Partnering for research: A critical discourse analysis

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Abstract: *Using a critical discourse analysis, informed by poststructuralist theory, we explore the research phenomenon of coerced partnership. This lens allows us to pay attention to the social relations of power operating in knowledge generation processes, especially as they affect feminist researchers in adult education. We propose an alternative vision of partnership which politicizes the term partnership, attends to civil society, maps resistances and values the process by all partners.*

Competition for research funds is increasing, especially in the Canadian landscape where fiscal conservatism is a government mantra. This conservatism brings with it the string that research is more likely to be funded if it involves a partnership of community, university and sometimes government. Using a poststructuralist lens, we examine the seemingly benign partnering phenomenon, highlighting the ways that women as researchers are affected and affect the research process.

Adult educators in Canada have been particularly affected by the partnership discourse. In a fiscal climate where adult education programming and research is not given priority, academics face increasing pressure to find external funding. The sought after publicly-funded research grants are increasingly allocated to collaborative efforts and to prize-winning topics such as interdisciplinary health and environment projects. Community organizations face a similar situation with government cutbacks to social programs (witness the decimation of core funding for women's groups and the restrictions imposed on Status of Women Canada in 2006). They are, in turn, driven to participate in community-university funded projects (e.g., the federal Community–University Research Alliance initiative). In the hallways of conferences, and across email the discontent mounts and yet few have taken on the discourse of partnership.

The backdrop to this paper is our experience of working in a recent research partnership, involving work with a government body. In this article we build also on conversations with colleagues, publicly available documents, and our past research experiences. We use critical discourse analysis to explore the social and historical

context, competing discourses and the power/knowledge nexus of universities, government, community and feminism. Within this context of coerced partnership, we pay particular attention to the social relations of power that operate in the knowledge generation process, especially as it affects feminist researchers. Finally we look at how the partnership phenomenon might benefit from repeated engagement with poststructuralism and critical discourse analysis.

Theoretical Framework

We use critical discourse analysis (CDA), informed by feminist and Foucauldian poststructuralism (1980, 1982), to understand how the partnership discourse is created and how it perpetuates itself and produces effects (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). Discourse analysis can be approached from a range of constructivist or critical perspectives (Phillips & Hardy). Constructivist approaches look at how discourse has been socially produced; critical approaches pay attention to the "dynamics of power, knowledge and ideology that surround discursive processes" (p. 20). Foucauldian informed CDA is interested in who is privileged and what the productive effects (negative and positive) of the discourse are (Treleaven, 2004). Foucault helps us to delve into how power is exercised (used) and embedded in the complex web of relationships and discourses (languages and practices) that surround the partnership process. The focus is on how some ideas, concepts, and beliefs become dominant or accepted as reality, and how some knowledge is privileged over others. Feminists have also been drawn to discourse analysis because of its possibilities for negotiating competing discourses and acknowledging social context (Mills, 1997).

From our perspective, the discourse of collaboration constitutes and sustains unequal power relations (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Though social scientists have shown increasing interest in partnerships (e.g., Baum, 2000; Cobb & Rubin, 2006) few if any have addressed this through CDA. This partnering for research phenomenon not only shapes interactions in and among the partners, the community and university for example, but also the knowledge produced and the nature of inquiry itself. Researchers who have an interest in gender have a particular perspective on the issue, as partnering or collaborating can be seen as a 'regime of truth' within gender studies. Our view is that research is not an unproblematic event and nor is partnering. Following Foucault, we want to pay attention to micropractices in which resistance is embedded in partnering. Resistance can be a quiet refusal to participate, talking back to power, or more visible forms of public protest. We are most interested here in the subtle resistances in everyday practices.

Attention to the flow of power helps us as feminists to understand more about how government funding agencies operate, and helps to complicate the organizational charts used to map the hierarchies of government and universities (see Brookfield, 2005; Chapman, 2003; English, 2005). Poststructuralism, and especially CDA, attends not only to what is produced (the research project), but how it is produced (in partnership) and to the history and contexts that surround its production (mandatory partners, streamlining of funding). This allows us to focus on the use of power to discursively create the players in funded research—the university, the academics, the administration and the community as well as the feminist researchers. And this power is productive—its use produces knowledge, researchers, and practices, as

well as diversity and competing discourses. This diversity is needed in political discourse as a way of "avoiding a language of consensus which disguises differences" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 161).

