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IJSaP is a journal about learning and teaching together in higher education. IJSaP explores new perspectives, practices, and policies regarding how students and staff (used here and subsequently to refer to academic staff/faculty, professional staff, and other stakeholders) are working in partnership to enhance learning and teaching in higher education. Shared responsibility for teaching and learning is the underlying premise of students as partners, and IJSaP is produced using a student-staff partnership approach.

IJSaP is designed to appeal to a wide audience of readers and potential authors in the higher education community. It aims to publish high quality research articles, case studies, reflective essays, opinion pieces, reviews, and other pieces from around the world. Contributions written collaboratively by students and staff are particularly encouraged, although single and other co-authored pieces are also acceptable. All submissions go through a rigorous review process involving both staff and students.

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EDITORIAL

Five Propositions for Genuine Students as Partners Practice

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Students as partners (SaP) is a metaphor for university education that challenges traditional assumptions about the identities of, and relationships between, learners and teachers. Through the surprising (to some) juxtaposition of "student" and "partner," this metaphor imagines and makes way for respectful, mutually beneficial learning partnerships where students and staff work together on all aspects of educational endeavours. SaP offers hope for students and staff seeking relational approaches to learning — built on and through dialogue — that enable shared responsibility and joint ownership for teaching, learning, and assessment. Because of its focus on dialogic practices, partnership provides a counter-narrative to current neoliberal agendas that translate into client-commodity-customer discourses of students and fee-for-service models of higher education driven by economic forces that trump broader social agendas.

If we think of student-staff partnerships as "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis" (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014, pp. 6-7), then partnerships can unfold in teaching, learning, and assessment activities or through subject-based research and inquiry approaches, including the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), or in curriculum development efforts where students can become teaching consultants (Bovill, 2013; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). As "a joint endeavour to shape and influence university teaching and learning," I have argued that SaP is an ethos "that values the collaborative interaction between *all* members of the university community" (Matthews, 2016, p. 3). Although the metaphor explicitly names "students" to intentionally and clearly assert the role students can assume alongside others with educational expertise, partnerships can involve: students with students, students with staff, students with senior university administrators, and students with alumni or members of industry.

As SaP is gaining momentum in many higher education institutions globally (Matthews, Cook-Sather, & Healey, in press), I believe it is important to draw together various threads of research and practice into overarching principles that can guide partnership approaches. Inspired by Felten, my intention is not to espouse *the* principles of good practice in SaP, but rather to offer these propositions as a springboard for practitioners that both attends to and encourages a diversity of approaches that "can serve as a heuristic for understanding and evaluating work in our field" (2013, p. 121). With that in mind, this editorial offers five guiding propositions underpinning genuine SaP approaches. Good practice should aspire to:

1. Foster inclusive partnerships
2. Nurture power-sharing relationships through dialogue and reflection
3. Accept partnership as a process with uncertain outcomes
4. Engage in ethical partnerships
5. Enact partnership for transformation

These propositions interweave varying strands of scholarly works (Bryson, Furlonger, & Rinaldo-Langridge, 2016; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014) and my experiences of partnership with insights from critical theorists. My goal is to illuminate power relationships and offer a tapestry of principles intended to guide practitioners. I hope they spark dialogue amongst those in partnership, while catalysing discussion and debate more broadly as we seek to engage in genuine partnerships and advocate for SaP as a way forward for higher education.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS

"Who engages in SaP?," and "what is the form of the partnership practice?", are two important, interrelated questions that must be considered in terms of fostering inclusive partnerships. There are no 'step-by-step instructions' or a 'cookbook recipe' for partnership, which is enacted based on creativity of the people involved who translate the ethos of SaP into practice. As Bovill stated, "all SaP projects will look different and involve different actors" (2017, p. 3).

Without reflecting on diversity and inclusion, a risk is that SaP may be biased in favour of "like students" partnering with "like staff", which is particularly worrisome in paired or small group partnerships where students or staff are recruited through some selection process. Indeed, Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) found that most SaP work reported in their literature review took this form. Bourdieu's (1988, 2003) theorising on power in societal structures, including universities, illuminated the role of habitus, or our unconsciously formed habits, dispositions, and preferences that are both influenced by our position in society, while also influencing our preferences and choices in our daily lives. In other words, without thinking about it, we will tend to be drawn to partnerships with people like us. For Bourdieu, this unconscious process reproduces the existing power structures in societies. This presents the risk of socialising students to the existing language and practices of higher education, rather than challenging and reframing them. As Greene lamented, "I have not easily come to terms with the ways in which what education permits and forbids in different people's experiences too often follows the lines of class, gender, and race" (1994, p. 2).

In higher education, SaP needs to create spaces for participation and partnerships where members from differing social classes, countries, backgrounds, religions, disciplines, and so on, can work together on teaching and learning. Cook-Sather and Agu highlighted the transformative power for equity-seeking students who are included in SaP: "In one student's words, the experience of being positioned as a partner 'made me feel like who I am is more than enough—that my identity, my thoughts, my ideas are significant and valuable'" (2013, p. 277). Drawing on Bourdieu, partnerships engaging participants with differing habitus, who engage in reflectivity, are beginning the important journey of disrupting traditional hierarchies in higher education structures.

Fostering inclusive SaP begins with acknowledging the diversity of our student and staff populations, and then reflecting on the design of our SaP programs, to reveal ways in which they may unintentionally be catering to certain students and staff while excluding others. Several important works (for examples see: Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard & Moore-Cherry, 2016; Cook-Sather & Agu, 2013; Bell et al., 2017) and projects unfolding (for example see: REACT Project, 2017; Green, 2017) explicitly address diversity, inclusion or cross-cultural learning in SaP. Bovill (2017) offered a framework outlining various levels of participation in partnership, while the Bryson and colleagues' (2016) Model A--Model B framework highlights the spectrum of opportunities for SaP from paired or small group partnerships where students are selected and typically working with staff in an extracurricular capacity, to partnership enacted in the assessed curriculum that reaches more students.

Ideally, institutions will direct attention to the experiences of a diversity of students as the focus of partnership work, while also offering a plethora of partnership opportunities that specifically seek to include students and staff from all backgrounds in meaningful, power-sharing learning partnerships that shape the university.

NURTURING POWER-SHARING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH DIALOGUE AND REFLECTION

Power, whether discussed or left unspoken, is always a factor in SaP interactions. The intention of SaP is not to eliminate power or tip the scales of power in favor of one group over the other. As Foucault (1982) suggested, power is ubiquitous, so trying to get rid of it is a futile exercise. Bourdieu (1988; 2003) grounded power in society and challenged us to be reflective in regard to how power unfolds in social systems where individuals possess certain habits and capital (resources in a broad sense) that either advantage or disadvantage them in social interactions. Theories of power offer a framework to illuminate power in SaP, to discuss it within partnerships, or reflect upon power dynamics as SaP practitioners and researchers.

SaP practitioners should aspire to share power within their partnerships. Cook-Sather and colleagues (2014) framed SaP in terms of equitable contributions by recognising the differing expertise that partners bring based on their experiences, positions, and perspectives. Searle, Gibbons, Haynes, and Potter (2015) linked expertise in partnerships with power generally. Expertise represents an important form of symbolic capital in universities and its possession is associated with power and influence from a Bourdieuian perspective. SaP creates space to re-imagine expertise, particularly that of students in regards to learning, teaching and the student experience in current higher education. By framing expertise in terms of power, partners can explicitly discuss their capital and its unique contribution specific to their position in the university. Through ongoing dialogue about expertise and contributions, and continuous reflection, power is not diminished, but instead shared as all partners come to appreciate the resources (capital) they have to offer. As one example, a partnership of undergraduate students and faculty to redesign a course found that, "By working together to take full advantage of all of the team's expertise, we began to understand the true meaning and importance of shared power through collaboration" (Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008, p. 5).

Always attentive to the power dynamics at play, those in partnership benefit from engaging in reflection. As several scholars have argued (e.g. Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970;

Schon, 1987), learning happens when we reflect on practice. Thus, simply doing SaP without learning the language, values, or intentions of SaP disadvantages those involved and diminishes the transformative potential of SaP for individuals, the universities, and the broader movement. I do not mean that practitioners must agree on language, follow the same 'recipe', or insist that SaP is a set of specific values. I have argued elsewhere that institutions should grapple with what SaP means in their context and decide together how to talk about partnership as an important part of the cultural change process (Matthews, 2016). Here, I am primarily drawing on Freire's (1970) notion of praxis as both action and reflection unfolding continuously and simultaneously. SaP should create space for open dialogue about the principles of partnership drawing on its language and participants' intentions. For Freire, action without reflection, or conversely reflection without action, is insufficient to transform the realities of those engaged in revolutionary praxis. For SaP, the risk is that those engaged are doing partnership work, even great SaP work, but without any space to reflect on what they are doing and why it matters for themselves and higher education more broadly, it lacks its transformative power for individuals and their institutions.

Several scholars have argued for the centrality of ongoing reflection in SaP (see Kehler, Verwood, & Smith, 2017; Seale et al., 2014). An important example of reflections on partnership that emphasise the messy, 'work in progress' nature of SaP is *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education,* which inspired the inclusion of reflective essays in this journal.

ACCEPTING PARTNERSHIP AS A PROCESS WITH UNCERTAIN OUTCOMES

Healey et al. summed up this proposition well by highlighting that SaP "is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself" (2014, p. 7). While the process of engaging in partnership is associated with a range of beneficial and desired outcomes for both students and staff (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), the driving force for engaging in SaP is not achievement of any particular, predetermined outcome. This is because, as I have argued, outcomes of "students and staff genuinely working together with a shared sense of responsibility for learning and teaching in higher education will be uncertain and unpredictable" (Matthews, 2017, p. 1). The reciprocal ethos of SaP, where all involved work together through power-sharing and dialogue, gives primacy to the co-creation of shared goals and outcomes that are mutually decided during the process of partnership. As such, the outcomes of SaP are unknown at the beginning of the joint endeavour. Furthermore, the process of partnership extends into the realm of emotions inherent in human relationships, which are central to SaP yet often not discussed in the context of learning in higher education (Felten, 2017).

The significance of partnership is in the process, because through ongoing dialogue participants build the human relationships essential to engagement in learning and teaching, and traditional power hierarchies can be shifted and shared (see Freire, 1970, for more on role of dialogue related to power). This orientation is particularly relevant for partnerships in neoliberal contexts where student satisfaction survey results, employment outcomes, and global rankings dominate the minds of some institutional leaders (Freeman, 2016), who are increasingly divorced from the daily life of academic practice although tasked with strategic planning for teaching, learning, and the student experience (Shepherd, 2014). In such contexts, academics and senior administrators are caught in a web of measureable outcomes to be achieved, which diminishes the time, energy and resources devoted to the process of building meaningful, power-sharing learning relationships (see Felten et al., 2016 for insight into place of relationships in successful universities).

A risk for SaP is that it becomes appropriated for neoliberal purposes that shift the discourse of SaP from a relational process to one of achieving outcomes of student satisfaction (which has been observed in terms of student engagement, see Matthews, 2016). In this scenario, the language of SaP is adopted, while the practices become 'watered down' to ensure particular outcomes that maintain the power structures that SaP seek to disrupt.

ENGAGING IN ETHICAL PARTNERSHIPS

SaP should be governed by ethical guidelines — conducted in an ethical process and for ethical outcomes. While formal ethics approval from committees (institutional research boards) in research or SoTL govern SaP approaches that require them (e.g. informed consent, risk), I am thinking more broadly about ethics as morals or dealing in right and wrong conduct. Healey et al. stated that ethics "provide the tools needed to develop practical compromises between what is correct universally and what is right in particular situations" (2013, p. 25). Ethical behaviour is perhaps assumed in SaP as it is not widely discussed in the literature, although values and principles of mutual benefit are strong, which suggests an ethical foundation. That is, good SaP is good for all involved.

Cook-Sather and Felten (2017) discuss the process of partnership unfolding in "an ethic of reciprocity" that draws on the respect and shared responsibility for learning and teaching (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). As a relational process, "all involved — students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on — are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 12). Bryson and colleagues argued that SaP is ethical when "all are granted equality of opportunity to participate and all voices, opinions and contributions are listened to and acknowledged with mutual respect and appreciation" (2016, p. 5). I have written that, "Partnership language is being crafted around the joint endeavour of learning predicated on mutually beneficial and rewarding collaborative learning experiences" (Matthews, 2016, p. 3). However, reciprocity does not equate to ethical practice. Thus, explicitly situating SaP as ethical practice becomes important.

Ethical SaP practices involves at least three components. First, the ethics of reciprocal, mutually beneficial practice necessitates a process of power-sharing between all involved. Power-sharing in the sense that power is shared amongst all individuals who bring differing but equally important expertise essential for partnership, and all have opportunity to shape the direction, decisions, and goals of the SaP approach as agreed upon at the onset. Ethical power sharing in partnership is complicated. Building from the student voice movement, care is required to avoid the potential for student participation in SaP to be manipulated or deployed solely for institutional purposes. Second, mutualistic partnerships benefit all involved who are working together for good. However, relationships that benefit all parties can be unethical in nature if the goals or outcomes of the practice are morally questionable. For example, partnerships that collude to mislead, cheat, plagiarize, or 'cut corners' to attain an outcome are unethical. If not caught, then all involved technically benefit and if caught, all share in the risk, and thus while reciprocal, this is hardly ethical.

Finally, ethical practices in learning and teaching partnerships mean serving more than the individuals involved as SaP is part of a broader movement for social good grounded in democratic principles. Or as Dewey (1938) insisted, the experience of education should contribute to individual growth in the short term and societal good in the longer term. Barnacle and Dall'Alba recently argued for care in student engagement, which has lessons for SaP and a shared goal of contributing to "an educative process that promotes creativity, critical judgement, and ethical and social understanding towards a more just and caring world" (2017, p. 11). Cook-Sather and Felten (2017) also recently advocated for an ethic of care in SaP, reiterating that partnerships contribute to a greater good than just individualistic advancement.

ENACTING PARTNERSHIP FOR TRANSFORMATION

"The extent to which we (university communities) value students and staff working collaboratively informs the transformative potential of partnership" (Matthews et al., in press). That is, the potential to create a culture of partnership grounded in the values of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility for learning and teaching between students and staff as equal members of the university community. In other words, genuine partnership in learning and teaching is an act of resistance to the traditional, often implicit, but accepted, hierarchical structure where staff have *power over* students. Drawing again on Bourdieu's theory of power allows us to imagine beyond current approaches to higher education so that SaP can transform learning relationships toward egalitarian learning communities instead of reproducing existing hierarchies that distance learners and teachers in an increasingly neoliberal environment. The tension of transformation, as I imagine it unfolding at the individual, disciplinary, and institutional levels, is the interplay of individual agency versus structural constraints in the field of higher education. Scholars of Bourdieu debate this tension. Like Mills (2008), I interpret Bourdieu's theory of power as making space for the transformative power of individual agency. Practitioners of SaP are first and foremost transforming their own realities by engaging in an alternative form of education within the traditional structures of universities. By connecting with other practitioners and advocating for SaP, they are part of a movement seeking to transform education more broadly.

Being able to think beyond *what is* and imagine different ways of learning and teaching is perhaps why many of us are engaging in SaP. Cook-Sather and Felten (2017, p. 187) evoked the notion of liminality to position SaP as an 'as if' practice that creates space "to accommodate contingency and responsiveness as especially promising for the ways they welcome the 'as-if', the generativity of marginality, the suspension of the 'what-has-been' and the 'what-is' to allow the trying out of the 'what-could-be'". The transformative potential of SaP, for Cook-Sather and Felten (2017, p. 187), is that is moves from beyond the margins by providing practitioners "a space within which to try out this collaborative way of being 'as if' it were a way of life."

Thus, transformation begins through our own active reflection and ongoing dialogue with others about who engages and why in partnership, what it means for higher education, and how we advocate for SaP more widely.

CONCLUSION

SaP does not follow 'step-by-step instructions' — it represents a multiplicity of practices predicated on power-sharing and reflectivity from all involved, which can make partnership challenging to enact. The first step is *wanting* to engage in genuine partnership, and this editorial was developed with that in mind. These five heuristic propositions provoke practitioners, and the broader collective movement, to ask difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions about power, ethics, and equity in partnership. Not doing so risks SaP becoming elitist, exclusionary, and outcomes focused, while maintaining the traditional power structures within universities. Pondering these questions, alone, in partnership, and collectively, is necessary for the transformative potential of SaP to be realised.

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OPINION PIECE

Emotion and Partnerships

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I have a confession to make. This feels a bit risky to do in a scholarly journal, but here goes: Every partnership I have been a part of has been an emotional experience.

Does that shock you? Probably not. Personal partnerships are rooted in emotions; I feel joy when my spouse smiles and sadness when my basketball teammate is injured. The professional relationships of student-faculty partnerships are also emotional, although first-year undergraduates may feel different things than senior academics as they navigate a partnership. Yet the scholarly literature on partnerships virtually ignores emotion. That is unfortunate because both the practices we use and the research we conduct could be deepened by directly addressing the ways emotions influence partnership processes and outcomes.

EMOTION IN THE LITERATURE ON PARTNERSHIPS

In preparation for a comprehensive literature review on students-as-partners, an international group recently compiled a database of more than 380 scholarly articles related to this topic (Mercer-Mapstone, Dvorakova, Matthews, Abbot, Cheng, Felten, Knorr, Marquis, Shammas, & Swaim, 2017). Nearly 75% of these publications have appeared since 2010 as partnership has spread across higher education in many countries, although the earliest was published in 1969. The word “emotion” (or any variation or synonym for that word) appears only once among the nearly 5,300 words in the titles of those publications. Of course, titles do not tell the whole story, but scholars typically use titles to convey the essential themes and topics of their work. Systematic absence in the scholarly literature suggests that emotion is not a commonly studied facet of partnership.

A deeper dive into two of the most widely cited recent works on partnership also suggests that emotion is an under-studied topic in the literature. Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) cite a psychological framework to explain that “shared emotional connection” (p. 28) is an essential element in partnerships. They later summarize two reports on student unions and higher education institutions to note that partner relationships help students “feel emotionally invested and empowered” (p. 30). The word “emotion” appears even less often in Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014), although these authors, like Healey and colleagues, delve into issues linked to emotions, including feelings of risk and discomfort evoked by liminality and also the tensions within relationships that can be exacerbated by power differentials.

Emotion is not always absent from the partnership literature, however. It seems to appear most directly and frequently in personal reflections written about partnerships. For instance, Alter (2012) calls her undergraduate partnership "an intense and often emotional experience" (p. 1), and Powers (2012), drawing lessons from partnerships she and her student peers engaged in, concludes: "While it can be tempting to try to rush relationships and jump ahead to a place where two people feel completely comfortable with one another and able to express a diverse range of emotions and perspectives, it is not realistic if the relationship is to develop a strong foundation" (p. 8). Scholars and theorists have noted what Mann (2008) calls the "rich emotional texture" (p. 96) of student reflections on their educational experiences, and the literature on student engagement also emphasizes the centrality of emotion in learning (Bryson, 2014; Kahu, 2013; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; see also Shor, 1992).

In traditional scholarly publications, faculty and academic staff often describe their partnerships in unemotional terms: "Meeting once a week with a student consultant is an intense exercise in self-reflection" (quoted in Felten, 2011, p. 1). When writing more personal and reflective essays, however, they also emphasize the emotional aspects of partnership. Describing a semester-long collaboration with an undergraduate, a senior male academic noted: "[You gain] confidence not just in the classroom, not just in your office and on campus, but also off campus, at home. I feel a kind of peace in my heart, not anxiety" (quoted in Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016). Reflecting on a similar partnership, a junior female staff member explained:

> Before I began meeting with my consultant, I have to admit that the prospect of opening my classroom to the critique of another was intimidating. I felt vulnerable and more self-conscious about my teaching than I ever have before; however, now when I think back on my experiences with my consultant, the sole feeling that washes over me is gratitude. (Conner, 2012, p. 8)

Emotion clearly is a component of student-faculty partnerships, yet academic customs—including our scholarly forms of writing—privilege the rational. That narrow focus obscures important aspects of partnership.

THE NECESSITY OF EMOTION

Over the past 30 years, psychologists and neuroscientists have demonstrated that the traditional Western view that separates thinking from feeling is wrong: "A purely cognitive view of the mind, one that overlooks the role of emotions, simply won't do" (LeDoux, 2002, p. 200). Unlike traits or moods, emotions are relatively brief and context-specific responses to experiences, objects, or causes. This means that "emotions orient people to respond to ongoing events in their environment" and are always "relational" (Keltner & Lerner, 2010, p. 318). By playing this foundational role in human behavior, emotions "structure relations . . . [and] guide social interactions," organizing "the interactions of individuals in meaningful relationships" (Keltner & Haidt, 1999, pp. 506, 510). Emotions also shape (a) what people tend to think about, (b) how deeply and critically they engage with ideas and experiences, and (c) the goals and motivations that inhibit or enable behaviors (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015). That's a citation-heavy way of making two fundamental claims:

1. We cannot understand the experiences of or outcomes for individuals in partnerships without attending to emotions.
2. We cannot understand the interactions and relationships between individuals in partnerships without attending to emotions.

EMOTION AND PARTNERSHIP

A first step toward honoring the influence of emotion in partnership involves what Gestalt Theory refers to as the figure-ground principle. In short, when we look at or study something, we tend to focus on certain aspects, "figure," and not other things that are present, "ground" (Knewstubb & Ruth, 2016). Scholars of partnerships often treat issues of power as figure in these relationships; for instance, Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) contend that "the distribution of power and responsibility is seen as one of the fundamental features of partnership" (p. 31), while Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) refer to "power dynamics" as perhaps "the most critical dimension of this work" (p. 137). Power certainly merits careful analysis, but we may learn new things by switching our gaze to the emotional "ground" of partnerships.

The scholarship in our emerging field is ripe for such a move because so much of our research is rooted in the perspectives and voices of those who are working together in partnership. We may not need to ask radically different research questions or use new methodologies in our inquiries; instead, we simply might turn our gaze to the emotional experiences and the "layered learning" (Cook-Sather, 2011) that are occurring before our eyes. Although bringing emotion into focus may feel more radical in some disciplines and contexts, even in these cases the psychological research cited briefly above may provide a scientific path into this line of inquiry. Regardless of the methods used, student-faculty teams should be an especially effective approach to this type of research because any analysis will benefit from multiple perspectives on the complex intersections of identities and relational dynamics that unfold in every partnership (Cook-Sather, 2014).

Ironically, a figure-ground shift might be more comfortable for scholars than for some practitioners in partnerships. While many of us already may discuss the emotional component of our collaborations, some partners feel wary about explicitly addressing the emotions that arise. Faculty, for instance, may not feel prepared to help students navigate the emotions they experience in challenging learning environments (Felten, Gilchrist, & Darby, 2006). This caution is valid but can be managed by attending first to the positive emotions that motivate students and faculty to engage together in partnership. Through honest but low-stakes dialogue about the excitement—and the nervousness—that characterize the initial stages of a collaboration, partners build a foundation for deeper engagement with emotions in the relationship.

Focusing on the emotional dimensions of partnerships will shine new light on the dynamic processes and the powerful outcomes of this work. By bringing emotion out of the background, we will be more effective as partners and more critical as scholars.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

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OPINION PIECE

Without Emotions, Never a Partnership!

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INTRODUCTION

Tara Hermsen: Many students, including me, don't feel valued during their study. Especially when the teachers' beliefs are along the lines of: "you (student) know nothing yet, though when you stay obedient, we (teachers) will pass our knowledge on to you in the upcoming years." In my opinion, this is still a strong and persistent belief. When I regard a relationship, any relationship, the emotion of being valued can bring so much motivation and joy. The feeling of being appreciated during my study created a world of difference to me. We are equals, even though we differ in age, function, and experience. I am just as valuable as you and we appreciate each other's contributions. We are doing this together even though we both have a different role and task. We are complementary. The moment you experience this complementarity as a student, you and your teacher really engage in a partnership. To achieve this, real contact is crucial. During my study, it was my privilege to experience this several times. Learning and studying are so much more interesting and joyful when this occurs.

This kind of experience is something we wish we could share with every student and teacher. In this opinion piece, we aim to show what is necessary to realise this kind of partnership. We argue that "contact before contract" is the essential foundation, followed by an awareness of complementarity and its importance. We include personal reflections to share the emotions we each have experienced in this process of contact, contract, and complementarity.

Contact before contract aligns with Stevens' (2002) statement that there is "no performance without relation" (p. 15). The key component to reach success in education is the student-teacher relationship. Before we can start our work (i.e., contract), we first must know—and more importantly feel—who the other is (i.e., contact) and who we are at that moment ourselves.

Emotions are energy. Energy allows us to act (Spanninks, 2011). We often act, however, without getting closer to the desired outcome. We immediately notice it in our own emotions: They turn inwards and become energy consuming and we get frustrated. Our own emotions can, at times, seem synchronised with those of others. Unfortunately, daily practice often shows a different experience within the realms of education. Even so, not only does a strong, mutual partnership among student(s) and teacher(s) help those directly involved, it also brings us closer to the societal aim of education.

CONTACT

Good contact starts with openness: It is new and exciting; it is unprejudiced, sincere curiosity. What will it look like when students enter the classroom, excited and unprejudiced concerning teachers and their new education? What will it look like when teachers engage students in the same way? According to den Boer (2011), contact means truly understanding what goes on in the other's mind. Truly listening is about understanding not what the other is saying, but what the other wishes to say. It is this kind of contact that leads to a contract (den Boer, 2011).

CONTRACT

Contact constitutes the foundation of the contract (van der Pol, 2013). Educational contracts exist to establish agreements, eliminating the need to repeatedly settle the same matters. In addition, many agreements also exist in implicit form. For example, teachers should inspire students at the start of the educational journey. Traditionally, teachers know "it" and students don't know "it" yet. But isn't education also, perhaps even primarily, meant to bring new forms of "it" to life? What if students take the initiative? What if "it," as the mutual project of students and teachers, is at the core of education?

ICEBERG

Tara Hermsen: One of my partnerships happens to be with my thesis supervisor. I would like to show the two stages of our partnership. To visualise my behaviour, beliefs, incentives, and emotions, I have placed them in McClelland's (1989) Iceberg. Iceberg A symbolises the start of our partnership, whereas Iceberg B symbolises the present (a year after Iceberg A). To evolve from A to B the idea of contact before contract was of the utmost importance. It helped me reach a point where I could feel important and valued beyond my research and its results. For me to form a partnership, it must grow and will always keep growing, with ups and downs. We did not go from iceberg A to B in a matter of weeks. In such processes, you don't have to open yourself immediately. In my experience, what works best is to start above the water. With time, you'll slowly reach deeper into the iceberg if both partners are truly committed to and intent on building the partnership. Granting each other time and using emotions are the most important aspects in building and enhancing partnerships.

Figure 1. Iceberg initial situation

Figure 2. Iceberg partnership

Thomas Kuiper: Judgments are often very strong and as such have great impact. I have the tendency to consider a mark or feedback to be a judgment on myself. Failing a test means I am a failure. For me, the beauty of a non-judgmental attitude lies in the experience that something is neither wrong nor right. This always leads to a dialogue within a partnership. The mark, grade, or judgment is no longer all-decisive in my sense of self-worth. Being non-judgmental towards myself means allowing myself to be me, perceiving tremendous space around me with hardly any constraints. Something which I create is credited by its own merit. It provides me with the stimulus to proceed and the willingness to do and learn even more. For me, real contact is essential for being non-judgmental towards my partner and myself.

COMPLEMENTARITY

Within every partnership there always exists a mutually experienced, felt, and perceivable notion that exists beyond the level of each individual partner. We all know these kinds of partnerships. The most important is of course our life-partner, though other forms are of interest in this sense: dance-partner, sparring-partner, partner-in-crime, or business-partner. The term "Students as Partners" might not be the best appellation, as it denotes a relationship perceived from a specific side—the teacher. In our opinion, mutuality, reciprocity, and complementarity are of key importance in the relationship between student and teacher.

It is remarkable, maybe even bizarre, that we had to wait so long before noticing that students and teachers could and should be each other's natural allies, especially within higher education. After all, students and teachers have been within the same educational situation for centuries. All around the globe, students and teachers have one huge social mission, or assignment: to provide great learning that eventually will help service society.

A person can only be him- or herself by the grace of the other. One can only be a teacher when others are willing to take the role of students. One can only be a student when collaborating with others, with teachers. Imagine what will happen when this total interdependence is accepted, recognised, and used within higher education by each participant?

In this interdependence, we complement each other—or at least we could, and perhaps should. If, once we have truly made contact, we seek out those areas in which we complement each other, education could attain a goal much more important than it has had thus far. The partner with whom we conduct our greatest human mission, the raising and upbringing of our children, is often also the one who complements us in many ways. In the second greatest human mission—the teaching, guiding, and supporting of all children—so much more can be achieved when both student and teacher are aware of the potential of partnership.

OUR FINAL REFLECTIONS

So, make contact before contract. In every partnership complementarity is different because the people and the emotions are different. Be aware of the essential nature of complementarity in your partnerships. Be careful and gentle with your own emotions and the emotions of others. Learn to notice, accept, interpret, understand, use, and apply them, without getting entangled in judgments. Take your time and stay away from prejudices. It’s hard work, but it will melt icebergs.

Undoubtedly you, as a reader, experienced something while reading the above. Would you be so kind to share with us the emotions you experienced while reading this opinion piece? What interpretations or confusion did it create? What do these emotions mean to you, to us, to education?

