Teaching and Learning Within and Beyond Disciplinary Boundaries

PART II: RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER SIX

EDUCATING FOR SELF-AUTHORSHIP: LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE
COMPLEX OUTCOMES

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Educating for Self-Authorship:

Learning Partnerships to Achieve Complex Outcomes

Educators in the United States and the United Kingdom share a common concern –
graduates' ability to successfully use their academic knowledge in their post college work
and personal lives. Graduates must be able to translate their academic learning to the
"capacity and understanding for working with many different sorts of knowledge in order
to engage with complex emergent problems for which there may be a range of possible
solutions" (Jackson & Ward, 2004, p. 427). UK scholars frame this challenge as learners
making the transition from disciplinary to transdisciplinary learning (Gibbons et al. as
cited in Jackson & Ward, 2004). Personal Development Planning, the process being used
in the UK for helping learners reflect on their learning and achievement and plan for their
own educational, academic and career development, aims to develop learners'
metacognition and self-regulatory capacities to make this transition. Similarly, US
educators are advocating "intentional learning," as the authors of *Greater Expectations: A
New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* wrote:

> In a turbulent and complex world, every college student will need to be
> purposeful and self-directed in multiple ways. Purpose implies clear goals, an
> understanding of process, and appropriate action. Further, purpose implies
> intention in one's actions. Becoming such an intentional learner means developing
> self-awareness about the reason for study, the learning process itself, and how
> education is used. Intentional learners are integrative thinkers who can see
> connections in seemingly disparate information and draw on a wide range of
> knowledge to make decisions. They adapt the skills learned in one situation to

problems encountered in another: in a classroom, the workplace, their

communities, or their personal lives. As a result, intentional learners succeed even

when instability is the only constant. (AAC&U, 2002, pp. 21-22)

The complexities young adults face in transdisciplinary contexts after college, as well as

the complexities inherent in disciplinary learning during college, require something

beyond skill acquisition and application. They require a transformation from authority

dependence to self-authorship, or the capacity to internally define one's beliefs, identity

and social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994). In this chapter I summarize

the learning outcomes advocated both in the UK and US, offer a perspective on the

developmental capacities these outcomes require, present possibilities about the

developmental capacities learners possess and describe how to construct learning

partnerships that help learners achieve the capacities required. Guiding learners through

the transformation from authority dependence to self-authorship is a primary challenge

for 21st century higher education.

Higher Education Learning Outcomes

Recent national reports in both the UK and US paint a similar picture of the desired

outcomes of higher education despite using slightly different language to convey these

ideas. US reports (e.g., American College Personnel Association, 1994; Association of

American Colleges and Universities, 1995, 2002; Keeling, 2004) emphasize higher

education's goal as fostering intentional learning and effective citizenship. Becoming

informed, active, responsible global citizens is the first of eight key concepts the UK

report *Putting the World into World-Class Education* (Department for Education and

Skills, 2004) notes as necessary for living in a global society. Integrating numerous

reports US national associations have published in recent years yields a model of contemporary US college learning outcomes that overlaps considerably with the key concepts advocated in *Putting the World into World-Class Education*.

Desired college learning outcomes in the US cluster into three distinct categories (Baxter Magolda, 2004b). *Cognitive maturity* includes the ability to discern the value of multiple perspectives through evaluating relevant evidence, problem solving in context, and making wise decisions bases on complex analysis. These outcomes are typically in the forefront of disciplinary learning. A second cluster of outcomes, which I refer to as *integrated identity*, is necessary to enable cognitive maturity. Integrated identity includes understanding one's own history, confidence, the ability to act both autonomously and collaboratively, and integrity. A third category – *mature relationships* – is crucial to cognitive maturity and integrated identity. Mature relationships include respect for one's own and others' identities and cultures to enable productive collaboration to integrate multiple perspectives. As I have argued previously:

> Maturity in these three areas combines to enable effective citizenship – coherent, ethical action for the good of both the individual and the larger community. Effective citizenship requires the ability to evaluate possible actions, interpret contexts and consequences, and make wise choices – all characteristics of cognitive maturity. For these choices to be coherent and ethical requires an internal belief system and an internal identity that together guide action. Ethical action for the good of the individual and larger community requires the capacity for mutuality and interdependence characteristic of mature relationships: it requires understanding of and commitment to one's own interests in interaction

with understanding and commitment to the interests of others. To act ethically as

a citizen requires intercultural maturity, or the ability to use multiple cultural

frames, engage in relationships with diverse others grounded in appreciation of

difference, and consideration of social identities in a global and national context

