Barbara Kensington-Miller, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND,
b.kensington-miller@auckland.ac.nz
Andrea S Webb, THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, andrea.webb@ubc.ca
Ann M. Gansemer-Topf, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY, anngt@iastate.edu
Heather Lewis, PRATT UNIVERSITY, hlewis@pratt.edu
Julie Luu, MONASH UNIVERSITY, julie.luu@monash.edu
Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier, YORK UNIVERSITY, gmp@yorku.ca
Analise K. Hofmann, THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, analise.hofmann@ubc.ca

Brokering Boundary Crossings Through the SoTL Landscape of Practice

ABSTRACT

This study examines the lived experiences of seven internationally diverse scholars from Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia to answer the question: how do we make meaning of our collective boundary crossing experiences across disciplines and positions within SoTL? Our positions range from graduate student, faculty, and academic developers, to department chair and centre director. We conducted a phenomenological study, based on narratives of experience, and drew on Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) theoretical framework that explores the features of a landscape of practice. Guided by this framework, we analyze our boundary crossings and brokering across the "diverse, political and flat" features of the SoTL landscape. Our collective findings highlight the critical role brokers play in facilitating boundary crossings. Brokering is precarious, bringing people together, building trusting relationships, and developing legitimacy while negotiating deadlocks, bureaucracy, authorities, and a multitude of challenges. Brokers, we found, require strength and resilience to mobilise, influence, and drive change in the landscape to transform existing practices or create new ones. We suggest that our analytical process can be used as a tool of analysis for future research about how brokers influence the SoTL landscape of practice and how brokering enhances SoTL development, support, and leadership.

KEYWORDS

SoTL, landscape of practice, boundary crossing, collaboration, brokering

INTRODUCTION

Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) often involves crossing two or more disciplinary, methodological, positional, and epistemological boundaries (Behari-Leak 2019; Fanghanel and Trowler 2008; Hubball and Clarke 2010; Kelly, Nesbit, and Oliver 2012). SoTL work, which considers individual disciplinary, positional, and institutional contexts and draws upon a variety of methodological approaches (Felten 2013) has helped propel SoTL as a distinctive and important type of inquiry (Fanghanel 2013). Central to many SoTL narratives related to boundary crossing is the theme of academics alone—at the margins of their discipline and something else (Becher 1989; Brew 2008).

Previous research has focused on the influence of crossing boundaries on scholarly identity (see, for example, Kensington-Miller, Renc-Roe, and Morón-García 2015; Simmons et al. 2013) as individual scholars question, define, or redefine their identity. Research focused on students and staff as active collaborators and boundary crossers is also gaining momentum (Cook-Sather and Felten 2017; Kupatadze 2019).

In this article, we (the authors) add to and expand the research on individual SoTL boundary crossing by asking: how do we make meaning of our collective boundary crossing experiences across disciplines and positions within SoTL? To do this we applied Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) theoretical construct about the diverse, flat, and political nature of landscapes of practice to our collective boundary crossing experiences within SoTL. Our group, made up of seven diverse SoTL scholars (graduate student, faculty, academic developers, department chair, and a centre director) from four countries, proved to be an ideal vehicle to explore this. Through a phenomenological study of our experiential narratives, we identified the critical role of brokering across the SoTL landscape of practice from examining our diverse, yet collective experiences as brokers within SoTL. We suggest that this analysis of the landscape can be used as a tool to better understand how brokers influence, and how brokering enhances, development, support, and leadership within SoTL.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We drew upon Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) conceptualization of a landscape of practice. In reviewing the literature and reflecting upon our own narratives, viewing SoTL as a landscape of practice provided a solid framework and grounding of our experiences. We found that theoretical insights about communities and landscapes of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015), albeit broad in scope, helped us locate our boundary crossing practices across a wide range of roles and positions within the SoTL context. Social learning theorists Etienne Wenger-Trayner and Beverly Wenger-Trayner view a body of knowledge not as a static set of facts and content, but rather a "community of people who contribute to the continued vitality, application, and evolution of the practice" (2015, 13). Researchers have investigated the formation of communities of practice (CoPs) within SoTL (see, for instance, Duffy 2006; Gauthier 2016) but few have taken the broader landscape of practice view.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner suggest a landscape of practice constitutes a "complex system of communities of practice and the boundaries between them" (2015, 13). They describe a successful landscape of practice as requiring individual competence within this community as well as engagement with and the legitimization from it. In turn, this engagement changes both the individual and the community. Our experiences of SoTL mirror this description. We each bring our own areas of disciplinary and knowledge expertise into SoTL while seeking engagement and legitimacy within SoTL.