We are influenced also by the international and participatory development field which has had long experience with partnerships. Especially problematic for the field of development is the unquestioned emphasis on partnerships (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). Adult educators will be familiar mostly with the participatory research dimension, though perhaps less so with the extended critiques. Debate over the utility, politics and practice of participatory frameworks came to the forefront with the "tyranny" debate (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In problematising the so-called tyranny of participation the authors challenge received wisdom on participation and work toward a new conceptual framework which underscores the need for criticality, reflexivity, and renewed politicization of the term participation. Current work in this field also employs poststructuralist analyses (Cornwall, 2004) to the power imbalances and resistances that are particularly instructive to our understanding of the situation both development practitioners and adult educators are facing.

Identifying our Context and Data

Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Mills, 1997) pays attention to the history and environment in which the research is produced. In this article, we draw on previous collaborative research experiences within Canada. Specifically, we bring to this paper our experience of "doing" a comprehensive literature review, for and with a government created body, the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). A team of feminist researchers physically located in a small publicly funded university, we entered the research through an invitation cum mandate of providing an extensive state of the field report on gender and learning. That experience raised particular concerns for us linked with a growing suspicion of the broader government-mandated partnering environment we found ourselves in. Elsewhere we have described the project in more detail and drawn attention to the ways in which power was exercised by the government in setting agendas, coercing partnerships, dictating methodology, and outcomes (Irving & English, 2007). We articulated our complicity and our resistance in the research process. Complicity consisted of writing to the audience of known experts in Canadian adult education and to the expectations of the CCL. Complicity also involved presenting an official report that met the rigors of academic research and bureaucratic criteria. Resistance consisted of talking back to the funders, writing subsequent texts that critiqued and made visible the discursive process, and which challenged some of the official guidelines and criteria. In addition to our own experience, a recurrent theme within the gender and adult learning literature itself suggested a potential conflict arising from a context of fiscal restraint and the unquestioned promotion of multi-sectoral collaboration. Case studies of such collaborations revealed tensions that were not addressed within the dominant discourse (Cottrell & Parpart, 2006; Prins, 2005; Reid & Tom, 2006).

Our other data are drawn from research experiences in the academic community over a period of 15 years of applying for grants, writing for publication, and participating in meetings and committees of the university, to reflect on the

discourses in which we are immersed in our daily work lives. We also consulted university websites, federal research funding agencies' published material, and the related academic literature, and analyzed these to provide a micro and a macro picture of this broader context.

With these events in the background, our present research seeks to understand the effects of power and the discourse within the larger university research culture that operates in Canada; this culture encourages collaboration and partnerships with the public and private sector, and especially with the community. Table 1 depicts the range of stakeholders (government, community, higher education administration, academics and feminist academics) and competing discourses within our academic context. These discourses include but are not limited to finances, social agendas and academic ideals. Not only are there competing discourses among the stakeholders (e.g., feminist versus government) but also within groups of stakeholders (e.g., academics who uphold integrity and academics who follow the bottom line). This data is illustrative not exhaustive.

To make the discourse more visible we have followed Treleaven (2004) who constructed a CDA of Australia's university restructuring process. She maps competing discourses among government, university administration and academics. Building on Treleaven's methods, we too use an orderly table to map our data, yet we readily admit that discourse is difficult to trace.

TABLE 1: Partnership Discourses in Research

Stakeholders	Context	Discourses	Primary focus	Effects	Data Sources
Government (and the research funding agencies they administer)	**budgetary accountability** **multiple commitments** **pressure to help HE and community** **need to increase GDP**	**community university partnerships** **accountability** **outcome-based** **knowledge economy** **internationally competitive**	**put research knowledge into practice** **strategic investments in education and research** **united research community**	**prioritizing results driven research** **centralized funding sources** **creation of research bodies and centres**	**Government funding / partnership agencies reports and guidelines**
Community (NGOs, local organizations, grassroots movements, individual practitioners)	**scarcity of funds** **multiple constituencies** **research needed to justify funding**	**grassroots** **legitimacy/ authentic voice** **indigenous knowledge** **integrity** **evidence-based decision making**	**collaborate** **build capacity** **build civil society** **find partners** **seek funds**	**loss of control** **collaboration in unknown areas** **loss of purpose** **challenge to credibility**	**community development literature** **interview data with women's centres (English, 2005)**
Higher education administration (deans, presidents,	**Budgetary constraints from tightened govt. purses**	**funded research** **academic standards and integrity**	**boost enrollment** **promote fundable research and**	**culture of efficiency** **managerialism** **corporatism**	**professional academic associations** **university publications**