(King & Baxter Magolda, 2003). (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. 6)

These three categories resonate with Barnett's (2000a) constructs of epistemology

(knowing), ontology (self-identity), and praxis (action). Organizing the Department for

Education and Skills' (2004) eight concepts accordingly, similarities emerge with the

model of US college learning outcomes. Understanding the key concepts of social justice,

sustainable development, and human rights resonates with cognitive maturity. The key

concept of values and perceptions, defined in the report as "developing a critical

evaluation of images of other parts of the world and an appreciation of the effect these

have on people's attitudes and values," recognizes the role of identity in effective

citizenship. The key concepts of respecting diversity, interdependence, and conflict

resolution interconnect with the category of mature relationships. Thus UK and US

scholars offer a powerful, shared vision of the core outcomes of higher education. This

vision includes what Robert Kegan (2000) calls informational learning (i.e., fund of

knowledge and skills) yet extends further to include transformational learning – the

remaking of how we make meaning. Both forms are crucial to prepare learners for

success in the complex 21st century society they will inhabit and lead.

Developmental Foundations of Learning Outcomes

Achieving these learning outcomes extends beyond informational learning to

epistemological (i.e., knowing), intrapersonal (i.e., identity) and intrapersonal (i.e.,

relationships) developmental capacities that support transformational learning. Here again, UK and US scholars concur. The idea that developmental capacities underlie learning outcomes is illustrated in the following exchange, taken from a course observation study (Baxter Magolda, 1999). Interviewed at the outset of his zoology course, Chris Snowden shared these aspirations for his students:

> I want them [students in Winter Biology] to appreciate the breadth of zoology and its connections to other disciplines. How do we put together disparate ideas? I'll use my research as examples of how one approaches problems. I want them to understand how information is gained. I want them to appreciate what facts really mean. Tentative facts. That's what all of science is. Subject to change and revision. (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 3)

Chris included this vision for learning on the course syllabus. Ann, a senior in the course, shared her reaction in an interview conducted at the conclusion of the course:

> I take sociology as my minor. It is all opinions, not hard-core facts where you are wrong [like Winter Biology]. I know he tried to play it off like there is still a lot of research, that it is a really new concept I guess, but still there is some stuff that is [fact] – like freezing cells. I understand what he was trying to do. He was trying to give examples to show what happened. But if he had just said cryoprotectants whatever, just said the point, I would believe him because he is the teacher. I don't need the proof, it's not like I'm going to argue with him about it. (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 3)

Clearly a disconnect exists. Ann seems to have heard Chris' words because she conveys that she knew what Chris was trying to do. As a senior Ann has succeeded thus far in a

rigorous curriculum. Chris was very articulate in explaining his expectations and the course content. Yet Ann does not demonstrate an appreciation for how information is gained. How can this be?

The disconnect between Chris and Ann stems from the frameworks each uses to understand learning and knowledge. Ann views the nature of science as "hard core facts." From this vantage point she interpreted Chris's examples as attempts to prove to her what happened, did not understand his portrayal of cryobiology (the study of life at cold temperatures) as an evolving field, and preferred that he just tell her the facts that she is sure exist. Chris, in contrast, views science as tentative facts, subject to revision. Operating from this vantage point, he attempts to get Ann and her peers to appreciate how information is gained, unaware that Ann's views about science versus sociology affect her learning in his course. Ann uses her current understanding about knowledge and how it is acquired to make sense of Chris's portrayal of cryobiology as an evolving field and facts as tentative.

For Ann to really understand knowledge the way Chris does, she needs particular epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal meaning-making capacities. She would need to understand that knowledge is uncertain and created by experts in particular contexts using relevant evidence. She would need to be aware that multiple perspectives derive from how particular people construct knowledge claims based on particular evidence. These epistemological capacities would allow her to understand how science could be viewed as subject to revision. In order to apply these epistemological capacities, however, Ann would also need corresponding intrapersonal or identity capacities. She would need to have a sense of herself as a person capable of participating in this

knowledge construction process. She would need to be able to reflect on, explore and choose her values to form a coherent sense of herself, or an integrated identity. This integrated identity would then serve as the foundation for her to interpret her experience and act on it. These intrapersonal capacities would enable her to envision joining Chris in knowledge construction rather than her present "don't argue with the teacher" perspective. Finally, Ann would need interpersonal capacities to meet Chris's expectations. She would need to be able to use others' thinking along with her own without being overly influenced by what authorities tell her. Thus she would need to achieve interdependence – the blend of her own integrated identity, openness to other perspectives, and the ability to critically analyze existing knowledge and other perspectives without fear of disapproval. If Ann had all these capacities, she would be capable of self-authorship, or the ability to internally define her beliefs, identity, and relations with others. As a college senior, she did not have these capacities and she is not alone.