In their framework, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner describe the processes by which individuals within communities become part of the landscape of practice and eventually broker across the boundaries within that landscape. They characterize the landscape as diverse, flat, and political; effectively brokering across boundaries requires an understanding of these features. We apply their framework specifically to our SoTL work, examining how we navigate the features of the landscape and broker across boundaries.

Drawing upon disciplinary and SoTL research, we first describe the distinct features of the landscape of practice and brokering across boundaries. By integrating this past research with our current lived experiences, we position SoTL as a landscape of practice as a way to understand the process and power of brokering across boundaries.

Landscape of practice is diverse

Across the landscape, diverse sets of communities exist, each with their own boundary. An effective landscape of practice such as SoTL requires recognition, encounter, and crossing of these boundaries that may be based on disciplines (e.g. sciences with arts), epistemological differences (e.g. positivist with constructionist), positional differences (faculty with staff), and level of expertise (Hubball and Clarke 2010; McKinney 2013). These boundaries can be problematic as they can limit entrance or acceptance into a community, yet provide opportunities for new learning.

Practitioners moving across boundaries can experience misunderstanding and confusion. Mørk, Hoholm, Ellingsen, Edwin, and Aanestad (2010) describe how introducing a medical innovation by new practitioners was met with resistance by veteran doctors. Hong and O. (2009) describe how conflicts between internal and external groups created obstacles for technology implementation. SoTL researchers also experience similar frustrations in attempting to promote and synthesize diverse perspectives (Hubball, Clarke, and Poole 2010).

Yet, these nebulous boundaries can also "hold potential for unexpected learning" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner et al. 2015, 17). The intentional development of SoTL initiatives such as SoTL mentoring programs, faculty development workshops, or faculty learning communities can serve as an antidote to misunderstandings and help to support new learning and innovation (Cox 2003; Hubball, Clarke, and Poole 2010).

Landscape of practice is political

Power dynamics are unfortunate but real aspects of the landscape of practice: "There will be competing voices and competing claims to knowledge, including voices that are silenced by the claim to knowledge of others" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 16). Power imbalance contributes to the political nature of practice and although community suggests harmony and agreement, Mørk, Hoholm, Ellingsen, Edwin, and Aanestad (2010) caution that these communities are often fraught with conflict and struggles of power.

When a boundary is crossed and a new community engages with a more powerful or established community, negotiations between the two must occur. It is only when there is an intersection of interests and respect that the new community is legitimized within the larger landscape (Hong and O 2009). Power exists within all landscapes of practice. Viewing SoTL within the broader academic landscape of practice, our study examined how politics and power served to legitimize or minimize it. However, being viewed as competent in one community may not guarantee that one is viewed as competent within another or even within the larger landscape.

Landscape of practice is flat

The notion that the landscape of practice is flat means that faculty are allowed to engage in these activities; yet, the political nature of the landscape means that the legitimacy of the work may vary

significantly because of these factors (Chick 2013; McKinney 2013). Although there may be power differentials within the landscape, no single practice dominates or subsumes all other practices. Being flat suggests that each community has its own practice and these practices co-exist. Sturdy, Clark, Fincham, and Handley (2009) describe the boundaries of communities as dynamic and context specific. In bringing people with differences together, a liminality of boundaries exist—there is space for new knowledge and can also result in a changing of one's identity (Simmons et al. 2013).

Consequently, SoTL work requires an understanding of and working through these seemingly contradictory flat and political landscapes. In a flat landscape, boundary crossing welcomes multiple practices and approaches. However, power differentials may exist and to be successful, boundary crossers must acknowledge these. For example, one can engage in SoTL work regardless of institutional type or discipline. SoTL work is accessible and not restricted to one context. Yet, one's institutional type, mission, or discipline may influence the support, importance, and worth of engaging in SoTL work. Other priorities may exist that limit motivation and engagement with SoTL. One's ability to navigate the flat landscape is influenced significantly by its diverse and political nature. Through our study, we therefore consider the degree to which the SoTL landscape may be flat and how our contexts may shape our perceptions.

Brokering landscape of practice

As we launched our study, we discovered that all of us had participated in SoTL-related boundary crossing, based on our roles and positions within our institutions, and from our experiences knew that boundary crossing was challenging. As we began to share our stories, we realized there was a need to "systematically make boundaries a learning focus" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 18) and that the descriptions of a landscape of practice mirrored our collective experiences. Our reflective process as a collaborative writing group helped us revisit and reflect on our individual boundary crossing moments, revealing similarities in how we navigated them, and their connections to a larger SoTL landscape of practice.

