

The Dual Identity Project

Partnering with Students to
Understand Their Experiences in
Joint College/University Collaborative
Educational Programs



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Overview:

1. Context
2. Literature Review
3. Research Question
4. Collaborative Program Profiles
5. Methodology
6. Results
7. Discussion
8. Conclusions & Next Steps



The Context:

- Rapid increase in joint college/university collaborative programs
(Ontario Universities Application, 2014)
- Most common form of Baccalaureate nursing education in Canada
(Kirby, 2008)
- Some indication of what makes successful collaboration administratively
(Kirby 2007; Zawaduk et al., 2014; Zorzi et al, 2007)

Literature Review

- Focus on students moving sequentially between separate programs
(Boggs & Trick, 2009; Decock, McCloy, Liu, & Hu, 2011, Kerr, McCloy, & Liu, 2010)
 - **strengths:** smaller, friendlier, resources (Zorzi et al, 2007)
 - **challenges:** transition stress, relocation, differing cultures & administrative structures (Cameron, 2005; Zorzi et al, 2007)
- Positive student engagement linked to positive learning outcomes
(Elfers, Oort, & Katsten, 2012; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007)
- If students identify with school they have greater student engagement
(Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004)
- No research re: students having ties to multiple institutional identities

Research Question

What are the perceptions and experiences of students in collaborative college/university programs?

Aim

To understand and optimize the student experience for those with “dual identities”



Collaborative Programs @ McMaster (2577)*

- McMaster – Mohawk Nursing (666)
- McMaster – Conestoga Nursing (610)
- McMaster – Mohawk Medical Radiation Science (487)
- McMaster – Mohawk Bachelor of Technology (814)



*student population as of 2014

Collaborative Programs @ McMaster

Name of Program	Location	Length	Deliverables
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN)	McMaster	4 years	Degree
	Conestoga		
Medical Radiation Sciences (MedRadSci)	McMaster	4 years (10 terms)	Degree + Diploma
Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.)	McMaster (main campus & MIP), Mohawk	4.5 years (inc 12 mths co-op)	Degree + Diploma + Certificate

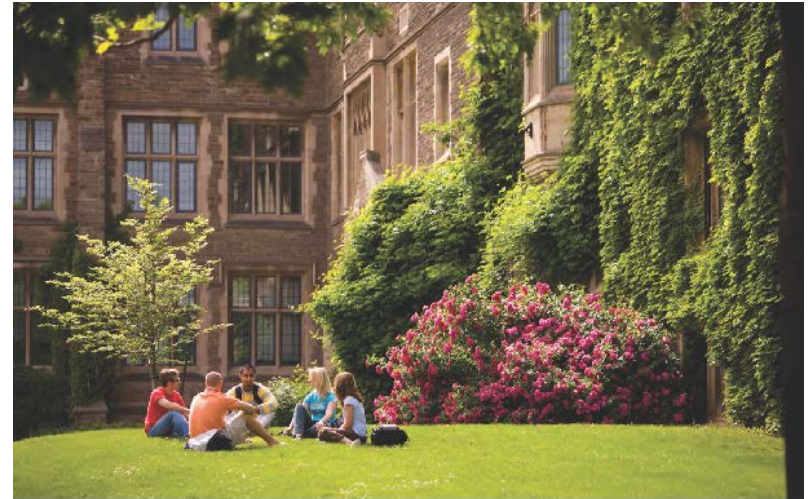
Methodology

- Qualitative interpretive description (Thorne, 2008)
- Focus groups co-led by 2 paid Student Researchers (SRs) from different programs
- Final focus group of SRs on perspectives for analysis of researcher bias
- Verbatim transcriptions
- Identification of themes, consensus meetings, secondary literature search



Participants

- 2nd 3rd, 4th year students
- 10 focus groups
- 68 students
- Uniform gender distribution
- 66% direct entry from high school
- 3% lived on campus, 40% off campus, 57% with parents



dual identity project

Nursing - B.Tech. - MedRadSci

Are you a 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year student in a collaborative McMaster-Mohawk or McMaster-Conestoga program?

Share your ideas and air your issues in an anonymous student-led 1hr research focus group!

The best part? You'll be entered to win an Apple iPad!



Email us for details.

