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On-campus partnership between students and college employees proves to be a valuable educational experience with both groups undergoing change.

Teaching and Learning in Community: Staff-Student Learning Partnerships As Part of a College Education

Alice Lesnick

Abstract

This paper offers descriptive analyses of two staff-student educational partnership programs of the Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLI) at Bryn Mawr College. The focal programs partner college employees with undergraduate students in unique, reciprocal learning partnerships and student-mentored introductory staff computing courses. While community engagement traditionally focuses attention beyond the campus and identifies off-campus community members as beneficiaries of college students' efforts, these programs focus on students' relationships with people whose labor sustains the campus in egalitarian, collaborative, educational experiences. In focusing this argument on the educational benefits of such experiences to students, I explore the connections to liberal education. I also argue that intra-campus community engagement enhances students' understandings and capacities to challenge limiting hierarchies and divisions. I further argue that this kind of engagement enables students to learn within and across diversity, while developing as people and leaders of campus-based civic initiatives.

"The conversations I have with Maria are often on quite scholarly subjects, which is interesting because these conversations are in direct opposition to a very unfortunate, but very common, stereotype about people who hold service jobs. College students–at every college I've ever visited–often hold very elitist opinions about workers in service positions and frequently use rather pejorative terms when talking about them.… The common idea that the job you hold is directly related to your level of intelligence or your personal worth is ludicrous. I wonder, however, how many people even at Bryn Mawr College believe this ridiculous stereotype, and how staff-student learning partnerships would be able to break that idea down. While elitism isn't confined to college campuses, they are prime places to test out ways to eliminate it and to produce people who will fight it. While this might be a little much to ask of a simple staff-student learning partnership, I don't think I'm exaggerating the impact of these partnerships by suggesting that they might have that effect."

–Student, spring 2006, writing about her educational partnership with a member of the housekeeping staff at Bryn Mawr College

Introduction: Staff and Students as Teachers and Learners

Studying at college without engaging beyond functional roles with the people who work there distorts students' understandings of where they are, what they are doing, and the social and political relationships that underlie their activities. It also obscures what they can achieve in relation to, rather than in ignorance of, the people whose work literally makes their studies

possible. As a response to this common problem, campus-based civic engagement is an important part of liberal studies.

At Bryn Mawr College, a small liberal arts college in the northeastern United States, undergraduate students and college staff members collaborate as teachers and learners through their participation in the Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLI). The students claim a variety of majors, backgrounds, and ages (though most are of traditional college age). The staff comes from a variety of departments including Housekeeping, Dining Services, Public Safety and Transportation, and Facilities. The two faculty coordinators (including the author) are professors of education who believe that teaching and learning occur in most human interactions and occupations (Lesnick, Cohen, & Cook-Sather 2007). Collaborating with these faculty and staff are many campus colleagues, including administrative leaders, variously positioned staff, and students who participate in and help lead the project.

This paper explores how two of TLI's staff-student educational programs support students' engagement with what Schneider (2004) calls the "liberal arts of practice": (p. 4) inquiry and intellectual judgment, social responsibility and civic engagement, and integrative and culminating learning. The goal of this paper is to contribute to the conversation about how a college may, and why it should, model educational structures and practices that connect all campus community members to the college's educational mission and enable diverse people to participate and reflect as subjects in the educational process. I will argue that such modeling is best understood as part of undergraduate education, rather than as a complement to or extension of it.

Student participants in the ELP and computing programs report significant benefits of their participation to their education. For the purposes of this discussion, I highlight several overlapping areas of student development, each of which shares in the liberal arts of practice:

- New Understandings and Experiences of Learning
- Social and Emotional Growth
- Increased Awareness of Social Positioning

In the discussion that follows, each area is discussed, together with a synthesis of their significance to the liberal arts of practice.

While a focus on staff members' experiences is beyond the scope of this paper, I do not mean to suggest that students are dominant in the exchange of teaching and learning. From the outset of the staff-student branch of the TLI (discussed in Cohen, Lesnick, & Himeles, 2007), stakeholders have rejected the frame of "community service" or "service-learning" that would position the staff as beneficiaries of service on the part of students and the college. Instead, we have chosen to describe our efforts as "community building." The mutual respect of a learning partnership, as well as the support afforded staff (through two hours paid release time per week for the semester) and students (through an hourly wage or field work credit), expresses the founding principle that each partner's contribution is equal and worthy of recognition, and that no matter how they are positioned by the institutional division of labor, each is both a giver and a receiver.

