

## Considerations for Seeking Equity and Justice through Pedagogical Partnership: Four Partners in Conversation

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### ABSTRACT

Student-faculty pedagogical partnership has recently been understood to have the potential to contribute to equity and justice in post-secondary education. Nevertheless, important equity-related concerns about partnership have also been raised. In a presentation at the 2019 Symposium on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, one of the co-authors of this article proposed a series of “tentative principles” for working toward equity in and through student-faculty partnership, which synthesized and foregrounded some of these possibilities and critiques. In this article, we share these “tentative principles” as well as a series of critical responses to them offered by the three co-authors. In so doing, we aim to offer an expanded set of significant considerations for those interested in student-faculty partnership and equity, and to invite and encourage further discussion and critique rather than reify singular principles.

*Keywords:* student-faculty partnership, equity, justice, critique

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<sup>1</sup> This author order is not intended to reflect significance of contribution but to foreground the fact that this article offers responses (with contributors in alphabetical order) to Beth’s initial presentation.

## INTRODUCTION

At the 2019 Banff Symposium, I (Beth) offered a keynote presentation exploring the ways in which student-faculty pedagogical partnership might contribute to equity and justice in post-secondary institutions. In this presentation, I provisionally offered four broad premises (referred to as “tentative principles”), synthesized from existing research and practice, that might support efforts to work toward equity through partnership: (1) access, (2) disaggregation,<sup>2</sup> (3) recognition and support, and (4) critique and responsiveness. These tentative principles—how they work, how they should be amended, and whether they should exist at all—constitute the starting point for this article.

In the time that has passed since I gave that presentation, I have continued to work on projects focused on equity in post-secondary education, often in partnership with students who identify as members of equity-denied groups. I, like many others, have also continued to learn from people experiencing systemic oppression about the depth and violence of the injustices that mark our educational institutions and Canadian society at large. In light of this ongoing education, I began to wonder about revisiting these tentative principles. Might they be one small piece of working toward our collective obligation to combat injustice in our institutions? Might they miss the mark, or themselves inadvertently enact or perpetuate injustice in some ways? Does proposing them constitute a meaningful leveraging of the privilege I hold as a white, upper-middle class, cis woman, and/or a problematic centering of my own voice and perspectives? As part of thinking through these (and other) questions, I reached out to the co-authors of this article—collaborators with whom I have worked in partnership on equity-related research, whom I understood to identify as members of equity-denied groups, and from whom I continue to learn a great deal. I invited them to consider responding to, critiquing, and revising the principles advanced in my initial presentation. In the spirit of the “looking back/looking forward” theme of this issue, and in an attempt to respond to the need for ongoing critique and revision of processes intended to support equity, we offer here the collective results of that process.

After introducing ourselves, we briefly describe existing research about student-faculty partnership and its potential contributions to equity and justice. We then offer Alise’s, Elaina’s, and Sri’s responses to the tentative principles offered in Beth’s presentation, drawing our various perspectives together to highlight some significant considerations for those interested in working toward equity through partnership and to demonstrate the potential value and complexities of naming, questioning, and revising such key considerations.

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<sup>2</sup> In the presentation, this principle was referred to as “diversity and disaggregation.” However, we have removed “diversity” here due to concerns about how this term gets misused.

## WHO WE ARE

**Alise:** I was first introduced to pedagogical partnership in 2016 as a PhD student and am currently collaborating as a postdoctoral fellow/staff member/instructor on primarily equity-focused projects with equity-denied students.

**Beth:** I am a faculty member who teaches in two programs on our campus. I became formally involved in student-faculty partnership in 2013, when I helped to develop (and subsequently oversaw) our institution's Student Partners Program.

**Elaina:** I first got involved in the Student Partners Program as an undergraduate student and have had the opportunity to work as a student partner on research, course design, and co-editing a partnership journal.

**Sri:** I was first introduced to partnership through the Student Partners Program during my undergraduate degree, and I have worked on several equity-related projects since then, which have included experiences in research, co-developing and running an equity initiative, and academic publishing.