DUALID@MCMASTER.CA



Focus Group Questions:

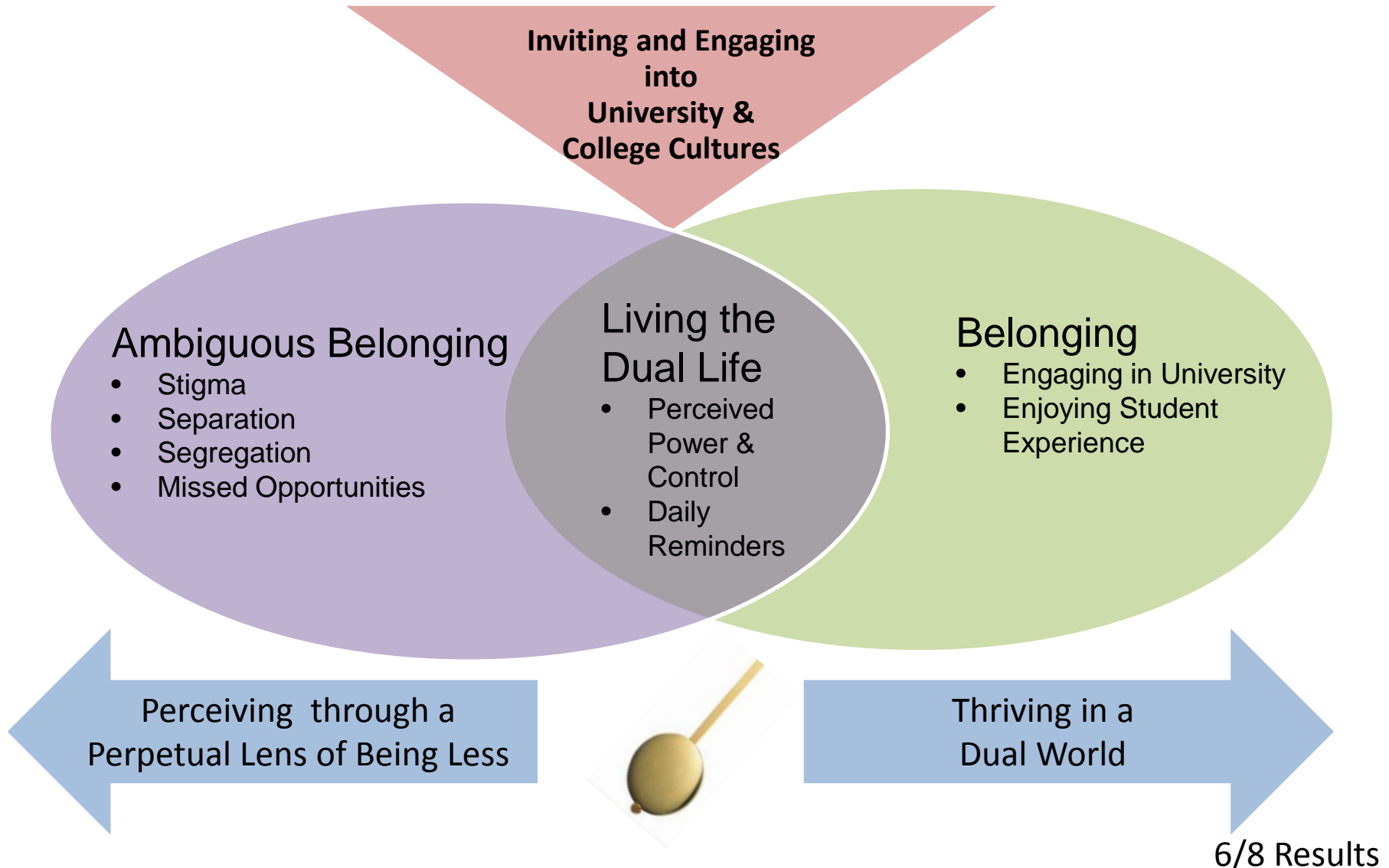
1. What are your overall impressions of your particular program?
2. What college and/or university activities outside of classes are you involved in?
3. Which institution do you feel most closely connected to and why?

Focus Group Questions (cont'd)

4. As a student, how do you feel you are perceived by others?
5. What are the strengths & challenges of being in your program?
6. What are your perceptions about your access to resources?
7. How would you explain your joint college/university program to a stranger?

