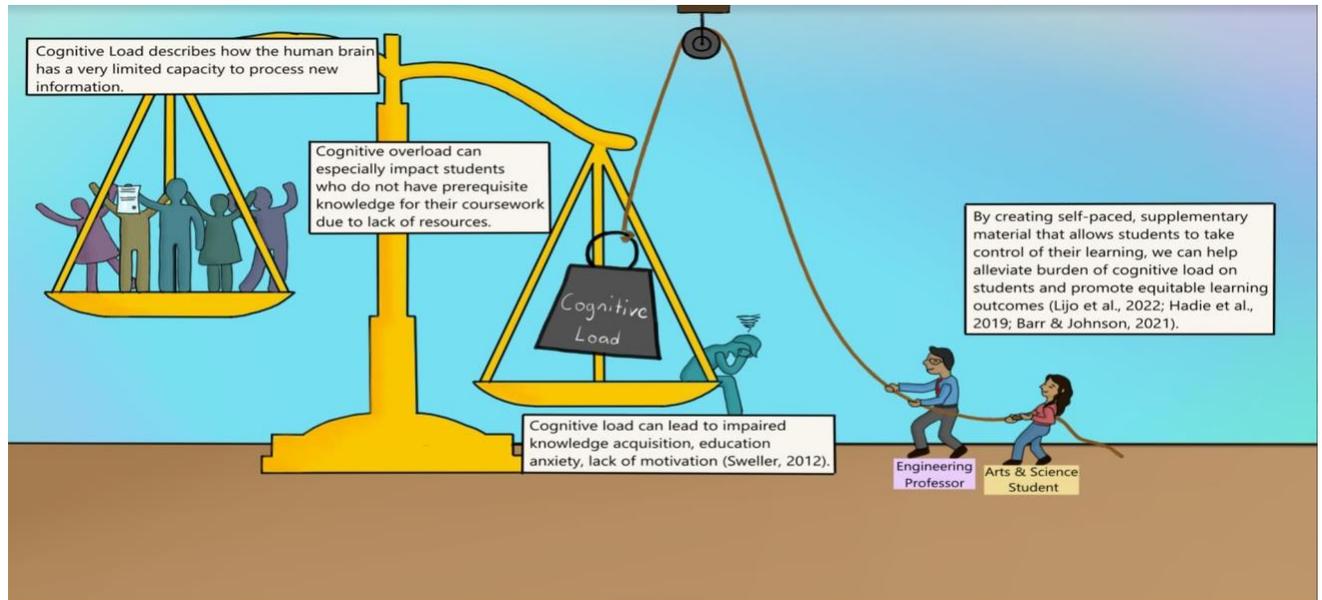
—Stephanie Kizimchuk, PhD GCTE AFHEA, learning & teaching fellow, University of Canberra, Australia (stephanie.kizimchuk@canberra.edu.au)



DIMENSIONS AND EFFECTS OF PARTNERSHIP

During our students-as-partners experience, we worked together to produce an animated continuing professional development resource for students, a video called “[How to Give Constructive and Actionable Peer Feedback](#)” (UCD Teaching & Learning, 2022). Feedback is an integral part of improving work that often involves partnership between feedback giver and receiver but is a complex skill to master. “Productive discomfort” (Slates & Cook-Sather, 2021, p. 229) was inherent in the project, requiring learning how to work together as partners and to use a video creation tool, so developing new knowledge and skills was vital. The project was characterised by two forms of partnership: (a) between the students and academic to produce the animation and (b) between the students via the focus of the animation on peer feedback. The focus on how to communicate efficiently with peers enabled the application of theory to the outside world. It also provided the opportunity to give and receive feedback to improve the animation collaboratively, which informed the development of lifelong skills. The project was mutually beneficial as it allowed the development of a trusted relationship between peers (previously impacted by the pandemic), and our animation will hopefully benefit others by highlighting the importance of feedback.

