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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

"It Depends": Exploring the Context-Dependent Nature of Students as Partners' Practices and Policies

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"For me context is the key—from that comes the understanding of everything."
Kenneth Noland (1988; as cited in Gibbs, 2010, p. 1)

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

In running workshops and presenting keynotes on Students as Partners (SaP), one of the most common answers we give to questions is "It depends." The breadth and complexity of practices and policies surrounding SaP mean that it is often difficult to make generalisations. This difficulty is intensified by the newness of the field, at least as it relates to learning and teaching in higher education, where the term has only become extensively used in the last decade and particularly in the last five years, and then only in selected countries. Unsurprisingly, the term is used in a variety of different ways (Cliffe et al., 2017).

The main reason it is difficult to generalise about SaP is that the practices and policies are context dependent. There is a need to identify the structural, temporal, and personal dimensions that define the context. Here we argue that we cannot begin to understand the processes and outcomes of specific partnerships without taking account of the context in which they operate. This argument has implications both for how we design SaP practices and policies and how we report research and evaluation findings.

A similar case has been made in relation to educational research and development in general. Acedo (2010), for example, argues that there is a "need to be sensitive to the context, whether in research, policy-making, or pedagogical practice" (p. 417). Not surprisingly "one-size fits all" policies enacted at national and institutional levels play out differently in different contexts. This leads to a critique of attempts to identify "best practice," as what is appropriate in one context may not be in another (Crossley, 2010). This point is made forcefully by Gibbs (2010):

> Many context variables are so influential that extrapolation from one context to another is fraught with difficulties and leads to many errors and confusions, including the adoption of contextually inappropriate educational practices, wrong-headed explanations of local pedagogic phenomena, the alienation of teachers who

> know more about the crucial features of their context than do the pedagogic researchers, and a retreat into methodological obscurantism on the part of researchers, in an attempt to explain apparently inconsistent findings which are more likely due to unnoticed contextual variables. (p. 1)

Gibbs goes on to illustrate this claim with a host of areas in higher-education research where there are exceptions to broad generalisations due to contextual differences (see also Cousin, 2013).

Our argument is that we should recognise the context-dependent nature of SaP work, see it as a strength, and be cautious of over-generalising. The key feature of context-directed research is that it is motivated by the specific professional context in which it occurs. As Taber (2013) notes "the research is successful if context-bound knowledge is developed which can better inform future action in that context (regardless of whether or not findings are seen to be generalisable to other contexts elsewhere)" (p. 127). McKinney (2015) makes a similar point about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): "By definition, SoTL work is local, context-specific, action research" (p. 1).

In this editorial we highlight four inter-related areas that underpin the context-dependent nature of SaP work:

- The meaning of partnership;
- The emotions, motivations, attitudes, behaviour, and values of participants;
- The aim, scale, and timeframe of the project or initiative; and
- The conceptual framework adopted.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but space does not allow us to include other areas (such as the cultural, social, economic, and political context that may help to explain some institutional and international differences in practice and policies).

THE MEANING OF PARTNERSHIP

One of the most cited definitions of staff- or faculty-student partnership is "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). As Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) also note, SaP should be viewed as a process: "It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself" (p. 7). The term "students as partners" highlights the shifting role of students and their partners in such work. As Matthews (2017) points out "Students as partners offer a view of student engagement that is a joint endeavour to shape and influence university teaching and learning. The language of students as partners deliberately emphasises the relational and social elements of mutual learning" (p. 1).

Like SoTL, SaP is a "big tent" (Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p. 30). Healey et al. (2014; 2016) identify two fairly distinct literatures that adopt a SaP approach, though the term "partnership" is not always used explicitly. First, there is the use of SaP in learning, teaching, and research; secondly, there is the employment of SaP in quality enhancement initiatives where students act as change agents. Whereas examples of the first, such as peer learning and assessment and undergraduate research, are reasonably common and can involve many students; examples of the second, such as students undertaking SoTL projects with staff and engaging in curriculum design projects, are relatively new and usually involve only a few

students. Engaging students in quality enhancement initiatives as partners means going beyond collecting students' views and feedback. It may involve, for example, students co-researching the initiative, co-designing the curriculum, or acting as consultants to staff implementing innovative forms of teaching. Some of the generalisations made about SaP, such as the difficulties of scaling it up (Bovill, 2017; Bryson, Furlonger, & Rinaldo-Langridge, 2016), apply more to this second version of SaP than to the first, particularly where the number of partners is small, and the relationships are intensive. In other words, statements about SaP depend on the nature of the SaP initiative you are talking about.

Who is involved as partners is a further critical question. Students may partner with a range of others as partnerships can involve "students with students, students with staff, students with senior university administrators, and students with alumni or members of industry" (Matthews, 2017, p. 1), and we note that staff includes not only academics but also librarians and learning support staff. Moreover, as we have already argued, some forms of SaP may necessarily involve a selection of students. A similar point is made by Bovill (2017) who suggests that "it may be difficult, impossible, or even undesirable in some contexts to involve all students . . . [because] meaningful partnership requires a high level of equality and contribution from partners" (p. 1-2). Who is involved among staff or other partner groups will also have an effect on how the group operates. This leads to the second area underpinning the context-dependent nature of SaP practices and policies.

THE EMOTIONS, MOTIVATIONS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOUR, AND VALUES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Cook-Sather (personal communication, January 5, 2018) argues that "to do SaP work one must be willing to be uncertain, open, receptive, responsive as well as tentative, humble, courageous, and daring through the give-and-take of developing and sustaining partnership work". In other words, we need to acknowledge the emotional as well as the intellectual and practical work involved in partnership and the affect that different emotions have on partners and partnerships. Research into emotions in the workplace has demonstrated that positive affects create supportive working practices and the maintenance of social bonds (Fredrickson, 2001; Niven, Totterdall, Holman, & Headley, 2012), whereas negative expressions, such as anger, can provoke reciprocal negative feelings (Williams, 2015).

It is reasonable to assume that similar patterns will emerge within Students as Partners work—that is to say, it depends on the emotions that people bring to and develop within a partnership. Emotions affect both the process of partnership itself and the potential and actual outcomes. Yet, as Felten (2017) argued in the last issue of the *International Journal for Students as Partners*, the scholarly literature on partnerships virtually ignores emotion. He goes on to make two 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. (p. 3)

Emotions are related to the motivations, attitudes, and behaviours of the partners. Motivations and attitudes are critical as people often engage in partnership despite

institutional policies. Motivations and attitudes underlie the subsequent behaviours of people. The attitudes and behaviours referred to in the literature are:

> mainly focused on interpersonal relationships; for example, listening to one another (Werder & Skogsberg, 2013; Powers, 2012); recognition of the different contribution partners make (Williamson, 2013); a willingness to meet others "where they are" (Powers, 2012); communicating openly and honestly (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; QAA, 2012); and, sharing a commitment to continued learning and celebrating and being proud of successes (Powers, 2012; Cox, 2004). (Healey et al., 2014, p. 29)

Many of the attitudes and behaviours of the partners illustrated in this quote can be seen as promoting a shared emotional connection and affecting the motivation of the participants to engage in partnership. In other words, these might be considered to be partnership *values*. Cook-Sather et al. (2014) identify the values of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility as part of effective SaP, and the Higher Education Academy (2015) extends this list further to include seven more values: trust, courage, plurality, authenticity, honesty, inclusivity, and empowerment. As emotions, motivations, attitudes, behaviours, and values of participants vary and change during partnerships, they make an important contribution to the context-dependent nature of SaP and emphasise the importance of what individuals bring to the partnership.

THE AIM, SCALE, AND TIMEFRAME OF THE PROJECT OR INITIATIVE

The *aim* of the project or initiative affects who is involved in the partnership and what they bring to it in terms of emotions, motivations, attitudes, behaviour, and values. The aim is the fundamental factor underlying the vision for any SaP work, and when in doubt about how to develop a practice or policy, the best advice is "return to the aim." The aim is, of course, also influenced by the national and institutional contexts, as the cultures embedded in these influence what is possible. The aim may relate to an outcome (e.g., enhanced student engagement) and/or an output (e.g., a new co-designed module) developed through the process of working in partnership.

The next two contextual factors help to clarify the aim. The first is the *scale* of the project. For example, will it operate between or within nations, within or across institutions, or at faculty or department level? Or is the aim better suited to a specific programme, course/module, or teaching session? The disciplinary context is also an important factor that operates across these scales (Healey & Jenkins, 2003). It may be easier to operate at the module or unit level than that of the programme, "at least until an institutional ethos develops that values student-staff partnership" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016, p. 206).

It is equally important to clarify the *timeframe* for the partnership. The time allowed for the initiative and the amount of time participants are expected to contribute to the project are important contextual factors. These depend, in part, on whether or not there is funding to support the project. For example, funding might be used to buy out some of the staff time from other activities and pay students for their work on the project. If no funding is available, it might be possible for the project to be part of a programme of learning in which students receive academic credit for their partnership work and staff may receive recognition in terms of a contribution to their workload. As Healey et al. (2014) suggest,

"Embedding the recognition and reward of staff and students engaging in partnerships, is one way in which institutions and students' unions can embody an ethos and culture of partnership in practice" (p. 33).

The aim, scale, and timeframe are important features of the context-dependent nature of SaP work in practice and as research. As they are clarified, it becomes easier to envisage which conceptual framework might be the most appropriate.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ADOPTED

Conceptual frameworks help to elucidate the nature of partnership both in theory and in practice (Cook-Sather, 2017). Context informs the conceptual frameworks we select, whilst simultaneously providing a lens through which to view context and identify what is possible. Matthews et al. (2018) discuss different conceptual frameworks in SaP, drawing in part on the argument that theories are models that enrich understanding, structure inquiry, and support future planning (Roxå, Olsson, & Mårtensson, 2007). Yet the value of different SaP conceptual frameworks may be different for different partners and partnerships, particularly in relation to the experience level of the participants involved. As Gibbs (2010) acknowledges, "if a theoretical model, or an empirical prediction based on it, is not born out, it may simply be that it is not salient in that context—but it might still be very useful in other contexts" (p. 1). The notion of "it depends" relates here both to *which* conceptual framework is adopted and to *how* it is used.

Newly formed partnerships may utilise frameworks to support understanding of what partnership means in their context and of what members aspire to achieve in their partnership. Alongside this, conceptual frameworks aid partners in planning how they want their own partnership to look and feel. For example, a framework emphasising social justice may be more likely to lead to the inclusion of marginalised voices than one simply emphasising enhancing student learning. Core to SaP is recognising that all parties have something to bring to the table. Whilst staff bring disciplinary, administrative, pedagogic, and/or research expertise and experience (depending upon the staff involved), students, among other things, bring their expertise at being students. Indeed, as Cook-Sather et al. (2014) suggest:

> most students are neither disciplinary nor pedagogical experts. Rather, their experience and expertise typically is in being a student—something that many faculty [staff] have not been for many years. They understand where they and their peers are coming from and, often, where they think they are going. (p. 15)

Not only do students bring this form of expertise, they also bring knowledge based on who they are, depending on the diversity of their identities—knowledge that is only recently being recognized as essential to understanding effective and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning (de Bie, Marquis, Cook-Sather, & Luqueño, 2018). This way of looking at the different roles of staff and students in partnership projects, whilst fundamental to the process, is likely to be taken as a given in contexts where such practices are more common.

Established partnerships may use conceptual frameworks to reflect on the strengths and limitations of their current and recent partnerships. As Deming (1993, as quoted in Trowler & Cooper, 2003) argues, "Without [good, explicit] theory, experience has no

meaning. . . one has no questions to ask. Hence, without theory, there is no learning" (p.223). Matthews et al. (2018) suggest that the set of related theoretical concepts of liminality (Felten, 2016), threshold concepts (Marquis et al., 2016), and translation (Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016), for example, provide useful tools for considering SaP and how people might be supported to understand the process of partnership. People who have experienced partnerships are arguably in a better position to reflect on partnership through these conceptual frameworks than those who are new to this approach.

Overall, theory has value in different ways at different times in the partnership process. Which conceptual frameworks are useful and how relates to the experience of the individuals and institutions of SaP practices and policies; as usual, "it depends."

CONCLUSION

Students as Partners is an ethos. It provides a lens through which to reconsider the nature of higher education. As new approaches and ideas emerge, we will gradually discover to what extent change in higher education may be accomplished through the adoption of this ethos; the "big tent" has plenty of space for yet unknown SaP processes. National political and policy agendas, of course, provide opportunities and constraints on the enactment of SaP. There is a danger, however, that some managers and policy makers may attempt to highjack the term partnership to mean increased choice for students in the higher education marketplace, rather than recognise that SaP work is a counter-reaction to the neo-liberal, competition-driven, student as customer policies promoted by many governments (Dwyer & Russell, 2018; Healey, Healey & Cliffe, 2018).

Adopting a SaP approach can be transformative, as it requires an openness to working in new ways. SaP "is a radical cultural shift from *staff making decisions to benefit students* toward a mindset where *students and staff are working together* – as colleagues, as partners, as trusted collaborators – with shared goals" (Matthews, Cook-Sather & Healey, 2018, p. 24). SaP involves a radical rethink of the power relationships between staff and students, which encourages them to co-create knowledge, co-design the curriculum, and to learn together. However, the reality of partnership is that it is messy, constrained by context, and all parties should be prepared to some degree to "occupy" different spaces if it is to be successful. There is a natural feeling of uncertainty and fear. Recognising this, developing resilience, and demonstrating compassion for one another are useful ways of beginning to cope with this tension (Gibbs, 2017; University of Hertfordshire, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the uncertainty and messiness of engaging in partnership, it can be an amazingly affirmative and stimulating experience for all parties (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014). With minds open to making the most of the opportunities provided by the context in which one finds oneself, Ntem (personal communication, 26 January 2018), in commenting on an earlier draft of this editorial, suggested that "the ideology behind 'it depends,' also leaves room for 'it will be,' or even 'it can be.'"

We have argued in this editorial that SaP practices and policies are worked out within a context, which includes the meaning of partnership; the emotions, motivations, attitudes, behaviour, and values of the participants; the aim, scale, and timeframe of the project or initiative; and the conceptual framework adopted. Attempting to divorce SaP research and decision-making from context is problematic. Recognising the importance of the context-dependent nature of SaP should enhance our understanding of partnership practices and policies. Hence, we need to ensure that in our presentations and publications

we report the context of our studies and be wary of over-generalising. Attention to context provides a more nuanced approach than one in which context is ignored. So, as far as we are concerned, we will continue to answer many questions about SaP with "It depends."

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OPINION PIECE

Toward the Formation of Genuine Partnership Spaces

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Students as Partners (SaP) represents an entangled nexus of relationships, roles, individuals, groups, expectations and interactions that challenges us with its nuance and complexity. In my own experiences working as a student partner, I have come to see SaP as a practice encompassing numerous collaborative contexts that can provide a relational and transformative pedagogic space. These transformative spaces can allow participants to act outside the role-boundaries that typically confine their teaching and learning activities, and *potentially* create a path to cultural change within universities. However, I am sceptical of the extent to which current SaP policies and practices in higher education align with the aspirational and transformational ideals of SaP.

In this opinion piece I argue for genuine partnerships spaces by outlining two models as pathways for SaP—one that maintains the current hierarchical structure of higher education and misuses the term "Students as Partners," and another that changes the shape of universities through genuine partnership. My argument arises from my identity as an undergraduate student studying anthropology, my experience as a student partner over the past two years, and a synthesis of my thinking following research projects exploring conceptions of SaP from students and staff in partnership and institutional leaders responsible for implementing the partnership.

Importantly, this opinion piece is as a necessary contribution of the student voice to a discourse community seeking to create space for more student-authored works in the scholarly literature typically reserved for the academic voice (Cliffe et al., 2017).

TOWARD GENUINE PARTNERSHIP SPACES

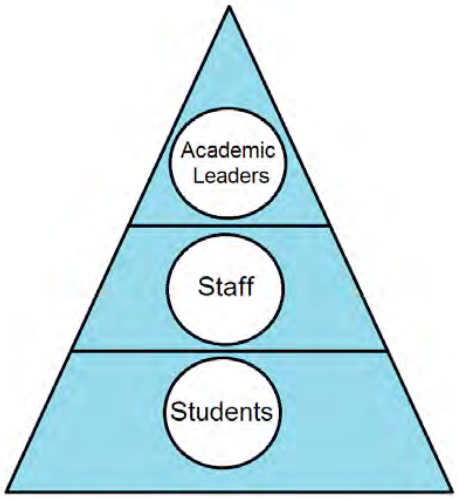
Questions about SaP being "genuine" and "authentic" often arise in conversations with peers about partnerships. In the last issue of this journal Matthews (2017) proposed five principles for genuine SaP practices. I want to expand on her work by exploring the idea of genuine SaP not as a practice, but as a space. I see genuine partnership space as the emergent property of an ongoing process of communication and cooperation between individuals.

Neoliberal pathway diminishes relational forms of partnership

The current organisational paradigm of higher education institutions is characterised by a structural hierarchy, that is organised vertically (see Figure 1), and is broadly motivated by economic imperatives while promoting individualistic competition at each level of the

university. My analysis of interviews with formal institutional leaders, for example, found that their primary frame of reference for conceptualising higher education was economic rationality (Matthews, Dwyer, Russell, & Enright, in press). Within this context 'Students as Partners' was often discussed as a product or strategy to ensure the university remained competitive and positioned students as self-interested consumers with little concern for their role within society. These views, priorities, and markers of success for partnership are heavily influenced by the rhetoric and logics of what has been called the neoliberal approach to higher education (Barnett, 2010). The occurrence of these views among senior leaders aligns with recent scholarship on neoliberal imperatives in universities (Ball, 2003, 2012; Shore, 2008).

Figure 1: The current organisational paradigm of higher education institutions



If we consider the implications of enacting partnership within the current paradigm, then partnership interactions are limited and typically deal only with role-specific contexts (e.g., the student experience and content delivery). The knowledge developed through these projects is valuable to the university and its senior administrators, and the function of SaP practices is the advancement and development of the university as a business.

For staff, the neoliberal process of SaP is used as a performance assessment tool for administrative leaders to critique and compare teaching staff. For students, neoliberal SaP typically prioritises high achieving students as ideal participants. Moreover, where SaP participation is unpaid, or the pay-to-work ratio is unbalanced, it prioritizes students who are financially stable and are able to shoulder the extra workload. This in turn exacerbates the disparities between certain types of individuals and both implicitly and explicitly encourages peer competition among staff and students.

By reinforcing role-based identities among participants and by limiting the scope of participation, the neoliberal pathway encourages linear and non-transformative teaching and learning. By incentivising competition within groups at the lower levels of the institutions' social structure, the neoliberal approach reinforces the hierarchy and power disparities inherent in that structure. The space of higher education does not change, although the language of Students as Partners might be evoked regularly.

Ultimately, this approach to SaP conflicts with the ideals and aspirations necessary for the creation of genuine partnership spaces, and compels us to seek an alternative approach to partnership.

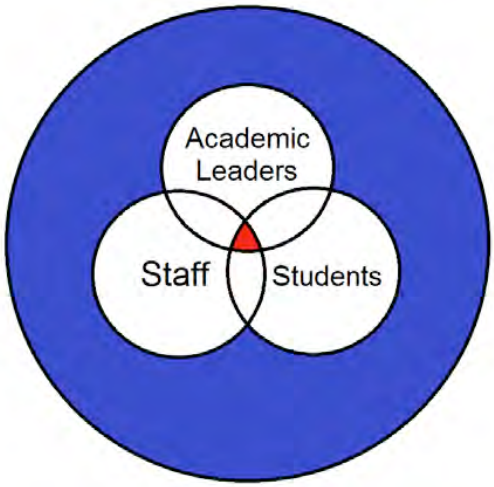
Genuine partnership spaces emerge through dialogue

The second approach to partnership gives primacy to open communication and the relational aspects of pedagogy. This model envisions partnership as a distinct pedagogic space that emerges between, and takes shape through the interactions of, university leaders, staff, and students.

As participants become involved in the process of partnership they are encouraged and often required to act outside of the boundaries that typically define their position in the university hierarchy. As a result, those boundaries become less salient as interactions between partners are focused on collaboration, dialogue, and establishing shared goals. This was a strong theme arising in some of my recent research on participation in SaP (Matthews, Dwyer, Hines, & Turner, 2018) and resonates with my own partnership experiences. Establishing open dialogue is an important stage in the process as it is where the abstract concept of partnership becomes concrete by suspending traditional notions of teacher and student identities and interactions (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016; Matthews, 2017), thereby affecting change in the participants' understandings of themselves as co-producers of knowledge.

Through processes of dialogue and negotiation a genuine partnership space emerges (see Figure 2), which resonates with ideas of SaP as a liminal space (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017). This space forms over time according to the shared goals and commitment to the ethos established and maintained by participants through collaboration and dialogue (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2016; Matthews, 2017). Participation in the partnership space can be contentious, rewarding, nerve wracking, and confidence building at different points in the relationship as partners learn, inquire, and create together according to the means and ends most appropriate to them.

Figure 2: Partnership space emerges between individuals as part of a committed effort to their project and each other



As a long-term model for enacting SaP, the genuine partnership approach offers the potential for both personal and institutional transformation by incentivising intellectual autonomy and fostering trust through dialogue. When participants move out of their partnership space, the boundaries between hierarchical roles become less salient. Over time and with continuous engagement in this form of practice, individuals at all levels of the university will experience a shift in how they relate to other members of their university and their own potential for learning, growth, and development.

Thus, the pathway toward genuine partnership spaces shifts the shape of the university, so where we start is not where we end, as visualised through the evolution from Figure 1 to Figure 2.

CONCLUSION

While theories and models for SaP are emerging in the literature, I see this opinion piece as contributing a student view on what SaP should become and a critique of neoliberal forces influencing the relationships that are fundamental to genuine partnership. I have argued that not all SaP is genuine partnership and that our collective efforts within the SaP community should be focused on a pathway toward authentic formations of partnership spaces.

I offer these opinions to provoke a productive discourse by contributing to the ongoing partnership conversation as a student member of the SaP community. Moreover, as a student I'm occupying spaces created by this journal with the hope of seeing more student-led articles that contribute to the theorizing and critiquing of pedagogic spaces and practices in the scholarly SaP literature.

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NOTE ON CONTRIBUTOR

Alexander Dwyer *is currently an undergraduate student studying anthropology at the University of Queensland in Australia and holds a degree in psychology. He has been a student partner and researcher in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and with the Institute of Teaching and Learning Innovation. He also works as a social researcher for the Queensland government in the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP).*

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ARTICLE

Learning "Betwixt and Between": Opportunities and Challenges for Student-Driven Partnership

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses students' experiences of a partnership learning community in which students take on an unusual amount of power over decision-making in the design and implementation of interdisciplinary education. Student-driven contexts are largely absent in literature on partnership in higher education, which has thus far been based on empirical study of institutional contexts in which faculty have more power than students. This reveals a gap in knowledge about arrangements in which students have more control over decision-making than faculty. Drawing from in-depth interviews with student course coordinators, and using the concepts of roles and liminality, we analyse how course coordinators perceive their challenging and often ambiguous roles in which they renegotiate their relationships to staff, students, and the university itself. We then identify some challenges and opportunities for partnership within this context.

KEYWORDS

partnership, roles, student-driven, liminality, education for sustainable development

Partnerships that position students-as-partners, co-creators, producers, and change agents in higher education (HE) have been shown to challenge university norms and hierarchies (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Iversen, Pedersen, Krogh, & Jensen, 2015), raise awareness about and even reshape student and staff roles and identities in a variety of contexts (Healey, 2017), and invite reflection on the value of HE and the inadequacy of treating it as a consumer product (Dunne & Zandstra, 2011; Gärdebo & Wiggberg, 2012; Sveriges förenade studentkårer, 2013; Bryson, 2014; National Union of Students, 2015). Partnership reshapes student and staff roles and leads to new types of relationships and processes that fundamentally change teaching and learning environments (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Bovill, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard & Moore-Cherry, 2016).

Healey et al. (2014) argue that in order to realise the transformative potential of partnership in HE, better understandings of how partnership works in theory and practice

are needed. They define partnership as:

> a *process of student engagement*, understood as staff and students learning and working together to foster engaged student learning and engaging learning and teaching enhancement. In this sense partnership is a relationship in which all participants are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. (p. 7)

Partnership is further characterised by the presence of certain values: authenticity, inclusivity, trust, empowerment, reciprocity, challenge, community, and responsibility (Healey et al., 2014). Students actively participate in activities that are usually only accessible to staff members, like curriculum design or the scholarship of teaching and learning and, therefore, partnership arrangements offer benefits that are co-created and not accessible to students or staff alone.

Studies of partnership have commonly been carried out in institutional contexts in which faculty have more power over decision-making and invite students to become partners (see Healey et al., 2014). In contrast, in this study we analyse what happens in a case when students have more power over decision-making in a student-driven educational context. Here students take on the responsibility of planning and coordinating university courses and inviting faculty to support them, an arrangement about which little is known from a HE partnership perspective.

In the context of ongoing partnership research, and using concepts of *roles* and *liminality,* our aim is to analyse and explain some consequences of this particular student-driven educational context for student-faculty partnership in theory and practice. Liminality, which we clarify further below, refers to a state of being which is "in between." Our research question is ***What are the possibilities and challenges for student-faculty partnership in a student-driven educational context?***

A CENTRE FOR STUDENT-DRIVEN EDUCATION

The Centre for Environment and Development Studies (CEMUS) is a joint centre at Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. It breaks with institutional and educational norms of HE in its inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches to sustainable development and its student-driven educational model. CEMUS originated in 1992 when two students at Uppsala University became dissatisfied with the lack of educational focus on large-scale environment and development problems facing humanity. They developed a detailed plan for a seminar series course called "Man and Nature" (*Människan och Naturen*) that would draw together experts from across Sweden. With the help of a few supportive professors, they made repeated efforts to get the university to organise and offer the course. It was eventually approved, but there was a twist: because they had already planned the course in such detail, and because no department was interested in running it, the students themselves would be responsible for it. With a small budget directly from the vice chancellor's office, no faculty or departmental ownership of their project, and a loaned desk in the corner of Professor Hans Rosling's office, they began calling lecturers.

Almost 500 students applied to the first course, of which only 200 could be accepted due to room restrictions. From this beginning, CEMUS has developed and expanded, eventually becoming a university centre in 1997 that today offers 22 courses and manages

ongoing activities in outreach and research. The organisation has retained the initial student-driven model, employing students to design, plan, and coordinate interdisciplinary courses for-credit at the undergraduate and graduate level that explore social, economic, and ecological sustainability questions and challenges. Courses continue to integrate researchers, lecturers, experts, and practitioners in a variety of disciplines and fields from across Sweden and abroad.

Two course coordinators (CCs) are hired to work on each course (i.e., a module or subject in some countries) on a nine-month project basis, with the possibility of continuing their position for up to three years. Coordinator positions are advertised publicly and are open to all students attending the two universities at which CEMUS is based. Most students hired as CCs have previously studied at CEMUS.

A core team of five permanent staff, all formerly CCs, provide organisational support, continuity, and representation for CEMUS. The CC pair is also supported in the course planning phase by a course-specific work group comprised of three to eight people and can include teachers, researchers, students who completed the course, external experts from the field, two core team members, and the CC pair. The work group provides critical feedback on assessment, assigned literature, pedagogical methods, and other course development topics.

Coordinators, with the already mentioned support people and routines, are responsible for planning and implementing seminars and active workshops and preparing assignments and examination tasks. They invite a series of guest lecturers, communicate with them about the course, and facilitate when lecturers are present. Literature for courses is compiled by coordinators, guest lecturers, and the work group and is then officially approved by the work group. Official course goals are set through formal university procedures; however, each iteration of a course is shaped significantly by those collaborating in its running—the attending students, the CC pair, the work group, and guest lecturers. Throughout course implementation, coordinators function as connectors, helping students tie together often diverse course material over the course duration and being a constant presence. It is also important to note that though the CCs are responsible for running courses, the pedagogical approach at CEMUS aims to put students enrolled in the courses in situations where they participate in and co-create learning, often allowing them to “take over” the classroom (Stoddard, Rieser, Andersson, & Friman, 2012). Deeper study of CEMUS’s pedagogical philosophy and student-centred pedagogical methods cannot be covered in this paper, but could be a suitable empirical context for future research on partnership and sustainability in HE.

In pursuit of “contributing to a more sustainable and equitable world” (Hald, 2011, p. 12), CEMUS aims to embody the idea that “students are not simply subordinate consumers of knowledge, but rather intellectual equals and producers of knowledge” (Stoddard et al., 2012). The growth and persistence of this model over 25 years invites reflection on assumptions about the organisation of education, responsibilities and capacities of learners and teachers in HE, and the how and what of student-faculty partnership.

ROLES, UNCERTAINTY, AND STUDENT CONTROL IN PARTNERSHIP

Healey et al. (2014) provide an extensive collection of cases of partnership predominantly from the UK and US. Where partnership has gone beyond discrete projects, partnership learning communities (PLCs), in which partnership becomes embedded in the culture and ethos of an institution, may be formed. These communities:

> invite critical reflection on existing relationships, identities, processes and structures and can potentially lead to the transformation of learning experiences. Given that partnership is both a working and learning relationship, these new communities should acknowledge the dual role of staff and students as both scholars and colleagues engaged in a process of learning and inquiry. (Healey et al., 2014, p. 8)

In this way , PLCs have an established collaborative culture where working in partnership is agreed upon as a foundation for learning, teaching, and even scholarship.

Much of what we see in partnership literature involves faculty inviting students into collaborative relationships, rather than students inviting faculty members. Faculty are the gatekeepers of curricula creation and exercise a high degree of control over providing students opportunities to work with learning and teaching processes (Bovill, 2014; Bovill et al., 2016). Fielding (1999), on the other hand, offers a more contentious vision of partnership, in which collegiality is radically inclusive and role boundaries are less securely drawn. However, we see a gap in knowledge about situations in which students are the instigators and/or leaders of a partnership relationship or learning community.