Results





Perceptions of Learning

- Pride in program – “best of both worlds”
- Sense of community and support
- Satisfaction with learning methodologies (small classes, PBL, group work, experiential learning, etc.)
- Sense that they are more “work ready”(B.Tech. & MedRadSci):
 - *“the combination of the practical experiences from the college side and the theoretical experiences from the university side... at the end I would have both an advanced diploma of technology and a bachelor of technology” ~ B.Tech. Student*

Perceptions of Learning

- Prepared for grad school (B.Tech. and MedRadSci)
- Nursing students valued heterogeneous student groups
 - *“I kind of like that about our program though, because you get more diversity, instead of just having a group of Mac students coming from high school.” – McMaster- Mohawk BScN Student*



Perceptions of Identity - Belonging

- High degree of variation – experiences ranging from integrative to disorienting
- MedRadSci students, who have no comparable university-only program, had the highest degree of belonging
- McMaster-Conestoga BScN students felt closer to Conestoga on a day-to-day basis, but identified with McMaster on their resumes or in conversation
Geographical proximity to McMaster*



Perceptions of Identity - Belonging

- Sense of belonging characterized by early engagement with student life and corresponding program satisfaction:
 - *“I love it, I love the program, I love ... being in small groups and working on case scenarios. And being in a clinical group that’s small and I feel like I have been able to grow in my confidence and my leadership” ~ McMaster-Conestoga BScN*
- Only a small subset of students could be categorized as “thriving in a dual world”



Perceptions of Identity – Lack of Belonging

- Many students described a fragmented, disjointed, or ambiguous sense of belonging and the feeling that they are “living in no-man’s land.”
- Students experience various forms of stigmatization:
 - *“So I remember the first day she moved in, I was asking her about how there’s Mo-Mac nursing and she’s like yeah, “it’s kind of bull..., like there’s all these Mo-Mac students and they end up with the same degree but they’re like not as smart as us”... And I was like, “yeah, I’m Mo-Mac” and she’s like, “oh sorry.” ~ McMaster-Mohawk BScN Student*
- Other participants described the pejorative labels they were given by other university students from within their same faculties:
 - *“We are perceived as the fake engineers, the ‘Pretend-engineers’” or “[we are called] ‘BTech/Rejects’, so I’m a ‘ReTech” ~ B.Tech. Students*

Perceptions of Identity – Lack of Belonging

- Segregation from broader community:
 - Lack of common courses with students outside of their program
 - Unable to book a study room in the library (or other resource issues)
 - Exclusion from certain orientation week activities
- Communication re: processes and resources available should be made at the outset – all programs