Robert Kegan (1994) argues that much of what contemporary society (including education) expects of students and young adults is "over their heads; " that is to say, the expectations require ways of making meaning beyond those students currently hold. This is Ann's situation; it is likely the situation of many college students in both the US and UK. Helping college students acquire more complex ways of making meaning is essential in light of the demands they face as college students and adults. In articulating what he calls the mental demands of modern life, Kegan (1994) highlights the need for adults to be self-initiating, self-correcting, self-evaluating, responsible for their actions, open to diverse perspectives, and able to connect to partners and children while setting

appropriate boundaries, to name just a few. He interprets these everyday demands as requiring integrating epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities in a complex way of making meaning. Specifically, he describes this as:

> …an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states. It is no longer *authored by* them, it *authors them* and thereby achieves a personal authority. (p. 185, italics in original)

Self-authorship offers a foundation upon which to function in what Ronald Barnett (2000b) calls a supercomplex world. Arguing that higher education is responsible for preparing students to survive in and contribute to this supercomplex world, Barnett explains:

> It is a world where nothing can be taken for granted, where no frame of understanding or of action can be entertained with any security. It is a world in which we are conceptually challenged, and continually so. A complex world is one in which we are assailed by more facts, data, evidence, tasks and arguments than we can easily handle within the frameworks in which we have our being. By contrast, a supercomplex world is one in which the very frameworks by which we orient ourselves to the world are themselves contested. Supercomplexity denotes a fragile world but it is a fragility brought on not merely by social and technological change; it is a fragility in the way that we understand the world, in the way in which we understand ourselves and in the ways in which we feel secure about acting in the world. (2000b, p. 3)

Barnett emphasizes that supercomplexity is "a matter of handling multiple frames of understanding, of action and of self-identity" (2000a, p. 6). Although he does not use the term self-authorship, his three dimensions resonate with the epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of self-authorship.

My longitudinal study of young adult development and learning (Baxter Magolda, 2001), in which I have followed participants from age 18 to 38, provides empirical support for the argument that adult life requires complexity in how we know, how we see ourselves, and how we construct our relations with others. This study, originally designed to explore gender differences based on the work of Perry (1970) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), began with 101 traditional age students (51 women and 50 men) when they began college in 1986 at a state institution in the US with a liberal arts focus. Admission is competitive and the 70% of entering class of which the participants were a part ranked in the top 20% of their high school class. Their majors included all six divisions within the institution (i.e., arts and sciences, education, fine arts, interdisciplinary studies, business, engineering and applied sciences), and cocurricular involvement in college was high.

Of the 70 participants continuing in the post college phase of the study, 21 pursued additional academic preparation after college graduation, including law school, seminary, medical school, and various graduate degrees. Their occupations included business, education, social service, ministry, and government work. Attrition over the last fifteen years resulted in 36 participants by year twenty. The annual interview began with a summary of the focus of the project, which was to continue to explore how participants learn and come to know. The participant was then asked to think about important learning

experiences that took place since the previous interview. The participant volunteered those experiences, described them, and described their impact on her or his thinking. I asked questions to pursue why these experiences were important, factors that influenced the experiences, and how the learner was affected. The interview became more informal as the study progressed and addressed what life had been like for participants since we talked last. These conversations included discussion of the dimensions of life they felt were most relevant, the demands of adult life they were experiencing, how they made meaning of these dimensions and demands, their sense of themselves, and how they decided what to believe. Inherent in these dimensions was their sense of themselves in relation to others and their involvement in significant relationships. Interviews were conducted in person during college and by telephone after college; they ranged from 60 to 90 minutes (see Baxter Magolda, 1992; 2001 for more in-depth methodological details).

Most of my participants made little progress toward self-authorship during college, leaving college relying on externally derived formulas for what to believe, how to be and how to relate to others. They found these formulas wanting as they entered the workforce and adult relationships, contexts in which they were asked to define, express and act on internal constructions of their beliefs, identities, and interactions with others. Their stories offer a perspective on how self-authorship evolves and the kind of educational experiences that assist young people in achieving more complex ways of making meaning.