## STUDENT-FACULTY PARTNERSHIP AND EQUITY IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Student-faculty partnership, a process which involves students and faculty working together as collaborators on teaching and learning initiatives such as course (re)design or pedagogical research (Healey et al., 2016), is increasingly understood to have the capacity to contribute to equity on post-secondary campuses. Partnership has been described as a process underpinned by values of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility (Cook-Sather et al., 2014), which is predicated on recognizing and affirming the knowledges and experiences of students and faculty (Cook-Sather, 2020; de Bie et al., 2019) and on attempting to challenge institutional hierarchies and meaningfully share power (Guitman et al., 2020; Matthews, 2017; Verwoord & Smith, 2020). As such, it is an approach to educational practice and research that might help transform universities into more egalitarian spaces (Matthews et al., 2018).

Moreover, a growing number of partnership initiatives focus specifically on questions of equity. Existing empirical and reflective accounts have documented how student-faculty partnerships have contributed to the development of more inclusive teaching spaces, or of courses specifically focused on equity, for example (Ameyaa et al., 2021; Chukwu & Jones, 2020; Narayanan & Abbot, 2020). Studies have also suggested that some of the documented benefits of partnership, such as students experiencing increased levels of confidence and belonging (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), might be especially beneficial for participating students who experience systemic oppression (Cook-Sather & Agu, 2013; Cook-Sather & Seay, 2021; Brown et al., 2020). Building on such work, de Bie et al. (2021) argue that partnership—in some cases—can contribute to redressing the epistemic, affective, and ontological violences students from equity-denied groups experience in post-

secondary education. Nevertheless, like other writers, such as Yahlnaaw (2019), Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2021), and Verwoord and Smith (2020), they also acknowledge that partnership does not always realize this potential and may come with risks and harms of its own.

The tentative principles that follow, which have been revised and updated slightly since the initial presentation, aimed to amplify and respond to ideas raised about such risks in particular, synthesizing these to suggest broad concerns practitioners and scholars might keep in mind as we endeavour to enhance partnership's capacity to contribute to justice. The intent was not to disavow the positive potential of partnership, but rather to pay attention to risks and shortcomings such that we might work toward mitigating them where possible.

## **ENHANCING PARTNERSHIP'S CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO EQUITY: SOME TENTATIVE PRINCIPLES**

### *Access*

One of the equity-related concerns that has been raised about partnership is the issue of who gets the opportunity to participate, particularly when partnership happens through extracurricular partnership schemes (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Moore-Cherry et al., 2016). Existing literature has documented potential barriers to participation in partnership initiatives, including differences in awareness about opportunities available, inequitable recruitment and selection procedures, and design features that can make participation challenging for some people (Bindra et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2020; Felten et al., 2013; Marquis et al., 2019). As a result, some have suggested that students with social and institutional privilege are more likely to participate in partnership activities (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020), and thus that partnership might in fact extend inequities it seeks to redress (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021; de Bie et al., 2021).

With this problem in mind, scholars have discussed the potential value of scaling up partnership schemes, such that more opportunities to participate are available (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020), and recommended designing recruitment and other processes with equity in mind (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021). Some have also advocated "whole cohort" approaches, where partnership values and practices, such as co-creation, are incorporated within the taught curriculum (Bovill, 2020; Bryson & Callaghan, 2021; Moore-Cherry et al., 2016). Although such approaches have potential, they are not without tensions and limitations. For example, when considering incorporating partnership within the curriculum, it is important to note that students from equity-denied groups sometimes have particular concerns about partnership, such as an understanding that partnership might co-opt or water down needed dissent (de Bie, 2020), which underscore the importance of people being able to choose whether, and how, they take part (Bovill, 2020). There's also the question of whether whole cohort approaches risk continuing or furthering marginalization (de Bie, 2020). Because such approaches include large and

complex groups and might be designed to cater to “the norm,” they could inadvertently repeat exclusions and drown out or disregard the voices of people experiencing structural oppression. Therefore, we need ongoing attention to strategies that might enhance access to partnership opportunities, including further critique and refinement of strategies that have been proposed to date.

### *Alise*

I agree that access is a significant concern that is unlikely to change without considerable effort. In fielding students’ questions about how to apply for partnership positions, I’ve come to realize how unintelligible the publicly provided information is to many students—preventing them from imagining themselves in a partnership role and deciphering how to apply. And this is just the beginning of access barriers. I get the sense that the design of and recruitment for partnership positions often (implicitly) expects and/or benefits from a pre-existing level of student confidence, initiative, self-efficacy, “professionalism,” hope/optimism in the possibility of creating change, and ability to decode hidden institutional norms and politics, as well as comfort (and/or coping skills) in managing new and uncertain experiences, asking questions, seeking support, and so on. These expectations raise more questions about necessary efforts to mitigate barriers for students who understandably struggle with these domains in an opaque and defeating university culture.

