Turning the Tables: Involving Undergrads as Researchers in SoTL

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study of students and faculty working as research peers. We report on the experience of two undergraduate students who took a central role in a research project guided by experienced researchers, in collating, coding, and analyzing the results, and writing up findings, and of two experienced researchers (faculty). Using autoethnography, we provide details of the students' involvement in the research project and hear from them and the researchers about their experience. Our findings will be of interest to others involved in not-for-credit student partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on two undergraduate students and two faculty members who took part in a research project at York University. All four report on their role in the project, their experience of taking part, and the benefits and challenges of the experience. This is presented as a case study of a student-faculty partnership not embedded in a for-credit course, in a large comprehensive Canadian university.

Advocates for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) urge researchers to involve students (Felten, 2013). Involvement is often interpreted as including students as research subjects. Here, two undergraduate students took part as researchers in a project that was not directly related to their studies. The outcome of the research is published elsewhere (Kim et al., 2020). In this article, the researchers' and the students' accounts of the experience are examined to explore the potential for student engagement in research as a methodology that is beneficial both to the students and to scholarly enquiry. We use autoethnography to enable self-reflection on our experiences. This methodology encourages researchers to analyze their own experiences to make sense of cultural experience and is effective in countering power imbalances (Ellis et al., 2011).

STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS

There is a wealth of literature on the benefits of students as partners, particularly countering the notion of students as consumers or customers in higher education (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Cook-Sather et al., 2018; Greene, 2000). There are multiple examples of students collaborating with academic faculty, staff, and/or other students in activities involving teaching and learning (Bovill, 2017; Healy et al., 2014, Matthews et al., 2018). In this study, we reflect on our student-faculty partnerships, which included students as research partners.

Two themes stood out in our reflections on our student-faculty partnership: power dynamics and synergistic relationships between faculty and students in the partnership. Although pre-established student/faculty power dynamics can lead to discomfort and uncertainty when working on a project, persistence in challenging those power dynamics can lead to the authentic inclusion of student voices (Felten et al., 2013; Felten, 2011). In general, benefits of student-faculty partnerships reported in the literature include personal and professional growth, increased enthusiasm for learning and teaching, learning about new perspectives, and improved relationships between faculty and students (Marquis et al., 2017; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014).

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SoTL is encouraged at our institution, following the principles described by Felten (2013). One of these principles is that good SoTL is conducted in partnership with students. Most of the SoTL that we noticed at York University involves students as subjects to be researched rather than as researchers. We therefore recruited two students as researchers. Our intention, from the outset, was for the students to be equal members of the research group. However, power dynamics can be present in any situation, regardless of intent. It would be disingenuous to claim that all members of the group were equal, given inequalities including role, payment, seniority, and level of interest. Accepting that power dynamics can occur in any setting, our intention was nevertheless that the students would take part in the research as colleagues, not as students beholden to a supervisor for approval, grading, or validation.

The students had no prior link to the Teaching Support Centre (TSC) where the other researchers were employed, but they were known previously to one of the researchers in her role as a course instructor. This researcher was a postdoctoral fellow in the TSC and taught in the Psychology Department, where it is common for students to take part in research, with the justification that any research experience is valuable. We wanted to be explicit about the benefits or challenges that accrue to students as volunteer researchers.

The students transcribed recorded interviews into written text, conducted thematic analyses on the interview transcripts, discussed the findings with other members of the research team, and contributed to the dissemination of findings at a conference and in a peer-reviewed journal as co-authors. After the conclusion of the original research project, two of the researchers and the two students agreed to reflect on their experience. This paper is the result of those reflections.