While staff members at all institutional levels, service/craft, clerical/technical, and administrative/professional, are active in the TLI, this paper focuses on educational partnerships and mentoring relationships between students and service/craft staff. Given the position of service/craft employment within campus hierarchies, staff in these occupations are especially subject to the elitist attitudes like those discussed by a student in the opening of this article. Further, the positions of the staff render it more likely for the knowledge and skills that enable their work, and that go beyond it, to remain invisible.

Theoretical Context

Until recently, colleges and universities themselves have not been considered sites of civic engagement (New England Resource Center for Higher Education, 2003), as service-learning and community-based research have been understood mainly to apply to communities beyond the campus. This is changing. In the words of Anderson (2003), co-founder of Learning for Life (L4L), a student-staff educational partnership program at Swarthmore College that pioneered this approach, "By conceiving of service as that which only serves those outside the immediate college community, we risk failing to recognize the needs of those who work among us" (p. 47). Importantly, we also risk failing to recognize the strengths and contributions–within and beyond institutional role and paid job function–of college employees and the needs and desires of staff, students, and faculty to relate to one another in

ways that affirm our shared humanity and engage productively with the hierarchies and divisions around race, class, age, and formal education on and off campus.

Anderson (2003) speaks to this broader set of needs and desires in concluding that, through educational partnerships, "A mutuality of learning and teaching has brought students and staff close to what it means to be 'liberally' educated and educating…. This is perhaps the noblest and most lofty of liberal arts college goals" (p. 53). At the time of its enactment, Anderson's and her colleagues' participatory assessment of L4L focused on the experiences of staff members ["At this time we are less interested in research findings about students than about staff (p. 53)"], because they saw students as already beneficiaries of privilege and oriented toward progressive change and service-learning. In the context of this prior work, this paper focuses on the educational impact *on* students, as reported *by* students, of teaching and learning with staff.

While colleges often speak of being sources of new knowledge and thinking, education at all levels too often amounts to teaching students to divide the world (Willinsky, 1998) by ranking different traditions, forms of work, and people. These lessons are not always the product of instruction; they result from the social organization of work. They undermine the "sensitivity and alertness" (Nussbaum 2003, p. 8) to the experience of others, without which people cannot be well educated as global citizens.

In response to this challenge, educators are rethinking the unproductive opposition of scholarship and practice. Schneider, president of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, identifies three formative themes that integrate study and action through the "liberal arts of practice" (p. 3): inquiry and intellectual judgment; social responsibility and civic engagement; and integrative learning. While these pursuits in various guises are not new to liberal education, in today's educational climate they are newly visible, and valuable, as evidenced by growing media attention such as the "College Guide" published by *Washington Monthly* (2006), which ranks institutions by "how much a school is benefiting the country" (p. 1). The editors define such benefit in terms of three indicators:

- How well it performs as an engine of social mobility

- How well it does in fostering scientific and humanistic research

- How well it promotes an ethic of service to country.

Notably, Bryn Mawr College was ranked first in this list of liberal arts college when TLI was launched in 2006. Schneider's first theme, "inquiry and intellectual judgment," focuses on "the thoughtful and creative use of human reason; …From intensive first-year seminars on liberal arts topics to writing in the disciplines programs to undergraduate research to senior capstone projects and courses, colleges and universities are pioneering new educational practices clearly intended to teach all students how to make sense of complexity, how to find and use evidence, and how to apply their knowledge to new and unscripted questions" (p. 3).

The staff/student partnerships of the TLI carry the educational goals of the liberal arts of practice beyond the traditionally conceived classroom to include new structures and people previously excluded and invisible. Critical thinking, imagination, and judgment are engaged as students collaborate with staff to create respectful, reciprocal relationships and re-envision the college in organizational terms.

Schneider's second theme, "social responsibility and civic engagement," focuses on collaborative problem-solving and problem-finding. "Faculty at every kind of college and university are providing students with real-world experience and rich opportunities to address social problems in cooperation with others. Collaborative, intercultural, and community-based learning are the new civic frontiers for our twenty-first century world of diversity, contestation, and inescapable interdependence" (p. 4).

The TLI gives staff and student participants new access to one another's experiences and perspectives. In Anderson's terms, it seeks to be both "learner centered" and "community centered" (2003, p. 57). By fostering one-to-one relationships and a range of collaborative forums for planning, consultation, decision-making, and assessment, the TLI provides a framework for community building in which people's social positionings may be better understood and become less narrow and isolating.