Journeys toward Self-Authorship

I offer one version of the developmental journey toward self-authorship based on my 20-year longitudinal study. During the college phase of the study participants relied heavily on external sources of authority. In over 500 interviews in the fifteen years since these participants' college graduation I have heard how self-authorship evolved through their professional and personal lives. These stories are consistent with those told by the collective student development research done in the US.[i] Yet the stories shared here tell only one version of how assumptions evolve from external sources of definition to internal ones. As you read, consider these stories carefully to determine if this version resonates with your students in your educational context and how these stories inform the transitions your students are trying to navigate.

Following External Formulas

Ann's reaction to her zoology course reflects the early part of the developmental journey in which students rely on external formulas for what to believe, how to define their identities, and how to relate to others. Most of my longitudinal participants used this perspective when they entered college and maintained it through their early twenties. Mark's account of how he approached law school reveals the essence of this way of making meaning:

> I came here and I tried to figure out what the legal culture figures is success. I knew [that] a Supreme Court clerkship was, so one of my goals was to aim towards that. So I got here to law school and I figured out, "Okay, well, to be a success here you have to get to know some professors who are influential with judges to get a good clerkship, to get in the pipeline, get in the star system here. Also get on <u>Law Review</u>. Write a paper here that you can publish." I thought,

"Okay, this is kind of the plan then, step by step." The ultimate plan for success in

the legal culture, I mean, go to [this] Law School and do these things, then you've

got it made. … I would be in the <u>ultimate</u> position to do whatever I want to do

because I will have done <u>everything</u> possible, and then I'd be in a position to make

a choice that reflected exactly who I was, or at least more clearly. (Baxter

Magolda, 2001, p. 41, italics in original)

Mark was still following external formulas when he started law school despite a

successful college career. As a college senior he understood knowledge as contextual and

articulated the process of weighing evidence to decide what to believe. However, he had

not yet developed an internal sense of self to bring to this decision-making process. He

still assumed that doing all the right things would yield a choice that matched his identity.

Like many of his peers, he discovered that to be a faulty assumption.

Crossroads

At various points in their mid-twenties most of my participants encountered the

shortcomings of external formulas. The formulas often did not serve them well in

complex work roles where they were asked to construct new knowledge and be flexible

in light of changing information and ambiguity. Participants' own emerging interests and

values often conflicted with the formula. They realized the need to extract themselves

from dependence on the external and to develop their own visions, beliefs and identities.

Doing so, however, was a challenge as Kurt so clearly describes:

I'm the kind of person who is motivated by being wanted, I think. I've gone to a

couple of workshops and, either fortunately or unfortunately, I'm the kind of

person who gets my self-worth [through] whether or not other people accept me

for what I do or other people appreciate what I'm doing. . . . I'm coming from a

position where I get my worth and my value from other people, which is, I think,

wrong for me to do. But that's where I am right now. I feel like whether or not I

choose to be happy is dependent upon me and only me. If I say, "You made me

mad," or the converse, "You made me happy," then I'm giving all of the power

that I have to you. The power of choice is mine, I have a choice of how I want to

perceive each and every situation in my life. . . . Obviously I'm not to that point

yet because I choose to make myself happy and make myself sad on what other

people are thinking. But I think I'd like to someday get to a point where I can say,

"Okay, that's your perception. I am not dependent on you for my happiness or my

sadness." And I think that would be a very strong, very spiritual place to be.

(Baxter Magolda, 2001, pp. 98-9)

Kurt shared this perspective in his mid-20s and later reported, "I spent the entire decade

of my 20s getting in touch with who I was and what is important to me" (Baxter

Magolda, 2004b, p. 24). His story underscores the struggle to develop an internal sense of

self upon which to ground one's identity and relationships. This internal sense of self is

also needed to define one's beliefs internally. Like Kurt, most of my participants devoted

a considerable part of their 20s to working through the crossroads.