Student-faculty partnership is rooted in certain principles that are distinct from traditional practices in HE. These include the belief that (a) students have perspectives that can improve learning and teaching; (b) faculty can bring student insights into play by collaboratively designing learning and teaching; and (c) working in partnership can alter the way we see roles within HE, making those involved better learners and teachers (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

Drawing on examples from the UK, Bovill (2014) outlines cases in which staff, who often feel unprepared for these types of partnerships, view their roles in the co-creation of curricula with students as risky. Bovill (2014) also notes that while working towards partnership does not erase the importance of the expertise of the staff members, it does change the role of staff towards becoming a "facilitator of learning" (p. 22). These types of roles that staff and students adopt in partnership relationships are often accompanied by uncertainties and shifts in power that lead to challenges with co-creating learning and teaching environments (Bovill et al., 2016; Barrineau, Schnaas, Engström, & Härlin, 2016). Inspired by Sherry Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation,[1] Bovill and Bulley (2011) illustrate a spectrum of student participation in curriculum design, which is presented in Figure 1. Bovill and Bulley's ladder of student participation in curriculum design is not intended to indicate any ideal level of participation, but as a tool to discuss relationships of power and decision-making alongside partnership processes. For example, it can prompt reflection on what kind of institutional support partnerships where students are in control require or what the pedagogical benefits would be if students were part of negotiating curricula. We address these points further in our discussion below.

[1] Arnstein's (1969) ladder illustrates eight "rungs" that correspond to the amount of citizen power and participation in decision-making processes.

Figure 1: Ladder of student participation in curriculum design

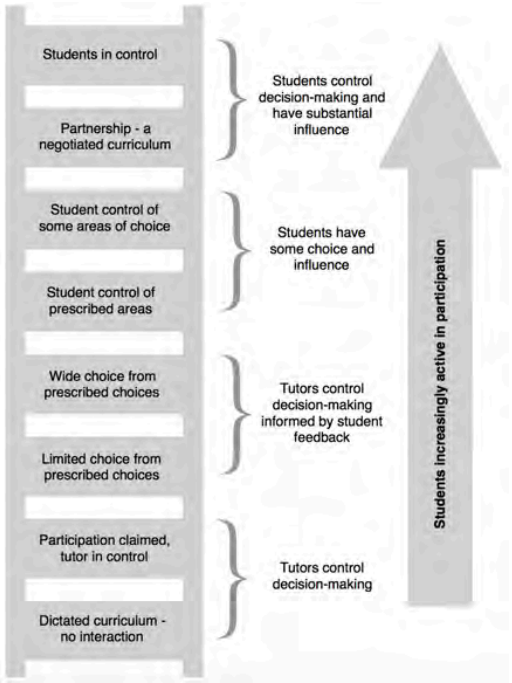

Figure 1: Source: Bovill & Bulley, 2011, p. 181)

Peer-learning is another teaching and learning situation in which partnership can happen, and arguably falls more towards the "students-in-control" end of the ladder. Peer-learning "involves people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing" (Topping, 2005, p. 631). Students take on roles such as facilitator, tutor, teacher, and so forth, lead activities for their peers, and support each other in their learning (see, for example, Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Topping, 2005). In these situations, "students often have significant scope for negotiating the content and nature of the activity, and the students take on elements of the role of teachers or assessors of learning" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 13).

LIMINALITY

Changing or altering roles in partnership can be accompanied by discomfort and seen as risky because the "safe" and predictable path of education is withdrawn (Bovill et al., 2016; Felder & Brent, 1996). Studies of partnership have shown that feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity around roles and responsibilities have been a key part of the practice of partnership itself. The anthropological concept of *liminality* helps in explaining how such new arrangements simultaneously offer uncertainty and possibility. Liminality refers to a state of being that is "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967), a state of being outside of and between the fixed categories of a socially agreed upon structure or set of categories, which is therefore an ambiguous and undefined state. A person in a liminal state experiences both the death of structural identity and a resulting birth of possibility, entering a realm that can lead to new combinations of ideas and relations (Turner, 1967).

For example, Cook-Sather and Alter (2011) studied what happened when students were placed in a new role somewhere between student and teacher, a role not previously found at their institutions. Students experienced a sustained, "suspended state of liminality"

(Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011, p. 39) as they renegotiated their relationships with teachers, other students, and within learning in HE. This offered "a quality of experience with unique potential to challenge deep-seated assumptions about how a community or society works" (Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011, p. 37). In the context of student-faculty partnership in HE, this may include, for example, challenging assumptions about power dynamics, roles of students and teachers, and responsibilities for learning.

Whereas Turner (1967) studied cases of liminality in rituals in which people transition from one fixed social category to another (for example, from child to adult), in this article we emphasise the experience of occupying a liminal position rather than the experience of liminality as a part of a transition. In this case, we look at the experience of being a course coordinator as occupying a liminal position.

SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sustainable development challenges universities to rethink their approaches to research, education, outreach, and campus operations (Barth, 2014; Cortese, 2003; Lozano, 2006; Sterling, 2001;). Education for sustainable development (ESD) makes demands of HE that require changes in culture, teaching methods, curricula (Wals & Corcoran, 2006; Wals, 2012), and also require finding ways of teaching students key competencies for sustainability (Wiek, Withycome, & Redman, 2011). Research has shown a weak culture of collaboration between students and faculty, both within and across disciplines, to be a key stumbling block for efforts at embedding sustainability at universities (Krizek, Newport, White, & Townsend 2012). Authors have highlighted the importance of new norm creation at the local level (Wickenberg, 2006) and engaging participants from across disciplines in neutral spaces not owned by a university department (Holmberg, Lundqvist, Svanström, & Arehag 2012). Bottom-up approaches have been shown to be effective in developing and enhancing sustainable development education at universities. Distributing leadership to smaller communities of practice (see Wenger, 1999) within and across universities has effectively generated educational programs for sustainability and climate-related issues (Davison et al., 2013). Furthermore, programs and courses in ESD that are student-driven can allow lead students to develop "key competencies beyond the regular curricula" and create conditions for innovation and teaching and learning (Singer-Brodowski & Bever, 2016). Analysing the benefits and challenges of student-faculty partnership and PLCs in HE may thus be particularly relevant for student-driven, bottom-up, sustainability-focused educational contexts.

PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS

We conducted ten semi-structured interviews with employees at CEMUS in December 2015 (see Appendix 1). Each employee that we interviewed has worked as a CC from 9 months to 3 years with the exception of one long-term employee who has worked at CEMUS for 8 years, originally starting as a CC. Interviewees voluntarily joined the research based on interest by responding to an inquiry via email. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the researchers to focus each interview on particular areas but also to probe deeper into certain themes as they arose.

Each interview lasted 60-80 minutes and was conducted in English. Interviewees were asked predetermined questions covering four key areas: (a) How do interviewees define their role; are they students, teachers, something else?; (b) What do they see as their main tasks and responsibilities?; (c) Do they see themselves as acting in partnership or

collaborating with other actors, and if so, who?; and (d) Do they see their or CEMUS's work as having an effect on the wider university context and if so, how? We did not provide interviewees with a definition for or verbal elaboration of partnership. This was done to avoid setting boundaries for interviewee's possible interpretations.

Interviews were fully transcribed and then coded using TAMS coding software. To sort data, an exploratory coding method was used to link provisional codes to the research questions. Our codes were "roles," "responsibilities," "collaboration," and "wider university." We then further used in-vivo coding to identify common native terms and expressions used across interviews. We continued with thematic analysis following Patton (2002) and identified main themes: ambiguity over roles, working in partnerhip (partnership), liminality, and inviting faculty.

This study gathers data of the experiences of one particular group of people, based on their personal experiences and interpretations, while also relating to the organisational context. Other important voices could be those of guest lecturers, students, or administrators. This is therefore a limited study of a complex and unusual learning context. We reason that as the CC is an unusual role, and central to the educational model under study, a more focused examination of that role is a productive place to start. CEMUS is a constantly evolving community with a practice regularly passed on through generations of CCs, lecturers, students, and others involved in the community. The experiences of these CCs are particular and therefore not necessarily generalisable to CEMUS's 25-year development. Interviewees had widely varied employment lengths and activities, and so interview data reflects a comprehensive picture of lived experience at CEMUS. A further limitation is that interviews were conducted several months after the collaborative course planning phase. This length of time may have affected interviewee's perceptions of their collaborations and relationships with different actors.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A STUDENT COURSE COORDINATOR

Here we present results from the interviews. We raise three main areas for analysis: (a) using multiple terms for ambiguous roles, (b) the course coordinators' experiences of being uncertain of one's own legitimacy while at the same time being empowered, and (c) the course coordinators' perceptions of their weak relationships with faculty, despite relying on them and working with them often. Later we analyse these themes in relation to our research question and identify some opportunities and challenges for partnership that accompany a student-driven educational model.

Ambiguity over roles: Not teachers, not experts, not easy

Course Coordinators co-produce learning and teaching, while at the same time inhabiting an ambiguous role that lies outside institutional norms. All interviewees said they had difficulty describing their role(s)—what they actually do—to the students taking their course, to university faculty, and to others. Interviewees used a variety of descriptive terms:

- student
- connector
- responsible participant
- pedagogue
- not-a-teacher
- co-student
- facilitator
- educator
- leader
- learner
- meta-person
- master of puppets

Coordinators found the role ambiguous. For example, one participant stated that students “don't necessarily see me in the same way that they see other teachers. So, it's floating around, it's undefined" (Interview 4). Many said that in discussion with others, any descriptive term or label like “CC” was inadequate and needed to be followed by a longer description of activities that the role actually required. Multiple CCs said they therefore relied on the students taking the course to understand the role of the CC implicitly through the way the coordinator ran the course.

A majority of CCs saw themselves as facilitators of some kind, something “between teacher and student,” or a “co-student,” but all saw themselves as students and as participants in the class in a way that teachers were not:

> I saw my role as sort of, partly a facilitator, partly somebody providing some sort of framework for the students to be able to work through the course. So, being a constant—as we had all these guest lectures—being somebody that was there the whole time. And I think it was sort of being between student and teacher. (Interview 5)

This ambiguity led to feelings of uncertainty about how others perceive them and what is expected of them:

> I don't think there is a universal understanding of who I am in the room and what I am supposed to do from, like, all the different students. Some are like “they're tutors” and some are “they're teachers,” and some “they're like coordinators” and so I think that that's what forces you into that position. . . . It's like well, what am I going to do now? (Interview 3)

At the same time, this ambiguity of the CC role offered the freedom to be experimental and risk failure, while being "willing to try things, which don’t always work" (Interview 4), which contrasted with “teachers,” who CCs believed were less likely to experiment in this way.

Most CCs actively resisted being called teachers in the classroom by students or guest lecturers, saying that it was important they define themselves as not experts in the subject matter of the course or in teaching; nor were they authority figures: “as soon as they say I am a teacher or anything like that I say ‘no, I am a facilitator.’ I try to break that down and say ‘no, I am a normal person’” (Interview 6). Almost all coordinators interviewed stressed the idea that “we are not the ones who have the right answers” (Interview 10). Some commented that avoiding the teacher/expert role took the pressure to “know everything” (Interview 4) off their shoulders: “if you say you are not the teacher, it’s ok to say ‘I don’t know’” (Interview 10). This gave CCs more credibility and confidence in being not teachers or experts, and thus placing more responsibility for learning on the students themselves, rather than on the “experts in charge.” This still left them in constant doubt over what their role was, however. One interviewee answered the following when asked how he described his role to students:

> I think it is very difficult. Because it doesn't exist, maybe. . . . It is hard to communicate and make the students grasp what we are, actually. That's the reason it is defined implicitly. Because it is not a clearly defined role. Because we have too much responsibility [to be] a student, and too little [to be] a teacher or professor. Or

> too little official knowledge to be a professor, or too little formal education to actually do what we are doing. And I think through that, it is unclear what we are actually. . . . This is an issue. At the same time this is the beauty. (Interview 4)

Coordinators further expressed two seemingly conflicting views about legitimacy. Coordinators often felt underqualified or that they were doing something they should not be doing. Newer coordinators in particular also often felt ill-equipped to meet these high expectations: "I think there's this expectation that we're gonna maintain a certain environment for them but that is not really very easy without tools that I'm not sure I have" (Interview 5).

At the same time, coordinators felt empowered, confident they were doing something meaningful, and that they had freedom to do education differently and to improve on the education they themselves had experienced. One participant elaborated on the CC's responsibilities in the classroom setting:

> Being a good pedagogue. Trying to offer a good education that is not just doing the same thing people have already been doing in their studies. Trying to break away from some structures that we know are dominating conventional academia. Using alternative tools and trying to provide students more freedom and space for manoeuvring themselves. (Interview 7)

CCs aimed to move beyond "this type of education where someone just tells you what to do and you do it" (Interview 8) and placed students more at the centre of education.

Partnership

Coordinators did not necessarily see themselves as working closely with faculty members. From the perspectives of CCs, the community at CEMUS consisted mostly of themselves and students taking courses, despite the yearly engagement of 100-200 guest lecturers and at least 30 work group members. Collaborations between CCs and various faculty members were often short but instrumental, and inviting guest lecturers did not necessarily result in meaningful work relationships: "you just extract a bit of knowledge from this place or this place and inject it into a CEMUS course and they leave again. Apart from having them for lectures, there's not much contact" (Interview 2).

At the same time, CCs described the faculty and external experts in course work groups as a valuable point of collaboration with the university. Coordinators' relationships to work group members were varied, some describing the work groups as a valuable meeting with colleagues and partners, others as a mandatory formal meeting with minimal results.

Many CCs had also built professional relationships with certain guest lecturers, who returned to particular courses each year and who over time formed ongoing relationships with the course and the student groups. In addition, CCs perceived positive benefits for many guest lecturers in their interactions with students in CEMUS courses:

> Lecturers coming in here, we talk to them about CEMUS, they engage with different discourses and different students, we have interdisciplinary classes. They get questions they didn't get before, they are able to communicate about things they can't communicate about in another setting. They engage in a different way, we

> leave it open to them, we support them in using different methods. I think all of that has an impact on the university. (Interview 4)

Still, CCs spoke often about being "in a bubble," a phrase that reappeared in many interviews. They felt isolated in terms of ties and influences within the wider university and felt that their work was distinct from the faculty and other departments and centres. Many interviewees thought that such collaboration needed to be improved.

However, some CCs perceived their work as engaging with the wider university through the students in their courses, who were enrolled in a variety of programs and disciplines. Furthermore, CCs developed strong reciprocal learning relationships with students in courses. One CC commented that the CC role provided "the chance to be more involved with the students . . . and be part of their learning and it's also my learning" (Interview 10).

DISCUSSION: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR STUDENT-FACULTY PARTNERSHIP IN A STUDENT-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Inhabiting liminal roles

In the context of CEMUS education, the concept of liminality, and more specifically a "suspended state of liminality" (Cook-Sather & Alter 2011, p. 39), helps us explain how students experience the CC role and furthermore, what a student-driven educational context can mean for partnership.

Both CEMUS as a centre and the CC as a position at the university fall outside of typical categories within HE. Similarly, coordinators occupy neither the roles of students nor university teachers, but instead "assume a position that is 'ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification'" (Turner, 1974, p. 232 as cited by Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011, p. 37). This causes a loss of legitimacy due to "not fitting into the system," creating uncertainty over their role and responsibilities in the university and in the classroom. They can feel unqualified, unprepared, and unsure of the extent of what they can and cannot do. At the same time, they experience a sense of freedom, empowerment, and a possibility to "do education differently."

As Bovill et al. (2016) recognise, "The challenges staff and students experience in co-creating learning and teaching are sometimes related to very real concerns about boundaries, capabilities and risk" (p. 198). In practice, this results in different coordinators adopting a number of closely associated roles (e.g., co-student, facilitator, responsible participant, etc.) that mitigate their concerns with their own perceived capabilities and with the challenge of crossing traditional HE boundaries.

CEMUS and the coordinator role incorporate liminality into the university in a fruitful way. CEMUS is a student-driven, trans-disciplinary centre within a traditional university structured by discipline. The non-teacher, non-student CC position exists in an institutional context with clearly defined student-teacher roles and a lack of student-faculty partnership culture. This combination enables experimentation and for boundaries to be broken, inviting students, teachers, and experts to (re)consider and reinterpret the how and why of learning. This is key to enabling coordinators to differentiate what they do from what teachers do.

From this "betwixt and between" position, students have organised themselves in an advanced way to coordinate learning and teaching around complex questions and problems posed by sustainability challenges. Furthermore, they have done so in a way that exhibits an

alternative power dynamic to that of the institution which surrounds them.

Students inviting staff to participate in partnership

CEMUS differs from other, well-documented forms of partnership because of the amount of power students have. We argue that CEMUS's educational model, managed and driven by "those traditionally regarded as the least able and least powerful members of the educational community" (Fielding, 1999, p. 21), is an example of a PLC that falls outside current conceptions of partnership in important ways.

This type of partnership arrangement moves outside the landscape of Healey et al.'s (2014) conceptual PLC model because of the students' level of control over decision-making. Referring back to Bovill and Bulley's (2011) ladder of student participation in Figure 1, CEMUS education arguably falls in the "students-in-control" end of the spectrum.

CEMUS does not refer to its educational model as a partnership model, but calls its work "student-driven education." However, it offers opportunities for actively engaging students and faculty to create learning spaces, as Healey et al. (2014) outline in their partnership definition, mentioned above. Already built into the CEMUS model is "the collaboration and mutual exchange between students and senior academics [which] confounds the old notion of researcher as teacher and examiner" (Stoddard et al., 2012). Staff are involved and do collaborate, but not necessarily as clear authority figures or leaders. Approaching CEMUS through a partnership lens consequently highlights the asymmetrical dimensions of some other partnership arrangements in which students can be invited in for short bursts to work together with teachers, similar to the way in which CCs invite teachers in as guests. The students' agency is thus different here, and this may have important consequences when considering the how and why of partnership. However, it is worth noting that, as Healey et al. (2014) and other authors in the partnership literature have shown, faculty-initiated partnership has potential to involve comparatively longer-term and more in-depth relationships. The same likely applies for student-initiated partnership.

Students inviting teachers to lecture and be work group members changes power dynamics, which invites agency and creates conditions to "re-learn [ways] of teaching and learning" (Wals & Jickling, 2002, p. 228). At the same time, it is possible in this type of arrangement that students can also become gatekeepers, maintaining control over access and decision-making in a way that partnership was perhaps meant to rectify (a sort of too-far pendulum-swing). This leaves open the possibility of a partnership arrangement with a high level of student participation but reduced or minimal opportunity for staff to engage. As we move along Bovill and Bulley's (2011) ladder of student participation, increased student control of curricula does not necessarily increase the success of partnership. A very empowered student group might not enter into partnership fully, missing out on its benefits not only for themselves but for the university.

We see some signs of this in our empirical study. None of the CCs saw themselves as having strong relationships with guest lecturers in general since these were usually shallow interactions relative to other relationships with colleagues at CEMUS. Many CCs mentioned the value of faculty members in the course work groups, but they were seen as a rather limited resource in terms of time. This is not to say CCs did not value faculty involvement, but rather that the sustained relationship between students and faculty desired in partnership was often not reflected in interviewees' experiences. Coordinators felt that their individual relationship to many faculty members was, to borrow from Healey et al. (2014), not necessarily "a relationship in which all participants are actively engaged in and

stand to gain from the process of learning and working together" (p. 7) or that it could be improved dramatically.

It is important to note that staff influence and involvement is routine and widespread at CEMUS, and this means that staff and students collaborate in a community quite unlike what is seen in the wider university context in which they are situated. In addition, the sheer number of guests visiting (100-200 per year) as guest lecturers or in CEMUS's extensive collaboration, outreach, and research activities, may have influenced CC perceptions of relationships to faculty. These many shallow interactions may lead CCs to feel they simply do not have the opportunity to work closely with faculty.

While the very existence of the CC role does invite "critical reflection on existing relationships, identities, processes and structures" (Healey et al., 2014, p. 7), the peer-to-peer interactions in the form of relationships both between the coordinators and with students in their courses took a more central role than those involving CCs and faculty. Peer-learning (see Topping, 2005; Boud et al., 2001) characterises aspects of the CEMUS model, in the relationships between the coordinator pairs and by students taking on different roles in teaching and learning to facilitate learning. Faculty in the CEMUS context were viewed as information providers and as temporary experts, and coordinators expressed that many lecturers barely seem to understand the coordinator role. We see an opportunity here for coordinators and teachers to engage further with and develop partnerships in a learning community working from the unusual premise and institutional context of a centre for student-driven education.

A challenge for the CEMUS PLC may be ensuring that students do not become gatekeepers themselves, seeing university staff as those who are invited but not significant partners. Another related challenge is ensuring that relationships between engaged students and supportive and engaged faculty are continually renewed and created.

Opportunities and challenges

This study raises a number of opportunities and challenges to partnership in which students have more power over decision-making in key areas like curriculum design and learning and teaching in practice. We tentatively suggest some of these as summarised in the table below.

Table 1. Opportunities and challenges of student-driven partnership arrangements and liminal roles

CONTEXT	OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
Students hold balance of power in institutional context	- Students form a strong community engaged in education in formal and informal ways - Faculty support and engage in a learning and teaching environment where they also learn -A learner-centred, as opposed to teacher-centred, approach is enabled	- Teachers can be excluded due to students becoming gatekeepers - Existing and new relationships between students and faculty are continually renewed and created
Students' roles located in a "suspended liminal state"	- Students and teachers find freedom of possibility for new combinations, ideas, relationships - Students' non-expert role generates potential for alternative power dynamics in the classroom	-Students experience a personally confusing position outside of fixed categories - Students need support and routines while dealing with uncertainty - Purpose or value of liminal roles may not be clear or accessible to those outside the learning community and to actors who take on the fixed roles within HE (e.g., administrators, teachers, students)

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT-DRIVEN PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS IN HE

Current conceptualisations of student-faculty partnership in HE commonly assume an institutional context in which faculty have the balance of authority and power over decision-making. Little is known about partnership arrangements in which it is students that have more power than faculty. This study has analysed the latter type of partnership, zooming in on the experiences of student CCs who manage design and implementation of sustainability education in a student-driven university centre. Our findings in this exploratory study are that this partnership arrangement (a) suggests revision or expansion of current notions of partnership to redress strong assumptions about staff having the balance of authority and power; (b) places students in an ambiguous role, a "suspended state of liminality," which, while confusing for them and others, also offers them freedom and possibilities to break with strong institutional norms about the how and why of education; and (c) has allowed students to creatively organise education at an advanced level. Further research could explore the relationship between student-driven models of partnership and the boundary-spanning nature of transdisciplinary sustainability education across disciplines and university structures.

This snapshot of CC perspectives is only one view of the education at CEMUS. The perspectives of students, lecturers, and external experts would be valuable contributions in future research. Additionally, learning outcomes, observation of classroom settings, and experimentation with the model in other contexts would all be worthy of further study. More generally, we see significant potential for further research into student-driven

initiatives in HE that enter into the core functions of the university—education, research, and outreach—in order to increase knowledge about and experimentation with new forms of partnership.

This article accords with ethics standards for the Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University. All transcripts of interviews were validated in writing by interviewees.

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APPENDIX 1

Name	Position	Time at CEMUS	Date
Interviewee 1	CC, The Global Economy: Environment, Development and Globalisation	9 months	2015-12-12
Interviewee 2	CC, Climate Change Leadership: Power, Politics and Culture	1.5 years	2015-12-07
Interviewee 3	CC, Critical Perspectives on Sustainable Development in Sweden	9 months	2015-12-12

Interviewee 4	CC, Project Management and Communication & Worldviews Values and Visions course in the MSc. Sustainable Development Program	3 years	2015-12-14
Interviewee 5	Director	8 years	2015-12-18
Interviewee 6	CC, Klimatet och Energin och det Moderna Samhället (Climate, Energy and the Modern Society)	9 months	2015-12-01
Interviewee 7	CC, *Livsfilosofi och det Moderna Samhället* (Philosophy of Life and the Modern Society)	5 years	2015-12-18
Interviewee 8	CC, Worldviews Values and Visions course in the MSc. Sustainable Development Program	1.5 years	2015-12-14
Interviewee 9	CC, Sustainable Design: Ecology, Culture and Human Built Worlds	2 years	2015-12-14
Interviewee 10	CC, *Hållbar Utveckling A* (Sustainable Development A)	2 years	2015-12-11

ARTICLE

'Locations of Possibility': Critical Perspectives on Partnership

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ABSTRACT

This article offers critical perspectives on collaborative partnerships and feminist teaching that revise paradigms of power, prioritize student agency, enrich curriculum and scholarship, and sustain empowered communities of learning that challenge institutional compartmentalization. The authors reflect on how co-created curriculum can catalyze new professional partnerships that in turn contribute to refreshed learning experiences and communities. This article presents evidence of how a partnership orientation effectively encompasses an ethic and practice of feminist teaching, posits a framework of feminist pedagogy and praxis into the discourse of partnership, and exemplifies possibilities of these practices as important steps towards a (re)vision of liberatory learning.

KEYWORDS

critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, reflective practice, students as partners, student partnership

> *The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom.* (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Learning, teaching, and working in institutions of higher education can be compartmentalized, demoralizing, and alienating experiences. Students, faculty, and staff are governed by notions of the primacy of individual achievement earned through successful negotiations within systems stratified by power relations and may well experience their lives to be marked by missed and missing connections, appeals to recognition by authority figures, and less-than-meaningful tasks (Basile, 2016; Freire, 2000; hooks, 1994).

As bell hooks suggests in the quote above, it doesn't have to be this way—and those of us who engage in partnership practices grounded in critical perspectives and approaches (including the authors of this article) may well have experienced the co-created paradises of transgressive learning spaces towards which hooks points (Fitzmaurice & Reitenauer, 2017; hooks, 1994; hooks, 2003; Reitenauer, 2017). This article explores the shared values of collaborative partnerships and feminist teaching as they serve to revise paradigms of power and prioritize student agency, enrich curriculum and scholarship, and sustain reciprocally empowered learning communities that challenge institutional compartmentalization. In addition, we reflect upon how co-created curriculum catalyzes new professional partnerships that in turn contribute to refreshed learning experiences and communities. Through this research, we mean to demonstrate how a partnership orientation encompasses an ethic and practice of feminist teaching and enter a framework of feminist pedagogy and praxis into conversations of partnership in order to exemplify possibilities of these practices as important steps towards a (re)vision of liberatory learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To construct an understanding of the principles integral to the practice of partnership, we looked to its literature to identify themes that characterize successful and equitable collaboration. We find it useful to consider partnership "a process rather than a product," which represents a conceptual approach that sees collegial relationships as intentional means to achieve certain goals (Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017, p. 5). A defined pedagogical process, partnership is "motivated by a desire to enhance the student voice in higher education, to challenge traditional institutional structures, and to disrupt traditional student-faculty power relations" (Kehler et al., 2017, p. 4). Acknowledging the conventional roles that students and faculty are positioned to adopt (in which faculty perform as experts and students as blank slates), the three core principles of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are especially imperative to sustainable and equitable partnerships (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). "Genuine partnership," in this sense, is distinguished from general collaborative labor by the prioritization of and intention to ensure equity in its exchanges and outcomes, in contrast to traditional educational paradigms that often fail to foster cultures of respect and mutuality (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 3).

Reciprocity in partnership requires that "the perspectives and contributions made by partners are equally valued and respected and that all participants have an equal opportunity to contribute" in the process (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 7). This ensures that experiences of partnership are, ideally, grounded in authentic and equitable collaboration. The responsibility inherent in genuine partnership provides students with opportunities to assume more active

positions in their learning and asks faculty and others invested in this practice to reconceptualize their authority (Cook-Sather, 2015; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). As it engages "experiences and expertise into dialogue in ways that inform and support more intentional action," partnership is simultaneously sustained by and serves to enhance these foundational themes of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (Cook-Sather et al., p. 7).

Critical and feminist pedagogies have emerged as responsive tools for resisting "control-oriented pedagogy dominating educational thought and practice" and as challenges to "the emphasis on efficiency and objectivity that perpetuate the domination of masculine rationality," (Scering, 1997, p. 62). In doing so, critical and feminist pedagogies are understood as "different way[s] of thinking about the relationship of schools and society and the hierarchical social relations for teaching and learning contexts" (Scering, 1997, p. 62). In other words, a framework of feminist teaching is motivated by the same institutional and intellectual conditions that call for a critically informed notion of student partnership.

At its heart, a feminist pedagogical approach functions to identify and reject imbalanced and "rigid teacher-student relations" as well as "individualistic views" of knowledge and success, reaching instead for accountability to shared success through "active construction of connected and critical ways of knowing" (Scering, 1997, p. 65). In practice, critical and feminist pedagogies present a "very different perception of the classroom than that where teachers have responsibility for teaching and students for learning" (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 14). Instead, agency is both an integral value and superlative result of collaborative learning that tasks each participant with "responsibility arising out of the relationships" they share as members of a larger intentional learning community (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 14). Framed this way, instructors can strategize methods to redistribute their allotted power to "enhance both autonomy and mutuality" and empower students to be better positioned and prepared to act as agents of their learning (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 10). When students are asked to claim, rather than passively receive, an education, their stake in the process and product of their learning is renewed (Rich, 1979). As outcomes and responsibilities of teaching are shared and developed collaboratively, the need for mutual, equitable accountability replaces the static academic standard of instructor as sole and absolute authority.

A critical pedagogy informed by a commitment to enhance agency and revise power imbalances "provides a model of interrelationships that can be incorporated into a developing vision of a world in which hierarchical oppressive relationships are exchanged for autonomy within a community that celebrates difference" (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 11). Establishing and sustaining opportunities for students to practice accountability to themselves and to their instructors and colleagues as they navigate and achieve their education reimagines the learning community as a site of "the practice of freedom"(hooks, 1994, p. 207).

METHODS

The authors of this article are a student, a library staff person, and a faculty member who first worked together in an Introduction to Women's Studies course at Portland State University (PSU) in the Fall term of 2015. Early in the term, the 30 students in the course, taught by Vicki, visited our University Library for an in-class practice session to develop their research

skills and introduce them to primary sources held in Special Collections, including materials ranging from medieval manuscripts to contemporary records of local community activism. Each student was invited to conduct further research in support of an individual project through continuing engagement with participating staff members, including those working with these archival collections and artifacts.