NOTES

1. This opinion piece was a collaboration of four very different people (see our biographies, below). The outcomes of our brainstorm sessions and deep conversations are translated in the text above. This opinion piece is extraordinary because, despite our differences and different backgrounds, we all identify with each other’s contributions. It was a true partnership.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Tara Hermsen *is an undergraduate student of Learning and Development in Organizations at the HAN University of Applied Sciences. During the writing of this article she writes her thesis about the behavior of teachers in partnerships. She researches which teacher behavior is required in a partnership and advises learning interventions to develop this behavior.*

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ARTICLE

Students as Partners—Good for Students, Good for Staff: A Study on the Impact of Partnership Working and How This Translates to Improved Student-Staff Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This paper situates Students as Partners (SaP) within the broader construct of student engagement so that we can examine the influence of partnership on student and staff participants and how this impacts on student and staff relationships. The findings of interviews carried out with students and staff (n=14), which aimed to capture rich descriptions of the lived experience of individuals, reveal that there was a high level of consensus between students and staff on how they described their lived experiences and the impact that partnership was having on them—particularly in relation to their personal development. Whilst it became apparent that the participants' thinking and behaviours had changed as a result of their involvement in partnership, quite often the catalyst for this change was in relation to how the participants were feeling. Considerations for relevant stakeholders are highlighted to support the scaling up of a SaP approach.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, student-staff partnership, higher education, personal development, scaling up partnership

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

According to Gibbs (2014; 2016) student engagement (SE) is a slippery construct and a current buzzword used by higher education institutions (HEIs), students' unions, teaching development units, and government alike. The difficulty that this presents is that "student engagement has come to be used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to keep track of what people are actually talking about" (Gibbs, 2016, p. 1). There are differing ways to view SE, and these vary according to an individual's role as either student or staff, discipline, beliefs, context, research perspective, and even country (Bryson, 2014a; Harrington, Sinfield & Burns, 2016; Kahu, 2013). In addition, following the dramatic rise of mass forms of higher education (HE), SE has become problematic (Kahn, 2014), and this study sought to explore the impact of student-staff partnerships on the individual through an appreciation and interpretation of the lived experiences of students and staff to determine the extent to which partnership influences student engagement. This is important in the context of the massification of HE, which has seen student numbers increase worldwide by 51.7 million between 2000 and 2008 (UNESCO, 2009). Coates and McCormick (2014) state that as student populations in many countries become larger and more diverse, there is a growing need to understand how to engage students across the student lifecycle. Scullion, Molesworth, and Nixon (2011) argue that an outcome of the marketisation of HE has resulted in students adopting a passive role in their learning where HE is viewed as a commodity and a "student as consumer" (SaC) attitude prevails. Many scholars (e.g., Bryson, 2014a; 2014b; Levy, Little, & Whelan, 2011; Matthews, 2016; McCulloch, 2009) feel that the time has come to challenge this paradigm and to move away from hierarchical university structures that encourage a "them and us" attitude to more collaborative approaches where students and staff work together for the mutual benefit of both in pursuit of deep learning.

McCulloch (2009) criticised the SaC model, finding at least eight deficiencies with it that reduced the role of the student to that of a passive recipient. He proposed that considering students as co-producers places the student in a more active role and encourages a "students as partners" (SaP) attitude. More recently, Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) state that

> partnership is understood as fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved—students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on—are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself. (p. 12)

Bryson (2014b) concurs with this approach and believes that "partnership and all that it entails offers the most fruitful way forward for student engagement as so many of the good practices for engaging students . . . resonate with the principles and practices of partnerships" (p. 239).

The recent move towards promoting a partnership ethos between students and staff across the sector has resulted in many institutions forging ahead with initiatives spanning various aspects of university life. As a consequence, different types of partnership have emerged and the diversity these embody would appear to support findings of studies in the public sector (Cook, 2015) and in the HE sector (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014) that there is "no one size fits all" when it comes to partnership working.

Working collaboratively is, of course, not new, and we are reminded that the idea of a university with a community of learners (students and staff) working together to advance scholarship was the vision put forward by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810 when he founded the University of Berlin (Lea, 2016; Levy, Little, & Whelan, 2011). More recently, research has emerged that extols the virtues of the SaP paradigm encompassing the following capacities. It focuses on the development of the learner leading to improved citizens (McCulloch, 2009). It enhances motivation and learning (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Little et al., 2011; Nygaard, Brand, Bartholomew, & Millard, 2013). It develops metacognitive awareness and sense of identity (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Dickerson, Jarvis, & Stockwell, 2016; Nygaard et al., 2013). It improves teaching and the classroom experience, which prompts a learning community (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Curran & Millard, 2015; Nygaard et al., 2013). It improves learning in relation to employability skills and graduate attributes (Dickerson, Jarvis, & Stockwell, 2016; Pauli, Raymond-Barker, & Worrell, 2016).

However, whilst this research highlights the outcomes of partnership working in a positive light, it is important to acknowledge the challenges that this type of working presents. It is clear that genuine partnerships do not happen automatically and questions still remain—particularly if we wish to scale up partnership working across an institution. Consideration is needed on how we can reconcile power relations between students and staff when we are working in a dominant SaC ideology (Delpish et al., 2009; Hutchings, Bartholomew, & Reilly, 2013; Levy et al., 2011). Transience can be a barrier as partners move on (Little et al., 2011; Levy et al., 2011), as can sustaining partnership work (Curran & Millard, 2015). There is also the challenge of finding a common language (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Levy et al., 2011). SaP can be a threshold concept for both students and staff (Cook-Sather, 2014; Marquis et al., 2016). Finally, finding time and funding for SaP can present a stumbling block (Marquis, Black, & Healey, 2017).

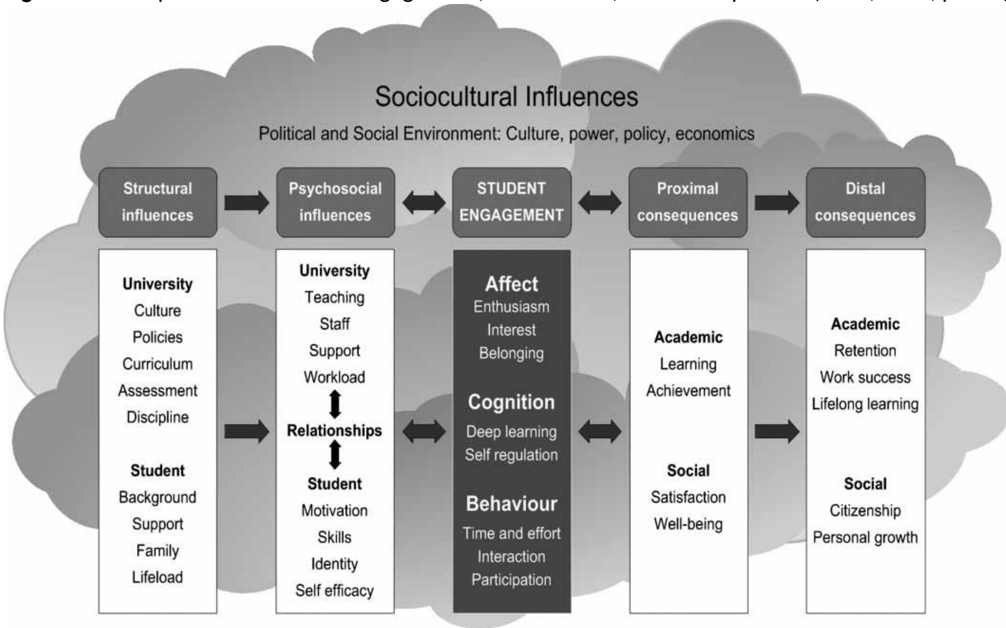
Despite and in recognition of the challenges, there is a growing movement across the HE sector to capitalise on the benefits of SaP in order to fully realise what some claim (see, e.g., Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al.,2014) is the potential transformative nature of a culture change that challenges the customer-provider model of HE. However, scaling up partnership working so that it challenges traditional forms of SE, which position the student in a passive role, to more relational forms of SE (Flint, 2016; Matthews, 2016), means that we need to consider our SE approaches more holistically by considering all of their component parts. Three dimensions of SE have been identified in the literature: behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement (Solomonides, 2013; Kahu, 2013; Trowler, 2010; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). These scholars state that students who are behaviourally engaged would typically comply with behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement. Students who engage emotionally would experience affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging. Cognitively engaged students would be invested in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements, and would relish challenge.

Recent research suggests that it is the interplay between the three dimensions at the level of the individual student that is important and is that which would allow us, as teachers and institutions, to examine what is within our control and what is not so that we might clearly focus on what we can enhance (Solomonides, 2013) . However, Kahu (2013) cautions that when "positioning engagement so clearly with the individual, there is a danger of downplaying the importance of the situation. Engagement is fundamentally situational—it arises from the interplay of context and individual" (p. 763).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, SaP is situated within the broad term SE and is viewed as a process or a concept in which to frame collaborative working between students and staff for the mutual benefit of enhancing learning and teaching. The focus for the research under discussion here is on an aspect of SE—staff and student relationships—defined as "psychosocial influences" in Kahu's model of socio-cultural influences on SE (Kahu, 2013, p. 766), represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of engagement, antecedents, and consequences (Kahu, 2013, p. 766)



Kahu (2013) places the student at the centre, as depicted by the centre column, and includes the three dimensions of SE representing the psychological: affect, cognition, and behaviour. In order to highlight the impact of sociocultural factors, the two columns on the left side of the figure represent the influencing factors, or antecedents, of the university and of the student. The psychosocial influences, which include university and student attributes and the relationships between them, are depicted as having a clear impact on SE and as being influenced by SE. The double-sided arrows between these two columns draw attention to this. In other words, the building of relationships between staff and students can influence SE, and SE can further build relationships. The consequences of SE are depicted by the two columns on the right side of the figure and are divided into what happens in academic and social spheres (also identified by Tinto, 1987, and Thomas, 2012). Again, the double-sided arrow between the central column and the proximal consequences indicate that student success or deep learning and the feeling of well-being may further influence SE, which in turn may result in more distal consequences such as retention and a disposition for lifelong learning and active citizenship.

Cognisant of my role as an academic developer in building staff and student capacity to engage, the overarching question this study attempts to address is: ***What is the impact of SaP on the individual staff and student participants involved and to what extent does this influence how they engage?***

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Kahu (2013) advises that her framework (see Figure 1 above) "highlights the need for projects that focus on narrower populations, including single institutions, as it is evident that a broad generalization of the student experience is ill-advised"(p. 769). She also advocates for "the use of in-depth qualitative methodologies to capture the diversity of experience" (p. 769). The data drawn upon in this paper were collected as part of a research project that set out to explore the lived experiences of students and staff at Ulster University who were one of 13 institutions across the four countries of the UK involved in the What Works? Student Retention and Success Change Programme 2013-2016 (WWSRS). One of the overarching aims of this Change Programme was to enhance the strategic approach to improving the engagement, belonging, retention, and success of students. The WWSRS at Ulster University involved a core team and seven discipline teams (representing 145 participants: 94 students and 51 staff). The discipline teams were Accounting; Built Environment; Computing; Creative Technologies; Law; Nursing (Mental Health); and Textile Art, Design, and Fashion. These seven teams comprised the course staff team and a number of students from the first, second, and final year of the undergraduate programmes. In order to achieve the objectives of the programme, the core and discipline teams were engaged in a range of activities between 2013 and 2016. The teams implemented specific interventions in the areas of first-year student induction (e.g., pre-arrival activities), active learning (e.g., higher-level students coaching first-year students), and co-curricular activities (e.g., workshops involving students from different year groups). This was followed by qualitative evaluation of the interventions, the administration of "belonging surveys" with students involved in the programme, and the use of institutional data such as attrition rates for each of the areas to monitor impact as a result of the interventions.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to address the research question highlighted above, an in-depth qualitative methodology was employed to capture the diversity of experience across the disciplines involved. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were carried out and recorded with staff and students (n=14), which aimed to capture rich descriptions of the lived experience of individuals. Purposive sampling was used and the individual interviews included one staff and one student member from each of the seven discipline teams. A member of staff and a student from the participant group indicated above assisted me in the development of trigger questions for the interviews (listed below). We carefully considered the questions posed in order to invoke descriptions of lived experiences and to "choose formulations which were open (rather than closed), and which do not make too many assumptions about the participant's experiences or concerns, or lead them towards particular answers" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin 2009, p. 60). Additionally, we wanted to use more "how" questions rather than "why" questions to ensure that the questions prompted rich descriptions of experience rather than overly reflective or intellectualised responses (Husserl, 1999; Kvale, 2007; van Manen, 1990).

Semi-structured interview trigger questions

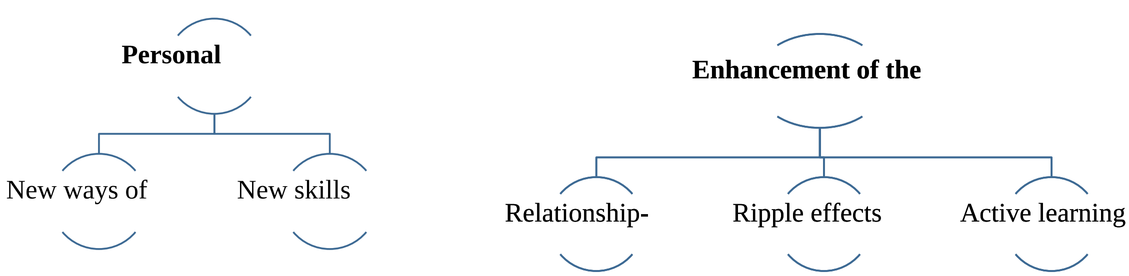
1. How do you feel about staff student partnerships?
2. Has the development of the staff student partnership in which you are involved presented any opportunities and/or challenges? If so, could you describe them?
3. Have you seen any differences in the way you interact with staff/students since the partnership was introduced? If so, could you describe them?
4. Has the staff student partnership changed your approach to your studies/teaching practice? If so, how?
5. Any further comments?

Following data collection, interview recordings were transcribed for data analysis. My approach focused on how I could tell the story of participants' lived experiences in relation to the broad challenge of SE. I was mindful that I needed to make the participants' experiences come to life and avoid "deadening" the phenomenon with bland descriptions, and that there is no one correct way to do the analysis (Finlay, 2014). Deep understanding of the meanings of data of this nature can be implicit and need to be made explicit with thematic analysis (Waters, 2016); hence, I engaged in a six-stage approach to thematic analysis as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Undertaking each phase allowed me to examine the data set (transcribed interviews). At stage 1, I read and re-read all the transcripts and noted down initial ideas. During the coding process of stage 2, 97 individual codes were identified; these represented features of the data across the data set. Further exploration of these initial codes enabled me to identify repetition and grouping of codes. In stage 3, I collated codes into potential themes, gathering all the data relevant to each theme. The original 97 codes were reduced by combining those that were similar and were then categorised under themes, which represented the remaining codes. It became evident that there were similarities between what students and staff were describing in relation to how their thinking was changing as new skills were developing and how these changes were resulting in a change in practice. Additionally, there was an acknowledgment of the challenges presented in "doing" staff-student partnership. In moving to stage 4, I checked if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts (the original 97 codes) and the entire data set. The ongoing analysis in stage 5 allowed me to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells. At this point, I defined and further refined the themes; two dominant themes were named, along with clear definitions for each. Figure 2 below presents the main themes with their sub-themes and provides the basis for organising the results below.

RESULTS

The data revealed that whilst individual participants experienced partnership in nuanced ways, there was a striking degree of accord in the descriptions of the impact of the partnership on the individual. This is explored under the identified themes displayed in Figure 2. Additionally, there was an acknowledgment of the challenges presented in doing SaP.

Figure 2. Thematic map showing main themes and sub-themes



Personal development

Theme 1 was identified as personal development. In this context, it relates to personal development of the individual, and Aubrey (2010) defines it thus: "Personal development covers activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life, and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. (p. 9)

The interviews provided an opportunity for participants to describe their lived experience of working in a SaP context. It became clear that for some students and staff the impact of partnership on them personally came as a surprise and not something they had thought would happen because of their involvement. Descriptions provided by participants related to how their self-awareness and self-knowledge was improving. There was also evidence in the descriptions (e.g., how participants were describing their role) of a shift in identity related to this new knowledge, and many described this shift resulting from increased confidence in their role. For those whose identity had shifted, there was a willingness to try new ideas and to try to enhance what they do or had been doing for many years.

New ways of thinking

Staff and students also commented on how the partnership encouraged dialogue and mutual feelings of respect. It gave both an insight into the others' world that enabled them to become more open and to consider new ways of thinking.

One student commented on the change she was experiencing as a result of being involved in the project with staff:

> I have developed confidence as a result of this and I feel more like a member of staff as I have got to know all the staff so well. Last year I was very quiet as a student coach. This opportunity allows me to develop my teaching skills as I was coaching first years that were having difficulty in one of the modules. I have developed my own knowledge through interactions with first year students and I can see the development in their confidence too. (Year-4 student, discipline 4)

A tutor described how they had always thought of staff and student roles in very defined terms but that working with students had made him realise that today's students are different: "I've had this sense of letting go—somebody has labelled me as an expert, but the students are the experts in their experience" (Tutor, discipline 5).

New skills

Students and staff demonstrated how involvement in partnership allowed them to engage in activities both inside and outside of the classroom. The collaborative tasks were allowing them to develop not just confidence but new skills too. One student commented: "The residential was very good—it was great to attend a professional event. Discussions with lecturers and co-presenting is helping me develop as a person and it will be great for job interviews" (Year-2 student, discipline 7).

A staff member described partnership work in HE as more reflective of the world of work, particularly in health-related disciplines where partnership is promoted between staff and users: "From a professional point of view it works well for me, partnership mimics the profession—we are teaching our students to work in partnership with service users" (Tutor, discipline 5).

Enhancement of the learning climate

Theme 2 relates to the context in which student learning occurs and the enhancement thereof. Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, and Norman (2010) define the learning climate as

> the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn. Climate is determined by a constellation of

> interacting factors that include faculty-student interaction, the tone instructors set, instances of stereotyping or tokenism, the course demographics (for example, relative size of racial and other social groups enrolled in the course), student-student interaction, and the range of perspectives represented in the course content and materials. All of these factors can operate outside as well as inside the classroom. (p. 170)

The interviews also indicated the value of this work in developing staff and student capacity to engage. Participants described how the learning environment was more "friendly" and they seemed happier because barriers were coming down between students and staff, which allowed scheduled classes to be more interactive. There were numerous references to the interactions that took place inside and outside of the classroom and how getting to know others in one context was transferring to another, thereby enhancing relationships and collegiality. Students and staff described how their practice and their approaches to learning and teaching had changed. The data suggests that working together was a catalyst for the enhancement of the learning climate.

Relationship-building

For both staff and students there was a realisation that behind the roles that each have that there is a person and getting to know the person helps both to carry out their role more satisfactorily and effectively. Involvment in partnership also led both students and staff to question previously held ideas on the teacher-student relationship and the hierarchy that exists or did exist in previous educational settings. As one student stated:

> I'm a student rep and that's how I became involved. I was asked to come to a meeting, it was very friendly and it made me *feel* like part of a team—not them and us. They kept it all down to earth and not too formal. At the start I didn't know much about it, but I then became aware it's about improving the course for next year. To make it better particularly for revalidation. I can also feedback aspects of the course that aren't working well. (Year-1 student, discipline 6)

Ripple effects

Creating a ripple effect in this context describes the influence that staff has on SE in relation to their attitude and approach to practice both inside and outside of the classroom. It also describes the influence that students have on other students in relation to their attendance, participation, and engagement in class. One staff member described how events external to the class were influential in the classroom setting:

> The social integration on some of the extra-curricular activities was fantastic. The relationships were then carried back into the workshops. One student had assumed that others knew each other and she felt on the outside, but realised they didn't and she was immediately drawn in… seeing that before my very eyes has reminded me of the importance of the need for social integration. (Tutor, discipline 7)

Active learning

Both students and staff reflected on how the partnership prompted them to reflect on their approach to their practice or their studies. The majority of participants indicated that they had enhanced their approaches as a result of their involvement. For some staff, this involved a radical change to how they used the time in the classroom with students, such as moving from a transmission mode of lecturing to a more facilitative mode. One tutor described how their classroom practice had changed:

> You notice a difference, it's more open and free in terms of what you can say and they say and it helps with the delivery of the content and you *feel* more relaxed and they *feel* more relaxed (Tutor, discipline 3).

Another tutor felt that the partnership was prompting them to reflect on his overall approach to learning, teaching, and assessment:

> It's given me an opportunity to sit back and reflect on what do you want to do as a teacher? I've spent more time thinking about what I want to achieve, taking that approach of being a facilitator has given me the space to explore further and rather than trying to cover everything, I can focus on one aspect which causes difficulty and we will focus on this. I can direct the students to the independent study better—it's made me less worry about transmitting information out and focus on how to use class time better. I've become more open to risk-taking in classroom. (Tutor, discipline 5)

Challenges

Students and staff also identified that partnership working is not without its challenges and these can be found at the individual or discipline level. The descriptions of challenges can be summarized as time, resistance, and capacity. One part-time student described his experience:

> When I agreed to do this, I didn't realise there was going to be a residential or set times for meetings. If I realised there would be meetings during daytime hours, I probably would have turned down the opportunity to do this. (Part-time student, discipline 6)

A member of staff explained that whilst partnership working might be instigated or nurtured by individual course tutors, it is difficult when other team members are not so committed: "Overall, I am positive about a partnership approach in the broader sense. There are other staff not engaging in the project and this is not sustainable going forward" (Tutor, discipline 2).

Another student described having difficulty knowing when to put forward a suggestion:

> Knowing when to come forward and speak. There always is a divide and that will never change. It's hard to know when your input is valuable and whether or not to sit back. Even if I have idea, I'm never sure whether it's valuable or not. (Year-2 student, discipline 1)

And for some student partners, involvement in the partnership can put more pressure on them to have the right answers and to do well academically: "I feel that because people [other students] are always asking me things . . . about assignments and stuff like that, it almost puts you under pressure to do well" (Year 1 student, discipline 5).

A member of staff also described the difficulty of transitioning to a SaP ethos:

> Partnership should be two-way and how do you make it two-way. Sometimes, it depends on the students. There are challenges with the rep system and I'm worried that there's a negative perception and

> perspective of a complaint culture. We need to listen to students and taken on board their suggestions but you can feel quite threatened. When they started paying fees, they became customers. (Tutor, discipline 1)

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

The findings can be related to elements of the conceptual framework (Kahu, 2013) (see Figure 1). Under the theme of personal development, staff and students indicated the value of partnership work in providing an opportunity for all participants to develop new ways of thinking and new skills aligning to Aubrey's (2010) definition of personal development as improving self-awareness, self-knowledge, skills, and quality of life. Kahu (2013) refers to this in the psychosocial influencing column of the framework, which indicates that student attributes such as motivation, skills, identity, and self-efficacy all have an impact on SE. It is important to note here, however, that whilst partnership working in this context was enhancing these student attributes and positively impacting SE, there is evidence to suggest that staff attributes were also enhanced and that personal growth was happening for both. This is indicated in the framework as a distal consequence that appears to be limited to students. Indeed, as identified by Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017), one of the areas where further research is needed is in relation to the outcomes of partnership for staff. The implication of the impact of partnership on staff is worth further consideration particularly if we wish to scale up a SaP ethos as a process of SE across growing and diverse student populations. In this context, perhaps we need to recognize the importance of facilitating personal growth for both staff and students in order that they can engage effectively, rather than just focusing on what staff can do to make students engage. Reflecting on the three dimensions of SE (the central column of the framework) which include behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, it became apparent that within this study the three dimensions are inter-related and work together. Emotion was evident in the descriptions of lived experience, and both staff and students described how they were feeling engaged or motivated or more involved, which was changing their thinking. This in turn was affecting their behaviours. Elder (1996) refers to this as the three basic mental functions: cognition, feelings, and volition operating in a dynamic relationship to each other. Where there is thinking, some related feeling exists.

Under the second theme, enhancement of the learning climate, students and staff talked about the breaking down of barriers and a "them and us" attitude that for some was leading to a better classroom experience. Students felt the benefit of being able to sit down around a table and discuss issues with the staff that make decisions. As indicated by the results, students felt that partnership is very beneficial in bringing staff and students closer together. Similarly, staff described their increased engagement as a result of getting to know the student cohort better. This reinforces what Kahu (2013) indicated under the psycho-social influence: that relationship-building fosters engagement, which in turn builds better relationships. This is potentially very powerful, and we need to consider how staff and students could be supported to initiate and sustain change through dialogue, and not just for some students who happen to be involved in a partnership initiative but for all students. For the students, the partnership allowed them an insight into the world of academia, which is a very unfamiliar environment, particularly for new, incoming first-years. It enabled them to think about the teaching perspective, which was the most evident where students were taking on roles such as coaching or mentoring lower-level students, carrying out research, leading induction activities. For staff, the partnership enabled them to think about the learning perspective, which was very evident in the interviews when staff described how they were now thinking about the effectiveness of their previously unchallenged teaching practice and were beginning to look at students through a new lens. Interestingly, the changing of classroom practice could be related to Kahu's structural influence of curriculum and assessment. Whilst the arrows in the framework indicate that SE does not influence structure, the evidence in this study suggests that for staff and students experiencing personal development as a result of partnership working, partnership can lead to the enhancement of curriculum design and delivery. The implication of this for a university wishing to embed institutional curriculum design approaches (such as policy on assessment, employability, etc.) is that cognizance also needs to be taken of agency for change. Encouraging a culture of SaP that can lead to personal development may empower both staff and students to lead this change at the discipline level. Similar findings were echoed in evaluations carried out on staff-student partnerships in different learning contexts, such as inquiry-based learning approaches (Healey & Jenkins, 2009; Levy et al., 2011), where it was found that the collaborative nature of the approach resulted in enhanced SE and personal development in areas such as changed beliefs and understanding about the roles in learning and knowledge creation.

Challenges

As outlined earlier, student-staff partnerships are not without their challenges. In this research study, challenges included time, resistance, and capacity (for both students and staff). How these challenges are addressed can differ across the disciplines. Students in particular referred to their busy lives and the struggle to find time to get the balance right between their studies and other activities such as their involvement in partnership activities. For part-time students, involvement in daytime activities was particularly difficult when holding down a full-time job. This is referred to in the framework as "lifeload" and is a critical factor influencing SE (Kahu, 2013) that needs to be considered when determining the nature of partnership work. Knowing who your students are can be enlightening and prompt changes in thinking, as indicated in theme 1 in the findings above. Staff described resistance to partnership as problematic. In this study, resistance was encountered where course teams who were involved in partnership activities did not have full buy-in from their colleagues. Staff described this as unsustainable going forward and suggested reward mechanisms for staff and students developing effective partnership as one way in which sustainability might be achieved (Curran & Millard, 2015). Additionally, the evidence base to date (see Bryson, 2014b; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014) suggests that if staff-student partnership is to work then it should become an ethos or a process of engagement; it works best when it becomes a mindset not just at the individual level but at the module, course, discipline, and institution level. However, the challenge of finding a common language can prevail (Levy et al., 2011), and the notion of partnership can be problematic in certain disciplines or for certain individuals. One way to address this might be to focus on partnership as a process or as relational, which Kahu (2013) situates in the psychosocial influences of the framework (Figure 1). As suggested by Matthews (2016), language is important and the recent language of SaP emphasises the more relational form of SE. In other words, conceptualising partnership with a small "p" (i.e., focus on relationship building between staff and students) rather than conceptualising it as a project or with a capital "P" (i.e., an extra task or activity outside of class contact time) can be more palatable. In relation to capacity, students explained that sometimes they lack the confidence to know when to speak up or come forward and felt that it can be hard to make a judgment as to whether an idea or suggestion is worthy of consideration. Some students also described a feeling of pressure from being a student partner—pressure to do well academically. Staff described the struggle with letting go—in the sense that they had to know when to give some control to the students. Ceding control was something that perhaps did not happen naturally after years of being in control in a learning and teaching context. In my role as academic developer working with staff and students grappling with partnership, time needs to be taken to allow both to consider what it means to them individually and collectively.

As scaling up partnership working is ongoing at the institution discussed here, we need to consider how this evidence base can inform others, particularly at the curriculum design stage. Using the findings from this study and aligning them to the conceptual framework as discussed allows us to recognize and locate how relational partnerships impact the individual, which in turn can impact the antecedents and consequences of SE (Kahu, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This research brings new understanding to stakeholders in relation to how the impact of partnership on individual students and staff members can help us think more holistically about SE. Although the sample size in this study is small and from a single institution, thereby limiting generalisability of the findings, there is evidence that the personal development of both students and staff is a welcome outcome of partnership working and one which has the potential to enhance skills, motivation, and self-efficacy of not just students but staff, too. In turn, this personal development can enhance the learning climate, which is important for extending the benefits of partnership working to students beyond the small numbers that tend to put themselves forward. The stage of curriculum design or re-design may be an opportune time for institutions to embed these enhanced learning climates resulting from a SaP ethos. Further key implications from this study in relation to SaP as a process or ethos of SE involves how we conceptualize SE. Using Kahu's (2013) conceptual framework can overlook the potentially transformative impact of the personal development of staff as a result of adopting a SaP approach. Recognizing the three inter-related dimensions of SE can allow institutions to better support staff and students to develop relational partnerships. It is also important to recognize that how staff and students are feeling can act as a catalyst for change in thinking and behaviours. Further additional research needs to be conducted, particularly that which conceptualises SE from both a student and staff perspective, recognising its three dimensions, and the role that SaP plays in building capacity for change. Continuing this research is imperative for developing an evidence base on scaling successful partnership working in specific contexts to an institutional level so that we are prepared for more diverse and increasing student populations.

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ARTICLE

Moving Towards Sustainable Outcomes in Student Partnerships: Partnership Values in the Pilot Year

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ABSTRACT

The UCL ChangeMakers scheme supports students and staff to work in partnership to enhance the University College London (UCL) learning experience. In 2014/15 we piloted the scheme with 10 projects run by 24 students in collaboration with 11 staff members. This paper will focus on our evaluation efforts of the pilot year through 4 illustrative case studies highlighting the successes and challenges of 4 projects. We focused our discussion on how projects were defined, what role students and staff should have had in defining the projects, and the sustainability of the projects once the student moves on or graduates. From our case study analysis, our findings revealed that a series of partnership values—collective responsibility, honesty, plurality, and trust—need to be considered in order to have an impact on the sustainability of the project and, more importantly, on the learning experience for students.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, sustainability, learning enhancement, students as change agents, student engagement

Increasingly, students in higher education are invited to act as partners in curricular processes designed to enhance engagement and ownership in their own learning process. The scope for such work is wide ranging, with students acting as members of course design teams (Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008), consultants working through classroom observations (Cook-Sather, 2014), and partners on projects focused on affecting change in teaching and learning.

UCL ChangeMakers is an initiative at University College London (UCL) that fosters, sustains, and supports partnership projects focused on changing current teaching and learning practices. UCL is a research-intensive university with a full range of academic disciplines. It has approximately 38,000 students, almost 18,000 of whom are undergraduates. It is currently working hard to enhance its educational provision with the aim of securing the same high reputation for education that it has for research. One of the objectives of its 20-year vision, UCL 2034, is to ensure students are "full partners in the future of UCL" (UCL, 2014).