METHODOLOGY

We used autoethnography (Andrew, 2017; Chang, 2008) as a way to capture the experiences of the student and non-student researchers on the research team. As Ellis et al. (2011) explain, autoethnography is both a process and the product where researchers use their own experience as a way to explore and understand cultural experience. It combines autobiography and ethnography, where the researcher and the subject are the same person (Maréchal, 2010). This approach enabled us to reflect on our experiences, in this case as researchers on a team with power imbalances, and locate our experiences within the culture of SoTL research and student-faculty partnership. One benefit of this approach is that it acknowledges emotions and the influence of personalities on research, something that is often

ignored or denied in other forms of research (Ellis et al., 2011).

We chose to use an approach described by Ellis et al. (2011) as co-constructed narratives. The two students each wrote about their experience of taking part in the research, and then the two researchers responded with their accounts. All four then reflected on the writing and made further comments. The content of this article is first-hand data, as it consists of original reflections, but it is also the result of reflection and refinement.

SALMA'S STORY

As a third-year psychology student, with most of my education in quantitative research, I was very excited when Alice gave me the opportunity to expand my horizons and explore SoTL. As my first time actively working on a team to see a research project to completion, the opportunity to work on this project has allowed me to develop both personally and professionally, and has left me with skills that continue to prove crucial in various aspects of my life.

At many psychology labs, undergraduate students are usually recruited to collect research data or conduct literature reviews and do not necessarily participate in the full research process. During my time on this SoTL project, I was lucky enough to be included in every step, starting with data analysis, then reviewing the literature, and writing about the study. Taking part in writing the manuscript together with everyone helped me immensely with my own thesis, which I completed later. I was able to better organize my draft and conduct literature reviews more efficiently, and I had gained skills and received inside tips, which helped me search for and integrate previous research into my own. Not only was seeing the completed manuscript rewarding, but I also learned how proposals are written and how publishing works, which is valuable experience for graduate school, and normally difficult to acquire as an undergraduate. Moreover, with most of my classes having taught me only quantitative research, learning qualitative analysis has widened my limited perspective and deepened my appreciation for research and its versatility.

In addition to the research and writing skills I was able to hone, I have benefited from being part of this team on a personal level as well. Despite being less experienced undergraduate students, Laura and I were always welcomed and our opinions valued, which made me feel included and motivated me to improve myself overall. There were many times when each of the team members needed to work individually on the project, and while it would have been difficult for me to stay updated and keep the same pace, our regular meetings helped me stay on track. In our meetings, we all discussed our progress and provided constructive feedback to each other, which increased my confidence in communicating my opinion and my ability to look critically at not only other people's ideas, but my own as well. After

the manuscript was written, we presented the study at multiple conferences, which further boosted my confidence and public speaking skills.

Under the guidance of an experienced team with diverse research backgrounds, not only did I learn about the research process, I was also able to contribute to a project that is central to the development of the university. Through my involvement in SoTL, I gained insight into the teacher's perspective. I learned of the many challenges a teacher might face while working to improve student learning and of the initiatives being undertaken to support both faculty and students. This provided me with a more holistic view of higher education, which I would have otherwise never had.

All in all, having been involved in this SoTL project has helped me grow as a person, a researcher, and a thinker, and it would not have been possible without the support and perspective of every member of the team. I am grateful to have been part of the project, and I encourage both students and faculty to invest in collaborative research that considers both views.

Laura's Story

I was a second-year psychology student when I first became involved in the SoTL research project, with no background in research whatsoever. During this time I was aware of how important research experience is in the field of psychology, especially for students planning on attending graduate studies. Unfortunately, it can be very difficult for students to gain access to the world of research, as many professors are hesitant to take on inexperienced student researchers.

I first met Alice when she was teaching a psychology course. She explained at the beginning of the semester that she and her colleagues were looking for student volunteers to help out with their research project. Unlike other labs I had reached out to previously, there was no formal application or interview process, and I was recruited for the project after a brief in-person meeting. By this time, interviews had already been completed and recorded, and my first assignment was to transcribe them into text for later analysis.

