

LISTENING, LEARNING, LEADING: SHARING GLOBAL STORIES OF PARTNERSHIP THROUGH THE NEXT DECADE OF THE *INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF PARTNERSHIP STUDIES*

Stephanie D. Gingerich, Lídice Mederos Villalón, Oscar Omar Díaz,
Mark Ostrom, Judith M. Pechacek, and Elizabeth V. Weinfurter

Abstract

This manuscript explores the theoretical foundations on which the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* was created, highlighting its commitment to partnership-based approaches and the methods of co-creation, co-design, and co-production, as well as diverse ways of thinking and knowing worldwide. These principles have shaped the journal's equitable approach to knowledge dissemination. Several exemplars illustrate how partnership-based approaches are being applied in local, national, and international contexts, demonstrating the journal's impact beyond academia. Looking ahead to the next ten years, the journal's champions hope to continue their dedication to sharing diverse perspectives and engaging in knowledge exchange worldwide.

Keywords: partnership, co-creation, co-design, co-production, dissemination, publication

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Introduction

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies (IJPS)* was founded on the partnership principles identified by Dr. Riane Eisler in her research on social paradigms,

which found that domination-oriented social systems tended to demonstrate characteristics of conquest, violence, and abuse, while partnership-oriented social systems tended to yield more creativity, equity, and mutual benefit and care (*Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, n.d.).

In her cultural transformation theory, Eisler defined four essential and interconnected cornerstones integral for shifting towards partnerism - and away from our current legacy of domination - to support human thriving and the survival of our planet. These cornerstones are family and child relations, gender relations, economic relations, and narratives and language (IJPS, n.d.). Cultural transformation theory has been applied in organizations to shift towards a partnership culture (Eisler & Montuori, 2001), notably in health care (Eisler & Potter, 2014).

It is important to understand how partnership works in practice and to recognize its applicability around the world. We can see both domination and partnership approaches in the home, communities, organizations, nations, and even global relations. Thus, this journal has been intent on sharing stories in which partnership is a foundation to interdisciplinary approaches to change in local and global settings.

Knowledge is inherently distributed; no single individual possesses complete understanding or all the answers regarding everything in the world. Each person is guided by their unique experiences, stereotypes, and biases. These drive their perceptions and their perspectives. Therefore, it is key to have various mindsets and perspectives represented in groups to lead change. Eisler's partnership paradigm includes mutual respect between individuals within groups, organizations, and communities. It is essential that leaders intentionally incorporate members who hold differing perspectives than their own. According to Gingerich (2020), incorporating these varying perspectives can help identify those aspects to which we have become blind within our own organizations - what she calls "broken clocks" (p. 3) - and open the door to deeper understanding and innovative solutions.

Grounded in Eisler’s cultural transformation theory, the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* publishes narratives from around the world that show how collaborative partnerships bring diverse groups and perspectives together to make meaningful change. These stories demonstrate how working in partnership can create new opportunities and find practical solutions. This focus aligns with the principle of co-creation, including co-design and co-production, in which leaders actively engage end users in identifying, developing, and delivering change initiatives (Etgar, 2008; Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Vargas et al., 2022). In our efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable scholarly system, the IJPS team recognized co-creation as essential, as it enables the sharing of power, knowledge, and responsibility, thereby strengthening the journal’s foundation and partnership approaches.

Our increasingly interconnected world requires a *glocal* mindset—one that sees the interplay between global and local challenges (Anand & Pai, 2023). *IJPS* reflects this mindset by publishing stories that transcend borders, affirming that global knowledge can inform how we act locally. It is integral to *glocal* action that leaders not only take bold action to address complex global problems, but also work intentionally to share knowledge broadly.

The concepts and methods of partnership coupled with co-creation, a commitment to diverse perspectives, and *glocal* action are key to the work published within *IJPS*.