Currently in its fourth year, the UCL ChangeMakers initiative has progressed and evolved from a "students as change agents" model (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011), which has arisen in the UK from the University of Exeter scheme of the same name. UCL ChangeMakers has moved away from this model, whereby the university empowers students to initiate and run their own enhancement projects towards a model where students work as partners alongside staff, determining and carrying out projects collaboratively.

At the start of the pilot year of the initiative, a call was sent out to all UCL students via staff to participate in the pilot UCL ChangeMakers scheme. The call asked students if they had an idea for how to improve the UCL education experience in exchange for a small stipend, with students on a project sharing £200. We received twenty project proposals. There was no selection criteria process in place, and while 20 projects began, this reduced to 10 projects over the following six months. No record was kept of student reasons for dropping projects.

The participating students met with UCL ChangeMakers staff to outline projects and were advised to find a staff partner to align their projects to discipline-specific advice and support. A total of 24 students worked in teams on the 10 projects, with each team working with one or two staff partners. UCL ChangeMakers staff provided generic advice and support around suggested research practices and practical matters related to booking rooms and catering. The projects began throughout the academic year and while they officially ran until the end of June, few continued beyond the exam period beginning in March.

In this first year, students reported high levels of satisfaction with the initiative and large personal gains such as an enhanced sense of community and belonging, a sense of empowerment, improved teamwork and communication skills, and a better understanding of how the university works. Comments in the end-of-project questionnaire included:

- "Taking part in an initiative like this really enhanced the sense of community that UCL holds"
- "I feel a bit more like a part of UCL"
- "It made me feel like I could do something beneficial for our community on campus. It felt like everything that I was being taught in university was coming into fruition"
- "It allows for connecting with other members of UCL and with your own classmates. It is a way to enhance team skills and to learn how to communicate ideas"
- "It made me understand better how the behind-the-scenes works at UCL."

On the surface this was a highly successful pilot year. Our working assumption at the time was that as the students' work was directed towards enhancing the learning experience at UCL there would be gains in that area. However, our decision to evaluate the projects a year later prompted us to question our initial assumptions and focus on what happened to the projects and what student and staff perceptions yielded in terms of their own lessons learned from the pilot.

The case studies discussed here emphasise the necessity of (a) defining the project in partnership, (b) the establishment of a collective sense of responsibility, and (c) a firm belief that students can achieve change. Taken in combination, we believe these values will lead to the sustained impact of educational enhancement projects driven by students. The cases also highlight important distinctions between the change-agents model (the starting point for the UCL ChangeMakers initiative) and students as partners model (the model UCL ChangeMakers used after the pilot year) as highly relevant for understanding the sustainable impact of such projects.

SITUATING UCL CHANGERMAKERS IN THE STUDENT PARTNERSHIP LITERATURE

The benefits of student partnership have been well documented, and, indeed, we were able to trace many benefits in the first year of UCL ChangeMakers. Our evaluation documented not only the educational enhancement but also how this enhancement was (or was not) sustained after the project ended. UCL partnership work is guided by the current scholarship on partnership: the benefits, the challenges, and how such schemes operate within traditional institutional infrastructures.

Evaluations of local schemes have previously shown that partnership educational enhancement projects can have high immediate impact. For example, at the end of its first year, the Winchester Student Fellows scheme had resulted in a large number of small institution-wide changes, such as online learning resources (El-Hakim, King, Lowe, & Sims, 2016). Similarly, at Northampton, the URB@N scheme has led to changes to enhance the student learning experience, such as changes to the library induction (Maunder, 2015). However, there is little evidence of the impact of such work being sustained as yet, as these evaluations occurred at the end of the projects.

In investigating sustained impact, a question emerging from this paper is to what extent control should be passed over to students, especially as UCL ChangeMakers moved from the change-agents model to a students-as-partners framework. Dunne and Zandstra (2011) distinguish the students-as-change-agents model as students setting the agenda, whereas partnership usually occurs with a more explicit negotiation between staff and students. However, this distinction has become blurred in recent years. Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2016) explicitly categorise Exeter's "students as change agents" scheme as partnership work in the area of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. We argue in this paper that the change-agents model is closer to students in control than to partnership in Bovill and Bulley's (2011) version of Arnstein's ladder of participation. The importance of the distinction for sustained impact is particularly shown in the case studies we discuss below.

Better established in the literature are the benefits for participants and institutions. For the participating students and staff, immediate benefits include enhanced motivation, engagement, and learning, with students and staff gaining awareness of how they think and who they are (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) add the development of a sense of community, which aids student attainment and retention.

The benefits for institutions in running partnership schemes include the move to a more democratic, collaborative culture. Student partnership can challenge neoliberal economic conceptions of higher education, enabling the institution to recalibrate its purpose as students take more responsibility for their own learning (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011; Cook-Sather et al., 2014). Åkesson and Malmberg (2012) point out that student partnership is a way to increase educational quality at relatively low economic cost.

Partnership work also improves students' development and employability skills (Andersson, 2012; Jarvis, Dickerson, & Stockwell, 2013).

Despite the high-impact benefits of partnerships, there is often resistance to partnership from both staff and students. Resistance among staff might stem from the need to reconceptualise learning and teaching and moving away from practices that had suited them as students to more inclusive ones (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Cook-Sather, 2014). For many staff, time is a major factor in being part of partnership schemes in addition to normal workloads; the other factor is professional recognition for engaging in this work (Bovill & Bulley, 2011). Both time and the question of how this work relates to the promotion process might yield reluctance and hesitation from staff.

Staff may also be concerned about whether students have the requisite knowledge and expertise, and students may prefer working in the passive, traditional student role (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2015). While sources of student resistance to partnership work are not well reported in the literature, student resistance could develop from a consumerised higher education sector; in other words, why should students do work they are paying fees for? We contend these particular forces play a role in the sustainability of partnership projects, not least because they are linked to multiple, complicated misperceptions, such as the perception held by staff and students that students cannot play a role in changing educational practice. A common misperception among students pertain to staff not having time to contribute to the project. Our case studies explore these perceptions and implicit frustrations that can affect the sustained impact of projects.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Our main research questions centred on students' experience within their project and staff and student perceptions of the impact of their projects. We used data gathered at two points in time: at the completion of the project timeframe in 2015 and one year after this date in the summer of 2016.

An anonymous online survey was used to seek feedback on the scheme in June 2015 (questions are shown in Appendix 1). The response rate was 29%, with seven out of 24 students responding. The low response rate was probably due to the timing of the survey because most students had completed their studies by June. However, as the projects were allowed to continue until the end of June, this was deemed the most sensible time for the survey. To gauge sustainability of the completed projects, one question concerned how likely the students thought it was that a change would occur based on their completed project. On a scale of 1-5, where 5 was "very confident" a change would occur, three students rated the likelihood of change as 3, two of them as 4, and two as 5. Five students gave reasons for their ratings: Three said they were confident because they had received positive feedback, one because it linked to an institutional strategy, and another student was hopeful that the university was committed to improving and taking student views into consideration.

In addition to the final survey, the 24 students were each asked to provide a case study at the end of the 2015 spring term. Recorded interviews were held with students from four of the 10 projects; a separate group submitted their own video while another group submitted PowerPoint slides. Many of the projects were not completed at this point, but they provide an outline of what had been achieved at that point in the project lifecycles. The failure to submit a case study did not imply that the project was not completed or successful. Staff have subsequently provided feedback and materials that the students themselves did not submit.

In 2016, we invited students and their staff partners to complete separate online surveys about the impact of the projects. Only three students (13%) and one staff member (10%) completed the survey. Within the survey, we asked who would be amenable to an interview; by chance both the former student and staff from the same project, “Assessment and Feedback” in Laws agreed to be interviewed. The agreement of the former Laws student to be interviewed was an anomaly; the interview occurred via Skype. The low response rate among students in general was due to many students no longer being at UCL. Another reason could be that we did not initially set up the year-on survey as an expectation of participating in partnership. The low response rate from staff could have been due to minimal engagement at the outset of the project; therefore participating in a survey a year later did not make sense.

Following this disappointing response rate to the survey from students and staff, we then emailed the staff partners directly at the start of August 2016 to ask what the impact of the project had been and what, if any, lessons they thought could be learnt to maximise the impact of the projects in future. Email communication proved more successful as seven staff replied to the UCL ChangeMakers director. We felt that staff were in a better position to inform on any lasting effects of the project, as most students were no longer at university. Therefore the interpretations of project impact were only taken from the staff perspective for many of the projects. Further work to plan and gather student perspectives would be helpful in future research projects.

We used an interpretivist, grounded approach (Charmaz, 2014) when analysing what we had gathered. We were reliant upon participants’ perceptions and interpretations of whether the project had had an impact and the factors that had influenced that. Through triangulating the final evaluations, online surveys, email communications, and interviews, we were able to piece together stories of impact as well as stories where impact was not possible due to miscommunication or misunderstanding. These data points further allowed us to outline factors that influenced the sustainability of the projects, which will be described in detail in our case studies. The limitation of the low response numbers make it impossible to generalise our findings; yet, taken together they provide useful perspectives and insight into what is needed in partnerships to garner sustainable educational impact.

Participant quotes come from the interviews and online surveys conducted a year after the projects ended and interviews at the end of the projects.

FINDINGS

The table below shows the activity of 10 projects from the first year: what happened during the year, project outputs and what, if any, sustainable outcomes the project had following the project’s completion. Four of the projects will be discussed in depth as cases representing important questions to be asked of student-staff projects. Collectively, the case studies emphasise the importance of partnership for sustained impact, the characteristics of partnerships, and the challenges faced when trying to achieve this through a change-agents model. Furthermore, each case study poses an important question to consider when thinking about how to foster effective student-staff partnerships.

Table 1. Overview of project outcomes

PROJECT TITLE	OUTPUTS FROM THE PROJECT	SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES
Intercalating Bachelor of Science (iBSc) Reforms	No information.	No information: assumed no sustainable outcome.
Second Language Learning	Skype exchanges between approx. 12 UCL and 12 Columbian students; Wiki page also created.	Though the department attempted to rerun the Skype exchanges there was no student uptake in 2015/16.
Assessment and Feedback	Document produced and disagreement between student and department as to whether it was delivered.	No outcome possible as staff do not recall receiving the report.
Module Database	Identified need for a better system for module choice.	Staff provided feedback that there was no sustainable outcome.
Belonging and Attainment	Demonstrated a belonging gap, correlated to the attainment gap for black and minority ethnic (BME) students	Project findings raised in two meetings with the Vice Provost (Education and Student Affairs). Planning new projects on belonging and enhancing the breadth of cultural capture in the degree.
PhD Forum	Demonstrated a need for an online platform to encourage communication, collaboration, and knowledge and skills exchange and a women's forum to help them transition from their PhD into a career.	No information available.
Curriculum Review to Identify Syllabus Overlaps	A number of issues about the programme were discussed amongst the student body and eight PowerPoint slides were delivered.	Comments in the National Student Survey (NSS) had a high degree of similarity to the PowerPoint slides, leading to a major rethink about the nature and structure of the programme.
Moodle Best Practice	Moodle Site Best Practice Guide produced.	The guidelines were discussed by staff. At a student-staff meeting in 2015, students reported that the majority of Moodle sites are much easier to follow.
Clinical-Based Learning and Medical Illustration	Trialled problem-based learning in one lecture and demonstrated through student feedback that it had improved their learning.	Piloted a clinical problem-based scenario in 2015/16 with mixed response from students but overall improved student engagement. Plans to expand on this in 2016/17. Successfully applied for funding from UCL ChangeMakers in 2016/17 to include illustration-based learning and to pilot drawing in the course.
Student Academic Engagement	Report making recommendations in 12 main areas.	Changes have been made in at least seven of the areas in which recommendations were made.

Case study 1: How should partnerships be defined? And who should define them?

When the UCL ChangeMakers announcement appeared in her email inbox, a fourth year student in Laws, Beth, applied immediately and cited her goal to investigate changes to final year modules. Her written proposal stated that her project would aim to introduce opportunities for team work as a form of formative assessment into the Faculty of Laws. The staff member involved in the project also remembers the student's wish to explore the incorporation of group work in the curriculum. The staff member recalled the idea as innovative, and she applauded the student for recognising the need to connect academic group work to group work that might happen within a law firm. After their first project meeting, the staff member thought Beth would pursue this question in her project.

There were only two meetings between the staff member and Beth throughout the project: the initial meeting to discuss the project and the second-term meeting to discuss progress. Beth felt that the member of staff was too busy: "We just felt like we could do it along with it and obviously someone who is a staff who does not have time to be involved and our project was changing so much so I think at some point we lost the connection with the staff member" (Interview a year after the project). Meanwhile, the staff member clearly felt that it was not her place to reach out to the student: "I remember having this conversation when I was saying, 'how do we know what is happening in the project?' And we don't. It could have been purely this case. This student got distracted and did not close the loop or she may have done more and did not tell me about it" (Interview a year after the project). Uncertainty over communication marred the project from the outset.

The middle of the project produced many questions for the staff member around what was happening—particularly about how to receive and give guidance to the student. At their second meeting, the staff member discovered the student had shifted the project focus to gathering feedback on improving timely essay feedback. In fact, in her interview a year after the project had ended, the student said the project goal had always been more about timely feedback on formative essays.

The staff member was disappointed to learn the student had switched project topics midyear as she felt the department had already gathered information about timely feedback on essays and they were in the process of improving it. In particular, she was unsure if she could have told the student what to work on at that point, when it became clear to her that the student work would be of little benefit to the department. She said: "My initial understanding, and it is probably wrong, but my initial understanding was students are to set the agenda and they tell you the things they feel need to be changed. So we don't want to take over. So I don't know" (Interview a year after the project). While the tutor's understanding of a student as change agent may have been correct, the midyear switch presented the staff member with a sense of time wasted over issues already known to the department.

Finally, there is no final report that anyone can currently produce; the student stated she submitted a report to the tutor; the tutor said she did not receive a report from the student. The concerns reported here indicate that there was insufficient communication between the student and staff partner to ensure that they agreed on and defined the project's purpose, or that they returned to that purpose throughout the project and that it remained relevant and useful to all stakeholders.

Case study 2: Whose responsibility is it to continue the work?

A Spanish and Latin American Studies student in his second year, Dan, who proposed and ran a project titled, "Second Language Learning," identified a need to provide more opportunities for students in his programme to practise their oral language skills. He therefore arranged an online exchange with a Columbian university. During the project year, 12 UCL students partnered with Columbian students to discuss predetermined topics during Skype sessions. In between Skype sessions, Dan built a Wiki page for them to practise their written skills. Anecdotally, the student response to these activities were very positive; according to both the student and a tutor in the department, although no official evaluation was carried out.

The relationship between the student and staff partner was not very strong. In an online survey conducted a year after the project was completed, Dan reported: "I didn't have very much contact with my staff partner. A member of my department said that they would be happy to support me when I asked at the departmental student-staff meeting, but I didn't have a time when I felt it appropriate to call upon this help." As such, the project was student-led but not necessarily a partnership.

At the end of the project the student described his experience as empowering: "It's empowered me. . . . Whereas before I think I was content to be a consumer . . . of education here at UCL, the ChangeMakers project has allowed me to conceive [of] myself in a producing role" (Interview with Dan).

A year later, the student reported that while the exchanges had initially worked very well, interest had faded. He had studied abroad as part of an exchange program the following year and no online exchanges between UCL and Colombian students had been organized. As a result, in the student survey a year after the "Second Language Learning Project" ended Dan wrote: "I don't think that the project had an overly large impact in my department."

A year after the project, a tutor in the department informed us that at Dan's request he had sent out an email asking for volunteers to participate in an exchange the following year but received no responses to either this email or a subsequent one that was sent at the request of the Columbian instructor. The tutor was clear that this failure was not due to a lack of need. At the time, the current student cohort requested additional classroom language instruction.

Two students, who the tutor characterized as "keen, diligent students," had initially volunteered to take over facilitating the exchange but he was uncertain whether they had done so. He explained that staff could have taken this forward, in particular by integrating it into a core Spanish language module, but staff were too busy to implement this. This would indeed have been a productive, relevant way forward, yet responsibility for sustaining and dissemination of the idea fell to the tutor. Integration of the Skype exchanges into a core module would have been more likely to occur if the project plan had included plans for dissemination of ideas to module coordinators suggesting where to embed and integrate materials. It also brings into question not only the responsibility of the student or tutor but also the question of who will advocate for continued changes to core modules in a programme.

Case study 3: How will project findings be shared and how will they be most useful for sustainability?

Two dissatisfied students, Fred and James, were challenged by departmental staff to take on a project to review their course curriculum in order to identify overlaps, which when eliminated would create more time for students to pursue their individual interests. The aim of staff in challenging the students in this way was to convert their dissatisfaction into a force for positive change. The "Syllabus Overlaps" project was the most controversial in terms of its outcomes. The only information on this project comes from the staff involved in the project. They report that the students stayed in touch, with over four meetings occurring between them and the students. However, the staff reported in the 2016 survey that while they received a PowerPoint presentation from the students, they did not receive a final report.

In the survey a year later, a member of staff reports that the students talked a lot to other students in the department and that they catalysed concerted efforts against a member of staff to complain about their module in their responses to the UK's National Student Survey (NSS). Another staff member wrote in an email that the issues raised by Fred and James were not unreasonable, but the way they reported them was very unfair. Following the NSS results, the department had undertaken a major reflection about the nature and structure of the programme. Nonetheless, staff felt strongly dissatisfied with the project.

There is no evidence of the students asking others to put their findings as comments in the National Student Survey, and it would be surprising if their findings and the survey did not reflect the same student views. Nevertheless, there was a staff perception that the students acted unethically, and that while the project has resulted in educational enhancements it has also undermined efforts to develop a culture of student partnership. The irony of this is that if the students acted in this way, they were probably motivated by a sense of powerlessness to effect change through the project. This could have been a symptom of the weakness of the partnership element present in this project.

Case study 4: What can students achieve?

The "Student Academic Engagement" project was, on the face of it, one of the most successful in terms of delivering positive change. The project was broadly envisaged as trying to identify possible enhancements to the programme. The student, Eva, recruited both students and staff to advise on the project. Eva then conducted a survey and series of focus groups to gain student input. She had weekly meetings with her staff partner, a teaching administrator, and her student team. Towards the end of the project when interviewed, Eva was very confident that her project would bring about change because she had strong support from the teaching administrators.

A year later, a teaching administrator in the department reported that of the 12 areas in which the report made recommendations there had been changes in at least seven of them. She was unclear whether change had occurred in an eighth area and the final 4 were about particular modules or areas of study, where content and delivery is continually reviewed and updated. The administrator reported that there is a strong relationship between academic staff and teaching administrators and that all recognise the importance of engaging with students and taking their feedback seriously. The major barrier (also reported by the student at the time) was that of time for the project. She continued to say that the major lesson to be learned from the project is that students should not restrict themselves and that even big changes may be possible. One of the recommendations that did not appear in the report was about the restrictions there were on module choice in years 2 and 3 because the students thought it could not be changed. These restrictions have now been changed for students entering from 2017/18.

A word of caution came from one of the academic staff, who noted that the findings of the report were in line with staff perceptions and that he doubted action would have been taken so swiftly if this had not been the case. He stated that the actions were thus not due (or at least solely due) to the project. It is of course entirely right that changes should only be made quickly where views are aligned: Cook-Sather et al. (2014) emphasise that neither partner's views should override the others. However, this does not mean that the students' work did not deserve any credit for the change.

DISCUSSION: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE CASE STUDIES?

Across the four case studies, we found a number of factors that could have contributed to fruitful, sustainable outcomes for each project: defining the project as a partnership at the outset, considering who has responsibility for sustaining the project, establishing trust, and acknowledging what students can achieve. Additionally, our findings show positive moments where partnerships enhanced educational processes leading to sustained impact.

Definition of the project in partnership

The first case study highlights the real need for the project to be defined as a partnership and the importance of partnership values (Higher Education Academy, 2014). This project would have benefitted from a sense of collective responsibility for the results, with open and honest dialogue about what would be useful to the department. The staff member was right that she could not demand to change the focus for the project in the middle of the project. However, if she wanted to sustain a partnership, she and the student could have addressed the misalignment of objectives and how the project would not be useful to the department. Yet, the staff member was uncertain about the parameters of the project and who should lead at any particular moment. The uncertainty of the staff member, which meant that she did not reach out to the student and encourage her to pursue her original project idea, resulted in the project not fitting with the aims of the department.

The student on this project (and others, particularly case study 2) held the perception that staff were too busy to contribute. While this might be true of most higher education administrators at any university in the world, this posed a limited, narrow view on the project. This reflects both a lack of communication and a lack of plurality, with students' inability to recognise staff contributions necessary to ensure the project's sustainability. This was an important lesson to learn in thinking about partnership projects existing within a term and beyond it. It is not just about what happened when they were conducting the project, but its sustainability, which would require the input and sense of ownership of the staff member involved.

Responsibility for sustaining the project

The question of who is responsible for sustaining the project, raised by the second case study, is perhaps a false one: There should be collective responsibility, which as discussed above is built through more a collective definition of the project and through the

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students involving staff more in its delivery. Sustainability is difficult to deliver without staff involvement, as students have other commitments, such as the year abroad in this case, and a limited time at the university. Staff are likely to have a greater understanding of how changes occur in their contexts: which forms to fill in, who to ask for help and when, or what constraints exist. Having said this, Dan's project's sustainability would have been aided by a systematic evaluation of the pilot to make an evidence-based claim for its continuation and the benefits it posed to core modules.

Trust

Case study 3 reminds us of the vulnerability of staff in working with students as partners. Crawford (2012) discusses how staff were concerned about whether the findings of student consultants on teaching would be used against them in performance reviews. Cook-Sather (2014) also discusses staff seeing student consultants as threatening when they do not view them as partners. Staff in the department where the "Syllabus Overlaps" project occurred, have the perception that students used their findings against them in the National Student Survey. Whereas one might be able to guarantee that the findings will not be used managerially, it is difficult to guarantee how students will use their findings. The focus instead must be on how to develop a trusting relationship on both sides, where the joint aim is to enhance practice, use findings ethically, and where staff will help to effect change.

What can students achieve?

As discussed above, the "unethical" reporting in case study 3 may have been due to the students not believing that their work had the power to create change, and so ensured their findings were also reported in the NSS. A lack of belief that students have the power to create change is a problem that was reported in two other projects. The staff partner on case study 4 reported that the project report had not made recommendations in one area because the students felt that change was not possible in that area. The student in case study 1 reported difficulty getting other students to participate in the project because they did not believe that change could be achieved. This speaks to the lack of student partnership culture that existed at the time. It is therefore vital that the successes of such projects are made visible to students to build belief in their power to influence change.

Time

One major barrier to the other projects producing a sustainable outcome was poor time management. The projects started throughout the year, and while many students planned to continue their projects following the exam period, this did not happen. As a result, two of the projects did not produce outputs in the form of recommendations that could be used. As a result, UCL ChangeMakers now asks for all projects involving undergraduates to be completed prior to the exam period and provides training on time management.

CONCLUSION

Student-staff partnerships bring many benefits to higher education. The lessons learned from these case studies informed the subsequent ChangeMaker projects, particularly in emphasising what goes into a successful partnership in order to enact meaningful change:

1. Students and staff need to recognise and commit to the idea of partnership as crucial to the project's sustained success. The projects may be successful in the short term without staff input, but they are unlikely to be sustainable if students do not create collective responsibility for the project by involving staff.

2. Partnership schemes need to emphasise and explore with students and staff the multidimensional aspects of partnership work. For example, students need to acknowledge that a staff member's schedule might limit the time available to discuss project progress; yet, the nature of staff work means that they have experience and administrative knowledge that is important for effecting longer-term impact. Inversely, staff need to acknowledge and accept that students might not have developed these requisite project management skills; therefore, extra time and explanation might be needed to bring students into these processes. However, students have current experience of being taught at a university and a perspective that encompasses not only the course being taught but the whole programme and student experience, which is important for understanding how best to implement positive change for students. Recognizing partnership work as multidimensional requires each partner to understand each other's strengths and constraints.

3. Students need to think carefully (with support) about choosing the appropriate staff member to work *with* them on the project rather than *advise* them. This evaluation is not intended to imply that students should not initiate or drive their own enhancement projects, as per the students-as-change-agents model; this is still an important part of the UCL ChangeMakers ethos. However, the impetus for change will not be sustained unless students find the appropriate partners in carrying out their work.

4. Uncertainty about roles can be paralysing: Staff may fear disempowering students by trying to redirect their work towards something that will have lasting impact while students may struggle to challenge staff to question embedded and cherished practices, particularly when students perceive staff as experienced or powerful. Staff and students may need the reassurance that they do not always have to achieve a perfect partnership. Staff need to involve students and empower them as best befits the context in which they work. Usually, that will involve empowering students more than they currently are, but not in all cases.

5. Honesty is required in terms of what is useful for staff/departments as well as about the uncertainty that exists for staff and students in how to act in partnerships when this practice is new to them. Honesty helps to develop trust—trust that students will use the findings fairly and trust that staff are serious about the possibility of implementing change based on the project—which is vital to successful partnership.

6. Finally, it is important to envision the sustained impact of the partnership by closing feedback loops and informing students of the project's impact after it ends. Through this last aspect of partnership, communication beyond graduation (or during a study abroad) further empowers the students and staff to recognise their contributions to enhancing educational practices.

Before conducting the interviews and surveys cited in this research article, the university's research ethics board successfully reviewed and approved research efforts conducted within the researchers' academic centre.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Jenny Marie *has directed UCL ChangeMakers since 2015. As well as her interest in student-staff partnership, she is interested in the enhancement of assessment and feedback and is currently part of UCL's Assessment Review team.*

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APPENDIX 1

1: Are you glad you undertook a UCL ChangeMaker Project?
2: Was it enjoyable to undertake a UCL ChangeMaker Project?
3: Would you recommend UCL ChangeMaker Projects to other students who are interested in making a change at UCL?
4: What advice would you give to another student who was thinking of doing a UCL ChangeMaker Project?
5: How would you rate UCL ChangeMaker Projects? Rate between 1-5, where 5 is excellent.
6: Has running a UCL ChangeMaker Projects improved your experience at UCL?
7: Approximately how many hours in total did your project take?

8: What was your motivation for taking part?
9: How confident are you that your change will take place? Why? Rate between 1-5, where 5 is very confident.
10: What barriers did you encounter?
11: Do you think the payment to project leads of £150 is a fair amount given the time and effort put in?
12: Do you think payment of £50 to project supports was a fair amount?
13: Is getting recognised on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) a good incentive for taking part?
14: Funding: please select all the statements you agree with:

- The amount of funding was fair
- The funding covered my project expenses
- It was clear what the funding covered
- It was easy to gain access to the funding
- The amount of funding limited what I was able to do in my project
- It was easy to find out how much money I had spent
- It was easy to find out how much money I had left
- Any other comments about funding.

15: Did you feel supported?
16: What support did you find useful?
17: What other support would have been useful if it had been available?
18: If we were to run an initial training workshop, what do you think should be included in it that would have helped you with your project?
19: How could we have created more of a community feel?
20: Any other comments or suggestions for us to take into consideration for the development of UCL ChangeMaker Projects?

ARTICLE

We Want to be More Involved: Student Perceptions of Students as Partners Across the Degree Program Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Engaging students-as-partners is gaining momentum in the higher education sector. This study explores undergraduate students' perceptions of how involved they were in partnership activities across their degree programs, and whether this matched their desired level of involvement in such practices. Analysis of a quantitative study of 268 students showed statistically significant differences between perceived levels of importance and involvement for all the partnership practices (n=18) investigated in our survey. These results highlight that the students in this study want to be more substantially involved in partnership practices across their degree program. We argue against the consumerist rhetoric about the role of students as passive learners and advocate for greater inclusion of partnership activities that foster active student participation in shaping the university curricula. We discuss implications for Students as Partners in relation to the progressive development of university curricula and assessment practices along with future research directions.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, student perspectives, higher education

Students as Partners (SaP) is a "hot topic" in the field of higher education (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016). Emerging research focused on those engaged in SaP initiatives is identifying a range of beneficial outcomes experienced by those involved (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). As the popularity of SaP increases and universities seek to extend the reach of partnership to more students and staff, it is important to understand the views of those not engaged in SaP initiatives and investigate SaP activities across curricula. In this study, we explore 268 students' perspectives of the importance of being involved in SaP activities and their opportunities to engage in such activities across their degree programs. The study offers an evidential baseline of student involvement in SaP, along with a measure of the gap between students' desires to be engaged in SaP practices and the extent to which the curriculum creates such opportunities for them. Understanding these data concerning students' desire to be engaged in SaP contributes to the development of the field by illuminating views of students who are not typically represented in published SaP research and by offering new insights into how students not typically involved in SaP practices wish to be engaged in them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SaP extends the concept of student engagement from a focus on students toward a notion of shared engagement predicated on students and staff collaborating together on shared educational goals (Matthews, 2016). This shared engagement is evident in the Healey et al. (2014) definition of partnership: "a relationship in which all involved—students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on—are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together" (p. 12). Going beyond listening to students' feedback on teaching activities, Cook-Sather et al. (2014) defined partnership as "a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis" (pp. 6-7). This definition emphasises student and staff collaboration in activities that traditionally have involved only staff by signaling that students can play important roles in designing learning activities, curriculum reform efforts, teaching, and researching the effectiveness of educational interventions. SaP interactions are based on the partnership principles of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in teaching and learning (Cook-Sather et al, 2014).

SaP encompasses a broad range of activities. Healey et al. (2014) proposed a framework comprising four overlapping categories where students and staff engage together as partners in:

1) Learning, teaching, and assessment
2) Subject-based research and inquiry
3) Curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy
4) Scholarship of teaching and learning

The framework highlights the range of possibilities for engaging students and staff as partners and signals the plethora of practices that can be classified as SaP, as Healey, Bovill, and Jenkins (2015) summarise:

> Students may take on the role of teachers through peer-learning and assessment or through taking on responsibility for co-teaching with staff and other students; they may act as scholars through being involved in subject-based research and inquiry; and they may engage as change agents through undertaking Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects, co-designing the curriculum and acting as pedagogic mentors and consultants to staff. (p. 142)

SaP is a recent term that encompasses existing practices while making space for possibilities not yet imagined. Early SaP research has highlighted a range of beneficial outcomes for both students and staff. For students, outcomes include increased engagement and motivation for learning, development of skills and broader outcomes linked to employability, deeper understanding of their own learning (meta-cognitive learning) linked to life-long learning, and a greater sense of belonging to the university (Cook-Sather et al, 2014; Healey et al., 2014). For staff, the outcomes include more enjoyment and increased motivation for teaching, deeper understanding of students' experiences, and development of enhanced teaching materials (Cook-Sather et al, 2014; Healey et al., 2014; Woolmer et al., 2016). While engaging students and staff in partnership has real challenges and hurdles, research is indicating these practices can be transformative and beneficial for both students and staff.