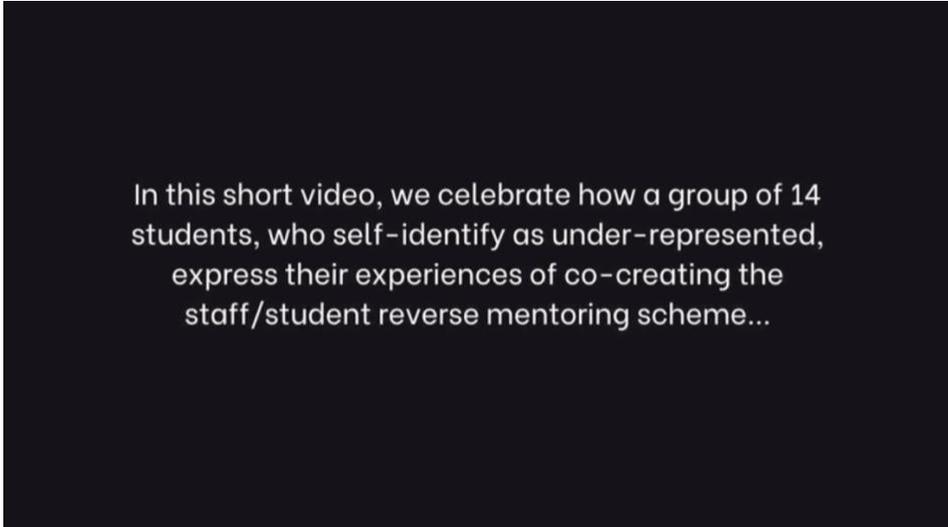
—Katie Costello, undergraduate psychology student; Martha Selby, undergraduate psychology student; and Emma Medland, senior lecturer in higher education, University of Surrey, England (e.medland@surrey.ac.uk)



UNDERSTANDING THE COGNITIVE LOAD ISSUES IN ENGINEERING EDUCATION

In this unique and unlikely partnership between two members from very different faculties, we studied the cognitive load of engineering students. The partnership is unique because the first author's (Adan's) abstract and interdisciplinary background in the Arts & Science Program is very different from the hands-on education of engineering students taught by Seshasai (second author and associate professor at McMaster's W Booth School). However, exploring the literature, we could collectively draw parallels between the research and Adan's own experiences. The engineering course load is undoubtedly challenging. For students from less privileged backgrounds, it can be painfully overwhelming. There is prerequisite knowledge for these courses that some do not have, and this increases the risk of cognitive overload and poor learning outcomes. As an economically challenged immigrant, Adan was very familiar with this feeling coming from a program with a rather homogenous and privileged student body. Fortunately, her lived experience as an undergraduate with cognitive overload enabled us to give this study a unique insight. It also motivates us to support this research in developing supplementary material to reduce these gaps in knowledge for students across all disciplines. We believe that improving equitable learning outcomes for students from any discipline would be a true measure of success in this partnership.

—Adan Amer, Arts & Science Program, McMaster University, Canada and Seshasai Srinivasan, W Booth School of Engineering Practice and Technology, (ssriniv@mcmaster.ca)



In this short video, we celebrate how a group of 14 students, who self-identify as under-represented, express their experiences of co-creating the staff/student reverse mentoring scheme...

CELEBRATING THE VALUE OF CO-CREATING STUDENT-FOCUSED RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNDER-REPRESENTED STUDENTS

[This collection of images, audio, and text capturing a research partnership](#) is a celebration of the time Rachael was lucky to spend working with a cross-discipline student team who self-identify as under-represented for reasons including, in their own words, being: mature, disabled, non-binary, transgender, Muslim, Latino, working-class, dyslexic, a black woman, international, British Pakistani, an ex-offender, low-income, a woman in STEM, and Vietnamese. The team worked together to co-create a reverse mentoring project between staff and students, which will be implemented in the 2022–2023 academic year. After the research period, the student team became research participants and were paired together for a recorded reflective conversation online about their experiences of working on this project together. They were given a series of questions to discuss without the researcher present. This video co-created by Rachael (project academic lead) and Grace (student intern) takes extracts from those reflective conversations to visually and audibly celebrate the value of co-creating research designed to improve under-represented student experiences, specifically with students who identify as under-represented. The video is an authentic exploration of working with students as partners and using students' own words from their reflections with the aim of encouraging researchers to engage with students from diverse backgrounds at the outset of their projects. You can also read [students' captions accompanying their images](#) used in the video.