Brief History of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*

In 2012, Riane Eisler and Dr. Teddie Potter, a nurse and internationally known expert on collaborative health-care models, were co-authoring a book which became *Transforming Interprofessional Partnerships: A New Framework for Nursing and Partnership-Based Health Care* (Eisler & Potter, 2014). Through the process of writing this book, they identified the need for a new scholarly journal to support the emerging field of partnership studies and to provide broad dissemination of scholarship and practice based on the partnership ideal. Potter had recently learned about the open

access model of scholarly publishing, in which traditional subscription-based barriers to accessing content are removed. Open access (OA) publishing makes the journal content freely available online to all, and this approach aligned directly with Potter's and Eisler's vision for the new journal (Open Access Network, 2025). Potter sought partners to bring the vision to life.

In 2013, Potter recruited three partners with diverse areas of expertise for the planning of the journal: Marty Lewis-Hunstiger, a pediatric nurse and journal editor, to advise the editorial process; Dr. Virajita Singh, an architecture and design professor and researcher, to advise the visual elements of the journal; and Liz Weinfurter, a health sciences librarian, for the logistics of creating, hosting, and publishing a journal. None of the partners had prior experience with developing an OA journal, but each person was committed to partnership ideals and willing to travel a new path of co-creation.

The most pressing technical need was a digital platform on which to publish the journal, and the accompanying financial resources necessary for access to this type of support. Since there was no funding source for the new journal, this could have been a significant barrier to creation. Weinfurter's expertise and connection with University of Minnesota (U of M) Libraries was critical. Libraries have always been guided by a commitment to connection, information access, and the common good. U of M Libraries had been supporting the concept of open access publishing by providing some financial support for University-based authors to publish in existing open access journals, but Weinfurter's connections helped accelerate the transformation of the Libraries' support of OA from transactional to systemic. The U of M Libraries joined as a full partner in the development of the journal, and this project was the catalyst for the University of Minnesota's development of and long-term commitment to financially and technically supporting both an institutional OA publishing platform and staff in a new department (Libraries Publishing) to fully support the creation of OA publications.

The journal officially launched in November 2014 as a partnership between the Center for Partnership Systems, the University of Minnesota School of Nursing, and the

University of Minnesota Libraries. It was the first open access journal to be published on the new platform. Ten years later, there are thirty OA journals as well as dozens of OA monographs and textbooks published in partnership with Libraries Publishing.

IJPS publishes two issues a year, and it has been continuously published since its inception. The journal platform and technical support are provided by the University of Minnesota Libraries, and the editorial board and peer review, copy editing, and compositing processes are supported by volunteers from across the globe.

Exemplars of Partnership Approaches

Since the first issue, *IJPS* has published articles from authors around the world that challenge domination systems and work within a partnership paradigm to implement meaningful change. Each of the following exemplars of partnership contains a unique story about supportive, relationship- and partnership-based approaches to building healthy communities.

Oscar Omar Díaz: Partnership in Academia and Teaching

Educators and students need to see themselves reflected and celebrated in the syllabus. To *Oscar Omar Díaz*, a forever learner and academic advisor, cultivating a growth mindset through our lived experiences is the key to igniting co-constructive and celebratory partnerships with students. His foundational groundwork takes a proactive, servant-leadership approach to teaching and advising that layers mentorship, resource/systemic navigation, and self/shared advocacy (creating a culture where “You thrive; I thrive; we and they thrive”). For this partnership to be successful, mutual care, trust, and respect must be nourished through open dialogue. He exercises a responsible praxis of care and safety; and students need to know who they are trusting with their dreams, effort, and needs.

Nothing secures a safety net more than experience, especially when the one securing it is speaking from personal experience. In teaching and advising, he shares his own

past experiences navigating higher education as a first-generation Mexican-American Indigenous student, as well as the headaches he gave himself and his family. He shares what worked and what did not; what was finagled; where he struggled; and most importantly, his triumphs. He emphasizes how crucial personal narratives are in centering and supporting underrepresented and underserved students like him to succeed. He leverages his cultural wealth and culturally compassionate pedagogy as a first-generation Indigenous student who very much appreciated the ‘highs and lows’ from his community college experience.

Mark Ostrom: Joy Collaborative Partnership for Inclusivity

Joy Collaborative emerged from a desire to design spaces for kids with disabilities to experience play in a way that might not typically be accessible to them.