As a new field of inquiry, it is unsurprising that SaP research tends to be small scale, with a reliance on qualitative case study methods that inquire into the experiences of students and staff explicitly involved in partnership activities (for example see, Butcher & Maunder, 2013; Woolmer et al., 2016, and case studies used in Cook-Sather et al, 2014; Healey et al, 2014). In a recent literature review of 65 published works explicitly investigating SaP through empirical research, Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) found the studies were predominantly small-scale case studies drawing on the qualitative experiences of those involved in SaP practices. Such studies are highly contextualised to the socio-cultural context of their institutions and tend to explore a micro-level focus on specific learning activities, classroom-level practices, or small-scale extra-curricular projects. They offer rich descriptions and insights into the lived experience of engaging as a partner in teaching and learning. As Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) argue, this focus, while important, is limited to the experiences, insights, and understandings of those involved to the exclusion of those not involved. If we believe that opportunities to shape one's education should be made available to all students, as suggested by Healey et al.'s (2014) model of "partnered learning communities" and Matthews, Cook-Sather, and Healey's (in press) notion of "egalitarian learning communities," then understanding the views of students not involved in partnership seems an important piece of the overall SaP research landscape. At present, however, little is known about SaP practices at the macro-level of degree programs and the views of students not explicitly involved in such practices.

Research capturing the SaP experiences and beliefs of larger cohorts of students and staff would advance the field of SaP, providing baseline evidence of the extent to which SaP activities are included in the curriculum and guiding further curriculum development to scaffold such activities across degree programs. This study explores the macro-level of degree programs by focusing on the broader student cohort using a large-scale quantitative research design.

PURPOSE AND CONTRIBUTION

Our aim is to contribute to the growing SaP body of research by asking students questions about their perceptions of SaP across their degree program. The rationale for exploring the student perspective on SaP draws on ideas of student voice that give value and privilege to what students think about their education by virtue of being essential partners in learning and teaching (Cook-Sather, 2002; 2006). We acknowledge that students have expertise in the student experience and can offer valuable perspectives that should shape and reframe curricular practices, particularly how SaP practices are scaffolded across degree programs. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. ***How important is it to undergraduate students to be involved in SaP practices?***

2. ***To what extent are opportunities for student involvement in SaP practices included in their degree program curriculum?***

Exploring these questions offers insight into the gap between students' perceptions of the importance of SaP practices and their inclusion in the degree program curriculum. This is an exploratory study that establishes an evidential baseline about SaP practices in a degree program.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative design to capture data from a large group of students. The study received approval from our Institutional Human Research Ethics Committee (approval #2016000441).

Context

This study was conducted at a research-intensive Australian higher education institution ranked within the top 100 universities worldwide (see, for example, Times Higher Education and QS rankings). The institution has a traditional model for teaching with strong disciplinary faculties focused on research excellence. Recent efforts to raise the profile of teaching and the student experience include a new five-year "student strategy" with SaP as a central pillar for institutional transformation of teaching and learning. The study was conducted in the Faculty of Science, which offers a three-year Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree with an optional fourth Honours-research year and a four-year Bachelor of Biomedical Science (B.Biomed.Sc) degree. Both programs offer undergraduate research opportunities as they are recognized to as integral to learning science within a traditional, discipline-oriented curriculum.

Data collection instrument

The Science Students Skills Inventory (SSSI) instrument developed by Matthews and Hodgson (2012) was adapted for this study. The SSSI is an established survey tool that collects student perception data about degree-program learning outcomes at the whole-program level using several indicators and has been used in many studies (see Dvorakova & Matthews, 2016; Matthews & Mercer-Mapstone, 2016; Varsavsky, Matthews, & Hodgson, 2014). The SSSI was adapted to focus on partnership activities across two indicators: *importance* and *inclusion*.

The survey focused on tangible partnership practices. The Healey et al. (2014) four-category model was used to identify relevant partnership activities, along with our insider knowledge of the undergraduate curriculum: Groenendijk is a BSc student, Chunduri is a lecturer, and Matthews is a science curriculum consultant. Groenendijk drafted a list of potential activities and we revised them together. In this process, we acknowledged that certain practices (e.g., end-of-semester class evaluation surveys; being a class representative for a unit) were not partnership practices, but these were familiar ways for students to offer feedback. Thus, Groenendijk in particular felt it important to include such items, as students would expect to see them. We agreed they could offer insightful comparisons across a spectrum of gathering student feedback, on one end, to partnership practices, on the other end. We then created the survey instrument and piloted it with four undergraduate students to gauge how they interpreted the questions and activities. We revised accordingly with the final survey exploring 18 partnership practices.

The survey consisted of questions on a 4-point alpha-numeric scale as per Table 1. Participants were asked to rate the perceived *importance* of each activity from "not at all" (1) to "a lot" (4). A "not sure what this means" option was included to prevent participants from being forced to guess on practices they did not understand. Participants were then asked to rate on the same 4-point scale how *involved* they have been throughout their degree program in these 18 activities. We also did not imagine that all students would indicate high levels of agreement for *importance* or *inclusion*; our aim was to explore the gap between them for the 18 practices. Demographic information was collected, which included year level, gender, and post-graduation plans.

Table 1: Example of survey question and alpha-numeric scale used to collect student responses

How IMPORTANT do you think it is to have the following included in your degree?					
SaP Practice listed	Not at all (1)	A little (2)	A moderate amount (3)	A lot (4)	Not sure what this means

Participants

The survey instrument was administered online to all students enrolled either in a four-year B.Biomed.Sc program with Honours or a three-year BSc degree with an optional Honours year. In total, 1,208 students were emailed an invitation to complete the survey, which was open for 1 week. A total of 289 students opened the survey and answered at least one question giving a total response rate of 24%. Taking into account the population size, the response rate is adequate for reducing sampling error and maximising confidence level (Nulty, 2008). For the purposes of analysis, surveys with 25% or fewer questions completed were removed, leaving 268 surveys for inclusion in the data analysis. Of the respondents included in this study, 48% (n = 129) were enrolled in third or fourth year and 52% (n = 139) were enrolled in first or second year. The graduation plans identified by participating students favoured attending medical school (n=58%), other postgraduate degree (24%), another undergraduate degree (2%), work (9%), no set plans (6%) and other (1%). Females were 67% of respondents, while the cohort is typically made up of 50% female students.

Analysis

The GraphPad Prism 7 statistical software package was used for all statistical calculations, including descriptive statistics and paired t-tests. For the purpose of analysis, "I don't understand what this means" answers were removed. Each partnership category was treated separately so that even if a participant did not understand some categories, the rest of their answers were kept for data analysis. Due to the alpha-numeric item nature of the survey, the data was treated as continuous as per common practice (Weng, 2004).

Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were calculated for each partnership activity for both perceived *importance* and *involvement*. Data graphs were created using the mean. Percentage agreement was also calculated for data tables, with "3" and "4" classified as "agree" as is standard and accepted survey practice for a balanced scale.

Paired t-tests were performed to a confidence level of 95% ($p > 0.05$) to assess differences between perceived *importance* and *involvement* in each partnership activity. Gap analysis tables were created to assess which categories had the greatest differences. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to analyse the difference between group means to test the hypothesis that demographics (i.e., gender, year level in degree program, post-graduation plans) may influence how students considered partnership activities to be included in their degree.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations worth acknowledging so readers can take care when interpreting and generalising its findings. First, the study is situated in one institution and one disciplinary context. As an exploratory study using a method unique to the field of SaP research, readers should take care to generalise to other disciplines or institutional contexts. Second, the study was focused on SaP practices, not the principles and values that underpin SaP. Thus, the study offers no insight into how SaP practices were experienced in relation to any values. Third, the 18 SaP practices investigated were not exhaustive, and, as such, the data collection instrument does not represent SaP broadly. Fourth, a sample of students elected to participate in our volunteer study. While many did not elect to participate, we cannot speculate as to their reasons why. This study is reflective of the students who did engage and care should be taken to generalise to the broader student population. Finally, as a quantitative study exploring perceptions of *importance* and *inclusion* using fixed prompts, the study offers no sense of quality of the experiences or outcomes of being involved in the 18 SaP practices.

RESULTS

The results present students' perceptions of the *importance* of being involved in 18 SaP practices, with *importance* being an indicator of what matters to students, which is distinct from a priority or prioritising what students might like to see implemented in practice. The results also present students' perceptions of the extent to which opportunities for student involvement were *included* in their degree program; *included* indicated what students identified as being available to them across their curricula. The results are displayed based on the Healey et al. (2014) categories, which presents clusters of data around similar types of partnership activities. The categories of "subject-based research and inquiry" and "SoTL" have been combined because these two practices that involve co-inquiry and co-researchers explored in the survey could fit into either category.

The results from the analysis of variance or ANOVA exploring differences between demographic variables (i.e., gender, year level in degree program, post-graduation plans) found very limited influence on perceptions of SaP being included in the curriculum.

Results for "learning, teaching, and assessment" practices

The results for the seven partnership activities in this category are presented in Table 2 and Figure 1, and showed statistically significant differences between students' perceptions of *importance* and *involvement*, with *importance* being higher across all activities.

Table 2: Levels of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means, percentage agree) of students across seven practices in the "teaching, learning, and assessment" category

SaP Practice	# of Responses	Importance % agree *M* (SD)	Involvement % agree *M* (SD)	Statistical Significance Level (Means)	Gap % agree M
Being a tutor or lab demonstrator for courses	260	72% 2.92 (± 0.93)	13% 1.35 (± 0.81)	$p < 0.0001$	59% 1.57
Negotiating assessment criteria and grade weightings with instructors	261	64% 2.79 (± 0.96)	8% 1.35 (± 0.66)	$p < 0.0001$	56% 1.44
Being a peer assisted study session (PASS) leader	257	65% 2.81 (± 0.95)	16% 1.43 (± 0.92)	$p < 0.0001$	49% 1.38
Negotiating assessment deadlines with instructors	264	55% 2.60 (± 1.04)	11% 1.39 (± 0.76)	$p < 0.0001$	44% 1.21
Selecting from a choice of assessment topics in class	254	80% 3.19 (± 0.85)	42% 2.29 (± 0.99)	$p < 0.0001$	38% 0.90
Self-assess your own work as part of an assignment	263	58% 2.73 (± 1.00)	36% 2.23 (± 1.02)	$p < 0.0001$	22% 0.50
Peer review of assessment for other students	264	62% 2.76 (± 0.94)	43% 2.35 (± 0.88)	$p < 0.0001$	19% 0.41

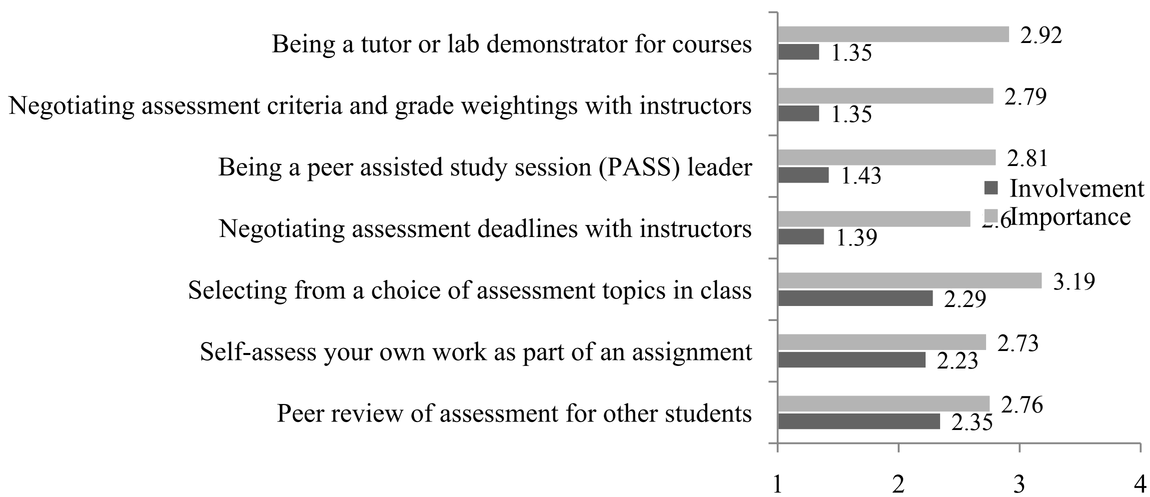

Figure 1: Graphical comparison of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means) of students across seven practices in the "teaching, learning, and assessment" category.

Results for "curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy" practices

The results for the nine partnership activities in this category are presented in Table 3 and Figure 2. Similar to the previous category, data showed statistically significant differences between students' perceptions of *importance* and *involvement*, with *importance* being higher across all activities. However, "end of semester class evaluation surveys" was found to be less statistically significant in comparison to all other partnership activities.

Table 3: Levels of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means, percentage agree) of students across nine practices in the "curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy" category

SaP Practice	# of responses	Importance % agree *M* (SD)	Involvement % agree *M* (SD)	Statistical Significance Level (Means)	Gap % agree M
Conversations with instructors to improve teaching practices	254	87% 3.39 (± 0.76)	20% 1.77 (± 0.88)	$p < 0.0001$	67% 1.62
Co-designed course materials with instructors	253	65% 2.83 (± 0.96)	12% 1.35 (± 0.76)	$p < 0.0001$	53% 1.48
Co-designed assessment tasks with instructors	252	64% 2.80 (± 0.88)	12% 1.38 (± 0.75)	$p < 0.0001$	53% 1.42
Developing assessment marking criteria with instructors as part of a class	260	57% 2.70 (± 0.99)	9% 1.35 (± 0.76)	$p < 0.0001$	48% 1.35
Drafting assessment questions for instructors as part of a class	259	61% 2.76 (± 0.99)	17% 1.53 (± 0.81)	$p < 0.0001$	44% 1.23
Student forums to discuss degree program curricula, teaching, or learning	262	75% 3.10 (± 0.85)	31% 2.00 (± 1.03)	$p < 0.0001$	44% 1.10
Being a student representative on a university committee	264	41% 2.31 (± 0.95)	12% 1.41 (± 0.81)	$p < 0.0001$	29% 0.90
Being a class representative for a unit	246	33% 2.18 (± 0.92)	10% 1.34 (± 0.70)	$p < 0.0001$	23% 0.84
End of semester class evaluation survey	247	86% 3.40 (± 0.77)	82% 3.26 (± 0.94)	$p < 0.05$	4% 0.14

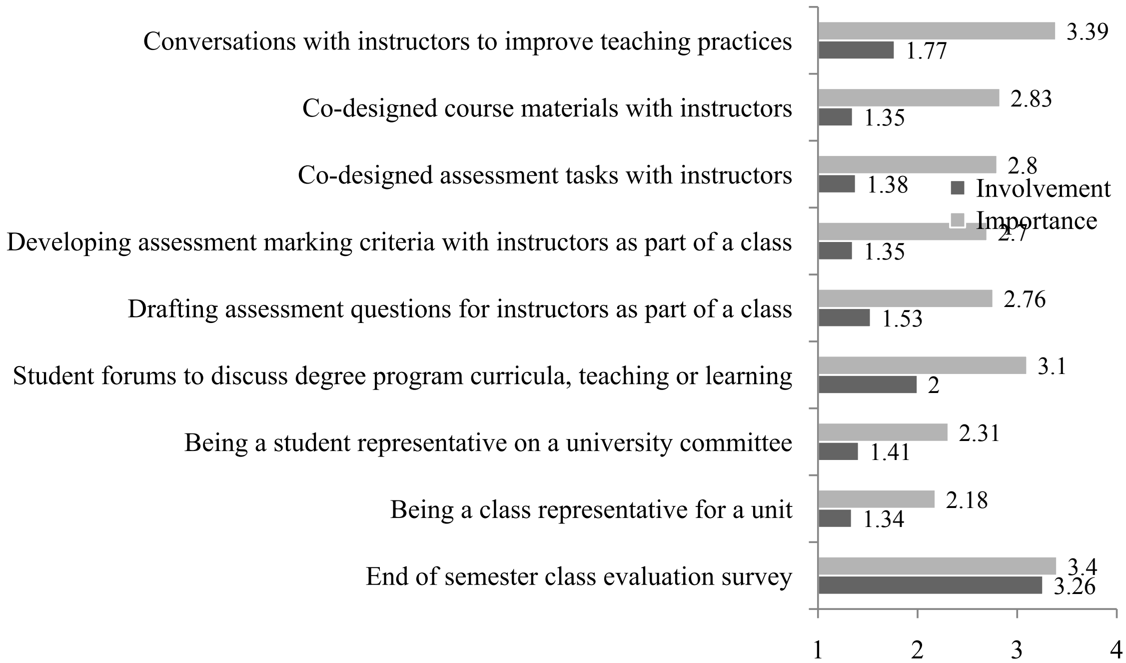

Figure 2: Graphical comparison of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means) of students across nine practices in the "curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy" category.

Results for "subject-based research and inquiry" and SoTL practice

The results for the two partnership activities in these two categories are presented in Table 4 and Figure 3 and showed statistically significant differences between students' perceptions of *importance* and *involvement*, with *importance* being higher across all activities.

Table 4: Levels of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means, percentage agree) of students across two practices in the "subject-based research and inquiry" and "SoTL'" categories

SaP Practice	# of responses	Importance % agree *M* (SD)	Involvement % agree *M* (SD)	Statistical Significance Level (Means)	Gap % agree M
Undergraduate research projects collaborating with instructors in their research	257	82% 3.29 (± 0.92)	29% 1.85 (± 1.09)	$p < 0.0001$	53% 1.44
Co-authoring a manuscript with an instructor	257	67% 2.83 (± 0.99)	14% 1.41 (± 0.81)	$p < 0.0001$	53% 1.42

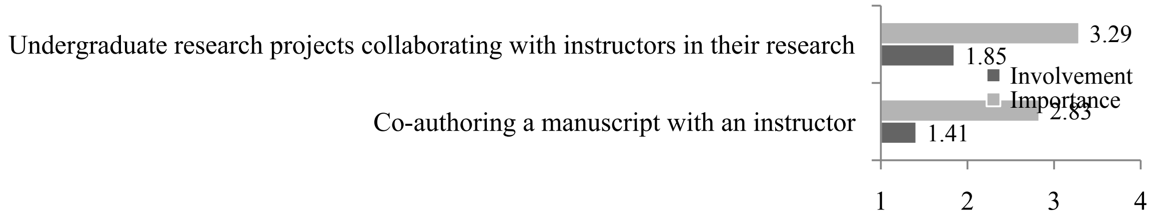

Figure 3: Graphical comparison of perceived *importance* and *involvement* (means) of students across two practices in the "subject-based research and inquiry" and "SoTL" categories.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how involved undergraduate science students are in partnership activities, and whether this matched desired involvement at the degree program level. The analysis of results from the 268 students included in the study analysis showed statistically significant differences between their perceived levels of *importance* and *involvement* for all 18 SaP activities investigated in the survey. These results show that students perceive these SaP practices are more important compared to their opportunities to be engaged in such SaP practices.

The Healey et al. (2014) framework highlights the ways that students and staff can become co-teachers or co-inquirers in subject-based or institutional SoTL research projects and co-designers or co-creators in curriculum and assessment endeavours. Our findings indicate large gaps in students' perceptions, suggesting co-teaching, co-creating, and co-inquirer forms of partnership are important relative to existing opportunities for engagement in such practices. While there were high levels of agreement on the importance of SaP practices, others have shown some student resistance to engaging in SaP practices (Seale, Gibson, Haynes, & Potter, 2015). Having baseline perception data from students allows instructors to have a better sense of where resistance might occur to specific practices so they may more explicitly state the purpose of adopting SaP approaches.

The smallest gap in the survey was students giving feedback on class (subject) teaching evaluation surveys, which are required to be administered online for all classes at the university being studied. Although this activity is better recognised as "listening to students" than engaging them as partners, students in this study valued it. Practices emphasising dialogue between students and instructors via "conversations with instructors to improve teaching practices" and "student forums to discuss curricula, teaching, or learning" had high levels of perceived importance, with substantial gaps indicating limited engagement in such conversations in the curricula. Models such as Cook-Sather's (2014; 2016) "Students as Learners and Teachers" encourage such ongoing dialogue between instructors and students through structured interactions focused on enhancing educational practices. In the biomedical sciences curriculum of the university in this study, no such models exist. These data indicate that such programs and more active forms of engagement than simply responding to a class teaching evaluation survey would be welcomed from students who are seeking dialogue about their educational experiences. However, official student representative roles on committees and in classes were perceived as less important by students in this study. While there has been a lot of focus on "student voice in governance" (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009), students in this study were less interested in such opportunities. These findings make sense in light of some student unions also emphasising that students and staff working in partnership extends far beyond involving representative students in decision-making on institutional committees (HEA and NUS, 2011).

The dearth of research investigating students' involvement in or perceptions of SaP activities across their degree program curriculum makes comparison to existing literature difficult. This study provides an evidential baseline for the wide scope possible for SaP and invites further quantitative research at the degree program level in other disciplines and other institutional contexts. There are several implications for SaP arising from our results, which we will discuss below under the following broad headings: (a) students as consumers or partners in learning and teaching, (b) progressive development of SaP in assessment practices, (c) SaP in curriculum development, and (d) further SaP research.

Students as consumers or partners in learning and teaching

In many ways, the emergence of SaP was a response to the changing nature of the discourse of students in higher education, particularly the rhetoric of "students as customers." A recent university graduate opinion piece, "We are not customers" (Afolabi & Stockwell, 2012), challenged the client view of students but acknowledged that curricula often encourages students to self-identify as a passive customer rather than facilitating the process of becoming an effective lifelong learner. While not explicitly framed in SaP, Bunce, Baird, and Jones (2016) explored the consequences of students being considered customers in the UK, which drastically increased university fees in 2012. They administered a survey to 605 undergraduate students from 35 institutions in England and found that students with a "consumer orientation" tended to hold passive attitudes towards learning, which then had a negative impact on academic performance (Bunce et al., 2016). By working together as collaborative partners in the teaching and learning enterprise, SaP is a direct challenge to the idea that students or staff can be passive in the educational process.

Students in our study held generally high levels of perceptions of the importance of SaP activities, indicating a desire to be more actively engaged in partnership activities with staff. Afolabi and Stockwell (2012) suggested that university curricular tended to encourage passive learning. Results of our study also suggest curricular experiences are not providing the opportunities many students seek to be more actively involved in teaching and learning and in the enhancement of teaching and learning. There is a risk that universities seeking to embrace SaP as a central pillar of teaching and learning predicated on active involvement of students with staff are actually reinforcing passive modes of learning based on traditional student-teacher hierarchies in the formal curriculum. SaP practices in the formal curriculum need to be carefully considered, particularly in institutions embracing the SaP philosophy.

Implications for SaP in assessment practices

Assessment is central to teaching and learning. The development of assessment discourse (e.g., assessment driving learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning) signals the inextricable link between learning and assessment. Current concerns around effective feedback arising from both formative and summative assessment practices highlight the different understandings of what constitutes feedback between learners and teachers (Carless, 2006). A national Australian assessment reform project in higher education featured several principles of effective assessment practices, including that students and instructors should become partners in assessment predicated on the essential role of dialogue in assessment and feedback (Boud, 2010). In our study, students assigned high importance to selecting from a choice of assessment topics. Giving students choices in their assessment topics provides a degree of responsibility and ownership over their learning, which can encourage higher engagement with assessment pieces (Healey et al., 2014; Waterfield & West, 2006). Other ways to engage students as partners in the assessment process include a shared revision of student generated statements and questions (Fluckiger, Vigil, Pasco, & Danielson, 2010). Benefits, such as increased student autonomy, are a good argument for increasing the prevalence of partnership practices in assessment (Healey et al., 2014). Student responses in our study indicate substantial scope for rethinking assessment practices in ways that give students more ownership, that offer more dialogic-based assessment and feedback tasks, and that create room to develop effective self-evaluative strategies.

Implications for progressive development of SaP in the curriculum

Our study did not find statistically significant differences between the perceptions of students by year level. This indicates that first-year students reported the same perception levels about the 18 SaP activities as final-year students. Using a survey to explore a large sample of students, Mercer-Mapstone and Matthews (2015) investigated student perceptions of graduate learning outcomes and skills across a degree program that included students from varying year levels. Their curricular model, drawing on Knight's (2001) progressive development of curriculum, supposed that students reported their perceptions based on experience of the curriculum to date. Ideally, according to Mercer-Mapstone and Matthews, students would report high levels of perceptions of developing such outcomes and skills at each year level, suggesting that the skills or outcomes were embedded in all year levels sufficiently. In our study, students' perceptions of the inclusion of most of the SaP activities were low, including that SaP activities were not being progressively developed across the year levels of the curriculum.

As Matthews, Cook-Sather, and Healey (in press) recently argued, SaP challenges the traditional roles of being a student and being a teacher in ways that require those engaged to rethink their beliefs. They acknowledge that this re-imagining of roles is challenging as it shifts universities toward more egalitarian learning communities, which represents a significant cultural change. For such a cultural change to occur, activities based on SaP will need to suffuse the curriculum in ways that introduce new students to the practices and rationale for such approaches while building the depth of partnership activities as students progress through their degree programs. Thus, more systematic planning and development of curricula based on SaP ideas and practices are necessary. This also potentially mediates against student resistance to one-off SaP activities introduced into the degree program by enthusiastic instructors operating in fundamentally different ways from their colleagues.

Implications for SaP research

Our exploratory study conducted at a single university within one disciplinary context (biomedical sciences) sought to ask different questions about SaP compared to much of the current SaP research, which led to a research design drawing on quantitative methods that values students' perceptions. The results were revealing with some clear implications for SaP activities across the curriculum. This creates space for further SaP research that captures large numbers of students' perceptions about SaP that can guide further SaP practices focused at the whole of degree program level. Similar studies have been conducted with a focus on whole of degree program curriculum development of graduate learning outcomes by drawing on students' perceptions (Matthews, Adams, & Goos, 2015; Varsavsky et al., 2014). The study also established an evidential baseline at a particular institution, which suggests that follow-up studies linked to efforts to further scaffold SaP activities across the degree program would be beneficial. Such studies could draw on this quantitative study while expanding into a mixed methods design that captured case studies, reflections, and narratives of students and lived experiences of staff engaging as partners.

Future research that allows for comparative studies in different disciplines and different institutional contexts would advance the field. The analysis by Bunce et al. (2016) revealed disciplinary differences in students' self-identification as passive or active learners, with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students being more likely to view themselves as passive learners. This suggests that disciplinary differences are a factor to consider in SaP practices and research, which makes sense given the depth of research into disciplinary differences that influence teaching and learning beliefs in higher education (Becher & Trowler, 1989; Mårtensson, Roxå, & Stensaker, 2014). As the field of SaP grows in both research and practice, the nuances of disciplinary differences will have to be explored.

Other avenues for further research are comparative studies of students and staff, similar to the Matthews and Mercer-Mapstone (2016) study exploring the perceptions of students and staff about curriculum development across a degree program, including both undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs. Ideally, as SaP becomes more common, perceptions of SaP across the curriculum will align around a shared responsibility for teaching and learning. Finally, exploring the perceptions of staff not involved in partnership practices would offer insight into potential barriers for implementing SaP practices more widely.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing body of research on SaP by asking questions of students about their perceptions of SaP across their whole degree program. The findings show that the students in our study want more involvement in SaP activities with implications for how SaP approaches are progressively embedded across university curricula and better linked with assessment practices. More large-scale research into SaP focused on curriculum development of whole degree programs would advance SaP practice and the SaP field of inquiry. Moving from small numbers of enthusiasts engaged in SaP to more collective curriculum efforts involving larger numbers of students and staff will not be easy. If we want the benefits of SaP to become more far reaching in our universities as part of broader cultural changes that upend notions of students as passive educational customers, then our efforts and research have to extend into curriculum development with SaP embedded across our degree programs.

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ARTICLE

PhD Student Ambassadors: Partners in Promoting Graduate Research

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this research were to explore the experiences of staff and postgraduate students in an ambassador scheme, develop a model of partnering with postgraduate students in the administrative space, and consider implications for partnership initiatives. A qualitative case study was undertaken of a “Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme”, involving a dean employing two PhD students as paid ambassadors to help promote a vibrant graduate research culture. Research diaries were kept by each partner, regular research discussions occurred, and each partner wrote a reflective account of their experiences. These data were collaboratively analysed using a general inductive approach. All partners had very positive experiences, but there was some uncertainty regarding the nature of the role and some institutional challenges. A model of staff-student partnership within the administrative space was developed that included three main influences on effective partnerships: roles in partnership, structural characteristics, and personal characteristics. The model highlights the need for clear articulation of roles and tasks, the challenge of institutional cultures, and the way that resources, time, and space can either hinder or help partnerships. Personal characteristics such as trust, respect, and informal communication can significantly mitigate challenges and build fruitful partnerships.

KEYWORDS

student partners; administration; graduate research; PhD students

INTRODUCTION

"Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product" (Healey, Flint & Harrington 2014, p. 7).

In recent years, scholars have taken an interest in promoting students as partners in higher education. The partnership engagement between students and staff (faculty, administrators, and managers) in higher education can occur in a range of areas such as teaching and learning, research, governance, quality assurance, community engagement, and also in extra-curricular activities (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016, p. 2). Such partnership can result in a wide range of positive outcomes for students including increased engagement, motivation and ownership for learning, increased self-confidence, better understanding of "other's" experiences, enhanced relationships with staff, and raised awareness of employability skills (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 11). Positive outcomes also occur for staff such as enhanced relationships with students, improved teaching and curriculum materials, greater teaching enjoyment, and increased understanding of student experiences (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 12).