A particularly fruitful connection developed as Mariah, the student, recognized the treasures available to her through Special Collections and developed her project in close collaboration with Rhiannon, Library staff. The outstanding results of this engagement led us to develop this article, as we recognized that the partnership we have cultivated and cherish shines a light on the possibilities that reside at the intersections of feminist pedagogy and partnership practice, an important example of student-faculty (and, in our case, student-faculty-professional) partnership as a transgressive and liberatory practice.

The methods we developed for this research project followed from the pedagogical principles embedded in the course in which we met. That is to say, our reflective investigation into the nature and meaning of our partnership experience was itself a fully collaborative process. Through multiple in-person gatherings, we thought and felt and acted our way through this process collectively, much as we had thought and felt and acted our way collectively through our shared course. Our work as researchers began with an exploratory meeting initiated by Vicki, who recognized the potential importance of telling our partnership story. We quickly established our interest in continuing our partnership, now as researchers and co-authors, and we determined that our first step would be to undertake a review of partnership and pedagogical texts. At a second meeting, we shared our insights from that review, and we tentatively outlined a grounding theoretical framework (namely, a revisioning of Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten's *respect*, *reciprocity*, and *responsibility* framework) that reflected our own lived experiences as engaged partners in teaching and learning. A third meeting found us entering this framework into conversation with a selection of the feminist voices and values that inform our praxis, during which we traced the ways in which a partnership model is ideally positioned to embody and enact critical pedagogy.

At our final meeting before writing, we decided to construct the bulk of this article as a dialogue of individually authored sections. Our choice of this narrative model is intentional, informed by a feminist recognition of the subjective self as a valuable source of knowledge and of the "use of personal experience as data [as] a significant and subversive act in the process of constructing new methods and theories" (Foss & Foss, 1993, p. 42).

Our methods for this project were informed by our dedication to making knowledge together while simultaneously honoring each partner's voice and unique positionality within this larger collaborative endeavor. In practice, this ensures that the contents of each narrative were preserved as they were contributed: they were edited and expanded only after discussion and eventual consensus. Through this union of collaborative analytical research and experiential narrative, and by presenting this project itself as an example of partnership practice in action, our intention was to illuminate critical insights about the implications of feminist teaching and thinking for partnership, and of feminist partnership for liberatory learning.

Deeply inspired by the work of Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014), we chose to reframe their themes of *respect*, *reciprocity*, and *responsibility* in the more explicitly feminist terms of *agency*, *accountability*, and *affinity*. We intended, through this recasting, to tell the story of our particular critical partnership grounded in our appreciation of the scholars (of both partnership and feminist theory and practice) whose contributions have made our work possible.

THE PARTNERS REFLECT

In this section, we share our individual reflections on our orientation to, experience of, and long-term takeaways from the partnering we engaged in through Introduction to Women's Studies. First, the instructor, Vicki, shares the pedagogical foundation for the course as rooted in a feminist praxis interested in *accountability* both inside and outside the classroom, as well as the distinct curricular features of this course that grounded the partnering practice. Next, Mariah, the student, offers her perspectives on the transformation from student-being-acted-upon to student expressing *agency* in claiming her education, and the ways this claiming has continued to shape her trajectory. Finally, Rhiannon, professional library staff and graduate of the department sponsoring the course, reflects on the power of *affinity* in creating networks of caring relationships that sustain a critical partnership orientation among colleagues beyond discrete partnering events.

Critical perspective: Accountability (Vicki, faculty partner)

Long before I became a faculty member in a department that engages in critical interdisciplinary studies—in my case, women, gender, and sexuality studies—I have been compelled to understand the ways power is felt, understood, and acted upon by persons in relationship with others. As a worker in the domestic violence and reproductive health fields, my personal preoccupation with power found expression in the daily ways I went about my tasks. For example, in accompanying a person seeking a protection order in court or talking with a teen about her birth control options, I attempted to enact a critical praxis (meaning the reciprocating relationship of practice and theory). I sought to understand the oppressive power dynamics of person-seeking-services and person-empowered-to-serve and the ways that power is held in hands that can be open or closed, thus disrupting the mechanisms that replicate these inequitable power relations from the start. That is to say, as a person institutionally empowered to enact service in a power-over way, I recognized a responsibility not only to refuse and resist that co-optation into an oppressive system, but to actively seek to transform the power-over dynamic which attends unjust systems through the redistribution of power and to practice accountability for the impact of my actions in so doing.

When I began teaching at the University, what had been the daily stuff of my work became deeply and unsettlingly distilled in ways I hadn't anticipated. Now I was not only seeking to act justly in transactional encounters within community-based settings, but I was operating within a critical field full of theorizing about power and its expression. Here in the academy, the locus of a particular kind of knowledge production and transfer, I experienced a keen sense that the stakes had been profoundly raised. How was I to engage in this fraught

endeavor of teaching with any integrity unless and until I challenged the very foundation of my professorial engagement with the teaching and-learning proposition?

As an instructor in a college classroom, I have an extraordinary amount of power vested in me by my institution. I get to decide what the content of any given course should be, and I get to communicate to students that this is not actually a choice but a foregone conclusion. I get to decide whether to take up every moment of our class time lecturing, save the hours I give exams and require students to repeat back to me what I've been saying to them. I get to decide how to reward or punish them for how well they perform for me.

How, then, to be accountable for this power—to myself, to students, to colleagues, to the world? If I say that I am committed to working for change, to seeking to enact social justice in the spheres in which I operate, how might I and must I practice accountability inside the classroom, and out?

The collaboration at the heart of this article provides a micro-view of the pedagogical commitments I attempt to engage in all of my courses. At the heart of this commitment is a foundational understanding of students as partners in a learning community's every moment. Quite fundamentally, there is no teaching without learning—so my desire to be a channel for some change to happen, for some learning and growth to transpire, can only be accomplished if there is agreement among us to learn. The teaching and learning proposition, then, begins with learning, with the tacit agreement of those gathered to open themselves up to what might be changed in them through their engagement with the experience at hand. In this view, partnership is not only useful for genuine learning to happen, it is required—a necessary condition for the transformations in knowing that constitute learning.

What I'm doing, then, as I prepare a course and unfold that preparation in the classroom, is to become accountable to my students for the power I hold to frame and initiate an experience in which I am asking them to choose to participate. Because only each one of them can know how they best might learn through this experience that has been framed by me and my power, I have, over time, come to practice accountability for my power and to redistribute that power within the learning community through a number of pedagogical practices:

- Collaborative development of course content: As Mariah and Rhiannon share below, each of them (and all of the students in the course) contribute to course content in essential ways. Rhiannon regularly visits class to share strategies and approaches for conducting research and communicating it to an audience, and she and her library colleagues host our class for an in-depth look at the Special Collections, among other resources. Mariah and her colleagues in the class teach us content through sharing their projects and linking their chosen topics to the overarching themes of the course, among other content-contributing assignments. My intention in this pedagogical intervention is to disrupt students' expectations that course content is a fixed and impenetrable force that acts upon them and to catalyze students' active participation in designing course content as curators of knowledge.

- Collaborative sharing of the facilitation of course activities, on both individual and group levels: In addition to formally assuming the role of teacher during the presentation of each individual project, students also share responsibility for opening each class session in the manner of their choosing (such as a check-in, a video and discussion, or a freewrite). Students also engage in collaborative co-teaching, as they self-select a book group in which they discuss the text, design an interactive class session to engage their colleagues around its themes, co-facilitate that session, and evaluate their achievements. If "how we teach is what we teach," as a colleague insightfully said (D. Osborn, personal communication, March 11, 2015), then teaching a critical interrogation of power in a learning space requires a sharing of power within that space.
- Individually-designed projects, with scaffolded steps: There is no way I could ever come up with the rich panoply of projects that students design and develop when offered the power to name and pursue what speaks most deeply to them. As Mariah's project (described below) evidences, the inherent meaningfulness of intellectual, emotional, and behavioral engagement with a project skyrockets when that project is self-selected and pursued with steadiness and discipline. The results, presented within the group, allow us all to learn not only from the content developed, but also from the lived experience of producing and sharing knowledge.
- Individual goal-setting for learning and self-grading of engagement and achievement: Certainly the most vital practice I have developed for being accountable for my power in the classroom, and arguably the most impactful mechanism for students to experience, is self-grading. Self-grading as a foundation for liberatory learning is a core feature of the grounding of my courses in a principle of partnership. The liberatory learning that attends this practice has been mine as well as students', as my freedom from being required to ultimately express my power in the form of a grade leaves me available for delight, astonishment, and gratitude for the learning that I am witness to and, reciprocally, that I learn from. Instead of ending a course with my power in full and final flourish through the bestowing of a grade, I instead offer myself as a partner to students as they claim their own grade for their efforts and achievements, through critical self-reflection.

Nothing had prepared me for the distinct honor it has been to design, hold, and tend the space in which co-learning and co-teaching happens with reciprocity, integrity, and care. Engaging with Mariah, Rhiannon, and the many students with whom I have shared learning experiences has stretched me in ways I couldn't have predicted, challenging me to practice my politics, to engage my feminist praxis, and to be accountable for my power. In these most difficult of times in our world, it is, for me, the stuff of inspiration, gratitude, and hope.

Critical perspective: Agency (Mariah, student partner)

I began my education at Portland State University after a few years at a local community college. Throughout grade school, I attended alternative and public charter schools that focused on student-teacher relationships and student-led learning and gave many

opportunities for students to pursue their interests. When I began my journey in higher education, I found myself in an environment where it was easy to detach from my surroundings. I was balancing work and college along with the responsibilities of growing up and moving out. I quickly fell into a rhythm of going to class, work, and then home, without making connections on campus.

Outside of school, my passions began to grow in a way that felt separate from my college education. I had been working in childcare since I got my first nannying job at the age of 14. As I grew older, this love for working with children grew into an interest in education. My mother was the founding director of the school that I attended from 5th grade through high school, and in my early years of college, all the talk about my mother's vision for change through education began to sink in. I became very interested in the ways in which education has the power to challenge the status quo, increase upward mobility, and change the physical and emotional health of children. I also started reading about the many ways that the public education system in the United States often does not do these things for its most vulnerable students. The disconnection I felt between my classes and my life outside of school made me uneasy about the time and money I was investing in my college career. I felt the burden of working for each professor rather than doing any of my coursework for myself. As I struggled to balance work and school, my dwindling faith in college as a life-enriching experience made it harder to push through the most difficult tests, classes, and assignments. I found myself panicking and dropping classes near the end of each term. As I transferred to PSU, I was discouraged and unsure if my goal of graduating was attainable.

My first class at PSU was Vicki's Introduction to Women's Studies class. Sitting through the first day of the course, I was struck by the intentionality behind every word she said and every activity we did. Her engagement with my classmates and me reminded me of my favorite moments with teachers in my childhood. I was brought back to the joy that learning had been in elementary school. Vicki designed her course to be self-directed, while maintaining a communal learning environment. Vicki introduced one of our course assignments, an individual project that we would work on throughout the entire term. I was excited about the project but tried not to get too invested. Many times throughout my college classes I had been told that I would be allowed to choose a project to work on. Each time, as the project got underway, it became clear that I would be working on this project to the particular values of my professor. There were small choices within these projects, but the assignments were all the same: research what the professor wanted me to research, write how the professor wanted me to write. The projects were facades, trying to mask the power structures of higher education with minor choice presented as student empowerment.

During a meeting with Vicki, a requirement of every student, I began to realize that this course and project would be different than what I had experienced in higher education so far. I could not believe that Vicki was making time to meet with each student, while in other courses I had to wait in line for other professors' office hours for a chance at five minutes of their time. We met for an hour, discussing whatever I wanted to. We talked about where I was in my transition to PSU and what my goals were in and outside of school. This led to a conversation about my interest in education and vision for the project. I listened for signals of what Vicki

wanted but did not find any. The conversation was collaborative, something I had not experienced with other professors. Vicki offered insight and resources without judgment or expectation. I came away from our meeting feeling empowered; I had agency over my education.

As I jumped into researching my project, I found the most compelling information to be about racial inequality in the school district I had grown up in, Portland Public Schools (PPS). The project was relevant to my life as I looked back at my education within PPS, and forward towards a career in education. This connection to my research served me throughout the entirety of the project. I learned about the real and local ways that education perpetuates the status quo. Without knowing this, I would not be able to disrupt it in my own future teaching practice and current work in childcare. I worried that my focus would not work for the scope of the course. I discussed this with Vicki and she made it clear that I was in charge of my learning this course. "Go where the project takes you," she said.

Perhaps the most magical moment of this project came when our class visited the Special Collections at the PSU Library. It was there that I had the pleasure of working with Rhiannon. I told Rhiannon about my project and she immediately said with excitement, "I have something for you." Rhiannon pulled boxes and boxes of relevant documents and handed them over to me. I could not believe that I was being given access to these documents, that I had the right to do my research in such a legitimate way. I felt like a researcher, not just a student working for a grade. Holding these pieces of history gave new weight to the work that I was doing. Though I had done so much research on the computer, I had not experienced the documents in such an emotional way. It made everything I was researching real. Sharing this moment with Rhiannon was a powerful experience, as she was as excited as I was to share the moment with me. After our trip to Special Collections, I fully committed to my project with the belief that I was a researcher with the power to learn something and to say something.
This was real agency. I became responsible for my coursework in a way that I had never experienced before. The requirements for the project were undefined, I could do as much or little as I wanted, and the course would be self-graded. My grade, project, and class work, it all fell on me—not just the responsibility to get "good" work done, but to own my experience and learning. This dismantling of the classroom power structure gave me freedom I had never known in higher education. To my surprise, it made me work harder than I ever had. I began calling my mother every night to tell her what I learned that day, attending meetings at local schools, and talking to anyone who would listen about my research. By the end of the term, I had completed the longest, most well-researched paper of my college career. At the end of the course, my classmates and I all presented our projects. Seeing each project, powerful and unique, was magical.

The outcome of this experience for myself, as a student, grew beyond the project. I began the term floundering, unsure if college was the right place for me, unsure if I was capable, and disconnected from campus. After this course, I found confidence that I did not have before. I became more involved on campus and more engaged in my classes and with professors. I began learning how to get what I needed out of college, rather than producing work that felt meaningless just for a grade. Vicki recommended me for a mentorship program,

something I would have never considered. I applied, was accepted, and, for a year, mentored a group of 30 first-year students. As I write this, I am on track to graduate, something I was never sure I would accomplish.

Vicki used her position to disrupt traditional power structures. Our partnership gave me power in a place I had previously felt powerless. I was able to find a stronger sense of self and to succeed when I became less isolated and began connecting with others through my research, when I was shown that my thoughts carried weight, when I was listened to and given deep respect. This experience motivates me to move toward a partnership mentality in my working as well as personal relationships. In working with children, I hope to allow them the agency that Vicki allowed me, to collaborate with them in their experiences instead of dictating them, to truly know and listen to the children I work with. I believe that partnership has the power to create more equity in education, both on a small scale and system-wide. When we give students agency and let them know their power and value, we are letting them own their experiences rather than passively working for a grade. My deep engagement in my work for Vicki's course made me care more about social justice in education than I ever could have if she had handed out the exact assignment that I ended up completing. Expecting agency from those at the bottom of power structures is a radical act that gives way to meaningful change.

Critical perspective: Affinity (Rhiannon, staff partner)

Like Vicki, I came into my career from a social service background. In that work, the notion of community informed and sustained every effort. Beyond place or population, in my work then and today I regard community as authentic connection and understanding supported through kinship of identities, experiences, or goals. Feelings of affinity that bloom through community bring powerful meaning to our work, serving to guide and sustain us as we strive towards a vision of the world we would like to teach, learn, and live in.

I began my degree program in women, gender, and sexuality studies at PSU just as I was hired to work at the Library. Cultivated together, my librarianship, my understanding and experience of critical pedagogies, and my feminism are inextricably interwoven. Over time, I have worked to make sense of my feminist praxis, that is, how the theoretical principles that inform my feminism are embodied and enacted through my work in higher education.

As a student, I often felt dissonance between my academic and professional communities. As I approached graduation, this sense of liminality weighed heavily, and I was ultimately uncertain if I would continue to pursue this kind of work. Over one term, however, this tension was reframed, and that liminal state soon became an advantageous position for which I have come to be profoundly thankful. In an upper-division seminar, Vicki and I collaborated to develop a session of teaching for the course, an exercise carried out by each student, that drew directly upon my professional work at the Library. From this, our co-created curriculum blossomed into a new, ongoing partnership between the Library and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies department. Through this, I have come to recognize that partnership is a core and catalyzing element of the feminist praxis I aspire to develop and enact in my work.

As Vicki, Mariah, and I have consciously worked to enact a feminist practice of partnership, I have again witnessed community functioning as a guiding principle as well as a great reward. As reciprocity infused with accountability and affect, this affinity satisfies what I had yearned for, manifesting in my work and collegiality as a renewed sense of joy and gratitude. In my multifaceted role as student/alumna and campus professional, I find that I have new and revived stakes in my projects, research, and writing and that I am more easily able to trace how I contribute to and benefit from the learning communities around me. In this way, I have found that daily tasks—labor that can be challenging to draw inspiration from and measure in impact—feel more closely and tangibly connected to larger, driving outcomes of student success and social change.

In the ways that I am supported, inspired, and empowered by my experience of partnership, the liminal, dualistic status that once troubled me now affirms my work and provides me, as well as my departments, with enhanced visibility and opportunities that have led to new and expanded partnerships and projects across campus.

As students like Mariah have engaged with library staff and resources through the activities and course sessions Vicki and I have co-developed, and like those that have followed that model, I have critically considered and evaluated the means and methods by which I enact my work stewarding library materials and the experience of conducting research. Engaging with students in new and dynamic ways has rekindled my affinity for this work. As the way I consider myself professionally has evolved, it has been constructive for me to imagine how I can foster this affinity for my colleagues and work to weave it into the institutional culture we operate from and through.

As Mariah so powerfully describes, an effective practice of partnership positively impacts students' senses of place and agency. True for all partners, recognizing affinity as both a principle and product of partnership underscores how we understand similarities across disciplines and departments and identify how our differences serve to enhance the work we do. Acknowledging the often fraught and siloed nature of higher education, a partnership mentality stands to disrupt cultures of competition. It helps us to resist complacency and compartmentalization by recentering learning and shared success as our goal, and by framing collaboration as a strategic response to scarcity and institutional isolation. I continue to be moved by the lasting impact my participation in a student-faculty-professional partnership has had on my work, and I am inspired by the possibilities it lends to the future.

DISCUSSION

As we engaged in the process of framing our method for investigating our experiences of student-faculty-professional partnership, we uncovered several insights both about our partnership(s) and about the deeper implications of partnership for us as individuals, as current and future professionals, and as members of a large educational institution. We believe that these insights may be applicable across institutional contexts and particular models of partnership, and we share them in the hopes that they further our readers' partnership philosophies and practices.

First, we noted that we have each experienced affective outcomes on the personal level that have been vitally important to our well-being: namely, that we each have felt less lonely as persons and in our roles because of the connections we have forged. Asserting agency and practicing accountability—twin processes in the sharing and redistribution of power—have catalyzed the development of affinity across differences in roles that have enhanced the feeling of connectedness and belonging for each of us. In creating community through the enactment of partnership practices, we have deepened our investments in our institution as well as recognized that personal satisfaction and success may be pursued and mutually supported even within our large and highly bureaucratized institution.

As we widened the frame, we perceived that pursuing a partnership model at the level of our courses has had the disproportionate effect of disrupting our felt experience of the compartmentalization that is necessary to institutional life. After just one 10-week course together, each of us extended our network in important, institution-influencing ways: Mariah became a peer mentor and actively contributed to the success and retention of first-year students; Rhiannon has increasingly reached out to faculty to link their courses to the living archives she stewards and has begun presenting and publishing on those efforts; and Vicki has connected with colleagues both inside and outside the University, through formal scholarship venues and faculty support efforts as well as informal networking, to share about the risks and rewards of employing a partnership ethic rooted in critical power analysis.

Because the benefits to this partnership model have been so significant for all of us, we have come to understand that the challenges to engaging it—the institutional structures that atomize tasks and actively work against collaboration, and the ready acceptance of power imbalances on the part of both teachers and students—are necessary to the struggle. In other words, the difficulties in navigating across power differentials in ways that build relationship and illuminate individual and collective possibility are, precisely, the work at hand, and the rewards of engaging with that work are the breakthroughs we have each experienced as persons, as teachers, as students, as professionals, and as members of communities.

CONCLUSION

We have come to believe that operating with a partnership ethic and from a partnership orientation is always available for us to adopt and practice from our personal and professional standpoints. In recasting the powerful frame of *respect*, *responsibility*, and *reciprocity* (Cook-Sather et al., 2014) as *agency*, *accountability*, and *affinity* in this article, we offer a model to interrogate our partnership practices as locations for the negotiation of power and to ground our continuing efforts in the possibilities for redistributing power in ways that change us, that deepen our bonds, and that intervene towards social justice in our world.

NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rhiannon M. Cates *works as a library technician in Special Collections and University Archives at Portland State University. She has a bachelor's degree in women's studies and sexuality, gender,*

and queer studies from PSU, and is especially interested in queer historiography, popular culture, and archival possibilities of teaching and activist-scholarship.

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ARTICLE

From Partnership to Self-Authorship: The Benefits of Co-Creation of the Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum, which is seen as one form of student-staff partnership in learning and teaching in which each partner has a voice and a stake in curriculum development. This qualitative research analyses participants' perceptions of co-creation of the curriculum in the Scottish higher-education sector. Initial findings show that some staff and students participating in co-creation of the curriculum perceive it to benefit them by (a) fostering the development of shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) creating the conditions for partners to learn from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) enhancing individuals' satisfaction and personal development within higher education. Using Barnett's conceptualisation of supercomplexity and Baxter Magolda's three-pronged view of self-authorship, the author suggests that critical and democratic engagement in co-creation of the curriculum can develop the self-authorship of both students and staff members, including their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal abilities which help them adapt to an ever-changing, supercomplex world.

KEYWORDS

partnership, co-creation of the curriculum, negotiated curriculum, supercomplexity, self-authorship

INTRODUCTION

This paper shares initial research findings focusing on the benefits of the co-creation of curriculum initiatives in the Scottish higher-education sector. It seeks to add to the students-as-partners literature by examining trends in students' and staff members' perspectives across a variety of related projects within Scotland. The majority of this literature includes staff members' perspectives relating to small-scale, extracurricular projects that focus on reporting the benefits for students (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). In this paper, I value equally staff members' and students' views whilst seeking to understand

the nuances of their perceptions of the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum for both student and staff participants. Since the literature on student engagement and co-creation of the curriculum has been criticised for being undertheorised (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2017), this paper also seeks to understand connections between the benefits of co-creation and theoretical work on the development of self-authorship. Self-authorship tends to focus on students' personal and professional development which "is simultaneously a cognitive (how one makes meaning of knowledge), interpersonal (how one views oneself in relationship to others), and intrapersonal (how one perceives one's sense of identity) matter" (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 10).

Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2017) use the following definition: "'Students as Partners' (SaP) embraces students and staff (including academic/faculty and professional staff) working together on teaching and learning in higher education" (p. 1). Like Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014), the research presented here is based on the premise that the relationship of staff working with students as partners should be reciprocal and based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. I tend to use SaP terminology to denote partnerships in which students and staff work together to improve various areas of the wider student learning experience at university, both inside and outside the classroom. I use the term "co-creation of the curriculum" to specify activities in which students and staff collaborate and negotiate curriculum development decisions to improve learning and teaching. Based on the work of Barnett and Coate (2004) and Lattuca and Stark (2009), I take a broad view of the higher-education curriculum as an active process that includes both course-level and programme-level content, structure, delivery, assessment, and learning outcomes achieved through interaction and collaboration between students and teachers.

Co-creation of the curriculum promotes an open dialogue about meaningful best practices in learning and teaching whilst redistributing power in the classroom and giving students more opportunities, as well as added responsibilities, to take an active part in pedagogical decision-making (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016). Students and staff members participating in co-creation of the curriculum can, and should, contribute different things to a partnership since their roles, expertise, responsibilities, and status are necessarily different (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). Despite ever-growing student numbers with the massification of higher education (Barnett & Coate, 2004; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), efforts to engage in projects co-creating the curriculum are important since they treat learners as individuals, engage students in their own learning experiences, and tailor the curriculum to the needs of each student cohort. Crosling, Thomas, and Heagney (2008) and Kuh (2010) have previously highlighted these as important factors that promote student success and retention.

THE EMERGENCE OF CO-CREATION OF THE CURRICULUM

The idea of students co-creating the higher-education curriculum has become popular because it is student-centred and promotes more active engagement of both students and staff in the learning and teaching experience. Over the past thirty years, the concepts of student-centred learning (Cevero & Wilson, 2001; Entwistle, 1992), self-directed and autonomous learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991), and student involvement and engagement (Astin, 1984; Kuh, 2010; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005) have gained importance within the higher education and adult learning sectors. In particular, student involvement and engagement can contribute to student empowerment and agency (Baxter

Magolda, 1999; Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011; Johansson & Felten, 2014) and success in higher education (Kuh, 2008, 2010; Kuh et al., 2005). Co-creation of the curriculum is a practice that has grown in prominence in the last decade. It draws on and extends these pedagogies to promote engagement and develop students' and staff members' shared ownership and responsibility within learning and teaching processes (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

Although some educators place the onus on students to engage with learning, I, like Kuh (2009, 2010) and Trowler (2010), believe that student engagement should be a mutual responsibility of both students and staff. This is what happens during co-creation of the curriculum since teachers facilitate ways for students to take an active part in their own learning, and students often take up these opportunities to engage in deeper learning experiences. Student engagement is embedded in the Scottish higher-education sector through the instigation of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which sets the expectation that student representatives will work in partnership with staff to enhance learning and teaching and to participate in decision-making at all levels of university governance (QAA, 2012; sparqs, 2015). In my research, I examine how co-creation of the curriculum extends the notion of student engagement beyond student representation to facilitate collaborative curriculum development in various Scottish universities.

Although it is popular in theory, co-creation of the curriculum is not yet widespread in practice since it can challenge entrenched power dynamics as well as institutional structures and processes in the higher-education sector (Bovill et al., 2016; Brew, 2007; Levy, Little, & Whelan, 2011; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017). For instance, Bovill et al. (2016) state that challenges include "perceived personal and institutional risks of redefining traditional staff-student roles and relationships" (p. 199) as well as attempts to change institutional structures, practices, and norms. Since this literature focuses on challenges to co-creation of the curriculum, this research paper focuses on the benefits.

METHODOLOGY

In my research, I aim to provide both an explanatory account of co-creation of the curriculum and an interpretivist account of how participants work towards embedding partnership in the Scottish higher-education sector. To learn about the nuanced nature of students' and staff members' conceptualisations of these complex topics, I employed qualitative research methods. I identified individual staff members at Scottish universities (through their publications, conference presentations, or word of mouth) who facilitate projects co-creating the curriculum with their students. Bovill et al. (2016) classify student roles as co-creators as including consultants, co-researchers, pedagogical co-designers, and representatives. Identified instances of co-creation of the curriculum varied considerably along variables in (a) the number of students involved, from selected student(s) to the whole class; (b) the enrolment status of student partners as past, current, future, or unenrolled students in the relevant course or programme; and (c) the formally designated role of the student partners as consultants, co-researchers, or pedagogical designers. I did not identify any instances of co-creation of the curriculum at the course or programme level that included formally elected or selected student representatives (who are supported by both their student union and university). The individuals identified through criterion sampling included 10 staff members from four Scottish universities who engaged in one or more co-creation-of-the curriculum projects (see Table 1 with each project specified). I used

snowball sampling with these staff members to identify a sample of 14 students who had participated in the identified co-creation projects. Ten of these students agreed to participate in interviews to contribute to this research (see Table 2).

Table 1: Staff participants

Participant	Variables in Each Instance of Co-Creation of the Curriculum	University	Subject Area	Stage in Career	Length of Co-Creation Involvement	Gender
A1	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Education	Later career/ experienced	1 year	M
A2	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, co-researchers; 3) select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Environmental Biology	Later career/ experienced	5 years	M
A3	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Education	Early career	1 year	F
A4	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers and co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Medicine	Later career/ experienced	7 years	M
A5	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, current students, co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	Mid-career	4 years	M
A6	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 3 (research-led)	Service Learning	Later career/ experienced	10 years	F

A7	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 4 (teaching-led)	Psychology	Later career/ experienced	20 years	F
A8	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Politics	Mid-career	1 year	F
A9	whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Politics	Later career/ experienced	1 year	F
A10	1) whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, past students, co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Veterinary Science	Later career/ experienced	5 years	F

Table 2: Student participants

Participant	Variables in Each Instance of Co-Creation of the Curriculum	University	Subject Area	Stage in Student Journey (At Time of Interview)	Mature Student?	Gender
B1	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers and co-researchers	University 1 (research-led)	Medicine	4th-year undergraduate	No	M
B2	1) whole class, current students, pedagogical co-designers; 2) select students, previous students, co-researchers	University 2 (teaching-led)	Marine Biology	Graduated two years ago	No	F
B3	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Career Guidance	Masters student	Yes	F

B4	select students, not on course, consultants	University 2 (teaching-led)	Psychology and Sociology	Masters student	Yes	F
B5	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	F
B6	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	F
B7	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Psychology and Environmental Studies	3rd- year undergraduate	No	F
B8	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Geosciences	4th-year undergraduate	No	M
B9	select students, previous students, pedagogical co-designers	University 3 (research-led)	Geosciences	3rd-year undergraduate	No	M
B10	whole-class, current students, pedagogical co-designers	University 1 (research-led)	Philosophy	4th-year undergraduate	No	F

The identified instances of co-creation of the curriculum within the Scottish higher-education sector include co-design of grading criteria and/or assessment, peer teaching embossed in graded courses, co-development of educational resources, students serving as peer reviewers and as learning and teaching consultants to staff, and student-led projects as a course unfolds. For example, students developed their own multiple-choice exam questions to be used in veterinary exams, and fourth-year medical students prepared and taught a class for second-year students. Another example included experienced students, who had excelled in a course, working with staff members to design educational materials that would be used by a future cohort of students. There were yet other examples where students worked in partnership with staff to develop and implement their own service-learning or teaching projects.