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boards of governors)	waning enrollment global competition	autonomy knowledge economy	collaboration seek govt. funds	marketspeak	& websites
Academics	restricted research funding reward structure that privileges fundable research pressure to collaborate	scholarly integrity independent scholarship contributing knowledge entrepreneurism	participate in collaborative grants write collaboratively do fundable research	strategy focused insecurity	personal knowledge professional faculty associations literature
Feminist academics	inattention to gender suspicion of gender collaboration	equality cooperative 3rd wave idiosyncratic	do authentic collaborative work oppose patriarchy	struggle with outcomes based research suppressed hierarchies collaborative focus	our own research this minor project

Analysis of the Data

Informed by the use of CDA by Treleaven (2004), Fairclough (1992) and Mills (1997), we looked at the everyday background, as well as the historical, economic, cultural and political setting in which the data (language and practices) were contextualized. Since each partner—feminist, academic, government, community and higher education administration—is positioned with different agendas and mandates, each responds to and co-creates the dominant discourses of partnerships and efficiency uniquely. Several discourses stand out and we analyze them here, allowing the theory to intersect with the data when relevant.

Research Context and Players
The overall Canadian research context is one of fiscal restraint and efficiency. This economic reality flows through the discourses in all sectors (*budgetary constraint, accountability, restricted funding, pressure, insecurity, competition, fundable research*). Canada's Auditor General Sheila Fraser is popular with her "tough-on-spenders" stance, by exposing federal fiscal mismanagement. In response, the Accountability Act of the federal parliament moved to make government leaders more responsible for decisions and funding, effecting a discourse of accountability across all government departments and agencies.

Faced with such scrutiny, multiple commitments and requests (pressure to help communities through regional development, support higher education, and the need to increase the GDP and promote Canada's international competitiveness) the government has to prioritize funding mechanisms. The federal Status of Women Canada (SWC) agency was a primary funder of women's organizations enabling them to conduct their own community-based research and work to improve conditions for women and promote gender equality. The government has stripped

SWC of its mandate to fund research and advocacy in the name of administrative streamlining, 'program renewal' and an 'outcome-based approach to funding' (http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/funding/wp/index_e.html). In this climate of fiscal streamlining, not surprising then is the call for collaborative work which will maximize funding dollars and make us more efficient and accountable (Swift, 1999). Universities respond with the promise that their collaboration efforts are "enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of Canada's research enterprise" (AUCC, 2005, p.27).

Competing Discourses and Effects
The dominant discourse of *partnership* was produced by the government funding agencies such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) ad CCL, as a way to create efficiencies. Although collaboration and alliances are also popular, we note that partnership is the preferred term (not lost on us is the fact that business and legal institutions favour this word to designate economic ties). Such partnering brings with it unreal expectations and assumptions about the unity of discourse within universities or communities. In reality, there is no uniform identity—within each there are competing discourses (see Baum, 2000).

Nowhere is this partnership discourse more apparent than in research publications from the government. The Human Resources and Development Canada's own manual on partnership building states that "partnerships are an important vehicle for building community capacity and undertaking community development activities" (Frank & Smith, 2000, p.1). Canadian researchers depend mainly on government funds through a group of bodies such as CCL, SSHRC and their counterparts in sciences and health. SSHRC encourages major collaborative research initiatives that are interdisciplinary and inter-university (http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/faculty_e.asp). SSHRC's Community–University Research Alliance (CURA) claims that "stronger alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions can be enormously effective and yield important benefits for them both."