Becoming the Author of One's Life

Successfully navigating the crossroads yielded an internal self-definition that transformed

all three developmental dimensions. Dawn described this transformation as resulting

from the self-discovery she experienced in theatre. She explained:

The more you discover about yourself, the more you can become secure with it. And that obviously leads to greater self-confidence because you become comfortable with who you really are. My confidence level is so much better than it ever has been. I'm more willing to express my ideas and take chances expressing my ideas. "Who cares what people think?" sort of thing. When you're not as self-confident, you're afraid that people are going to laugh at what you think or you're afraid that they're going to think you're stupid -- it's all those petty, little things that inhibit us. Whereas when you're confident, you are more willing to say, "This is my opinion; this is why I hold this opinion. You may agree with it or not, but this is what--with my mind--I have formulated this opinion and that's how I think and feel." I'm not as afraid to be willing to say that because of what I am this is how I feel. I try not to step on people's toes with my opinions, be offensive about it, but if someone asks me for my opinion or advice or how I think and feel about something, I will definitely tell them. And I think self-awareness too, because you realize that it doesn't really matter if other people agree with you or not. You can think and formulate ideas for yourself and ultimately that's what's important. You have a mind and you can use it. That's probably the most important thing, regardless of the content of what your thoughts and opinions are. I suppose it's very idealistic to think that everybody can see that. It's the fact that you can form an opinion that's more important than the opinion itself. But I don't think that happens. So it's kind of a self-confidence and self-awareness thing. (Baxter Magolda, 2001, pp. 152-3)

You can hear in Dawn's story how her internal self came into being, how it in turn changed her perception and fear of others' appraisals of her, which in turn allowed her to express her own thinking. Thus the epistemological insight that she has a mind and can use it to develop her own opinions was made possible by advances in the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of her development. I turn next to the characteristics of contexts in which participants' journeys toward self-authorship occurred.

Learning Partnerships Model

Listening to my longitudinal participants' experiences in multiple settings (e.g., college, employment, graduate and professional school, community involvement, personal life) revealed many characteristics that promote learning and self-authorship. From those stories I developed the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda, 2004a) to promote self-authorship while simultaneously supporting learners' current meaning-making. Kegan emphasized the necessity of providing support when our expectations extend beyond students' current meaning making. He advocates creating:

> a holding environment that provides both welcoming acknowledgement to exactly who the person is right now as he or she is, and fosters the person's psychological evolution. As such, a holding environment is a tricky, transitional culture, an evolutionary bridge, a context for crossing over. (1994, p. 43)

The Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) creates an evolutionary bridge by merging three supportive components with three challenges in the learning environment.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Support is offered through *three principles*: validating learners' ability to know, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructing meaning.

Participants reported greater willingness to take responsibility for constructing knowledge and their own beliefs when educators validated their potential to do so. Using their experience offered a foundation for learning provided support in this challenging process. Having learning defined as mutual construction made it acceptable to participate in the process. These supports assist learners in engaging in the *three challenges* of learning environments that promote self-authorship: knowledge is complex and socially constructed, self is central to knowledge construction, and authority and expertise are shared among knowledgeable peers. Explicit portrayal of knowledge as complex and socially constructed challenged learners to move toward epistemological complexity. Emphasis on the role of the self in knowledge construction challenged them to bring their identity into learning thus moving them toward construction of an internal identity. Sharing of expertise and authority in the learning process engaged learners in mutually constructing knowledge and helped them develop more mature relationships.

These six components connect to all phases of the journey because the educator is mutually constructing the educational process with the learner. The partnership adjusts as the learner adopts more complex ways of making meaning.

Exemplars

The three supportive principles of the LPM emerged first from my longitudinal participants' college narratives. The three challenges emerged more clearly in the post-college interviews. All six components were visible in an observation study in which I observed three semester-length courses: Chris Snowden's zoology course (mentioned earlier in this chapter), a mathematics course, and a large education course (Baxter

Magolda, 1999). Student interviews at the end of the zoology course illustrate how Chris

Snowden modeled the LPM in his teaching. Rich explained:

>The whole focus of most of my classes in college have been just regurgitating the
>
>facts, with the exceptions of a few like Winter Biology where the base facts were
>
>given to you on the ground level and where the actual learning was coming in
>
>above and beyond that. The learning was coming in where he would ask what do
>
>you think about this, and you couldn't just look on your notes, you couldn't just
>
>remember what he said. It is not just blatant memorization; learning comes into it
>
>when you are utilizing the ideas towards something new that hasn't been done.
>
>That kind of set-up seems to stimulate me more than just being like a computer
>
>and storing this information to really do nothing with. This class gave more
>
>interest into the applications, what is going on right now, ideas of it, theories on
>
>what they don't know. The other classes it was "here is what we know and you
>
>have to know it too." There wasn't any fairly mutual exchange between the
>
>instructor and the class, no formulations of ideas beyond. (Baxter Magolda, 1999,
>
>p. 122)

The challenge to create new formulations to extend existing knowledge put knowledge as

complex in the foreground of learning. Rich appreciated being invited into the learning

process with the question "what do you think about this?" Although Rich does not

describe the mutual exchange between instructor and class, I observed it regularly. Chris

routinely invited students to share their thinking, engaged the class in processing their

ideas, and helped them work through the validity of various knowledge claims. Erica

offered a perspective on how Chris supported students in facing these challenges:

He takes the approach that he wants you to do it on your own. He will help you

plot through your ideas and he will help you sort out what you are thinking and

help direct you and he still encourages you to work independently. He just makes

his office setting very comfortable. He'll ask "what are you confused about?" and

he will ask your opinion on the matter rather than telling you what you should do.