Level 1 ethical clearance was approved by the University of Edinburgh. The aims of the study and the voluntary nature of participation in the research were made transparent through participant information sheets and consent forms. The interviews with staff lasted between 45 and 157 minutes, whereas the interviews with students lasted between 35 and 75 minutes. It was apparent from the staff response rate and the average interview length that they were proud to share their innovative work, and many felt flattered that I showed

interest in their innovative projects to co-create the curriculum with students. The student participants were all happy to have had the opportunity to co-create the curriculum with staff, and many saw participating in an interview as a way of giving back to the teacher whilst also advancing academic knowledge in this area.

During the semi-structured interviews with staff and student practitioners of co-creation of the curriculum, I explored various topics including participants' experiences of working in partnership and their beliefs concerning the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum. I learnt about their perceptions of effective teaching and student engagement, how they conceptualise co-creation of the curriculum, why they engage in it, and what purposes of higher education they believe it will achieve. With permission from each participant, I audio-recorded the interviews and produced transcripts of the extensive qualitative data. These were then analysed using elements of a grounded-theory approach, using NVivo and involving the constant comparative method to identify themes emerging from the data.

RESULTS

Three main themes emerged from the results from students' and staff members' perceptions and reflections on the benefits of co-creation of the curriculum: (a) shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) individual satisfaction and development. Each of these themes is presented below.

Shared responsibility, respect, and trust

Many participants shared their reflections on the changes that occur in the classroom when staff share responsibility with students and facilitate the creation of a learning environment based on respect and trust. Both staff and student participants highlighted that staff often take overall responsibility for the curriculum and choose to create spaces within the curriculum where they can work as partners. For instance, Student Participant 9 stated:

> In terms of co-creation, I think of course the staff need to lead it because it is their job, they are paid for it, they know how to do it. But I think there is definitely an element for students to come in.

Similarly, Staff Participant 9 said:

> It is a partnership but I think there has to be a respect for expertise whilst also the experts, if you like, respecting the new insights and fresh insights of looking at things that students can provide.

Both Student Participant 9 and Staff Participant 9 share views on how academic staff members can create spaces and show they value students' perspectives and new ideas to enhance the higher-education curriculum.

When staff begin to share responsibility with students whilst co-creating the curriculum, both staff and students can at first find this to be more challenging than traditional teaching methods. However, they often highlighted benefits of increased student engagement. Staff Participant 1 shared initial challenges in developing this engagement:

> A lot of it just goes back to making sure that we don't look like we are just being really lazy, "there you go, create your own curriculum. . . ." We do need to throw stuff back [to students] and help people understand that it's good for them to lead the engagement part as well.

Similarly, Student Participant 2 spoke about the staff member she worked with during co-creation of the curriculum:

> I think it was a conscious decision on his part: the fact that he'd opened himself up for criticism created this environment where we felt comfortable. . . . I think being treated with respect in that way really gives students a kind of satisfaction from the course and know that their views are actually being listened to because they're being treated like adults. I think there's a sense of empowerment from it so you really leave feeling that you can make a difference in that your views are really relevant enough to change something like that.

This student shared her views on how staff facilitating co-creation of the curriculum can feel vulnerable to criticism when they share responsibility with students. However, she also suggested that she felt empowered to engage because staff had respected and trusted students' views about curriculum design.

This theme of respect and trust emerged strongly in the data. Many participants emphasised their view that practitioners of co-creation of the curriculum create an environment where respect and trust helps students feel safer when choosing to engage in learning activities. Staff Participant 9 said:

> I think there has to be the opportunity to say slightly controversial things. For us, we've always said that it has to be within a context of respect. . . . It's about providing support and an enabling environment but also a challenging one because actually we're about taking your views and then looking at them around in 360°, imagining different perspectives. I would say that that's one part of the environment, and allowing people to say silly things without feeling that they have to crawl away.

Speaking about the experience of sharing responsibility, Student Participant 10 reflected:

> I guess you feel more important. . . . Throughout the course we worked in those groups of four to create our learning portfolios, to create our reading lists, all these things. I've ended up being best friends with those people in my group, when I hadn't really formed many good friendships with people on my course until now, so it's been a great opportunity in that respect as well. It comes back to the classroom not just being a cold environment; it's a place where you're friends. It does make a difference. You're more comfortable and feel safer.

This student suggests that spending time to build respect and trust can facilitate a learning community that improves students' academic experience. This theme will be expanded in the next section.

Learning from each other within a collaborative learning community

Many participants shared the view that co-creation of the curriculum helps them foster a strong learning community that encourages the active engagement of all participants. For instance, when speaking of the aims of his co-creation of the curriculum project, Staff Participant 2 stated:

> Collegiality is different than just working together, so I think collegiality is about creating, working together to reflect shared values and go beyond just your individual interests. . . . I think working with students has a prospect for radical collegiality because it's challenging the idea that students are not colleagues. . . . Clearly they're not peers in terms of subject expertise, but they should be peers in terms of teaching processes because students have much more expertise actually. They obviously have much more experience knowing what it's like to be a student in our classes than we do.

This staff participant shared how he creates a learning community by respecting students as peers and learning from their experiences. Staff Participant 7 expanded on this idea:

> There's a symbiosis between us and things that are in the ether now that weren't there before, that's a kind of creating. . . . I think I probably could squeeze it down into creating learning materials, creating learning experiences, this idea of the whole being more than the sum of its parts: it's a dialogue between the lecturer and the student. The learning can be an emergent property of the expertise of the lecturer and the lived experience of the student, making content relevant, scaffolded, and tailored to student knowledge of the subject.

This participant shows that co-creation of the curriculum can foster active learning experiences for not only students but also staff members.

Many participants underscored that co-creation of the curriculum helps them bridge the gap between staff and students within a learning community in which staff and students learn from each other. By promoting a more inclusive curriculum-design process, staff reflected that their students reacted differently to their teaching. For instance, Staff Participant 8 stated:

> We tried as much as possible to let them see the nuts and bolts of the process, and how these things kind of get devised. . . . I think it took a certain amount of trust on both of our parts, and the trust has paid off. . . . they have not only more of an appreciation of what it is you do, but also they have more of an appreciation of what they need to do to achieve the marks they need to achieve.

Furthermore, Staff Participant 9 learnt about the effect of teaching students about pedagogy:

> For me, the thing that's come out [of the co-created course] that had never occurred to me before, which maybe shows how daft I am, was that showing your workings to students makes a huge difference. . . . [It] had never occurred to me to talk to students about basic pedagogic principles. Now it seems such a simple thing to have done which I had never done. Actually those couple of weeks on pedagogy had a transformational effect on students. . . . it really made them incredibly active and reflexive. I just thought, "I've been missing a trick for a couple of decades on that!"

The language and repetition that this participant uses suggests that engaging in a more collaborative and creative curriculum-design process can have a transformative effect for not only students but also for staff. Similarly, Staff Participant 10 said:

> The more you engage students in activities like this, the more they empathise with the role that academics play. That comes back to my thing about bridging the gap between staff and students, bringing the communities closer together.

It was not only the staff members who noticed that co-creation of the curriculum provoked a change in the dynamic of teaching. Student Participant 4 stated:

> The first time I did the project it was completely new and the staff were also learning at the same time. That was positive, I think, because it helped to know everyone was in the same boat. Even although they were the specialists in this area it was nice to know there wasn't an "us and them" divide.

Helping students understand curriculum design processes and including them in decision-making can help students engage more within their learning community with peers and staff.

Satisfaction and development for staff and students

Both staff and students reflected on their positive experiences of co-creation of the curriculum. Many staff participants in this study emphasised the positive effect of co-creation of the curriculum on their teaching, professional development, and job satisfaction. Staff Participant 4 stated,

> There is a fantastic synergy and collaboration with the students who are doing the writing, and that's very rewarding for staff—striking up some intimate academic relationships.

Similarly, Staff Participant 7 explained:

> You're being active in the process of the enterprise [of teaching] and the social relationship is more authentic. . . . It gives life meaning to both the student and the lecturer; it turns the enterprise into a meaningful and worthwhile one.

These two participants reflected on the exciting collaborative work with their students during co-creation of the curriculum, which was rewarding when they got to know their students professionally. Furthermore, as mentioned above, staff tend to learn more from

their students when participating in co-creation of the curriculum than they do from the feedback they receive in traditional courses. For instance, Staff Participant 6 stated:

> It's made me more interested and excited about teaching, I think, being able to do this and to improve and develop my teaching.

Therefore, in addition to being a more enjoyable form of teaching for staff members, it can also help them in their professional development by working to enhance their teaching practices.

Students also compared co-creation of the curriculum with their experiences of more traditional teaching methods. Student Participant 4 stated,

> One of the downsides to University is you do very much learn what you need to learn to pass exams. Same, I think, in the British education system in general, but when you are co-creating something in the curriculum you are immersed in it, you can't avoid learning things. I think that's a good way to learn for actually remembering things and getting a good grip on the knowledge and the theories. I think it's beneficial.

Similarly, Student Participant 10 reflected poignantly on the impact of co-creation of the curriculum:

> Yeah, I was actually considering dropping out throughout last year so having this course to look forward to was the main reason why I stayed, really. . . . You feel like what you're learning is really relevant to your life rather than just something you can put in your short-term memory and forget about once the exam is over or an essay is over. . . . Everything I've learned [in this co-created class], that's for the rest of my life and I know that people will be benefiting from it in years to come.

These two students shared views that co-creation of the curriculum helped them learn more about their subjects in a way that facilitated their enjoyment of learning.

Furthermore, many students spoke about the personal and professional development that they gained through participation in co-creation of the curriculum. Student Participant 7 shared her thoughts:

> I also learned a bit more about responsibility. I think having that close interaction, that close engagement with professors, you're held accountable for more. . . . I think there was less room for me to casually do it or just pass by, which in other classes that's easier to do if there's less accountability and trust that's made, that bond.

Student Participant 10 stated:

> I think it taught me to challenge authority a bit more. . . . It meant that now, going into the workplace and the wider world, I know just because someone has a higher status than me. . . I can still challenge them and I should still have the confidence to question things and not just take things because I'm on a lower level than them.

Similarly, Student Participant B4 said:

> It's been a really good experience of gaining confidence in my own ability because it's too easy to say, "you're just a student" when there's no "just" about it. Just because your're learning, doesn't mean you don't know or don't have the authority to say things.

These students appear to have developed considerably whilst participating in projects co-creating the curriculum.

DISCUSSION

There is strong overlap across the three themes reflecting that co-creation of the curriculum benefits individuals by promoting (a) shared responsibility, respect, and trust; (b) learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and (c) satisfaction and development for individuals. The first theme captures staff and students' views of curricular co-creation as that which is developed on a foundation of shared responsibility and respect for different views, which promotes trust. Participants highlighted that academic members of staff often take overall responsibility for curriculum development decisions due to their subject expertise, teaching experience, and job responsibilities within university structures and quality-assurance processes. Even though curriculum development usually relies on academic staff members' choices in curriculum design and planning (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), staff members facilitating co-creation of the curriculum actively create spaces to work collaboratively with students to hear their views, experiences, and alternative perspectives and to inform curriculum decisions.

Like in the work of Cook-Sather et al. (2014), participants in this study also emphasised three key aspects of co-creation of the curriculum: respect for different opinions, reciprocity by sharing different (although not necessarily the same) expertise and perspectives, and responsibility shared amongst students and staff. These tend to be both foundational prerequisites for co-creation projects as well as outcomes because they are strengthened through the experience of working together. Several participants reflected on the risks, vulnerabilities, and challenges that co-creation of the curriculum can present; however, they also noted that shared responsibility, respect, and reciprocity tend to create safe learning communities where they feel comfortable challenging themselves and others whilst developing personally and professionally.

Participants highlighted various ways in which students actively contribute through participating in co-creation projects: (a) through students sharing their lived experience both as students and as individuals living in the 21st century, (b) through staff incorporating students' ideas when applying theoretical knowledge to practical examples, and (c) through students and staff learning from each other through dialogue and exploration of complex issues. By facilitating student engagement in these ways, students contribute their existing knowledge and perspectives so that the curriculum is tailored to their aims and interests and becomes more relevant to their lives. Both Dewey (1916/2004, 1934) and Kuh (2010) emphasise the importance of tailoring learning and teaching experiences to the needs, interests, and aims of students. Co-creation of the curriculum often facilitates a dialogue between students and staff to align their needs, interests, and aims whilst making the educational experience more relevant and meaningful for students. In particular, co-creation of the curriculum can recognise students' perspectives to internationalise and

diversify the curriculum by incorporating the needs and interests of the student body of the 21st century. This, in turn, can often help students feel that their academic experience is relevant to the "real world."

Many student and staff participants in this study shared that co-creation of the curriculum had a transformational effect on student participants who felt respected, valued, and more confident to contribute not only in the classroom but also in wider society. Kuh (2008, 2010) in particular highlights how high-impact educational practices recognise students' talents, empower them, and help students rise to meet new academic challenges. Educational practices like co-creation of the curriculum help students become active members of their learning community and also model and teach students how to become active citizens in democratic society outside of the classroom, which was also shown by Bron, Bovill, and Veugelers (2016).

Both the student and staff participants in this study used phrases such as "crawl away" and "cold environment" that reflect their negative experiences with some forms of traditional teaching. This contrasts sharply with their feelings of comfort and safety within an "enabling environment" in which students feel "important" and respected. Similarly, Noddings (2005) highlights the importance of care, mutual respect, and responsiveness in the classroom which positively contribute to the learning and teaching experience of both students and staff. Although Noddings' work focuses on children and younger students, it seems extremely relevant to the views presented by participants in this study. Care and respect are important aspects of robust learning communities that can help both staff and students feel safer as they explore new learning and teaching practices. Student and staff participants in this study reflected on the absence of care and respect in traditional forms of teaching, and noticed their presence within more innovative and collaborative co-creation projects.

Traditional teaching in higher education can be characterised by entrenched hierarchies (Brew, 2007; Levy et al., 2011). However, participants in co-creation projects often try to challenge these hierarchies by working in partnership with students and, where possible, promoting equality in the classroom by involving students in democratic decision-making. This is also apparent in the work of Bron et al. (2016) and Cook-Sather et al. (2014). Student participants in particular shared views on how co-creation of the curriculum contrasts sharply with traditional teaching methods and hierarchies with a "sage on the stage" lecturing to students and presenting him/herself as an expert who knows all the answers. These students reflected on the negative and often alienating impact of lecture-based and exam-based higher-education pedagogy.

Compared to the distance that tends to separate teacher and student roles in more traditional forms of teaching, this study found that co-creation of the curriculum can shift the dynamic to a more collegial relationship. Some participants suggested that this more collegial, democratic relationship is beneficial for preparing students for the professional relationships needed to solve the world's complex problems and to live in an age characterised by "supercomplexity," which is at the same time global, ontological, and personal (Barnett, 2004). Speaking about our current supercomplex world, Barnett (2004) notes that the world is changing at a pace faster than ever before and argues that "neither knowledge nor skills, even high level knowledge and advanced technical skills, are sufficient to enable one to prosper in the contemporary world. Other forms of human being are required" (p. 253). Barnett's philosophical conceptualisation of the sense of critical "being"

is similar to the concept of self-authorship in developmental psychology which was advanced by Baxter Magolda (1999), drawing on the work of Perry (1970).

Baxter Magolda (1999) emphasises that self-authorship involves cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development. Similarly, findings presented above show that projects co-creating the curriculum have helped both students and staff develop cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal aspects of self-authorship. Both student and staff participants appear to have gained interpersonal self-authorship through working in partnership, respecting each other's contributions, and learning from each other. Participants in co-creation projects have also shared how they perceived increases in students' and staff members' cognitive development relating to learning and teaching, including the ability to analyse their perspectives critically and to apply knowledge and theory to their lives and academic subject areas. Furthermore, many participants perceived that students developed what Baxter Magolda would recognise as intrapersonal self-authorship by developing responsibility, initiative, confidence, and the ability to challenge authority in the classroom and the wider world.

Although Baxter Magolda (1999) focuses on self-authorship within adolescents and young adults including university students, Barnett's notion of supercomplexity emphasises the need for lifelong learning and the continual adaptation and honing of abilities in order to cope with an ever-changing world and an unknown future (2004). In this sense, this study has found that projects co-creating the curriculum have also helped staff in continuing to advance their self-authorship. Co-creation of the curriculum has helped them develop interpersonally within vibrant learning communities, as well as cognitively by causing them to reflect on and develop their professional practices, try new teaching methods, and receive critical feedback from students to promote teaching enhancement and excellence. At the same time, some staff have continued to develop a sense of intrapersonal self-authorship by evolving their identities as both teachers and learners who are confident in their abilities as they open themselves up to risk and criticism by giving students more ownership in co-creation of the curriculum. In these ways, both staff and students appear to have developed critical "being" and self-authorship through participation in co-creation of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Initial findings from this study suggest that co-creation of the curriculum can be a more collaborative and rewarding form of teaching and learning that can benefit students and staff in various ways. Key benefits include the development of shared responsibility, respect, and trust; learning from each other within a collaborative learning community; and satisfaction and development of individuals. Whilst there are also significant challenges with participating in co-creation of the curriculum, including increased responsibilities for students, increased time and effort involved for both students and staff, and institutional inertia as both students and staff challenge the status quo (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2017), these have been explored elsewhere, and this paper has emphasised the benefits. This research focuses on co-creation of the curriculum within the Scottish higher-education sector; however, it is likely that findings could be relevant to other contexts since this research extends on findings from other relevant students-as-partners research (Bovill, 2013; Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Bovill, Morss, & Bulley, 2009; Bron et al., 2016; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

This paper also attempts to draw new links between co-creation of the curriculum and philosophy of education theory as well as psychological development theories. It is hoped that these links between theory and practice can be further explored through future research in other contexts for both students and staff. This paper attempts to show how co-creation of the curriculum can promote democratic values and model democratic engagement in the learning community, which may help students and staff to advance their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal senses of self-authorship and critical "being." Extending beyond the skills and knowledge that are often emphasised within traditional higher-education teaching, this development of self-authorship and critical "being" can help both students and staff to adapt to an ever-changing, supercomplex world. When students and staff form partnerships based on trust and respect, they can advance more intrinsically rewarding forms of collaborative teaching and learning that benefit not only individual students and staff, but also their communities.

This research was approved by the Moray House Graduate School of Education (University of Edinburgh) Ethics Committee using approved processes.

NOTE ON THE CONTRIBUTOR

Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka *is a PhD student conducting higher education research at the Moray House Graduate School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include student engagement, teaching excellence, purposes of higher education, and benefits and challenges of co-creation of the curriculum*.

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ARTICLE

"I Feel Like Some Students are Better Connected": Students' Perspectives on Applying for Extracurricular Partnership Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

While existing research has discussed the need for student-faculty partnership opportunities to be inclusive and accessible, attention to students' motivations for participating in extracurricular partnership activities, and to their sense of the relative accessibility of such opportunities, has been limited. The present study, designed and conducted by students and faculty working in partnership, aimed to address this gap in the literature by exploring how students at a Canadian research-intensive university with a centrally-supported Student Partners Program perceive extracurricular partnership opportunities and the process of applying for them. Drawing from survey and focus group data, we describe students' motivations for taking part in student-staff partnership initiatives and their sense of the program features that enable and constrain students' participation. Implications of these findings for practitioners and researchers interested in Students as Partners are discussed.

KEYWORDS

student-faculty partnership, motivation, barriers, facilitators, inclusion

This study aims to explore how students perceive opportunities to participate in extracurricular student-faculty partnership. While retroactive student engagement in teaching and learning enhancement is commonplace in many institutions, the practice of engaging students as equal collaborators in the research or development of pedagogy (Cook-Sather,

Bovill, & Felten, 2014) is in its relatively early stages. As suggested by the conceptual model proposed by Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014, 2016), this more proactive approach to student-faculty partnership can take place in a range of contexts, including subject-based research, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), and curriculum design and pedagogical consultancy.

Across these contexts, many benefits of student-faculty partnerships have been cited (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), including enhancement of both student and faculty learning (Cook-Sather, 2011; Little et al., 2011; Huxham, Hunter, McIntyre, Shilland, & McArthur, 2015). Participating students gain transferable skills and experience positive shifts in their identities, aiding in personal development (Cook-Sather, 2015; Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015) and employability (Jarvis, Dickerson, & Stockwell, 2013). For faculty, novel student perspectives promote reflection that can enable higher quality curriculum and instruction (Healey, Bradford, Roberts, & Yolande, 2013; Pounder, Ho-Hung Lam, & Groves, 2016), while the development of new types of relationships facilitates changed understandings and approaches to teaching (Cook-Sather, 2014; Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016). Engaging students as partners can also create a more student-centred and egalitarian model of higher education (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Matthews, Cook-Sather, & Healey, 2017) and can help to push back against dominant, neoliberal forces that focus narrowly on outcomes and position students as consumers of higher education (McCulloch, 2009; Neary, 2014).

Alongside these numerous benefits, however, notable challenges connected to adopting student-faculty partnership practices have also been discussed (see, e.g., Allin, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard & Moore-Cherry, 2016, Marquis, Black, & Healey, 2017). For instance, the difficulties attached to navigating entrenched institutional structures, sharing power, and stepping outside of traditional roles have been widely considered, (Delpish et al., 2010; Marquis et al., 2016; Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008; Seale, Gibson, Haynes, & Potter, 2015), and some have argued that the radical potential of partnership programs can be overstated (Kandiko Howson & Weller, 2016; Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017; Weller, Domarkaite, Lam, & Metta, 2013). While such investigations of how power operates within, and affects the outcomes of, student-faculty partnerships are significant, less attention has been paid to the more immediate goals of individuals involved in partnerships and how these affect their decision to participate (see Acai et al., 2017 for one exception). With this in mind, more study is needed of when and why students, for example, might want to engage in partnership where opportunities exist. This issue is made more pressing by the fact that existing research focuses primarily on exploring the perspectives of faculty and students who have already participated in partnership endeavours. This risks overlooking perspectives that exist within the broader student and faculty populations, particularly since evidence suggests individuals involved in many partnership opportunities may be a distinct cohort (Bell, 2016; Flint, 2016; Matthews, 2017). As such, a compelling gap remains in the literature with respect to how people who are *not* involved in student-faculty partnership perceive the concept and why they have not participated.

This gap becomes especially important given ongoing discussions about the relative inclusiveness of partnership opportunities (e.g., Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Bovill et al., 2016). Many have pointed out that selective, extracurricular partnership initiatives tend to

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involve only a small group of high-achieving students, many of whom also have access to additional kinds of social capital and privilege (Felten et al., 2013; Moore-Cherry, Healey, Nicholson, & Andrews, 2016). To the extent this is true, partnership opportunities risk entrenching or exacerbating existing inequities and limiting the diversity of student perspectives brought to bear on teaching and learning tasks. This issue is perhaps especially compelling since others have argued that the benefits of partnership are particularly significant for students who identify as members of equity-seeking groups (Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011; Cook-Sather & Agu, 2015). Nevertheless, researchers have also documented situations in which students are not especially interested in participating in partnership initiatives (see, e.g., Seale et al., 2015), or have argued that enforced approaches to student engagement limit and disregard students' autonomy (MacFarlane, 2016). With this set of challenges in mind, further attention to the reasons students do or do not participate in partnership activities is needed.

Our study thus aims to explore a broader range of student perspectives on student-faculty partnership, considering the perceptions of those who have taken part in partnership opportunities and of those who have not. The context for our exploration is an extracurricular partnership program (which the authors have participated in and/or oversee) within a research-intensive university in Ontario, Canada. The Student Partners Program (SPP) is run by the central teaching and learning institute, and creates opportunities for students to partner with faculty and staff on a wide range of teaching and learning projects. Many become involved in SoTL research, while others participate in course (re)design, curriculum review, or pedagogic consultancy. Each term, students apply to join projects that have been selected (by a committee of students and staff) for inclusion in the program, and are invited to work (in paid positions) for approximately five hours a week as full members of project teams (for further details, see Marquis, Haqqee, et al., 2017; Marquis, 2017). Since the program was developed in 2013, undergraduate and graduate students from across campus have participated, and we have been able to expand such that it now involves approximately 100 students each year. Nevertheless, we remain conscious that only a small percentage of the student population applies to participate in any given term, and many who do apply are not offered positions. With that in mind, this research seeks to understand the perceptions of partnership offered by students who have and have not taken part in the SPP, and to investigate what factors influence students' participation in both this specific program and other partnership opportunities. By exploring these questions, we aim to contribute to the growing literature about student motivation to participate in partnership, and about the potential barriers to and facilitators of such participation.

METHODOLOGY

Given the benefits of student-faculty co-inquiry (see Werder & Otis, 2010), and in alignment with principles of good practice in SoTL (see Felten, 2013), the present pilot study was designed and conducted by four undergraduate students and one faculty member working in partnership. In line with our focus on students' experiences and perceptions, and with an interpretivist epistemology that understands social realities as multiple and variable (Merriam, 2009), we gathered a range of data that privileges students' perspectives on partnership opportunities. Following clearance from our institutional research ethics board, we invited

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current undergraduate and graduate students at the university to participate in an anonymous, online survey which contained a mixture of multiple-choice, open-ended, and ranking questions about participants' perceptions of partnership, and about the factors that encourage or discourage them from taking part in partnership opportunities. Special attention was paid to the SPP; respondents were asked to indicate if they had taken part in or applied for the program and to specify issues that facilitated or deterred their participation. The survey also included an optional question wherein respondents could indicate if they would be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss these issues further. Those who indicated interest were contacted by email, and focus groups approximately 45 minutes in length were scheduled. These discussions, which were facilitated by pairs of student researchers, aimed to gather richer data about the issues raised in the survey questions and provided student participants with an opportunity to discuss their understandings of partnership in ways that echo the dialogic processes of meaning-making characteristic of everyday experience (Barbour 2007; Kosny, 2003). Focus group questions included prompts about why participants might or might not be interested in taking part in partnership initiatives, and what factors they think influence whether or not students participate.

Following data collection, survey data were exported from the survey tool, and basic descriptive statistics were calculated for ranking and multiple choice questions. Verbatim transcripts were created for all focus groups, and the research team completed thematic analysis of these and of responses to the open-ended survey questions using constant comparative analysis (Merriam, 2009). Each transcript was first coded by one researcher, who examined that transcript and highlighted points that resonated with our research questions. We then checked the initial coding (each reviewing one or two transcripts we had not yet coded), and worked together to establish a preliminary code tree that drew out key ideas. We subsequently returned to the transcripts to re-code them using the developed code tree, modifying elements as necessary. This second phase of analysis, which was conducted using a qualitative analysis program called Dedoose, was finalized by having another member of the team check the coding of each transcript, before the principal investigator reviewed all transcripts and code tree branches to confirm consistency in our application. Any substantial discrepancies noted during this process were discussed by the team until we reached consensus.

Ultimately, 65 students elected to take part in the survey, of whom 17 had participated in the SPP and 48 had not. Fourteen of these participants were graduate students (five Masters students and nine PhD students), while 51 were undergraduates (22 in year one or two, 28 in year three or above, and one in year two of a second undergraduate degree). They were pursuing degrees in a wide range of programs, with the largest concentrations coming from the Faculties of Science (n=21) and Health Sciences (n=13) and the interdisciplinary Arts & Science Program (n=11). Seven participants were enrolled in programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences, six in the Faculty of Engineering, and one in the School of Business, while two were pursuing combined degrees (in Business and Social Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) and four did not clearly indicate a program affiliation. Nineteen of these respondents (five SPP participants and 14 who had not been involved with the SPP) also chose to take part in a focus group discussion. Six focus groups were held, ranging in size from two to

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four participants, while one additional session had only one participant and thus proceeded as an interview. While these participant numbers represent a small fraction of the university's total population, we note the disagreement that exists in the literature about required sample sizes (see, e.g., Hill, 1998) and argue that our data, framed appropriately, are sufficient for a pilot study. Our claim, then, is not that these data are representative of the entire population of students at the university, but rather that they offer a window into the experiences of those who participated, and that these experiences in turn generate productive, preliminary insights that might be used to guide future research and practice.

FINDINGS

Motivations for participating

In an effort to understand students' rationale for engaging in student-faculty partnerships, participants were asked about factors that motivate them to take part in such opportunities. All of the factors mentioned by participants in the focus groups overlap with options selected commonly by survey respondents, with one notable exception—participants in the focus groups also mentioned students' desire to feel valued and appreciated for their contributions as a reason for pursuing partnership opportunities. For example, one stated, "It's really empowering to have someone that . . . has been in the field for forty years . . . take your ideas seriously . . . and really listen to what you have to say, [and] work actively to try and incorporate your opinions and ideas" (P5). Feeling valued was noted as an empowering experience that gives students the confidence to approach faculty and provides a sense of positivity that motivates students to pursue partnership opportunities.

Several additional factors, which arose in the focus groups and the survey, were identified as motivators to participate in partnership opportunities. The most commonly mentioned of these factors are discussed below.

Interest in content or process

Student interest in the topic or field of a partnership project was identified as the most common motivating factor for participants in both the focus groups and the survey. In the survey, when participants who had applied for the SPP were asked if interest in the projects involved in the program contributed to their decision to apply, 16 out of the 22 respondents said "yes." Eleven of 22 also cited a desire to learn more about the education system specifically. Furthermore, three out of the five respondents who had heard of the SPP but had not applied said that a lack of interest in the project topics was a factor that deterred them from applying. As noted in the focus group excerpt below, genuine interest in content creates an intrinsic will to participate:

> Interest in whatever is being studied is a really big factor. Like, regardless of the nature of the student-faculty partnership, you can be on the greatest team ever, but if you're not actually enjoying what you're doing, it's still not going to be a good or beneficial experience for you. (P6)

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Personal and professional development

The opportunity to learn and to grow intellectually was also positioned as a popular reason for participating in partnership programs. Developing skills in an experiential setting outside of the classroom was an appealing component for many participants, as in the case of one who noted that "being able to engage in a wide variety of activities to kind of cultivate … a whole host of skills is … beneficial at the undergraduate level" (P6). Student-faculty partnerships provide a great opportunity for intellectual growth, and participants who associated this factor with the SPP and other partnership initiatives were more motivated to apply.