The process revealed that as individuals, we not only crossed boundaries ourselves, but also facilitated it for others and in doing so, we recognised that we served as brokers within the SoTL landscape of practice. Kubiak, Fenton-O'Creevy, Appleby, Kempster, Reed, Solvason, and Thorpe (2015) say brokers are like "spiders spinning a web of individuals from different organisations or gathering together resources in order to address a specific need" (88). However, "boundaries are often places of misunderstanding and confusion [and] crossing a boundary or introducing an idea from elsewhere on the landscape can result in feelings of inadequacy, personal failure or disengagement" (Kubiak et al. 2015, 81). We applied the concept of brokering to our collective experiences within the SoTL landscape of practice framework.

Epistemological limitations

Although Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner discuss power differentials and political contexts, they do not consider explicitly how dominant cultural values can influence power relationships. Our study also does not explicitly focus the dominant cultural norms and values many of us exist in and perpetuate. Scholars such as Behari-Leak (2019) argue that it is crucial for academics to interrogate their "own cultural positioning and epistemological frameworks" (66) to include others' knowledge and

pedagogies. In this way "the integrity and authenticity that have been eclipsed" (66) by epistemological assumptions is restored. This suggests that SoTL practitioners working across boundaries within the landscape of practice need to closely examine the epistemologies that shape their practice and the cultural positions they occupy as boundary crossers. We therefore acknowledge the limitations of Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) theoretical framework, and by extension our study, recognize that interrogating the dominant value and cultural systems and crossing epistemological boundaries are vital methodological and topical areas for future SoTL boundary crossing research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of our study was to first understand the intellectual and institutional experiences of boundary crossing across the features of the SoTL landscape of practice as a precursor for understanding how boundary crossers and brokers actually influence and change the landscape. We represent a diversity of positions in various disciplines, which reflects the field of SoTL generally. As a result, the size of our sample (n=7) is less important than the richness of the data collected (Creswell 2013). Our study asked: How do we make meaning of our collective boundary crossing experiences across disciplines and positions within SoTL?

Methodology

Our work was guided by phenomenological inquiry and analysis. This flexible, adaptable approach to SoTL research (Webb and Welsh 2019), which prioritizes lived experiences and one's interpretation, was a valuable lens in which to understand SoTL scholars' experiences of boundary crossing (Frechette et al. 2020). Common features of this methodology include a purposeful sample, multiple methods of data collection, authentic modes of communication, and an analysis approach that views interpretation as a dynamic process between the whole and the individuals, emphasizing the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participant. In this way, interpretive phenomenology "must be responsive to the phenomena being explored" (Dall'Alba 2009, 8) and the iterative data collection and analysis procedures of this study, discussed later, reflect that responsiveness.

As participants in the research and observers of it, we are situated in and influenced by our context. Therefore, we make our experience the focus of our inquiry (Lopez and Willis 2004) in order to explore the unique features of our individual situations. The commonalities and differences in individual subjective experiences contribute to the description of the meanings that participants make and how those meanings influence their choices (Webb and Welsh 2019).

Interpretive phenomenology views knowledge as socially constructed with the focus of inquiry on the individual's subjective experience (Van Manen 1997). It assumes that individuals make choices, and that contextual understanding of experience without interpretation is impossible. Therefore, guided by the theoretical framework of the landscape of practice, we were most interested in how participants made meaning of their work as SoTL scholars and boundary crossers.

Methods and analysis

As recommended by Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, and Lavoie-Tremblay (2020), we adopted multiple methods of data collection: 200-word autobiographies, a collective focus group about

our entry and experience in SoTL, and, finally, semi-structured interviews between each other. See Appendix for prompts and protocols.

Iterative data collection, reflection, and analysis afforded the opportunity to continue to gather narratives until rich description was achieved. The autobiographies were written before our first face-to-face meeting. Interviews and focus group were conducted during the International Collaborative Writing Group (ICWG) workshops in October 2019. During face-to-face meetings, we kept a running list of generative themes that arose frequently in our conversations and these informed our analytical framework for the focus group and interviews, which were recorded and transcribed (Van Manen 1997). Our focus group analysis, with a detailed reading of particularly salient experiences, was used to generate the interview protocol. Participants transcribed their own interviews as a form of member checking.

Thematic analysis offered an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing the qualitative data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). Interacting with the data involved thematic coding through an iterative and cyclical process (Van Manen 1997). Given our vast experiences, seven SoTL scholars with diverse roles and disciplines, and many examples and conceptualization of boundary crossings, we chose to frame our analysis around our conceptual framework of the landscape of practice.

Our data set (autobiographies and interviews) was reviewed holistically for key themes. Each interview was analysed four times: twice for generative themes (pre-determined themes from the focus group) and twice for emergent themes. Each analysis was performed by a different team member and then shared with the larger group. The analysis for generative themes confirmed that the interviews had responded to the original protocol, but did not prove useful for further analysis. We thus turned our attention to the emergent themes for analysis and meaning making and aligned these themes with our theoretical framework.