After all the interviews had been transcribed, I began to meet in person with Alice and Salma on a weekly basis to analyze the interviews both independently and then collaboratively. After the interviews had been analyzed and themes had been identified, we began the process of writing up the first draft of our manuscript in collaboration with several TSC researchers. The span between beginning the research project and submitting the final draft for publication was approximately two years. During this time, I have been introduced to and formed connections with several other researchers associated with the TSC, and I have been recruited for numerous other research projects.

Working on this project has offered me the reciprocal benefits of taking information learned in school coursework and applying it to the real world, as well as implementing the knowledge and skills learned throughout my research experience and applying it to coursework. In an honours program, students must complete an introductory statistics and research methods course, which taught me the basics of conducting and understanding the fundamentals of research on a conceptual basis. However, it was the SoTL project that allowed me to apply these concepts outside of the classroom for the first time.

I should mention that my ultimate goal is to attain a PhD in clinical psychology; therefore, my initial interest in the research aspect of psychology was low. However, throughout my continued involvement in research, I find myself appreciating the nature of research as an additional field of interest along with clinical psychology. This realization can be attributed to the overall nature of SoTL and its interest in involving students in research, regardless of their experience. My experience with the SoTL project has inspired me to expand this interest back into coursework by encouraging me to undertake additional statistics and research methods courses that I would not have chosen otherwise. In addition, I can now better understand abstract concepts taught in the classroom because of my experience with SoTL, and my academic writing has greatly improved.

Aside from my academic and research life, being involved with SoTL has also provided additional benefits to my general self-image and confidence. The non-hierarchical and welcoming nature of its researchers encouraged me to develop a sense of autonomy and assertiveness, and I am now more comfortable requesting additional responsibilities and delegating tasks.

Overall, being involved in the SoTL project has impacted my academic life and my personal life. I am very thankful that Alice and the TSC took a chance to involve an inexperienced second-year student in their research project.

ALICE'S REFLECTIONS

I have been fortunate to connect with many talented undergraduate students, including Laura and Salma, through my role as a course instructor. When I was working on this study, I was a postdoctoral fellow at the TSC, as well as an instructor in the Psychology Department. I met Laura and Salma as students in a course I was teaching. I already knew that they were both excellent students, so when they approached me about helping out with any of my ongoing research projects as the course was coming to an end, I was happy to consult with my advisor, Celia, and she immediately agreed to having them on board. By the time Laura and Salma joined the study, the course I instructed had finished. I had finished conducting the interviews for a SoTL-related study, and I needed help

transcribing the audio recordings. I was very happy to have Laura and Salma help with this aspect of the study, but I also wanted to make sure that they had the opportunity to contribute in other more meaningful ways and to be recognized as authors for their contributions, particularly since they were working on the study on a voluntary basis. Although the possibility of including Laura and Salma as authors on the study was agreed upon from the outset, their position in the author list had not been decided. This detail led to some disagreement amongst our research team, which made me realize the importance of making decisions about authorship with the entire research team at the outset, particularly when working with student partners and colleagues from different disciplinary backgrounds, with potentially different authorship conventions. It was helpful to know that authorship was a possibility for Laura and Salma because this enabled me to discuss with them at an early stage what they would need to do to be included as authors. In this way, I was able to manage their expectations and help them make informed decisions about their involvement.

In hindsight, I think that working with Laura and Salma benefited me as much, or perhaps more, as I hope that it has benefited them. Firstly, in describing and discussing the various steps and decisions made throughout the study with them, much of what would have remained implicit became explicit. This added a layer of thought and reflection to my contributions to the study. Moreover, through weekly working meetings, collaborating with Laura and Salma helped to keep me motivated and on track. During these meetings we worked independently but in the same room or connected via teleconference so that any issues could be discussed immediately. This arrangement was initially intended to support Laura and Salma, but it quickly emerged as protected time for me since these were legitimate meetings with Laura and Salma, as opposed to just time set aside for me, which could be skipped.