Participants also perceived the SPP to be a valuable stepping stone towards their graduate studies and/or their career goals. In the survey, when participants were asked if reaching future academic or career goals was a motivating factor for applying, 16 out of the 22 respondents who had applied to the SPP provided a positive response. A focus group participant offered similar comments:

> It could be an important component of your graduate school or professional school application. And it's a great way to develop soft skills that you wouldn't learn in your regular classes. So I think there's a big academic and vocational value in participating in partnerships like these. (P10)

Partnership opportunities are perceived as a catalyst for attaining academic and professional goals; consequently, participants who associated professional development with the SPP said that they were more motivated to apply to the program.

Networking and relationship-building

Participants also identified opportunities for networking and building relationships with faculty as motivators. When asked on the survey if the opportunity to work in partnership with faculty or staff was a motivating factor, 15 of the 22 respondents who had applied to the SPP said "yes." As indicated by the quotations below, focus group comments suggest that some participants see the development of relationships with faculty as important for supporting future opportunities or career goals, while others value these relationships in and of themselves:

> If we can have those mentorship relations solidified at an undergraduate level, that would go a long way in creating those in graduate school—having to work with somebody and knowing the ropes already. (P13)

> You know, you work in a lab or you work in an office, and it's mostly just you, and you don't even have that close connection with your supervisor. So…I find that I have a really good relationship with my supervisor [in the SPP]. And she's supportive, and she kind of makes up for what my … PhD supervisor is not sometimes. (P2)

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As noted in the last excerpt, the potential for a different, positive relationship between faculty and students plays an important role in motivating some to engage in partnership opportunities.

Facilitators of participation

In addition to describing reasons they might be interested in participating in student-faculty partnership, participants also named several factors that would make it easier for them to participate where opportunities exist. The structure of partnership initiatives was highlighted, for example, with focus group participants mentioning features like flexibility in scheduling as potential facilitators of student involvement. Similarly, the perceived approachability of faculty partners was discussed, with some participants suggesting that the more personable and supportive the faculty member, the more likely students would be willing to participate. Two of the most commonly reported facilitators, however, were previous experiences and established networks. These interconnected factors are described in turn below.

Previous experiences

A common theme arising from the data was that particular kinds of curricular or co-curricular experiences, such as enrolment in certain academic programs or involvement in campus clubs, encourage students to apply for partnership opportunities. Such involvement was seen as a strong way for students to discover or confirm their interest in the kinds of projects or processes that might be involved in partnership initiatives. As one focus group participant noted, "by participating in a lot of different things you learn more about yourself and you can learn what your interests are and whether this partnership is something that could be a good fit for you" (P14). Relevant prior experience with research or academic work, as well as existing opportunities to engage with faculty members, were likewise positioned as factors that would support students' participation in partnership projects, as the comments below demonstrate:

> Classes that involve research in them, so, like, inquiry-based classes, or even, like, upper-year classes where you get a little more interaction in working within labs and stuff like that, having experience interacting with profs, I guess, would probably be something that would make you more likely to apply just because you have that experience of interacting with faculty members. (P1)

> Your interactions with professors and things are also like a good indicator of ... how successful you can imagine yourself to be in this kind of position. … I think if you have like really positive interactions, you'd feel more like suited for this kind of role. (P9)

As the last comment suggests, previous experiences were seen to support the growth of students' self-confidence alongside the development of their skills and their perceived "fitness

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for partnership." Enhanced confidence due to experience, in turn, was seen to facilitate further participation in activities like student-faculty partnerships:

> You have to overcome this initial feeling of inadequacy. So, like, when you start off you're like, "I don't have anything to contribute, I don't have anything to say." Then once you've done it once you realize, "Oh, I'm fine ... my contributions are valuable." . . . So you feel less uncomfortable the next time you [have] to do it. (P15)

Enhanced confidence is perhaps an especially important support for partnership given the entrenched student-faculty hierarchies existing at universities. As one participant noted, interacting with faculty is "one of those things where until you do it, it seems impossible" (P5). Previous experience, and the confidence it can generate, thus should not be underestimated.

Social networks

Beyond the development of confidence, interests, and skills afforded by particular experiences, participants also suggested that activities and affiliations on campus led some students to develop social networks that supported their entry into partnership work. On the one hand, such networks were seen to increase the likelihood of students being selected for partnership opportunities because, as one focus group participant suggested of people involved in clubs, they "build up their resume and people recognize who they are" (P12). Indeed, participants also reported that existing connections could lead to being approached or encouraged to participate in partnership, or to receiving personal support for their participation:

> I've been super involved since undergrad, so the opportunities, especially as you go, they come more naturally. And then even as a grad student in education, you know, these things get sent to you or people even personally recommend you for them. (P15)

In addition to increasing the likelihood of being known, and thus invited to participate in partnership activities, existing social networks developed through campus experiences were positioned as facilitating partnership by enhancing students' understanding of relevant initiatives or their willingness to apply:

> In [one program on campus], we . . . have classmates and friends who have been involved, and then, it's so much easier when you see someone you know for a little while involved in that, to take the next step. (P1)

> I think that knowing people who have already done it, and having . . . personal connections and conversations with people who have done it can give you a good sense of what it actually involves, and . . . how you can write a good cover letter and resume. (P3)

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Perhaps most fundamentally, the social networks formed by involvement in campus life and enrolment in particular (typically small) academic programs were seen as key to facilitating partnership by supporting students' awareness that partnership opportunities exist. As one participant noted, "the more exposure you get by participating in more different things, the more you hear about different opportunities, so I think that definitely helps a lot" (P14). Likewise, several participants noted that they'd heard about initiatives like the SPP through communications from friends or faculty and students affiliated with their academic programs, acknowledging (indirectly or explicitly) that such awareness is a necessary precondition of participation. In addition to all the other ways in which connections fostered through involvement on campus can facilitate participation in partnership, such comments affirm that communication via established networks can support partnership participation by providing students with a basic awareness of the opportunities available.

Barriers to participating

Comments made by participants reflect that opportunities to participate in student-faculty partnerships are not perceived to be equally accessible to all students. Lack of time available to dedicate to partnerships, perceived ineligibility for and competitiveness of positions, and lack of awareness of student-faculty partnerships were identified as major barriers that prevent students from taking part.

Perceived eligibility, competitiveness, and student confidence

Engagement in many extracurricular student-faculty partnerships requires students to apply and then be selected to take part. Participants' responses suggest that students are mindful of, and at times intimidated by, these selection processes. On a survey question asking participants to indicate the factors that discourage them from applying for partnership opportunities (not limited to the SPP), 21 of 65 respondents suggested they were concerned that their grades were not high enough. In the focus groups, students likewise expressed concerns regarding their academic standing:

> I think it might be like a confidence kind of thing. Like, I'm just not sure how my grades would measure up to . . . someone else's academic history and . . . whether or not it's worth, like, applying to because . . . maybe it's just, like, too far a stretch. (P9)

Lacking relevant background experiences was also a frequently mentioned concern, with participants noting that some students may be better prepared to take part in partnerships than others. As one focus group participant put it, "sometimes students think that they're ineligible for faculty-student partnerships because they don't have a consistent background in the field" (P11). Echoing this point, 35 of 65 respondents to the survey question about factors discouraging participation selected "I don't think I have relevant experience."

Underlying participants' concerns about meeting perceived academic or experience-related requirements for partnerships were apparent insecurity and under-confidence (perhaps fuelled by power imbalances in the university). Gesturing to this lack of confidence, 22 of 65 respondents to the survey question noted above selected "working with a professor is

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intimidating" and a further 22 selected "I'm worried professors won't value my contributions." Focus group comments offer further examples of this interplay between perceived competitiveness and student confidence:

> I think intimidation can be [an issue]. Like I mentioned before, . . . there's always going to be a power dynamic, so not really feeling comfortable approaching it. And then kind of related, not really feeling that your skills [are] well-suited to actually contribute something. [As] undergraduate student, you don't really feel like what . . . you're learning is going to be super applicable. (P6)

> I know for myself if I were still an undergrad, there is no way on earth that I would ever think I could ever do this. . . . I would think I'm up against the health science students, or I'm against whatever, whoever. . . . I think it's the idea that … there is a level of skill that is required. And so I think people who are new to research, . . . who have never had that opportunity, probably wouldn't even think about applying. (P2)

Participants' conceptualizations of the application process highlighted that they were being evaluated by faculty members. In this model, the faculty members who decide which students qualify to participate in partnerships retain a position of power—one which, as indicated by the comments about intimidation above, is already salient to many students and discourages some from applying. These barriers may be both real and perceived, as while some faculty partners may choose students with particular academic or professional credentials, students may also self-select due to the perceived competitiveness of the selection process.

Time

Many students expressed that the time commitment associated with student-faculty partnerships could also deter students from becoming involved. Time constraints were alluded to in the survey, for example, as 23 of 65 respondents indicated they were discouraged from applying for partnership opportunities because they are busy with other commitments. In the focus groups, lack of time due to other commitments was again raised, sometimes in ways related to financial accessibility, as students may choose paid jobs over unpaid or minimally compensating student-faculty partnerships:

> Time commitment is also a big one. A lot of faculty members will, I guess, prefer students who can dedicate a much greater amount of time to their project than students who would be only willing to work on it on a part-time basis. And I guess that makes sense on their part. As a full time student I know it's not always possible to take on a project, especially as an extracurricular activity if it's expected that I spend more time I guess, than I would on a regular basis. (P10)

Students may have other priorities, such as academic courses, ensuring financial security, or getting work experience in their field of interest, which discourages involvement in extracurricular partnerships.

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Awareness

Just as participants noted that awareness of partnership opportunities (often facilitated by other kinds of campus involvement) was a necessary precondition of taking part, so too did they note that lack of awareness constitutes a formidable barrier to participation. More than half of the survey respondents (35 of 65) suggested that limited awareness of partnership opportunities discourages them from participating. Likewise, of the 48 survey participants who had not taken part in the SPP, only 10 indicated that they had heard of it. Focus group participants also reiterated that they or other students they knew were not especially familiar with the SPP. This lack of awareness about student-faculty partnerships among particular groups of students prevents these opportunities from being inclusive, particularly for those students who might not be as well connected in the university. As one participant noted:

> I think awareness, particularly about this program, is a big part of it. And I feel like some students are better connected than other students, and then those students share that information with their friends, and peers, and so opportunities often are really concentrated in certain segments of the student body. (P5)

Efforts to generate more widespread awareness of partnership opportunities would thus serve to mitigate some of the barriers participants described.

DISCUSSION

The current research is not without limitations, including the relatively small size of its participant pool, and the fact that many participants seemed to limit their understandings of partnership to opportunities to engage in research (disciplinary or pedagogical) with faculty. Nevertheless, by examining the motivators, facilitators, and barriers described by a range of students at one institution with a growing student-faculty partnership program, this pilot study offers a number of insights that have implications for those interested in partnership research and practice. Most significantly, by exploring students' perceptions of the accessibility of extracurricular partnership opportunities and their reasons for taking part (or not taking part) in such initiatives, the study begins to fill a gap in the literature about the relative inclusiveness of partnership practices. While much work in this area has considered the dangers of involving only a small proportion of students as partners (see, e.g., Felten et al., 2013; Moore-Cherry et al., 2016), and some studies discuss motivations for participating (see, e.g., Acai et al., 2017), we are unaware of work that investigates thoroughly how students themselves—and particularly students who haven't participated—experience the accessibility of extracurricular partnership opportunities. Our more sustained focus on student perspectives in this research both corroborates some existing concerns about inclusive partnerships and generates a number of new insights for supporting equitable student participation. These are enumerated below.

Student interest in partnership

To begin with, the study points to the potential for relatively widespread interest in selective student-faculty partnership opportunities amongst undergraduate and graduate

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students. While our number of participants is small, and certainly might be tilted in favour of those who are interested in partnership, the findings nonetheless underline that students have a range of motivations for participating in partnership opportunities, even if they haven't (yet) had the chance to experience partnership themselves. Many of these motivators, including opportunities for personal and professional development and a desire to establish rewarding, collegial relationships with faculty, overlap with the benefits of partnership discussed in the literature, suggesting that these benefits are perceived by many students and underpin a desire to take part. Indeed, while several of our participants noted a lack of confidence about their capacity to contribute or indicated that working with faculty sounded intimidating, only two of 65 survey respondents suggested they were not interested in the idea of partnership at all. As such, while acknowledging the argument that students should be given the freedom to choose whether partnership appeals to them (MacFarlane, 2016), the present findings emphasize that many students may be interested in partnership but do not have an opportunity to take it up. In this respect, we offer some preliminary empirical corroboration of concerns about inclusion expressed in existing scholarship.

At the same time, the present data also add further nuance to this discussion. For example, it bears repeating that one of the most common partnership motivators for students in our study was interest in the topic of the project at hand. With this in mind, the fact remains that students might not be interested in all partnership opportunities even if they are attracted to the idea of partnership per se. Along these lines, 11 of the survey respondents who had not taken part in the SPP indicated they would not be interested in applying for it in future, and a few focus group participants shared perceptions that other students they know are put off by partnership-style pedagogical approaches. This complexity suggests the value of further research and debate about when "whole cohort" approaches to partnership (Flint, 2016) should be undertaken, and about how potential student resistance or disinterest should be factored into this discussion.

Barriers, facilitators, and implications for practice

Perhaps more significantly, the present data also underline a range of specific facilitators and barriers reported by participants who largely are interested in extracurricular partnership opportunities. While further research is warranted to determine how widely held such perspectives might be, these findings nonetheless suggest some potential ways forward for practitioners interested in enhancing the inclusiveness of partnership initiatives. In particular, our participants highlighted the multiple, intersecting factors that combine to make some participants more likely to engage in partnership than others. For instance, people enrolled in smaller academic programs that have an emphasis on research and inquiry, or who are heavily involved in campus clubs, were seen to be more comfortable with the idea of partnership given their experience interacting with faculty and their opportunities to hone skills of self-directed, scholarly learning. At the same time, these people often have established networks as a result of their campus involvement, and thus know more about existing opportunities and have the chance to learn about them from friends, colleagues, and faculty connections. Conversely, other students were seen to have little awareness or understanding of partnership opportunities, and also to feel less confident about their capacity to contribute to partnerships

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or to secure competitive positions. Practically speaking, this makes clear the potential value of targeted information campaigns about programs like the SPP within larger programs and among "less connected" groups, such as part-time students or first-generation students.

Given our findings, a major goal of such initiatives should also be to find ways to take into account the variable levels of confidence that students might have had a chance to develop as a result of their experiences and social locations. The widespread sense of students doubting their capacities in our data makes clear that considerations of power figure significantly into partnership even before it begins, and underscores that these may be experienced as particularly deterring for some student groups. Indeed, just as scholars have noted that faculty who lead partnership initiatives might invite or select only the most high-achieving and socially privileged students to partner with them (Felten et al., 2013), participants in our study suggested that concerns about such selectivity might discourage or prevent students from applying for extracurricular partnership initiatives in the first place. This is particularly problematic insofar as our data, like other partnership research (see, e.g., Cook-Sather, 2015; Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015), emphasize that participating in partnership can play an important role in augmenting one's self-confidence and sense of the value of one's knowledge. A vicious cycle is thus potentially established, where systemic factors leave particular students less likely to attempt partnership, even while participation in partnership endeavours might be one way of helping to grow their confidence and sense of belonging (though, of course, enhanced individual confidence cannot account fully for the broader, inequitable structures that marginalize some students in the first place). Such student self-selection suggests that efforts to enhance inclusivity in partnership initiatives need to extend beyond simply working with faculty to dismantle inequitable selection criteria, although this is certainly important. A first step in this process, which echoes a point made by Bovill and colleagues (2016) and Bell (2016), is to clearly articulate and make transparent to students one's selection criteria in cases where decisions about including students have to be made. The lack of confidence expressed by participants in our data, however, suggests that this may not be sufficient in and of itself.

A compelling avenue for further research, then, is to explore and assess strategies for supporting a diversity of students to "see themselves" in partnership initiatives and to apply if they're interested. Underscoring in advertising campaigns the ways in which a variety of students might contribute to partnership might be one effective step, for example, as might opportunities for students who are "less connected" in the university context to meet with current student partners to learn more about program requirements and emphases. Clearly, such strategies would be most effective if developed in tandem with reviews of partnership program selection criteria and support for faculty that encourages them to counter the common tendency to simply select students who most clearly conform to traditional (and narrow) standards of academic success. And, of course, thinking further about integrating partnership into the taught curriculum, such that all students enrolled in an academic program have a chance to participate and selection is not an issue, is relevant here as well.

More immediately, future research might also aim to access a larger participant pool at institutions of different types with different histories of student-faculty partnership to determine the extent to which the perspectives reported in this pilot study are shared by a broader student group. Given the preliminary insights generated from the comparatively small

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set of students in this study, such research is likely to offer important information that is essential to supporting partnership's radical, egalitarian goals.

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ARTICLE

Resistances and Resiliencies in Pedagogical Partnership: Student Partners' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we explore forms of psychological resistance that 10 female students perceived in their faculty partners and in themselves in the context of a pedagogical partnership program in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Positioning these students as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), our analysis draws on literature in academic development and psychology and on student responses to research questions to discuss how these student partners built resiliencies through the approaches they took to engaging the resistances they perceived. We first present the resistances these student partners perceived in their faculty partners and what factors they think might have contributed to such resistances. Next, we describe the approaches the student partners took to working through the resistances they perceived and the resistances they experienced in themselves. Finally, we analyze the ways that student partners developed resiliencies through productively engaging these forms of resistance.

KEYWORDS

resistance, resilience, student partners, pedagogical partnership

When college faculty engage in classroom-focused pedagogical partnership with undergraduate students, they embark upon a vulnerable-making and potentially transformative experience. Many feel wary of the role student partners play as observers as well as cautious about entering into conversation with their student partners regarding personal insecurities, worries, or moments of joy in the classroom. As one faculty member put it, the prospect of entering partnership "produced the anxious expectancy of classroom observation as a (real or perceived) form of benevolent surveillance" (Reckson, 2014). Once they enter into pedagogical partnership, most faculty find that their student partners offer "observation without judgment—a rare gift—and along with it, a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose" (Reckson, 2014). Yet it is common for faculty to feel initial trepidation.

In addition to this general sense of anxiety and vulnerability that pedagogical partnership raises for some faculty, from the student partner perspective, faculty members' biases and previous experiences can also prompt forms of faculty resistance. These include resistance to being openly vulnerable about their work with their student partners, resistance to trying new pedagogical strategies, and resistance to simply asking for their

student partners' perspectives on classroom practice. Regardless of what form the resistance takes, striving to understand resistance and where it stems from opens the space to confront issues that may feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and filled with prior biases. If these issues are not addressed, partnerships may not be productive, and they most certainly will not be transformative.

Student partners also experience partnership as a vulnerable-making and potentially transformative experience. In an essay co-authored by a student and faculty member who had worked in partnership, the student partner described how she "initially felt anxious" about her new role as a consultant and partner because of "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)" (Reyes & Adams, 2017, p. 2). Like the faculty member quoted above, this student partner found that, as the partnership unfolded, her faculty partner's "openness and honesty" showed the student partner "how invested, committed, and comfortable" the faculty member was. Her faculty partner's engagement made the student partner "better able to open up herself to the partnership as well" (Reyes & Adams, 2017, p. 2).

In the role of pedagogical partner, students must develop approaches to managing their own uncertainties, the forms of resistance they perceive in their faculty partners, and the forms of resistance they sometimes experience themselves in response. In this discussion we do not claim that what student partners perceive captures what faculty partners experience or feel. Our focus is on the experiences and perspectives of a group of 10 student partners who participated in a pedagogical partnership program and the approaches they developed to manage their perceptions. These approaches included striving to build trust and relationships; taking further steps toward their faculty partners (or a kind of leaning in) in an effort to realize the transformative potential of partnership; and, conversely, withdrawing (or taking a step back) out of self-protection.

The focus of this discussion emerged as a result of questions formulated by Anita, first author of this article and an experienced student partner in the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program. SaLT is based in the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, two selective, liberal arts colleges in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Over her three years as a student partner, she had experienced and observed the complexities of faculty and student uncertainties and resistances in pedagogical partnership. These experiences and observations informed her interest in student partners' perspectives on forms of resistance they might have perceived in their faculty partners, why these forms of resistance were present, and how student partners worked through these resistances. Similarly, she wanted to understand the resistance student partners felt based on their faculty partners' level of receptivity towards the partnership. If faculty partners demonstrate lack of trust and communication as well as other forms of disengagement, student consultants can feel resistant to moving forward in their partnership—a kind of resistance in response to resistance.

Anita clarified her questions about these resistances through dialogue with the group of student partners with which she was working one semester, and Alison, second author of this article, saw connections between the questions Anita raised and a study already underway that focused on the experiences of student partners who claim membership in equity-seeking groups (e.g., students who are racialized, LGBTQ+ students, and first-generation students). Building on Anita's linking of resistance and resilience, we

decided to conduct a mini-study within the larger study focused on the perceptions and experiences of resistance identified by this particular group of student partners with whom Anita worked and how engaging those forms of resistance could build forms of resilience. Our use of the plural forms of resistance and resilience is intended to capture the multiplicity of experiences of these phenomena.

To frame our exploration and analysis, we invoke several arguments from the academic development and psychology literature regarding resistance and resilience. We then describe our methods. Next, we present the forms of resistance the 10 female student partners felt they encountered in their faculty partners and what factors they think might have contributed to such resistances. After that, we describe the approaches the student partners took to working through the forms of resistance they perceived and that they experienced themselves. Finally, we analyze the ways that student partners developed resiliencies through engaging these forms of perceived resistance.

RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE IN THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE

Faculty resistance to academic development has been analyzed from a number of angles. Sheth and Stellner (1979) argue that resistance to innovation is influenced by two basic factors: "habit toward an existing practice and perceived risks associated with the innovation" (p. 1). Trowler and Cooper (2002) note that faculty assumptions regarding the "nature of students in higher education (including their abilities and preferences)" (p. 229) and "what is, and is not, appropriate practice in teaching and learning situations" (p. 230) can influence their receptivity to innovation. Resistance to change and innovation can result from cultural forces such as academics' own experiences as students, inherited practices from colleagues, and expectations of current students (Hughes & Barrie, 2010).

Quinn (2012) has analyzed numerous discourses consistent with those described above that are evoked to explain faculty members' resistance to engaging in activities aimed at professionalizing academic practice. She also suggests developing ways of analyzing such resistance that are more enabling of faculty engagement in professionalization. Likewise, Deaker, Stein, and Spiller (2016) point to the tendency of faculty to resist forms of professionalization that they may experience as oppressive, focusing in particular on commonalities they found between discourses about resistance to teaching development and faculty views about teaching and learning as captured in their comments on student evaluations of teaching. In relation to student-faculty partnership work in particular, Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, and Moore-Cherry (2016) suggest that "custom and common practices alongside the perceived personal and institutional risks of redefining traditional staff-student roles and relationships inform the challenges staff and students experience in co-creating learning and teaching" (p. 199).

These arguments from the academic development literature provide some context for our analysis of student partners' perceptions of faculty resistance in pedagogical partnership and also affirm student partners' efforts to find productive ways of engaging the resistances they perceive. Definitions of resistance from the field of psychology provide a different conceptual frame for analyzing the resistance student partners experienced in response to perceived faculty resistances.

In the psychology literature, resistance has traditionally been cast as "an impediment to the creation of a working therapeutic relationship" (Gilligan, Rogers, &

Tolman, 2014, p. 1). More recently, however, Gilligan et al. (2014) have "reframed" resistance in young women "as a psychological strength, as potentially healthy and a mark of courage" (p. 2). Such a reframing suggests that resistance can be seen as a manifestation of young women having the strength and courage "to know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings" (p. 1). Although this theory focuses on resistance in young women, it provides a framework for understanding the approaches college-age, female, student consultants used in their pedagogical partnerships.

The reframing of resistance Gilligan et al. (2014) offer is consistent with the hypothesis Anita generated on her own, based on her studies as a psychology major and her practice as a student partner, regarding strategies student partners develop in the face of perceived resistance on the part of their faculty partners. Furthermore, the reframed notion of resistance intersects with resilience as Anita conceptualized it and as it is defined in the literature. Summarizing the findings of Abiola and Udofia (2011), Cassidy (2015) describes resilience in terms of "inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity." Cassidy (2015) also highlights how resilience can both minimize "the impact of risk factors, such as stressful life events," and enhance "the protective factors, such as optimism, social support, and active coping, that increase people's ability to deal with life's challenges." Johnson, Taasoobshirazi, Kestler, and Cordova (2015) also suggest that social supports may influence "how students develop their own sense of resilience and how they persist through academic challenges" (p. 869)—an important point to consider in relation to the cohort within which the 10 student partners worked.

Linking the reframed notion of resistance and these definitions of resilience, we focus on the healthy, productively assertive sense of agency drawn on and developed when female student partners "know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings" (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1). We attend in particular to how students from equity-seeking groups build resiliencies from engaging perceived resistances and are thus "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Cook-Sather and Agu (2013) and de Bie, Marquis, Cook-Sather, and Luqueño (under review) bring a similar perspective to their work, arguing for the importance of ensuring the equitable participation of traditionally marginalized knowers and knowledge in knowledge production.

CONTEXT

In 2006, Alison developed the SaLT program in her role as Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. SaLT invites undergraduate students to take up the paid position of pedagogical consultant to faculty, and student-faculty pairs work in semester-long partnerships to analyze, affirm, and, where appropriate, revise the faculty member's pedagogical approaches in a course as s/he teaches it. Since the advent of the program, Alison has supported over 230 faculty members and 145 student consultants in a total of more than 280 partnerships. She has also engaged in partnership with students in course design and facilitation (Cook-Sather, Des-Ogugua, & Bahti, 2017). Anita has worked as a student partner since 2015, collaborating with four different faculty partners and co-facilitating partnership forums. She has also presented on her work in international venues (Ntem, 2017). During the summer of 2017 she conducted research on partnership as a Fellow of the Teaching and Learning Institute.

All incoming faculty members are invited to participate in SaLT as part of a first-year pedagogy seminar in which they have the option to enroll in exchange for a reduced teaching load (Cook-Sather, 2016). Stand-alone partnerships (not linked to a seminar) are also available to all faculty. SaLT employs student consultants from across disciplines and from diverse backgrounds who may not be enrolled in the course to which they are assigned as consultants. They spend six hours per week conducting weekly observations of their faculty partners' classrooms, expanding upon and delivering their observation notes to their partners, and meeting weekly with their partners to discuss what is working well and what might be revised. In addition, they meet weekly with other consultants and Alison to discuss how best to collaborate with faculty in the work of developing productively challenging, inclusive, and engaging classrooms and courses (see Cook-Sather, 2014, 2015).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

Every year since the advent of SaLT, Alison has received approval from Bryn Mawr College's ethics review board for studies of the experiences of student participants in the program. As part of a larger study focused on how student partners from equity-seeking groups (e.g., students who are racialized, LBGTQ+, first generation) experience student-faculty partnership in educational development, we formulated a set of questions that Anita posed to the cohort of 10 female student partners with whom she was working during one of her semesters as a student partner. The questions were:

1. What kinds of resistance, if any, have you experienced or encountered in your partnership(s)?
2. What factors contribute to resistance?
3. How do you as a consultant tackle resistance you experience or encounter?
4. In what ways, if any, do you see any of the forms of resistance you and faculty have practiced as forms of resilience?

The 10 student partners offered written responses to these questions. Consistent with the methods used in all of the studies of SaLT student experiences in which Alison has engaged, we used constant comparison/grounded theory (Creswell, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify themes and trends in the experiences and perspectives of respondents. Themes were generated through the first step in the constant comparison method, which involved identifying a phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), followed by open coding, or ''the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data'' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61).

Once we had developed a preliminary set of categories and analyses of student partners' responses, we shared the draft of our analysis with those student partners, inviting their responses to our interpretations and their own further analysis. We also asked several experienced faculty partners to respond to the draft. The discussion we offer in this article is, therefore, the result of an iterative process of reflection and analysis by the student partners who responded to the questions, several faculty partners, and the two of us.

We want to reiterate that we focus in this discussion on a set of perspectives offered by a small number of student partners in a single pedagogical partnership program during a single semester. These perspectives reflect these individuals' experiences of and perspectives on resistances and their active development of resiliencies. We do not claim to be speaking for faculty, nor are our analyses meant to criticize faculty. Furthermore, we do

not argue that student partners in other contexts would perceive these same forms of resistance and resilience. Rather, our goal was to invite this group of student partners to identify, analyze, and learn from the forms of resistance they perceived in their faculty partners and experienced within themselves.

Consistent with our insistence on recognizing students, particularly those claiming membership in equity-seeking groups, as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), our focus is on what students perceived based on the verbal and non-verbal signals they received from faculty. Guided by the students' perceptions, we reflect on what we can learn from these analyses that might inform our own work and be of use to colleagues on other campuses who experience resistances in partnership.

STUDENT PARTNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESISTANCES AND RESILIENCIES

In the following sections we combine results and discussion of the 10 student partners' perceptions of resistances and resiliencies. We focus first on forms of resistance student partners perceived in their faculty partners and what factors they think might contribute to these resistances. Next, we turn to how student partners worked through both these perceived resistances and the resistances they themselves experienced toward partnership. Finally, we analyze how the student partners built resiliencies through the ways they engaged with these resistances.

Kinds and sources of perceived faculty resistance to pedagogical partnership

Student partner responses to the questions, "What kinds of resistance, if any, have you experienced or encountered in your partnership(s)?" and "What factors contribute to resistance?," surfaced what student partners perceived to be problematic assumptions made by their faculty partners and a range of fears that student partners believed their faculty partners were experiencing.

Student partners identified perceptions faculty seemed to have of students' behavior and capacities as potentially contributing to faculty resistance to partnership. One student partner wrote that her faculty partner appeared to assume that "[students] don't talk [during class discussions] because they are concerned about being politically correct." In her analysis of this apparent assumption about student behavior, the student partner wrote: "This makes it very difficult for [my faculty partner] to take feedback from me or her students." From this student's perspective, this totalizing judgment of student behavior, which she perceived in her faculty partner's comment, was a source of her faculty partner's resistance.