Schneider's third formative theme is "integrative and culminating learning," the

deliberate fostering of connection rather than dichotomization between disciplines, theories, and practices and personal, scholarly, and professional pursuits. The TLI attempts to make integrative learning a resource for all campus community members by lowering traditional disciplinary and status barriers to owning, seeking, and sharing knowledge, thus forging new connections and ideas.

Context of the Study: Introducing the Teaching and Learning Initiative

The TLI was designed by a diverse, voluntary campus team to create new structures and spaces within which all members of the campus community collaborate as teachers and learners (Cohen, Lesnick, & Himeles, 2007). Financial support for the initiative reflects its boundary-crossing and collaborative commitments. Different parts of it are supported variously by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Bryn Mawr College's chief administrative officer, provost, chief information officer and Office of Intercultural Affairs. The TLI has three main branches: student-faculty work, staff-staff work, and staff-student work. Each branch has several distinctive projects stemming from it. Through the TLI, students serve as consultants to faculty on matters of pedagogy in which students, by virtue of their position, have deep experience and important insight (Cook-Sather, 2008; 2009). Particular programs within the faculty-student branch of the TLI address new faculty, experienced faculty working to meet the ongoing challenge of gathering student feedback on courses, and faculty concerned particularly with culturally relevant pedagogy. The TLI also fosters opportunities for staff members to teach and learn from one another by creating communities of learning in various offices and departments. Finally, the TLI connects students with staff members in teaching and learning partnerships, called Empowering Learners Partnerships, in student-mentored introductory computing courses for staff, and in adult literacy and continuing education programs. During the period reported on here, I served as Faculty Coordinator of these programs, together with two student co-coordinators/research assistants.

A few snapshots of the Empowering Learners Partnership (ELP):

In a campus dining hall after the Sunday lunch rush, a student and a staff member in Dining Services meet in the office adjacent to the kitchen to conduct Web research about Islam. He is teaching her about his beliefs and practice as a Sunni Muslim; she is teaching him about computer security and keyboarding. Next time they meet will be to attend a campus lecture about Islam.

A housekeeper teaches a student a range of arts and crafts techniques that she herself uses in a craft business she maintains. The student teaches the housekeeper how to download and email digital photos and introduces her to the social networking site Facebook, which she now uses to keep in touch with friends, students, and alumni she knows through her work in the dormitories.

A rowing coach teaches a student the basics of pottery, which the coach has pursued as a hobby but never taught. The student teaches the staff member how to create a Web page using MySpace and together they chronicle their learning partnership online.

As these examples illustrate, the ELP pairs a student and a staff member as teaching and learning partners to access one another's particular experiences and interests. The staff-student pairs work in unique 10-14 week partnerships with financial support from the College (staff participants get two hours paid release time per week; students are paid hourly, as well, or are afforded field work credit for selected Education courses) and program support from TLI leaders. A faculty and a student co-coordinator help partners identify a focal subject to teach and a focal learning area that relate to their interests and goals. The partners meet two hours weekly, one hour for each subject, and track their activities and questions through weekly reflection logs as well as midcourse and final assessments with Program staff. Student participants meet for an additional hour of reflection each week; staff, students, and faculty collaborate in the program advisory committee. The 49 unique partnerships that have taken place to date have focused on such exchanges as: Greek cooking/research skills; woodcarving/email literacy; fresh fish preparation/Biblical diction and syntax; baking/house painting; PowerPoint/Tae Kwon Do; and Bulgarian language introduction/ESL.

Computing 1, 2, and 3 were designed to help College staff gain access to computer basics and the College's electronic communication system and to recognize their right to use the educational and electronic resources of the campus. Again, a

few snapshots:

In the library's computer training room, three students are mentoring three staff members as they learn to use email and gain access to the College's computer communications system. Two of the staff are public safety officers, each with over 20 years of service to the College. The third is a young man who works in Dining Services. For the past three years he has worked side by side with his student mentor, a student employee in Dining Services. He has joined the computer training class, having learned of it at a celebration for prior participants; he now plans to teach his son what he has learned and is beginning to use the Internet to pursue his interest in music.

In the college's alumni house and restaurant, a student is helping the staff member who works as the hostess practice checking her email and sending messages. The student has stopped by at the end of the work day, at around 6 p.m., in response to the staff member's phone call asking for assistance. Both the staff member and student rejoice in their new friendship and in the staff member's status as an insider in the world of electronic communication.

At the celebration of this cohort's completion of the program, one of the students and one of the public safety officers perform a song they have co-written and digitally recorded. Two housekeepers from the more advanced computer course give PowerPoint presentations of their learning in the second level computer course. One housekeeper shares her new blog.