—Rachael O'Connor, lecturer and director of Student Support in Law, School of Law, University of Leeds, England (r.e.oconnor@leeds.ac.uk) and Grace Pountney, LITE student project assistant (digital), BSc microbiology student (industrial), University of Leeds, England

[Photos and captions that accompany images in the video](#)



A TANDEM JOURNEY THROUGH THE EDUCATIONAL LABYRINTH

In my role as an educator, what is foremost in my mind is to provide a “space” within higher education that is learner centred and focuses on fostering creative thinkers and challenging learners to confront ambiguity and adaptability. Learners as partners is an essential aspect in encouraging independence, meaningful communication, curiosity, and flexibility, which are essential attributes for our future graduates. Seeking and understanding that student’s voice moves towards blurring learner-teacher identities to create a dialectical pedagogy (Vygotsky, 1978). Within this image, the playful skipping rope represents two access points into and out of a labyrinth, recognising that the educational partners have different perspectives, responsibilities, and lived experiences. A labyrinth is an ancient symbol of wholeness and an analogy for a student’s educational journey, representing a path to their own centre and back out into the world. It is not a maze or a puzzle to be solved but a path of meaning to be experienced.

A labyrinth has one entrance—one way in and one way out. When learners walk the path, travelling around short curves and long curves, they sometimes move out on the edge, sometimes circle around the centre. Here the learners are not lost, but neither can they quite see where they are going. The chairs represent interaction and openness to engage with the unpredictability and uncertainty of learning environments, influenced by Dewey’s recognition that uncertainty should be valued and that reflective inquiry is born from the experience of doubt (Garrison, 1996).

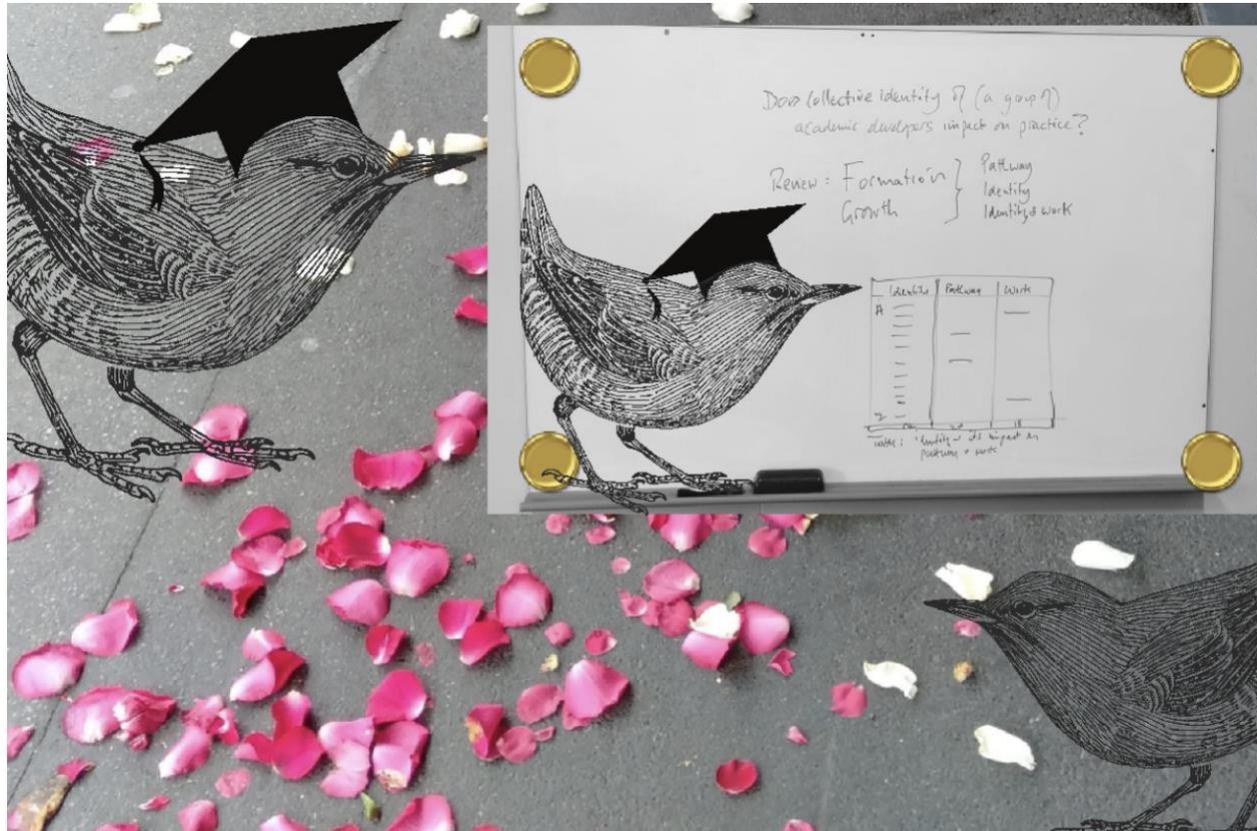
—Anne Marie Morrin, Mary Immaculate College, Ireland (annemarie.morrin@mic.ul.ie)



PARTNERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION

We—an undergraduate student (Nyrose), a staff member (Cassidy), and a graduate student (Sipos) at University of British Columbia (UBC)—pictured in the top center of the photo grid, partnered to create a 3-day short course called the Sustainability Education Intensive (SEI). Members of the UBC and wider community contributed resources (e.g., a bike trailer from the Sustainability Office to bring materials to Day 1 at UBC Farm) and wisdom (e.g., an elder from Musqueam Nation opened that day). Faculty, staff, and students co-created or honed aspects of sustainability in their course, program, or initiative, captured in summary posters like the one shown in the grid. We shared responsibility for developing all aspects of the SEI, including promotions, lesson plans, materials, and facilitation of activities. Deep engagement of participants focused on sustainability literacy, sharing of artifacts, one-on-one chats, small group work, and individual reflection and writing, captured in the photo grid. Drawing on analyses of participant feedback and surveys, we co-presented at local and national conferences, co-published in journals and book chapters, and shared materials and tips for sustainability teaching and learning on a website. The connections, confidence, and skill application captured in these photos of partnership continue to guide us in our other work.

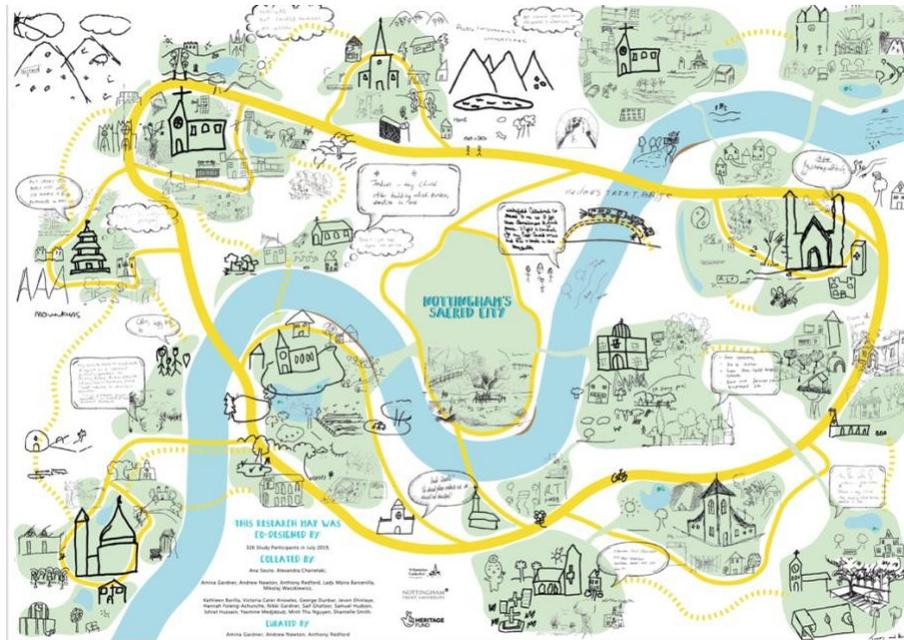
—Alice Cassidy, Yona Sipos, and Sarah Nyrose, University of British Columbia, Canada
(alicecas@telus.net)