I have recruited and worked in partnership as a disabled staff member/instructor with more than 30 students, most of them identifying with disability and other intersecting affiliations with equity-denied communities and collaborating on disability/accessibility-focused projects. As much as I actively seek to work with students who have had access to fewer opportunities, the information currently available to me through recruitment materials by which to perceive barriers or inequities students may have faced is limited, often to an appraisal of resumes or sometimes self-disclosure in cover letters or interviews. The time and energy I have available to work in partnerships with students is also constrained, and so I commonly face trade-offs in determining how to best support “access.” When students enter partnerships with particular pre-existing capacities, I can sometimes increase access by hiring more students. Alternatively, I can increase access to students facing greater barriers by providing more comprehensive support, but this often means hiring fewer students overall. In the end, I typically grapple with these ethical decisions (assessing my own capacities for supporting students well, selecting students, and numbers of students) on my own. I wish for an access strategy collectively developed and evaluated at the level of partnership program design as I suspect it would not only be more successful than each partner trying to deliberate in isolation on our individual approaches within existing recruitment structures, but also offer support and resources that I would find helpful.

### *Elaina*

I echo the point that access is important, but as we talk about institutional strategies like tracking who participates in extracurricular partnership, I am cautious about how access gets measured. Mercer-Mapstone et al. (2021) indicated two possibilities for measuring the institution-wide “diversity” of partnership initiatives: perception-based data of staff administering student-staff partnerships (which they used) and demographic data (which they suggested for future research). They did discuss the results with nuance, but I am wary about how perception-based data and demographic data (done poorly) might obscure important considerations about partnership access. For example, if partnership staff simply observe “racial diversity” via a demographic survey, it removes opportunities for participants to articulate the complexities that come with accessing academic spaces as a racialized person.

As a racialized woman—Vietnamese, second-generation in Canada—whose parents never went to university, I struggle with networking, with putting myself forward for opportunities, and other professional skills, and I credit partnership with helping me build the confidence to navigate higher education more successfully. However, I was introduced to partnership because of its close affiliation with my undergraduate program, which in my cohort, skewed white, female, and wealthy, and I am aware that my history of enrolment in similar elite education programs—I was also in gifted and International Baccalaureate programs—is closely linked to my ability to participate and succeed in partnership. Coming from a Southeast Asian background, I have been afforded a lot more opportunities for social mobility within education systems than many Black and Indigenous folks. Through the lens of perception-based data, would I simply be seen as evidence of program “diversity”? In a demographic survey, would I be counted as a racialized woman and categorized as someone outside of the realm of “usual suspect”? I think intersectional analyses that holistically evaluate how people end up working in partnership can be beneficial, but I am skeptical of evaluations that flatten complexities, including studies that throw in the word intersectionality without following through.

### *Sri*

For all that universities are places for learning and growth, fighting for equity in these spaces is inherently limited because of how universities perpetuate white supremacist, capitalist ideologies. As a result, when considering the potential for partnership to scale up and be institutionally recognized within the university to increase access (e.g., the university promoting partnership projects and initiatives for public relations, strongly encouraging or mandating partnership work for students and faculty, etc.), I am immediately deeply suspicious.

Partnership could become more restricted by the bureaucracy and rules of the university if it becomes more widely institutionalized, potentially limiting some of its transformative potential. In other university equity projects, some of our work has involved guiding students to rely on institutional structures such as accessibility



services and campus police, when these structures can be deeply (re)traumatizing and cause active harm to marginalized students. When pushed to reconsider those suggestions, faculty often point to the university's bureaucratic structures and rules by which they are, understandably but contentiously, limited. Additionally, in the process of formalization, partnership can become less transformative if, as often happens, the language and process of partnership is co-opted by the university and used for the public relations aspect of diversity and inclusion. I have witnessed how different organizations within the university use the language of diversity/equity/inclusion to put on the facade of making the institution more equitable, when no significant structural changes are made. This practice intentionally maintains the status quo of serving white, rich, abled, cisgender, heterosexual people over those who are equity-denied.

