Editorial and Introduction

Rethinking the Scholarship of Global Partnerships: The Next Chapter

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For decades, perhaps even centuries, scholars have hypothesized the existence of a set of master plots that underlie all works of literature. These range from writer William Foster-Harris' assertion of three fundamental plot lines (1959); various proposals by literature scholars for a few dozen master plots, journalist Christopher Booker's popular assertion of seven Jungian archetypes, and, most recently, the six core trajectories unearthed by data scientists inspired by Kurt Vonnegut's belief that stories have emotional shapes (Flood, 2016; Reagan et al, 2016). It could be said that the body of scholarship surrounding teaching and learning in a global context had achieved a similar dynamic, with conversations coalescing around a set of core plot lines; ranging from the heroic triumph over logistical and cultural differences to the journey of personal growth and expanded worldview. The contributions to this special issue of Transformative Dialogues represent the next chapter of how we think about global partnerships. Our authors not only add new stories to the canon but also propose new master plots, or ways of framing the work we do to bring the world to our classrooms.

The dominant master of research on global partnerships centers on the transformative power of the study abroad experience for students; to the point where it was recognized as one of a handful of coveted high impact practices (Burns, Rubin & Tarrant, 2018; Ruth et al, 2018; Stebleton, Soria & Cherney, 2013). Compared to this body of work, the amount of scholarship devoted to the issue of faculty transformation is relatively sparse, though it is showing signs of emergence. What consensus there is seems to emphasize that working in other countries generally has a positive effect on faculty, especially improvements in teaching effectiveness both abroad and at home (Albaum, 2011; Festervand & Tillery, 2001; Fung & Filippo, 2002; Meyer-Emerick, 2010; Miglietti, 2015); but these effects can only be realized after overcoming a number of considerable obstacles—whether logistical, political, economic, or cultural (at home or

abroad) to meaningful faculty involvement (Dooley, Dooley & Carranza, 2008; Knight, 2015). In this sense, the faculty are positioned as the heroes of their own story; vanquishing the foes of resistance in order to champion a greater global vision. This heroic arc serves multiple purposes; not the least of which is inspiration for others to follow in their footsteps and not be daunted by the myriad of challenges; a role which becomes more significant in light of research highlighting faculty resistance as a major impediment to initiatives aimed at globalizing the curriculum (Stohl, 2007).

In our special issue, the authors posit an alternative to this triumphant narrative; rather they reflect on the constructive, even transformative, power of failure. Verzella, for example, shows that robust virtual exchange programs have arisen from the inability of many universities to globalize their curriculum in substantive ways due to financial constraints. In their study of a virtual exchange, Crawford and Miering examine how technology mediation can both enhance and problematize cultural understanding. Meanwhile, Miller looks deeply into the tensions inherent in advising graduate students across borders; tensions which traverse academic as well as national cultures. Finally, Fenton and Peti use shared frustration with a team-taught course at a Hungarian university as the basis for deeper insight into the fundamental assumptions that faculty and students make about the purpose(s) of education. Contrary to much conventional wisdom, these experiences suggest that there may be times when dwelling on our problems, rather than jumping to solve or overcome them, can have beneficial effects.

Indeed, the initial impetus to initiate global partnerships in teaching and learning often comes from the need to solve a perceived problem; whether that problem may be training responsible global citizens; facilitating intercultural collaboration; or addressing international issues of social justice. Research has shown that global partnerships can address these problems not only for students; but also for faculty, thereby enhancing not only their teaching practice but also their roles as advocates and scholars (Miglietti, 2015; Sandgren, Elig, Hovde, Krejci, & Rice, 1999). By reframing problems in teaching and learning as research questions, however, we find that they may connect to a broader set of complex social, political, and economic issues often referred to as wicked problems (Bore & Wright, 2009; Noweski, Scheer, Büttner, von Thienen, Erdmann, & Meinel, 2012). In this sense, the term wicked refers not to evil (as in wicked witch) but devilishly difficult. Wicked problems, by definition, are so complex that we may never reach a resolution; so we must devise other strategies for navigating, clarifying, or otherwise disentangling the complexities that characterize them. In our special issue, we see how contributors have attempted to wrangle with such problems from locations all over the world.

Verden and Murphy, for example, use a study abroad experience in the Bahamas to illuminate the challenges faced by children with disabilities; and the wicked problem of coordinating global efforts to increase accessibility. Rubenstein, Fuhrman, Duncan, and Conner facilitated an international service learning project, set in Scotland, which focused on the often politicized problem of food security. Their qualitative study reveals a range of conflicted responses to the experiences; including themes of inadequacy, risk aversion, and cultural sensitivity. Giraudou, Lennerfors, and Woodward discuss their experiences in using case studies to teach students from multiple countries (and cultures) what we know, and what we don't know, about managing sustainable

development. Finally, Geist and Cass shift our attention (and the locus of the problem) to an undergraduate research course set in Cuba in which cross-disciplinary teams of engineering, nursing, and pre-professional health students had to identify real-world health problems themselves and devise creative solutions (including prototypes) to address them. While learning experiences such as these may not be able to solve wicked problems; they may represent models of how to develop wicked students (Hanstedt, 2018).

And by becoming wicked students, i.e. willing and interested in tackling complex issues, students may also find themselves engaged in another master plot, i.e. the journey of personal growth; in which the individual is transformed, often in profound ways, by the experience of engaging with another culture. This literature often takes on a reflective and retrospective perspective; in which the individual (or group) is looking back on an experience and marking the growth process that has brought them to their current state. The paradigm of personal growth does not have to be discursive or narrative-based, either, as studies that measure the impact of study abroad programs often focus not only on student learning outcomes (usually within a discipline and/or body of course material) but also in terms of broader, non-cognitive outcomes, such as cultural competency; academic goal orientation, persistence, and teamwork/collaboration (Haupt, Ogden & Rubin, 2018; Soria & Troisi, 2014).

The authors of our special issue do not belie the paradigm of personal growth; but several of the contributions problematize a linear conception of the process. Cook-Sather, for instance, discusses how she became different versions of herself as she alternated between periods of comprehension and suspension. Similarly, Beavington describes student's field experience in the Amazon as a form of suspension. As his students engaged in field experiences in the Amazon, he notes, they stopped short of fully processing their experience until provided the opportunity to do so in daily sharing sessions. Based on their experiences with students in Belize, Denison Kirshner and Kamberelis extend the growth process to include ongoing dialogue about broader, imbedded topics such as positionality, authority, and humanity; conversations which need not stop when students (and faculty) return home. Finally, Metcalfe describes a partnership in which nursing students become "other-wise" as they care for a population of patients that are different and unique from one's own; a process which translates into lifelong learning and sustained advocacy behaviors. In many ways, these authors argue for an iterative model of personal and intellectual growth; one that jettisons the idea of both beginnings and endings.

The emphasis on an iterative process does not negate the power of history; rather these stories, reflections, studies and essays are enriched by the evocation of our personal histories; as well as the ongoing dialogue between our past and present understanding of the meaning of these partnerships. As the authors of the contribution entitled Historia suggest, global partnerships challenge the intersectionality of our professional identities, whether as students, faculty, faculty developers, higher education professionals, citizens of a particular country, or simply as humans. And that intersectionality may be compounded by those, such as graduate students, whose current (and future) roles already span multiple categories, as Jasinski and Davis emphasize. Taken collectively, the contributions to this special issue of *Transformative*

Dialogue suggest that the next chapter in thinking about global partnerships will not serve to simplify the process into a few master plots; but rather to revel in (and learn from) its complexity.

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