Joy Collaborative is a nonprofit with a mission to “create empowering spaces for those with life-limiting conditions,” and a philosophy that everyone deserves a space to be themselves (Joy Collaborative, 2024.). Joy Collaborative partners with local communities, small and large organizations, individuals, and families to not only create safe spaces, but also to deliver inclusive welcoming spaces for individuals in need (Joy Collaborative, 2024). They occupy a niche between wish-granting organizations such as Make a Wish and full-scale residential organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, to renovate spaces that support whole-person experiences so that those with life-limiting conditions might thrive. Other service organizations may not have the capital due to their focus on program delivery, and single families may be facing a host of priorities, least of which is taking on a home remodeling project.

To promote more inclusive and welcoming spaces (ranging from small spaces in a home, to a van called the Joy Mobile, to large spaces in industrial buildings and hospitals), the leaders of Joy Collaborative have partnered with individuals and their support teams to identify purposeful and unique methods that enhance quality of daily living for those with life-limiting conditions. Their work includes not only physical but also visual and trauma-informed methods to remove barriers for those whose resources are lacking.

Attention to user input has led to a variety of new services including Joy Rooms, Joy Community, the Joy Mobile, Joy Zones (a double-sized version of the Joy Mobile), and Joy in a Box (retail versions of Joy Rooms). These innovative approaches to human experience design serve large program organizations, public events, and single families, all informed by deep programming into very specific and often complex needs. Spaces are transformed to create intentional, user-specific designs that allow people to move out of sometimes isolating existences and into welcoming and supportive settings such as community events, health-care or rehab settings, or residential spaces where barriers have been replaced by purposefully designed flexible, durable, and exciting experiences. This approach reflects Joy Collaborative's focus on the power of great design to support a range of human needs.

In the case of equitable access in public spaces, the Joy Mobile serves as a relief space for those experiencing high stress at public events. With acoustic isolation, low-level audio and video, and a range of tactile or passive experiences, the Joy Mobile creates a safe haven for guests to reset and subsequently re-engage. The Joy Mobile has proven to be a draw for those with sensory needs who may not have attended events such as the Minnesota State Fair before due to concerns of being overwhelmed or having difficulty with sensory processing. A person can arrive at the Joy Mobile with uncontrolled stress and exit 10 minutes later, calmer and more centered. The Joy Mobile provides a safe haven in the midst of chaotic spaces, minimizes potential embarrassment, and becomes a joyful extension of their stay.

These innovations occur because leaders listen deeply, collaborate and explore, and develop solutions in tandem with users to create spaces where purposeful and meaningful experiences can occur. This approach reflects the core values of partnership, as it centers shared decision-making, mutual respect, and the recognition that lasting change emerges through collective effort.

Judith M. Pechacek: Veterans Affairs Quality Scholars Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a long history of training the next generation of care providers.

The VA's vision for educating and training health professionals to enhance the quality and timeliness of Veteran care, both within the VA system and for the nation . . . is achieved through partnerships with academic institutions, leveraging their resources and expertise to prepare the next generation of healthcare providers (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2025).

The VA Quality Scholars' (VAQS) program is a 2-year postdoctoral interprofessional fellowship that has been training health-care providers and leaders for over 20 years both nationally and internationally (Patrician et al., 2012). The fellowship consists of ten sites across the country and one in Toronto, Canada. Interprofessional fellows and leaders (e.g. nurses, physicians, pharmacists, therapists, and informaticists) at each of the sites focus on health-care quality improvement (QI), safety, and implementation science in four domains: QI Core, Methods and Analysis, Leading Healthcare Improvement, and Career and Scholarship.

Over the two years of the structured fellowship, participants (called fellows) are exposed to real-world experience in QI, participate in weekly didactic sessions, and learn the competencies to be a leader who can drive change at the bedside. Upon completing the program, fellows demonstrate competence in Interprofessional Collaboration and Teamwork, Improvement Methods and Skills, Organization and System Leadership for Quality and Safety, Research and Teaching and Learning (VAQS Quality Scholars, 2020).

The program is structured to engender partnerships at multiple levels. The first partnership is between the individual VA sites and their local academic affiliates. Each of the ten VAQS sites has a named academic partner that works with their local VA teams to deliver academic content, ensure opportunities for fellow engagement, and co-create scholarship in needed areas unique to that site. The second partnership is

between the fellows and the local VAQS faculty (referred to as faculty) members at each site. Each week the faculty, representing the fields of nursing, medicine, clinical psychology, and pharmacy for example) meet locally to co-create the local curriculum. An example of an activity that faculty delivered to the fellows was reviewing current scholarly abstracts before submitting them to a conference.

