Proceedings of the RAISE International Colloquium on Partnership

RAISE convened a major event on June 23rd 2017, hosted at Birmingham City University. This was undertaken under the auspices of the RAISE Special Interest Group on Partnership. The event organisers were successful in bringing together leading, international commentators and practitioners to discuss and reflect on developments in partnerships between students and staff in Higher Education. We were pleased to welcome Alison Cook-Sather to present the keynote address

We noted that students and staff working in partnership has rapidly become a major feature of the HE landscape around the world. There is much evidence to show that partnership working may be a powerful catalyst to enhance student engagement and enhance student learning. Indubitably there are benefits to staff and institutions too. Developing such an ethos presents an attractive alternative to neo-liberal, transactional and consumer models of HE. We wished to take stock of these developments and explore the opportunities, challenges, and consequences of such approaches. Is partnership truly inclusive and open to all? What are the ethical tensions? Are some of these practices more 'pseudo-partnership' then genuine? Is there a danger of appropriation through neo-liberal or managerialist agenda's?

We asked contributors to summarise the presentations and workshops they gave at the event for these proceedings and we are delighted that so many of them have been able to do so.

Further material (posters and slides from presentations) are available for RAISE members to view here:
http://www.raise-network.com/resources/partnership-colloquium-2017/

Colin Bryson and Abbi Flint, Colloquium Organisers

Contributions to the Colloquium Proceedings

What Our Uses of Theory Tell Us About How We Conceptualize Student-Staff Partnership

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All intentional practices are informed, implicitly or explicitly, by some underlying theory. As partnership practices have proliferated, so too have the theories evoked and deployed to analyse them. The definition of partnership that I used for the keynote address I delivered—or rather that delegates and I co-created—at the RAISE Colloquium, was the one that colleagues and I developed based on our analyses of a variety of student-staff pedagogical partnerships across countries and contexts. In *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*, we define partnership as:

> *a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis* (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014, pp. 6-7).

In the keynote I offered for consideration a handful of theories that surface repeatedly across published analyses of student-staff partnerships. These included theories of engagement, student voice, power and identity, communities of practice, student as producer, liminality, threshold concepts, and translation. As I presented each of these, I asked delegates to note what each theory enables and constrains. The final portion of the keynote was devoted to small-group and then whole-group discussion of the insights and questions this theory tour prompted for all of us.

Background, Definitions, and Guiding Questions

I have been working over the last year or so with student and staff colleagues from England, Australia, Canada, and the US on a multi-dimensional literature review project (see Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, for the first product of that collaborative endeavour). In the context of this project, a student partner recently reminded us that we use terms, such as "theory," without really defining what we mean. I appreciated this point about assumptions we make when we have been thinking about or doing something for too long, so I thought it would be useful, both to the collaborative literature review project and for the delegates of the RAISE conference, to map out and explore some of the theories most commonly used to illuminate and analyze partnership.

One set of US-based definitions and one set of UK-based definitions of theory gave us a starting point, and I posed, as well, several questions for all of us to consider as we moved through the several theories. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary offers: a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena; a belief, policy, or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action; and a hypothesis assumed for the sake of argument or investigation. *OED* online includes: a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be

explained; a set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based; and an idea used to account for a situation or justify a course of action.

As these definitions make clear, theories inform and guide thinking and action. They may be generated from other arenas of thought, as the first OED definition makes explicit. They may also be generated based on research on practice and data generated from that research, what Glaser and Strauss first called "grounded theory" back in 1967. The questions I posed (informed by Peter Felten's good suggestions) for everyone to keep in mind as we toured the theory gallery were these:

- Why does theory matter for individual partners/scholars, and for the "field" of Students as Partners (SaP)?
- Do we need *a* theory as the foundation of this work? If we have lots of theories underlying lots of different practices, is there an essence or core of SaP, or is SaP really just a range of people/practices grouped under a common term?
- Do certain theories privilege certain things (such as attention to questions of equity and inclusion) -- such that attending to (or not attending to) certain theories would challenge us to be more inclusive or more learning-focused or … in our work?
- Might theories act like a kind of conscience, reminding us of *why* we are doing something and helping to keep us true to our intentions?

Theories Often Evoked in Scholarly Discussions of Pedagogical Partnership
Below is a partial list of some of the theories that surface in analyses of student-staff partnership work. Each includes a basic definition, a note on the theory's roots or origins, and a quotation that asserts or applies the theory. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, either of all the theories that are evoked in the literature or of the ways in which each theory is used. Rather, this selection is intended to lift a number of theories into the light in order to look across them for what they tell us, individually and in relation to one another, about how we conceptualize student-staff pedagogical partnership.

Engagement
Engagement has been defined as a complex phenomenon that encompasses student involvement, excitement and persistence (Ahlfeldt et al. 2005), layered and meaningful participation in, and commitment to, learning (Kuh et al. 2010), and emotional as well as intellectual investment that is both a requirement for and outcome of partnership (Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016). The roots or origins of this theory are in higher education's interest in the retention and thriving of students, a growing concern and focus of attention starting in the mid-1990s. Bovill and Felten (2016) recently argued that:

> *Student engagement is a central theme in higher education around the world. Over the last several years, student-staff partnerships have increasingly been portrayed as a primary path towards engagement.*

Student Voice

Student voice is both a metaphor for and the literal sound, presence, and power of students in conversations about educational practice (Cook-Sather, 2006). The roots or origins of this theory are in K-12 school reform in the UK, Australia, Canada, and the US. In a recent special issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, Frison and Melcarne (2017) linked student voice and pedagogical partnership: "This collection of essays offers, first of all, the opportunity to address the strongly felt need for supplying a clear theoretical and methodological approach to those educational practices that are flourishing in Italy according to a 'student voice' approach, oriented towards developing partnerships between students and teachers."

Power and Identity

We can understand power as the capacity to act and identity as who we are as defined by intersecting social dimensions/characteristics. The roots or origins of theories of power and identity in relation to pedagogical partnership are in critical, feminist, post-structural, and intersectionality theory. Crawford (2012, p. 57) links power and identity in relation to partnership:

> *In a desire to democratize knowledge, making our teaching more public, it is not enough to recognize the inequality in power that characterizes the relationship between student and teacher; that recognition must be a catalyst that enables challenge and cultural transformation.*

Student as Producer

Student as Producer emphasizes the role of the student as collaborators in the production of knowledge. Derived from:

> *Critical social theory grounded in avant-garde Marxism that developed in Soviet Russia after the Bolshevik uprising in 1917, before being suppressed by Stalin, and a group of modernist Marxists working in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s* (Neary, 2010),

It draws in particular on the work of Walter Benjamin and Lev Vygotsky. Neary (Ibid) has argued that:

> *Student as Producer is a critical response to attempts by recent governments in the UK, and around the world, to create a consumerist culture among undergraduate students.*

Communities of Practice

Wenger (2006) contends that "communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor." Meacham, Castor & Felten (2013) used communities of practice to analyze pedagogical partnership, explaining that: having a "domain" means that participants have a common interest or competence that sets them apart from others who are not participants in the group (e.g., artists, surgeons, high school teachers); being in "community" means that participants share information and engage in domain-related activities that help all of them to learn and grow in this particular area; and

having a "practice" distinguishes this group from others who simply have passing but common interests or passions. The roots or origins of this theory are in learning theory and anthropology. Meacham et al. (2013) suggest that:

> *Having a 'practice' distinguishes this group from others who simply have passing but common interests or passions; members of a CoP 'develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems' (Wenger 2006).*

Threshold Concepts

Meyer and Land (2006) have defined threshold concepts as "conceptual gateways" or "portals" that, once passed through, lead to "a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view" (p. 19). Threshold concepts are troublesome, transformative, discursive, irreversible, and integrative. The roots or origins of this theory are in economics. Cook-Sather (2014) and Cook-Sather and Luz (2015) have described partnership as a threshold concept, and Marquis et al. (2016, p. 6) have argued that:

> *passing through the partnership threshold entails coming to understand staff and students as collegial contributors to teaching and learning, with complementary roles, responsibilities, and perspectives, and realizing this understanding within actual teaching and learning practices.*

Liminality

A liminal space is "a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (Turner, 1995 [1969], p. 97), where participants are "ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (Turner 1974, p. 232). The roots or origins of this theory are in anthropology. Extending traditional notions of liminality, Cook-Sather and Felten (2017, p. 181) suggest that:

> *Intentionally embraced as places within which the possible might unfold, such 'as-if' spaces can support academic developers, academic staff, and students engaging with one another as partners, and by enacting partnership in this in-between place, they can learn to become partners beyond it.*

Translation

To translate is to bear, remove, or change from one place or condition to another; to change the form, expression, or mode of expression of, so as to interpret or make tangible, and thus to carry over from one medium or sphere into another; to change completely, to transform (*Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2nd ed.). The roots or origins of this theory are in literary and translation studies. Applying translation to partnership, Cook-Sather and Abbot (2016) explain:

> *translation is the process through which particular outcomes are achieved: student consultants' and faculty members' perceptions of classroom engagement, terms for naming pedagogical practices, and identities or sense of self are transformed.*

I invite readers, too, to think about what each of these theories enables and/or constrains or what is enabled and/or constrained by the intersection of more than one of them. Stay tuned, as well, for a more extended analysis that will emerge from the collaborative literature review process and other partnerships.

Modes of Partnership- Universal, Selective, Representational and Pseudo Partnership

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We introduced our workshop by making the case for the virtues of partnership and noted that partnership epitomises the positive values of society through an emphasis on democratic participation and being ethical. We drew on Freire (1972) to contend that education should be exemplary (the notion of always behaving with respect for others) but also dynamic, be progressive and 'public'. Our definition of partnership is based on:

> …student-faculty partnership as a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, though not necessarily in the same ways. (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten, 2014; 6)

Therefore the principles respect, repricocity and responsibility underpin partnership (*ibid*).
We argued that participants must perceive (Bryson, Furlonger and Rinaldo, 2015):
- That their participation and contribution is valued and valuable;
- A sense of co-ownership, inclusion, and equalising of power relations between students and staff;
- A sense of democracy, with an emphasis on participative democracy;
- Membership of a community related to learning and educational context.

Although partnership creates potential for many benefits for both students and staff (Cook-Sather et al, 2014) these may be not realised if enacted practices do not follow the principles and ethos of partnership. We invited workshop participants to consider a number of scenarios which could be described as some form of partnership. The considerations posed were: were the relationships in the scenarios actually partnership; who benefits and in what ways; issues of power; issues of ethics; and issues of inclusivity.

The three students in our team summarised their reflections on being (or not being) a partner in the roles they had taken on during their degree at Newcastle.

Student Perspectives
Sara
Throughout my time at University I have participated in partnership schemes such as being a mentor and a member of the Student Staff Committee. However, I felt most strongly like a partner when taking part in an internship designing new curriculum. Through this I felt completely equal to staff but also other students as we consider what our peers would like. Partnership for me is about having the respect of staff, more so than being equal to staff. Staff will always be more experienced and guiding the learning but offering the student a voice and having the respect to listen is what

make partnership so worthwhile for students. The next step in partnership is working out how we make it accessible to all or most students.

Georgina
In my final year at university, I took on an internship as a co-researcher, working in partnership alongside a member of staff, researching student engagement. I had the freedom to decide how to organise and carry out the research, with my supervisor providing advice when I needed it. The internship facilitated partnership; I had the scope to steer the project as much as a member of staff did. But as students, do we ever necessarily feel that we are in equal partnerships with members of staff? Throughout the internship I continually checked that I was doing what was expected of me - I didn't feel I had the experience and authority to make decisions in the project to legitimise my claim as an equal partner. So, do the power hierarchies between staff and students which exist throughout our education inhibit our ability to experience genuine equal partnership?

Jasmin
I do not see the roles and work I have done as a partnership with staff members, but more as the staff facilitating me to do a number of things that I wouldn't have done without their help. I see my two biggest achievements have, as authoring a piece for the RAISE journal (Brooke, 2017) and being a student lead on a small scale research project, and influence from staff members would have been inappropriate for these. The project did involve partnership with student peers as we consulted on almost all aspects of the project. But these things would not have happened if I did not have a good relationship with staff members and the confidence to put my own ideas forward. I see this facilitation role (staff 'enabling' students) as equally valuable to partnership. Emphasising the latter approach may not always be suitable, as it may mean that students miss out on opportunities to do independent projects.

Discussion
These accounts demonstrate that students may perceive partnership in different ways to staff! We propose two useful ways to make sense of partnership. The first concept has already been explored in the literature. This is degree of involvement and application of ideas such as the ladder (Arnstein, 1969) and the continuum of participation (Pateman, 1970). McKinney, Jarvis, Creasey and Herrmann (2010) developed a continuum of student voices/roles in co-research. Applying this to the accounts above shows the intentions from staff may not match with student perceptions and how they position themselves.

We presented a model of modes of partnership (Figure 1). We are still developing this but a summary might be:

Pseudo-partnership – may have a gloss of partnership features but in reality staff have the roles of patrons, and students that of apprentices or proto-academics. Ironically students may 'feel like a partner' in this situation but really they are repositioned in a power hierarchy where they may be privileged over other students but are not real partners.