Computing 1 is a course co-designed by administrators, faculty, staff, and students with the goal of ensuring that all members of the College community can develop essential digital literacy. Designed with institutional and personal needs and opportunities in mind, the course meets once per week during the academic year; students and staff meet for an additional hour per week for one-on-one mentoring in which the staff members practice and extend their skills.

Computing 2 was created in the spring semester of 2007 in response to requests from staff to continue their computer education. This class meets twice a week to teach the basics of Microsoft Word. Staff learn about software, word processing, how to write a letter, a memo and a brochure in Word, saving files, inserting pictures into text documents, how to change fonts, and

other Microsoft Office skills. Computing 3 is an independent study program through which individuals or pairs of staff work with a mentor and a technology specialist on a specially designed project. To date, two members of the housekeeping department have studied Web design and Contribute in order to begin creating a housekeeping department Web page. A staff member in Dining Services has studied Web navigation in order to plan for a Web page for his woodworking business.

In addition to the ELP and computing courses, two further TLI programs bring students and staff together in educational partnerships. Each program has arisen through the collaboration of administrative and faculty leaders, staff participants, and students. The programs include:

- Reading, Writing, and Communication—a partnership program through which staff interested in developing literacy skills work with other staff, students, or faculty mentors using the twice-weekly model.

- Continuing Education—a partnership program designed to provide coaching and informational support to staff seeking to complete a first degree: GED, Associate's, or B.A.

The computing and ELP programs began at the same time, and the planning team chose to adopt two different paradigms for staff education: one more traditional in its training process and one open-ended. We have hoped, and found, that the existence of both models proves generative.

Methods

This paper is a descriptive analysis of students' reflections on the impact of the two original programs, the Empowering Learners Partnership and computing. Since their inception in January 2006, 91 staff members (out of a staff of 500) from dining services, public safety and transportation, housekeeping, athletics, facilities, and the president's house, and 82 students have participated in a total of 99 partnerships through these two programs.

With IRB approval and in the role of faculty coordinator of staff-student partnerships, I began a program assessment in January 2006. The goal of this assessment, which I undertook as a form of action research, grew out of goals resonant with

Carr's and Kemmis's general definition:

"Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162).

I sought to explore the significance of program participation to the students in it, and to contribute, via a descriptive analysis, language that might help others within the community and beyond it interpret and assess the import of the program in the context of a college education.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The data for this assessment came from reflective processes built into the program. These reflective processes included weekly reflective logs completed by student participants, required as part of program participation, and non-graded field notes students completed as part of field work when their program participation counted toward an Education course I teach. They also included notes I took while facilitating weekly, hour-long reflective discussions among student participants. These discussions, part of program participation for students, took place outside of any formal course structure. Additionally, the course itself included discussion of students' experiences in the program and the preparation by students of more formal written analyses of their experiences in the program. These discussions and formal written analyses were part of the data set.

Most quoted material in this descriptive analysis comes from individual students' reflective logs, though a small amount comes from in-class and reflective discussion and, in three cases, a formal course paper. Specifically, the data set for this study encompasses the following kinds of documentation: 47 participant reflective logs, written by 14 students who participated in ELP and computing partnerships in 2006 as a paid campus position. These logs consist of 1-2 paragraph, weekly reflections on students' activities, successes, challenges, and questions through the partnership and transcribed audiotapes of fall 2006 class sessions of an undergraduate education course, Education 225: Empowering Learners: Theory and Practice of Extra-Classroom Teaching. The audiotaped class sessions represent sessions that took place after

the IRB approved the study and that focused on students' presentations and discussions of their work with the Empowering Learners program. In this course, five students, out of the 14 whose logs were included in the data set described above, were active in the program as a course field placement.

Also included were:

- 11 sets of field notes I took during fall, 2006 during weekly reflective meetings among student program participants (those doing the work as campus employment or as a course field placement).

- Seven course papers written by 5 students involved in partnerships as course field work during 2006. These papers were in fulfillment of assignments for which students were required or allowed to analyze field experiences. The 5 students whose work was included in the data set were those whose field work was the TLI.

In addition to the material above, I had access to the following supplementary data sources that I read and considered repeatedly, and discussed with student co-coordinators/research assistants, during the process of formulating the focal areas for this paper. I used them as reference points for triangulating my evolving interpretations during 2007, a year-long period of data analysis and writing, and during 2008 and 2009, through revising the arguments and accounts presented in this paper:

- Four sets of minutes and transcripts from once-per-semester meetings, two held in 2006 and two held in 2007, of the program's advisory board(a cross-campus group of 16 stakeholders including representatives from staff, student, and faculty)

- 13 observations I conducted of individual partnership meetings, during which staff and students taught and learned their focal topics.