The third level of partnership is across all of the fellows themselves. The fellows share the same office, “thought partner” regularly on their QI activities, and support each other by debriefing various activities. Partnership in the VAQS program is achieved through intentional leadership, structured content with a spirit of inquiry, and a co-creation mindset with a bias toward action. The fellows and faculty meet weekly, with a deep commitment to the quality work they need to do. The ultimate recipient of this partnership approach with each other is the veterans - there is not a more noble cause than that.

Stephanie Gingerich: Multilingual Publication

Since 2018, faculty from the University of Minnesota, School of Nursing, have traveled with students to Cuba to learn about their prevention-based national health-care model. During these trips, students are introduced to the three-tiered system of health care that focuses on illness prevention in the community and a deep partnership among patients, families, physicians, and nurses. Faculty and students are introduced to remarkable individuals throughout the health-care systems and have the opportunity to continue deep partnership even after their return to the United States.

This deep partnership led to the publication of Cuban research focused on a decade’s worth of investigations into the impact of the family environment, school, and media on the gender perspectives of young children (Escalona González et al., 2021). The original manuscript was submitted to *IJPS* in Spanish to disseminate the knowledge globally. The question shifted from “Can we publish this in English?” to “What if we publish the article in both Spanish and English?”

The *IJPS* editorial team began to develop an approach to translation to ensure not only that the article was translated accurately and effectively, but was also then peer reviewed and copy edited rigorously in both languages, with changes applied to both English and Spanish versions. The partnership among the authors, translators, reviewers, and copy editors made this work possible. Together they navigated the challenges of a gendered language on a gendered topic translated into a non-gendered language. The team worked in partnership to adapt recommended processes for translation, including forward translation, retro-translation, consideration of the individuals performing the translation given their dominant language, and the context of the writing, as well as stereotypes and biases (Ares et al., 2012; Beaton et al., 2000; Brislin, 1970; Epstein et al., 2015; Guillemin et al., 1993; Hendricson et al., 1989; Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004; Wild et al., 2005).

Given the partnership approaches involved, the team worked together with respect and deep appreciation of each person's contributions, with the goal of challenging the idea that English should be the dominant language of publication. The team's efforts yielded a publication in both English and Spanish to serve a broader audience, but also the development of the Model for Partnership-Based Multilingual Publication (MPBMP) (see Figure 1).

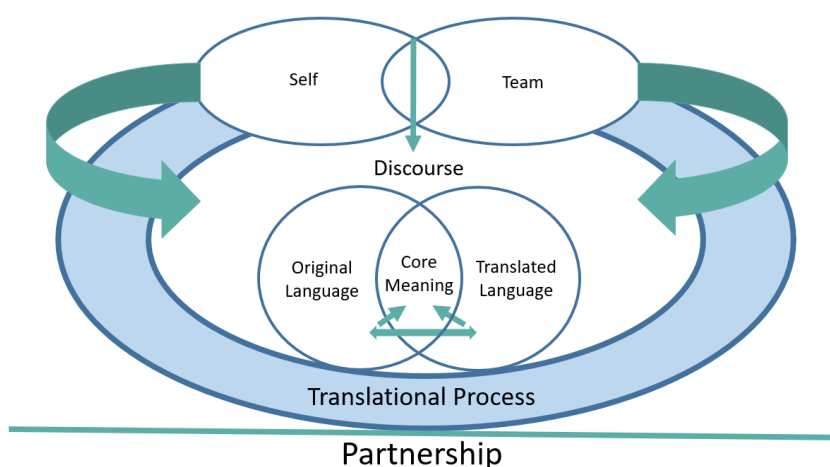


Figure 1. *The Model for Partnership-Based Multilingual Publication (MPBMP)* (Gingerich, 2025).

The MPBMP model relies on partnership principles (Eisler, 2018) employed by the entire team. In addition, the team recognized the importance of discourse to ensure that the core meaning of the work was retained in both languages during the peer review and copy editing processes. The team also recognized the importance of addressing biases and stereotypes that could influence the translational process and should be verified not only by the individual, but also by the team.