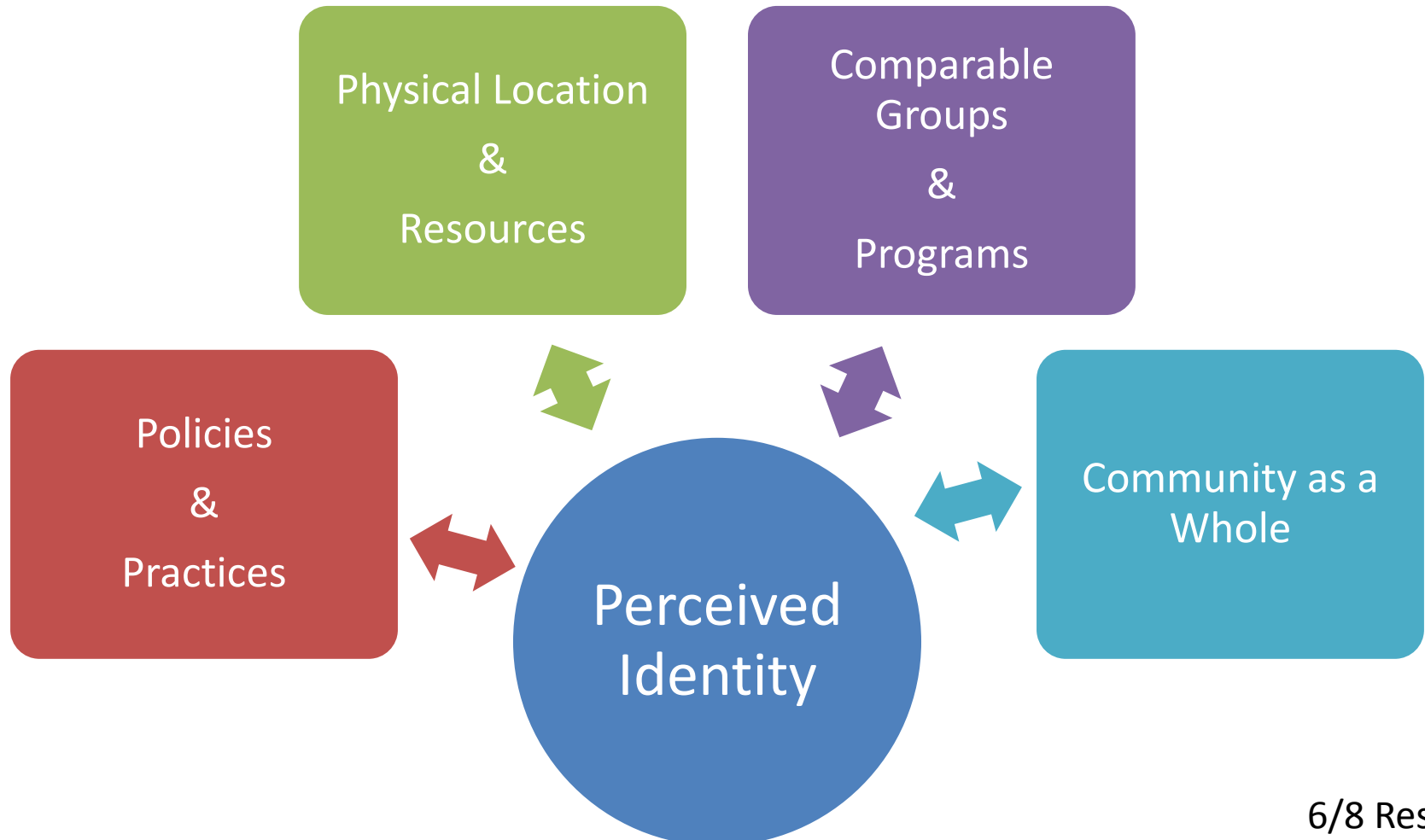
Perceptions of Identity – Lack of Belonging:

- Frequent daily reminders that students are not “university-only” reinforces a feeling of “being less than”

“I felt embarrassed because it’s total judgment. [To participate] we had to take a bus to a different site to do some kind of volunteer thing. And for the whole time waiting for the bus I was like, shoot my Mohawk student card, they’re going to see my Mohawk student card. Everyone’s like, ‘you got your student cards’? And they’ve all got their McMaster cards. Meanwhile, I’ve got my McMaster card for the gym yes, but I’ve got my Mohawk card for the bus. So literally getting on the bus it was a sleeve, magic trick. I was like this, the most discrete flash of the card because I didn’t want somebody to be like, ‘is that an Mohawk card?’. But if they were to see it, immediately there’s the judgment; ‘you’re a Mohawk student? Why are you at this function?’” ~

McMaster-Mohawk BScN student

Perceptions of Identity



Discussion

- Need to examine policies from student perspective versus institutional perspective
- Student and faculty perceptions of colleges vs. universities
(Weerts, Freed, & Morphew, 2014)
- Elitism and “rankism” alive and well within university and college cultures (Fuller, 2003)

Impact of Student Partners:

- Participant recruitment
- Openness in focus groups
- Asking pertinent questions
- Understanding results from multiple perspectives
- Challenging faculty assumptions



Conclusions

- Need to engage students in discussions across programs
- Attention to curriculum alone will not address issues of student satisfaction
 - Many feelings of exclusion stem from admin structures
- Focus on engaging students from onset to intentionally improve day-to-day experiences and sense of belonging
- Need to increase internal and external profile of collaborative programs to fight stigmas & stereotypes

Conclusions

- MOUs governing such programs should be evaluated in light of their impact on students:
 - *Do admission policies impact student access to housing or bursaries?*
 - *Do students have ID cards that provide equal access to resources such as transportation?*
 - *Are collaborative program students permitted to take courses alongside university-only students?*
 - *Are students expected to monitor multiple email accounts?*
- Student reps on Steering Committees recommended

Next Steps

- Second phase of research brings together a new group of SRs
- Student-driven collaborative student advocacy association
- Further research:
 - Staff and faculty perceptions
 - Sequential vs integrated models
 - Comparison of collaborative program experiences



Thank you!

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