To me, it was clear from the start that both Laura and Salma were highly engaged and that they cared deeply about the rigor and the quality of their work. Seeing this made me want to give them the best experience possible working on this study, especially knowing that this study was one of the first that they had ever worked on. I wanted to make sure they received the recognition they deserved and that they felt they were both appreciated and respected as members of the team. We established a dynamic that made each member feel comfortable to speak their mind, including when holding a dissenting opinion. A clear example is how we each coded the interview data, particularly when one of us interpreted a passage differently from the other two. I liked that Laura and Salma felt able to disagree with me and each other and explain their views. To me, this was a sign of their growing self-confidence, not only as researchers, but also as individuals who thought critically and thoughtfully about a given issue and then confidently voiced their beliefs, even if it meant speaking out in opposition. This made me extremely proud of them, especially since I do not think I reached this stage myself until I was well into my graduate studies.

I experienced some tensions working on the study with the rest of the team, particularly because I felt that the group dynamic was different from that of the smaller group. Laura and Salma often joined the team meetings via teleconferencing, often without video. This made it difficult for me to judge how they were experiencing the meeting. They spoke much less at these meetings, for several possible reasons, including the awkwardness of being the only members who were not physically present, not having an established relationship with (and in some cases not having met) the rest of the team, as well as being the most junior members. Despite the admiration and appreciation of my colleagues for the students, my sense is that Laura and Salma were not comfortable speaking as freely as they did when the three of us worked alone. Though they confirmed that this was true in later conversations, I am unsure if it impacted me more than them or if they downplayed the magnitude of their discomfort. Further, I am not sure if in the future I should do more for my student partners to build stronger relationships with other collaborators or if this should be left for my student partners and other collaborators to decide and act on.

Despite all that Laura and Salma had accomplished, I felt that I had to advocate for them. This was not because anybody was trying to discredit them, but because, at some level, I still felt that they were my students, whom I had brought onto this team. Moreover, because Laura and Salma had worked exclusively with me on the study, they did not have much opportunity to establish a relationship with anyone else on the team, which I thought would make it harder for them to advocate for themselves. I believe they would have spoken up in the larger group if they disagreed with some aspect of the research or how it was being conveyed, but I do not know if they would have spoken up to advocate for themselves. Fortunately, everyone on the team was happy to support our student partners and, in general, to recognize them in every way that we could. I was very proud of Laura and Salma when they co-presented the study at our annual institutional teaching and learning conference, and I am delighted that they are also authors on the corresponding manuscript. As much as I had initially agreed to have them help out with the study so that they could gain research experience, I believe that we (the rest of the research team and I) benefited just as much if not more than Laura and Salma by having them as student partners.

CELIA'S REFLECTIONS

My role in the research process was participating in the initial discussions to conduct the study and the broad design, identifying key themes after the interviews had been conducted, writing up the findings and contributing to subsequent conference presentations and publications. While I was aware that two of the team were undergraduate students, I did not think of them with that identity. For me, they

were fellow members of the team. This may have been because the students worked directly with Alice who had recruited them, but also, because I had never been their instructor, our relationship was as fellow researchers.

I was aware of power dynamics, at times, in the project. The most obvious experience of this was in team meetings where I noticed that the students rarely initiated discussion. They were confident and willing to share their views when asked, but did not initiate. I assume this was in part due to the power imbalance inherent in some of the team being novices in the company of more experienced colleagues, but also due to cultural expectations of students and faculty.

During the project I tended to think of Salma and Laura as part of a sub-team led by Alice. This was a perception that was enhanced by the way in which we did the work. Alice led the initial analysis of the raw data, sharing the work with the two students. My involvement started once this initial work was completed. Together with the other two researchers (not authors on this paper), I examined the data to identify key themes emerging from the interviews. We all worked on the output—conference presentations and an article for a peer-reviewed journal. This process was largely conducted online using a shared document, supported by occasional in-person meetings.

I was initially surprised that both Salma's and Laura's accounts were wholly positive as I had expected them to experience some form of power imbalance. However, on further reflection, it occurred to me that such an imbalance may be experienced as the norm for students and so was not seen by them as worth remarking on, or may not even be recognized by them as significant. I hoped it was not because they felt it inappropriate to express anything negative.