Data Analysis

The analyses reported here derive from constant comparison/grounded theory methods (Creswell, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) and member checking in the form of

critical feedback on successive drafts from five student participants and three staff and faculty stakeholders to arrive at focal themes and framing literature. The process of data analysis occurred over the course of a year. The author and the two student program co-coordinators/ research assistants met weekly that year to discuss and categorize the data listed above. The process of preparing interim program reports, and planning for and experiencing advisory board meetings and biannual program celebrations, also served as opportunities to name themes relevant to student learning. Such is the process of action research, which is undertaken in the context of ongoing participation in the study context. Ultimately, this process, a blend of analytic and experiential engagement not possible to replicate literally, led to the themes discussed here.

Some categories that the group generated, such as "risks and barriers to program participation," "conceptions of space (public, private, open, hidden)," and "access to campus resources," did not prove important to the focus on student learning, while others, such as "re-framing knowledge," "new knowledge and skills," "communication," "humility," "friendship," "patience," "giving/gifts," "re-seeing self and others" were resonant with the evolving focus on student learning. Categories such as "learning about teaching" and "inquiring into adult learning," while generative for a consideration framed by teacher preparation, did not ultimately connect with the framework of the "liberal arts of practice" which a later review of literature suggested would be a useful analytic frame for this paper. Schneider's discussion of judgment, engagement, and integration as central to this frame suggested the value of analytic categories able to distinguish and clarify possible connections between cognitive, relational, and intra-personal arenas of learning. Given this frame, I settled on the three categories used here—one focused on "new understandings and experiences of learning" (extensions of and reflections on education), one focused on "social and emotional growth" (the affective dimension of learning), and one focused on "increased awareness of social positioning" (the political context of learning)—to maintain a focused yet inclusive examination of students' perspectives on the impact of program participation on their learning.

RESULTS

Impact of TLI Participation on Students' Learning

In this section I discuss three inter-connected forms of students' learning through the programs: new understandings and experiences of learning; social and emotional growth; and increased awareness of social positioning. The discussion of these results is situated in terms of the goals of liberal education.

New Understandings and Experiences of Learning

Educational collaboration with staff brings students new experiences and understandings– and uses–of learning, the chief goal of undergraduate study. An illustrative case in point concerns the student who learned about Islam from a staff member who practiced it was also taking college courses in Religion. The student's reflective logs during this partnership show how her academic study of Islam was informed by the perspective of practice and a practitioner. As she wrote, "I was able to grasp a better understanding of some of the daily things that must be taken in consideration if one is living his life as a Muslim." She also gained familiarity with source material oriented to practitioners: "I learned the five pillars of Islam, the six articles of faith, and he also directed me to an amazing website (*islamicfinder. com*) that has a lot of information about Islam. It has prayer times, the direction you should be facing when you pray, books, etc."

In another reflective log, the student commented on the intellectual fruitfulness of a dialogue with her partner about the challenge of following traditions in contemporary times:

We discussed one of my major concerns about Islam and organized religion in general: Is it necessary to follow certain religious traditions especially when they seem so disconnected from this current time and this current place? Although I believe that there are many religious traditions that we cannot relate to because we are in a different society, my partner mentioned that he still believes these laws still should be followed.

In another log, the student discussed how by learning more about her partner's life, she was able to understand better what it means to claim a Muslim identity:

This week I learned that as teacher, a lot of times your daily agenda may not go as exactly as planned. It is important to have the space for

there to be additions to your schedule, and today I learned that those additions can be great. I was able to speak with my partner with some issues that he is currently facing in his life.

This student's discourse for her learning is rich and complex. As a teacher, she thinks through the need for flexibility and responsiveness in an education partnership, alert to the relevance of personal knowledge to the broader project of studying Islam. She integrates her roles as teacher and learner and demonstrates the value of communication and trust. Her inquiry into Islam is enriched by her partner's experience and framing.

In addition to enriching their knowledge of areas already under study, TLI students working with staff develop skills in areas that they might not otherwise explore (such as cooking, woodcarving, crafts, ceramics, aspects of physical education). Pursuing inquiry in such unfamiliar domains allows students to better understand what is entailed in learning. As a student who participated in a group ELP between three students and three staff from the Facilities Department commented in her weekly log, "Really awesome. We learned to re-wire a lamp and talked about what we could teach them. Next week I'll prepare to speak on China." Another student, learning from a staff member how to prepare and cook fresh fish, wrote, "I had trouble filleting a whole fish–and my end products were not fit to eat!!" Claiming new realms and re-claiming knowledge of familiar ones generates engagement, excitement, and both new sense of expertise or something to share, in some cases, and humility in others.