Figure 1
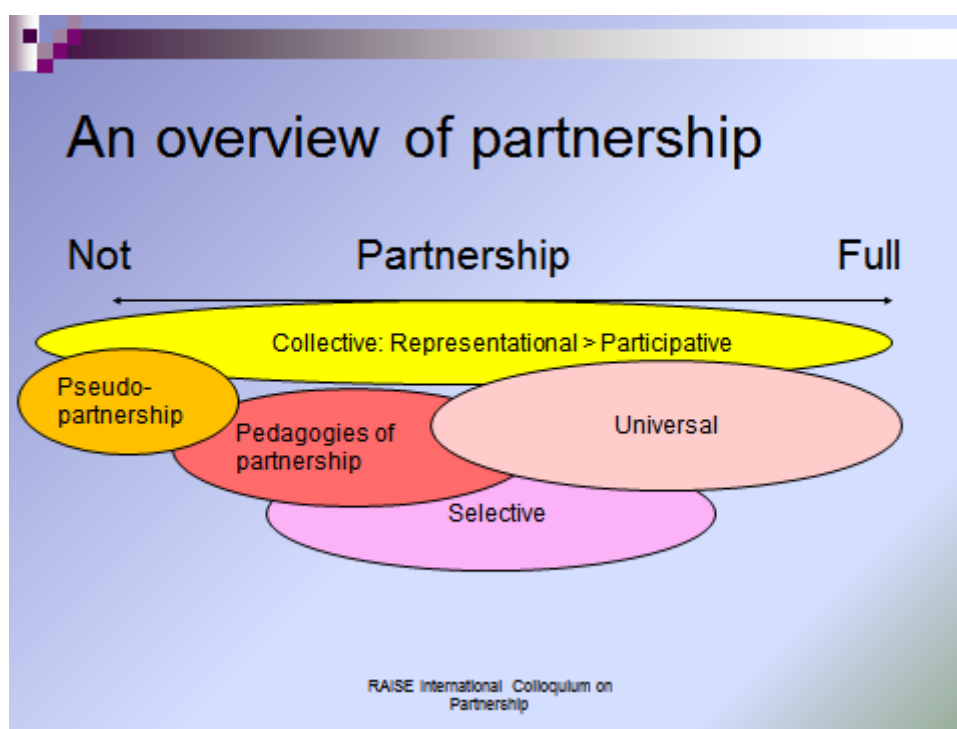
Pedagogies of partnership – these are pedagogic and curricular approaches which create more potential for partnership in teaching and learning. Examples might include inquiry based learning and experiential learning. Note that for tis potential to be delivered staff need to change their traditional role and share decision making and determination with the students. Assessment can rather get in the way of that. Involving students in the co-design of the module before and during its enactment are likely to enable partnership to begin and become embedded. However are students able to participate in partnership mode?

Collective – set up as a democratic structure with the ideal of commune or co-operative. This is ethically and socially legitimate but hard to maintain in practice (in a neo-liberal world). It requires sharing of a set of values by all parties and investment in the sense of sharing responsibility. It needs participative rather than representational democracy and a tangible sense of mutuality. Without that it can be undermined, for example, as oligarchies start to develop.

Selective partnership – the most common model currently of partnership initiatives. Small numbers of students are involved and have individualised relationships with staff. These can lead to powerful benefits but with reflection and further consideration, this mode may be fraught with less positive aspects, such as lack of inclusivity (opportunities for a few than all and it is actually those with most prior social capital who are most likely to participate); unfortunately through staff investing time, attention and resources on these students, other students may become (and feel) neglected; the rewards and recognition associated with this approach may

develop a sense of elitism (and actually be elitist); and frequently these initiatives are separate to student voice/representation mechanisms which can undermine their legitimacy too.

Universal partnership – seeks to overcome exclusion and attempt to include all students and build a wider partnership ethos and culture. The curriculum offers 'whole class' participation and may be fruitful context to develop this. This approach requires co-ownership of the agenda and process, co-decision (democratically agreeing important dimensions), building student:student (as well as staff:student), ensuring all gain benefits and all 'feel' like a partner.

We commend universal partnership as the best approach but recognise it is challenging to realise this and requires a movement of identity away from staff:student and teacher:learner to something more mutual. This involves taking risks, patience and much effort. This is not easy in the current HE system which privileges performativity over reflection and transformation – but it is definitely worth it.

Decision-making in partnership: tools to support partnership planning

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Recently, there have been several scathing critiques of student engagement research for being under-theorised (Gourlay, 2016; MacFarlane & Tomlinson, 2017), and whilst this is a significant generalisation with the danger of undermining many beneficial student engagement efforts, there is a growing sense that we must ensure co-creation, partnership and student engagement work retains or adopts a critical stance. In this context, I have had some concerns that it is not always clear who makes decisions and how decisions are made within partnerships and it is sometimes overlooked that students and staff might have different roles in co-creation at different stages. In response, I present below three different frameworks that I have found useful in furthering discussions about decision-making in partnership: 1) Early design decisions in co-creating curricula (Bovill, 2014); 2) Decision mode levels (Heron, 1992); and the participation matrix (DFID, 2003; Konings, Bovill & Woolner 2017; Bovill, 2017). These frameworks enable us to analyse how different individuals are involved in different ways at different stages of any co-creation process.

The first of these frameworks (Bovill, 2014) is based on research that investigated co-created curricula in the UK, Ireland and the USA. The research demonstrated that it was common practice for staff to make a range of decisions prior to involving students in co-creating curricula. These decisions included, for example, which students would be involved: all the students in a class/cohort, or a selection of students; and whether the students selected to be involved were retrospective students (last year's students), current students or future students about to study a course. Other 'pre-decisions' included whether the partnership project would focus on course or programme level curricula, whether students were able to make decisions about curriculum content and/or process, and whether the students were to be rewarded or not for their participation (for example, through payment, vouchers or course credit).

The second framework from Heron (1992) highlights that staff are often ultimately in control of co-creation or partnership initiatives focused on learning and teaching, but that there are multiple levels (and opportunities) where staff can either *direct*, *negotiate* or *delegate* decision-making power. Heron (1992) describes direction as staff making decisions for students, negotiation as staff making decisions with students, and delegation as students having autonomy to make decisions on their own. Ultimately, he argues that whichever decision mode is adopted is decided by staff, who often act as gatekeepers to curriculum design (Bourner, 2004; Bovill, 2014).

Heron argues that decisions take place on four levels. Level one focuses on decision-making within a learning activity. Here the teacher decides when to direct, negotiate or delegate decision-making within, for example, a problem based question used in a tutorial. Level two focuses on planning a learning activity. So for example, does the teacher negotiate with students to suggest how the problem based learning

activity will run, or does the teacher simply direct the activity? Level three is where staff choose the decision mode to be used in planning the learning activity. So the teacher decides whether to invite students to negotiate which activities would be appropriate, relevant and engaging in a class. Level four is where the teacher chooses the decision mode to use in choosing the decision mode to be used in planning. No, that's not a typographical mistake! Heron argues that the most common form of decision mode in Level four is direction and he states that "facilitators tend to wilt rather when I go on about levels 3 and 4; it does require something like an altered or at any rate an extended state of consciousness to keep effectively alert at those levels. But…until we have mastered those levels and know that we are using them and how we are using them – which usually means being directive at 3 as well as 4 so that we unilaterally choose decision modes for level 2 – then we have not really taken charge of our power to empower our learners…in other words, facilitators are, at crucial points in the process of learning, exercising a subtle kind of unilateral directive authority. No facilitator can abdicate from it at level 4, and will usually use it at level 3" (Heron, 1992:71). Finally, Heron emphasises that "…the decision modes of direction, negotiation and delegation will be used in differing serial and concurrent ways on any progressive course as it unfolds" (Heron, 1992:69).

The third framework is the participation matrix that has been used frequently in the international development sector (DFID, 2003). This matrix outlines a set of project stages, and then maps against these stages a range of possible participation levels appropriate for different stakeholders including: *inform*, *consult*, *participate*, *partnership* or *control*. What this demonstrates is that there may be situations where it is not appropriate for other participants to be involved deeply, but they may still need to be kept informed of progress. One adaptation of the participation matrix by Könings, Bovill and Woolner (2017), is focused on participatory building design in education. The framework is able to highlight the way that, for example, the architect's involvement, the community's involvement, and students' involvement in designing a school or university changes significantly from planning through to building utilisation.