Throughout data collection, emergent themes were shared. Preliminary findings were presented for peer review during virtual meetings. These steps insured our research design's trustworthiness, a measure of the study's quality and overall credibility and dependability (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

FINDINGS

We explore our encounters with the diverse, flat, and political features of the SoTL landscape (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015) and how we brokered boundary crossings as SoTL scholars and practitioners.

Landscape of practice is diverse

We discovered that learning occurs at the intersection of the boundaries. Our group members often talked about the boundary crossings required of SoTL work, providing rich opportunities for our learning. Rather than perceiving boundaries as a threat, we embraced the experience and the excitement that came with learning from others and their diversity: *I like learning new things and meeting new people and I am not afraid to network ... and I always gain a lot more from the diverse groups of people, different degrees, and faculty.* For an effective landscape of practice, boundary crossings are necessary for learning to happen: *It was a project where I connected with really cool people ... You are picking up a lot of information that you don't realize that you are learning. So that was really valuable.*

In describing SoTL work, we frequently used the word *diverse* and the terms *diverse interests*, *diverse disciplines*, *diverse perspectives* were commonly noted to describe *boundary crossing within the SoTL*

landscape of practice. Collaboration was also repeatedly used to describe the process of working within this diverse landscape across multiple boundaries, for example one member shared how for her: *I need other people to collaborate with me because I need accountability, but I also need to bounce ideas back and forth as that is extremely rich.* For other members it was similar: *I find this collaborative process really helpful just to keep everyone on track and accountable.* And another: *You need enthusiastic, cool collaborators who care about the topic.*

For our group, crossing a boundary did not mean leaving behind one's identity, experience, or expertise, but rather, it was an opportunity to understand how one's experiences could be translated and expanded at the boundaries and in turn, how others' experiences could change or transform our own work (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 25).

> *I'm not too proud to recognize that someone else has got something that I don't have, like recognising that someone might be really strong on methodology … or really big on literature … so I'm really happy to be collaborating with people who have different skills.*

Collaboration at the boundaries provides opportunities to rethink or reimagine definitions and assumptions of scholarship and their importance within a landscape.

For some group members, crossing boundaries was a normal process that felt comfortable because their work was never confined to a particular discipline, nor legitimized by the need to assert themselves as an expert.

> *I'm comfortable with the interdisciplinary boundary situation because I've never felt like I was embedded in a very disciplined silo space. ... I'm excited to talk with people who have had that similar disconnect ..., sometimes feeling like you're neither part of this group or that group.*

Challenges came from issues related to motivation and commitment, with the lack of follow-through and expectations most commonly cited. Group members talked about research projects that were stalled, data that was collected but not analysed, and papers not turned into publications. Several of us had experiences of abandoned SoTL projects:

> *It's so challenging to maintain a community that is interdisciplinary … and why it's not just me crossing the boundaries. It's about … a community that's crossing boundaries, what kinds of supports are necessary, how do you keep people and help maintain them in their own field discipline while also being boundary-crossers.*

Our group members acknowledged that there were instances when the challenges overshadowed the benefits, where boundaries were not "peaceful or collaborative" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 17) as one member shared: *when this happened, it's okay to say, 'it's done, I'm done … It might look great on my CV but it's not a healthy way to spend my time—it's too taxing emotionally.'* Although we recognised working collaboratively across boundaries can be hard, overall meeting new people

through crossing boundaries was worthwhile. The group shared optimism and trusted that a collaborative SoTL process was something worth struggling through:

> *When I connect with really cool people, like I feel in some ways a sense of pride. … we don't know how or what is going to happen but you know, just to get together as strangers and be able to talk and discuss and critique and vet and suggest, that has been really important.*

Landscape of practice is political

Within a landscape of practice, there exist multiple and sometimes competing voices of claims of knowledge and competency. Regulations create policies and ensure compliance. Sometimes practitioners, "comply with mandates and demands, and sometimes shrug it all off as too disconnected to be relevant. Sometimes they even create an appearance of compliance while doing their own thing" (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015, 15). For example, SoTL has its own regimes of competence, often driven by social science research paradigms. Success in SoTL includes publishing and teaching others how to engage in research. One member elaborated:

> *Good collaborations spend time talking about research design, getting feedback, understanding the right methodology, constructively aligned and use different types of data collection. The research is clear and the impact it is going to have is unique and contributing.*

The pressure to publish highlights the prevalent regimes of competence in higher education, shared within many SoTL contexts, as described by one member: *the Holy Grail [in SoTL] is disseminating in a journal*. Our members talked about the power of publication and the tension with disciplinary research: *My department chair said that if you are going to do this SoTL work, you have to keep your research agenda going and there needs to be an opportunity for you to publish.*