Creating educative relationships with staff helps student experience disentangle learning from an exclusive, commonplace focus on achievement. One student explained, "I was more accepting of different appearances of traditional intelligence because I had a better sense of myself and didn't feel as though I needed constant affirmation. I was calm and reflective, instead of anxious and high-strung" (course paper). As students support others' learning and critically reflect on their own, they speak of becoming more patient, flexible, persistent, and confident. As a student reflected (in a weekly log), "This week I learned that it's important to not let frustration get in the way of your teaching/ learning." The pressured atmosphere of a competitive college can impede such expansive understanding. As the student wrote in the course paper cited earlier in the paragraph, "Perhaps more importantly, it offered me to courage and confidence to begin making these relationships with people I didn't know…. We are concerned so much with what others will think of us that we fail to engage each other, and remain in our own judgment-free world…. People always have more, as opposed to less, in common."

Students also gain an opportunity to rethink and relearn things they already know (e.g., how to use technology) in order to make that knowledge accessible to others. In the words of a student computing mentor:

> It is so interesting to be able to teach someone about a part of our lives that is so integral to us, yet foreign to anyone who does not have experience with it. Computers are like a whole other language that we have grown up with, as they have developed we have grown with them, and yet those who don't have access or grew up before computers were so essential have not acquired this language and therefore are missing out on many opportunities that we take for granted.

As with students learning about realms they do not generally explore, the re-learning of a skill or body of knowledge they take for granted deepens understanding. In the words of a student who was teaching her learning partner to access his College email account, "I learned about speaking slowly and not assuming that the terms I used are universally understandable. Being aware of the learner's point of entry." Perceiving and responding to the point of entry of another learner can raise students' awareness of their own points of entry and how easy or difficult the access is.

At times this challenge is humbling. As one student commented in a section of the reflective log asking if further support is needed: "I am having a hard time thinking of different ways of explaining what a website URL is. I have tried approaching the concept in several different ways as well as just repeating the steps of using different types of websites (like a search engine vs. e-mail). I am in need of some new ideas to convey this concept." Finding the words to communicate, particularly about a topic for which the student may not have ready discourse, is an intellectual as well as practical challenge. By gaining new experiences of learning, students become better able to own and share their knowledge.

Social and Emotional Growth

Early in the TLI, one of the first student participants said (during a class presentation), "When I was a baby, people took care of me and I didn't realize it. Now I am no longer a baby. Sometimes people still take care of me–and now I need to think about that–and sometimes I need to take care of myself and others." This language of development speaks to the social and emotional context of the TLI–the way it encourages students to mature beyond ignorance of the staff who literally take care of their physical needs (for food, hygiene, and physical safety, among other things) and of the social and political structuring of these relationships. Waking, or growing, up to these relationships, so often invisible and unvoiced on college campuses and elsewhere, is an important enactment of the social responsibility and civic engagement Schneider names as vital to the liberal arts of practice. How can students pursue deep civic participation or responsibility without engaging directly and productively with the problems of ordinary hierarchies where they live and study?

In another instance of developing social awareness, this same student, the speaker from this paper's epigraph, came to question her prior assumptions about where staff members at the college make their homes:

The first thing I noticed–and I must admit this rather sheepishly–is how far away Maria lives from the college. For some reason, I had just assumed that our staff members all lived relatively close to the campus. Of course, upon reflection, I realized how incredibly stupid that assumption was, but it struck me as interesting that I would have thought something like that. Why would I have made such an obviously naive assumption about the staff members? Would I have made that assumption about other types of professions? (course paper)

Questioning her assumptions, the student engaged in metacognition about the limitations of prior ideas.

Moving beyond naïve conceptions of dependence and independence, students in the TLI express maturing conceptions of interdependence and accompanying growth in their ability to foster the same. As they take unique responsibilities for others' learning and critically reflecting on their own, they become

stronger. In the words of a student mentor in the computing class: "After our one-on-one session [my partner] reported back to the class '[the instructor] is a great teacher–she shows me all sorts of different ways to do things–wow.' And later [the partner] sent me an e-mail thanking me for my patience" (reflective log).