These frameworks are useful to stimulate discussion about decision-making in partnerships. The first and second frameworks reveal that staff often make pre-decisions before students are invited into partnerships in learning and teaching. While the second and third frameworks also challenge a common assumption that all students need to be involved in the same ways in all stages of a project (Bovill, 2017).

Exploring understandings of partnership in higher education using methods from corpus linguistics

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There has been a proliferation of references to partnership in the discourse of learning and teaching policy and practice over recent years (Healey, Flint & Harrington 2014, p. 12). Although the term is more frequently present in higher education documentation and parlance, there is little agreement over what constitutes a partnership in learning and teaching (Healey et al. 2014) and it is recognised that the term is difficult to define (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten 2014). The documentation that seeks to guide those establishing partnerships in learning and teaching (e.g.: QAA 2012 ; NUS 2012 ; HEA 2014) outlines the values that support effective partnership (such as trust, openness, shared responsibilities, empowerment) and recent research reveals how the values of partnership are played out in practice (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). As Healey, Flint and Harrington note, however, "partnership is multi-faceted and has a number of different meanings and purposes dependent on context" (2014, p. 24). We argue that corpus-based methods can support the formulation of context-specific definitions of partnership by challenging people to reflect on what partnership is, who is involved, and how partnership differs from other ways in which staff and students work together in a particular setting.

A corpus in linguistics is a collection of texts (written and/or spoken) that can be explored and analysed using a corpus query system, also called corpus access software or concordancer (see e.g. Hunston, 2002; McEnery & Hardie, 2011), in our case Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). After exploring the absolute and relative frequencies of occurrence of the word 'partnership' in a variety of (sub)corpora (see Table 1), we suggest two corpus-based activities that can support the exploration of the contexts and patterns in which 'partnership is' used.

Table 1: frequency of *partnership* in different corpora (using simple query)

	Corpus	Frequency	Relative frequency
whole corpus	BNC	4,153	36.98 per million
	ukWaC	210,478	134.90 per million
	enTenTen	1,204,510	53.00 per million
	New Model Corpus	6,187	54.00 per million
Sub-corpus	enTenTen – uk only	112,307	4.90 per million
	en TenTen – ac.uk only	5,671	0.20 per million
	ukWaC – ac.uk only	24,966	16.00 per million

As a first step and to familiarise you with the typical output of a corpus search, we discuss how corpus outputs can be used to observe "the 'central and typical'",

"meaning distinctions", "meaning and pattern", and "detail" (Hunston 2002, p. 45-52) by close reading of the concordance lines. This is also a technique used in Data-Driven Language Learning, where close reading of concordance lines can help language learners discover typical patterns of use (ibid). You can explore patterns of usage of 'partnership' by looking closely at the concordance lines from different sets of documents. We used a random sample of 50 concordance lines from: the ukWaC (which stands for 'UK Web as Corpus', a collection of texts from UK-based web domains, see Ferraresi, Zanchetta, Baroni, & Bernardini, 2008); from the ac.uk sub-corpus of the ukWaC, which means texts from academic pages only; from a random sample of UK universities' Strategic Plan, plans that guide universities' work. Figure 1 provides an example of 5 concordance lines from the ac.uk sub-corpus of the ukWaC.

Figure 1: example of concordance lines from the ac.uk sub-corpus of the ukWaC

strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. The importance of working	**partnerships**	between the urban poor, local government and other stakeholders is also
recognises the hard work put in by all team members and the successful	**partnerships**	formed with universities, institutions and the private sector both in
CPMs, other Jobcentre Plus staff and local authority staff, childcare	**partnerships**	, and other childcare related organisations. One of the key areas the
inclusion project (1999-2002) Funded by the DfEE This project was based upon a	**partnership**	between the Learning from Experience Trust, Goldsmiths College, Lewisham
schools 14-19 'A Tertiary strategy in every community' 5. Life-long learning	**partnerships**	. 6. 10% of the those entering secondary education are already disaffected

The concordance lines are examples of the different ways and contexts in which partnership is used in everyday language (when looking at the sample of ukWaC concordance lines) and also more specifically within higher education (when looking at the ac.uk ukWaC sub-corpus, and the Strategic Plans). These usages can then be contrasted with your own understanding of what the term 'partnership' in learning and teaching encompasses.

These understandings can be further developed by investigating what using the term partnership offers when compared to other words. The thesaurus function in Sketch Engine yields a list of words "automatically generated based on algorithms that look for words which appear in similar contexts in a text corpus" (https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/user-guide/user-manual/thesaurus/, see also Kilgarriff et al. 2014). The output of this function based on the whole ukWaC corpus shows that in this corpus of everyday web-based language, initiative, collaboration and relationship behave in similar ways. A useful exercise is to ask yourself what would distinguish, for example, a staff-student partnership from a staff-student collaboration, an initiative or a relationship.

What both of these activities do is to bring to the fore the variety of meanings that partnership has both within and outside higher education. In seeing how the term is used in everyday language, in academia more generally, and in the Strategic Plans that present a particular management-focussed view of higher education, we can better see how these differ from our understandings of what partnership means in learning and teaching. We need to find ways to talk about the values, practices and rationale for learning and teaching partnership that help embed this more technical use of an everyday term within higher education and not see the term appropriated, in the minds of people who could potentially use it for purposes that run counter to the rejection of the consumer model that partnership can provide (NUS, 2012).

A meeting of minds: the impact of partnership working

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In a higher education (HE) context where student numbers have expanded significantly and demographics are more diverse—engaging all students has become more problematic (Kahn, 2014). In addition, the construct of student engagement (SE) is in itself complex (Gibbs, 2016) and can be determined and practiced differently according to discipline, beliefs, traditions, and country (Bryson, 2014; Harrington, Sinfield & Burns, 2016; Kahu, 2013). Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now implementing a 'students as partners' (SaP) approach to SE to challenge a dominant 'student as consumer' (SaC) attitude which Scullion, Molesworth, and Nixon (2011) argue is an outcome of the marketisation of HE.

This workshop examined the influence of a SAP approach on student and staff participants and how this impacts on SE (see Curran, 2017 for full paper). The context for the research is limited to one institution that participated in a three-year What Works Change Programme (2013-2016), which set out to improve student retention and success across 13 institutions in the UK (Thomas et al., 2017). The data drawn upon here was collected during the Ulster University 'What Works project', which adopted a SaP ethos and involved a core team and seven discipline teams (representing 145 participants: 94 students and 51 staff). The findings of interviews carried out with students and staff (n=14), which aimed to capture rich descriptions of the lived experience of individuals (van Manen, 1990), revealed that there was a high level of consensus between staff and students in how they described their lived experiences and the impact that partnership working was having on them.