Institutionalizing partnership might further incentivize the university to congratulate itself for its efforts to include student voices and promote the idea that issues of equity are being addressed and "fixed" when, in reality, senior administration would not take on the task of transformation to make the institution more equitable on a broader scale. In contrast, small-scale partnership projects can be more flexible because of how much more classroom-focused and localized they are. Faculty can exert more direct control and implement change in their own courses or research projects. For example, rolling deadlines and extensions can simply be written into course outlines to increase accessibility without navigating complex institutional rules. While the scale of these impacts might be smaller, the greater control afforded by smaller partnership projects makes these projects less vulnerable to external agendas.

### ***Disaggregation***

A second significant consideration related to partnership's potential contributions to equity is the need to account for the diverse experiences of the people participating in partnership. For example, we need to attend more meaningfully than has sometimes been the case to the differing ways in which people's social locations might affect their experiences of partnership, rather than homogenizing faculty and student experiences. To this end, some scholarship has begun to document unique benefits, challenges, and harms students and faculty from equity-denied groups may encounter while working in partnership (Cook-Sather & Agu, 2013; de Bie et al., 2021; Kupatadze, 2019; Marquis et al., 2020; Marquis et al., 2021) and to explore the partnership experiences of individuals from specific groups such as Black women students (Cook-Sather & Seay, 2021) and disabled students (Brown et al., 2020). Continuing to attend to such varied experiences, rather than generalizing, is an essential part of understanding partnership's relationships to equity and engaging in such work justly.

Meaningfully engaging with difference within partnership practice might also involve countering universalizing assumptions about what partnership is and how it should play out. Along these lines, some researchers, such as Bindra et al. (2018),

have noted that much partnership scholarship has been conducted in Western contexts (though see Chng, 2019; Ho, 2017; Kaur et al., 2019; Owusu-Agyeman & Fourie-Malherbe, 2021; Waqar & Asad, 2020; and others for exceptions). Further attention to how student-faculty partnership might look and whether or not it is seen as valuable in non-Western locations is thus merited. Likewise, given the reality of cultural diversity within and across contexts, it is also important to ask whether student-faculty partnership is sufficiently responsive to multiple ways of collaborating, co-developing knowledge, and working toward equity (Marquis et al., 2021). Similar concerns are taken up by Yahlnaaw (2019), who notes experiencing some examples of partnership as colonial practices, in which particular (settler) knowledges and approaches were taken for granted as desirable and claims to partnership thus felt tokenizing. Further attention to countering such tendencies and respecting and enabling varied ways of working toward equity in partnership are thus required.

### *Alise*

If I had a subtitle for my state of mind right now regarding partnership, it would be, “From Wary to Weary.” I have previously written on my distrust of partnership as a Mad-identified student (de Bie, 2020; de Bie & Raaper, 2019), speaking to the kinds of labour and energy it takes to be involved. As I am now three years post PhD completion, I am starting to get a better handle on what partnership feels like for me as a disabled staff member/instructor, and I find myself exhausted. I experience the labour and risks (and joy, too) of partnership as a contract worker and early career scholar differently than I did as a student and wonder whether students may get more out of working in partnership than I do in my current position. At least for me, participating in partnership as a student felt like it offered more career and personal benefits and fewer risks than it does now (e.g., in the way partnership absorbs and directs my energy away from other more institutionally valued activities; see Marquis, 2018, for further discussion of risks for junior scholars). This is not necessarily a reason not to engage in partnership, but it does make me wonder about possible inequities with regards to whether partnerships are “mutually beneficial.”

My suspicion is that working in student-faculty partnership may offer fewer possibilities for redress of social injustices experienced by faculty/staff from equity-denied groups than it does for students, at least in some circumstances, and may unfortunately aggravate various forms of harm (see de Bie et al., 2021). Aside from the risk of epistemic exploitation from engaging in devalued equity/partnership work in the institution, the ways staff/faculty may constrain our emotional expressions in the name of “professional” boundaries and/or not burdening student partners may cause affective harm (e.g., minimizing our own disclosures or requests for accommodation and support—sometimes to the extent that we stop feeling like a true partner). Moreover, it can be confusingly painful to see student partners experience the benefits of partnership (e.g., increased



confidence, skill development) when these same opportunities were not available when we were students, provoking an increased awareness of circumstances that diminished our potential to be who we could have been. Any resulting feelings of sadness, grief, resentment, jealousy, or vulnerability in relation to student partners can cause quite a lot of dissonance and uncertainty with regards to one's sense of self. I would value further conversation on these points as part of Beth's emphasis on disaggregation.