Student partners also perceived faculty members making problematic assumptions about student capacity. One student identified this type of assumption about student capacity as "'misguided/traditional' views or assumptions about students and their ability." A particular manifestation of these kinds of assumptions, according to one student partner, focused on her capacity as a partner in pedagogical exploration: "I've encountered resistance when it comes to recognition of expertise. My [faculty] partner was very resistant to let me into her pedagogical thinking space." This student partner highlights the resistance she felt on the part of her faculty partner to recognize her as a "holder and creator of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106) about pedagogical practice. As Bovill et al. (2016) point out, faculty often "under-estimate student abilities to contribute meaningfully" (p. 200). Such under-estimation, student partners suggested, led to a lack of communication

regarding principles and practices that might have been guiding the faculty partner's notion of expected classroom practices.

From the perspective of the student partners, sweeping judgments about students' behaviors and capacities constitute a form of faculty resistance to working in partnership with students—both with student partners in educational development and with students enrolled in the faculty members' courses. These student partners' perceptions are consistent with scholarship in educational development that points to the tacit assumptions some faculty make that are part of "typificatory schemes" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 58) concerning the "nature of students in higher education (including their abilities and preferences)" (Trowler & Cooper, 2002, p. 229).

In addition, student partners named a range of fears they perceived their faculty partners to be experiencing that the student partners thought might be contributing to resistance. Some of these had to do with relationships between students and faculty, some had to do with institutional pressures faculty seem to feel, and some had to do with pedagogical commitments or habits.

In relation to fear regarding student-faculty relationships, one student partner described her perception of faculty members' "fear of their students not liking them/not thinking they are competent professors." Another student partner reflected on her perception of her faculty partner's "fears of connecting with his students." In relation to institutional pressures students perceive that faculty feel, the second kind of fear identified, student partners mentioned "fear of job stability" and "pressures related to tenure/promotion." One student partner elaborated that faculty positions, "while rooted in an established discipline, are very insecure and unstable, and I think they fear losing their job constantly. This creates a mood of defensiveness." These student perceptions are consistent with scholarship documenting the "despair of isolation, insecurity, and busyness" (Boice, 1992, p. 2) many new faculty experience (Simmons, 2011) as well as the risks faculty may associate with innovation (Bovill et al., 2016; Sheth & Stellner, 1979).

In relation to pedagogical commitments or habits, the third kind of fear identified, student partners perceived in some of their faculty partners a fear of deviating from traditional ways of teaching and of engaging with students. These student partners' perceptions are consistent with what Trowler and Cooper (2002) call "rules of appropriateness"—rules based on "tacit assumptions [that] set out what is, and is not, appropriate practice in teaching and learning situations and are usually only manifested when practices are proposed which contravene them: that is, by 'deviance'" (p. 230). These are among the cultural forces (Hughes & Barrie, 2010) and the customs and common practices (Bovill et al., 2016) scholars identify as contributing to faculty resistance. Regarding one student's perception of faculty resistance to suggestions student partners made for possible revisions of pedagogical practices, one student partner pointed to her faculty partner's "fear of taking class time away from moving through course material." Another mentioned her sense that faculty "fear they are overwhelming students." A third student partner described her perception of her faculty partner's "fear of giving up long-held beliefs." Yet another student partner identified "fear of change" as a perceived source of resistance.

Some student partners linked some perceived faculty fears and resulting resistance to particular dimensions of identity. One student partner, who identifies as a person of color (POC) herself, reflected:

> New POC faculty have trouble letting go of their perceived all-encompassing control. My partner had very specific ideas about how she wanted everything to go, which led to inflexibility. I think sometimes new faculty insecurities get the best of them and lead them to a very defensive/resistant attitude.

Another student partner, who identifies as a POC, wrote: "Many people, faculty included, are unused to checking their privileged identities regularly. When student partners ask this of them it can be overwhelming and again lead to defensiveness." These speculations connect to how faculty of color can experience particular pressures and costs as they strive to "establish 'home' and a sense of belonging" (Mayo & Chhuon, 2014, p. 227).

The first form of perceived faculty resistance identified above, that born of apparent assumptions about students, elicited frustration from student partners not only because it hinders the development of partnership but also because it underestimates students. The various fears student partners attributed to their faculty partners certainly led, in student partners' minds, to faculty resistance, but they also elicited empathy from student partners—an important sense of shared uncertainty and vulnerability that might have been key to some of the approaches student partners took to working through perceived resistances.

Approaches to working through perceived resistances

Student partner responses to the question, "How do you as a consultant tackle resistance you experience or encounter?," yielded a range of strategies that cluster around trust and relationship-building, persisting or leaning in, and withdrawal or taking a step back for self-protection.

A primary strategy student partners used to work through resistances they perceived in their faculty partners was to endeavor to build trust and relationship. One student partner explained how she responded to resistance she perceived from her faculty partner:

> I jump back to building a community and trust. People need positive reinforcement to carry out change. I have had more personal check-ins when faced with resistance because I always think there is something more past the surface. I try to build a space for this multiplicity.

Another student partner asserted simply that "building trust is a HUGE part of it." A strategy many student partners used to build trust, as one explained, is taking time to get to know each other. In her words: "I usually take the first few minutes of our meeting to ask my partner how he is doing." These examples of striving to build trust and relationship reflect an empathetic approach to addressing perceived resistances.

A second strategy student partners used to work through perceived resistances was "leaning in" to whatever form of resistance they perceived by continuing to try to connect with their faculty partners. Student partners described how they worked through resistances they perceived "by continuing to give feedback and pushing to meet with her despite her resistance to meeting with me." Another student partner described how she cultivated an approach characterized by respectful assertiveness: "Being extremely clear about how I feel. Not pushing faculty but at the same time making sure they know how I

feel about a certain issue." A variation on this theme of persistence is articulating reasons why they might be making a particular suggestion. One student partner described this as: "Give a clear rationale for why I think my idea is a good one"; another wrote: "Back up my opinions with my experience as a student." Complementing these efforts to ground their perspectives in their lived experiences and lean in to their faculty partners' resistance, student partners also described making efforts to link to their faculty partners' priorities: "Try to appeal to things I know my partner wants for his classes."

A final strategy student partners identified regarding how they worked through perceived resistances was stepping back or letting go out of self-protection. One student partner explained:

> I have learned to let things go (for my own sanity) and also the beauty of readjustment. We spent weeks reframing our relationship/what she wants me to do for her, which has led to a much more fruitful partnership.

Another student partner wrote: "I tackled resistance by stepping back. I had to remove all personal feelings from the partnership. I then checked myself and named my own resistance." This approach is a manifestation of student partners' "psychological strength" and "courage" (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 2)—knowing themselves well enough both to care for themselves and to find ways to persist in partnership.

Illustrating how all these strategies can be combined, another student partner reflected:

> Sometimes I am patient and spread out my feedback over time, or soften it. Other times I push back and resist my partner's resistance, especially re students' abilities, giving affirmation to my partners, the importance of feedback—these are all areas where I have strong beliefs.

Demonstrating a deep awareness of the complexity of being in partnership and of learning, another student partner wrote: "I try to meet my partner where they're at, push them to understand/question, but not over the edge."

These approaches to working through perceived resistances illustrate student partners "know[ing] what they know and speak[ing] about their thoughts and feelings" (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1) with the goal of strengthening both themselves and their faculty partners. By employing these approaches, student partners built their resilience through complex weavings of persistence and self-preservation, both deepening the capacity to assert what is within themselves, and deepening understanding of and working with respect for what is encountered in others.

How working through resistances builds resiliencies

Student partner responses to the question, "In what ways, if any, do you see any of the forms of resistance you and faculty have practiced as forms of resilience?," illuminated various relationship- and self-building processes through which student partners built resiliencies.

About relationship building, one student partner described being in a process of "continuing to try to reach a partnership." Another explained: "As a way of practicing resilience, my partner and I have worked to re-see our relationship, our roles, and our mutual obligations, and that flexibility is most definitely a process of resilience." Another student partner wrote: "We are both able to be sure of how we feel but also listen to each other." These statements illustrate how relationship and reciprocity are as central to developing resiliencies as they are to developing partnership itself: both require and build a give-and-take between partners, an exchange that is mutually affirming and enhancing. The language of "continuing to try to reach," of "working to re-see," and of "listen[ing] to each other" is the language of relationship.

Regarding the strengthening of the self that student partners also identified as a form of resilience, one student partner emphasized both the strength she drew from within herself and the strength she drew from her fellow student partners: "We continue to, day by day, pick ourselves up and move. To resist is tiring work. We must find the inner strength to keep moving. Our weekly meetings and commitments to continue moving forward are resilience." These assertions echo the findings in the research literature that social supports may influence how students develop resilience and persistence (Johnson et al., 2015), and they show how productive approaches to resistance build resilience.

The strength student partners' develop through claiming and enacting what they know is part of what builds their resilience: "For me to keep pushing what I believe, time and time again, is resilience." Echoing these sentiments, another student partner reflected: "I think my refusal to back down and my willingness to pursue certain ideas over time, repeatedly, is a form of resilience. I have some confidence to stand up for these strong beliefs." Illustrating at the same time how this kind of personal strength is also relational and reciprocal, this same student partner wrote: "I think my partner's willingness to hear me and to hear students and adjust/take in that information shows resilience as well." Striving to put resistance and resilience into a productive relationship with one another, one student partner argued: "The resistance can be seen as self protection. And yet faculty resist against their inner obstacles every time they agree to meet with me and that is resilience."

As we analyzed student feedback and considered the conversations that evolved over the course of the semester regarding resistances and resiliencies, we began to see patterns in student partners building resiliencies from resistances. The first tendency for many student partners was to question or doubt themselves. As Anita put it: "What am I doing wrong? What is going on here? Like, is it me? Do I not have the capabilities of being a student consultant?" Another aspect of the process was stopping, retreating, readjusting, recalibrating, or reconsidering. This piece of the pattern is captured in a quote we used above:

> I have learned to let things go (for my own sanity) and also the beauty of re-adjustment. We spent weeks reframing our relationship/what she wanted me to do for her, which has resulted in a much more fruitful partnership.

And a third aspect is a kind of reconstituting process: revisiting and clarifying one's own beliefs and commitments and drawing on some combination of the strategies mentioned above, such as: "Give a clear rationale for why I think my idea is a good one,

back up my opinions with my experience as a student, try to appeal to things I know my faculty partner wants for their classes."

Building resiliencies from resistances, then, has multiple dimensions. It includes recognizing that both faculty and students experience resistances. It requires getting comfortable with uncertainty. It necessitates understanding and accepting that you do not need a single direction: you can be flexible and malleable. It requires pushing each other to open up to more perspectives, even those with which you disagree. It demands that you consistently revise, revisit, and reconstruct your own pedagogy and find common themes across partners to build on and be productive. All of the approaches student partners describe support the redefinition of resistance as "a health-sustaining process" (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1), "a psychological strength" (p. 2), and "a mark of courage" (p. 2). These approaches are also consistent with resilience as "inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity" (Cassidy, 2015). The patience, empathy, and generosity student partners display further illustrate the ways resistance and resilience are intertwined.

The emotional labor of students of color in partnership, whether with faculty of color or white faculty, is a particularly important component of this discussion of building resiliencies through engaging with resistances. As one student partner who is an international student and person of color explained:

> We've seen in the consultant meetings how emotionally vulnerable some of my peers are willing to be in our partnerships in order to think about justice [and] racial or gender equality. It's very moving to see my peers give themselves so much, give so much of themselves in their partnerships to make professors understand, to give professors perspective on their experience.

This giving of themselves with the support of others demonstrates how students from equity-seeking groups, in their positions as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 106), build resiliencies from perceived resistances. It is a manifestation of the healthy, productively assertive sense of agency drawn on and developed when female student partners "know what they know and speak about their thoughts and feelings" (Gilligan et al., 2014, p. 1).

As their reflections illuminate, student partners reject easy ways of thinking, being, and interacting; they meet the various kinds of resistances they perceive in faculty with a wide array of thoughtful and empathetic responses; and they work on their own, with other student partners, to turn their own resistances into resiliencies.

IMPLICATIONS

There are numerous implications of this study of students' perceptions of resistances in pedagogical partnership. These include the potential to forge positive outcomes from initial vulnerabilities and perceived incompatibilities, increased capacity to navigate power dynamics always present in student-faculty partnership, and the development of flexible approaches to working through perceived resistances.

Both resistance and resilience as student partners perceive them are implicitly or explicitly tangled with power dynamics, which are thrown into stark relief in pedagogical partnership (Crawford, 2012; Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008). In both the relationships

themselves and the ways in which they provide forums for examining pedagogical practice, student-faculty partnerships not only illuminate the complexities of power dynamics but also the norms and values students and faculty bring to analyses and enactments of teaching and learning. As Brookfield (1995) has argued:

> When we become aware of the pervasiveness of power, we start to notice the oppressive dimensions to practices that we thought were neutral or even benevolent . . . (many of which reflect an unquestioned acceptance of values, norms and practices defined for us by others). . . . [This] is often the first step in working more democratically and cooperatively with students and colleagues. (p. 9)

This suggests that when student partners choose approaches to respond to what they perceive to be "pervasive power," these approaches influence the forms of resilience they develop.

The approaches student partners took to working through the resistances they perceived endeavored to build trust and affirm the work of everyone involved as teachers and as learners. The student partners described how working through resistances pushed them to be clear and explicit in articulating what they know, as well as to know when to let things go in order to regroup. Through these approaches, student partners developed resiliencies in re-evaluating their role, built strength to understand the biases that come with teaching and education, and understood their courage not only in challenging their partners but also in challenging themselves to make meaning from what is present.

CONCLUSION

While this article highlights student partners' interpretations of their experiences of resistances and resiliencies, further research might explore other challenges and conflicts in partnership (see Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) and might delve in particular into how faculty partners experience resistances and resiliencies within the context of pedagogical partnership. Additional areas of inquiry could include how these findings might impact the way in which student partners respond to and navigate perceived faculty resistance within subsequent partnerships. Further research could also explore how faculty resistance might differ among early career faculty and experienced instructors involved in partnerships. Finally, while we use the reframed notion of resistance Gilligan et al. (2014) offer in relation to female student partners' forms of engagement, the "loudly silent" construct of gender in the literature on partnership is another area for further exploration (Matthews et al., under review).

Rogers (2001) notes that where new learning is "perceived to be a threat to identity" (p. 10) one should expect to encounter anxiety in the learner "because real learning involves change, and that's difficult stuff for most of us" (p. 12). Student-faculty partnership demands learning that might be perceived to constitute a threat to one's identity for both students and faculty, and the threat to one's identity at stake in such partnerships looks different if one has developed resistance as a tool for moving through spaces in which one is often marginalized. Examining resistances, resiliencies, and their relationship to one another offers insight into seemingly negative or problematic reactions that can actually be re-understood as positive and empowering.

This study is part of a larger study approved by Bryn Mawr College's ethics review board focused on the experiences of student partners from equity-seeking groups.

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ARTICLE

Research Assistants' Experiences of Participating in a Partnership Learning Community for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Calls for enhancing student engagement in higher education have offered strong arguments for student-faculty partnerships in teaching and learning. Drawing on a conceptual model of partnership learning communities (PLC), we investigate the experiences of two undergraduate research assistants (co-authors of this paper) who participated in a PLC within a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research study. In this paper, we use data from transcripts of four research conversations occurring over a three-year period. Evidence of research assistants' experiences was co-analyzed using benefits and challenges identified in the literature. Our findings reveal that our PLC helped these research assistants develop student agency and provided opportunities for reflection on learning. We conclude that participating in our PLC helped the two research assistants develop deeper pedagogical relationships amongst themselves and with the faculty partners. Moreover, our study directly contributed to the development of our bachelor of education degree program while ensuring students were partners in that process.

KEYWORDS

partnership learning community, research assistants

In this paper, we investigate the experiences of two undergraduate research assistants (Ashlyn and Ranee) who participated in a partnership learning community (PLC) within a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) research study. The SoTL study is part of a longitudinal study focused on designing and implementing high-impact practices across an entire bachelor of education degree program in order to support undergraduate education students in their process of connecting theory and practice. This larger SoTL study provided the opportunity to develop a PLC because the research assistants, Ashlyn and Ranee, were involved as co-researchers in gathering data, analyzing data, and disseminating the results of the SoTL study during the years of their contracts. For the purposes of this co-authored paper, we use transcripts of four research conversations between the researchers

(Gladys and Kevin) and research assistants (Ashlyn and Ranee) that occurred within the PLC as we analyzed the data gathered in the SoTL study. In this context, Ashlyn and Ranee are the student partners, the participants, and the co-authors. Our research question is: ***How did the undergraduate research assistants (Ashlyn and Ranee) experience a PLC embedded in a SoTL study that focused on the co-design of high-impact practices within courses and school placements of a new bachelor of education degree program?***

To better understand the experiences of the two undergraduate research assistants who participated in a PLC, we present the context of the SoTL research study in which the PLC is embedded.

CONTEXT OF THE SOTL RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY KEVIN AND GLADYS

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) has contributed much to our understanding of teaching and learning within post-secondary institutions. Boyer (1990), one of the first scholars in this field, recognizes the significant role teaching has in the academy and proposes that teaching is not a "routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do. When defined as scholarship, teaching both educates and entices future scholars" (p. 23). The scholarship of teaching can occur when evidence-based inquiry is shared, is subject to critique, and contributes new knowledge on teaching within a discipline (Hutchings, 2002; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2001). Similar to other SoTL studies (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2001; Felten, 2013; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; McKinney, 2004), our evidence-based SoTL research study is systematically focused on student learning.

Our Canadian undergraduate post-secondary institution includes a focus on teaching and learning informed by scholarship in its mission statement, and SoTL research is strongly supported. Our undergraduate students participate in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), one of the largest research projects in North America that considers undergraduate students' experiences of best educational practices. Like other Canadian universities, our university administrators use the results of this survey to assess academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, collaborative learning, and supportive campus environments. As faculty members and researchers, Kevin and Gladys have drawn on related research using data from NSSE to inform the design of our new bachelor of education degree program. In particular, we used Kuh's (2008) research that identifies 10 high-impact practices that contribute to higher retention rates, deeper student engagement, and improved student achievement: first-year seminars and experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning and community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects. Our research is strongly embedded in SoTL because we engage in evidence-based inquiry into our undergraduate students' experiences of learning and because we implement high-impact practices programmatically within a new Canadian degree program in teacher education. We are using qualitative research methodologies (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to investigate the education students' experiences of high-impact practices and links between theory and practice. The SoTL research project is ongoing and involves 53 participants. Data collected and analyzed includes class assignments and yearly individual interviews.

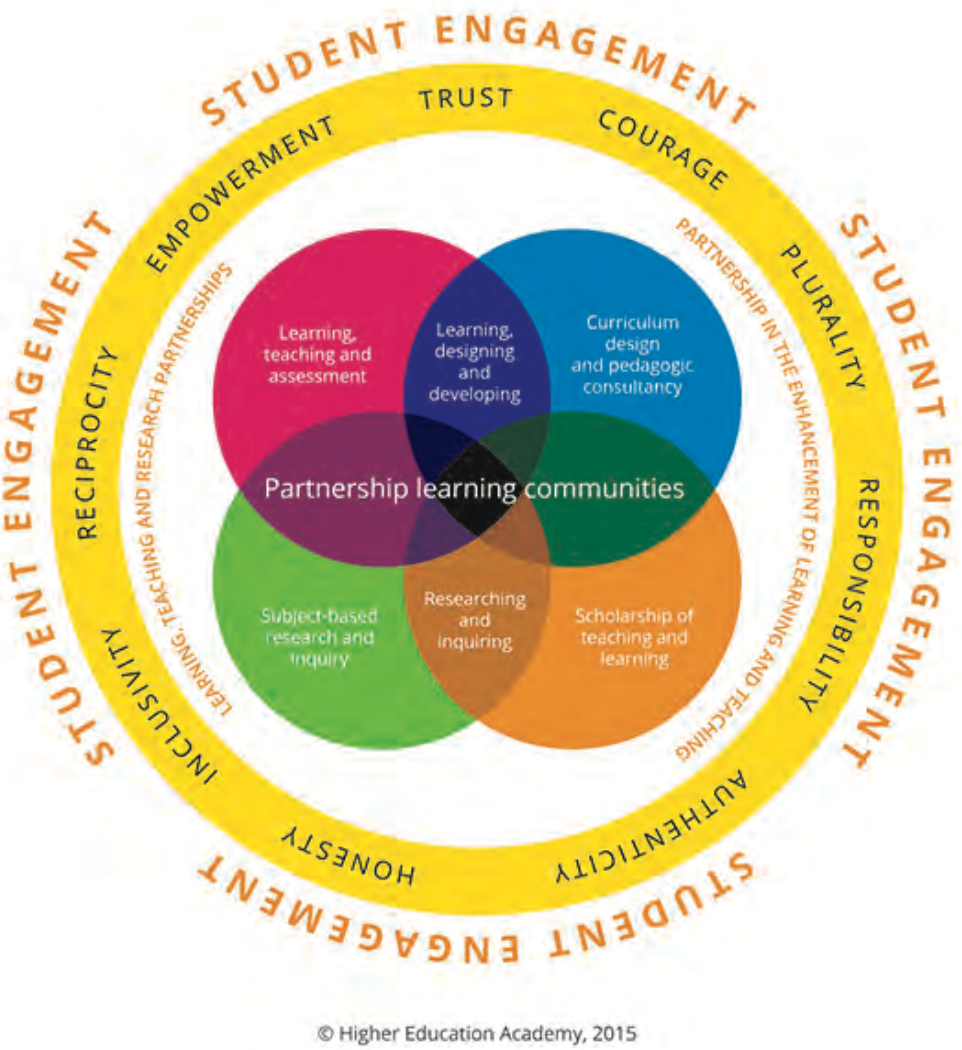
Within this research context, and in response to emerging research in SoTL in the area of student-faculty interaction, we became interested in students as research partners. We noticed that our research assistant, Ranee, was highly engaged in the data analysis and offered unique a perspective through a student lens. During an early-stage conference presentation and the dissemination of research results, she contributed to and shared responsibility for the findings of the study. As faculty researchers, we wanted to better understand her experiences of participating in the conference presentations and invited her to reflect on such experiences during an interview. Her insights prompted us to consider the role of students as research partners. Specifically, we were struck by the consistencies between how she described her experiences and how Healey et al. (2014) describe a PLC as a collaboration with students as partners to create a genuine and inclusive community of practice.

While involving students as research partners is suggested as one of the five principles of good practice in SoTL (Felten, 2013), engaging students in SoTL research is rare as students are usually the subjects of research conducted by faculty members. In addition, there are few studies that examine the experiences of students working with faculty members on SoTL projects (Healey et al., 2014). The research we present in this paper explores the experiences of two research assistants participating in a PLC and was conducted by two faculty members and two student partners. The research is strongly embedded in the SoTL study described above.

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN A PARTNERSHIP LEARNING COMMUNITY

Healey et al. (2014) present a model of Partnership Learning Communities (PLCs) that is focused on collaborative research projects with students and faculty. They believe that such collaboration is most successful when it is reciprocal and suggest that creating a true partnership involving co-learning, co-inquiring, co-developing, co-designing, and co-creating can have many benefits for both students and professors. In order to best develop reciprocal relationships where student researchers are deeply invested, students should be active participants in the learning process, and faculty partners should emphasize that the partnership is a process of engagement, not a product. Drawing from the literature on Students as Partners, Healey et al. identify authenticity, inclusivity, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, challenge, community, and responsibility as values that underpin their conceptual model. Their model has been adapted in the framework (see Fig. 1) published by The Higher Education Academy (2015).

Figure 1: Students as Partners in a partnership learning community (The Higher Education Academy, 2015).



Researchers have found that students benefit in many ways when participating in PLCs. Mihans, Long, and Felten (2008) suggest that extensive student growth and sustained engagement occurs when students are given opportunities to work on research on topics that are directly related to them. Healey et al. (2014) found that by including student researchers in partnerships that value authenticity, inclusivity, and reciprocity, students are more likely to remain engaged and embrace the perspectives of and learning opportunities from those around them. They suggest that through learning, teaching, and assessment, students are actively engaged in their personal learning as a type of partner. It is through these and extended opportunities for partnership with professors, when "students are given a significant amount of autonomy, independence, and choice" (p. 3), that heightened engagement is developed. In many cases, "partnership raises awareness of the implicit

assumptions—about each other, and about the nature of teaching and learning" (p. 12), which further engages students and promotes investment in their own learning and future experiences. Bovill, Cook-Sather, and Felten (2011) agree that having an active and participatory role in research about their learning enhances student commitment and engagement. They suggest that when students begin critically analyzing what they are learning, they are likely to further investigate who the learning is for, resulting in personal growth and development. This shift from passivity to agency encourages students to reflect metacognitively on their development. These researchers found that in working collaboratively with faculty, students gain the opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of learning. By removing themselves from the direct experiences of learning and metacognitively reflecting on their learning experiences and practices, students are better able to understand and articulate their needs and the needs of their peers. Furthermore, Bovill et al. suggest that the unique opportunity for students to work with faculty inspires students to further invest in their learning, and again, promotes engagement. This collaborative process challenges students to think critically about their own processes and promotes metacognition surrounding learning and teaching styles. This direct impact upon students' personal understandings has the potential to not only allow students to shape their own future learning experiences at a metacognitive level, but also to provide valuable feedback to professors.

Participating in PLCs offers many benefits for professors. Mihans et al. (2008) suggest that once students have become comfortable working with and contributing to discussions with professors, they provide strong insight and are personally attached to the research. These researchers propose that as a research project involving students as partners progresses and rapport is built between the student researchers and faculty, a community of trust is strengthened and professors become more comfortable trusting the opinions of student researchers, who prove to have valuable contributions. Felten et al. (2013) suggest that "partnerships in curriculum development, teaching, and SoTL provide powerful opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate in the creation of new disciplinary, institutional, and pedagogic knowledge" (p. 1). Through faculty-student partnerships, the nature of the classroom can be altered and additional confidence can be built. Bovill et al. (2011) propose that when "staff engage in dialogue with students and one another about learning expectations, pedagogical rationales are clarified" (p. 5), and a better course or program can be developed.

There is strong evidence that participating in PLCs is beneficial to both students and professors. In creating their model for PLCs, Healey et al. (2014a) recommend creating experiences in which students are consulted and involved as participants and partners. They identify four main ways of engaging in partnerships: subject-based research and inquiry; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; learning, teaching, and assessment; and the practices of SoTL (see Fig. 1). Two of these are relevant to our research: first, curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy and second, the practices of SoTL.

As students engage in collaborative research, there are often opportunities to assist in reconstructive or supplemental curriculum design. Bovill et al. (2011) look specifically at the potential advantages of including students as co-creators of both course design and curricula. They argue that "although much educational development focuses on pedagogical technique, course design might be the most important barrier to quality teaching and learning in higher education" (p. 4). Mihans et al. (2008) investigate the importance of

student-assisted curriculum design in redeveloping a course that is unsuccessful, and the likelihood of regaining and maintaining success as a result of student input. In their research, they found that the students were more likely to focus on the practical, while the professors preferred a theory-based approach. In exploring this discrepancy between student learning preferences and the required curricular materials, the professors and students were able to develop a program that satisfied the needs of both, while still accounting for diverse learners. This personal engagement from the students presented a unique lens through which to view the process of curricular design.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, student research and partnerships with faculty play an important role in promoting student engagement and personal investment in learning. In working within SoTL, a level of personal and intellectual commitment is required, and as a result, students involved in the research often undergo significant growth and deep personal reflection (Allin, 2014). Opportunities for students to collaborate with their professors provides a unique means for students to gain a deeper understanding of topics either outside or within their personal fields of study. The relationship between student researchers and faculty working directly within their own personal academic fields is particularly impactful, as the experience provides students with a sense of autonomy and fosters a deeper relationship and commitment to the research itself. For student researchers, the importance of exploring areas of personal interest or significance has greater meaning and influence on personal learning and understanding (Healey et al., 2014a).

SoTL provides opportunities for students and faculty to engage in and collaborate on research projects with one another at a reciprocal level (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, n.d.). Felten et al. (2013) and Allin (2014) discuss the collaborative nature of SoTL and the transformative potential it offers for both student and professor researchers. Students have been better able to share their personal feedback on specific programs and practices, which has led to better programmatic insight as a result of SoTL.

While research about the benefits of PLCs seems promising, Allin (2014) cautions that reciprocal relationships can be hard to build and require a cultural change in academic settings. She questions whether or not true collaboration can be achieved as a result of the role of influence within the post-secondary system. In undertaking research with professors, she believes that students are at risk of being less valued. In addition, students themselves may struggle with the influence of power within research relationships as the professors with whom they are working may also be responsible for grading their work or reviewing their ideas. Engaging students as partners seems to be a complex endeavor. In this paper, we co-investigated the experiences of two undergraduate research assistants, Ashlyn and Ranee, as they participated in a PLC focused on the co-design of high-impact practices within a new degree program. Drawing on the literature on student experiences in PLCs, we attended to the benefits of student growth, sustained engagement, agency, personal investment in learning, and increased opportunities for metacognition. We also were interested to know if the challenges noted in the literature involving power relationships and an exclusive emphasis on practice were experienced by Ashlyn and Ranee. Qualitative methodology was used to provide insight into the experiences of our two student-partner participants.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodologies (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and specifically case study methods (see Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013), were used to investigate experiences of two research assistants who participated in a PLC; these two research assistants are also co-authors of this paper. Ranee, a student in the second year of the program, joined the research team in 2013 as a research assistant and was involved in the longitudinal SoTL study of a cohort of students in the first year of the program. Ranee remained part of the team until the completion of her degree in 2016. Ashlyn, a student in a subsequent cohort of students, has participated as a member of the research team since 2015. Beginning in 2013, we, the two lead faculty researchers and the two student researchers, engaged in bi-weekly collaborative research conversations and recorded and kept research notes about our experiences.