He will ask you exactly what is happening and what you need help with and try to

direct you from there rather than presenting himself in a way that is kind of

intimidating. … I think the way I see it is that he wants you to feel that you are at

the same level as him, not in as far as the same knowledge, he wants the

atmosphere to be such that you feel comfortable asking him or talking to him in

any way. (Baxter Magolda, 1999, pp. 133-134)

Erica's description of her interactions with Chris reveals that he validated her ability to

think and work independently. By asking her to direct the discussion and offer her

opinion, he situated learning in her experience. He helped her plot through her ideas,

simultaneously directing her and encouraging her to work independently, thus

demonstrating mutual knowledge construction. By using the components of the LPM

Chris helped his students learn both the content and the thinking processes of the

discipline. In doing so he also promoted their development toward the complex ways of

making meaning required to view science as "tentative facts, subject to change and

revision."

Longitudinal participants' stories reinforce the notion that graduates must be able

to translate their disciplinary learning into supercomplex, transdisciplinary contexts. This

was most evident in employment contexts in which the three challenges took the

foreground. Andrew's description of his work environment conveys these challenges:

> I'm trying to think how to word it, but I guess the true responsibility they give
>
> you, I mean, the freedom of work. Sometimes you may just have a manager who
>
> hands you stuff and then you do it. Or you're given a responsibility and then you
>
> can define your job from there. You take more initiative, rather than it being
>
> dictated to you. They kind of give you the ball and then tell you to go play with it
>
> rather than tell you how to shoot hoops. We joke at work, we call it the "dump
>
> and run," because sometimes it seems like they don't have a very formal training
>
> procedure. But by the same token I think it's good because it allows you to find
>
> your niche and do your thing. They take the approach if somebody comes in new,
>
> looks at the thing, they may find a better way to do it. So they don't like to say,
>
> "This is the way it should be done always." They're not afraid to let people
>
> reinvent the wheel, especially if it means they come out with a better wheel.
>
> (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 253)

Clearly Andrew's management team conveyed that there were multiple ways to approach

work, that Andrew could bring his own approach to it, and management and employees

shared authority. The opportunity to take initiative to define his work validated Andrew's

ability to know. Doing his own thing situated learning in his experience. He did clarify

that he and his colleagues were not without direction:

> When push comes to shove they give us the direction we need. But for the most
>
> part I completely do not feel like I have management looking over me. I feel that
>
> I'm making more of an effort to let my management know what I'm doing so

they're kept abreast rather than them coming to me and saying, "Well, what are

you doing?" And I think that makes just a big difference in the way you feel.

Management never really checks up on you; you're given complete trust. Now if

you don't perform, I'm sure things would be said. (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 253)

Direction provided when needed conveys that mutual construction took place when

management or employees felt the need for it but otherwise employees were trusted to

perform effectively until they proved otherwise. This balance of challenge and support

helped Andrew develop more complex ways of approaching his work.

Another longitudinal participant explained more specifically how sharing

expertise and authority in a learning partnership works. Gavin described how his boss

helped him learn to think for himself in the insurance business:

It's really nice to know that I can just say, "Mr. Smith, I'm having trouble with – I

don't understand this." He doesn't always give me the answer. A lot of times he'll

throw back questions like, "Well, what do you think about it?" He always tries to

get you to answer it yourself. And if he feels differently, he'll tell you. … His

method of getting people to learn is he always thinks that if you're a bright enough

person you really do know the answer or it's easy enough for you to find out. If

we disagree, then he says, "Well, if that's the way you see it, do it your way and if

it works out let me know." … It gives me the impression that if my mindset is that

I'm going to do it my way, I can do it that way. If it doesn't work, I'll tell him.