An underlying discourse of government is that of *efficiencies,* which supports the *partnership* discourse. Those, such as us, who worked or partnered with government, were affected by both discourses. In the case of our work with the CCL, we sought (or at least positively responded to) the opportunity to work to "create really useful knowledge" (Johnson, 1988, pp. 21-22) about gender and learning. Yet, we resisted the government's attempts to co-opt our labour by not paying for it and not actually using the report in the ways intended, by writing critiques of it such as this. Other academic resisters include Stein (2003), who asks, 'Efficient at what?' (p.70). Does efficiency become an end in itself? Stein uses the example of hospitals boasting of savings from staff layoffs without acknowledging loss of service. The discursive effect of the efficiencies discourse is cynicism.

Higher education administrators (deans, academic vice-presidents, provosts, boards of governors) are attentive to the *partnership* and *efficiencies* chatter and have created a discourse of their own, sometimes in sync with the government (*partnering, collaborating to produce first rate research, worthy sites of fundable research activity)* and at times at odds with it (*academic standards and research integrity, autonomy*). The discourses exist simultaneously, each producing a

separate and parallel regime of truth. Faced with declining enrollment and global competition, higher education administrators reward funded research and *entrepreneurial* activity by academics. Government wants assurances that the knowledge creation activity it funds has impact and practical utility (*results-driven, usability, strategic*). The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC, 2005) cites successful private sector collaborations that promote the transfer of knowledge to the marketplace; similarly, universities highlight entrepreneurial achievements in annual reports and websites.

Academics also use the discourse of cooperating, partnering, collaborating, and sharing (e.g., Butterwick & Harper, 2006). The enlightened (and successful) researcher has responded favourably to the discourse and begun to use it, becoming *team* members, *collaborators* and *co-investigators* if the SSHRC grant application calls for it. Researchers resist to some degree with a discourse of *independence* and *research integrity*, embodying it in Research Ethics Boards and Academic Integrity committees, and campaigning to have research untainted by funders such as pharmaceutical companies (see Owram, 2004). Yet, the quest for funding continues and the academic subject position that is produced is made up of multiple and contradictory identities (Ford, 2006). A perusal of the websites of adult education academics in Canada shows that many have partnered for funding and produced texts from these collaborations, yet noticeably missing are critiques of the process. Exceptions include Butterwick and Harper.

Community and grassroots organizations also embrace the *partnering* discourse, in the quest for research and funding. Literacy coalitions and feminist collectives often arise out of the need to apply collaboratively for funding. More recent examples are even larger consortia such as the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre in Canada. An increasingly common question is who actually is involved and can the actors be identified apart from these conglomerations. Although partnering among and between community-based organizations is integral to grassroots activity, partnering with universities and government to survive has taken on a new form. Whereas once universities looked to them as sources of data, now communities look to universities for funding to operate. Without the research they cannot justify to funders that they are credible.

Community groups resist with the discourse of *indigenous knowledge*, *grassroots* organizing, and at times, *authenticity*, *integrity, voice* and *legitimacy*. This *knowledge for the people by the people* discourse, however, is parallel to the *partnering* and survival discourse. Now the community has to write proposals for CURA funds, participate in university research projects and use the *marketspeak* of Executive Directors in order to do community work. Their skill set is often not strong on research language so they become minor players in the alliance (Cottrell & Parpart, 2006). They worry that their knowledge will be appropriated and co-opted (Cooke, 2004). As well, their goal is community impact whereas the university prioritizes publishable work. CDA makes it clear that the partnership is a troubled discourse that creates distrust and resentment that the university has stolen from the grassroots. While community groups are seeking subsistence funding theirs is not an unquestioned gratitude. Braithwaite, Cockwill, O'Neill, and Rebane (2007) document their extensive efforts to overcome "the profound research initiative fatigue" (p. 68) within communities before embarking on new collaborative projects. As community-

based action researchers, they detail the challenges they faced throughout this process. Negotiating the insider-outsider dynamic, for instance, was time consuming and ultimately not rewarded in the traditional research sense. Furthermore, the partnering discourse assumes a monolithic community group as partner (see Baum, 2000). The troubling reality is that no entity can be clearly marked community—there are differences and competing agendas even within single community groups (Cornwall, 2004).

At issue in all these discourses is a concern for *civil society*, admittedly a term used as vaguely as community and partnership. Civil society, often comprised of grassroots groups and *bona fide* partnerships, is understood at the community level as people outside of government mobilizing to address shared goals. As a movement, civil society has become a popular focus for academics, and is now being courted by government because of its "productive" capacity. Swift (1999) points to government's frequent offloading of public services by promoting partnerships with civil society organizations, forcing them to compete for funding and to adopt the discourses and practices of business rather than those of community development. Collaborating academics can find themselves caught in partnerships that undermine the very community strength they want to support. Adult educators such as Welton (1997) critique this cooptation of civil society.