For the purposes of this paper, the data included transcripts of four research conversations between the researchers (Gladys and Kevin) and research assistants (Ashlyn and Ranee). Evidence of the two student partners' experiences was analyzed using benefits and challenges identified in the literature. Specifically, we attended to emerging themes that related to student growth, sustained engagement, personal investment in learning, agency, increased opportunities for metacognition, power relationships, and an emphasis on practice. Consistent with analysis methods identified by Patton (2002) and Strauss (1987), the transcripts were first coded individually by Gladys and Ashlyn according to emerging themes that related to our research focus on participation in a PLC. Then, our co-constructed academic and professional conference notes and individual research notes were used to refine the interpretations as all members of the PLC reviewed the analysis, collaboratively adjusted the codes, and wrote findings together. Several themes emerged in the data that provided insight into benefits and challenges: developing student agency, developing relationships, and providing opportunities for reflection.

FINDINGS

In our analysis, we focused on student growth, sustained engagement, personal investment in learning, agency, increased opportunities for metacognition, power relationships, and an emphasis on practice. Our key findings of this case study were that our PLC helped research assistants to develop student agency, to develop relationships with the researchers, and provided opportunities for reflection on learning.

Developing student agency

Research on Students as Partners suggests that student agency is a key part of PLCs (Felten, 2013; Healey et al., 2014, 2016.). Three strategies were identified as contributing to the development of student agency for Ashlyn and Ranee: understanding the SoTL research context, understanding the research literature, and contributing to knowledge. At the beginning of their involvement in the SoTL project, Ashlyn and Ranee were each asked to read the data previously collected. It was evident that this process provided them with a deep understanding of the study and that they were able to make strong contributions to the analysis of the data. For example, Ranee commented on high-impact practices in the interview data:

> With the fourth-year [students], there have been two things that have come up a lot,

> the first one being, again, the seminars because we were asking them about the seminars. There is theory and practice but there is also that community of practice piece in there as well because they are talking about how that gave them a certain space where they are allowed to realize that they are not alone and learn from each other's experiences.

Links between data across the years were made by all four authors and conversations about such connections fostered a common understanding of the research. All authors were familiar with the data and were able to bring various perspectives to the data analysis. Indeed, a distributed expertise emerged as the authors had different experiences while gathering data. Ranee had conducted the interviews in a specific year and was able to offer insights about the data because of her robust understanding of it:

> I think [the use of seminars] is really important. Okay, so this is what I have been trying to wrap my head around a little bit too because I am going to go back to second years and I am more familiar with that data, obviously.

One strength that both Ashlyn and Ranee had was the ability to provide specific examples of findings that contributed to the SoTL data analysis, as shown by how Ranee remembered participants' experiences: "I just thought it was so perfect about [how the seminars became] that challenging piece because the title to her journal entry was, 'Am I Closed-Minded?,' and she came out of a seminar going, 'Wow, I am closed-minded.'"

In joining and participating in the SoTL research project, Ashlyn and Ranee not only gained a deeper understanding of the data, but also became more comfortable in personally identifying with the literature. Through interpretation of the acquired data and ongoing conversations, Ranee identified an increased ability to make meaning of readings that may have previously been without context:

> I have been doing a lot of reading on identity and the different identities that student teachers experience between being in university and being in the schools. . . . there is a disconnect between these two identities because they are not really talked about. . . . there are three different identities that students teachers need to develop over time.

Through personal analysis and comparative thinking, Ashlyn was able to recognize that her professional identity was strengthened as she became more familiar with various concepts through coursework, hands-on experiences, and the research. She commented, "I didn't realize at the time, and I think it is interesting because all the pieces are coming together between the research and between all of the classes." These realizations contributed to her investment in the research, as well as her personal pedagogies relating to the field of education. They also fostered Ranee's deeper understanding of how the literature and theory connect directly to current education practices:

> Actually a lot of what I was reading was talking about [how those tensions between theory and practice] are necessary because if you are not challenging your belief, often you are just going to fall back and nobody is going to change. Education is

> never going to change, everybody is just going to go back and teach the way they were taught or have these sort of unrealistic ideals and going into the realm of actually teaching and kind of being overwhelmed, right?

The SoTL data fostered deeper insight into the perceptions of teacher candidates of their own practice. Prior to the conducted seminars and facilitated discussions, teacher candidates were less cognizant of the influence that their past school history had on their teaching identity. Ranee reflected on the growth that she had seen various teacher candidates undergo:

> I kind of guided them—especially with the second years, too —where I was like, "Okay, coming into university you had experiences from K to 12, and so you have some sort of idea of how you want to teach and what sort of teacher you want to be, and oftentimes people our age have been taught in a traditional way. Now we are pushing more student-directed, constructivist, inquiry-based, or whatever it is. How is that playing out in your classroom? Are you actually seeing that?" And so then they actually go, "You know? No."

Ranee's reflection fostered a better team understanding of how teacher candidates actively make theory and practice connections. In addition, it helped Ashlyn and Ranee enhance their own self-reflection on their own teaching practices. After hearing about the experiences of the teacher candidates in the study, Ranee reflected that she saw a significant growth in the candidates after participating in the program and through seminars: "They are learning in this different way and they are seeing it in a different way and I feel that they are almost taking on more, as a professional and as an individual."

In addition to the strong professional identity evident in the SoTL interview data we were analyzing, Ashlyn reflected that her part in the research project played a significant role in helping her form a stronger teacher identity:

> I think [being involved in the SoTL study] has helped influence the direction I am going in as a teacher, I think even getting to reflect on it to that room of people, getting to share with them a little bit about how I think it is positively driving my school career was really beneficial.

Through both the coding process of the longitudinal SoTL data and the SoTL interviews conducted with Gladys and Kevin, Ashlyn was better able to understand the important changes that she had undergone as a result of her understanding of community-based opportunities and the programmatic research focused on high-impact practices:

> I am very biased in saying that I think our research is important because I believe in it . . . . I think it is really important and I think we can change things through the research, I hope, by being able to show [stakeholders] the role [research] plays. . . . I think, assuming that [stakeholders] can see what we are seeing, I think it has the opportunity to make a really, really big difference in the program moving forward.

As the longitudinal SoTL research progressed and changes were implemented in the

program, the impact on the teacher candidates became more significant. As the program grew and changed as a result of feedback gained through the research and interviews, teacher candidates received an increasingly enhanced learning experience. Ashlyn described her learning experience in the context of analyzing the impact of the high-impact practices on teacher candidates' learning:

> [The research] is playing a really big role in determining my teaching identity and hopefully [is] helping create . . . [a] group of teachers who have these really passionate ideas, and these really forward ways of wanting to make teaching and learning really personable for the students.

Developing relationships

A second theme in participating in a PLC was the development of strong relationships. Throughout the course of the research, Ashlyn and Ranee identified a strengthening in both their ability to grow as teachers and individuals as a result of the relationships developed through the various research opportunities. In developing a deeper understanding of the themes and perspectives throughout the SoTL research analysis process, they were better able to identify the motivation behind the research and its inherent importance. Ashlyn reflected:

> I am able to really relate to [Kevin's] passion. I think it is helping me understand and be more engaged in the science, because I know the roots of his passion and a lot of the things he is talking about . . . from the work that we have done. . . . I find that I relate much more easily to it, which maybe I wouldn't if I didn't have the background.

These realizations helped to strengthen personal investment and connection to the SoTL research. In addition, the themes and relationships developed through the SoTL research analysis prompted Ashlyn and Ranee to reflect on their own personal growth as teachers. Although she did not conduct the participant interviews, Ashlyn discussed how she was able to develop her personal and teaching identity as a result of interacting with teacher candidates' experiences when coding the interviews:

> I have seen the growth in these other people. And then taking their growth and their understanding from when they first started their [school placement] and where they [are] now when we conducted these interviews . . . I think that has been really reassuring and help[ed] me feel comfortable, and knowing that definitely the knowledge we have is enough.

Through participating in the SoTL research project and identifying critical information from the recorded transcripts, Ashlyn was able to utilize the developed relationships in order to shape and further her personal experience as a result. In working with Gladys and Kevin, she gained confidence and thrived as a direct result of their ongoing support. Ashlyn discussed with Gladys the gradual shift that she felt in regards to her teacher identity:

> You and Ranee have such a strong relationship that it was really reassuring, and it

> made me feel really good about working towards having a similar relationship with you and Kevin. She really was able to rely on you, you are such strong mentors for her, so that was really exciting for me to have the prospect of being able to have that and grow towards that. . . . I think it has even been really, really inspiring for me to be able to work with you because I see a lot of the things that are important to you in your teaching. I think it has been a really big help and a big confidence-builder in being able to work with you and being able to see my identity—my teaching identity—grow through your influence.

As a result of these developed relationships gained through the research opportunities, Ashlyn underwent a significant transformation. Moving forward in completing her school placement, she was better able to understand the classroom environment and the importance of the high-impact practices we were implementing. This transformation directly contributed to her attention to the importance of meaningful relationships with partner teachers, supervisors, and her students and her ability to create these relationships. The PLC provided Ashlyn with a unique lens through which she could look at the impact that developing a strong relationship within the classroom can have. Although she had been instructed on the importance of relationships in her courses, it was through working with her professors in the PLC that Ashlyn was able to analyze the direct correlation between strong relationships and the success of teacher candidates in a classroom environment. The PLC also allowed Ashlyn to better understand why the high-impact practices that were being implemented were included and introduced in such ways. Before joining the PLC, Ashlyn struggled to grasp the importance and intentional nature of the incorporation of high-impact practices. Analyzing the research data allowed Ashlyn to guide and shape her own practice as a direct result of the research outcomes and understandings.

Providing opportunities for reflection on learning

A third theme in the data was the strengthening of the PLC when Ashlyn and Ranee were provided with opportunities to reflect on their own learning. One important shift was the development of Ashlyn and Ranee's identities as a result of the SoTL research. After critically analyzing the data, Ashlyn stated, "I feel more prepared in terms of confidence in what I think I am looking for [as a teacher]. . . . I have read and gained from the interviews". This understanding allowed Ashlyn to become comfortable with her identities as both a professional and as a researcher. Through the unique opportunities presented through the SoTL research, such as speaking at conferences, Ashlyn was given an untraditional platform through which to reflect on her experiences:

> I think it was really quite validating for my own self-awareness and self-reflection as a teacher to be able to articulate what we are doing, and sharing that experience and sharing my own experience has been valuable in seeing that I am making the deep connections, and I am developing a really specific identity moving forward as a teacher. . . . it is helping me become more comfortable with what I want my time in the classroom to look like.

After spending such a significant amount of time working on the research project,

Ashlyn was able to identify the correlation between these experiences and her growth:

> I think that being a researcher for both my teaching and my student identity, it clicks in with both of those, it is quite like a core piece . . . clicking into both of those and influencing both of those identities on their own.

These understandings helped to contribute not only to her perceived and actualized teaching identity, but also helped to shape the values and key learning strategies that she will take into the classroom moving forward.

Ashlyn and Ranee gained many additional understandings and insights that they would not have been able to experience had it not been for their participation in the PLC. In having the opportunity to explore the different aspects of classroom development and experiences through a filtered lens and at a distance, Ashlyn and Ranee were able to better understand which practices and values they most closely identified with. As a result of this, they were able to further their own understanding and were able to identify their growth in learning through their own experiences and the experiences of their peers who were participants in the longitudinal study. Ashlyn identified the deeper understanding that she gained through the research practices:

> I think it has been really helpful, especially with looking at our research with the notion of place [community-based learning]. I think that has been extremely helpful for me, and I see that everywhere now. . . . I see that all the time now, whereas I think with our research, without the transcripts and the feedback that I have kind of seen from everyone else, [that] I would have probably missed that.

Both Ashlyn and Ranee identified that the research process was crucial to developing their deep understandings and furthering their teaching identities. As a result of this opportunity to look reflectively at the larger picture and to analyze the trials and successes of their peers, Ashlyn and Ranee gained invaluable understandings. Ashlyn has found that through her peers she has been better able to understand the importance of the high-impact practices and, as a result, has been better prepared moving forward:

> I didn't really see it until I had the whole picture at the end. I think that has been really influential for me in preparing me for what I want my [school placement] to look like, as opposed to my other field experiences where they felt kind of separate.

The PLC provided the opportunity for Ashlyn and Ranee to engage in meaningful research and further explore their own interests and values. By working closely with Gladys and Kevin, they were able to develop a rapport. We also considered how these processes and advancements were supported and offer these recommendations:

- Set aside time for bi-weekly meetings.
- Engage in the co-collection and co-analysis of data alongside one another.
- Engage in, document, and analyze research conversations.
- Co-present at academic conferences and in professional contexts.

CONCLUSION

Our findings reveal the complexities of working within faculty-student partnerships. Productive strategies for participating in a PLC emerged through this research as we explicated the processes of developing student agency, developing relationships, and providing opportunities to reflect on personal learning.

The literature identifies student growth, sustained engagement, investment in students' own learning, agency, and increased opportunities for metacognition as benefits for students participating in PLCs. Both Ashlyn and Ranee were impacted by their participation in an engaging experience and an inclusive community. They have had a significant impact on the development of the program and have increased their personal understandings of effective professional practices and pedagogies through this reciprocal partnership.

In this case, the PLC thrived and allowed for meaningful growth for each of the partners. Despite the complexities that Ashlyn and Ranee faced as a result of their simultaneous participation in the bachelor of education program that they were investigating, and their personal investment in the project, they were each able to identify a positive significant shift in their pedagogies and identities as a result of their gained insights. They both found that they were passionate about the project and were better able to build meaningful relationships with faculty research partners. Additionally, they felt that their classroom and programmatic experience had been enriched and their personal pedagogies further developed. Their involvement in the research allowed them to grow significantly outside of the traditional parameters of a university experience.

The involvement of student researchers provided faculty partners with a unique and rich opportunity to strengthen programmatic perspectives through the student lens. The engagement of student partners in a PLC allowed a better understanding of the strengths and challenges of implementing high-impact practices. We conclude that participating in a PLC for learning and teaching in higher education helped helped the two research assistants develop deeper pedagogical relationships amongst themselves and with the faculty partners. Moreover, our study directly contributed to the development of our bachelor of education program while ensuring students were partners in that process.

This research was successfully reviewed according to Mount Royal University's research ethics committee guidelines.

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CASE STUDY

Three Heads are Better Than One: Students, Faculty, and Educational Developers as Co-Developers of Science Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum planning should be a shared responsibility that involves students. To encourage higher education students to actively participate in their own education, we believe in the idea of engaging students as partners in learning and teaching. We have developed an Applied Curriculum Design in Science course at McMaster University that is aimed at engaging students as co-creators of curriculum. In this course, upper-year students form partnerships with faculty and educational developers and work in groups to co-create learning modules that become key components of a foundational Science course offered to first-year students. We present a scholarly exploration of our rationale for the course, the implementation and critical analysis of the initiative, and ideas for sustaining the co-created pedagogical approaches and continued student engagement in co-creating components of the curriculum.

KEYWORDS

Students as Partners, co-creators, curriculum, learning modules, educational development

Academics routinely engage in collaboration and peer review of one another's work. Why is it, then, that we tend not to take a similar approach to collaborating with students on issues pertaining to their learning in higher education? Sometimes, students are involved as representatives on various university committees; however, this type of tokenistic engagement does little to provide students with opportunities to significantly influence, develop, or shape their learning experiences. Academic staff, referred to as faculty for the remainder of this paper, often have the power to make curriculum decisions; students are consulted less often about the curricula they experience as learners than employers and other stakeholders during the curriculum design process (Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011).

One way to encourage students to participate more actively in their own education is to engage them as partners in learning and teaching (see for example, Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). The Policy Statement on Higher Education published by the Welsh Government (2013) states that, "true partnership relies upon an environment where the priorities, content, and direction of the learning experience are all set by students and staff in partnership" (p. 21). Such partnerships offer a sophisticated and effective process of engaging students in teaching and learning issues and initiatives in higher education, where both students and faculty stand to gain from developing a learning and working relationship together. As Healey et al. (2014) argue, these types of partnerships offer a great possibility for genuine transformational learning experiences, not only for students, but for all involved, including staff and faculty.

An exciting but rather under-explored partnership opportunity involves engaging students as co-creators of curriculum (Bovill, 2013). This idea is not new, as evidence of calls for such partnerships are rooted in Dewey's arguments for democratic school environments and progressive education. Many others have since continued with this idea and argued that curriculum planning be a shared responsibility that involves students (Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981; Rogers & Freiberg, 1969; Shor, 1992).

Catherine Bovill, Peter Felten, Beth Marquis, and their colleagues have become recent advocates of engaging students as co-creators of the broader concepts of curriculum. Through various case studies and research projects, they have identified many benefits for students and faculty that come from engaging students as curriculum design partners, including deeper understandings of learning processes, enhanced engagement, increased motivation and enthusiasm, and stronger relationships between students and faculty (Bovill, 2014; Bovill et al., 2011; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; Bovill, Morss, & Bulley, 2008; Marquis et al., 2017). These cases make a strong argument that faculty need to go beyond the tradition of simply consulting students or asking students for feedback, and rather engage them as full participants in designing teaching approaches, courses, and program curricula. Engaging students in this way will help in moving away from traditional hierarchical models of expertise and will help in achieving a radical collegiality where students are, as Fielding coined, "agents in the process of transformative learning" (Fielding, 1999, p. 22).

The process of transformative learning through co-creation of curriculum does not come without challenges. Challenges often involve faculty resistance to co-creation, navigating institutional barriers, and establishing inclusive co-creation approaches (Bovill et al., 2016).

In this paper, we present a case study of a program that actively engages students in the co-creation of program-level curricula using approaches that aim to minimize the challenges presented from other cases and increase the sustainability of the co-created pedagogical approaches. The intention of this paper is to describe a particular case at McMaster University where students, faculty, and educational developers worked in partnership to develop science curriculum, with a focus on educational developers' initial perspectives on successes and challenges. A subsequent research paper is in preparation to critically analyze the three perspectives (Knorr, Goff, & Puri, manuscript in preparation).

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CASE DESCRIPTION: APPLIED CURRICULUM DESIGN IN SCIENCE

Enhancing the first-year student experience within the Faculty of Science at McMaster University became an important theme that arose in the early 2010s. In response, a committee was established by the Associate Dean of Science to better understand student experiences and to develop a program to engage and motivate first-year students across a variety of science disciplines.

Conceptualizing a new foundational science curriculum

The curriculum committee included the Associate and Assistant Deans of Science responsible for undergraduate studies, faculty members from each of the departments within the Faculty, academic support staff, two students, and two educational developers from the teaching and learning institute. From the outset, there was a strong desire to involve students in developing a course that would benefit students transitioning into first-year Science. The curriculum committee began by surveying upper-level Science students (n = 324) to identify their perspectives, needs, and satisfaction with their transition to university. The students on the curriculum committee were asked to gather additional feedback from their peers through the science student societies. The student representatives formed a sub-committee with two faculty members and two educational developers to articulate a course concept that was aimed at meeting the goals the larger committee had discussed. The new first-year course was conceptualized on the basis of four fundamental components that emerged from the data collected:

- *A lecture series.* Engaging face-to-face 50-minute lectures in the style of TED-talks were developed by each of the eleven departments within the Faculty because students were interested in exploring various disciplines in science. The goal of these lectures was to introduce students to the most interesting facets of the discipline, including current and exciting research, as well as opportunities for further study and future career prospects.
- *A series of weeklong learning modules.* In response to students' desire to have small-cohort learning opportunities in their first year, tutorials of ~25 students were conceived in which students would engage in miniature research investigations (MRIs) designed to expose, engage, and motivate student interests in scientific-based explorations from a wide-variety of scientific disciplines. The intention was to provide students opportunities to develop and hone skills pertaining to the scientific method. Each module, for example, could focus on an aspect of one of the following: stating a hypothesis, reviewing literature, designing an experiment, collecting and analyzing data, or presenting findings.
- *A learning portfolio.* A learning portfolio tool was proposed to allow students to document their own learning goals, reflect upon their learning experiences and skills development, and become aware of their future professional or academic goals.
- *Support from peer mentors.* The committee also proposed to include peer mentors as a key element of the course who could act as an important resource for first-year students. Students would complete their learning modules together with the support and encouragement of upper-level peer mentors; peer mentors in turn would share their experiences that helped them through the transition to university.

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Each of the four components was developed with varying levels of student partnership and engagement. Most lectures tapped into student input and feedback, and several lectures invited students to share and showcase their experiences and voices. A first-year student partner designed the learning portfolio component based on a combination of his extensive literature reviews, consultations with students, and his own experiences. Two students, one third-year Science student, and one intern from a neighbouring university's teacher education program conducted thorough literature reviews and environmental scans and then worked in tandem to design the peer mentoring component for the first-year course. However, it was the development of the learning module series that engaged students as partners in a new and exciting manner.

Creating learning modules for the first-year Science curriculum

Once the course concept was approved, members of the curriculum committee discussed approaches in actually designing and developing each of the components, with a keen interest in finding new ways in which we could partner across roles. Faculty members bring a perspective on what disciplinary content and skills students need to know, while students have a perspective on what they find to be meaningful and engaging learning opportunities. Educational developers can help bring these two perspectives together through good practice in course and curriculum design. To enable this cross-role partnership work in the development of components for the course, we, the authors and educational developers with a science background, designed a third-year course in Applied Curriculum Design in Science. Third- and fourth-year Science students were invited to apply for this for-credit course. Course content in the early weeks was focused on science education, instructional design, and course design principles. Students brainstormed lists of topics that they found most interesting about the many disciplines within science. They also collectively identified the many skills that they felt they would have most benefited from learning and practicing in their first year of university. Students divided into 10 small groups and identified common scientific topics of interest and particular skills that they wanted to help first-year students develop. Each student group was connected with two faculty members who served as disciplinary experts and with the two educational developers who served as instructors for the course. We believe that when these three roles work together in partnership, curriculum development processes are optimized.

The deliverable for the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course was a stand-alone, one-week learning module that aimed to engage first-year students in a miniature research investigation on a topic they selected. Together with the disciplinary experts and the educational developers, the curriculum design students articulated and refined the intended learning outcomes of their module, prepared module outlines and all necessary resources, and created an assessment that would provide first-year students with feedback on their skill development. Students showcased their learning modules at a symposium and revised them based on feedback from the Associate Dean, disciplinary experts, other faculty and support staff, and many Science students.

In the first offering of Applied Curriculum Design in Science, 10 learning modules were created by 10 groups that involved student-faculty-educational-developer partnerships. Because it was not possible to incorporate all 10 modules into the first-year course, a team of

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three students and one faculty member subsequently selected six of the 10 learning modules to refine (for consistency) and include in the initial offering of the new first-year foundational science course. Modules were selected on the basis of representing a breadth of disciplines and skills, as well as the feasibility of implementation. The other modules went into a bank for possible use in the future.

IMPACT AND FUTURE PROMISE

As a result of offering this course, we have identified approaches that may be beneficial to those interested in partnering with students in curriculum design to minimize challenges, enhance sustainability, and to continue to engage students in the co-design process.

Minimizing challenges

Engaging students as co-creators of curriculum does not come without challenges. Challenges often involve faculty resistance, institutional barriers, and inclusive and sustainable approaches to co-creation (Bovill et al., 2016; Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011).

While there were many benefits in co-creating a series of learning modules, how we experienced challenges is worth mentioning in relation to what has been reported in the literature. Bovill et al. (2016) reported that resistance to co-creation, often from faculty but also from students, can be a challenge. In our case, students who were open to co-creating curriculum self-selected into the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course by applying and enrolling. Some faculty certainly experienced more resistance than others—in some cases because of the added workload in guiding students as disciplinary experts and in some cases because they felt their discipline was not being emphasized adequately. While these are indeed challenges, we hope that by offering the course every second or third year that we can minimize the amount of added work and increase the variety and availability of learning modules within each of the disciplines. Having students work closely with educational developers as instructors alleviated much concern about students' pedagogical expertise that both students and faculty may have otherwise faced.

As Bovill et al. (2016) described, we discovered that an orientation towards co-creation was indeed novel at our institution, as the idea of co-creation falls outside of traditional roles. However, rather than encountering barriers, we were very fortunate that the pilot offering of Applied Curriculum Design in Science garnered significant support and encouragement through our ongoing consultation, networking, and engagement with the university President, the Provost, the Vice-Provost (Teaching & Learning), and the Dean and Associate Dean within the Faculty of Science.

Establishing a balance between selection and inclusion is another potential challenge (Felten et al., 2013). Bovill and colleagues (2016) recommend that whether all students are included or purposefully selected, faculty should consider whose voices are heard and whose are not, whose participation is invited and whose is not, and what the implications are for co-creation projects, the larger institutions of which they are a part and the individual and groups of participants involved (p. 9).

Many students enrolled in the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course who would not otherwise have been included in contributing to university curriculum; however, instructors

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will need to become more conscious of whose voices are not being included and how that might affect the outcomes of the co-created projects. One initial observation is that only students who had achieved a 75% average were admitted into the course, thus excluding students with lower grades. Perhaps students with lower grades may have additional insight into how modules might be designed to engage a broader range of first-year students and may be more knowledgeable about ways to engage students who struggle academically in their first year. Based on this observation, the authors (with additional colleagues) are presently conducting a research study to investigate whether incoming grades are an appropriate indicator of success in student partnership roles.

Enhancing sustainability

The structure of Applied Curriculum Design in Science, now offered every two to three years, allows the Faculty of Science to engage students as co-creators of curriculum and to build a repository of student-designed learning modules from which to draw when selecting the learning modules for the first-year foundations Science course. By integrating the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course into the regular course offerings within the Faculty of Science in a sustainable manner, it benefits upper-year students who wish to contribute their voices and ideas for future students, first-year students who become engaged in science by completing student-designed learning modules, and faculty who will have an ever-growing bank of current, faculty-endorsed learning modules from which to draw.

Questions have been raised about the sustainability of co-created pedagogical approaches, which can enhance student ownership of learning in one year but might call for re-design by the next cohort of students to ensure the same depth of learning (Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011). It is important to recognize that one cohort of student curriculum designers cannot fully represent the learning needs of all future students. We expect that repeating this design process in subsequent iterations of the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course will allow student curriculum designers to consider the changing learning needs of different cohorts of incoming Science students.

Continued engagement

Engaging students as partners in designing curriculum through the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course has gained support and recognition, not only within our institution, but beyond. Efforts to create student-faculty partnerships have not stopped with the introduction of this course. Indeed, faculty and educational developers have continued to partner with students in presenting this idea at several national and international conferences (Goff & Knorr, 2014; Goff, Knorr, Tang, Ndoja, & Mahiri, 2014; Knorr, Goff, Ashfaq, Garasia, & Ahmad, 2014; Symons et al., 2015). Some students continued to partner with educational developers on teaching and learning initiatives well beyond the completion of the Applied Curriculum Design in Science course and even beyond their undergraduate studies at McMaster University. Upon graduation, other curriculum design students continued to work on encouraging students to become partners in teaching and learning initiatives by conceptualizing and developing ideas and programs at McMaster and at other universities.

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While a growing body of literature suggests that partnerships can impact students, staff, and faculty in deepening learning and engagement and in adopting scholarly approaches to learning and teaching (Bovill et al., 2016), the long-term impact of engaging and partnering with students is not clear and would be worth studying. However, as we reported in our study of student perspectives' of the new course (Cockcroft et al., 2016), 92% of students registered in the initial offering of the foundational Science course indicated that they would take the course again, and 98% would recommend the course to other incoming first-year students (Cockcroft et al., 2016). It would be important to get a better understanding of how these partnership experiences may have influenced the perspectives and future approaches or directions of faculty, staff, and students in the long term. It might also be interesting to study the impact and sustainability of the outcomes or deliverables that were developed within these partnerships.

We recognize that there are challenges associated with having students and faculty form partnerships to co-create curriculum. We have discussed some of these challenges in this paper; however, our experiences lead us to believe that there is much more to uncover. As such, we are engaging in ongoing research to explore the benefits and challenges of designing curriculum in partnership. At this time, though, we have found that through our experiences in offering a formal course that engages students, faculty, and educational developers as co-creators of curriculum, such partnerships can work towards challenging traditional faculty-student boundaries, while simultaneously respecting the experiential expertise of students, disciplinary expertise of faculty, and curricular expertise of educational developers. Three heads are better than one.

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CASE STUDY

Facilitation of Student-Staff Partnership in Development of Digital Learning Tools Through a Special Study Module

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ABSTRACT

A student-staff partnership was formed as part of a final year special study module to provide dental students the opportunity to work closely with faculty to produce high-quality e-learning resources in areas of the curriculum identified by the students as particularly difficult. The student-staff team identified the following themes as major influences on the success of the project: student-staff interaction, ownership, managing expectations, time pressures, and co-creation partnership benefits. This partnership resulted in a valuable learning experience for both the students and staff involved. The resource developed was evaluated by junior dental students in second and third year of the five year Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) degree programme at Glasgow Dental School and showed a high degree of acceptability by those in both groups. The quality assurance built into the process has resulted in an e-learning resource that has been incorporated directly into our flipped classroom model for pre-clinical skills teaching.

KEYWORDS

co-production, active student engagement, partnership, digital learning resources

The importance of staff-student partnerships in learning and teaching in higher education has been stressed by Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014) and in a number of recent papers (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; Curran, & Millard, 2016; Jarvis, Dickerson, & Stockwell, 2013; Marquis, E., Puri, V., Wan, S., Ahmad, A., Goff, L., Knorr, K., & Woo, J., 2016). These publications identify both challenges and significant advantages of the partnership and co-creation approach.

Dentistry is a dynamic clinical profession that is strongly influenced by developments in technology. E-learning has become an integral part of many dental school curricula, but students have typically been the recipients of e-learning resources developed in isolation byteaching staff. In his paper investigating the relationship between the learner and the university, McCulloch (2009) concludes that the metaphor of “the student as consumer”

implies passivity on the part of the learner who is the "receiver" of a service. However, it is important that as teachers we consider the voices of learners, and one way of achieving this is to involve students as co-producers of e-learning materials. As McCulloch (2009) has indicated, "Co-production requires active engagement with the entire learning process on the part of the student, and sees the student as an active participant in the development of knowledge" (p. 178).

Bovill, Cook-Sather, and Felten (2011) also report on the importance of reconsidering students' roles in their education and repositioning students to take a more active part as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula. There are certainly challenges when attempting to co-create learning and teaching materials with learners. Bovill et al. (2016) attempt to address the challenges in co-creation, highlighting a need for transparency to build trust between staff and students. They also state that it may be easier to overcome the challenges of working in partnership when the focus of the partnership is the co-creation of learning and teaching material within an existing course. Their view is that "breaking down traditional teacher-student boundaries, while simultaneously recognising and maintaining the professional standing of academic staff, opens possibilities for redefining and broadcasting understandings of academic expertise in the rapidly changing world of teaching and learning" (p. 206).