Two dominant themes were identified: 'personal development' and 'enhancement of the learning climate'. Within each theme, sub-themes were identified: for personal development the sub-themes were 'new ways of thinking' and 'new skills'; for enhancement of the learning climate the sub-themes were 'relationship-building', 'ripple effects' and 'active learning'. Under the theme of personal development, staff and students described how over the life of the project their beliefs about HE were changing. Through working together both students and staff appreciated better how HE was being experienced from the others' perspective. Staff gained insight into what it is like to be a student today, and students gained a better appreciation of how HE operates beyond the classroom. This in turn prompted changes in attitudes and caused both students and staff to challenge their existing approaches. Reflecting on the three dimensions of SE which include behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Trowler, 2010; Solomonides, 2013; Kahu, 2013), it became apparent that within this study the three dimensions were working together. Emotion was evident in the descriptions of lived experience, and both staff and students described how they were feeling engaged or motivated or more involved, which was changing their thinking. Under the second theme, enhancement of the learning climate, students and staff talked about the building of relationships and how a SaP approach was beneficial in bringing staff and students

together. Getting to know each other was breaking down real or perceived barriers and this was having a positive effect on learning in the classroom.

An output from this study: Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Curran, 2016) was available for participants to discuss in an interactive session; its potential use as a tool to encourage others to buy-in to partnership working was explored (see Figure 1 for extract). Participants identified some of the suggested activities such as: student societies, the use of higher-level students to induct first-years, and co-curricular activities as being interventions that could easily be introduced or enhanced within their own contexts. Consideration was also given to how we might support the scaling up of a SaP approach. Recognizing the three inter-related dimensions of SE may allow institutions to better support staff and students to develop relational partnerships, which in turn may enhance and develop student engagement.

Figure 1: Extract from Staff and Student Guide to Engagement through Partnership (Curran, 2016)

How do I get started or build on what I'm already doing?
For staff, **critically reflect** on your approach to supporting and enhancing the student experience. What opportunities are there for students to build relationships, take on active roles, exercise choice in tasks/assessments, learn collaboratively, practice their discipline, engage in research, work on curriculum enhancements and so on…

For students, **seek opportunities** to develop your skills, confidence and performance. This may mean that you have to step out of your comfort zone, and shift from a passive to an active role in your own studies.

Recommendations
Developing strong partnership learning communities which engage staff and students is key to embedding partnership as part of the culture and ethos of the institution (Healey et al, 2014). Here are some recommendations, to consider which can promote partnership.

Staff	Students
Create a **welcoming environment** so that students coming to HE can easily make friends, find their way around and get ready to learn in a different way.	Be **open and flexible** and remember that everyone is feeling the same at the start. Get involved and participate in activities offered.
What works?	**What works?**
• Small group working to aid socialisation is critical at pre-entry and induction to promote belongingness. Information overload at this stage should not be the primary focus; • Introduce students to key staff that they will come into contact with that year so that relationships can be initiated; • Peer mentoring – students welcome the wisdom and support offered by higher level	• Attend all course induction and Week 0 activities; • Join in group activities and get to know other students and staff; • Seek guidance and support from your Studies Adviser, Module Tutor or higher-level students who have already been through this; • Familiarise yourself with Student Support on your campus. Advice and guidance is available

Un-fuzzing the fuzzword: reflections on using visual methods to explore understandings of student engagement through partnership

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This workshop at the RAISE Network's International Colloquium on Partnership (in June 2017) drew on a research project I undertook as part of a Visiting Research Fellowship at Birmingham City University (BCU) with Luke Millard, exploring staff understandings of student engagement in practice (Flint and Millard, 2016). BCU has a strong track record around student engagement, with a particular emphasis on students as partners as part of the institutional ethos. Our research aimed to explore how individual academic staff understood and translated the concept of student engagement in practice and how that related to their teaching practice.
As part of the interview process, we asked participants to draw and then talk through (Mitchell *et al,* 2011) a concept map that reflected their understanding of what student engagement meant to them in practice. We used the term 'concept map' loosely, and most participants drew something more akin to a 'mind map'. Our motivations for using this approach were twofold. Firstly, it ensured the interview was rooted in the participant's understanding of student engagement: providing opportunity and a structure for individual reflection before the interview questions began. Secondly, given the complexity of student engagement, it seemed appropriate to use methods that allowed a less linear way of representing their understandings alongside the formal research interview questions.

In the workshop at the International Partnership Colloquium, I shared some of the findings from our research, and also asked workshop delegates to undertake the same task as our research participants: to draw what student engagement meant to them in their practice. Even in the 5 minutes allowed for the task, the images created were rich and diverse. Some created mind-maps similar to our research participants, others used visual metaphors such as ladders and roads to frame their understandings. Delegates were asked to create their image individually then talk through them in pairs and identify common themes and differences in their representations of partnership.

In our research, we used visual methods to explore individual understandings, but one of the benefits of doing this in a workshop context is that it can provide an opportunity for collaborative reflection and comparison of perspectives. The images surfaced similarities and differences that fed into the verbal discussion. My reflections are that the use of visual methods enabled a deeper discussion of the nature of student engagement than using verbal methods alone, the images also created anchors or reference points for discussions. Drawing can also be a very levelling activity – you do not need to be an experienced scholar with years of studying student engagement (and familiar with academic discourses around this) to draw what it means to you. It felt to me like an activity that reflected some of the values associated with partnership; it enabled and valued sharing of all perspectives. The use of discussion alongside the drawing, also lent a collaborative ethos to the development of individual's models of student engagement: meanings were socially

constructed through the dialogue around them. It is important to note, and to emphasise to participants, that the level of drawing skill is not important: it's about what's in the image, not how well it is drawn (Mitchell *et al,* 2011).

Visual methods may be particularly appropriate for exploring complex concepts like student engagement. As many authors have already identified, there are multiple dimensions of engagement rooted in diverse scholarship, leading some to critique student engagement as conceptually confused and fuzzy (Macfarlane and Tomlinson, 2017; Vouri, 2014). My reflections are that the complexity and 'messiness' of individual understandings of student engagement are more easily articulated through drawing a diagram; where different dimensions/aspects of engagement can be added and connected in multiple ways.

As an educational developer and researcher, I think that there is rich potential in using visual methods in both research and evaluation work and in workshops with staff and students. Firstly, it opens our eyes to the myriad ways student engagement is understood and implemented in practice; perhaps leading to the development of new (practice-based) models of engagement. Secondly, for those rolling-out student engagement initiatives or strategies, it adds to the understanding of how these are translated into practice, and perhaps a deeper understanding of why people choose to engage (or not to engage) with different initiatives.

Partnerships and emotional intelligence: Reflections on personal and professional learning

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Introduction

Emotion plays a significant role in student-staff partnerships, yet scholarly inquiry on, and writing about partnership, rarely addresses emotion directly. This tends to obscure important aspects of partnership that deserve critical analysis. By looking more closely at emotion we might not only enhance partnership experiences but also uncover evidence that partnering contributes to the development of emotional intelligence, an essential capacity for a thriving personal and professional life.

Emotion in partnership

A recent literature review on students-as-partners offers a comprehensive overview of the scholarship in this emerging field (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Emotion is all-but absent in the research studies analyzed in that study, although it is more apparent in personal reflections published on partnerships (Felten, 2017).