Partnerships between students and staff should be engaging, with a particular focus on how to facilitate "high levels of active student participation" (Healey et al., 2016, p. 2). To achieve a true partnership, students should have a significant amount of autonomy, independence, and choice (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011; Healey et al., 2014). Moreover, the partnership should be at a level higher than merely consultation and involvement in decision-making (Williamson, 2013). Partnership may be promoted by honesty, trust, courage, and responsibility, and factors such as empowerment, authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, and plurality (Healey et al., 2016, p. 6). Partnership requires a "shared vision and values, sharing of knowledge, regular communication between partners; and joint decision-making and accountability" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 26). Alongside these core values, Bovill and Felten (2016) advocate that since partnership may be a new territory for students, staff, and institutions, partnership practices in higher education need to be investigated and theorised.

A recent model of students as partners (Healey et al., 2016) includes four main areas of partnering: learning, teaching, and assessment; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; scholarship of teaching and learning; and subject-based research and inquiry. The model is centred on partnership learning communities. This model focuses mainly on disciplinary learning spaces, although Healey et al. (2016) do provide examples of partnerships beyond the curriculum. We use the term "administrative space" to refer to departments, offices, or units that sit outside the main academic faculties but whose function is to support teaching and learning in the institution. In our case study, "administrative space" refers specifically to a graduate research school. Students as partners in administrative spaces may also encompass an employer-employee relationship similar to other student administrative roles such as exam marking, library administration, and other office work. However, partnership means something different from only having an employer-employee relationship. In our case study, the partnership was between a dean and two PhD students, who were employed as ambassadors. We suggest that the particular role of "ambassador," which is broad in its job description, helped to facilitate the partnership engagement between staff and students in this administrative space.

Some research has been conducted on students as partners in the administrative space where the intent is to improve teaching and learning. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) reported that of the 65 articles they analysed in a systematic review on students as partners, 40% occurred outside of a discipline. Of all partnerships studied, 54% were categorised into Healey et al.'s (2014) "curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy," with 31% in "SoTL," and 22% in "learning, teaching and assessment" (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p.7). Some of these partnerships involved students partnering in administering teaching conferences or symposia. For example, Peseta et al. (2016) described an undergraduate student ambassador scheme at the University of Sydney in which seven students at undergraduate level assisted in promoting a Sydney Teaching Colloquium. Also, research has occurred on student-led conference initiatives within coursework, such as an event management course (Lawrence & McCabe, 2001; Moscardo & Norris, 2004), and computer science course (Gruba & Sondergaard, 2000), as well as student-led extracurricular conference initiatives (e. g., Ramdayal, Stobbe, Mishra, & Michaut, 2014). These examples mainly involved partnerships that occurred with undergraduate students. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) noted that only 20% of the articles analysed reported on partnerships with postgraduate students and only 35% involved paid work.

In this article, we report on a partnership scheme involving postgraduate students as paid ambassadors working in the administrative space alongside the dean of a graduate research school. We define the role of student ambassador as: postgraduate students employed to help promote, implement, and evaluate activities to support the graduate research culture.

The aims of the article are to:

- explore the experiences of the ambassadors and the dean in participating in the Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme;
- develop a model of partnering with postgraduate students in the administrative space; and
- consider implications for future partnership initiatives.

In the following, we will first provide some background on the ambassador scheme and then move on to describe the research methods.

The Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme

The University of Otago is a research-intensive university, based in Dunedin, New Zealand. The University has about 22,000 students including over 2000 doctoral and master's research students. The Dean of the Graduate Research School (GRS), Rachel Spronken-Smith (third author, hereafter referred to as Rachel^D, where ^{D} signals the dean), initiated the Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme as a way to critique and refresh how the School promoted a vibrant graduate research culture, and therefore enhance the learning environment for postgraduate students. In April 2016 she advertised for ambassadors (about 100 hours work each) and recruited two: the first two authors, Liesel Mitchell (Liesel^A) and Shabnam Seyedmehdi (Shabnam^A) (note ^{A} signals the ambassadors). While the ambassador positions were paid roles, they were created with a partnership model in mind—there were no pre-set tasks determined by the dean, the nature of role was to be negotiated with the students, and because the ambassador role was brand new, there was scope for active student participation in developing and shaping the role. Although some employee/student relationships may be similar, we argue that the particular role of *ambassador* generated a unique partnership, and in this case, one that focused on enhancing the learning environment for postgraduate students.

Office space was unavailable in the School, so the ambassadors continued to use their own offices, gathering in the School for fortnightly meetings. In the early meetings, we discussed ways to support and promote the graduate research culture and a few activities were agreed upon, as well as a commitment made to research the scheme. The ambassadors decided to profile current graduate research students and to develop and implement a new event to showcase graduate research. Accordingly, Liesel[A] and Shabnam[A] began meeting with postgraduate student representatives across the University and profiling students. However, in June, it was collectively agreed to develop a novel "Dance Your Thesis" event for the first time at Otago. For the next three months, the ambassadors focused on organising and advertising, gaining sponsorship, sorting criteria for entries, and finding judges. The event was run in September 2016, and the entrants appreciated the creative outlet for presenting their research. The final phase of the scheme involved researching the initiative, with our analysis presented here.

METHODOLOGY

We used a qualitative case study research approach for addressing our research aims. The case study was the Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme described above. Over the course of the partnership, we (Liesel[A], Shabnam[A], and Rachel[D]) developed a collaborative model of research and practice, which involved collective and individual tasks, collaborative and self-directed reflection, and critical analysis of how student-staff partnership operated in practice. Over an eight-month period, we kept research diaries and meeting notes, and had many discussions about our research. We then collectively generated a set of questions to guide further examination of the partnership. The questions included probes regarding: the expectations and roles of the ambassador; defining, experiencing, and qualifying partnership; and advice and ideas for future partnership projects. We all responded to the questions, shared our narratives, and then discussed and analysed the narratives over a series of team meetings.

We used a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) to analyse our data, which involved identifying themes in relation to our research aims, as well as allowing themes to emerge in a grounded approach. Our thematic analysis was guided by Bronstein's (2003) model for effective interdisciplinary collaboration. Bronstein's model has an interdisciplinary and collaborative focus, which complements our interest in developing effective administrative partnerships. All three partners have different disciplinary backgrounds (Peace and Conflict Studies, Marketing, and Geography and Higher Education), and like Bronstein (2003), we wanted to achieve goals that required cooperation and could not be attained when working by ourselves (p. 299). While partnership is always collaborative work, collaborative work is not always a partnership. For example, a staff-student collaboration on an academic paper may, but will not always, facilitate active student participation or encourage co-decision making in the process of collaboration. The Bronstein (2003) model was developed from an interdisciplinary search of theory and relevant research in the social work field, and it includes core elements of interdependence, newly created professional activities, flexibility, collective ownership of goals, and reflection on the process (Figure 1). These core elements are influenced by four categories: professional roles, structural characteristics, history of collaboration, and personal characteristics. Our narrative analysis was guided by these four categories. However, it soon became apparent that the "history of collaboration," was not relevant to our case because students may have little background in the type of collaborative initiatives that cater for a particular profession in Bronstein's (2013) model. Furthermore, we also adapted "professional roles" into "roles in partnership," since this better reflected the nature of these roles in our context. Consequently, our thematic analysis focused on: roles in partnership, structural characteristics, and personal characteristics.

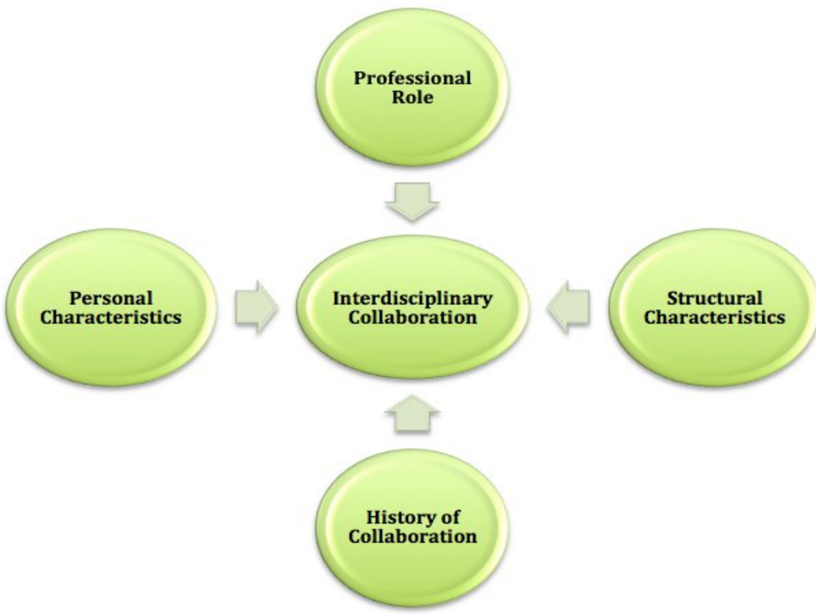

Figure 1. Model for effective interdisciplinary collaboration (adapted from Bronstein, 2003, p. 303).

Each co-author read the narratives to extract key themes relating to one of the categories, and then we collectively considered and critiqued the thematic analysis until we were in agreement on key findings. In the following sections we have constructed responses to the three areas of partnership using direct quotes from our research diaries and from our narratives. We acknowledge that our data are our own subjective ideas, which have in turn been used to support the construction of a partnership model. When research is conducted in such a subjective way, it is vital that we incorporate mechanisms to facilitate both critical and reflective practice. Our methodology uses credibility, transferability, and confirmability checks to maintain our research transparency and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). For example, in terms of credibility, we observed and analysed the partnership over a long time period (eight months), and used peer debriefing. For transferability, the analysis of our experiences allowed for a thick description of the partnership. For confirmability, we used reflexivity and triangulation of partnership experiences.

RESULTS

In this section we present our findings, drawing on Bronstein's (2003) model to discuss the major influences on partnership in the administrative space: roles in partnership, structural characteristics, and personal characteristics.

Roles in partnership

Bronstein (2003) defines professional roles as: upholding the ethical character of your profession; an "allegiance to the agency setting" and to the profession; "respect for professional colleagues;" a "holistic view of practice" in keeping with the profession; and "a perspective that is similar or complementary to collaborators' perspectives" (p. 302). In our case, we are dealing with graduate research culture rather than a profession, nonetheless, the fundamental elements of Bronstein's model remain relevant.

During the ambassador recruitment, Rachel[D] looked for students who "displayed ambassadorial qualities such as being good role models . . . enthusiastic and passionate about graduate research." She was hoping that the ambassadors could work in a collaborative way with her so she could "draw on their experience grounded as participants in graduate research to see what might be of interest to the community" (Rachel[D]). Therefore, Rachel[D] wanted to collaborate with students who possessed similar values for and an allegiance to graduate research, as well as who brought in a different perspective. Such aspects are well aligned with Bronstein's professional roles, and in our case, also with "roles in partnership" within the higher education setting.

There were some problematic aspects of roles in partnership including the notion of ambassadorship and an uncertainty over what that position would entail. Although the role contained elements similar to the more familiar "student representative" role, in terms of gaining views from the wider postgraduate student body, the positions were more about marketing graduate research and involved project work to enhance the learning environment. The branding of the position as an ambassador was attractive to the students, evoking a sense of prestige and importance: "The advertisement looked very attractive to me as first it had an amazing title 'ambassador' and it was prestigious too as it was something related to GRS!" (Shabnam[A]). There was also a sense the University community would listen to people who were ambassadors for the Graduate Research School and who could make changes. Shabnam[A] thought that such a reputation "was very helpful for us when we contacted other people and we introduced ourselves as GRS Ambassadors, they got back to us in a way that showed they really counted on us as a GRS person!" The notion of ambassadorship also evoked connections—as Shabnam[A] said, it created "a bridge between two groups of stakeholders." There was a sense of responsibility to the stakeholders to "take the insights and ideas from both parties [students and staff] in order to plan and implement things" (Shabnam[A]). Liesel[A] "assumed that the position would require interaction with lots of different people, to feel comfortable talking in various environments and to have a certain confidence to carry off the role of 'ambassador'."

While the two students had a perception of what an ambassador role entailed, there was also some uncertainty because it was a new initiative. Liesel[A] wondered if she "didn't quite fulfil some of the necessary criteria to own such a title—as in, I am not sure the role was given the profile that it needed in order to be called an ambassador, or if it was just a title that wasn't very easy/familiar to students and staff in the university, therefore people were not sure exactly who/what you were." In this case, her unease was not about her ability to take on the role but more about whether the role would be understood in the university community. There was also uncertainty about who the ambassadors were representing. Rachel[D] thought the ambassadors would represent graduate research, while Shabnam[A] thought she was representing the Graduate Research School. Liesel[A] said, "I never quite worked out who we, as 'the ambassadors', were representing." Lack of clarity meant the position and title of "ambassador" were difficult to understand.

Despite these uncertainties, there was a shared understanding, particularly around key tasks. Liesel[A] confirmed, "Shabnam and I had been hired to promote the events and culture of the GRS/postgrad students." Shabnam[A] noted: "this position required coordination for planning and hosting events." Liesel[A] also described it as "administrative work—meetings, emails, communicating with student representatives in the University." Rachel[D] had deliberately hired Liesel[A] and Shabnam[A] for their "potential fit to a team, their ideas for enhancing the graduate research community at Otago, and their experience in the use of social media." She wanted ambassadorial and teamwork qualities, but she also recruited for diversity, deliberately choosing both a domestic student (Liesel[A]) and an international student (Shabnam[A]).

Structural characteristics

Structural characteristics refer to the structures that exist around and within the collaborative partnership relationship. For example, the existing hierarchical structures of the university shape certain aspects of the staff-student partnership. Bronstein (2003) notes relevant structural characteristics include "an agency culture that supports interdisciplinary collaboration, administrative support, professional autonomy, and the time and space for collaboration to occur" p. 303). Additionally, structural characteristics can act as a conduit or a barrier to staff-student partnership, depending on factors such as the "ways that an organisation and supervisor allocate resources and assign work" (Bronstein 2003, p. 303). Therefore, structures such as those of authority, the type of collaborative institutional culture the partnership exists in, the access to and/or limitations on resources, and the way time and space is used, can be significant factors that influence the student-staff partnership. These structural characteristics were present in our reflections and are examined in this section.

Structural characteristics cannot be completely divorced from the existing collaborative culture of the institution, which in this case, is the University of Otago Graduate Research School. Staff and student roles carry existing hierarchies, pre-conceived roles of teacher and student, and the associated power dynamics that can all influence student-staff partnerships. Tertiary institutions tend to maintain distinct categories of staff and student, making it challenging to ignore existing structures to build interdependence and trust within these settings. Some of these challenges were highlighted by Shabnam[A] who said, "I think it would be great if we as ambassadors were introduced better to university and postgrads." Liesel[A] commented, "we needed Rachel to sign off on various things and approval around certain University regulations, yet it was sometimes difficult for us to know what we needed to initiate, and what we needed to get approval for." Rachel[D] was also aware of these power dynamics: "I say 'equal' in inverted commas as clearly there was always going to be an element of unequal power dynamics at play given our respective roles. Nevertheless, I hoped that both ambassadors would feel it was a safe environment to volunteer ideas and that their voices would be listened to and acted upon."

Access to resources can help or hinder the partnership collaboration. Both ambassadors were paid, indicating that the work being done was valued. However, continuation of the ambassador scheme relied on institutional funding, as noted by Rachel[D], "I would love to be able to continue with the Graduate Research Ambassadors, but this, of course, is dependent on funding. In my role as Dean, I get a research support fund, and I used part of this fund to employ the two ambassadors." Thus in some cases students may not be paid, which can hinder the development of activities together, while also affecting interdependence and collaboration.

The ambassadors were given the freedom to create an ambassador t-shirt and were given access to honorary staff ID cards. These two acts symbolised what Bronstein (2003) refers to as "newly created professional activities" (p. 300). Shabnam[A] said what she really liked "was getting an honorary staff card which distinguishes us from other students and gives us identity as ambassadors as the staff of the university." Rachel[D] reported "they [the ambassadors] requested access to staff cards and a Graduate Ambassador T-shirt, both of which I supported as they were ways to both legitimise and advertise their work." T-shirts and staff ID cards helped acknowledge the unique role of the ambassadors and legitimised the job, both within the partnership and in the eyes of other staff and students.

Although access to resources helped to mitigate some hierarchical structural characteristics, the limitations placed on other resources had the opposite effect. Some of the existing administrative structures meant that key responsibilities of the ambassador role, such as utilising social media, were not possible. This was a frustration noted by the ambassadors: "when we were trying to negotiate ways that we could communicate not only the work of the ambassadors, but also promote the events we were wanting to develop, and information about the work of GRS, we were unable to get access (as administrators) to the Facebook page" (Liesel[A]). Shabnam[A] agreed access "would have helped us to promote the events much better." Denial of access to resources reinforced the hierarchical divide between staff and students, and it inadvertently limited certain potential for the students to feel "true partners."

Time was a structural characteristic of the partnership that was always evident as all three partners were juggling different schedules with different pressures. However, that said, Rachel[D] made every effort to be flexible in order to give as much room to accommodate our collaborative work. Rachel[D] said "they [the ambassadors] were honest about workloads and we renegotiated tasks to fit around their commitments." While there was always a relaxed feeling to meetings, all partners took their professional role seriously, which was demonstrated by how time was used efficiently for meetings and assigning tasks. For example, Shabnam[A] said, "we both act very professionally and usually our meetings are about 30 to 45 minutes but we are very productive. We decide about everything and divide the tasks properly."

Finally, space was a structure reflected in the default location of our regular meetings taking place in Rachel[D]'s office in the Graduate Research School. Although this was not an overt decision, it inadvertently strengthened traditional roles of student and staff instead of building up the partnership roles. Liesel[A] noted, "perhaps the space where we met—mixing it up from meeting only in Rachel's office—and taking some of our meetings outside of the University, and even organising to meet up in a purely social capacity, would have also helped to create different understanding of our roles." Moreover, if the ambassadors had an office space or had been incorporated into the Graduate Research School generally, there may have been less structural power dynamics from the deeper institutional culture, regardless of other collaborative elements, that were part of the partners' meeting space. Rachel[D] acknowledged, "One aspect I did not manage well was integrating the ambassadors into the Graduate Research School," and this factor was reiterated by Liesel[A]: "It was interesting being a part of the GRS, yet because other staff members were not entirely sure who we were or what we did, I never quite felt a part of the wider department, although there were efforts to include us."

Personal characteristics

Personal characteristics can help build rapport among the partners in a successful partnership. As Bronstein (2003) explains, personal characteristics include "the way collaborators [partners] view each other as people, outside of their professional role" (p. 304). These kinds of characteristics foster the relationships within a partnership and were evident in our reflections (as we outline below).

Personal characteristics contribute to the emotional bond between partners and make the collaborative experience much more enjoyable. Informal communication and informal relationships play an important role in this partnership and help foster collegial working relationships. Here, informal communication at the beginning of the fortnightly meetings was noted as being an enjoyable aspect of meeting for the three partners. Rachel[D] said "the fortnightly meetings, despite being late on Friday afternoons, were a highlight of my week. I looked forward to seeing both ambassadors as they were always enthusiastic about the meetings, and there was an easy collegial working relationship." These conversations were equally enjoyable for the ambassadors. Shabnam[A] said she "enjoyed our regular meetings as they were friendly . . . we started with chitchatting." Liesel[A] also pointed out "the non-work conversation in our meetings helped to establish more of a collaborative connection between three of us." Furthermore, Liesel[A] believed that the friendly conversations "helped to shape our relationship beyond the staff-student relationship." A further example of this informal aspect of the partner relationship was socialising outside of work: "Another positive experience for me was being invited to the dean's house for a potluck where I had the opportunity to meet other GRS people and feeling belonging and being a part of the team" (Shabnam[A]). In order to enhance the partnership experience, then, informal communication and informal relationships play an important role in easing the formal aspects of the partnership, make it enjoyable, and foster the feeling of being in a team.

Other personal characteristics such as trust and respect were mentioned frequently in our reflections. Shabnam[A] commented, "the relationship between us is very respectful and friendly," and Liesel[A] said, "[at] our meetings I always felt respected, welcomed, and appreciated." Due to the fact that a successful partnership is built on a foundation of trust, the mutual trust referred to by the ambassadors may help foster the collaborative environment and encourage all partners to be active members. As well, "understanding" was evident in our reflections as another characteristic being necessary for an effective partnership. Shabnam[A] thought the other two partners were very friendly and understanding, evidenced by their flexible response when she had to travel to her sister's wedding earlier than the expiry date of the work contract. As a result, she said this made her more committed to the team as she tried to compensate while she was away.

In summary, the personal characteristics of trust, respect, and understanding allowed the partners to actively foster good relationships as they could comfortably express their work ideas, while also enjoying each other's company. The informal opportunities for communication and relationship building seemed to be a critical element in developing collaborative staff-student relationships.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we use our findings to develop a model for staff-student partnerships in the administrative space, and then we consider the implications of our research. Finally, we discuss the limitations of our study.

A model for partnering with students in the administrative space

Analysis of our experiences in the Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme led to the development of a model of partnership with postgraduate students in the administrative space (Figure 2). Our research was informed by Bronstein's (2003) model for interdisciplinary collaboration and like Bronstein, we found that roles, structural characteristics, and personal characteristics were key influences on collaboration or partnership. However, as noted earlier, Bronstein's "history of collaboration" was not pertinent for our student-staff partnership model. Therefore, we focus on three main influences for effective partnering: roles in partnership, personal characteristics, and structural characteristics.

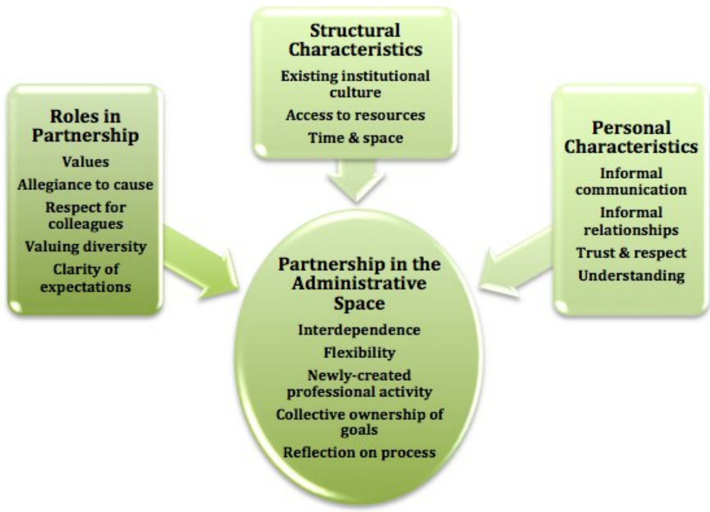

Figure 2. Model of effective partnering with students in the administrative space (adapted from Bronstein's (2003) model, "Influences on Interdisciplinary Collaboration", p. 304).

Roles in partnership includes values, allegiance to cause, respect for colleagues, valuing diversity, and clarity of expectations. It was apparent that all three partners placed value on the importance of graduate research and shared a strong allegiance to the cause of promoting a vibrant graduate research culture at the University. Having a shared vision and values were noted by Healey et al. (2014) as being essential for a true partnership. For an effective partnership, it is also essential that the partners value diversity. Analysis of the partner narratives clearly demonstrated this element. In the ambassador recruitment process, Rachel[D] deliberately selected for diversity by choosing a domestic student and an international student, and all partners had different disciplinary backgrounds (Peace and Conflict Studies, Marketing, and Geography and Higher Education). Shabnam[A], an Iranian, was well networked with international postgraduates and always offered valuable insight into some of the needs and expectations from this group. Liesel[A], a New Zealander, was also widely networked with both domestic and international students and importantly had some very strong community links, which proved valuable for sponsorship. Bovill (2017) noted the need for inclusivity in student partnerships and for such partnerships to include harder-to reach or previously excluded students (p. 1).

The only aspect of roles in partnership that was less well achieved was clarity over expectations. The "ambassador" title, while appealing to the students, created uncertainty regarding expectations around roles, and these uncertainties were not well clarified. Peseta et al.'s (2016) student ambassador initiative did not report any specific difficulties in relation to the title, but perhaps this was because the students were very clear about their roles. The importance of clear expectations has also been noted by Marquis et al. (2016). Yet, as we suggested earlier, the ambiguity of the ambassador title may have provided wider parameters for staff and students to engage effectively as both positions co-designed and co-developed the role in partnership.

Personal characteristics, such as informal communication, informal relationships, trust, respect, and understanding, all helped to generate an effective partnership (Figure 2). These characteristics contributed to building up rapport and forming a sense of belonging to the team, thus playing an important role in enhancing the interpersonal relationships among the partners. Mutual trust and respect are required for effective communication and honest dialogue within a partnership. By cultivating and maintaining trust through actions and words, partners may be more likely to share their ideas and take initiative. The importance of personal characteristics in partnerships has also been noted by Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) and Healey et al. (2014).

Figure 2 also highlights how *structural characteristic*s are an essential element to consider in student-staff partnership in the administrative space. Our findings argue that existing institutional culture including hierarchy, access to resources, time, and space, can support or hinder the partnership, or what Marquis et al. (2016) refer to as a collaboration that can be "simultaneously beneficial and challenging" (p. 5). Peseta et al. (2006) found that their student ambassadors were disappointed by institutional practices and norms that hindered their work to enhance the learning environment. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) reported heightening power inequalities as a negative outcome of partnerships with students. To try and overcome aspects of institutional hierarchy, we used the ambassador role to distribute power more equally, and we accepted the ambassadors as honorary staff. That said, all three partners commented on aspects of the structural culture of the institution that made true partnership challenging, particularly in the administrative space where certain information and systems were not accessible.

Time was a factor beyond our control that seemed to impact equally on all three partners. Marquis et al. (2016) and Bovill (2017) have both noted that time is one of the key challenges faced by partnerships due to the difficulty of creating meaningful relationships that embody characteristics such as trust and respect within tight time frames. However, professional roles were taken seriously, and there was a shared understanding of efficient use of time, regardless of other commitments all partners were juggling. One way that time was acknowledged, was paying the ambassadors by the hour, so all student work could be valued. Promoting work-based paid partnerships has been advocated as a way to sustain staff student partnerships (Curran & Millard, 2016).

Physical space was a structural characteristic that we could have used differently to better facilitate staff-student partnership. The importance of physical space has received less attention in the literature, yet in our case, having office space within the School would have mitigated some structural barriers, as well as foster a stronger sense of belonging to the School. Additionally, for us, many of the structural obstacles were managed by the way the personal characteristics were valued, both formally and informally. Respectful communication enabled us to either bridge hierarchical structures, or acknowledge the structures to negotiate resources, and manage time and space constraints.

Central to our model is the partnership of staff and students in the administrative space (Figure 2). We found Bronstein's (2003) core elements for effective collaboration were applicable in our model: interdependence, newly created professional activities, flexibility, collective ownership of goals, and reflection on process. We each noted how partnership is rewarding, and creative, with the added benefit of a sense of shared learning irrespective of our roles. We also found that partnering with students in the administrative space was characterised by very positive emotions. Felten (2017) suggested that not enough attention is paid to the emotional aspect of partnerships. Importantly, we found that some of the challenges faced by student-staff partnership, particularly structural elements, were able to be successfully managed by aspects of the "personal characteristics" element of our model. In other words, relationship building is key to fruitful partnership. This echoes Healey et al. (2014) identifying how partnerships are "encouraged by structures . . . that support partnership, shared values, and attitudes and behaviours that each member . . . signs up to and embodies in practice" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 28). These factors may not be unique in administrative partnerships, but they may be enhanced by the role of ambassador, and perhaps be a benefit particular to staff-student collaboration within this context.

Implications for partnering with students in the administrative space

The main implication emerging from our research relates to the tension between clear expectations regarding job descriptions, roles, and tasks, and maintaining some flexibility of terms, such as our use of "ambassador," in creating effective partnerships. Our research also highlights the importance of integrating students with other administrative staff to give the students a sense of belonging to the structures and roles that are already in existence. Providing office space for student partners, allowing access to key administrative tools such as social media, and involving them in social functions, are ways that may mitigate these gaps. Finally, it is important to allow the space and time for informal communication to enable relationships to be built.

Limitations of the study

The major limitation of this study is that the model of partnering with students has been generated from only one case study. Also, the analysis was undertaken by the partners, who have a particular perspective and therefore the findings will reflect their views. Despite this, we believe our model and the findings will be transferable and useful to partnerships in other university contexts.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we aimed to explore the experiences of partners in a Graduate Research Ambassador Scheme, develop a model of partnering with postgraduate students in the administrative space, and consider implications for future partnership initiatives. Using a reflexive and collaborative approach, compiling our personal experiences of partnership, we adapted Bronstein's (2003) model of interdisciplinary collaboration to provide a theoretical framework for our analysis. Central to the model were elements such as interdependence, newly-created professional activities, collective ownership of goals, and reflection on process. Similar to previous research, partnering with students evoked very positive emotions, but there were some institutional challenges. The key influences on effective partnering included the need for clear articulation of roles and tasks, and the capacity to deal with challenging institutional cultures. In addition, we identified that the broad parameters of an “ambassador” role in the administrative space helped provide a positive structure for partnership. Resources, time, and space can either hinder or help partnerships, and key personal characteristics such as trust, respect, and understanding, as well as informal communication and relationships can help to build and cement partnerships. Further studies need to be carried out in order to test the model and to determine the model’s applicability in other contexts.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Liesel Mitchell *is a PhD student with the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, and employed as a Graduate Ambassador at the University of Otago. Liesel currently researches participation in nonviolent civil resistance, and has broader interests in education, conflict resolution, restorative justice and ways to use online learning*.

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CASE STUDY

Partnership in Practice: Implementing Healey's Conceptual Model

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ABSTRACT

This case study discusses the implementation of Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) model of student engagement through partnership with staff. Healey et al. (2014) identify issues associated with "putting partnership into practice" including inclusivity and scale, power relations, reward and recognition, transition and sustainability, and identity. Faculty, staff, and students participating in a Students as Partners (SaP) Program at McMaster University's MacPherson Institute encountered these issues during a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) project. This paper explores our reflections and suggests refinements related to the above five issues. It concludes by identifying possible new directions for SaP programs.