Students also gain experience grappling with the emotional and interpersonal challenges of relationships seldom made available for reflection. The following log entries bear this out:

- I learned that students can tell when you are worried about something or when you are not quite sure how to explain a word/ concept. [My partner] asked me to explain a word to him, but I hesitated and started to think, but before I even spoke, he said, "Calm down, spokino" (that means slow down in Bulgarian). I was surprised that he could tell that I was worried about how I was going to approach this particular word explanation.

- Being in a comfortable place with your teaching and learning partner is such a wonderful thing. [My partner] and I can be laid back during our sessions while still learning a lot (I think). I think our friendship provides her with the confidence she needs to succeed.

Through their work with staff, students come to see other people as multifaceted. The pressured atmosphere of a competitive college can challenge such understanding. Partnerships foster more commonplace, human-to-human exchanges in which being together is as important as accomplishment. Students become less rigid about demanding immediate resolutions and more comfortable with complexity.

Increased Awareness of Social Positioning

Closely linked to these affective understandings is increased awareness of social positioning on the part of students. The ability to situate themselves is important to students' capacity to assume social responsibility and civic engagement, particularly in terms of the meanings of formal educational attainment. Through participation in the staff-student programs, students gain perspective on their assumptions about themselves, staff members, and the College. In the process, some of them

defamiliarize their privileges. During a reflective meeting, one student, herself a first generation college student, pointed out this process as one of "unlearning the attitude of entitlement" that the college atmosphere fosters in students.

When students stop taking for granted how College employees serve them, their stance changes from one of unconscious consumption to one of co-participation. With this shift they are positioned as civic participants in the campus community, gaining awareness of the organizational structure and its varying impacts on individuals. Diversity, intercultural communication, social responsibility, and collaboration take on specific, embodied meanings as students become conscious of the relationships in which they are necessarily a part. One example of this shift came about in discussion among students during a reflective meeting about why some staff express concern about occasional rude or dismissive conduct toward them by students. Another concerned students' excitement about working with staff in public settings of the College in which staff-student collaboration is not commonplace, such as the library and the computing center. Thus, students re-see the culture of the College in ways both inward- and outward-looking.

The significance of choice came into view for another student as she reflected (in a course paper) on the contrast between her own sense of choice and opportunity on campus and that of staff:

> As a Bryn Mawr student I am free to engage in the College community on my own terms. I am able to choose the courses I take, I am authorized to participate in clubs and seek out jobs, I am able to build my social network through various means which include all I have already mentioned as well as seek out any opportunity and use any available resource on campus, not to mention all of the opportunities available off campus that are brought here by both staff as well as outside entities.

Freedom of choice and physical freedom to move on campus are givens for students; not so for all staff. In surfacing how "endless possibility" is distributed on campus, this student helps us notice the limits of the College's democratic philosophy. Recognizing these limits is an important part of thinking about changing them. The ability to think critically about social

hierarchies is strengthened in students who participate in the staff-student programs. As one student explains, the meaning of superiority and inferiority is unsettled and made more complex through cross-class, intergenerational collaborations. A reflective log written by a student working as a mentor in Computing 1 synthesizes many of these gains:

> This week I learned just how much we know about computers and basic usage than many people know. I learned how slow this process will be. I also learned in contrast to some of my previous mentoring experience that teaching an adult presents all sorts of new challenges. Whereas with a kid, you are older and more knowledgeable, this is not the case with the maintenance workers. It is difficult to strike a balance between being informative while not being condescending.… (H)e has much more life experience than me, but I am more knowledgeable about computers. I also realize just how fortunate I am to know computers and technology so well. It is a privilege that I have never had to even think about. Today he asked me how long it took me to learn computers and I realize that I have been lucky enough to work with computers since elementary school. I have slowly been able to learn about them all of my life.

Here, the student marks her generational privilege. She also surfaces a tension between her own "luck" in being able to learn computers slowly and her expectations about the speed with which her partner will learn. At the same time, she acknowledges that when she sees the Internet through her staff partner's eyes, she is changed as "the awe comes back" to her.