### ***Elaina***

Adding to Alise's point, I think overemphasizing how partnerships are mutually rewarding can be detrimental to students as well as staff. Often partnership literature emphasizes that the value students bring to projects comes from their unique perspectives, such as bringing a student perspective to course design. My first partnership project, however, involved researching a topic I knew little about when I did not have any research experience. Not to discount my contributions to the project, but the partners I was working with needed to be generous with their time and advice in ways that are underrecognized by the university. Their confidence in my ability to be an equal contributor helped me become a better scholar, but also it led to some self-imposed pressure to live up to the expectation of impacting the project in a transformative way. Consequently, I struggled to balance asking for help, something I am already insecure about as a racialized woman, with not being a burden to faculty/staff members who were dealing with their own pressures.

### ***Sri***

The homogenization of student voices in equity work feels especially dangerous to me. In work I have done outside of partnership, usually as one of few people of colour, I have often felt the need to speak to issues of equity that would perpetuate harm to those whose identities I may not share. In these situations, if I do not bring attention to those missteps, the problem would go unspoken, but I am acutely aware of and uncomfortable with how problematic it feels to be positioning myself as having authority to make those claims just because I am not white. Similarly, I wonder whether the concept of "equity-seeking groups" as it has been framed in partnership projects has been flattened in ways that set problematic expectations, where once someone who is from a particular equity-seeking group is brought on, they are expected—or feel the need—to take on the role of speaking for all marginalized voices. I also worry that quantifying how many people are brought onto a project to provide an "equity-seeking perspective" can be used to further the idea that marginalized groups can speak for each other, contributing further to institutional biases against those who are more underrepresented in university spaces (e.g., Black and Indigenous students). The principle of disaggregation needs to be considered carefully in these contexts to avoid generalizing marginalized students' experiences in tokenizing and burdensome ways.

### ***Recognition & Support***

Given the increasing awareness that partnership might intersect with experiences of harm for equity-denied students and faculty, even if/as it has positive effects, we also need to be attentive to ways to mitigate such harm and support participants as they work toward equity in partnership. For example, this might involve developing spaces where participants can connect with others, debrief, share ideas, and seek help as necessary. The weekly meetings of student consultants in the Students as Learners and Teachers Program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges offer one model of what such supportive spaces might look like (Ntem & Cook-Sather, 2018). Additional strategies and supports, such as equity-specific training, should also be explored.

Remuneration is also relevant in this regard. Although payment does not obviate or excuse harm, it can be a part of recognizing the labour partnership entails. This is particularly important when students from equity-denied groups are engaged in partnership initiatives designed to contribute to equity. In addition to supporting access (Bindra et al., 2018; Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020), paying students for the contributions they make recognizes equity work that often goes uncompensated (Marquis et al., 2021), and perhaps helps to counter the risk that it becomes a form of “cultural taxation” (Joseph & Hirschfield, 2011), an additional burden placed on equity-denied students relative to their non-marginalized peers. Further attention is also needed to how faculty labour in equity-focused partnerships is recognized and rewarded, particularly given that both partnership and equity work are difficult and time intensive, and neither are commonly included among the activities that are most valued in faculty assessment and career progress decisions. While recognizing the labour faculty invest in partnership is important generally (Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020), this is especially true for faculty from equity-denied groups, who often have elevated service demands relative to peers who occupy more privileged social locations and also face additional inequities and barriers to recognition (Joseph & Hirschfield, 2011; Henry et al., 2017).

### ***Elaina***

I strongly support paying students working in partnership, but I think if we want to make partnership more accessible to students who cannot afford to do unpaid work, it is worth probing a bit more into the specifics of the remuneration process. When I worked as a student partner, I worked additional part-time jobs, which were necessary for me to have regular and reliable income. The partnership schemes at my institution have only a small number of project hours allocated, and work hours vary from week to week. I understand that these particulars arise because of fixed funding—more projects can be funded if fewer hours are allocated for each project—but limited and variable hours may make it financially necessary for participants to take on several other paid positions that run contrary to partnership philosophy. For example, I also worked as a research assistant, which has its

benefits, but it is much more hierarchical than partnership work, and I have limited ownership over any work I was paid to produce. Therefore, beyond recognizing remuneration as good, I think it is important to consider how the extent of support is impacted by specific mechanics, such as pay structure.