KEYWORDS

students as partners, scholarship of teaching and learning, conceptual model, power, identity, student engagement

The educational benefits of Students as Partners (SaP) working in reciprocal relationships with faculty and staff can be traced back to the work of John Dewey (1939). The benefits of SaP can also be traced to social constructivism (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), which sees learning as a process that occurs through individual experience and reflection and through collective learning and negotiation. While student-staff partnerships are not new, they have gained widespread recognition for promoting student engagement (Kuh, 2010), enhancing research skills (Jarvis, Dickerson, & Stockwell, 2014), and transforming student and staff approaches to teaching and learning (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). SaP programs have been championed by leading scholars in Europe, North America, and Asia (Bovil & Bulley, 2011; Felten et al., 2013; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). In fact, several regional, national, and international conferences have featured scholarship on SaP programs. For example, at the 2017 RAISE (Researchng, Advancing, and Inspiring Student Engagement) conference in Birmingham, Cook-Sather outlined how theory informs conceptualizations of student-staff partnerships. Despite the momentum of SaP programs, they are relatively nascent, making reflection on student and staff experiences working in partnership vital to enriching SaP programs.

McMaster University in Canada is home to a pioneering and internationally recognized SaP program. McMaster's SaP program has grown from a handful of students in 2013 to over 80 students engaged in partnerships across the university in 2017. This commitment to SaP appears both in the institutional mission (Deane, 2014) and in the 2015 strategic plan of the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (MIIETL), recently renamed the Paul R. MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation, and Excellence in Teaching.

The implementation of the SaP program at McMaster was based on Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) model of student engagement through partnership (see Figure 1). This model outlines four ways students and staff can engage in partnership learning communities: assessment projects, curriculum consultation, subject-based research, and SoTL. An updated version of this model is adopted by the Higher Education Academy (2015, in Healey et al., 2016); however, the theory-to-practice issues are addressed only in the 2014 model.

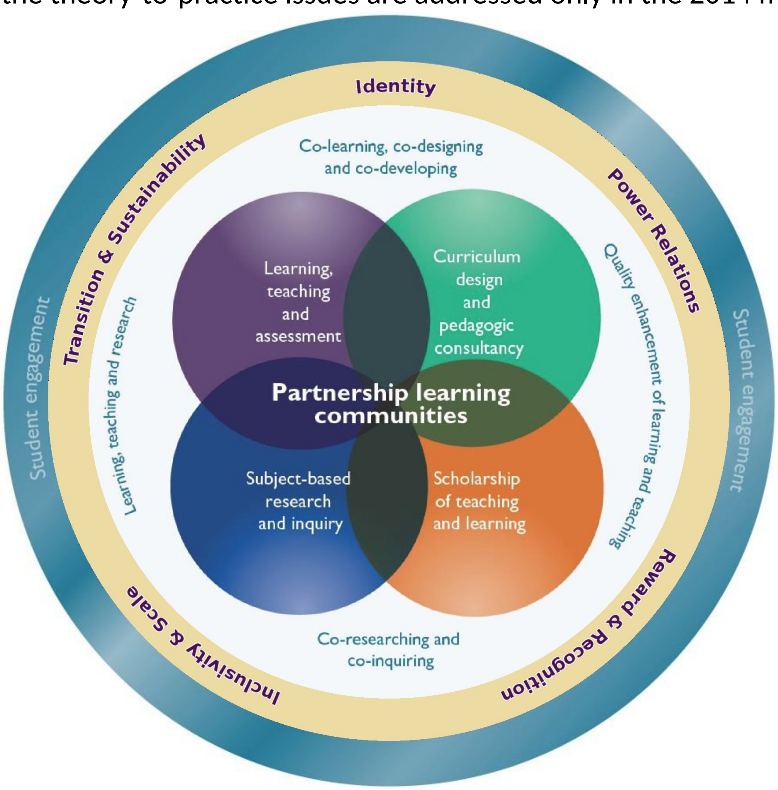

Figure 1: The Healey et al. student partnership model (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 25) enhanced with issues related to putting partnership into practice

Ahmad, A., Ali, A., VanMaaren, J., Barrington, J., Merritt, O., & Ansilio, K.(2017) Partnership in Practice: Implementing Healey's Conceptual Model *International Journal for Students as Partners 1*(2). https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v1i2.3197

THE PARTNERS AND THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The core research team is made up of the contributors to this case study. The team consists of individuals who bring diverse levels of education and disciplinary approaches to the research, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The core SaP team

TITLE	DISCIPLINE
Undergraduate student (now graduate student)	Psychology, Neuroscience, & Behavior
Undergraduate student (now graduate student)	Molecular Biology & Genetics
Undergraduate student (now graduate student)	Engineering Physics
4th-year PhD Candidate	Religious Studies
Professor, Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning	Business/Education
Associate Director, Educational Development	Education
Director, Centre for Teaching & Learning	Psychology/Cognitive Science
Professor Emeritus	Neuroscience & Biostatistics
Professor Emeritus	Psychology/Pedagogy

The partners collaborated on a SoTL project titled *Student Perceptions of Teaching* (SPOT). This three-year research project was undertaken as part of the MacPherson Institute, and all six partners participated through different associations with the MacPherson Institute. The project compared teacher self-reported data with student and observer data on teaching practice. The specific aims of the study were to investigate the psychometric properties of a learner-centered measure while examining the relationship between this variable and student performance.

METHODOLOGY

This “intrinsic” case study (Stake, 1995) addresses the theory-to-practice continuum through an ongoing SoTL research project. In describing and analyzing working together in this partnership project, this case study has engaged in a collaborative writing process (Ede & Lunsdord, 1990) that included four phases: (a) initial discussion to identify the main goal and issues; (b) general discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of our collective experience; (c) preparation of a first draft by one member followed by individual contributions from all; and (d) integration of theory, comments, and reactions resulting in refinement of the paper. Core members (both past and present) were invited to be co-authors and contribute to each section of the paper. Retrospective analysis was used to capture evidence according to existing theoretical frameworks.

PUTTING PARTNERSHIP INTO PRACTICE

The SPOT research experience provides valuable insight for further refining SaP models. Healey et al. (2014) identify five issues related to putting partnership into practice: inclusivity and scale, power relations, reward and recognition, transition and sustainability, and identity. These five issues structure the following discussion of student and staff experiences as reciprocal partners.

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Issues of inclusivity and scale

Finding a balance between inclusivity and scale is the first challenge for putting partnerships into practice. In particular, the ideal of equal opportunity that would enable every student to participate at the highest level of her/his ability (Hart, 1992) is limited by the constraints of specific partnerships. Healey et al. (2014) emphasize that where selecting partners is unavoidable, the selection criteria must be clear and must consciously counteract creating an “elite” partnership of those already “best-served” by the system (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006), or of those with the “cultural capital” enabling expected contributions (Taylor, 2009).

At McMaster, opportunities in the SaP program are advertised each semester university-wide. When applying, students select their top three projects and provide a statement of interest for each project. Project leaders review candidates against criteria pertinent to each project and interview short-listed candidates. The selection process for the SPOT project valued students who indicated the project was their first choice, demonstrated a high level of interest in research on teaching and learning, and had prior experience in statistical analysis.

The scale of the SPOT research project enabled the project to select two student partners per year. Having multiple student partners brought different student perspectives to the project and provided a student-staff balance in the core research group.

Issues of power relations

Simply put, partnership means sharing power. Shared power means being co-creators and co-decision makers (Hart, 1992). Healey et al. (2014) emphasize that in practice, power distribution fluctuates over the course of the relationship. It is also important to be honest about contexts where a significant distribution of power is not possible due to experience and expertise gaps between partners (Bovill & Bulley, 2011). Healey et al. (2014) further caution against structures that may reinforce existing inequalities and are counterproductive to partnerships. In particular, student partners are accustomed to traditional student-staff hierarchies in their university experience (Hutchings, Bartholomew, & Reilly, 2013). Further, the SaP model itself embeds a power imbalance that assumes staff bestow power upon students. However, the model does not address power differences between students or between staff (Taylor, 2009).

The experience of student and staff partners in the SPOT project reflects key issues related to shared power. Specific ways in which staff relinquished a level of control in the SPOT project included involving students in facilitating meetings, producing independent literature reviews, establishing contact with internationally known scholars, taking the lead in a student-staff conference presentation, organizing data collection, creating online student surveys, and providing feedback that influenced study design and the re-evaluation of project direction. Students felt initial discomfort with the degree of autonomy and responsibility, especially due to experience and knowledge gaps between themselves and staff partners. Staff felt confident about the students’ ability and their capacity to assume responsibility, while remaining sensitive to supporting student learning.

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On the one hand, the SPOT research team saw the embedded faculty and staff/student power imbalance as unavoidable, because the initiative for student partnership comes from faculty and staff, who must bestow power on students. On the other hand, additional pre-existing institutional power differences, such as different levels of education between students or different university roles between faculty and staff, turned out to be less consequential for group power distribution than merit. For students, confidence became a primary cause for the distribution of power. Specific skill sets that individual students possessed, whether organizational, analytical, or compositional, also affected the distribution of power. Faculty and staff power dynamics, although complicated by the supervisory role of one member, benefitted significantly from a prior history of collaboration. The issue of power relations only came to the fore when an internationally known scholar was invited for consultation. Different faculty assumed incompatible power roles due to ideological differences that were grounded in different areas of expertise. This threatened to undermine the collaborative spirit of the team. Appealing to foundational values of SaP programs, especially role modeling, helped resolve differences and enabled the group to move beyond their respective power roles in order to work more collaboratively as partners.

In addition, an important example of power dynamics is how any group negotiates authorship and the issue of attributing credit. This became a source of tension given different expectations and disciplinary conventions. Some members of the group had strong views but agreed they were against tokenism and arbitrary conventions. Authorship was eventually based on merit weighted by the respective contribution of ideas, the actual writing of the article, and the visible pieces of collaborative work done. It is recommended that authorship criteria are discussed up front and revisited periodically as lead roles shift in the evolution of the partnership project (Fine & Kurdek, 1993).

Issues of reward and recognition

A third issue related to putting partnership into practice is the system of incentives for both students and staff. This is a challenge because individuals engage in partnerships on different terms. Adequate support is especially needed when students are engaged outside of their core disciplines and when the partnership meets no credited educational objective. Healey et al. (2014) suggest providing formal documentation of skills developed during the partnership as a form of reward. In addition, payment for work completed can help alleviate the financial strain of post-secondary education (Robotham & Julian, 2006). Healey et al. (2014) also note the importance of institutional incentives for staff to engage in partnerships, for example, in the appraisal process or in formal awards. Embedding the system of incentives in the institutional framework promotes a culture of partnership, while insufficient reward and recognition will negatively influence inclusivity and power relations among partners.

The SaP program at McMaster employs students as paid research partners, enabling students to include “student research partner” on their *curricula vitae*. Further, the program has yielded several conference presentations, publications in top-tier journals with students as co-authors (i.e. The International Journal for Academic Development and The Canadian Journal for Disability Studies), and the launch of the *International Journal of Students as Partners*, which is co-edited by students. While faculty and staff function as paid employees, they choose

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SaP projects based on personal interest. Engagement in scholarly projects in the SaP program also counts towards merit increases for staff of the MacPherson Institute in annual performance reviews.

Student partners in the SPOT research project noted that both financial compensation and formal documentation of skills were instrumental for their initial interest. However, students mentioned two less tangible forms of reward and recognition: a chance to collaborate with established researchers and an interest in teaching and learning research. All students had expressed interest in the SPOT research topic directly due to either past teaching experience or future aspirations of teaching. Two students noted that collaboration created valuable professional contacts that opened new avenues for career goals. Thus, while the topic remained outside their core learning area, it directly related to career goals. Interestingly, it is these latter incentives that provided the primary motive for continued association with the SPOT research project. The strength of these less tangible incentives was demonstrated by the continued voluntary engagement of student partners when they were no longer officially paid student partners. The distinction between rewards and recognition related to initial interest and continuing motivation, and the different influences of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for student partners are important areas for further refinement of SaP programs.

Issues of transition and sustainability

Another challenge for putting partnership into practice relates to the duration of a partnership. Students face the obstacle of having a time-bound relationship based on the semester system, and thus are less likely than staff to be engaged in partnerships for long periods of time. Healey et al. (2014) emphasize the time required for newcomers to fully integrate into a community and suggest developing strategies for providing new members access to the participative memory of the community and for initiating relationships between outgoing and incoming student partners (Summers, Pearson, Gough, & Siekierski, 2013).

In order to smooth transitions and promote sustainability, the SaP program at McMaster created opportunities for students to continue for second and third semesters. Introductory sessions, periodic workshops, and a year-end symposium also provide comprehensive opportunities for strengthening student-staff partnerships.

Two of the three student partners whose affiliation with McMaster ended have continued to contribute to the SPOT project beyond their degree program. In this case, the partnership has transcended institutional affiliation. Multiple student partners highlighted the importance of a single staff contact person tasked with acclimatizing student partners. In meetings with this staff partner, students could practice operating with shared power before participating in full-team meetings. This role of coordinator was essential for ensuring appropriate tasks for each partner and overall inclusivity of each community member. Finally, the two students who joined in the third year of the project were tasked with an extensive literature review. The purpose of the literature review was to reevaluate the SPOT research direction, but it also streamlined students' acquisition of the participative memory of the community, thereby assisting in discussions and integration of the literature within the research group.

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Issues of identity

Two aspects of identity relate to successful partnerships. First, students and staff enter partnership with multiple prior identities, and different identities may dominate in different contexts. Healey et al. (2014) also caution against over-simplifying partners as nothing but their roles as either students or staff. Second, student and staff identities change through participating in learning communities (Mcmillan & Chavis, 1986). The blurred roles of partnership communities are especially fertile ground for transformed identities as students and staff become co-learners and co-researchers and may lead to the deconstruction of "student" and "staff" labels.

One student partner noted that participating in the SPOT study helped the student develop a stronger appreciation for teaching and learning. As an active teaching assistant, reading literature about best teaching practices enabled the student to further reflect on tutorial organization. Interestingly, the student partner formed partnership-like relations with their own students. Although the model makes no distinction between types of students, one student noted their unique identity within the "student" half of the staff/student dichotomy. As a PhD candidate, their main experience of graduate-undergraduate relations was as a TA with the institutionally embedded power roles marked by grading student work and leading tutorials. Joining this study allowed this student to partner with undergraduate students.

One student presented findings of the study at the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STHLE) annual conference. This student described the experience as empowering and enhancing self-motivation for research. In addition, they noted that their work felt more significant after having the opportunity to share it with a broader audience. This experience was transformative for the student's perception of the overall importance of research.

Lastly, one student who was new to the study found it difficult to understand topics discussed by more experienced community members. Once "caught up" with the relevant literature, this student found it easier to integrate new knowledge and ultimately felt more comfortable during project-based roundtable discussions.

Staff partners emphasized the time needed to build SaP relationships and felt that SaP projects need to be envisioned beyond one semester. McDermott (1999) expresses this sentiment while discussing communities of practice: "To convey the depth of people's insights in a way that is valuable to others, learning needs to be an exchange in which people build enough relationship to understand and make sense of each other's ideas" (p. 8). Staff also expressed surprise at the level of student competence in every aspect of the research project and suggested that staff expectations of students may need to be raised. Indeed, this partnership experience repeatedly highlighted student adeptness for grasping educational literature regardless of academic background and for performing consequential tasks with increasing independence.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SaP PROGRAMS

The partnership experience of the SPOT research project demonstrates that Healey et al.'s (2014) theoretical model can be effectively put into practice. This section summarizes the

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above suggestions for improving the implementation of SaP programs, while also identifying new directions for further refinement.

First, the SPOT project underlined how pre-existing power dynamics between students, between staff, and between students and staff influence partnerships. Speaking openly about evolving power dynamics helped to redistribute power and re-energize work flow. When considering types of incentives, the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and between initial interest and continued motivation, may be helpful. Some keys to successful partner transitions include a designated coordinator for onboarding new students and a literature review as an early task for student partners joining ongoing projects.

Beyond the issues raised by Healey et al. (2014) with respect to inclusivity, team members retrospectively felt the group adjusted well to a wide range of expertise. This speaks to a form of elasticity that comes from broadening the understanding of inclusivity to create space for new members to build on the work of those completing their terms so that long-term projects like ours (three years) can be sustained. Also, SaP programs at McMaster are mostly centralized through the MacPherson Institute, which limits how much these can be scaled. One way forward is to establish satellite SaP programs in different Faculties where dynamics may better enable the inclusion of more student partners.

The experience of the SPOT research team underscored the enhanced learning potential of SaP initiatives, which address strategic institutional priorities reflected in their distribution of resources. The crucial question of funding and sustaining SaP programs is best framed as either finding new funds, or as reallocating resources towards initiatives which demonstrate desired learning outcomes. Approached in this way, any institution that values student partnership can implement a SaP program.

In the end, institutional factors, while necessary for a successful SaP program, are not sufficient to guarantee program outcomes. Rather, it is the personal investment of each partner that ultimately makes each SaP project meaningful. Accordingly, SaP programs will thrive as partnership experience refines robust models like Healey et al.'s (2014) through rigorous reflection that highlights vulnerability within partnerships and also creates lasting bonds that strengthen learning for both student and staff partners.

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CASE STUDY

The Importance of a Whole-of-Department Framework in Learning Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

This historical case study of the Yilgarn Project explores a community-engaged, whole-of-department framework that involved students as partners in research and publications. It shows how existing flexible curriculum and assessment processes enabled student engagement with research. The purpose of this case study is to share practice and to explore partnership styles. It locates partnership approaches in the intellectual traditions from which they have emerged and explores the relative importance of the process of partnership as well as the product, which is described in terms of the skills that students learned. The Yilgarn Project is analysed in the context of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Framework (2014) with special reference to the core values that inform partnerships. This gives rise to discussion of the nature of partnership and the relative importance of using empowering processes to enhance student learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS

community-engaged; research-led curriculum; empowerment; social science; partnership values

The British Higher Education Academy's (HEA) Framework (Healey et al. 2014) defines learning partnerships in terms of students' active engagement, collaboration, and opportunities for choice. Ryan and Tilbury (2013) hail this approach as "learner empowerment" (p. 5) because it challenges the power relationships inherent in hierarchical and didactic teaching and learning settings. Through partnerships, students become "change agents, producers, and co-creators of their own learning" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016, p. 196). According to Bovill et al. (2016) students' partnership roles may be classified as consultant, representative, pedagogical co-designer, and co-researcher. This case study focuses on the final role, seeking to tease-out the different ways in which students can engage as partners in research because, following Moore-Cherry, Healey, Nicholson, and Andrews (2016) "our working definition of partnership is not tightly constrained, rather it seeks to indicate boundaries to the concept" (p. 85).

The HEA Framework for partnerships is process-driven and based on core values of successful partnerships. These are:

- authenticity (staff and students are invested in the project),
- inclusiveness (the removal of barriers to participation),
- reciprocity (everyone benefits),
- empowerment,
- trust,
- challenge,
- community-building, and
- shared responsibility (all parties share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership and individual responsibility for their own contributions).

Partnership approaches build on established pedagogical traditions. For example, constructivist pedagogies hold that "learners are not passive, uniform, empty vessels into which we can pour second-hand knowledge. Effective learning occurs when the learner is actively involved in the primary construction of knowledge" (Stewart, 2012, p. 10). Collaborative learning communities emerged as effective vehicles for constructivist pedagogies. Wenger (1998), for example, crystallised the concept of Communities of Practice which require "the participation of people who are fully engaged in the process of creating, refining, communicating, and using knowledge" (p. 1). These notions of collective and participative learning build on what has long been understood about women's collaborative ways of knowing (Belensky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarale, 1986) and Frière's (1971) collective conscientization strategies. In brief, collaborative and active learning is core to pedagogies associated with empowering, transformative adult learning (Knowles, Holton, & Aswansu, 2005).

THE CASE STUDY

The Yilgarn research project was initiated by a request for the development of a shire history by the Council of the rural Yilgarn Shire in Western Australia. It asked the head of the social science department of a metropolitan college to produce a book commemorating the centenary of the discovery of gold in the Yilgarn. The Council planned 10 years ahead. This presented an opportunity to develop a structure to facilitate staff and student research over an extended period. A whole-of-department framework was adopted in which staff of the social science department undertook to write chapters of the book based on their own and undergraduate students' research. In effect, the Yilgarn Shire became a social science laboratory. This approach resulted in a book of greater scope than is customary in local histories. Chapters covered topics such as climate and landscape; geology and mining; soils, flora and fauna; economic development; politics; and Indigenous history. Two chapters provide the focus of discussion for this case study because both are now open source. These are "Miners and Farmers 1915-1950" (Hunt, L.J., 1988a, pp. 197-265) and "Women" (Hunt, L.Y.A., 1988, pp. 351-411). This case study is historical to the extent that student research focused on regional history. Further, given the time needed to produce the book, it refers to work completed in the past. As a consequence, students have now graduated and their voice cannot be included in this account of the project.

The whole-of-department framework provided opportunities for students to engage in authentic multidisciplinary research based on qualitative and quantitative investigation using primary and secondary sources of evidence. Participating students were enrolled in a six-course minor studies program which was guided by the principles of student choice of assignment topics, continuous assessment, and active learning. In brief, it was already primed as a research-led curriculum which "means that students become producers of knowledge, not just consumers. The strongest curricula form of this is seen in special undergraduate programs for selected students, but such research and inquiry may also be mainstreamed for all or many students" (Jenkins & Healey, 2012, p. 132). So student partnerships in research and writing for the Yilgarn Project were accommodated by the flexible, research-led curriculum without need for further changes.

The whole-of-department framework and 10-year time frame meant that some students studied a number of courses oriented to the Yilgarn, so they completed more than one piece of work for the project using a range of research methods. Within the framework, students designed and developed their own research projects in collaboration with each other and with college staff. Students were engaged in knowledge production and, in some cases, their original work and dissertations were placed in the Western Australian State Library providing an evidence base for future historical work. Similarly, students' interviews with local residents have been digitised and included in the Western Australian State Archives and are credited to students as independent researchers. Student contributions were fully acknowledged in the ensuing book, *Yilgarn: Good Country for Hardy People*' (Hunt, L.J., 1988b).

Research design skills

The Yilgarn Project was informed by active learning pedagogies—students learned by doing. It was a constructivist (Stewart, 2012), authentic (Hunt, 2005), and problem-based approach. Students were confronted with real-world research problems that had to be resolved through effective design of their independent research projects. For example, one student wanted to develop a questionnaire survey about attitudes towards women in paid employment in a region dominated by the traditionally male industries of farming and mining. Her first draft of the survey contained leading questions that risked presuming the answers. Further, the questions did not necessarily reflect the information she was seeking. So, it was suggested that she work backwards; for example, she was asked: "What kind of results tables do you need to have in order to answer your research question?" A few examples were modelled and she gained momentum in formulating her intent. For example, she wanted to know if men and women differ in their responses and if older men and women respond differently to people in younger age groups. When she knew what she was looking for, she developed an appropriate sample of respondents and worked backwards from this sample to formulate survey questions that would give rise to answers that might illuminate attitudes to women's paid employment. Through this process she gained insight into research design, in particular, the importance of aligning the beginning, middle, and end result of the process.

Research methods

Students' research in the Yilgarn Shire formed part of their normal course of study. The project provided a focus for the specified, skills-based learning outcomes for each course and for assignments. Students chose topics for themselves, and these determined the selection of research methods. In broad terms, students learned about questionnaire construction, interviewing skills, and content analysis of documents. Given that some students completed more than one course and more than one assignment about the Yilgarn, there were opportunities for them to engage with a number of research methods.

Information retrieval skills and data interpretation

Students learned information retrieval skills through their original research on secondary sources. The end notes to the "Miners and Farmers" chapter show that, inter alia, students referred to documentation from the Lands and Surveys Department; minutes and rates books of the Yilgarn Road Board; and private records from local farms including cash books, ledgers, and bank books. Students also referred to local newspapers, which revealed surprisingly high levels of education and some literary talent in this remote rural population. They also learned to triangulate findings either by completing multiple assignments using different methodologies or by discussing their results with each other because they were all working within the same whole-of-department framework. The triangulation of research results, from different sources, led to complex analyses in which students came to understand, for example, that what was written and said about women bore little resemblance to what they actually achieved. In short, key learning outcomes included not only information retrieval skills but also critical thinking about the interpretation of evidence.

Discussion about research findings took place in tutorials and during regular week-long fieldwork trips to the Yilgarn. Fieldwork was facilitated by the Shire Council, which offered free use of the local sports centre for accommodation. This facilitated student engagement which has been noted as "both a requirement for and an outcome of partnership" (Bovill et al., 2016, p. 196). Fieldwork also facilitated community engagement and students' immersion in the project. This enhanced learning outcomes because living in the community, even for a short time, contributed to emotionally engaged learning that encouraged awareness of ethical considerations about how to write individual research projects, raising such questions as, "Should we just write the pretty stories, or do we write about local tensions such as racism and sexism?"

Ethics

According to R. L. Healey (2014) ethical thinking is a "particular type of critical thinking" (p. 3). Ethical thinking is considered such an important outcome of a university education that it is almost universally included in lists of expected graduate attributes. Yet in contemporary higher education settings, the progress of even small pieces of undergraduate research can be inhibited by the very process of gaining ethics approval before embarking on data collection. The departmental framework of this project allowed students to proceed quickly under the umbrella of ethics approvals granted to the project whilst learning how to implement ethical considerations such as the need for confidentiality and the importance of protecting the privacy of respondents. This accords with R. L. Healey's (2014) observation that learning about ethics includes "an ability to perceive the ethical implications of a situation" (p. 3). She also notes that many ethical issues are multidisciplinary in nature, which suggests that opportunities to complete multiple assignments in different courses within the minor study program enabled students to explore the ethical implications of research from the perspectives of a number of disciplines including sociology, history, and geography.

Report writing

Undergraduate students wrote their own reports about their research projects. This facilitated the assessment of individual achievement required for normal accreditation purposes. The undergraduate teaching and learning processes associated with writing echoed those normally available to postgraduate students. Individual tutorials and iterative cycles of review, reflection, and improvement resulted in written work of a standard high enough to merit being archived in state and professional libraries. In the writing process, students had to marshal their material into reports that required them to account for their methodology and describe and analyse results.

ANALYSIS

This case study shows how the whole-of-department design of the Yilgarn Project scaffolded students' learning experiences. They developed high-level skills and learned threshold concepts in social science (Land, 2012) including: research design; research methods, such as questionnaire construction, interviewing skills and content analysis; information retrieval skills; data interpretation; research ethics; and report writing. Students took responsibility for the design, implementation, and reporting of their own research. In some cases, their work has been archived in state libraries, which means it has been shared publicly. Strengths of the project include the provision of multiple opportunities for students to learn about the design, implementation, and reporting of research. Further, the whole-of-department framework created a community of practice that built confidence and facilitated students' individual publications. These outcomes accord with the HEA core principles of partnership approaches.

However, students did not share in writing the chapters for the book. This is a possible point of departure from the HEA core values, which advocate collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership and personal responsibility for individual contributions. This issue gives rise to a number of questions about partnership processes. For example:

1. How should partnership processes be assessed—by their compliance with partnership criteria or in terms of students' learning outcomes—or both?
2. To what extent is it necessary for students to engage in every aspect of a project for the benefits of partnership to be apparent?
3. How important is the extent rather than nature of partnership processes to learning outcomes?

Cook-Sather et al. (2014) suggest that while all participants in a partnership should have the opportunity to contribute equally, this does not necessarily mean that they contribute in the same ways. Creating opportunities to contribute in different ways is a curriculum matter. According to Tinto (2003), learning communities and partnerships "begin with a kind of co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together, rather than apart" (p. 1). He referred to linked and cluster courses as well as coordinated studies where courses "are typically connected by an organising theme which gives meaning to their linkage. The point of doing so is to engender a coherent interdisciplinary or cross-subject learning that is not easily attainable through . . . unrelated, stand-alone courses" (p. 2). The Yilgarn Project offered this kind of organising theme to the six-course, social science minor in which students were enrolled. It might be considered a jigsaw model of partnership in which each student takes responsibility for researching his or her own piece of the big picture, scaffolded by a whole-of-department framework and a curriculum already geared to undergraduate research by active learning pedagogies and provision for student choice in assignments.

The HEA's core values for a students-as-partners approach are process-driven. This means that the manner in which students are involved is important. Put simply, it is not just what you do but the way that you do it that is important. Student empowerment is the goal. It is about equalising the power relationships inherent in university learning and teaching to give students space to learn. Labonté's (1990a) analysis of empowerment indicates the need to avoid prescriptive approaches because "I empower you" is a contradiction in terms—the speaker remains in control of the process. So, at what point does intervention in student-learning partnerships become a measure of control? As Northedge (2005) pointed out, student-centred approaches do not obviate the act of teaching intervention. The point is to facilitate learning partnerships in empowering ways which McWilliam (2005) describes as "meddling in the middle":

> Rather than teachers delivering an information product to be consumed by the student . . . the teacher and student [are] mutually involved. . . . In colloquial terms, this would frame the teacher as neither sage on the stage nor guide on the side but *meddler in the middle*. The teacher is in there doing and failing alongside students. (p. 11)

According to Labonté (1990a), empowerment refers to a process in which participants gain or assume power. This can be done at three levels all of which echo the HEA's core principles of partnership:

1. intrapersonally, as in confidence building and the development of a sense of self-efficacy;
2. interpersonally, which refers to the construction of knowledge based on personal and shared experiences; and
3. within communities, meaning the cultivation of resources and strategies that provide beneficial outcomes for all (Labonté, 1990b).

These levels of empowerment could serve as benchmarks for exploring partnership as a process. For example, learning communities and partnerships can be disempowering for some, as Freeman (1972-73) long ago noted in her powerful analysis of the tyranny of structurelessness. So, do we know what works and what does not in partnerships? What helps students gain a sense of self-efficacy through their participation in learning partnerships? What processes help students to construct knowledge and analyses based on personal and shared experiences, and which aspects of partnership work to enhance students' ethical and critical awareness? Finally, what do we know about partnership processes that are disempowering or counterproductive to positive student learning outcomes?

This case study shared practice by showing how the Yilgarn Project created opportunities for students to construct knowledge that was important to a rural community. They gained confidence that was beneficial beyond the project. Many students taking the minor studies course were mature-aged. They were apprehensive about their abilities to study anything, let alone complete their own research projects. Inspired by their participation in the Yilgarn Project, some went on to postgraduate study and some became active members of professional history associations.