Regardless of the level of scholarly attention, emotions are an inherent part of every partnership. Psychologists have demonstrated that emotions serve a variety of purposes, including as guides in social situations that structure and shape "the interactions of individuals in meaningful relationships" (Keltner & Haidt, 1999, p. 510). To extend a claim by a prominent neuroscientist: "A purely cognitive view of the mind [and of partnerships], one that overlooks the role of emotions, simply won't do" (LeDoux, 2002, p. 200). A group of Dutch students and staff put this even more directly: "Without emotions, never a partnership!" (Hermsen, Kuiper, Roelofs, & van Wijchen, 2017, p. 1).

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a term coined by two researchers, Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990), and then popularized in a book by Daniel Goleman (1995). The original conception of this term centred on:

> *a set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and others, and the use of feelings to motivate, plan, and achieve in one's life.*
> (Salovey & Mayer, p.185)

More recently, scholars have defined emotional intelligence as:
> *a set of skills that enables us to make our way in a complex world - the personal, social and survival aspects of overall intelligence, the elusive common sense and sensitivity that are essential to effective daily functioning.* (Stein & Book, 2013, p. 14)

Engaging in student-staff partnership might be a particularly powerful way to develop emotional intelligence. Partnerships are rich educational experiences, and the "layered learning" in these relationships both challenge and support students - and

staff - to grow in complex, sometimes unexpected, and often deeply personal ways (Cook-Sather, 2011). Indeed, partnership's most commonly reported outcomes include enhanced motivation, increased confidence and self-efficacy, greater understanding of other people's experiences, and deeper self-awareness (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). All of these are aspects of emotional intelligence.

Although scholars have not yet explicitly studied whether and how emotional intelligence develops in partnership, a connection seems likely – and this topic might be a particularly significant area for new research on student-staff partnerships. For instance, do partnership experience contribute to positive developments in personal well-being and self-control, two of the central facets of emotional intelligence (Petrides, 2010)?

Approaching partnership as an opportunity to cultivate emotional intelligence also suggests another range of outcomes that deserve additional attention from scholars and practitioners. Research demonstrates that high levels of emotional intelligence are correlated not only with personal well-being but also with career success (Lopes, Kadis, Grewal, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). A recent survey of business leaders in the UK, echoing a similar survey in the US a decade ago, indicates:

> *a major disparity [exists] between the degree of importance attributed by employers to emotional intelligence competencies and the current levels displayed by graduate employees.* (Jameson et al., 2016, p. 515)

Since many students appear not to be developing their emotional intelligence within the curriculum, partnership experiences might be a particularly important opportunity learning that has a lasting influence on student – and staff – personal and professional lives. Enhancing emotional intelligence may not be the primary or the sole purpose for many partnerships, but it is a possibility that merits careful and critical attention.

The battleground for Students as Partners: applying the Habermasian concept of Colonisation to explore the appropriation of practice

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Introduction

Various models have been developed to help articulate the types of partnerships in higher education that exist and how they work in terms of roles and remits (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2016; Dunne and Zandstra 2011). However, as the field of faculty-student partnerships in teaching and learning develops, it is necessary for researchers and practitioners to take account of the multiple agendas in the academy which seek to appropriate practice. Such critical engagement should take into account the political forces which influence policy and practice, leading us to ask not only what partnerships are and how they work but also where they occur and why they are enabled. This is of particular importance when considering the challenges of increased commodification of learning and the influence of neoliberalism in higher education and the paradoxical claims that arise from partnership being seen to 'provide a mainstream solution to common challenges, and as a radical approach involving a fundamental change in the structures and values of higher education' (Buckley, 2014, p. 2).

The work of Jürgen Habermas (1987) and his conceptual ideas of Colonisation (by systems) of (individual) Lifeworlds provide a useful lens to consider the relationship, and tension, between the policies and practices of partnership. Applying Habermas's ideas, which are rooted in critical theory, to partnership helps explore if and how the radical, democratic ideals of partnership are being developed (Bovill, 2013) in an ostensibly neoliberal higher education policy environment (Olssen and Peters, 2005) and how this manifests in policy and in practice.

Considering partnership as a political act

Motivations for entering a faculty-student partnership are often numerous and multi-faceted. They may involve a desire to improve student engagement, redesign a course, or democratise learning environments (see Cook-Sather et al, 2014). However, a common feature across all partnership activity is a desire to create spaces for dialogue, negotiation, and voicing of different perspectives. In this sense, partnerships provide opportunity for what Werder, Ware, Thomas, and Skogsberg (2010) describe as dialogic pedagogies.

Whilst critical pedagogy has advocated the emancipatory benefits of dialogue in learning, Bovill (2013, p 100) notes that much of the current call for more active student participation in learning:

> *does not always draw upon the long tradition of critical pedagogy or popular education and the more radical, emancipatory or transformatory rationales that underpinned calls for negotiated curricula in much of the historical literature […]it*

is often less overtly political and demonstrates a more mainstream, instrumental adoption and dilution of concepts of participation.

In parallel, the advance of neoliberalism in higher education has resulted in what Naidoo and Williams (2015, p. 208-209) describe as "the reconceptualisation of students as consumers of HE". The result has been to:

link learning with economic productivity, to commodify the experience as a return on investment (financially, in particular), and increasing importance given to individualising and commodifying the experience. (Woolmer, 2016, p. 16)

Neary (2008) and McFarlane and Tomlinson (2017) discuss the effects of neoliberal policies and how they distort the dialogic spaces open to faculty and students in higher education, highlighting further the importance of critical analysis of the relationship between macro-level policy and micro-level practice in institutions.

The values underpinning neoliberalism and critical pedagogy frame discourse and practice in ways that are political in nature, making statements about the intention of higher education, learning, and forms of knowledge. Therefore, faculty-student partnerships are inherently political acts.

The battle for partnerships: colonisation of lifeworlds
Jürgen Habermas is a critical theorist who has written extensively on democracy in society and the spaces in which individuals discuss and make decisions on matters that affect them. He is concerned by the decline in spaces for public debate-the public sphere-and the increasing dominance of techno-rational policy which infiltrates individuals' customs, practices, and ways of thinking. He describes this conceptually as the colonisation by systems (economic and political processes) which seek to distort or prevent communication, effecting the lifeworld of individuals. These ideas informed the development of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (1987). Habermas sees universities as playing a key role in educating and developing citizens who can participate in democratic processes.

McLean (2008) has applied Habermas's conceptualisation of colonisation to higher education, critiquing the effects of neoliberalism on the sector and how it has infiltrated the lifeworlds of faculty. She argues it has resulted in the distortions which "manipulate the social relationships in an academic's lifeworld" (p.11) and argues that it is at the individual level, with a focus on practice, that the communicative value of education can be reclaimed (p169).

I further extend McLean's discussion of colonisation in higher education to the arena of partnership. By examining the values underpinning policy and practice of faculty-student partnerships we are able to critically examine two things: 1) the extent to which neoliberalism may or may not be colonising and infiltrating the dialogic, communicative spaces intended through partnership and 2) the extent to which partnerships themselves help resist the colonisation of neoliberalism by enacting the communicative values of education, advocated by critical pedagogy, creating radical spaces based on principles of respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility (Cook-Sather et al, 2014).