And a lot of times he'll say, "Well, you'll feel a lot better with yourself because

you tried it." So it's a very, very relaxed atmosphere with very, very professional

people. They just know how to--it's like they're being a mentor. It's neat. (Baxter

Magolda, 2001, p. 265)

Mr. Smith encouraged Gavin to reflect on his own ideas and expertise to think through

his work. When Gavin needed help, his boss provided it without making Gavin feel

incompetent. He supported Gavin trying things his way, even if he disagreed. Mr. Smith

encouraged Gavin to try out his own thinking in order "to feel better about himself" even

when it led to mistakes. This model of supervision balanced the risk associated with

employees learning how to work effectively with the long-term benefit of their

professional and personal growth.

The Learning Partnerships Model has been intentionally used in multiple settings

to design educational practice to promote learning and self-authorship. For example, it is

the foundation of the 4-year writing curriculum in the Miami University School of

Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS). To build an evolutionary bridge from external formulas to

self-authorship, the academic staff "created a plan where students would progress from

engagement with expressive modes to an increasingly critical awareness of and

proficiency in disciplinary forms to the development of interdisciplinary scholarly

inquiry" (Haynes, 2004, p. 67, 70). The SIS academic staff organized this progression

into seven increasingly complex stages spread out over the four years of the curriculum.

Similarly, the LPM is the basis for a four-semester Earth Sustainability Project in which

content is structured around developmental goals to promote increased cognitive

complexity and the ability to disciplinary knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries

(Bekken & Marie, 2007). The LPM is also the pedagogical foundation of Miami's

College Student Personnel Master of Science program that prepares graduate students for

professional roles in college and university administration (Rogers, Magolda, Baxter Magolda, & Knight-Abowitz, 2004). Systematic attention to the challenges and supports of the LPM help students self-author their professional and personal identity to become effective citizens in the complex world of higher education.

The LPM is a central feature of two experiential learning programs. The Casa de Solidaridad offers students a semester of study and cultural immersion in El Salvador. The Casa, co-sponsored by Santa Clara University and the University of Central America, is open to students from all over the US; the participants are primarily from Jesuit institutions. The LPM guides the pedagogy of the coursework, supervision of work in the Salvadorian community, and the community living component of the Casa to meet the Casa objectives of education for transformation, global citizenship, self-authorship, and institutional solidarity (Yonkers-Talz, 2004). The Urban Leadership Internship Program uses the LPM to supervise 10-week summer internships in urban contexts. Program coordinators note that, "With the support of the Learning Partnerships Model, students can be guided to self-authorship through the challenges of experiential learning – challenges that promote the transformation of other-directed students to self-directed citizens who are engaged in their communities" (Egart and Healy, 2004, p. 149). Detailed discussions of these and other uses of the LPM can be found in *Learning Partnerships* (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) and *Self-Authorship: Advancing Students' Intellectual Growth* (Meszaros, 2007).

Designing Learning Partnerships

The LPM's use in the US offers hope that educators can design learning environments that simultaneously promote disciplinary and transdisciplinary learning. Table 1 provides an overview of the process for designing learning partnerships.

Insert Table 1 about here

Designing learning partnerships involves consideration of the developmental capacities that underlie most learning goals. Once learning goals have been established for a particular learning context (step two), it is crucial to identify what those learning goals demand of students, to what degree those demands might be beyond their current meaning making, and how we might organize learning to create a transformational bridge from external formula to self-authorship. Analyzing the ways of constructing knowledge, oneself and relationships that particular learning goals require (step three) gives educators a sense of the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal capacities needed for achieving those goals. Assessing the degree to which learners possess those developmental capacities (step four) reveals the discrepancies between what is demanded and how learners currently make meaning. This enables educators to identify the developmental goals – the capacities students need to develop to be able to meet the learning goals (step five). The design phase begins with translating the learning and developmental goals into a reasonable "curriculum," or process that welcomes learners' current meaning making and gradually invites them into more complex meaning making (step six). This might take the form of a formal curriculum as in the case of the writing curriculum mentioned earlier or the form of a particular course. The LPM's three challenging assumptions (step seven) and three supportive principles (step eight) help educators intentionally devise pedagogical relations that respect learners' current

meaning making yet invite learners to reconstruct their beliefs, values and relationships in the more complex terms required by college learning outcomes.[ii]

Numerous dilemmas are inherent in designing learning partnerships. Nearly every aspect of the higher education enterprise is designed in opposition to learning partnerships. As Terry Wildman wrote in his analysis of using the LPM in curricular reform at Virginia Tech,