A SECURE BASE

This collage captures a student-staff partnership nurturing in a “nest.” The art of such partnership may be analogous to a baby-parent bird relationship where the parent creates a cozy environment and communicates survival skills. In parallel, staff creates a comfortable learning space and teaches students how to survive in their respective journeys. A nest is, ideally, a secure base (Bowlby, 1988). As Bowlby’s attachment theory claims, a secure base supports exploration of the nurtured subject (in this case, the baby bird) by providing a safe base to return to any time by not interfering unnecessarily and by being encouraging and accepting of the exploration (Feeney & Thrush, 2010). I see genuine partnership in such imagery. It goes beyond collaborating and mentoring. It involves numerous instances of trust-building between the two. While the staff provides a secure base for the student’s optimal learning experience, the student appreciates the profound care, or in a way, unconditional love (Miller, 2018), and turns that into energy to thrive. My explorations are supported by the warm encouragement of “give it a go!” Sometimes, our on-campus florist scatters beautiful petals on the pathway. Walking out of supervision meetings have been like entering this pathway, giving me much courage.

—Yoko Mori, University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand
(moryo752@student.otago.ac.nz)



STUDENTS AS RESEARCH PARTNERS

This image represents “[Mapping Nottingham’s Sacred Spaces](#),” a 5-week long research summer scholarship, part of a Heritage Lottery Fund project (2019). My contribution to the project was to explore how residents in Nottingham connected with the idea of sacredness. This was delivered with the collaboration of five students from the Department of Architecture and Built Environment and volunteers from different disciplines who engaged in a literature review on sacredness, the co-design of research tools (a creative questionnaire), the gathering of data from over 300 participants, and the final representation of the data through this conceptual map. As a result, this map encapsulates the spirit of this research project, an authentic collaboration that permeated the process and the final outcome. The map was co-designed, using the drawings that participants included in their creative questionnaires. It is a collage highlighting the main three themes identified: sacredness as green spaces, religious spaces, and homes. This map represents how students can become research partners, creating a collaboration that was developed and treasured by all, removing hierarchies, sharing skills, and recognising each other’s contributions to this extracurricular project. This experience has been so transformative that I cannot imagine working on a research project without the students’ partnership. Their ingenuity, creativity, passion, and interest in research, combined with my experience and expertise, has generated outcomes and outputs that still influence my research and are genuinely appreciated by other researchers, students, and members of the public. I am always promoting a continuum with previous knowledge and experiences, always enhancing, and promoting the art of partnership at the core of my research.

—Ana Souto Galvan, Nottingham Trent University, England (ana.souto@ntu.ac.uk)



STUDENTS AS PARTNERS FOR PERFORMANCE-MAKING PEDAGOGY

The layered partnership of [our performance-making pedagogy project](#) (represented by the video) helped students learn more than working independently. Selected quotes from graduate students' reflections demonstrate the value of the partnership and impact on their learning and development. For example, one student wrote: "It provided me with the perspective that obtaining social justice is active, communicative, and involves community. Therefore, I can see more opportunity for social justice within the culture and community surrounding me." Another reflected: "The importance of collaborating with different departments and cohorts came to light after partaking in this social justice project." Additionally, the partnership provided opportunities for students to learn to be comfortable with uncomfortable conversations, which helped support individual growth and strengthen partnerships. This can be seen in the following student comments: "It was nice to put myself in uncomfortable situations...I believe it is important to growth, for one to be able to process these feelings in uncomfortable situations" and "I was inspired with how people were willing to help one another. I actually gained more than I had anticipated. I made new contacts and encounters while learning about marginalization and current issues." The partnerships developed through this critical arts inquiry project helped to expose all students to critical perspectives on a range of social justice topics while also encouraging development of transferable skills like teamwork and communication.

—James M. DeVita, director of High Impact Pathways, associate professor of higher education, University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA (devitaj@uncw.edu) and Christine Liao, associate professor of elementary, cultural arts and Art Education MAT program coordinator, Watson College of Education, University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA (liaoc@uncw.edu)

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