United Kingdom (UK) university courses that lead to a degree registrable with the General Dental Council (GDC) must satisfy the intended learning outcomes defined in the GDC document "Preparing for Practice" (General Dental Council, 2015). Since dentists must be competent practitioners upon qualification, much of the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) programme involves intensive clinical training in addition to the underpinning academic content. As a result, the timetable is busy, and a creative approach is required to identify opportunities for engaging students as co-creators of teaching techniques and materials. However, in common with the initiative of special study modules in many medical curricula (see Byrne, Lewis, & Thompson, 1999), the BDS programme at Glasgow Dental School incorporates a special study module (SSM) option for final-year students. This option offers senior students an opportunity to embark on some additional focused learning in an area of personal interest.

During the 2015/2016 academic session, a new SSM about co-creation of e-learning materials was launched, in which small student groups worked with academic staff and a learning technologist to co-create e-learning packages for use by students in earlier years of the course. The concept was similar to a project in which pharmacy students designed, wrote and developed e-learning teaching materials (see Lam, Au Yeung, Cheung, & McNaught, 2009, for discussion of this project). The case study that follows provides a reflective account from both the student and staff perspective of one of the teams that participated in the first year of this new SSM about co-creation of e-learning materials.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The aims of the SSM were to allow students to (a) interact with their peers to identify one aspect of the BDS programme for which they believed e-learning would be beneficial to student learning and (b) work in partnership with staff members to design and develop an e-learning package which would be evaluated by student users. The aspiration was that the co-created resource would become embedded in routine teaching for subsequent years. This new SSM was offered to fifth-year BDS students through a standard

process used by module leads to present information on the range of SSMs that are available.

At the commencement of the module, the student partners met with the core SSM staff (two academic staff and a learning technologist) to discuss the logistics and approach to be taken. Following a review of all existing e-learning resources, including those available via the Scottish Dental Education Online repository, the student partners designed and distributed a questionnaire to senior students to identify areas of the curriculum in which an e-learning package would have helped them in earlier years of the BDS course. A significant number of respondents indicated that an overview package on clinical procedures in endodontics (root canal treatment) would be very valuable. Endodontics is a subject area which involves highly technical, clinically challenging operative procedures for which there was no quality assured, pre-existing digital learning package.

The SSM ran on alternate weeks for a six-month period, during which time the staff members were available twice a week for up to three hours. However, this was flexible and the students determined the extent to which they required staff contact time, dependent upon their support requirements at each stage of the project. A work schedule and timetable for the entire project was developed by working backward from the fixed end date of the module.

All elements of the work package development were initiated and undertaken by the student partners, including storyboarding, scripting, photography, video filming and post production editing. Content was discussed with the subject expert on the staff team to ensure accuracy, and guidance was provided on aspects such as copyright legislation and methods of assessment. An audio-visual expert provided training and guidance for the students on video filming and editing and their voice-over script was checked for accuracy by the academic subject lead before the students recorded the narration. A small number of required images and radiographs that the students could not access themselves were made available upon request from the teaching collections of academic staff. The final highly technical phase, which involved compiling the materials created by the students, was supported by the educational technologist and included compression of the video footage to provide files of a manageable size.

Junior students on the BDS programme completed a questionnaire to evaluate the e-learning resource produced, and a summary of the responses is provided in Table 1 below. Dissemination of the work was undertaken through an invitation to the student partners to present their e-learning resource at a Dental School Meeting to which all faculty staff were invited.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

This section of this case study provides excerpts from the reflections of each member of the student-staff partnership (i.e. two student partners and four staff partners), each of whom provided written reflections in response to an email request. Each team member has been given a pseudonym and the reflections were categorised into key themes.

Both students and staff participants reported finding the project very rewarding and noted that it offered the students the chance to work closely in partnership with staff, which made it unique in respect to the BDS degree programme at Glasgow.

Student-staff interactions

The quotes in this section reflect how the interaction between the staff and student members developed. For example, Alex, a staff partner, reflected that "the student partners were slightly hesitant at the beginning; this is a new relationship with staff after all, however they very quickly relished the freedom they had." Janice, a student partner, stated:

> I did not know what to expect. . . . Our team consisted of an IT expert who took care of the programming of our learning resource, experts in the specialty topic chosen to ensure the quality of the learning material remained high, teaching staff who were able to guide the team on timelines and targets and lastly us—the students who were able to pin point areas of difficulty amongst our peers and were able to design a tool which we thought would best cater to our learning needs.

The sentiments of "not knowing what to expect" and being "slightly hesitant" reflect the need to break down traditional teacher-student barriers early when students are involved as partners. The last phrase in Janice's comment powerfully highlights the value of student-staff interaction in the development of teaching materials that satisfy learner needs.

Ownership

The level of control over the subject matter and the design of the resource was welcomed by the student developers, as Beth, a student partner, indicated: "I liked that the module allowed us to express a level of individuality and creativity, while focusing on a subject of our choosing." This comment highlights the value of switching the traditional role of students as "receivers" of educational material to that of active creators of materials for other learners.

Managing expectations

Ensuring that goals set by students are realistic in relation to the project's time constraints and other available resources is an important role for experienced staff partners, who must exercise this duty without causing disillusionment or loss of motivation. Alex, a staff partner, commented: "My role quickly evolved from encouraging active participation to …. keeping an eye on what was realistic in the time allocated."

Time pressures

Unsurprisingly, time was a major factor for the whole team. The student developers were concerned about managing this project as well as completing a demanding final clinical year of their degree, whilst staff had concerns about their own workload. What the following quotes reflect, however, is the immense satisfaction that followed the effort expended and the recognition by staff that the teaching resource developed actually saved them time in the long term:

> When I started the SSM, I knew that it would be hard work. However, I think I initially underestimated the time and dedication needed to make our project a success. . . . Because the SSM was student led, the success of our project greatly depended on how much effort we were willing to put into it. . . . The hours spent on

> the project exceeded the hours spent on any other SSM but I also think the rewards were greater. (Beth, Student Partner)

> I had imagined that the task would be an onerous one, swallowing large amounts of time in my already hectic schedule. However, very quickly it became apparent that this would not be the case. . . . in reality it has saved significant time in the production of teaching material. (John, Staff Partner)

Co-creation partnership benefits

The experiences of all team members supported the view that it is easier to overcome the challenges of working in partnership when the focus of the partnership is the co-creation of learning and teaching material (Bovill et al., 2016):

> I am very proud to have been part of such a hard-working group of students and staff. We created strong relationships with the University of Glasgow staff working on this project with us, who viewed us as peers and not just as students. I believe that this collaboration between students and staff contributed greatly to the success of this project. (Beth, Student Partner)

> This SSM also allowed us to work closely with teaching staff who, for the purpose of this SSM, were our colleagues instead of our teachers. . . . in fact at times we as students were expected to lead the team. It was not as daunting as it seemed and they respected our views and input just as much as we respected theirs. Once we overcame the initial student-teacher barrier the work flow and level of productivity quickly increased and our meetings became quite exciting. (Janice, Student Partner)

Both of these student comments reflect very strongly on the collegial working relationships that developed between the student and staff team members, with little evidence of a hierarchical dynamic.

The ability to achieve this productive and exciting working environment in a short period of time is testament to the positive attitudes and respectfulness of all parties involved.

For example, Brian, a staff partner, explained that he "[loves] the experience of seeing the students planting the seeds of their own learning packages and then harvesting those plants in a form of high quality, engaging and interactive activity-focused resources." This positivity and respect was echoed by Claire, the Educational Technologist, who wrote:

> Having worked with many academic staff . . . , it was different and quite refreshing to work with the students, with their insights into design and the drive that they showed to complete the project on time. . . . I was so pleased to see the dynamics of the group develop over time as well as watch their confidence grow in technical as well as "soft" skills like group working. (Claire, Educational Technologist)

In summary, this was a true "win-win" exercise for all parties involved. The students' perception of learning needs and the type of e-learning tool that would satisfy the requirements were combined with the academic and technical skills of the staff members,

with all parties reporting very positively on the experience. The student members gained a significant number of new skills, many of which were transferable graduate attributes, and also gained immense satisfaction from developing a digital learning package that is now used for undergraduate teaching. This is true student-centred learning and teaching in all its forms.

STUDENT USER PERSPECTIVE

As part of the SSM, feedback on the packages developed was sought from two groups of undergraduate students using an online questionnaire. This questionnaire, using a five-point Likert scale, asked to what extent respondents agreed with the following statements:

1. The content of the e-learning package was consistent with the intended learning outcomes outlined.
2. The material was set out in a clear and logical way.
3. The self-paced nature of the learning was a good feature of the e-learning package.
4. I would recommend this e-learning package to others.
5. The quiz appropriately tested the material presented within the e-learning package.
6. I would use this e-learning package for revision purposes.
7. The package has improved my understanding of this topic.

One of these groups (BDS 2; n=68) had used the package in a flipped classroom exercise on endodontics, and a second group (BDS 3; n=89) had already completed their endodontics pre-clinical skills teaching. Whilst the focus of this paper is on the staff-student co-creation of the e-learning package, the combined data in Table 1 demonstrate the high level of acceptability of the final product by both groups of students surveyed.

Table 1. Student feedback on the endodontics e-learning package co-created by the student-staff SSM team (n=157)

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1			1	67	88
2		1	1	61	95
3			2	61	95
4		1	5	76	76
5		2	19	85	50
6	1	2	14	66	75
7	1	2	30	88	37

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PLANS

One of the palpable sentiments threaded through the independent reflections is the sense of fulfilment experienced by all the team members as a result of their joint success. This was evident in their personal satisfaction with the excellent working relationship that developed, the digital product itself, the positive feedback from users, and the presentation

by the student and staff joint team, which won the prize for the best presentation at the ninth University of Glasgow Learning & Teaching Conference. It was enlightening for the staff members to see the perspective of the students in the package design, but also an eye-opener for the students about academic life and the effort that is required to produce effective teaching materials.

The reflections from the various stakeholders in this SSM, based on co-creation of digital teaching materials, speak for themselves. The comments by authors quoted in the introduction to this paper about active student engagement in co-creation (McCulloch, 2009; Bovill et al., 2011) came to life during the six-month project, and the possibility of breaking down traditional student-staff boundaries to share expertise and insight into development of learning tools was fully realised. In addition to the valuable learning and experience gained by both student and staff partners, an excellent digital learning resource has been created by students for students. The quality assurance built into the process has resulted in a package that has been incorporated directly into our flipped classroom model for pre-clinical skills teaching (Crothers et al., 2017).

There were, not surprisingly, some challenges that needed to be addressed. The issue of scoping the work in relation to the time available was a particular problem, but guidance from the staff members ensured that aims were achievable. Even so, the students expended considerable effort in their free time to ensure completion, a mark of their commendable enthusiasm and drive.

Following the success of this first year of the e-learning SSM, it has been continued for a second year. Once again, the student-staff working relationships have matured swiftly to result in the completion of two further e-learning packages. On the basis of experience gained, groups will be limited to a maximum of two student partners per project in future years, since this seems to result in a better working dynamic than groups of three student partners.

We have been extremely fortunate that the students who have chosen this SSM to date have been exceptionally well motivated and engaged and respond well to the inclusive and welcoming behaviours of the staff involved. It is clear that the students who opt for this SSM greatly value the freedom and autonomy it provides within the setting of a clinical programme. The SSM is now a permanently embedded element of the curriculum and we look forward to continued success with this model of co-creating teaching materials for the BDS course. The success of the SSM is evidence that given the right circumstances, co-production partnerships have a place in professional degree programmes.

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REFLECTIVE PIECE

Reflections on *That-has-Been*: Snapshots from the Students-as-Partners Movement

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EDITORIAL NOTE (Alison):

The idea for this multipart reflective essay emerged from first author Christel Brost's reflections on her experience of striving to develop a students-as-partners approach within the context of a summer institute and then back at her home institution. To aid reflection on these experiences, Christel used Roland Barthe's construct of *that-has-been*, which she explains below, to examine several "mental snapshots" of her experiences and what those mean for her personally and for students-as-partners work. Inspired by the vivid, emotion-filled representation of Christel's "snapshots," we (co-editors of reflective essays for the journal, Anita Ntem and Alison Cook-Sather) invited participants from two other venues to share their reflections within the same frame.

Authors of each section of this essay use Barthes' construct to "zoom in" on different moments and lived experiences of partnership, creating mental snapshots from three students-as-partners venues. The first venue is the Change Institute at the May 2017 International Summer Institute on Students as Partners held at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. The second is the May 2017 Pedagogic Partnership Conference held at Lafayette College in, Easton, Pennsylvania, in the United States. The third is the June 2017 RAISE International Partnership Colloquium held at Birmingham City University in Birmingham, England.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME: IMAGES OF *THAT-HAS-BEEN* (Christel)

At the end of his life Roland Barthes wrote *Camera Lucida*. After spending a lifetime in semiotic analyses, he made a remarkable shift in that book. He started to look at photographs as *that-has-been* (Barthes, 2000, p. 77), and in doing so he connects emotion and intuition. He spends a good part of the book writing about a photograph taken of his mother, in the Winter Garden, when she was five years old. She is looking straight at the photographer and thereby straight at the viewer. When Barthes writes about this photo, his mother is no longer alive. She died after he had nursed her at the end of her life. Now he is

looking at a photograph of her as a child, a child that needs nursing. The emotions that are experienced in regards to *that-has-been* affect him strongly, since the act of viewing the photograph embeds it with emotions. A semiotic analysis would not unpack those emotions in the same way, according to Barthes.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE MCMASTER UNIVERSITY CHANGE INSTITUTE (Christel)

The mental snapshots exist only in my mind but if I can try and put these emotions into this essay, the essay becomes the images. And I can share the images with you.

43° 15' 20.5956'' N 79° 52' 15.9672'' W

I find myself once again in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, just like last year. Why do I leave my hometown of Malmö, hop on a plane in Copenhagen, fly for eight hours, get off the plane in Toronto and get on a GO bus for another hour, to arrive at the above coordinates? The answer is in the question: because they are coordinates.

This is where X marks the spot. This is where I have found my tribe. This is where Students as Partners is lived and not just a concept described in a paper or in a lecture.

So why am I sitting alone in a room at the Change Institute, not a student in sight? I am doing my best to put the value of the experience into a reflective piece of writing that could possibly be published in the *International Journal for Students as Partners.*

I feel as if I am part of a movement and Hamilton is the epicenter. The fact that the journal was just launched, and that last year was the very first time this event took place, gives me a feeling of being part of a silent paradigm shift in higher education.

When two student partners, the Pro Vice Chancellor, the head of the Center for Teaching and Learning, and I, all from Malmö University Institution/University, took part in the Change Institute in 2016, we made such great plans. The fact that all levels of our university were represented in our group of five made us think that we would have a great impact upon our return. Did we?

I have to pull out a few mental snapshots and lay them out on the table, so to speak, since my tiny room here at the Change Institute is very quiet. Last year there was a lot of noise, giggles, and heated debate. The five of us lived in a bubble of total partnership for five days. We stayed at the Sheraton on King Street and came to the Institute in a rented car. No GPS, guessing directions, getting lost in Hamilton; instead, we always made it to the Institute on time. I, the control freak, learned a valuable lesson in that back seat. Snug between my two students I stayed quiet. I thought to myself: These are clever people. We will get there!

The Change Institute is organized in a very generous way. Lots of food is served throughout the day. Still, in the evening at the hotel, we wanted to get together. We found a lounge on the top floor of the Sheraton where we could order a cheese plate. Most nights we had that lounge to ourselves, and we all agreed that it was like coming home after a long day at work.

Looking back at those evenings a year ago I can see that the relationship created in that lounge—which became like our own living room—was not just a continuation of what occurred in the workshop but a whole new space where we did not “talk shop.” Instead, we shared personal things about ourselves. This new space is the most challenging to recreate when you return home. It is not just about sharing a meal or meeting outside work, it is about going home and “kicking your shoes off.”

The third mental snapshot was taken in the grand hall of the Change Institute. The sun was pouring in through the ceiling windows, and my four partners around the table looked so beautiful. Not because they posed for my mental camera but because they engaged in and enjoyed collaborative work, surrounded by colleagues from six other universities from around the world. Together we formed an alliance. Hopping from one table to the other in the liquid café, the feeling of being part of a movement emerged. Looking at that mental snapshot from a year ago, I can connect to that feeling in a very strong way.

It is interesting to notice that, as I sit here and write, the 2017 Change Institute is going on right now in the grand hall. However, to me, it just looks like students and teachers working, and I do not connect with their process as I connect emotionally when I look at my mental snapshot from a year ago.

I can relate to Barthes' *that-has-been*; my emotions are embedded in my mental snapshots and I therefore read them as very strong images. The essence of my experience is alliance, the alliance that was created in our group a year ago through partnership. It is important to connect to that alliance.

In my daily practice, looking at mental snapshots from the year that has gone by, I have collected a box full of less-successful images. Out of focus, messy, pale in comparison. Right now that does not bother me so much. Right now I feel connected with the silent movement that is created in these rooms.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE PEDAGOGIC PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE (Christelle)

When I decided to apply for college, specifically to Bridgewater State University, it was a whimsical choice. I didn't know where the end of my senior year in high school would bring me, or where my future was heading. In making my commitment to attend Bridgewater State University as an English major with a minor in secondary education, I was still uncertain. It was not until the completion of my first semester that I knew that school was where I was meant to be, both in learning and teaching. Upon this realization I committed myself to ensuring that I am doing everything in my power to both teach and learn to my maximum potential. So my first *that-has-been* moment is of that time of uncertainty, taken from the perspective of what is now certain commitment.

Because of my dedication as a scholar, I was afforded the opportunity to be a pedagogical partner and attend and present at the Pennsylvania Consortium for the Liberal Arts Pedagogic Partnership Conference. My second *that-has-been* moment is taken from a conversation at that conference. As someone who had not previously participated in pedagogical partnership, I was asked to present my concerns to the more experienced group of student partners. In discussing their apprehensions upon beginning their partnerships, many of them shared that they feared that they would not be able to communicate to someone higher up about their imperfections. However, this was not one of my main concerns as I realized, perhaps because of the environment at my college, that professors and students are more similar than students tend to think. At first my logic behind this thinking was just superficial: that they were students not too long ago themselves, and we are all adults. But, this was the beginning of an epiphany that was developing throughout the conference.

My biggest concern going into pedagogical partnership was, what if I can't find anything wrong with the way someone is teaching? I was reassured that no one is the

perfect teacher no matter how efficient they are; there will always be room for improvement. Then, I thought about the character of the professor I would be working with—someone who teaches with passion and care for the content at hand who would be aware that there is always more to be done and is persistent in striving towards perfection. Teaching is a craft that one cannot perfect but should be ever changing, and does so as a result of learning. What I ultimately realized is that professors are nothing but the best students, who are just trying to keep the flame alive in knowledge and learning.

The clearest snapshot I took away from the Pedagogic Partnership Conference is the realization that the position a professor embraces is a dedication to lifelong learning. The snapshot contains traces of all the faculty who participated in the conference—a multitude of people committed to a life of learning. Through this experience I was able to define expertise not as completion in learning, but knowing enough to teach and push the knowledge of your field forward. I find that teaching and learning are too often seen as relatively parallel avenues, but the truth is *effective* teaching requires teaching and learning to intersect in many different areas. Learning and teaching have a symbiotic relationship that develops a recipe for the propulsion of cognition for both the individual and society.

My last snapshot is a *that-will-be*, rather than a *that-has-been*, as I continue on my path of lifelong learning. In attending the conference, I gained a greater depth in my understanding of why I am here, both in school, and in life. I have begun my journey of lifelong learning by acquiring higher education in a field I find to be vital to the shaping of the adolescent mind. While I wasn't exactly certain what to expect as a partner or in attending the conference, both ended up being great learning experiences; what I found is that I learned most about myself and the scholarly environment. Until I attended this conference, it didn't occur to me that the commitment I was making to teaching as a result of learning and a separate commitment I was making to learning were one and the same. After my completion of my master's degree I want to teach at a high-school level, and eventually return to school to pursue a Ph.D. As I move forward I will keep in mind the important lesson I learned in Pennsylvania, that my most important goal is becoming the best lifelong learner I can be.

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE RAISE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP COLLOQUIUM (Karen and Saskia)

For the last eighteen months, we have been collaborating on an internally funded project investigating understandings of the term partnership in higher-education learning and teaching. We were invited to facilitate a workshop on how we have used corpus-based methods to support this work at the Researching, Advancing & Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE) International Partnership Colloquium in Birmingham.

As the alarm went off early on 23 June, my initial thought was just how tired I (Karen) was. The Colloquium came at the end of a very busy week where I had met with a partner organisation that offers a degree my institution validates, delivered a workshop on professional development for international collaborative partners, and attended an awards ceremony where I was shortlisted for my work with external partners. These seemingly unrelated tasks were, on reflection, all partnership activities—but they were very different to the staff-student partnerships Saskia and I were going to discuss at the Colloquium. It is this diversity of meaning of partnership in contemporary higher education, and its proliferation in policy and practice that has fuelled our work; Saskia and I have sought to

understand what impact these different technical and everyday understandings of partnership have on how we view learning and teaching partnerships between staff and students.

We met up on the train from London to Birmingham and set off to walk to Birmingham City University. My (Saskia) first memory of the day is the roundabout way we approached the venue, first through the hustle and bustle of the Bullring shopping centre and then an unexpected turn through a dimly lit tunnel, which I was dubious would lead us to our destination. But we tried our luck and ended up in the right place. This *that-has-been* moment seems to be a metaphor for how I ended up at this event. Karen has had a long-standing interest in learning and teaching, and in the language of higher-education policy and practice particularly. Her decision to focus on partnership seems more logical than mine. For me, working on this project with Karen has led me down an unknown path that does not appear to fit my background in applied linguistics, but I think we are emerging on the other side of the tunnel onto a path of exploring how partnership is understood by students and staff in higher education. The Colloquium provided us with an opportunity to test out our current thinking and our approaches to research and, at the same time, learn more about other questions people were posing.

As a small and focussed event, the sessions and informal conversations were challenging, inspiring, and immensely useful for our own work and thinking. For me (Saskia), what was striking was the many commonalities I discovered in what interests me and the keynotes and workshops offered on the day. I had a couple of veritable light-bulb moments, now *that-has-been* moments, that clearly show that the kind of interdisciplinary work we do is valuable and fruitful. For Karen, the Colloquium was an opportunity to catch up with friends and former colleagues whose work I have followed for some time. One very strong impression of that day was in a session about the battleground for Students as Partners and the (mis)appropriation of practice. This resonated so strongly with our work, where we have discussed the prevalence of partnership in higher-education management speak.

During that session, I was sitting with people who have been involved in this area of practice for a long time, reminding us where things had started. At the same table, a student shared her own understandings of partnership based on her own very recent experiences. The conversations, sometimes characterized by conflict and at other times by consensus, reminded me of the importance of individual experience and the need to collectively develop understandings of what partnership means to a particular group of people, within a particular setting, at a particular time. It turns out that the corpus-based tool that we used in our workshop might well help to shape those discussions. The excitement and intellectual curiosity we saw in the participants during our workshop when they looked at how partnership was being used in different types of text (e.g., strategic documents, academic webpages, and everyday language) demonstrated that there is merit in exploring what partnership is (or could be) in teaching and learning and in potentially using corpus linguistic methods in other higher-education-focussed research.

At the end of the day, our return journey to the station seemed less convoluted, the pathway was clearer, and we had a better sense of where we were going. And that's how we feel about our work. The Colloquium provided us with a fresh challenge, reassurance, and purpose. It was invigorating. Indeed, so invigorating that Karen forgot how tired she was and wrote an abstract about partnership for another conference on the train!

EDITORIAL NOTE (Anita):

The mental snapshots captured from these venues reinforce the essence of why the exploration of students-as-partners approaches generates enduring memories that impact partners' self-reflection in education. Christel's snapshots describe the "tone" established in the Change Institute, with not only the launch of the journal that celebrates partnership, but also the way partnerships were rich in capturing the quintessence of those dialogues wherever they were. Christelle's snapshots afforded her the validation needed for her to feel confident in her present and future role as a transformative learner and teacher. Karen and Saskia's snapshots allowed them to realize that partnership is a transformative and context-dependent process. Overall, these snapshots, some clear and some unclear, have an emotive presence and a temporality that gives these writers and their readers the opportunity to be a part of a development that, while rendered in only a handful of *that-has-been* moments, is an ongoing conversation with sustained feelings.

NOTE ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Christel Brost *is a lecturer at Malmö University, Sweden. Her subjects are photography and graphic design, and she has a background as a professional photographer. As pedagogical developer at the Center for Teaching and Learning at Malmö University, her focus is Students as Partners and Students as Agents of Change.*

Christelle Lauture *is a second-year undergraduate student at Bridgewater State University, where she is majoring in English as well as secondary education. She has worked in pedagogical partnership with faculty, plans to be a teacher, and hopes to pursue both a master's degree and a Ph.D*.

Dr. Saskia Kersten *is an applied linguist and Senior Lecturer in English Language & Communication at the University of Hertfordshire. Her research interests are the second-language development of young learners of English, computer-mediated communication, and using corpus-based methods in interdisciplinary research. The latter sparked her interest in staff-student partnerships.*

Dr. Karen Smith *leads collaborative research and development in the School of Education at the University of Hertfordshire. Karen's research interests center around how higher education policies and practices impact those who work and study within universities. She is currently exploring the different meanings of partnership in higher education*.

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BOOK REVIEW

Postgraduate Research Supervision: Transforming (R)Elations by Alison Bartlett and Gina Mercer

New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing 2001 (284 pages)
ISBN: 978-0820449982

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As a course designer and instructor, a curriculum assessor, and as a newish researcher in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), I keep a small section of books in my library that clarify these facets of my work as a teaching graduate and situate them within my institution (the University of Kansas), my discipline, and the university sector. Alison Bartlett's and Gina Mercer's *Postgraduate Research Supervision: Transforming (R)Elations* is a valuable recent addition to this collection, one that I have already recommended to graduate colleagues in the humanities and the social sciences, to my faculty mentors at KU's Center for Teaching Excellence, and to faculty in the English Department where I do my research.

Reading Bartlett and Mercer's book amounts to holding one's assumptions, experiences, and attitudes up to the mirrors of 26 chapters, written by 55 sophisticated voices, each with its own revealing emphasis. The book is an elegant cross-section of theory-driven arguments, such as Tai Peseta's "Imagining a Ph.D. Writer's Body Grappling over Pedagogy"; literature reviews, such as Mandy Symons's "Learning Assistance: Enhancing the Ph.D. Experience"; data-driven case studies, such as Bob Smith's "(Re)Framing Research Degree Supervision as Pedagogy"; and fascinating new or hybrid genres, such as Gaylene Perry and Kevin Brophy's dialogue, "'Eat Your Peas': The Creative Ph.D. Thesis and the Exegesis." Some who read this review may balk at the work's age but its continued relevance stems from the foresight of its contributors and the fact that universities still have considerable room for growth on the issues they have raised.

Symons reminds us that graduate "students who are asked about their [research] supervision usually mention problems" (p.103), and reading this book may help graduates who are experiencing such problems diagnose causes and imagine feasible solutions. For some graduates, reading thoughtful identifications of the issues, such as Sheralyn Campbell's "Re-imagining the Gendered Self in Postgraduate Experience," may at least provide reassurance that whatever stressors they face are not imaginary, nor perhaps even rare. For me, Jo Balatti and Hilary Whitehouse's wry and incisive chapter, "Novice at Forty: Transformation or Reinvention?," identified a tension I've felt between having been a competent professional prior to graduate school and occasionally being treated as a novice based on assumptions about students (graduate students, after all, are students). One of the most challenging chapters, Jane Gallop's "Resisting Reasonableness," traces another student's similar malaise into a provocative

critique of the policy-driving taboo on advisor-advisee sex, suggesting that the advisor-advisee relationship is a form of true respect for an advisee, who, if dissertating, "is, by definition, at the very edge of student identity… no longer simply a student, already within the rite of passage to professor" (p.153).

A student need not be encountering career difficulties in order to appreciate this book. Even someone in a congenial, productive research partnership (where I see myself) with faculty may find this a worthwhile investment in recognizing her happy circumstances, as well as the institutional conditions that led to and sustain them. (A similar trajectory of thought prompted the book in the first place; see the editors' introduction.) As a stakeholder in a university, exposing oneself to literature that exposits what has made a good experience good is a gratitude-inspiring and generally empowering move; arguably, it's an act of good institutional citizenship that pays forward. Symons reminded me to thank the director staff at the Center for Teaching Excellence for its culture of mentorship. Macaulay and McKnight's chapter underscores the crucial role that librarians and archivists have played in my coursework, comprehensives, and dissertation research. And Gough and Anders's emphasis on methodology implies the value of my campus's humanities research center, a hub for conversation on research methodology; they see shared methodology, as opposed to shared content interests, as a successful strategy for good research advising.

Making campus supporters of graduate research aware of the crucial role they're playing empowers them to advocate for the resources needed to create and sustain supportive behaviors, programs, culture, and resources, and they will influence our universities long after well-supported graduates have become (well-placed?) alumni. To those in such roles these chapters may offer horizons for new initiatives; verbiage for departmental goals, values, or position descriptions; and possibly even insight that could lead to grant funding for enhanced support. If a teaching and learning center, office of graduate studies, or research center with graduate staff has a library or resource list, this book should be included.

A common observation in SoTL is that all too often instructors default to the sorts of pedagogy they experienced while students. To a faculty member who has never advised graduate work but is about to, to one who hasn't had advisees in a while, or to one who has historically relied on conversations with colleagues and anecdotes shared in passing, it may come as a relief to realize that this book is available. To graduates it is a reminder that "the supervisory role [is] one of the hardest and most thankless tasks of an academic" (p.104) and that faculty are often adding this task to already-burgeoning queues of work. In sum, this work remains relevant and has the potential to renew university culture by enriching the relationships that comprise its network of researchers.