Feminist researchers within the academy negotiate the competing discourses of *collaboration* and *scholarly integrity.* Allied with university and community they struggle for their share of research funds, while trying to honour participatory, collaborative processes inherent in feminism. Often they see the opportunity to work with community as a way to enrich 'both academic theorizing and community activism" (Cottrell & Parpart, 2006, p. 16). Almost all (if not all) adult education departments in Canada have feminist researchers on staff. In our CCL research we identified them by name and areas of interest, and noted the broad extent to which they work at the community level (English & Irving, in press). Feminist research has the potential to draw attention to the ways in which women are unequally and differently positioned, yet with the overall *efficiencies* discourse, funds for this work are shrinking (Manicom, Rhymes, Armour, & Parsons, 2005). Ideally the research question drives the research method, but increasingly government efficiencies are in control. Feminists face challenges when their participatory and time-consuming methods are questioned by the funders who promoted the partnerships in the first place (Butterwick & Harper, 2006).

Paradoxes in the Partnerships
As we conducted our research for the state of the field review, and engaged with the bureaucrats involved, a number of paradoxes emerged.

The first paradox is that all of the *partnership* discourse was dictated downward creating a discursive effect of surveillance and resistance from the so-called partners—academics, government leaders, administrators, community researchers. In our case, for instance, there was the expectation of collaboration between teams, and we resisted by working independently of our *partners*. We were averse to false collaboration when we were not in need of further partners nor were we convinced that such partnerships and meetings would be helpful to the process or the product. At the community level, as Cornwall (2004) notes, the very presence of partnering

external agencies can reinforce inequalities when they remain as "simply pseudo-democratic instruments through which authorities legitimize already-taken policy decisions" (p. 80).

Another paradox was the existence of this *partnership* discourse alongside the discourse of *knowledge exchange*, *knowledge transfer* and *knowledge production*. Along with, and perhaps in concert with the partnership and efficiencies discourses, government bodies have opted for the marketspeak of *knowledge* as a commodity. According to its 5-year strategic plan, SSHRC is reinventing itself as a Knowledge Council that is also concerned with improving relationships between stakeholders in the realm of learning. The knowledge discourse runs alongside the partnership discourse, working to help the government compete for global resources by ensuring its research funds produce economic benefits. Universities hold a strategic position in this knowledge exchange enterprise. Community partners may ask if a university's community engagement originates from a sincere commitment to social justice or from a motivation to take advantage of a funding opportunity as "an enterprising marketing technique" (Winter, Wiseman, & Muirhead, 2006, p. 224).

A third paradox is that the fund-driven partnering relationships are devoid of productive relationships. Utilitarian and short-lived, these relationships do not contribute to lifelong learning or to an authentic knowledge culture. In our case, as with much project-driven research, time to reflect and respond to the various research processes we are involved in is not encouraged or supported. In applying CDA to this contradictory discourse we raise questions about its longevity and its effects. On the one hand partnering creates a research culture and on the other hand it militates against relationship. A revisioning process is needed.

Towards an Alternative

In the spirit of the partnerships that we value, we avoid giving a list of prescriptions or lessons (see Prins, 2005) to "do" partnerships right. Rather, we propose that adult education consider the following elements of a participatory and reflexive paradigm.

Further Politicization of the Term Partnership.
In the cooptation of partnership by higher education officials, funding bodies, government and other groups, the term has lost meaning and purpose. We borrow here from Hickey and Mohan (2004) who have suggested a more political perspective on participatory discourse. Any discussions of collaboration of partnership need to acknowledge the effects of the power, the direction of the power and the ways in which we are "disciplined" by participation. In interrogating the compliance to rules, the stringent policies and procedures of applications, and the imposed control of language we politicize the term partnership to challenge the ways it is described and practiced.