Another element of awareness comes for students from the experience of working with people who, while different from them, are like them in ways they didn't anticipate:

> I learn best from repetition; I like to keep doing something or keep reading something until it sticks. I hadn't ever thought about the different variety of learning methods, such as visual learning, writing things down, or logical learning (mathematical or scientific approach). I am lucky because [my partner] learns in a very similar way as me. (reflective log)

[My partner] also asks me some questions

about myself and while working in the campus center she asked me what I was doing when I started people watching. It was funny because she said that she also liked to do that, and I think that finding little common things that we both can talk about and enjoy allows us to open up more to each other. (reflective log)

Indeed, questions of similarity and difference shift as students engage together with staff in the common roles of teacher and learner, creating a "commons" in which prior differences between people become less significant. In one striking pair of reflections, written several weeks apart, a student shows what such a shift can sound like. In the earlier reflection, the student focuses on a sense of isolation and frustration in relation to her partner's current struggles in life:

> Today, Isaac shared with me pieces of his personal life—some stories about his children, his brother, about growing up—which was really fulfilling, but he also shared some less cheery elements. We discussed his recent divorce and the difficulties that stem from it. I'm always eager to engage in conversations like these.… But it is challenging to be presented with problems to which one does not know the answer. I don't know how to help make his life better. I wish I could offer some token of insight or an uplifting story, but my register of experience only tangentially relates.

Four weeks later, in writing once again about learning from her partner about his life experience, she expressed a greater sense of openness and less of a sense of separation:

> We had been playing a bit with Googlemaps during class, a program which allows you look at 3-D maps of neighborhoods. Isaac showed me where he had grown up, where his school was, his grandmother's house, his childhood home, and we began to have a discussion about his experiences as a kid…all, again, outside the realm of my experience. It was an interesting conversation, however. I feel that the implications of the cultural gap between us have lessened, at least in the context of our relationship.

A growing relationship seems to be able to encompass differences that the student first saw as capable of undermining the entire framework of the computing program.

Limitations of the Study

A layered structure of reflection, combined with my involvement with the program, constitute both strengths and limitations of this study. They strengthen the study through the opportunity they have afforded for analysis of students' reports of their experiences over time and in several contexts, attentive to recurrent themes and issues. At the same time, as an action researcher, I am part of what I am studying, and while my involvement with the program and participants affords me rare access, it also means that I am not an impartial observer. As a descriptive analysis, this report does not offer points of contrast with students not participating in the programs, and is not designed, or able, to speak to whether students in other contexts find other, equally or more impactful, ways to participate in the "liberal arts of practice."

Challenges for Further Research

As learners, student TLI participants face the challenge of doubling their vision to focus both on individuals and on the organizational setting of their partnerships. Further research on the impact of staff/student partnerships needs to further explore this challenge.

An additional question for further research is how to gain access to the richness of students' learning through TLI collaborations when their verbal and written expressions of it are limited, or when they are asked to comment on learning experiences about which they are less practiced at speaking. It may be difficult for some students to find language with which to talk about the significance of learning and becoming skilled in craft knowledge, perhaps owing to how relatively little their formal education prepares them for this. Perhaps going forward this may become an explicit goal of the TLI projects that focus on such knowledge.

While this paper marks a beginning, it needs to be extended by case-based and intersubjective studies of the experiences and perspectives of particular individuals with the programs and, through them, with one another over time. Support for collaboratively written research, always a goal of the project, needs to be more centrally pursued. The relationships among and across TLI programs, and the people who participate across them, also call for further attention and understanding.

Conclusion

In the context of teaching and learning with staff, students use inquiry and intellectual judgment. Teaching and learning with staff helps them learn to turn thoughtful, generative attention to another adult's learning process. Gaining skill and understanding in these roles is not a matter solely of practice or intuition; critical reflection is crucial. Connecting inquiry to engagement with others' learning is an important source of both integrative learning–the inter-meshing of lived, relational experience with the designs of theory–and of civic engagement and social responsibility, defined as participation in community-building activity. The development of teaching skills, on the part of those preparing for professional work as teachers and those not so oriented, connects inquiry and intellectual judgment to the theme of social responsibility as students learn how to contribute to others' learning in a range of contexts. Social and emotional growth helps students gain capacity to take on the demands of the liberal arts of practice, helping them engage more patiently, humbly, and confidently with these demands. Finally, increased awareness of social positioning is both a result and a source of students' inquiries into their own and others' standpoints. Through the TLI, students consider what it means to be in a dynamic rather than reinforcing relation to the limitations of any single person's standpoint, and of the need to respect and learn from all of them.

When the liberal arts are divided from practice, we run the risk of ascribing to scholarly knowledge more permanence and relevance than is warranted. When practice is divided from study, we run the risk of yielding to the instrumental ends of the moment without reference to a field broad or deep enough for imagination and growth. Study in the liberal arts of practice, then, must entail the ongoing revision of prior knowledge and its integration with new experience, ever outpacing earlier formulations and limitations.

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Acknowledgements

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