The co-existence of neoliberal and critical pedagogy values in higher education subject individuals involved in faculty-student partnerships to a series of pushes and pulls as these paradoxical values seek to influence and appropriate practice and the lifeworlds of faculty and students. If partnerships are to facilitate the creation of radical, dialogic spaces for faculty and students, and to counter the discourse of neoliberalism that we might hope for, then partnerships need to be understood and appropriated at the individual level-through lifeworlds. However, focusing only on the micro level-the lifeworlds of faculty and students-is not sufficient. If partnerships are to resist the effects of neoliberalism and achieve a radical reframing of learning it is essential to research the experiences of individuals *in relation* to the system context where the practice exists. Habermas's idea of colonisation provides a theoretical lens to examine this.

Examining the policy/practice nexus in context
The interaction between policy and practice described above is illustrated in figure 1, and is described as the policy/practice nexus. Edwards (2017, p. 22) describes how the Habermasian concepts of colonisation and lifeworld highlight dual perspectives, enabling us to "interrogate subjective experiences and ways of thinking (the lifeworld perspective) [and] at the same time locate them …critically within wider economic and political processes (the system perspective)". In a partnership context, analysis of (the dual perspectives) of policy and practice can help to make transparent to those who have a stake the values underpinning the work, the motivations for involvement, the focus of activity, approaches to assessing impact, and ultimately, how partnership activity may be sustained. This approach adds to existing guidance on establishing partnerships (Cook-Sather et al, 2014, Healey et al, 2014) by explicitly addressing the economic and political agendas which influence the context of partnership and how policy and practice interact.

Figure 1: Policy-practice nexus: Relationship between Systems and Lifeworld.

System (political and economic) as colonisation
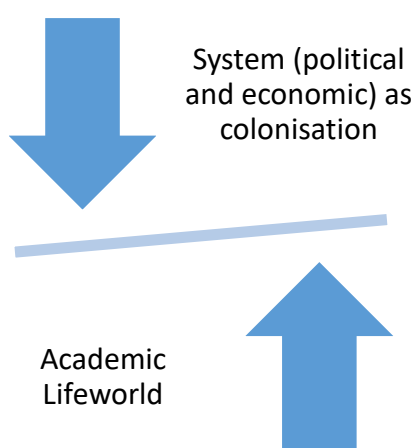
Academic Lifeworld

Figure 2 presents a matrix to aid discussion between colleagues (faculty, students, senior managers and administrators) to explore the different perspectives on why and where faculty-student partnerships occur within an institution, demonstrating the relational aspects of policy, practice, and values. The matrix is intended to be used as a heuristic, making explicit individual and institutional drivers for the partnership

activity in question. Mapping activity in this way may help us critically evaluate the nuanced ways in which partnerships are understood and appropriated by individuals (lifeworld perspective) and by policies (systems perspective), and identifying where the colonising effects of neoliberalism might serve to reinforce consumerist interactions rather than challenge them.

Figure 2: Mapping matrix
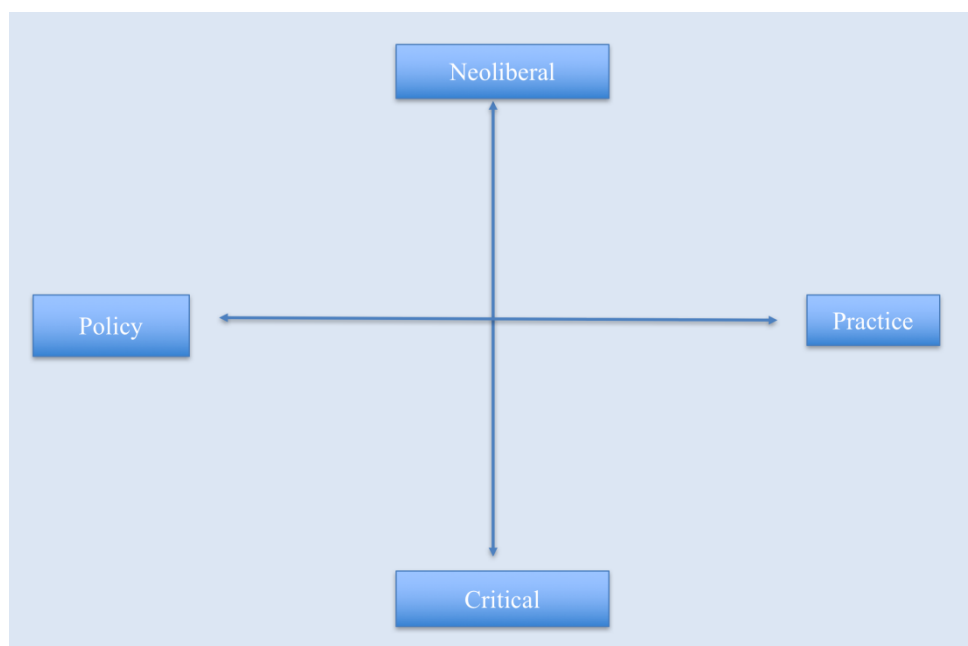
Conclusion

By considering the political dimensions of faculty-student partnerships and the ways in which systems colonise individuals' lifeworlds we can explore the values underpinning activity. This requires us to ask critical questions of where and why partnerships occur in addition to how they work. Addressing appropriation of practice is crucial if the field is to address and resist the colonising effect of neoliberalism and the increasing commodification of learning. It is through attention to appropriation that we reclaim the communicative value of education advocated by Habermas and Mclean.

Staff-student partnership: Inclusive/exclusive pedagogical practices

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This workshop focused on student-staff partnership working in a mass education system. Specifically we explored whether in a mass education system we can, and should, engage in partnership working that goes beyond just selected staff and students to become mainstream pedagogical practice. It began with a short overview of a conceptual model of inclusive partnership developed by Moore-Cherry, Healey, Andrews & Nicholson (2015). This model highlighted the potential benefits to the whole learning community of expanding partnership working beyond a few selected students (whether chosen by staff or self-selected) to all staff and students. Given the reported positive impacts and benefits of partnership working, the discussion began with how we might maximize opportunities and potentially mainstream this approach to staff-student collaboration? A cautionary note was struck by one participant who commented that particular students may not want to engage in partnership working and that this should not be read as student disengagement. More inclusive partnership was thus defined within the workshop as 'mainstreaming the opportunity to engage in partnership working', recognizing that it is a choice and just one tool through which to enhance student engagement. A consensus emerged that partnership working should be a goal of institutions, staff and students, and then discussion moved to thinking about how we can mainstream it.

There was significant caution around the potential for mainstreaming with most participants agreeing that it was a good idea but questioning whether it is realistic in the context of growing student numbers. The example of Birmingham City University was used to suggest that one way of mainstreaming partnership within resource constraints is to conceptualise it as a continuum from very high-level curriculum design type collaboration through to more light-touch activity, such as student jobs on campus programmes.

The group broke into smaller discussion teams to address three key questions:
1. What kinds of principles do we need to underpin the mainstreaming of partnership working?
2. What are the key supports that already exist or are needed to mainstream partnership working?
3. What are the key barriers to mainstreaming partnership working in our institutions?