### *Alise*

I would add sustainability to Beth's list of important considerations—as a kind of recognition and support but named more directly. There are very real emotional, energy, and career-related limits on how much one can fully engage in partnership that require attention if partnerships are to have equity-supporting possibilities. Since the more micro/interpersonal contributions of partnership to justice often do not feel like “enough” for me and feel less tangibly significant than the potential outcomes of other justice strategies (e.g., work for structural change or community organizing), I have found myself creating more positions on more teams so more students can access the potential benefits of partnership and paid career-related employment. However, I have ultimately learned this type of “scaling” at the level of the staff partner does not work: I have very real limits on how many relationships I can sustain. Moreover, partnership is not necessarily the most sustainable or effective strategy for addressing some violences in our education systems, and I think that needs to be continually acknowledged, even as the unique possibilities for supporting equity through partnership are explored.

I have found partnerships significantly more sustainable when I am not the only staff/faculty partner involved and where I can debrief, take a break, and trade off with a colleague with the assurance that students' finances, support needs, project completion, and other gains from partnership will not be compromised because of me, and that my own well-being and accessibility needs do not need to be sacrificed or deprioritized to sustain the work. In some cases, I find mentorship works better for students and is more sustainable for me than partnership, and I would be pleased to see my university adopt a coherent mentorship scheme as enthusiastically as our partnership program has been expanded. Perhaps most of all, I wish for further spaces where students, staff, and faculty can connect and conspire with each other as peers and members of communities, rather than across institutionally inscribed divides, such as student-staff/faculty roles and employee-employer relations. Only working within the parameters of the institution feels unendurable for me long term.

### *Critique and Responsiveness*

Partnership literature has sometimes been criticized for focusing primarily on positive outcomes (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Bryson & Callaghan, 2021). While there are certainly numerous benefits to partnership, if we expect it to meaningfully contribute to equity, we also need to recognize that such work is hard, we will not get it “right” all the time, and it may well have important equity-related limitations that have not yet been fully recognized. People advocating and

participating in partnership (whatever our positionality) thus need to seek, hear, value, and respond to critique—particularly from members of equity-denied groups (de Bie et al., 2021). Examples of what such critique might look like are beginning to appear in the literature (e.g., de Bie, 2020; de Bie & Raaper, 2019; Yahlnaaw, 2019), and they provide an initial and important set of considerations to amplify and take into account.

### ***Elaina***

I credit those with whom I worked in partnership for creating environments where feedback was welcome and responded to, but developing an open space for critique is not straightforward. While writing this article, I have been able to be reasonably open because I am working with folks whom I trust, but it is still hard to offer these critiques. I have wondered at times if my reflections are novel enough to share and struggle with feeling that there might be counterarguments or reasons I forgot to consider that would completely invalidate my points. I was fortunate enough to work on projects that involved reading partnership literature on equity, but I still do not always feel knowledgeable enough. Most students (and perhaps even faculty/staff) engaged in partnership likely do not have time to read enough partnership literature to feel confident formulating, let alone expressing, critiques.

I also feel vulnerable sharing critique grounded in personal experience when it will likely be read by an audience whom I mostly do not know, who perhaps occupy positions of privilege, and who may misunderstand. If I am offering honest critique, my personal experiences are inescapable, but I do not always feel safe or comfortable sharing them. There is always the risk that if I mention racism, it will either be dismissed or there will only be an outsized reaction of shock that leads nowhere, which can be exhausting to manage and makes sharing vulnerability not feel worth it. Oftentimes (this article included), I feel as though I am negotiating between authentically representing my experiences and protecting myself from additional harm. I offer critiques because I have found partnership meaningful and so I am invested in partnership outcomes for other students and faculty/staff, but there is always the fear that I will come across as “ungrateful” or “unprofessional.” So even if someone has knowledge of partnership literature and is in a welcoming environment, there might still be numerous other factors that can make sharing critique, let alone publishing it, risky and challenging for those who hold less power.