According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, when crossing boundaries within the landscape, the power dynamics, the local nature of each practice, and the different boundaries that are crossed will affect the larger landscape: "Whether the competence of a community is recognized as knowledge depends on its position in the politics of the landscape" (2015, 16). Because there is no guarantee that what is deemed competent within SoTL will be recognised as such by faculty, staff, and administrators in different disciplines or positions, successful boundary crossing collaborations need buy in. One member explained: *SoTL collaboration requires 'buy in' from the academics in order to work effectively. There needs to be an understanding, a common language, similar aims, and goals.*

Competence is not static but continually aligned and realigned with experience. It involves issues of power and negotiation even within highly collaborative groups engaged in boundary crossing. One member acknowledged: *Collaborations can be risky and outside one's comfort zone, especially negotiating all the voices when some will be strong and others quiet, so it is making sure everyone is heard and able to contribute in different ways.* In our group, we generally saw ourselves as not conforming to the discourses of truth or regulations that frequently pervade higher education bringing both political and social power. We noted that: *This does not come without struggles because the political structure of academia is ever present.* Positioning ourselves in the liminal zones means that we can experience difficulty with our sense of belonging,

Somebody asked me a question recently, 'you're an academic, right? and I said, 'oh, no, I'm not.' He looked at me, and said 'no, I don't mean your role title, I mean your training?' And I'm like, 'oh yeah, that's right.' Sometimes I want to position myself as an academic, but other times the way I interact with people I box myself as 'I'm not one of you guys' but he made me realize that I was self-oppressed in that moment.

Existing reward structures in each institution may weigh disciplinary research more heavily, and hinder interest and engagement in SoTL research:

I feel this tension between encouraging people to engage in this kind of work because I think it makes the learning and teaching experience in the classroom better. But I also understand that at a research intensive university, I'm not going to tell somebody who's solving childhood cancers they should be spending less time in the lab and more time focusing on their teaching.

Hence, our group members struggled through "boundaries among practices" (Wenger et al. 2015, 23). Although they recognised that engaging more people in SoTL research needed to be supported by those in power, they attempted to create alignment with conforming practices, and, when not possible, proposed non-conforming ones to navigate across the boundaries.

You know, unless it is mandated from the top that this is the important stuff, you are kind of working at the lower level and trying to get people on board with you to believe in it. I probably do a lot of selling about the importance of putting scholarship around their teaching and I just keep banging on about that.

Landscape of practice is flat

A flat landscape of practice recognizes that no one practice represents the whole, even when one has more power or resources to influence another practice. In our group, we referred to SoTL as a field, not a discipline. One member explained: *I think if we want to make the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning a viable field then we have to hold up standards of rigour and scholarship and engagement.* Perhaps intuitively, we framed SoTL, at our respective institutions, as the kind of work that, by its nature, cuts across disciplinary boundaries, methodological and epistemological traditions, and positions in the landscape. Thus, in a flat landscape, boundary crossers are able to work with others effectively and embrace a messy but productive process: *We definitely had kind of roadblocks for sure, but the attitude of the team was very important, because we were all just comfortable with taking a step back and saying 'okay so what else can we do about this.'*

In other words, collaborative SoTL levels the playing field, or flattens the landscape, and is strong enough to co-exist with other legitimised disciplines, as attested in the following quote: *For me getting to do SoTL and continuing to engage in the community means I've also gained a larger community. And I get to put it [SoTL] in my thesis. One chapter in my thesis I own.* In our exploration, group members recognised that practices and disciplines have different powers or privileges within the context of higher education.

One group member in particular articulated the challenge for her in promoting a SoTL agenda without an officially recognized title: *I had no title, no formal position. The grant money gave me authority.* Of course, the knowledge thus produced bears great significance to the practitioners involved. This process creates new practices that are further legitimised as others get involved, and in turn leads to more recognition in the broader landscape.

We collectively endeavoured to flatten the landscape for our collaborators and ourselves so that new practices and knowledge would be viewed as legitimate and important. This flattening of the landscape was also highlighted in our description of what group members contribute to our joint project: *Someone else has got something that I don't have […], so I'm not going to stand there as the leader and pretend that I know about it because I don't … so I'm really happy to be with people who have skills.*

In our discussions, we came to the realization that we cross boundaries for purposes beyond our individual agendas. All of us are engaged in enabling others to join the SoTL landscape so that they can contribute to our collective teaching and learning wisdom to inspire new undertakings.