I was pleased to see that both students felt they gained from the experience, both in terms of research skills learned and in a wider sense in terms of their confidence and understanding of higher education. Aside from the power imbalance, I was conscious of another level of inequality in the research team. Two-thirds of us were employed by the university at the time of the research whereas the students were not only not employed, but were paying fees to maintain their identity as students. This research was a voluntary activity for them and one that was intended to enhance their skills, but it was also a source of free labour for the university if we regard research outputs as economic units. I am therefore glad that the students recognized the benefits of their engagement in the project.

DISCUSSION (JOINT REFLECTION)

Once the students and researchers had written the reflections above, we all contributed to the following section where we jointly reflected on what had been written, which in turn led us to reflect further on the experience of taking part in

this project.

We all believe benefits accrued to both students and faculty. However, the process of writing this paper has highlighted and emphasized some nuances in that experience. The principle one was that there are inevitable power relations in play in such an arrangement and simply being aware of this may not be sufficient. It may be necessary to employ mindful navigation and anticipate potential areas of tension.

We have tried to anonymize this section, while indicating student or faculty perspective. The reflections have been grouped around three key themes:

- Mutual benefit for faculty and students
- Power dynamics
- Paid work or voluntary contribution

Mutual Benefit for Faculty and Students

STUDENT RESPONSE

Throughout my experience with this project (and even now) as a student partner, I sometimes fail to recognize my own talents and value to the research field. Reading Alice's and Celia's reflections, I realized how much of an impact we had, as student researchers, not only on the SoTL project, but also the impact we had on Alice and Celia as researchers and educators. To this day, I continue to receive insightful training and opportunities for additional research projects. This experience has been a wonderful journey and continues to contribute to my growth as a student and future researcher, and I am thrilled to know how much Alice and Celia have benefited from having me as a student partner.

FACULTY RESPONSE

I gained a lot from this partnership as a researcher. I believe that our situation is not common: most research groups consisting of both students and faculty are not true "partnerships." It is not a partnership if the student's role is to assist in completing a project but not to think meaningfully about the project—to process data in a mechanical manner, for example, without having an intellectual connection to the process. In our context, I would liken this to having the students transcribe the interviews without extracting meaning from the data by being thoroughly involved in the analysis, which is the phase of the project where I believe they developed a more meaningful connection to the study. Students in a student-faculty partnership do not simply benefit by learning a new skill or developing a closer relationship with faculty; they also benefit on a more personal, transformative level by (1) co-creating knowledge in an intellectually meaningful way and (2) appreciating that they are capable of doing so.

Popovic, C., Kim, A.S.N., Saleh, S.A.F., & Farrugia, L. (2021). Turning the tables: Involving undergrads as researchers in SoTL. *Imagining SoTL, 1*, 99–115. https://doi.org/10.29173/isotl531

Faculty benefit from the partnership through the enhanced intentionality of decisions, behaviours, and processes when instruction and mentorship is paired with the act of conducting research. Guiding students through a research procedure requires not only explaining what the research steps are, but also why they matter. These explanations highlight assumptions underpinning research decisions. What often remains implicit for many of us who have grown familiar and accustomed to conducting our research becomes explicit when we mentor students through the process. Researchers can benefit by questioning their assumptions, which in turn benefits the quality of the research.

Power Dynamics

STUDENT RESPONSE

In response to power dynamics, we felt more comfortable in the smaller group setting with Alice, compared to the larger group meetings with the rest of the faculty members. This could be due to several factors. For one of us, it is generally more difficult to speak in a larger group setting, regardless of power dynamics. I tend to be more anxious during teleconference calls, especially when I am unable to see the other team members' faces. I should mention that the group setting was always warm and welcoming. This was never a discomfort caused by members of the group, but rather an internally generated discomfort. The feeling of a student-professor dynamic was brief. In the end, I accepted myself as equal to Alice, Celia, and the other researchers.