In conclusion, the community-engaged, whole-of-department framework that integrated students' research into normal curriculum processes provided opportunities for students to work as partners in an undergraduate, research-based curriculum that provided multiple opportunities to build their confidence and competence as social researchers. The project gave rise to a book in which students were named as researchers. The book will be open source, connecting the Yilgarn Project to community studies around the world.

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CASE STUDY

The Opening Conference: A Case Study in Undergraduate Co-design and Inquiry-based Learning

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ABSTRACT

The separation between "research" and "teaching" in universities has been under increasing challenge from scholars who want to place inquiry-based learning at the centre of higher education. An important approach to challenging established paradigms and structures is to question, and thereby destabilise, role distinctions, relationships, language, and learning spaces. In this article we present a case study of a conference organized in collaboration between staff and students for first-year undergraduates. Reinventing the academic conference space is our aim in challenging assumptions about undergraduate education. As co-designers of the conference, we reflect on the activities and institutional context leading to the creation of the event, its design and implementation, and its impact on the undergraduate learning community.

KEYWORDS

Co-design, inquiry-based learning, conference, undergraduate, business schools

INTRODUCTION

In this article we want to explore an "inquiry-based learning" (IBL) approach, incorporating practices often considered the exclusive domain of research into a setting typically described as education or teaching. The case study example we provide is an "Opening Conference" for first-year undergraduate students co-designed by staff and students within a research-intensive UK university. A central motivation for this initiative was to explore the possibility of forming an IBL community with first-year undergraduates and working with staff and students in partnership to challenge the "conspiracy for safety" (Barnett, 1999, p. 164), which, arguably, has become the norm in HE learning design and delivery. The conference space we describe emerged through a co-design process and became an answer to many of the challenges the group faced in introducing undergraduates to new pedagogies, roles, and relationships. The shared aims for the conference were to: (a) create a space for building a collaborative learning environment and community; (b) introduce co-design principles to the community and invite participation in the co-design process; and (c) showcase co-design-in-action through the implementation of the conference, where students and staff share key roles in hosting the event.

We follow the ethos of staff-student partnership by offering a reflective account of a co-design process and by allowing the power dynamics of multiple actors working together to shape the narrative. Although we offer a coherent "single" narrative to structure the central thesis of the case study, we have enriched this narrative with individual verbatim statements from various members of the co-authorship team (as recorded in conversations between the authors in the process of preparing the text). We believe this approach offers a glimpse into the complex interdependent process of working in partnership, and importantly retains the distinct voices of both staff and students while resisting the temptation to conflate the two. The article is structured as follows: first we lay out our perspective on IBL and offer the academic conference as an important design space for alternative pedagogies; next we introduce the institutional context for the case study and describe the co-design process; and then we summarise the conference format and reflect on its impact from different perspectives.

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

IBL can be described as an "alternative" paradigm to what might be deemed the traditional approach of lecture-based modes of teaching. Levy, Little, McKinney, Nibbs, and Wood (2010) offer a simple definition for this as a "cluster of student-centred approaches to learning and teaching which are driven by inquiry or research" (p. 6). Research and learning are not fixed or exclusive objects as both are processes of inquiry in pursuit of meaning, understanding, and knowledge (Clarke, 1995). This way of thinking opens up new possibilities for HE, creating notions such as "pedagogy of joint discovery" (Barnett, 2007), or staff-student communities of "co-learners" (Le Heron, Baker, & McEwen, 2011). Healey (2005) describes IBL as a "new pedagogy for the twenty-first century" (p. 197), and Healey and Jenkins (2009) suggest:

> the task now is to reinvent or reinvigorate the curriculum to ensure that all undergraduate students in all higher education institutions should experience learning through and about research and inquiry. (p. 6)

The co-design group was formed in 2014/15 and met during the academic semester with a range of staff and students. A key focus for the group was to engage all undergraduate students from the start of their university learning journey in a way that went beyond institutionalised induction processes. As part of the EEF project plan, one third of the budget was allocated to travel and attending events, largely with the aim of disseminating our work as "research" but also as a way to learn and share with staff-student groups from other universities around the world. The group explored conferences and international workshops publicised by HE associations in the areas of learning technology, education development and innovation, student engagement, and interdisciplinary education. During the 2015/16 academic year the EEF budget funded co-attendance at eight conferences from April to October 2016, most of which were as presenters of papers or hosts of workshops (e.g., Cantore & Gatenby, 2016; Gatenby, Cantore, Harris, Morgan, & Davidson, 2016; Rowledge, Davidson, Harris, Fair, & Gatenby, 2016).

In this article we follow a similar line of argument to Lueddeke (2003), Griffiths (2004), and subsequent scholars in characterising IBL as an "alternative," as a reaction against what became mainstream approaches to HE pedagogy during the 20th century. We also see IBL as more than a challenge to institutionalised teaching practices—it presupposes a theory of learning. The space in which "teaching" ends and "learning" starts becomes a central debate within IBL. It is an important theoretical question whether, as Justice et al. (2007) argue, IBL is both a process of seeking knowledge (i.e., learning) and a method of teaching, or if it is a more complex phenomenon that combines both. As Brew (1999) argues, IBL challenges assumptions and expectations about learning, including:

> shifts in power relationships, the inclusion of different kinds of knowledge, learning perhaps becoming a collaborative process of engagement in a joint enterprise. They might involve the distinctions between teacher and student becoming less clear. (p. 296)

Within an IBL paradigm, Spronken-Smith and Walker (2010) ask whether undergraduate students should start their first year in a "structured" mode of inquiry—closer to tutor-led lectures and seminars—and then move gradually towards an "open" inquiry approach, or whether they should start in an open discovery mode. Healey and Jenkins (2009) do not see the need to draw clear distinctions or set out a fixed path. Instead, they suggest students can participate in different approaches to research and inquiry from the first year onwards with a general trajectory to more open modes.

The conference space

The academic conference emerges as an important design space within an IBL perspective as it offering participants the opportunity to meet as inquirers, to ask questions together, and to exchange ideas. Conferences are fundamental to the research process in all academic disciplines and they are also critical for professional practice development. Conferences become spaces for the formation and reproduction of learning communities, and they can facilitate the social process of learning fundamental to many theories of knowledge (Bandura, 1971). Conferences can be open to all learners, from the uninitiated novice to the experienced scholar. In this sense, conferences can be seen as a natural domain for strengthening the teaching-research nexus.

There have been various attempts over the past decade in particular to incorporate the conference spaces into undergraduate learning. In the UK, the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) has been hosting an annual student-led research conference since 2011. A related UK organization, Researching, Advancing and Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE), has also hosted an annual conference since 2011. These conferences have offered a forum to showcase the outcomes of IBL at the level of individual HE institutions. Additionally, a small literature has grown around student-led or co-led conferences embedded within course design. These conferences take place at the end of a semester or academic year and may form part of the summative assessment for a particular course (e.g., Davis and White, 2005; Garde-Hansen and Calvert, 2007).

In this article we explore a new use for the conference space as a way to initiate an IBL community (in contrast to its more typical use of showcasing and providing closure to student research outcomes). We agree with Schwartz's (1995) statement that "the question is not how individuals become members in a larger cognitive community . . . the question is how a cognitive community could emerge in the first place" (350). We have not found any examples of this approach to the conference space in prior literature on undergraduate research or IBL.

Institutional context

The case study takes place within Southampton Business School, which is part of the University of Southampton in the UK. Sitting within the Faculty for Business, Law and Art, the School is one of the largest departments of the University with 2,000 students (900 of which are undergraduates) and 120 full time staff. In recent years, Southampton Business School has set out to transform the process of undergraduate curriculum design and delivery through the creation of a new set of modules as part of a common first year. The aim was to fundamentally restructure the governance of undergraduate education by working with students as partners in the creation and ownership of the learning environment, and by harnessing the openness and scalability of digital resources to enhance student engagement. An integral part of this process was the formation of a staff-student co-design group, which was funded by the University's Education Enhancement Fund (EEF), an institution-wide initiative using alumni donations to support education innovation. The Students as Creators EEF project was designed to act as a catalyst for education innovations in the faculty. Senior management advocacy was an essential part of the funding for the group. The initial project ran from October 2014 to July 2016, and it involved a wide range of staff and students from the School along with student learning champions, named Digichamps, from the wider university.

Co-attending conferences

On joining the co-design group, none of the undergraduate student members had attended an academic conference before. The idea for the Opening Conference came from discussions in the co-design group meeting immediately after returning from the International Summer Institute on Students as Partners, hosted by McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada (May 2016). Three members of the co-design group attended the Summer Institute, and the idea for the Opening Conference emerged, in part, from the returning students explaining to other group members what a conference actually entailed and the potential of conferences to transform staff-student relationships.

A conference became the obvious way to combine many of the other initiatives the group had been discussing around undergraduate pre-arrival, cohort induction, and the introduction of the ethos of staff-student partnership. As one members of the group suggested, reflecting back on the experience of key co-design meetings:

> The enthusiasm of co-design colleagues returning from an academic conference sparked the idea of co-creating a conference for newly arrived first year undergraduates at the very start of their programme. Reflecting on that conference experience, it was the networking and exchange of ideas that really energised people. What if we could adopt a similar conference format to spark energy and productive learning relationships for newcomers? (Staff member of the co-design group)

Another member explains:

> We realised a conference is a place where students could socialise and network with one another, engage with the lecturers and academics, and begin to define for themselves what it means to be in an inclusive learning community. All of these

> outcomes were predicted by students, after our experiences attending conferences. (Undergraduate co-design group member)

Co-design and Implementation

Once the group had decided to design the conference, and had secured resources within the School to support its implementation, the process of design could begin. From the May 2016's co-design meeting we had four months to prepare for its planned delivery in the first week of autumn semester (October 2016). A member from the group has provided the following account the co-design process during this period:

> When work on creating the scope, content, and format of the conference began, we realised that, not only were we introducing the first years to a new framework for true collaboration, in the form of co-design, but that we had to place this in the context of their "school to higher education" transition. We often found ourselves asking what the incoming students would be expecting from the conference. We realised that this would be the first time they would meet many of their fellow colleagues, and that it would be their first glimpse of university academic content, debate and discussion. We also accepted that combining this via the medium of co-design would be daunting for most. Indeed, it became apparent a large amount of "managing expectations" would have to occur, not only within the context of the Opening Conference, but within the entire context of introducing this new framework of education. Yet, we felt that a short, sharp shock that combined the ethos of partnership with an introduction to undergraduate research within the context of the Opening Conference would be the best way for incoming colleagues to notice a change so substantial, that they would be obliged to begin to realise the difference in how they would learn at university.
>
> With the purpose of the conference set we came together to create the content of the conference. As ever when speaking about partnership in the context of higher education, we had difficulty deciding on the language we would be using. Did we use "co-design," "co-creation," or "partnership," or did we use "colleague" or "staff/student"? Our main concern was that we didn't want the terminology of the conference to sound so foreign as to put them off.

We intended to treat this Opening Conference like any other conference an academic would attend, and we did. Formal invitations were sent out where colleagues had to register, a "Business-Smart" dress code was set and name tags were prepared. We put together a Southampton Business School branded "conference pack" which contained some further reading material, an attendee list, and a welcome letter from the co-design group. The latter inclusion, we felt, was very important. The letter was the formal, personalised recognition that they were now part of a distinct, new, and professional community at university. To stimulate conversation, we used circular tables. (Undergraduate co-design group member)

The Conference Format

It was decided that a half-day conference was sufficient for what we aimed to achieve. The event was planned for the Monday of Week 1 of the semester—it would be the very first learning experience the first year students would have in their degree programme. Registration on the day commenced at 9:30 a.m., where colleagues picked up their conference pack and name badge. At 10:00 a.m. the conference began and was opened by one of the second-year undergraduate members of the co-design group. The remainder of the conference format is summarised in Table 1. The schedule included a balance between staff and student contributions, with many of the sessions jointly hosted and led by members of the group. The event was attended by 190 first-year students (90% of those who were invited), by eight second-year members of the co-design group, and nine members of staff from the School's undergraduate programmes.

Table 1.

Time	Activity
10.00-10.20	Welcome, introduction to the day, meeting the team and table conversations – *introduction by students and staff*
10.20-11.20	*Subject-specific discussion – led by staff* Interactive work on current business new stories.
11.20-12.10	*What exactly is the Business World? – led by staff and students* Conversations (with tweeting - students encouraged to sign up to co-design twitter feed and student-led blog)
12.10-12.30	**Lunch Break**
12.30-13.15	*Co-creation and Co-design – led by students* Getting to grips with programme co-design and involvement.
13.15-14.15	*Establishing Enterprises – led by staff and students* Launching the "Boeing Fund" and working out some next steps. *Our Programme Charter* How are we going to make it work for all of us?
14.15-14.20	*Next Steps – led by staff*
14.20-14.30	Announcements and Close

Impact of the conference

The attendance, level of engagement, and feedback from the conference has been very strong. We were able to capture the ethos of the co-design approach and allow students to experience a conference which was integral to their course design. As an undergraduate member of the group reflects when looking back at the day:

> The reaction from our new colleagues to the fact that second years were an integral part in creating, preparing, and running the conference was one of surprise, disbelief, and sometimes scepticism. While they did not understand the full implications of what exactly the co-design group did, they realised implicitly that there had been a paradigm shift in their new educational environment. This was

> merely the beginning of their journey into the world of partnership and undergraduate research.

A staff member of the co-design group gives the following observation of the impact of the event:

> My observation is that it was not only the leadership role of students that impacted newcomers but perhaps even more significantly the stepping back of the teachers into a complementary position signalled that power and control in this community was open to being shared. I don't think the impact of this can be under estimated since the conference encouraged the newcomer to perceive that learning at university was going to be different from what most had previously experienced, emphasising in particular the essential role they needed to play individually and collectively to co-create transformational learning experiences.

A feedback questionnaire was circulated to all attendees and was completed at the end of the day in the closing session. The staff member who led this closing session reflects on the day:

Feedback gathered through a questionnaire indicated that students overwhelmingly (90%) appreciated the opportunity to get to know one another as the primary success of the event. The learning about the content of the programme was well down in fourth place (54%) behind understanding co-design group activities and forming enterprise co-operatives. This speaks of the students' need to create trust and a sense of safety as a precursor to learning in a community context. The willingness of students to engage subsequently with one another in classes and café conversation events is some evidence of how the conference helped create the conditions for community learning.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have explored the conference space as an effective way to combine co-design with IBL in undergraduate education. The Opening Conference emerged as an opportunity to: (a) create a space for building a collaborative learning environment and community; (b) introduce co-design principles to the community and invite participation in the co-design process; and (c) showcase co-design-in-action through the delivery of the conference. The format of the conference was an effective way to showcase the potential of co-design in shaping IBL. There was a balance of contributions between staff and students, with many of the sessions being jointly led. The conference activities were designed to encourage students to meet each other as colleagues and co-inquirers, to create new profiles as researchers, and to begin their own inquiry process into their chosen subject. As Healey and Jenkins (2009) recommend, this event offered a combination of "structured" and "open" modes of inquiry.

As co-design members, our experiences of running the conference were mostly quite positive from a learning perspective. The attendance, level of engagement, and detailed feedback suggest the event had an impact on the first-year students, particularly as a social opportunity to meet new colleagues framed as co-inquirers. The incoming students were aware that this approach offered an "alternative" to mainstream methods of teaching in higher education (Brew, 1999; Garde-Hansen and Calvert, 2007; Lueddeke, 2003). This event presented an opportunity to shape expectations in what was a novel learning environment for most in attendance, and it allowed the co-design group to introduce a range of themes that would have been difficult to convey in a lecture or seminar environment. The conference format was therefore well designed to challenge the "conspiracy for safety" in education that sees students fitting into a passive role (Barnett, 1999). The conference's ability to showcase co-design through the role modelling of second-year students and through a new language for learning perhaps had the most impact on the cohort.

The weaknesses of the approach were largely found in the difficulty of engaging the minority of students who found the experience difficult to understand and appreciate. This suggests that some students may have already "fixed" their role expectations before entering university and that they need more dedicated support (or challenge) in exploring their role in the process of inquiry. Building on Spronken-Smith and Walker's (2010) work, we need to consider to what extent a conference format can offer different levels of inquiry structure to meet the development and expectations of a wide-range of individual learners. This is an area for further investigation and experimentation in both the IBL and student-as-partners literature.

Our experience of working within the conference space alongside undergraduate students has suggested this approach has significant potential to create IBL communities. A future aim of the group is to hold an end-of-year Closing Conference organized through a process of co-design with the first-year undergraduate students themselves. This will give symmetry to the Opening Conference and will offer an opportunity to take stock of the undergraduates progressed in their first year of study. It is through this longitudinal approach to building a community and culture of co-inquiry that we think offers the most potential for strengthening the teaching-research nexus.

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Growing Student-Faculty Partnerships at Ursinus College: A Brief History in Dialogue

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In 2009-2010, Meredith Goldsmith (English) created the Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLI) at Ursinus College with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The centerpiece of the TLI was a new student-faculty partnership program, the Student Consultant Program, formed with substantial guidance from Alison Cook-Sather (Bryn Mawr College). In 2014, the TLI (now the Teaching and Learning Institute) became a formal College office within the division of Academic Affairs, and TLI leadership passed to Susanna Throop (History).

The TLI Student Consultant Program allows individual faculty an opportunity to engage in pedagogical dialogue over the course of a semester with a trained student observer and dialogue partner (i.e., a student consultant). Faculty participation in the program is voluntary, open to all instructors, and kept separate from formal evaluation procedures; students are selected to work in the program after a rigorous hiring process. Every week during a semester-long partnership, a student consultant visits their faculty partner's course, shares detailed field notes, and meets for discussion with their faculty partner. The program's primary goal is to support faculty in reflecting upon their teaching. Additionally, the program aims to offer students a chance to develop as collaborative leaders.

In the following dialogue, Goldsmith and Throop are joined by two alumni who worked as student consultants: Codey Young ('14) was a leader among the initial cohort of consultants and Megan Hanscom ('16) played a pivotal role in the transition from grant-funded initiative to College office. In this essay, the co-authors reflect from their various perspectives on the experience of building a student-faculty partnership program at a small liberal arts college. The essay is organized around five key questions that lead readers through critical actions in designing partnerships and partnership programs: beginning, sustaining, growing, leading, and assessing. Each question is addressed first in terms of the partnership *program* and then in terms of the *partnerships* themselves (though it will be evident throughout that *program* and *partnership* are interdependent).

HOW DO WE BEGIN?

Meredith

For me, the partnership program began through a stroke of luck: upon Ursinus receiving a Mellon grant, I joined a faculty pedagogy seminar with the understanding that I would be partnered with a student observer. My experience in that one partnership was so transformative that it made me want to build a partnership program at Ursinus (see Goldsmith & Gervasio, 2011). It further convinced me that anyone building a program should participate in a partnership and experience the associated feelings of vulnerability and alliance. Looking back, it is clear that trust between faculty member and student was critical to beginning both my partnership and our partnership program.

Built on trust, the Student Consultant Program allows both faculty and students to talk about the work of teaching and learning that we do every day. Teaching can be an atomizing profession, the presence of students and colleagues notwithstanding. My vision was to create a community around teaching and learning where both students and faculty could engage in more active dialogue. In my view, improving teaching can then come with the territory.

Susanna

Trust enables frank dialogue and deep learning for both members of a partnership. I would go even further though and say that *leading* a partnership program is also an opportunity for both faculty and students to learn greatly, especially when that position of leadership is approached with trust for others. Leading the TLI required me to learn a great deal from the student consultants themselves. Because of their direct and preexisting immersion in the program, they were my primary mentors and advisors as I took on my role. I think that willingness to learn from and with students, whether one is leading a partnership program or just participating in it, is vital. When leading a partnership program, one is an educator, a manager, an administrator, and a coach; at the same time, one is also a learner.

Codey

If faculty and student are both going to learn greatly from a partnership, trust is key, and trust is often built through empathy. Knowing that the beginning of a partnership with a faculty member laid the groundwork for the rest of the semester, I was always intentional about making each partnership relationship-centered. In initial meetings, I asked questions about the professor's academic background, how they came to teach in their current area of focus, and how they ended up at Ursinus College. I also asked the professor what they wanted to accomplish during the semester. Doing all this helped establish common ground between us. This initial questioning also gave me insight into their mindset. For example, in my first partnership, I became aware that my partner's academic background was at a large R-1 university where he had received little training as a teacher. This knowledge informed my understanding of the discomfort he displayed standing before a small class, and it allowed us to emphasize confidence building, which translated into higher rates of student engagement.

Megan

Building trust is essential in developing an open dialogue throughout the semester, and it is an ongoing process. Like Codey, I tried to get a sense of my faculty partner's background and teaching experience as well as their goals for the semester. I also made sure the professors understood that I was a sounding board for their ideas and worries, and I was there to support them, not to report my observations to anyone else for evaluation. For partnerships to be effective, faculty need to see consultants as people who support professors and pedagogical development, and that means that consultants need to demonstrate their support for their faculty partner from start to finish of a partnership.

HOW DO WE SUSTAIN?

Meredith

In the program's early days, it became clear to me that program sustainability involves person-to-person encounters and, broadly speaking, visibility. Individual student consultants might feel isolated by their work, and so from the start, physical meetings increased program sustainability simply by deepening contact. At the beginning, some did not see why our bi-weekly meetings, where all consultants met to discuss highs and lows and solicited advice from our peers, were necessary. However, I believed strongly that face-to-face encounters were essential, not only within a single partnership, but also within the community of consultants working in the program. The bi-weekly meetings provided support for individual consultants and generated esprit de corps among the consultants. At the institutional level, visibility and in-person encounters are also crucial for sustainability. The TLI has recently held some of its events at our President's house, which offers a powerful symbol of institutional support. In our start-up days, several early adopters attested publicly to the effects of the program, thus encouraging others to participate. When I began the program, people kept asking me, "Well, what do *you* do?" The answer to that question should always be readily apparent.

Susanna

For me, sustainability all boils down to engagement. First, a student-faculty partnership program needs to be supported and valued by a critical minority of faculty members who are actively engaged in partnerships. Second, the student consultants themselves need to continue to be engaged in the program's development, and they need to see a connection between the program's success and their own personal success. In both cases, faculty and consultants need to feel they have agency and the ability to impact their institution. That brings me to my third "need" for sustainability: active institutional engagement with the program.

Codey

Meredith and Susanna have talked about visibility and engagement. I would like to address the importance of flexibility. As the semester progresses, the needs and desires of a student-faculty partnership naturally shift. In particular, as faculty and students advance through the syllabus, I have found that student engagement tends to decline. Sustaining partnerships then depends on providing student consultants with the training to assist faculty in reevaluating goals throughout the course of the semester.

Megan

Codey is right about the challenges of sustaining engagement through the course of a single partnership. Flexibility becomes vital, but so too is what is sometimes called a "growth mindset" (Dweck, 2006). One thing I have often encountered is the class with no obvious "issues" to be addressed. This is not unusual because often skilled faculty are precisely the ones who want to improve even further. In that case, you can use weekly meetings to discuss the general climate of the classes, ask if any of their other classes need help, ask about upcoming assignments or projects that they are excited to teach, or inquire about the professor's career and goals. Helping consultants learn to be strong allies even when there is nothing "wrong" is useful for both partners as there is always room for growth. Teachers often remind students of this support; in a partnership, a consultant can help their faculty partner remember it too.

HOW DO WE GROW?

Meredith

Having learned from my own experience growing a program, I would suggest that program development should be a bit like backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)—you want to think concretely about where you want to be three years out, and then see what you can do along the way to get there, while leaving room for spontaneity and creativity.

Susanna

I want to echo what Meredith has said about backward design and offer a concrete example. One of my personal goals as program leader was to increase the professional development of the student consultants and to ensure that working for the program was a truly professional experience for them. With these goals in mind, the consultants and I designed a first semester for new hires that includes explicit mentorship by other consultants, a set of introductory readings, and bonding among all consultants as well as specifically among new consultants. We also co-created an online performance feedback form that faculty partners complete at the end of a partnership. This feedback helps individual consultants to grow in their roles, assists me in writing strong letters of reference for consultants, and generates assessment data. Last, we incorporated consultants into the TLI more broadly. Because some consultants were taking on greater responsibilities as a result of all these changes, we created a two-tiered set of positions: Consultant and Senior Consultant. Senior Consultants are leaders within the program; they take on additional partnerships, serve on the TLI Advisory Board, participate in on- and off-campus TLI events, and help hire and mentor new consultants.

Codey

Over the course of my work as a student consultant, I watched the program grow fairly organically. In my own interactions with faculty who were not part of the program, I often encouraged them to consider a faculty-student partnership to address any issues they may have in the classroom. Because Ursinus is a relatively small campus, word about the Student Consultant Program spread quickly from person to person.

Megan

I agree with Codey that working with students and faculty who already support the program helps generate new ideas about how partnership programs can continue to grow. I would also like to note that program growth can also lead to personal growth. For example, an important part of my own time in the TLI was taking on multiple partnerships in the semester. The majority of our training comes from on-the-job experience as with each partnership we observe new skills and strategies to implement later on. While multiple partnerships increased workload, I had more access to diverse styles and adaptations to share with professors as problems arose. More responsibility gave me more experience to draw on, which actually relieved the stress of working with two people at once. Likewise, serving on the TLI Advisory Board gave me managerial experience and allowed me to work collaboratively with faculty who cared about the program. These added responsibilities helped me grow as a consultant and in turn my contributions helped shape the future of the program.

HOW DO WE LEAD?

Meredith

For me, leadership of the program began with decision making. Essentially, I created practice, policy, and programming where none had existed. I also needed to convince administrators in a climate that was basically tolerant, but not, at that point, particularly knowledgeable about issues of teaching and learning. My leadership also involved cultivating and demonstrating trust among my faculty colleagues—if it had not been clear that consultant work was separate from the evaluation process, our program would not have succeeded.

Susanna

Meredith is right to emphasize decisiveness, persuasiveness, and the cultivation of trust. We are socialized to think of leadership in terms of dominance, but effective leaders have more in their toolkit than dominance alone. Besides, in student-faculty partnerships and the TLI more broadly, faculty cannot be “made” to do anything. In my experience, leadership in the TLI means being able to inspire, to support, and to facilitate. Those were my tasks, as program leader, and those were the consultants’ tasks as they worked with their faculty partners. The challenge is achieving meaningful and positive change without the ability to explicitly direct others.

Codey

I believe that active listening and self-awareness are necessary for leadership in teaching and learning. Active listeners are constantly engaged in dialogue, which enables them to hear not only what is said explicitly in the classroom, but also to perceive the nuances of a faculty’s pedagogical style. A student consultant who observes what a faculty partner asks them to focus on does well. A student consultant who is able to observe requested issues while also noting additional factors of which a faculty member may be unaware (like race or gender dynamics in class participation) makes an even greater impact. Likewise, a consultant who has the self-awareness to be able to listen to their faculty partner while also offering feedback informed by their own perspective a student is doubly effective.

Megan

My ability to empathize was my most useful skill as a consultant. Having a strong sense of empathy allows us to work with people who are in very vulnerable positions, whether it is professors allowing us into their classrooms, students who trust us to defend their anonymity when reporting feedback, or other consultants who seek help in working through difficult situations in partnerships. This also is a key component for allowing multiple consultants to take leadership positions within the program. If everyone is attuned to each other's goals, as well as able to imagine what the world looks like from another's point of view, it is easier to negotiate responsibilities and allow the whole group to take on leadership positions.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE WE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Meredith

Although we could not predict our success, planning for growth would have made our expansion easier. We never really discussed how many partnerships we could manage and overbooking to me seemed like a good problem to have. Having worked with a program where all the consultants I worked with were women, I focused on sex/gender diversity in my own recruiting. It was not until we were running for a year or so that we hired our first consultants of color, and I would have liked to foreground racial diversity from the very beginning.

Susanna

I wish I had made greater efforts to engage the departments and faculty who did not (want to) participate in student-faculty partnerships. We have done a good job of reaching out to those faculty who are open to the idea and to new faculty, and the program runs fine this way. Nonetheless, I think targeted outreach to departments with more limited engagement with the program would have been effective in both predictable and surprising ways.

Codey

While I am a firm believer in qualitative data, I also think that quantitative metrics serve an important role in documenting the efficacy of pedagogical consultation. It would have been interesting to see if there was some means of linking evaluations of faculty-student partnerships to evaluations used in tenure-track reviews, for example, to compare if there is indeed a marked improvement in the faculty member's performance over the course of their partnership.

Megan

My suggestions have to do with changes that are currently in progress. In my time we worked to build a more diverse group of student consultants both in our individual backgrounds and in the subjects that we pursue, and I hope that commitment to diversity continues and, if anything, intensifies. On a related point, I think focusing on helping consultants learn to work with diverse faculty partners should be part of the TLI's long-term program goals; it is good that this is addressed in readings for new consultants but more can be done. For me, it was important to work with a variety of professors, particularly with other women. In those partnerships, I felt that I was most valued and I also gained the most insight by seeing what it was like to work as a woman in academia. That is not to say that students should always work with professors that are "like them," but the chance to work with someone who has faced similar challenges can be as beneficial as working with someone with whom you share little in common.