Brokering the landscape of practice

Connecting with a multiplicity of practices across a landscape requires crossing multiple boundaries. Successful crossings often involve brokering, or enabling, at the boundaries to facilitate connections between the different practices, through translation, coordination, and alignment of different perspectives and meanings (Kubiak et al. 2015, 81). This creates new learning experiences and hence knowledge. Brokering can be difficult. We talked at length about boundary crossing, the need to build relationships, and how some people do not work collaboratively: *I was so amazed at the inflexibility [of some people] … I mean … it's different if you're like parallel playing, like kids do parallel play, but this is collaborative work.* And, some people can be inflexible, or even destructive: *And not going as planned doesn't mean that it's negative or positive. But there are times where for you—you know … it's a really destructive group or it's not going anywhere.*

To build legitimacy, "a broker may need to remain at the edge of the CoP, a liminal insider-outsider constantly faced with the challenge of how to make the practice of one CoP relevant to another" (Kubiak et al. 2015, 82). Trust must first be established in brokering, which takes time. As people share together, relationships grow and honesty and reliability emerge. Brokers select who needs to be involved in the encounter and provide a shared focus and framework to support the process of connecting the different practices. These build legitimacy.

> *I try to be someone that is approachable, so that people can feel that if it isn't working for them they can talk to me. If I'm working in a group I want everyone to be on board and if something has happened then come and talk to me and we'll find a way forward or how to help you.*

Boundary encounters are precarious. They are "not easily constructed and can be fraught with potential misalignments and contradictions" (Kubiak et al. 2015, 93). There is a balance between being too controlling, which can drain and strangle initiatives, or being too light, which can place undue pressure on trust between participants. Brokers understand the landscape and how people across it see things, making their positions vulnerable. Boundary encounters are particularly difficult if a broker has to

straddle a boundary where different communities have competing accountabilities, making it important to capitalize on the energy and accountability of the collaboration,

> *After the meeting is over, everybody's feeling energized to do that thing you didn't have the time or energy to do, or didn't have the angle or whatever, so you go back and you have that fuel to do a bit more. Also, knowing that maybe in two weeks' time, or a month's time you are again accountable. So I found my recipe.*

Brokers often work in difficult positions to establish boundary encounters and drive change in the landscape. Their work requires considerable skill, determination, and personal resilience as they "give away their power in favour of collective agency" (Kubiak et al. 2015, 93). Many of us echoed this feeling: *Collaboration is very much rewarded. And it can be a headache. But it's also fun.*

DISCUSSION

United by our common interest in SoTL, our aim was to shed light on how we encountered the features of the landscape of practice and how we brokered multiple boundaries to connect, collaborate, and stay together. We employed the framework by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) to examine the broader SoTL field. For example, experiencing the landscape as diverse meant that regardless of our position, background, and context, we could be valuable contributors to SoTL. This is worthwhile as a 'selling point' for faculty and staff who promote SoTL opportunities in their context, or intend to join the SoTL community. Experiencing the landscape as flat meant that we could bring our individual expertise to SoTL without needing to be an expert in all things. These experiences highlight the unique and positive aspects of SoTL. SoTL work draws from multiple methodological and academic disciplines, a reality that brings advantages and disadvantages. SoTL's diversity means that the field is accessible to and welcoming of individuals with various titles, positions, trainings, and skills. Consequently, it forces individuals outside their comfort zone, switching between the roles of expert and learner as they move over the changing landscape crossing boundaries. Navigating these multiple perspectives can be challenging, and making this explicit when communicating about SoTL could assist in managing faculty and staff's expectations to create a positive experience.

Although SoTL itself may not prioritize one discipline or expertise over another, the broader higher education context in which SoTL occurs often does. We all experienced the political nature of the SoTL landscape of practice. Many of us received messages suggesting that SoTL work is "lesser" than other disciplinary focused research and experienced others' reluctance to join SoTL because of this perception. Thus, the reality of the SoTL landscape of practice being viewed as diverse, political, and flat reaffirms the need for boundary crossings and collaborating, and lends insights on how these boundary crossings can be most effective.

Being brokers, we concluded, is not easy. Brokering requires energy and the ability to mobilise, influence, and build trusting relationships, establishing and managing encounters, driving change in the landscape. The vulnerability of brokers necessitates strength and resilience to develop capacity, especially when legitimacy is precarious with deadlocks, bureaucracy, authorities, and more. Brokering was

frustrating, but also brought motivation and rewards. There are opportunities to forge new partnerships, bring people together from diverse communities to transform their existing practices, or create new ones.

Collectively, our findings inform how we move forward with development, support, and leadership in the SoTL field. A broker is critical in the landscape, a liminal insider-outsider constantly faced with the challenge of how to make the practice of one CoP relevant to another. Brokers are vulnerable. They must establish trust as anxiety and uncertainty will inhibit learning. They must know the territory; gather all necessary information; understand any issues to be addressed; pull together resources for specific needs; align cross-boundary learning goals; articulate ways forward; and negotiate intellectual, ideological, and practice differences. Brokers build legitimacy as without it they, nor the boundary crossing, will achieve much.