Upon reading everyone's reflections, I was touched to know how much the more experienced team members were aware of and worried about the comfort of the student researchers, in terms of power dynamics as well as overall benefit. From my experience doing research and having discussions with faculty members, I already had a cultural schema for those kinds of collaborative relationships, and to me it was normal—in fact, expected—that there would be a higher degree of formality during discussions with senior researchers, as there would be in any discussion between myself and anyone more experienced in the field. That formality, however, did not compromise comfort. I believe students can still be fully assertive and natural, having an equal standing within the research team, while still being conscious of the natural status difference that exists outside the bounds of the research project.

As for the students being less active during the group meetings, several possible reasons were mentioned, the closest one to my case being the general unfamiliarity and initial isolation from the other team members. This was not in any way negative—it was simply a result of how the research project worked, and the close relationship and direction received during the three-person meetings was nothing but beneficial. For most of the project, the students only met with Alice on a regular basis. Only later did they meet with the rest of the team members, whom they did

not have enough time to get to know. Perhaps that unfamiliarity caused some discomfort, which I believe would have been eliminated after more time spent with the whole team.

FACULTY RESPONSE

We seemed to be more concerned about how power dynamics might have impacted the students than they were. Are we overthinking things? Should we leave it more to the students to advocate for themselves? Should this be viewed as a way for students to learn to advocate for themselves? Given our seniority over the students, as faculty, should we make a point of advocating for our student partners? Since faculty have more experience than students in their field, as well as in academia in general, they are expected to mentor and instruct students. This invariably leads to issues of power and power dynamics in situations that involve students and faculty. It is quite possible that the experiences of our student partners were as positive as they were because we, as the faculty in this partnership, were cognizant of the inherent power dynamics and intentionally created a space that was conducive to co-creation of knowledge with our student partners. It is also possible, however, that the positive reflections are due, at least in part, to other factors, including institutional pressure and/or power inequalities, causing participants to report mostly positive outcomes as noted previously by Dawson and Dawson (2016).

Paid Work or Voluntary Contribution

STUDENT RESPONSE

My first reaction to reading through everyone's account is that there are a lot of grey areas, such as the point about how the students were unpaid. In one sense, the students' involvement in the research could be viewed as an opportunity for us to gain new skills and as a form of experiential education, but it can also be viewed as unpaid labour, carrying out the work of the university by helping to "pump out publications." Although the students expressed that they benefited from their experience, this does not necessarily mean that they should not also have been paid as research assistants to do this work. This makes me wonder whether student partners are viewed and treated differently when they are paid for the work that they do, and if yes, in what ways.

With regards to the students having participated in the project on a voluntary basis, it was not a concern for me because, as mentioned above, the personal and technical skills, connections, and research experience gained through this opportunity are coveted and are more than enough to motivate most students to get involved in research. It is also the norm for students to volunteer as research assistants in universities, and it is always the student, as in this case, who enthusiastically pursues this kind of opportunity and is happy to volunteer their time.

Reading the team members' opinions was eye-opening. As my experience was very positive thanks to having been blessed with a welcoming, considerate team, I was not aware of how issues such as monetary reward and power imbalance might influence student partnerships, which might be the case for some students who participate in collaborative research.

FACULTY RESPONSE

Many students seek research experience to make their applications for graduate studies more competitive. Many of our colleagues view students as discounted—if not free—labour, balanced with "in-kind payment" in the form of reference letters, research experience, and varying degrees of mentorship. This, of course, then leads to issues of equity, as only a subset of students are able (vs. willing) to work and/or volunteer in these contexts, just as not all students are able to take up internships, due to their personal and/or financial situations (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, when there are no funds to pay a student should we ignore the opportunity for a voluntary arrangement? In Mercer-Mapstone et al.'s (2017) study, approximately a third of the partnerships rewarded students financially. The issue of the morality of paying students financially or rewarding them in other ways through the development of skills and access to further opportunities is worthy of discussion and research. Currently, the practice of not rewarding students financially is the norm, but that does not mean it should be (Bovill et al., 2015). Payment, or the lack of it, can impact who can and cannot take advantage of opportunities, thus reinforcing cycles of privilege and access.