### ***Sri***

Like Elaina, I have been fortunate to work with people I trust and with whom I have gradually become more comfortable sharing my true opinions (including in this article), but the actual process of how to share critique in constructive ways can be nebulous, especially for those just entering partnership and who might be new to that kind of vulnerability. It would be helpful to offer sessions or guidelines

within partnership initiatives on how to be ready to hear feedback, take it up, and engage with it.

I also think it is important to reflect on the added burden and emotional labour that marginalized partners might take on when providing critique in partnership. While one potential outcome of giving critique is possible backlash, there is also the outcome of overcompensation through exaggerated, self-flagellating responses, as Elaina alluded to, which can lead to marginalized students or faculty having to take on the exhausting process of absolving their partners' guilt. There needs to be a balance between conveying feedback sensitively when someone has caused harm, but not in a way where the person providing feedback has to make the receiver comfortable and constantly affirm their good intentions.

Additionally, there needs to be real recognition of the professional consequences of providing critique in partnership. Marginalized people, especially, constantly have to weigh the importance of providing critique with the material ways in which it might affect their professional positions and, consequently, their livelihoods. They might also have to police their tones to sound non-offensive to avoid accusations of being aggressive and thus protect their positions, which I have also done in writing this paper. With remuneration (rightfully) beginning to be incorporated into equity work in partnership, especially for students, critique can become a minefield to navigate without clear expectations that it is welcome without financial or other consequence. Overall, framing critique as integral to the partnership process, though explicit guidelines might help partners approach it with more ease.

### *Alise*

All I have to add is yes, and thanks for saying this.

## CONCLUSIONS/OPENINGS

By outlining and responding to the tentative principles set out in Beth's initial presentation, we have endeavoured to foreground some key considerations that should be borne in mind when working to advance equity and justice through student-faculty partnership. In the reflections offered above, Alise, Elaina, and Sri corroborate Beth's proposal that (1) access, (2) disaggregation, (3) recognition and support, and (4) critique are important issues that require attention when working in/on partnership. At the same time, the reflections also advance a number of significant ideas that were not addressed in Beth's presentation, underlining the importance of continuing conversations about how these equity considerations might be expanded and taken up. These additional considerations include the limits of crude ways of assessing compositional diversity and access to partnership programs, the need to avoid approaches to access that simply ask staff partners to take on more projects, the tensions attached to "institutionalizing" partnership work, the possible drawbacks of promoting partnership as (always) equally



beneficial for students and faculty, and the importance of considering sustainability as well as support. Importantly, these responses also underscore additional harms and forms of labour that equity-denied faculty and students might experience in partnership, such as the risks and challenges of providing critique (including in this article) and the difficulty of being asked or assumed to speak on behalf of all marginalized people. Like Beth's initial presentation, we highlight these concerns not to discount the benefits and joys of partnership, nor its potential to support equity, but rather to contribute to ongoing discussion of the complexities of this work and how we might engage in it most effectively and justly.

At the same time, the process of writing this article has made us think further about the concept of "principles," and what it might accomplish or foreclose. As Alise's, Elaina's, and Sri's responses make clear, the "tentative principles" Beth proposed are not without gaps and limitations; they reflect *one* set of ideas and one way of organizing these, and each of us would likely have arrived at differently phrased or conceptualized ideas had we been the developer of the initial considerations. Positioning these ideas as overarching principles could thus itself be seen as problematically universalizing. Moreover, while the tentative principles synthesize existing partnership scholarship focused on equity and/or including the voices of equity-denied faculty and students, they nonetheless draw on a relatively small body of research and practice, and thus risk missing important perspectives or reproducing patterns of citational injustice (Henry et al., 2017; Mercer-Mapstone, 2020). As such, while we have presented, complicated, and added to these broad themes here, we position the expanded set of considerations we offer simply as some important ideas *we* would highlight—rather than as *the* principles for contributing to equity via student-faculty partnership—and invite others to add to, question, or replace them entirely (recognizing that even soliciting critique of these considerations re-centres them to some extent). In so doing, we hope, like Mercer-Mapstone (2020), to offer an "opening" rather than a conclusion through this article, encouraging others to participate in and, where comfortable, share their own iterative, critical discussions of the potential relations between student-faculty partnership and in/equity.

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