Limitations and future research

There are, of course, limitations to our work. We are a group of seven diverse SoTL scholars located in English-speaking countries around the globe, researching our own work and narrating our own perspectives and therefore do not claim these can be assumed by all. In our study, we focused on the SoTL landscape of practice. In doing so, we overlooked other critical aspects of the SoTL context. For example, we did not address the influence of resources on boundary crossings. We recalled that our participation in the international ISSoTL writing group was because of financial support from our institutions. Increasing participation in and the reputation and stature of SoTL scholarship requires resources of time, funding, and training. Additional research focused on this critical aspect of SoTL work is needed.

We recognize that our institutional, national, and local contexts also influence SoTL experiences and are an important area for analysis (Chng, Leibowitz, and Mårtensson 2020). This additional analysis was outside the scope of this current article but is a focus in our subsequent work.

We did not aim to identify how brokers influence and change the SoTL landscape of practice. Instead, our aim was to contribute to the work of boundary crossing, and articulate through our collective experiences what happens at the boundaries as the first step in analysing. We also acknowledge the need for further studies that address how brokering and crossing boundaries within the SoTL landscape of practice inform development, support, and leadership in this field.

FINAL WORDS

SoTL has evolved into a distinctive landscape of practice with boundary crossings being one unique aspect of this landscape. During our time together we were also experiencing another significant boundary crosser: COVID-19. Living in lockdown and needing to self-isolate while focusing on a topic of boundary crossings undoubtedly influenced our conversations and commitment to this topic and each other. The global pandemic emphasised a devastating influence of interconnectedness. We hope our work as a trans-national group of scholars demonstrates, at least in one small way, the life-giving potential of building connections. Crossing boundaries is an essential aspect of SoTL work and may be the action that has the most significant influence on higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Barbara Kensington-Miller is an Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at The University of Auckland (NZL). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9231-4052

Andrea S. Webb is an Assistant Professor of Teaching in Social Studies Education at the University of British Columbia (CAN). https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3963-5057

Ann Gansemer-Topf is an Associate Professor of Higher Education in the School of Education at Iowa State University (USA). https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1074-1534

Heather Lewis is a Professor of Art and Design Education at Pratt Institute (USA). She led a three-year, cross-disciplinary SoTL initiative at Pratt Institute grounded in faculty learning communities.https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4336-1194

Julie Luu is an Educational Designer in the Faculty of Business and Economics at Monash University (AUS).

Geneviève Maheux-Pelletier is an educational developer, educator, and scholar of teaching and learning currently serving as the director of the Teaching Commons at York University (CAN).https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9550-6930

Analise K. Hofmann is a PhD candidate in Genome Science & Technology at the University of British Columbia (CAN). https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7252-2885

NOTES

1. The quotes included in this paper are purposefully not attributed to an individual in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewee. They are feelings and experiences shared by all of the participants.

REFERENCES

Becher, Tony. 1989. *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Disciplines*. Buckingham, U.K.: Open University Press.

Behari-Leak, Kasturi. 2019. "Decolonial Turns, Postcolonial Shifts, and Cultural Connections: Are We There Yet?" *English Academy Review* 36, no. 1: 58–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/10131752.2019.1579881.

Brew, Angela. 2008. "Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Affiliations of Experienced Researchers." *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education Research* 56: 423–38. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9102-4.

Chick, Nancy L. 2013. "Difference, Privilege, and Power in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Value of Humanities SoTL." In *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in and Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kathleen McKinney, 15–33. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Chng, Huang Hoon, Brenda Leibowitz, and Katarina Mårtensson. 2020. "Leading Change from Different Shores: The Challenges of Contextualizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 8, no. 1: 24–41. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.8.1.3.

Cook-Sather, Alison, and Peter Felten. 2017. "Ethics of Academic Leadership: Guiding Learning and Teaching." In *Cosmopolitan Perspectives on Academic Leadership in Higher Education*, edited by Feng Su and Margaret Wood, 175–91. London: Bloomsbury.

Cox, Milton D. 2003. "Fostering the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Through Faculty Learning Communities." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 14, no. 2/3: 161–98.

Cresswell, John W. 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks.CA: Sage.

Dall'Alba, Gloria. 2009. "Phenomenology and Education: An Introduction." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41, no. 1: 7–9. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00479.x/.

Duffy, Donna K. 2006. "COPPER: Communities of Practice—Pooling Educational Resources to Foster the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 30, no. 2: 151–52.

Fanghanel, Joëlle. 2013. "Going Public with Pedagogical Inquiries: SoTL as a Methodology for Faculty Professional Development." *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 1: 59–70. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.1.1.59.

Fanghanel, Joëlle, and Paul Trowler. 2008. "Exploring Academic Identities and Practices in a Competitive Enhancement Context: A UK-Based Case Study." *The European Journal of Education: Research, Development and Policy* 43, no. 3: 301–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2008.00356.x.