Partnering for Civil Society.
With the stress that we have highlighted above on partnerships for efficiency, partnering for civil society has been lost. We suggest that renewed attention be given to civil society and the long-term good of stressing it. When partnerships of economy and efficiency are given pride of place the community is lost. Ironically there is an

efficiency built into partnering for civil society—a strong citizenry has a strong economy. The future health of a community and its index of productive citizenship can be attended to by strengthening of relationships, prioritizing of community needs, and resistance to government co-optation. Elabor-Idemudia (2002), citing Caroline Moser, a key feminist critic of international development, reminds us of the "need to shift focus from emphasis on participation as a means (efficiency, effectiveness and cost sharing) to participation as an end (empowerment and capacity building)" (p. 229). This helps us to shift focus from donor-driven goals to meaningful building of capacity at the local level.

Identifying Resistances in the Partnerships.
Part and parcel of any productive partnership is attention to the resistances. As Foucault reminds us, resistances reside in all relationships, and they are especially important in partnerships such as we have been discussing here in higher education and community. Attending to the flow of power as it courses through the partnerships brings our gaze to the resistances that are always there. Williams (2004) notes, "Any configuration of power/knowledge opens up its own particular spaces and moments for resistance" (p. 94). Community resistances to being taken over by the academy, for instance, may show in poor attendance at meetings, back-talk about proposals, and lack of willingness to lend their voice to the process. Resistances can shed light on suppressed power imbalances that affect partnering.

Valuing the Process by all Partners.
As Braithwaite et al. (2007) remind us, there is a need at the outset to build relationships, overcome distrust and negotiate the insider-outsider dilemmas that are inherent in community-university research teams. They observe the community incredulity that the time spent writing up the research was valuable or beneficial for them. In uncovering this troubled dimension of partnering Braithwaite and her colleagues disclose the unmentionable challenges of partnering within the community. Wallerstein and Duran (2006) advise, "partnerships need to have opportunities to reflect on the issues that surface related to participation, privilege, power, and race and/or ethnicity and to help identify structural changes that can support mutuality instead of dominance by one stakeholder" (p.320). We encourage the researchers to publish findings and analysis of the process.

We are not naïve enough to assume that all partnerships can become co-equal nor are we desirous of a return to the lone scholar phenomenon or top-down policy development. Yet, to overcome the quest for the "mythic participatory ideal" (Williams, 2004, p.98), we encourage sensitivity to the research dynamic and continuous interrogation of the motives, processes and procedures. As Cottrell and Parpart (2006) acknowledge, open communication involves persistence as community and academic partners identify issues of power and control. Yet, the effort can result in more effective collaborations. Cornwall (2004) encourages us to bring this practical challenge to the institutional level. Unfortunately, there is also the very real dilemma that a call for renewed action to overcome power imbalances, while apparently reasonable, can seem impossible to achieve (Cooke, 2004) in a managerial context. Maintaining the energy to work for improved collaborations in the face of deep welling cynicism is difficult.

The funding environment that is produced and reproduced in the collaborative discourse is one that creates resentment and the fabrication of unity. Yet, it also allows, albeit in a circuitous way, all the stakeholders to function. We wonder aloud if the discourse of partnership could be open to more examination and critique and if the "partners" might be able to suggest meaningful alternatives. For instance, the international aid agency, ActionAid (David & Mancini, 2004), as a donor agency is turning the tables on accountability by allowing the recipients of funds to define and evaluate impact, so that the funds do achieve what is in the best interests of the community, rather than the supposed interests of the funders.

Concluding Comments

From a feminist point of view, the *partnership* discourse is to be emulated and lauded, suggesting as it does relationship and strength. Yet, when CDA is employed, we see that partnering can run counter to *relationship* and authentic community discourse. It raises questions of the use of partnering to create *efficiencies.* The community asks questions about how these partnerships will strengthen their identity and their work. The academic wants to know if partnering is a discourse that has a long shelf life and if it contributes to sustained partnerships and knowledge creation. Higher education administrators negotiate the competing discourses of partnering and efficiencies, forever questioning the effects and the need to create a discourse that is sustainable. In fact, the potential for partnering is disrupted by the competing and somewhat contradictory discourses and the relative distributions of authority in the research process.

This kind of research contributes to the body of knowledge on research in uncovering and problematising seemingly benign research practices such as partnering with the government. Through doing critical discourse analysis on these research practices we have contributed to the ongoing development of our field and encourage others to do the same.

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