The structure we used—with students in a sub-group and occasional team meetings—enabled the students to receive direct and close supervision, but this may have been isolating in that the students did not interact much with the rest of the team. The students did not mention feeling isolated, but these reflections highlight how separated they were from the rest of the group.

Lessons Learned

On reflection, we arrived at a number of observations and recommendations for our own future research, which may be of interest to other SoTL researchers.

MUTUAL BENEFIT FOR FACULTY AND STUDENTS

While there may be a debate regarding the value of student partnerships in learning, that was not the focus of this study. The students completed their undergraduate studies with no further involvement with any of the researchers as course instructors. While Laura and Salma may reflect on the benefits of their experience to their research skills and confidence, we did not attempt to quantify the direct impact on their learning. This participation of students in research could be a useful teaching tool but would require further research to validate any claims.

For faculty the benefits of this study were similar to those reported in the literature, but included increased focus on what we do and why, a heightened awareness of power dynamics, and a wider perspective from the research team than would otherwise have occurred, as detailed in the earlier discussion. The benefits for students also aligned with the literature, but were particularly significant in respect to learning how research works in higher education, improving confidence, and developing research skills.

POWER DYNAMICS

While there were power dynamics between faculty and students that impacted the experience, there were also power dynamics within the rest of the team. These are rarely absent. In this study, those with power may have been more acutely aware of the impact and concerned about it than is the norm. The student response suggests that acting on this awareness may help to ensure that negative outcomes from an imbalance of power can be reduced if not eliminated.

PAID WORK OR VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION

A concern over paid or unpaid work rested mainly with the faculty and not the students. The students seemed unaware of it as an issue until it was discussed as part of this research. There are ethical and moral issues that need to be addressed in any voluntary role, but they are no more acute in this setting than any other. That said, having examined this issue as a result of our reflections for this paper, we intend to seek funding to pay students for their work in the future. Indeed, two of the authors are now engaged in a project involving a student in a similar capacity to this one, and that student is being paid for her work.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

This methodology was new to all four of us. While we had all had some experience in reflective writing, none of us had engaged in autoethnography. Our starting point was a challenge: how to write a group reflective paper which gives equal opportunity and weight to all contributions and to do so within accepted scholarly practice. We would encourage others to explore this methodology as we found it effective in giving voice and eliciting nuances that might otherwise be overlooked.

CONCLUSION

We are at a juncture where both faculty and students are recognizably playing significant roles in higher education learning contexts (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). The significance of the present study is that it centres on students as valuable members of our learning environment who have much to offer to propel advancements in SoTL research. The students benefit from exposure to academic

research, understand processes through experiencing them, and learn how to work with a team of researchers on a collaborative project. However, there are tensions, in terms of power relationships and economics of labour.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Alice S. N. Kim has a PhD in experimental psychology, with specialization in human learning and memory. Alice is the Founder and Managing Director of Teaching and Learning Research (TLR) In Action, a not-for-profit research organization focused on conducting and publicly disseminating research on teaching and learning.

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Salma A. F. Saleh has received a Bachelor's degree in psychology from York University, Toronto. She conducted her Honours thesis on the effect of different learning techniques on skill acquisition, and is interested in exploring ways in which students and faculty can collaborate to improve learning practices at universities, as she believes inclusion is intrinsic to student success.

Laura Farrugia is a 4th year honours psychology student at York University. With a passion for mental health advocacy, she is working towards pursuing a PhD in clinical psychology. She has an interest in research that will provide insight into more effective teaching and learning practices, as well as clinical research that will improve future therapeutic disciplines.

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