Felten, Peter. 2013. "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL." *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 1: 121–25. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.1.1.121.

Fereday, Jennifer, and Eimear Muir-Cochrane. 2006. "Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5, no. 1: 80–92. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940690600500107.

Frechette, Julie, Vasiliki Bitzas, Monique Aubry, Kelley Kilpatrick, and Mélanie Lavoie-Tremblay. 2020. "Capturing Lived Experience: Methodological Considerations for Interpretive Phenomenological Inquiry." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254.

Gauthier, Launa. 2016. "Redesigning for Student Success: Cultivating Communities of Practice in a Higher Education Classroom." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 16, no. 2: 1–13.

Hong, Jacky F, and Fiona K. H. O. 2009. "Conflicting Identities and Power between Communities of Practice: The Case of IT Outsourcing." *Management Learning* 40, no. 3: 311–26. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1350507609104342.

Hubball, Harry, and Anthony Clarke. 2010. "Diverse Methodological Approaches and Considerations for SoTL in Higher Education." *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 1, no. 1.

Hubball, Harry, Anthony Clarke, and Gary Poole. 2010. "Ten-Year Reflections on Mentoring SoTL Research in a Research-Intensive University." *International Journal for Academic Development* 15, no. 2: 117–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144003737758.

Kelly, Niamh, Susan Nesbit, and Carolyn Oliver. 2012. "A Difficult Journey: Transitioning from STEM to SoTL." *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 6, no. 1: Article 18.

Kensington-Miller, Barbara, Joanna Renc-Roe, and Susan Morón-García. 2015. "The Chameleon on a Tartan Rug: Adaptations of Three Academic Developers' Professional Identities." *International Journal for Academic Development* 20, no. 3: 279–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1047373.

Kubiak, Chris, Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, Karen Appleby, Maxine Kempster, Michael Reed, Carla Solvason, and Mary Thorpe. 2015. "Brokering Boundary Encounters." In *Learning in Landscapes of Practice: Boundaries, Identity, and Knowledgeability in Practice-Based Learning*, edited by Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, Steven Hutchinson, Chris Kubiak, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, 81–96. New York: Routledge

Kupatadze, Ketevan. 2019. "Opportunities Presented by the Forced Occupation of Liminal Space: Underrepresented Faculty Experiences and Perspectives." *International Journal for Students as Partners* 3, no. 1: 22–33. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v3i1.3744.

Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Lopez, Kay A., and Danny G. Willis. 2004. "Descriptive Versus interpretive Phenomenology: Their Contributions to Nursing Knowledge." *Qualitative Health Research* 14, no. 5: 726–35. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1049732304263638.

McKinney, Kathleen. 2013. *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in and Across the Disciplines*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Mørk, Bjørn E., Thomas Hoholm, Gunnae Ellingsen, Bjørn Edwin, and Margunn Aanestad. 2010. "Challenging Expertise: On Power Relations Within and Across Communities of Practice in Medical Innovation." *Management Learning* 41, no. 5: 575–92. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1350507610374552.

Simmons, Nicola, Earle Abrahamson, Jessica Deshler, Barbara Kensington-Miller, Karen Manarin, Susan Morón-García, Carolyn Oliver, and Joanna Renc-Roe. 2013. "Conflicts and Configurations in a Liminal Space: SoTL Scholars' Identity Development." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 2: 9–21. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.1.2.9.

Sturdy, Andrew, Timothy Clark, Robin Fincham, and Karen Handley. 2009. "Between Innovation and Legitimation—Boundaries and Knowledge Flow in Management Consultancy." *Organization* 16, no. 5: 627–53. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1350508409338435.

Van Manen, Max. 1997. *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. London, ON: Althouse Press.

Webb, Andrea, and Ashley J. Welsh. 2019. "Phenomenology as a Methodology for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Research." *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 7, no. 1: 168–81. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.7.1.11.

Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger-Trayner, Etienne, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner. 2015. "Learning in a Landscape of Practice." In *Learning in Landscapes of Practice: Boundaries, Identity, and Knowledgeability in Practice-Based Learning*, edited by Etienne Wenger-Trayner, Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, Steven Hutchinson, Chris Kubiak, and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, 13–32. New York: Routledge.

APPENDIX

Autobiography prompt
What is your path to SoTL?
This gives our positionality in the institution, who we are, where we come from, and how we repositioned ourselves to SoTL research.

Focus group prompt
What is our understanding of being a boundary crosser?
How are we boundary crossers?

Interview protocol
Why did you join a writing group? Why this writing group?
Talk about a SoTL activity that a) you are really proud of? b) you have done with colleagues? c) you were rewarded?
Tell us about a SoTL example that didn't go the way you wanted it to?
Describe a SoTL experience of being outside your comfort zone?