CONCLUSION

Our dialogue, as revealed in the preceding pages, mirrors the partnership process in that we listened, learned, and reorganized our ideas as we went along. Yet, as in any discussion, certain key themes emerged and were repeated. First, we hope it is clear that a successful partnership program will be itself firmly grounded in the practice of partnership. Like a Fibonacci spiral in a seashell, one starts with a single partnership, circles out to an initial program, and scrolls further still to additional growth and development. Scale changes but the central importance of partnership between students and faculty does not. Second, at the very heart of partnership is the word that has been repeated more than any other in our essay: trust. Trust enables collaboration and dialogue, growth and reflection, for persons, programs, and institutions. The need for trust should not seem unduly daunting. As we hope this essay demonstrates, trust is built one question, one conversation, at a time.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Megan Hanscom *graduated in 2016 from Ursinus College, where she majored in Environmental Studies and minored in English and Gender and Women's Studies. In her four years at Ursinus, she served as a TLI Student Consultant and TLI Advisory Board Member, as well as a Green Fellow in the Office of Sustainability.*

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Codey Young *graduated in 2014 from Ursinus College, where he majored in Philosophy and Anthropology & Sociology and minored in African-American and Africana Studies. Codey served as a TLI Student Consultant from 2013-14 and helped lead a pilot TLI program at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, China.*

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Small Steps Toward an Ethos of Partnership in a Hong Kong University: Lessons from a Focus Group on "Homework"

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HISTORY: ESTABLISHING A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AT LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

As a teacher at Lingnan University new to Hong Kong's classroom culture, I sought insight into the learning environment and feedback on the effectiveness of my delivery of material to non-native English speakers beyond end-of-term evaluations. To serve these needs, also shared by other instructors in this context, and in support of Lingnan's mission as a global, liberal arts institution, I created the Student Consultant Program as a collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Initiative at Ursinus College. Until it was able to develop its own identity and role, implementation of the Lingnan program relied heavily on Ursinus' Student Consultant Program. Since 2014, however, Lingnan's program has grown into a small but sustainable and successful program (Pounder, Ho, & Groves, 2015). In the context of semester-long student-faculty pedagogical partnerships, trained Student Consultants provide faculty across disciplines with feedback from the perspective of students not enrolled in their courses through regular classroom observations, dialogue, and critical reflection.[1]

As the faculty coordinator of the program, I organize partnerships, maintain records and evaluations, and mentor the small cohort of seven Student Consultants. As part of my research, I also catalog the unique characteristics and challenges that emerge from the Student Consultant Program's equally unique context as a teaching and learning resource in a liberal arts university, which is performing its mission in a heavily politicized, postcolonial environment. Students invited to join the program are usually the most curious about how they are taught, have high GPAs, and demonstrate excellent communication skills in English and in Cantonese. I hoped that the dialogue resulting from partnerships could not only support teachers in this context but also help students articulate their experience of Hong Kong's recent educational reforms.[2]

Stepping Out: Seeking to Expand Partnership at Lingnan University

In this historical context, and with the goal of further developing the Student Consultant Program, the Lingnan team (two Student Consultants and I) participated in the "Change Institute" at the McMaster University Summer Institute on Students as Partners held in 2017. As part of our discussion of sustainability, we explored how we could extend the dialogue beyond the Student Consultant/faculty partner dyad to include more student voices and perspectives on teaching and learning as well as develop an ethos of partnership that could encompass the entire campus. Key concerns for us were: how to attract students and faculty outside of the Student Consultant Program to experience and be empowered by the benefits of partnership (identified as the respectful sharing of ideas in an environment of more even power dynamics), and how to identify and exploit openings at the university for such encounters to flourish.

We agreed that one modest and achievable step was to host a focus group led by experienced Student Consultants that was attended by their current and ex-faculty partners and open to other students. For our inaugural focus group, we decided to offer participants one credit towards fulfilling the university's required Integrated Learning Program curriculum. The topic we chose was "homework," an activity that teachers and students have in common but with vastly different perspectives, goals, motivations, and outcomes. Especially in Cantonese, the term "homework" denotes almost all graded or ungraded assignments completed outside of class time. We hoped that the focus group would provide a forum for discovering different experiences of and perspectives on homework as well as the pedagogical intentions behind it so that both parties would be able to reflect on (and perhaps modify) their approaches to doing and assigning homework. As faculty partners were, in this instance, Westerners with a variety of Hong Kong experiences and students were local to Hong Kong, what emerged was a powerful discussion about cultural differences, differences between the adult and young adult culture, and systemic issues far beyond the assigning of homework.

Designing and Facilitating a Focus Group on "Homework"

In preparation for the focus group, the experienced Student Consultants and I met to discuss our own experiences of homework in Hong Kong and abroad and grappled with how to create partnership in one hour, under the fairly artificial constraints of participation for credit in a session that drew "good students with good attitudes, and teachers with good attitudes" (Professor A). We designed an informal icebreaker activity that would allow us to tackle different perspectives on homework: all participants wrote down one word that described their experience with homework and were asked to say why they had chosen it. Then, Student Consultants facilitated a larger discussion about different aspects of homework with questions such as, "To a student, what is the difference between reading and assignments?"; "What is the difference between homework in high school and university?"; and "What is your 'ideal' homework?" They chose these questions based on our discussion of why the university recommends six hours of outside study for every course and how faculty and students are expected to fill them.

For our first one-hour meeting, three Student Consultants from various departments invited their current faculty partners from business and the humanities and an ex-faculty partner from science; seven students across majors from different years also attended providing a total of ten students and four teachers. Student Consultants were responsible for leading with the questions that had been developed prior to the focus group—a shift in traditional dynamics that led to a more candid and rich discussion. In addition to revealing many insights about homework, our conversation highlighted how different assumptions can throw obstacles in the way of partnership and also how a key shift in attitude can open the way to partnership.

Assumptions as Obstacles to Partnership

A disagreement regarding plagiarism in the first focus group meeting threw into relief how different assumptions—in this case about the "effectiveness" of homework, what counts as "resources," and how "interesting" homework should be—can constitute significant obstacles to partnership. During the icebreaker activity, Student C explained that she chose the word "ineffective" to describe homework because there are simply too many "resources," such as Google or copying from her friends, and therefore her homework does not actually measure her understanding of the course materials. In response, another student reported that it was common to copy a classmate's homework from a previous class; another recalled an American exchange student who realized that his local presentation partner simply copied and pasted "quotes from the website, and put it in the PowerPoint . . . hoping that the lecturer won't notice, and he . . . can just kinda read from the PowerPoint and just get his mark" (Student F).

The reactions from faculty partners ranged from shock to despair with Professor A, a new professor to Lingnan and Hong Kong, visibly stumped by such bold admissions of academic dishonesty. The mere mention of the "p-word" (i.e., plagiarism) threatened to become the focus of the discussion by shutting down faculty members' ability to hear or reflect on what students were trying to communicate. The divergence in the definition of and intentions behind copying, which the professor saw as dishonesty but which the student saw as a "resource," overwhelmed the original focus: the initial commenting student's choice of the adjective "ineffective."

Student participants persisted in explaining why they might choose to copy than turn in original work. Student C explained that she turns to "resources" such as "groupmates and friends" to help her complete homework tasks, noting that her homework was "very similar" to what her friends completed in a previous iteration of the class. Perhaps Student C's teacher was as pragmatic as the students s/he teaches, saving time and effort by opting to re-assign homework instead of tinkering with an assignment that might ask a student to "think on my own." Reflecting on Student C's accountability as a student to produce original work, I am challenged to think about my own accountability as a teacher in creating an assignment that cannot be copied. What is *my* role in not creating what Student F called "rubbish" homework that is "made to grade you . . . [and doesn't] teach you anything, it's the grade that you have to fulfill?"

Disagreements and strong emotional reactions emerged as the result of different assumptions made about what "ineffective" might mean, what counts as "resources," and what drives plagiarism. While students spent a significant portion of the focus group meeting trying to make clear to faculty that they prefer to think for themselves, to take risks, and to "expand our ideas," different student and faculty assumptions initially presented an obstacle to partnership.

A second issue, that of incentives, was equally challenging. During our discussion, students revealed that they do not consider reading as homework because, in the hierarchy of assignments to be completed outside of class time, reading is "worth" less. In part, reading comes last in the list of homework activities because it contributes the least to a student's measured success in the class. Hearing the students' perspectives, the teachers asked how they could pitch their activities and then assess the majority of the class who may not have done the reading. A few students divulged that the best incentive for reading—indeed, even for simply attending class regularly—is to make it worthwhile or "interesting."

Like "ineffective," "interesting" threatened to shut down what could be heard during the discussion because of the different assumptions students and faculty made about the term. All professors believe they assign "interesting" reading, and if it is not "interesting," then it is "good for you" or somehow necessary to the course. Students shared their responses to these beliefs, including, as Student F put it, not doing a single reading "except for White Elephant [George Orwell's "Shooting An Elephant"], because that one is interesting." She also explained why she did not go to class: "because it is compulsory, you don't need to be interested . . . but you have to go there and just listen to the lecture." She argued that "the whole system is wrong, you are forcing students to go to the class they don't like, that's why they don't do their homework."

Her comments elicited shock and laughter from the group with several other students also confessing to skipping almost an entire semester's worth of classes. Professor D retorted by saying, perhaps "you don't know whether or not it is interesting until you do the readings." Student H suggested that interest comes from a student's search for the "relevancy" of the reading within the text itself and also from the pedagogy of the class. A discussion-based class, he proffered, only becomes "interesting" if you have done the reading and can interact with your classmates and teacher; a student who has "to go there and just listen to the lecture" for a compulsory course may find no "relevancy" in either the content or the method through which it is delivered.

Student F's brazen admissions of refusal challenged stereotypes of both the "Hong Kong student" (commonly understood to be passive to the point of silence, pragmatic, and skilled in rote memorization) and the "ideal student." Her resistant language, defiance, and confidence illustrate how students often do not communicate "in a certain way about their learning with the teacher using appropriate language forms" (Arnot & Reay, 2007 p. 321). Student Consultants specialize in such "code talk" (Arnot & Reay, 2007, p. 319) through which faculty and administrators might more readily hear advice and preferences, but Student F demanded that we also listen to the undisciplined voices, unschooled and resistant to pedagogic process. How do we hear the student who is "not interested"? As with "ineffective," the term "interesting" elicited a range of perspectives from students and faculty as they unpacked their different assumptions—differences that initially presented obstacles to partnership.

Receptivity that Leads to Partnership

After trying to understand gestures of refusal from students, Professor A eventually asked for "solutions" to his struggles with varying levels of "interest" and investment in his course, and he wanted to know how he can help students complete assigned reading as a prerequisite for critical thinking. At this point in the discussion, I noticed a general loosening of tension in the group as students seized the opportunity to give advice and share their insights, a practice that, beyond the Student Consultant Program, many do not have consistent access.

The students' responses addressed the accountability of both parties in the crafting of effective and "interesting" assignments. One student, for example, suggested that "you can ask them to write them to write their own questions" to foster choice, independence, and ownership of learning outside of class. At least three students offered anecdotes about compulsory courses they have attended where the teacher's "passion" and "caring" inspired them to participate and become engaged. Despite "hating science," Student F attends all her biology classes because her professor is "so passionate in teaching, and you feel bad [about] not doing the homework that he asked you to do, so I ended up doing the homework which is not graded." A Student Consultant similarly described her experience in a history tutorial where the professor succeeded in getting her to read by "caring" and having "passion towards the class that he teaches, especially when it is a compulsory subject."

As I listened to these student perspectives, I felt daunted: How does a teacher recreate passion in every class? How does caring translate to assessment? Do students only participate out of pity for their professors or because passion is infectious? Thinking further, however, I realized that these comments highlight the powerful intersection of pedagogy and passion: professors manage to get and keep students' attention by modeling commitment both to the class and the discipline, stimulating engagement, and fostering partnership and students' ownership of the course. This combination also applies to how homework is assigned—the ideal is not the absence of homework but an assignment in the individual style of the professor to suit what is unique to the course. Student F described how homework can be a way of "learning [it] in the eyes of the person . . . because every individual, every professor, has their own special features." Students, it seems, seek the same kind of originality and independent thought in assigning homework that teachers value in the homework answers students give.

Once we turned off the recorders and the group disbanded, Professor A became locked in conversation with four of the student participants whom he had just met. Sensing his culture shock, the students were eager to continue the conversation with him, offering encouragement and advice about maintaining his individuality as a teacher. Seeing this engagement, we realized that we had achieved what we had set out to do: in one hour, we had managed to break down boundaries between faculty and students and create spontaneous sharing. The open sharing in which students engaged, and the ultimately open mind that Professor A demonstrated in staying behind to talk with the students, constituted small, but significant, steps on the way to an ethos of partnership.

CONCLUSION

Scholars and advocates of student voice work caution against what Michael Fielding has defined as "methodologies or contextual circumstances [that] reinforce subjugation" (2004, p. 296) and resting on (than critically addressing) assumptions that might lead to further marginalization or manipulation. At every moment of this focus group and while drafting this essay, I have tried to remain attuned to "who is speaking, who is spoken of and who listens as a result" (Alcoff qtd. in Fielding, 2004, p. 301) as well as the "historical location of the structures and relations of power" (p. 301).

In this case, students and faculty operate under the neoliberal economics of Hong Kong's postcolonial educational complex and the political dynamics of a university system reacting to a post-Umbrella Movement student population. During the focus group, I witnessed students refusing to be interrupted and helping each other clarify their thoughts and preferences in dialogue with professors who took up the responsibility of being active listeners. While I have not yet followed up on whether faculty have acted on what they have heard, we have nonetheless gone some way in undoing the image that endures from the unproductive meeting between student leaders and government officials during the pro-democratic Umbrella Movement in 2014. During the Umbrella Movement, a last-ditch dialogue was arranged between pro-democracy student leaders and government officials. The images released from the event illustrate the many obstacles facing partnership in the territory. A chasm separates the two parties, reinforcing the divide between who speaks and who is heard.[3]

This focus group demonstrated how powerful active listening, often on the part of adults/teachers, can be in facilitating partnership because it creates a climate of openness. At the same time, overcoming deeply ingrained assumptions, often about the student/other, can be a challenge to hearing and receptivity. While attentive to the complicated power dynamics of what Julie McLeod (2011) has called "voice-based equity interventions" (187), I felt like we co-created, if only temporarily, a more democratic, postcolonial space centered on openness, difference, and collaboration. The focus group on homework, in which we encountered obstacles but also opened our minds, constituted small steps toward an ethos of partnership in our Hong Kong university.

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NOTES

1. The Ursinus program, in turn, was based on Bryn Mawr College's Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program.
2. In 2012, the Hong Kong government radically moved from a 3-year university curriculum to a 4-year system. The so-called "3-3-4" reforms were designed to increase global competitiveness in graduates and bring Hong Kong in line with international standards. Similar to the North American educational system, Hong Kong students gain a year of core curriculum courses prior to choosing their majors.
3. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1621694/talks-fail-narrow-gap-between-student-leaders-and-government

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Navigating a Difficult Journey: Reflections on How a Student-Faculty Partnership Helped Address Racial Tensions in a Social Science Course

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INTRODUCTION

Racial injustice is a hallmark of the United States. In the classroom, many social science and humanities courses delve into moments of racial injustice in history and contemporary events. Classrooms, however, are not only places to discuss contemporary politics and inequality; they are also places where racial tensions can arise from misunderstandings, well-intended but misspoken comments, and disagreements in points of view. In this essay, we reflect on our faculty-student pedagogical partnership experience as it relates to navigating racial dynamics that arise in the classroom. Our insights into how to incorporate a faculty-student partnership approach in addressing tensions, obstacles, or sensitive topics that arise can provide lessons to others in how to navigate these dilemmas. Understanding how to address sensitive contemporary events that occur both outside and inside the classroom is particularly important as the United States now operates under a presidency that is rife with particularly harmful racial, gendered, and migration-related propaganda. We begin this essay by describing our faculty-student partnership. Next, we shift focus to how we addressed racial tensions that emerged in the classroom. Finally, we end with a reflection on how our experience influenced our understanding of our role in learning and teaching in the classroom.

OUR PARTNERSHIP

During the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year, Kirsten, a Bryn Mawr senior majoring in Anthropology, with a minor in Education, and Victoria, then a second-year Assistant Professor at Bryn Mawr, were paired for a pedagogical partnership through the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. Through this program, Kirsten visited Victoria's class once a week and took detailed observation notes, and we met weekly to discuss classroom dynamics, review Kirsten's notes and feedback, and address Victoria's questions. In addition, Victoria participated in a seminar with other new faculty, and Kirsten participated in weekly meeting with other student partners, both facilitated by the director of the SaLT program. Victoria was compensated for her participation with a reduced teaching load and Kirsten with course credit.

From the beginning, we strove to create a partnership in which we were relative equals and to establish trust with one another given the inherent power dynamics between a faculty member and an undergraduate student. We explicitly recognized that we each had valuable knowledge and that we were in the partnership to learn from each other. Victoria stated her desire to get critical feedback on her teaching, and while Kirsten initially felt anxious about her new role as a consultant and partner—due to the misconceptions students and professors have about the role(s) they play in the college setting (e.g., many students are taught to not question authority figures, in this context, their professors)—she quickly realized the reasons she had anxieties were unfounded. Victoria played a crucial role in relieving Kirsten's initial worry. As the partnership grew and we got closer, Victoria's openness and honesty with Kirsten showed her how invested, committed, and comfortable Victoria was with her, and so Kirsten was better able to open up herself to the partnership as well. Through ongoing dialogue in person, over email, and on the phone, we were able to address difficult dynamics in the classroom, particularly those around racial tensions (see Reyes & Adams, 2017, for a discussion of how they used their partnership to manage apathetic students in a different classroom).

ADDRESSING RACIAL TENSIONS

The class that was the context of Victoria's and Kirsten's partnership was a 200-level course on social science research methods in the Growth and Structure of Cities Department, which meets the quantitative requirement at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. The first half of the course covers basic quantitative techniques, and the second half focuses on other types of social scientific methods. Students played an active role in the course through leading portions of the discussion. In general, students in this class were engaged with one another and the content of the course.

The April 13th, 2016 session was a discussion-based session on content analysis. In the readings, we explored how scholars used content analysis in the course of their research on institutionalizing the concepts of race and ethnicity. The week before, we had a discussion on race and college admissions, and Victoria prefaced that class with a comment on respecting and listening to one another on what are sensitive and controversial topics. However, Victoria did not reiterate this position for the April 13th session. One of the discussion leaders presented a question to the class regarding what their experiences were in reading and working with high school history textbooks. In the course of the discussion, tension between students became palpable following comments about the role of race (or lack thereof) in the teaching of history. In short order, students then began interrupting one another. Victoria stopped the interruptions in order to let each student be able to contribute to the discussion, after which she made a comment regarding how race cannot be disentangled from U.S. history, and how different racial groups have been racialized in different ways. Victoria then shifted to the next point of the discussion.

Leaving the class, Victoria thought she diffused the situation but wanted to double-check with Kirsten via the classroom notes she takes, which had spaces allotted for our questions to one another. The ongoing dialogue set by the pedagogical partnership allowed Victoria to not feel confused or unsure of how to respond to conflicts and tensions that arose in the classroom. In effect, this was because Kirsten had become an institutionalized support system for Victoria. Due to our continued conversations, Victoria was able to build trust with Kirsten as a student mirror that reflected back another perspective on classroom dynamics, and touching base with Kirsten became a routine after class, and something to which Victoria looked forward. As such, the pedagogical partnership cultivated, from Victoria's perspective, a view of classroom observers as helpful guides with different perspectives, with whom she could brainstorm ideas, rather than as judgmental figures in the classroom that provoked anxiety because of her classroom performance.

When Victoria touched base with Kirsten regarding the April 13th class, Kirsten agreed that giving her own perspective and shifting the focus was appropriate and a good response to the situation. Seeing how open, honest, and vulnerable Victoria was with Kirsten in this situation, and throughout the partnership, helped Kirsten feel like she was truly Victoria's equal and partner. Reciprocally, Kirsten, being a student who had experienced a similar event, was able to offer Victoria a perspective of how students might have felt after the incident, as well as indicate what students needed in order to process the incident and get back on track.

Although her talk with Kirsten alleviated some of the fears she had regarding how she handled the aforementioned situation, Victoria's understanding of what happened was dramatically altered the next day when a student came to her office hours. This student told her that she felt silenced in class, branded as a racist, and that this was not the first time she—and another student—felt offended or that their experiences were invalidated. She then discussed how social media played a role in the aftermath of the class where at least one student posted a message about the class with a coded reference to her and other students, and that some other classmates "liked" the post. The student then told of other encounters after class that involved apologies, crying, and rejections. Victoria was blindsided by what the student reported, and she was greatly concerned with the dynamics of the class.

The already-set-in-place pedagogical partnership with Kirsten allowed Victoria to not get overwhelmed with the tensions the student reported that occurred both within and outside of the classroom following the event. Even at a place like Bryn Mawr College, which purposefully creates space to discuss pedagogy, in previous semesters of teaching there, Victoria had felt alone as she tried to navigate the teaching, research, and service responsibilities she had as a tenure-track faculty member. Both the weekly discussions with Kirsten and those that occurred in the pedagogy seminar allowed Victoria to connect with varied members of the BiCollege community (Bryn Mawr and Haverford), facilitated a sense of belonging and ease, as well as supported the creation of a "brave space" (see the Spring 2016 issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*) where everyone was engaged in learning.

Because of their pedagogical partnership and the trust they had established, Victoria reached out to Kirsten once again, this time via email to arrange a phone interview to talk about what the student had disclosed to Victoria during her office hours. On the phone, Kirsten and Victoria were able to go through what occurred during the previous class, discuss the office hour meeting with the student, and additionally, Kirsten was able to share with Victoria an interaction that took place after class that also played a role in the situation. Victoria asked Kirsten about how her professors had handled similar events, and Kirsten was able to share a social media policy her professors had put in place for her Anthropology classes to remind students what is said in the classroom should remain there since it is where the context and intention can be preserved and respected. During our phone conversation, we both felt it was critical to make sure our end goal was for students to feel validated and heard while reminding them, during the next class session, of the expectations of respect and class confidentiality Victoria had in place for her classroom. As mentioned previously, student consultants provide another lens for professors to view classroom interactions by allowing for a mixture of perceptions and interpretations. At the conclusion of their phone conversation, Victoria and Kirsten both agreed they should reach into their toolbox of resources and support provided by the SaLT program and get further advice about the situation. Victoria then spoke with the Director of the SaLT program.

In response to these consultations, Victoria emailed two students to meet with her separately (she offered an option of meeting as a group, but both students preferred meeting separately) before the next class period to check in with how they thought class and the aftermath following the incident went. In one student's reply, they thanked Victoria for what she said following their comment. This student saw Victoria's response as affirming their point of view and they expressed appreciation for allowing them to express their thoughts and not be marked as "the angry person of color." In her reply to Victoria's initial email about meeting, the other student thanked Victoria for checking in and replied that she felt upset, hurt, and misunderstood about the situation.

In her individual meetings with these two students, Victoria asked them about how they felt class went and about what happened afterwards, and solicited their feedback on her plan to address what happened at the beginning of next class. At the beginning of the next session, Victoria drew on her conversations with Kirsten and the director of SaLT and prefaced her comments with her appreciation for the discussions they have in class. She noted that each of the students come to the class with varied backgrounds, points of view, and experience in talking about these issues. Victoria told the students that it was her hope that the class try and grapple to understand what each other is saying than talking to just get a particular point across. Victoria suggested a formula to follow if one feels hurt or offended or wants clarification on what someone else said: "I feel ______when you said _______because _______." Following this formula, students could avoid being on the defensive, because when anyone feels defensive or attacked, learning cannot happen. Victoria encouraged the students to be self-reflexive and think about why people are saying what they are saying.

Per the helpful advice from Kirsten, Victoria told the students that they should strive to think about what fellow students say—particularly at places like Bryn Mawr and Haverford, where students are especially cognizant of these things—in the best light and/or with the best intention. However, there is also a saying that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," and so best intentions do not necessarily matter when people are hurt by what is said. This is why Victoria encouraged the above formula, which specifies why we agree/disagree or are upset with people. By being specific regarding our disagreements, we open up room for learning and dialogue, particularly because some students have more or less experience with talking about sensitive issues like race and history. Victoria does not believe in policing students' behavior, particularly outside of class, and wanting to affirm that people should freely express a wide array of emotions they feel, she encouraged the class to be aware of the intended and unintended consequences that come with these things and to understand our privilege. Victoria also discussed how one way of thinking about privilege is not having to think about what we say or how we act, and we need to be reflective about what we say and why (particularly if it causes someone else to be hurt). In the end-of-semester feedback, one student commented that [Victoria] "was always aware of any identity tension that arose and was a great diffuser," and another said that "[t]he instructor is willing to have tough conversations and confront issues in the class head on. I really enjoyed that."

This example illustrates how, in recent years, classrooms and college campuses across the U.S. have become sites of engagement, protest, and activism for social justice and change. To be successful, conversations about charged issues such as social injustice need to be handled respectfully. Victoria and Kirsten were able to work together to find a fair way to address the needs of the two students and the needs of the class, while validating the need for the conversation and respecting different beliefs.

HOW OUR PARTNERSHIP INFLUENCED OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR ROLE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

As we have described, our faculty-student pedagogical partnership served as a forum to address racial tensions in the classroom. In doing so, we were able to reposition students in the class, Kirsten, and Victoria as active agents in our learning. This only works, however, if all of people involved so desire. For student consultants, participating in pedagogical partnership does more than fulfill a class requirement or provide a paycheck. It provides real-world skills, such as reflexivity and active listening, which will serve them in their lives as students and in their lives as professionals when they leave Bryn Mawr and Haverford. Additionally, because of the way they are socialized in school settings, many students believe their professors are all-knowing individuals who are there to one-sidedly pour their knowledge into students' malleable minds. Further still, some students even feel disenfranchised when it comes to their educations, feeling like they have no knowledge of their own to share with their professors. This partnership dispels those myths and shows both faculty and student participants, as well as the students in the faculty members' classes, that we should all be there to learn and grow from each other.

For faculty, participating in pedagogical partnership does more than afford a course release during the semester. It provides a valuable space and time to reflect on pedagogy, something that may fall to the wayside during the first few years on the tenure-track as faculty balance the required research, teaching, and service roles that are required. In particular, Victoria was able to take away two important pedagogical strategies from the seminar and partnership with Kirsten: flexibility and the role of students in the classroom. In terms of flexibility, she discovered how essential it is to foster a learning environment. This involves not over-planning classes, catering to the needs not only of the class as a whole but also to individual sessions, students, and subjects, tensions, and/or obstacles that arise. Similarly, Victoria also left the partnership seeing students as agents of their own learning. For example, being able to "punt" questions Victoria has about the course and its direction to students themselves, and questions they have to one another, allows a classroom dynamic where students take ownership of their education. It also creates an environment where faculty and students can engage in conversations not only about the content of the class but also classroom dynamics.

In addition to these benefits, partnership addresses the misconceptions some students and professors have about their roles in the classroom and the misconception that asking for help is a sign you are less knowledgeable than others. Throughout the duration of Victoria and Kirsten's partnership, both reached out to others when they were not sure of what to do or say, whether to each other or to students in the classroom. Bryn Mawr has a rigorous culture and is a place where many of its community members try to do everything on their own because they believe they can handle it all. Although there is no doubt that they are capable of handling myriad responsibilities and challenges, one thing both professors and students forget is that they do not have to do it alone. For both Victoria and Kirsten, their partnership gave each of them another person on campus to reach out to, confide in, and look to for advice. Together they were able to learn from and help each other be even more confident in their roles and abilities on campus and beyond (for similar reflections, see Reyes & Adams, 2017).

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BOOK REVIEW

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom by bell hooks

New York: Routledge 1994 (224 pages)
ISBN: 978-0-415-90808-5

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I first read bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994) in my first semester as a first-year undergraduate student six years ago. Her writing inspired me to pursue education as a field of study and deeply impacted my focus when I began partnership work. I began to question my voice, space, privilege, and power in higher education through the ways I saw hooks describing her own often quite different experience of the classroom. I have had the pleasure of returning to her work more recently as I've struggled to find language to capture the level of mutual trust, reciprocity, and care so integral to the partnerships I had as an undergraduate student and the partnerships I continue to foster now as an educational developer with colleagues, mentors, students, and faculty. hooks's chapters range in style from reflection to theory to critical dialogue, and this genre switching has helped me examine topics like power in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives. hooks takes readers through a diverse exploration of values, theories, and practices on the topics of feminism, freedom, and teaching, centering her perspective as a black woman in a patriarchal and predominantly white US higher educational context. I focus in this review on the insights she has to offer on power, engaged pedagogy, and institutional transformation to highlight the ways each are integral to partnership.

Partnership is a process of mutual empowerment. In hooks's dialogue with philosopher Ron Scapp (Chapter 10), hooks describes the ideal classroom as "a space where we're all in power in different ways . . . We professors should be *empowered by* [emphasis added] our interactions with students" (p. 152). Language about power in partnership is too often worded as a process of giving power to or sharing power with students. But my partnerships have never been one-way relationships and, when I was a student in partnership with others, I never felt I was the object of those relationships. My partnerships instead have always been about students and faculty/staff mutually empowering each other.

hook's key concept of engaged pedagogy is closely related to this mutual empowerment. hooks defines engaged pedagogy as a reciprocal and vulnerable-making process for students and the professor, led by many voices, involving shared risk-taking and responsibility, and embracing the whole individual. Reading *Teaching to Transgress* through this partnership lens has called me to be radical, challenging, empowering, supportive, and revolutionary in the way I engage in my own partnership practices.

Partnership is about transforming the academy. hooks reminds us that "the work of transforming the academy" requires us to "embrace struggle and sacrifice. We cannot be easily discouraged. We cannot despair when there is conflict" (p. 33). Partnership leads to transgression: teaching in revolutionary ways, rethinking the source of expertise, upending traditional hierarchies—all of which is difficult and risky, especially in university contexts where large classes and sage-on-the-stage teaching methods are common. The words that hooks uses to describe transformation are ones of emotion—and partnership takes emotional energy. It was far easier for me to write off the efforts of my professors when I didn't fully empathize with them; partnership made this lack of empathy impossible and continues to affect the way I work with faculty in and out of partnerships today.

Partnership must be attentive to the role identity plays in shaping power within the relationship. Overt and covert aspects of our identities inform the way we interact with each other, as well as how easily (or not) we develop trust and reciprocity in our partnership. hooks calls us to be continually conscious of the "politics of domination" (p. 39), or the assumptions we make based on shared and disparate identities which lead us to privilege the voices of middle- and upper-class straight white cis men—the hegemonic class in the United States and much of the world. As a white, upper-middle class, queer cis woman, my partnership with my cis white male mentor is negotiated differently than my former partnership with my South Asian male faculty partner was, and those differ still from my partnership with my East Asian female student. Partnership has always been complicated by these politics of domination, but higher education's increasing diversification continues to raise new and different tensions. What is exciting—what I have begun to see in each of my partnerships and what hooks helps us to imagine—is that partnership also opens the possibility of radical transformation through these connections across difference.

Teaching to Transgress is a necessary read for anyone engaged in or seeking to engage in partnership because it encourages us to embrace the full potential that exists in this work. Partners will find ideas and language that reflect the ideals of partnership and push partnership to be its most revolutionary self. We learn from hooks that partnership must be aware of identity and power, and with awareness partnership can be about mutual empowerment, transgression, and the transformation of the academy. We can, with partnership, make the academy a more radical and equitable space.

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