Each team had the opportunity to contribute their responses on each question. The top or most important response to each question was then identified collectively. Table 1 summarises the main points that emerged from each question with the most critical issue highlighted in red.

Table 1: Principles, supports and barriers underpinning the mainstreaming of staff-student partnership working in higher education

Key principles	Supports	Barriers
An 'enabling' institution valuing all (staff as well as students)	Resources (money, champions, success stories)	Perceptions of staff and students
Time / space	Trust (amongst stakeholders, freedom for failure)	Cost to university and to student
Reward / recognition	Long-view – sustained wins	No incentives for staff (e.g. promotion criteria etc)
Leadership (why? What's in it for me?)	Commitment (institutional and local)	Lack of skills / experience of staff
Culture of expectation (students and staff alike)	Evidence of impact (metrics – NSS/degree classifications); qualitative comments; longer-term alumni	Is it an institutional driver?
Accessible for all	External drivers e.g. government push for inclusive practice	Lack of time 'to be brave'
Flexible admin	Start development for culture change (personal/professional development)	Apathy / indifference
Meaningful participation	Student body – make sure we understand it	Time / space
Negotiation, shared understanding	Schemes/structures to enable engagement	Obvious opportunities
Communication		Self-interest
Rebalance power relationships (student-student; staff-student; leadership-staff-student)		Conventional roles – stuck in the status quo
		Opportunity costs - resistance

Source: Workshop participants

Critically Exploring Partnership through Doctoral Research

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In the last 10 years, the notion that students can assist in a role beyond consultation in learning and teaching has gained traction with the development of projects such as students as partners, change agents, producers and co-creators of their own learning (Bovill et al., 2011). Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014) suggest that:

> *engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing higher education in the twenty-first century (*2014, p7).

Dunne and Zanstra (2011) presented a radical re-visioning of traditional forms of student engagement, asserting that:

> *There is a subtle, but extremely important, difference between an institution that 'listens' to students and responds accordingly, and an institution that gives students the opportunity to explore areas that they believe to be significant, to recommend solutions and to bring about the required changes.* (2011, p4)

The aim of this workshop is to present two doctoral research projects, both of which explore methodological approaches that are intended to reveal critical understandings of staff-student partnership. Developing a sound theoretical framework for educational research the theoretical lens adopted provides different perspectives and enables the researcher to identify or unearth different aspects of partnership working. It is therefore important that the researcher establishes a logical sequence of their assumptions from ontology to epistemology to methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

Dan is a doctoral researcher from the University of Lincoln, his research project aims to conceptualise the input of student voice within a student-university relationship where student participation is welcomed and encouraged by the rhetoric and policy produced by the institution. Conceptualising how student voice is integrated within the student-university relationship and governance models stems from the position that students should be provided with the space and opportunity to be heard, be empowered to influence change and have equal roles as partners with staff in the development and enhancement of teaching and learning and the student experience.

This framing and current thinking is suggestive of a democratic relationship between students and the institution, which is an intriguing prospect that has captured the interests of academic developers (Curran and Millard, 2016) educational researchers (Bovill and Felton, 2016) and is the focus of scrutiny and research interest within academic communities (Klemenčič, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2015). In particular, it raises debate and dialogue about how students, students' unions, staff and senior managers can work collectively to form the student-university relationship and the impact this can have on learning environments.

Historical and political discourses have framed the current relationship between staff and students in the UK and is a direct consequence of neoliberal reforms that have changed the face of higher education (Little and Williams, 2010), shifting to a marketised higher education sector with clear consumerist agendas (Brooks, Byford and Sela, 2016). The values held in the research, reject the neoliberal ideology of a marketised sector and instead looks towards emancipatory models of working with students that share common goals and are collective in wanting to improve the student experience (Bragg, 2007).

Specifically, the research seeks to identify how the ethos and culture of the institution proliferates down to practice, examining the: nature and extent of student voice; impact of student voice on the decision-making across multiple levels of institutional governance; and the power relations between the institution, staff and students. The research project will use a combination of critical theory (constructing and reconstructing the student-university relationship) and post-structuralism (acknowledging the historical discourses that influence or limit the conceptualisation of the student-university relationship) within an ethnographic case study (analysing multiple forms of data collection and documentation within one institution); to conceptualise the discursive reality of the student - university relationship within a UK-based institute. Qualitative data will be generated from individual and group interviews, observations, texts/policy documentation and an informal participant journal kept by the researcher. To analyse the data collected a combination of thematic and discourse analysis will be used, examining how the historical, political, economic and institutional discourses effect the concepts of shared authority and independent responsibility in the development of learning and teaching.

Catherine is a doctoral researcher from the University of Brighton. Her research is concerned with how partnership is experienced by students and staff when working together on higher education learning and teaching projects, and explores whether described modes of partnership working are productive, in process and outcome, for those involved. Alongside the potential value of working in partnership, this work acknowledges significant challenges that have been raised through a small number of studies (Felten, 2011; Manor et al., 2010; Weller and Kandiko Howsen, 2014), which pose the complexities of partnership working that are contextualised by deep-rooted hierarchies, power relations, and identities in higher education. Robinson (2012, p.10) writes of the danger of "an uncritical adoption of student engagement practices" that can "reinforce existing hierarchies amongst the tutor-student and student-student relationships."

The SRHE (Society for Research into Higher Education) Research Scoping Study (Weller and Kandiko Howson, 2014) set out to determine future directions for embedding student engagement in the enhancement of learning and teaching. Their findings posed student involvement in enhancement activities as a 'threshold concept' for academic staff and developers "because it is at once counterintuitive for many faculty and contradictory to norms in higher education" (p.2). Cook-Sather (2013, p.189) also identified that student-faculty partnerships "can be threatening, disappointing, and/or (potentially) productively unsettling," supporting the need for substantive consideration of the ethics around authority, power and identity (Allin,

2014; Robinson and Taylor, 2014; Weller and Kandiko Howson, 2014). With this in mind, this research project is concerned with discovering how partnership is interpreted and experienced through the perspectives of participants over a period of time, alongside their evolving projects. The research utilises grounded theory, a "general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed" (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.273). Grounded theory in this research context recognises and places emphasis on the emergent qualities of partnership, allowing the researcher to pursue inductive, indeterminate, and open-ended phenomena. Adopting an emergent method in this context can enable the processes of partnership to be discovered (Charmaz, 2008, p.155), through the continuous interplay between data collection, analysis, and further data collection, referred to as a 'constant comparative analysis' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p vii). To extend the use of grounded theory in this study, the use of Adele Clarke's (2003) 'situational analysis' will be explored, to deepen qualitative understandings through the use of three kinds of analytic maps: situational maps, social worlds/ arenas maps, and positional maps. This mapping approach will draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, and other material elements, to analyse the complex elements of student-staff partnership in higher education.

In this workshop, we have tried to outline how the different philosophical assumptions we make or adopt influences the design, the methods used and how student-staff partnership therefore looks through the different lens we have applied in the two doctoral research projects provided. The answers we provide to these fundamental questions do not enable us to postulate any imaginable relationship and our approach is therefore guided by the questions we pose to address our philosophical assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

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