> One of the first things we discover in our attempts to introduce new practices in institutional settings is that the *old designs run deep*. Indeed they are embodied in the classrooms where knowledge is *delivered*, in the curriculum practices where requirements are *checked off*, in the space utilization policies where time is *parsed out* in small manageable chunks, in the textbooks where knowledge is carefully *scripted and de-contextualized*, and even in the organizational structures where disciplines can be *isolated* and protected within their own departments. (2004, pp. 250-251, italics in original)

These structural barriers, deeply embedded in the fabric of our institutions, work against constructing learning partnerships. Similarly, the recent proficiency testing movement, aimed at ensuring that students possess basic knowledge and skills, often leads to greater rigidity in the curriculum rather than to mutually constructing knowledge with learners. Students' and their parents' expectations for vocational training that leads to successful employment is another source of pressure to tell students what they need to know rather than engage them in learning how to think and function in complex ways.

These pressures are exacerbated by the ways in which both students and educators have been socialized. Students are often socialized in pre-college education to rely on

authorities and not take initiative for their own learning. They are disconcerted when these familiar ways of learning are challenged and their learned behavior does not yield success. Educators are often socialized to function as authorities with minimal expectation to share authority with learners. They are disconcerted when their familiar ways of teaching are challenged and they fear that sharing authority with students will not produce effective learning.

These institutional and human dynamics combine to sustain what Wildman called the "old designs" – those that frame learning as the passive acquisition of knowledge. These old designs have not produced the kind of complex meaning making necessary for success in 21st century adult life. Conceptualizing educational practice that promotes the transdisciplinary, intentional learning required for success in contemporary adult life requires transforming learners' and educators' assumptions about the role of learners and educators in knowledge construction. As difficult as this may be, preliminary evidence suggests that it is possible. Wildman (2004) and his colleagues report substantial success with faculty learning communities in which sustained discussion of new frames has enabled implementation of the learning partnerships model. Similarly, Rebecca Mills and Karen Strong (2004) describe reframing their entire Division of Student Life organization to promote self-authorship. Divisions of Student Life in US colleges and universities include functions related to the cocurriculum (e.g., admission, orientation, programming for first-year students, residential life, career services, student activities, leadership, learning assistance, programming for special student populations). These units are staffed by professional educators with advanced degrees and headed by a Vice President. These large-scale efforts show that educators can create new designs for the higher education

enterprise that model and engage students in the complex ways of making meaning inherent in self-authorship. To help learners achieve the complex learning outcomes I summarized at the outset of this chapter, educators will need to re-conceptualize the educator-learner relationship. The Learning Partnerships Model offers one vision for engaging students in the ways of making meaning their disciplinary knowledge communities require and simultaneously help them gain the developmental capacity to engage successfully in transdisciplinary communities.

Table 1. Designing Learning Partnerships

Phase One – Assessing Learning Goals and Learners' Capacities for Self-Authorship	
Step 1	Select a context in which to develop a learning partnership.
Step 2	Identify the learning goals for this context – what should learners know and be able to do as a result of this educational experience?
Step 3	Identify the developmental capacities the learning goals require – what ways of understanding knowledge, oneself, and relationships are required to achieve these learning goals?
Step 4	Identify the developmental capacities the learners in this context currently possess – what ways of understanding knowledge, oneself, and relationships do learners exhibit?
Step 5	Identify consistencies and discrepancies between learning goals and learner capacities; craft developmental goals that will help bridge the distance between current and required capacities.
Phase Two – Designing the "Evolutionary Bridge"	
Step 6	Outline the developmental "curriculum" – how can the learning and developmental goals be translated into cumulative steps over time?
Step 7	Address the three LPM challenging assumptions – to what extent are they currently in place and in what ways could they be more explicit in this context?
Step 8	Address the three LPM supportive principles – to what extent are they currently in place and in what ways could they be more explicit in this context?
Step 9	Review the consistencies and discrepancies between learning goals and learner capacities that exist in this newly designed learning partnership.
Step 10	Develop a plan to evaluating the effectiveness of the new learning partnership.

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[i] For a summary of this research, see Hofer, B. K., & Pintrich, P. R. (2002). *Personal epistemology: the psychology of beliefs about knowledge and knowing*. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.

[ii] For a detailed discussion of this design process and examples, see King, P. M., & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2004). Creating learning partnerships in higher education: Modeling the shape, shaping the model. In M. B. Baxter Magolda & P. M. King (Eds.), *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship* (pp. 303-332). Sterling, VA: Stylus.