Lídice Mederos Villalón: Youth Activism in Cuba - Building Stories and Shaping the Future

Throughout history, Cuban youth have been protagonists of major social transformations and are recognized as agents of change in various settings. Convinced that trained and empowered adolescents and young people could contribute decisively to changing the course of the HIV epidemic and participate in the development of Cuba's national strategic plan and objectives for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, HIV, and hepatitis, the Youth for Life Network emerged in the 1990s. The Network is made up of Health Promoters, adolescent and young adults committed to maintaining the sexual and reproductive health of the youngest segment of society and to preventing sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

Over the years, the Network has taken steps to enhance its impact and reach, such as training peer promoters known as Health Promoters, building capacity on diverse topics, developing life skills for its members, and integrating with related social sectors, organizations, and institutions. One example of a program led by this Network and the Health Promoters is the "Decide your Game" Campaign, which is intended to strengthen informed decision-making among adolescents and promote safe sexual behaviors.

The Network's Health Promoters are characterized by their selfless commitment, sense of responsibility, and high level of preparedness. They actively promote values of responsibility, humanism, empathy, and assertiveness, enabling them to meet the

challenges of working with a changing and critical population whose expectations for sexual information and education continue to grow.

These achievements have been made possible by the Network's Health Promoters, the leadership of its teams at all levels, the stability of its coordinators, systematic capacity building, technical and financial support primarily through fundamental projects, and the level of commitment of the young people and professionals involved in the response to HIV. The deep commitment to partnership among the workers within the Network as well as in the community have allowed for promising change.

Partnership for the Future

Partnership approaches allow for diverse ways of thinking, yielding creative solutions to complex problems. As we navigate a world of complex issues spreading across countries and cultures, it is more important than ever that we work together not only collaboratively but in true partnership to design new systems to solve these issues. These exemplars of partnership demonstrate the value of its application for individuals, communities, and international work. Through partnership, students are supported to succeed, individuals are welcomed into the community, scholars create safe quality care processes nationally and internationally, youth lead health discussions with peers, and knowledge is disseminated internationally. Together we can lean in with curiosity and civility to lead change at the local and global levels.

For twelve years, the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* has been dedicated to sharing research and stories of partnership approaches across the disciplines for readers worldwide. This dedication will continue into the next ten years with the hope that our stories reflect more diverse perspectives, more languages, and more curiosity. We have so much that we can learn from others; intentional knowledge exchange such as that within *IJPS* is key not only to learning from others worldwide but also to applying knowledge for impact within our own communities. Learn globally, act

locally. We can make a difference in our communities through partnership, curiosity, civility, and, most of all, respect for all.

We invite scholars and learners to join us for the next ten years of *IJPS*. Learn more about partnership by reading our articles, share your own unique stories, and contribute to the partnership paradigm through your daily work.

Welcome to the next decade of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*.

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Stephanie D. Gingerich, DNP, RN, CPN, is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota, School of Nursing, Specialty Coordinator for the Doctor of Nursing Practice program in Health Innovation and Leadership and the Director for Global Programming. Additionally, she is the Executive Editor for the Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies. Her scholarly focus is on global healthcare studies, partnership approaches to academic and professional nursing, and leadership. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice in Health Innovation and Leadership from the University of Minnesota and a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from the University of Iowa. Dr. Gingerich is a Registered Nurse, dedicated professor to her students and colleagues, and active community member.

Lídice Mederos Villalón, RN, holds a degree in Nursing (1997) and a Master's degree in Health Informatics (2008). She is an Assistant Professor at the University of Medical Sciences of Havana and an Associate Researcher at the Academy of Sciences in the field of health promotion and disease prevention in Cuba. Her career focuses on the design and evaluation of educational interventions for sexual health, with a special emphasis on adolescents and young adults. She has led the implementation of national and international research projects related to digital technologies applied to health, health education, and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. As a specialist with more than 20 years of experience, she has been part of national teams developing plans and strategies to promote the comprehensive health of population groups.

Oscar Omar Díaz was Born and raised in the U.S.-Mexico border of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, and he serves as the Assistant Director for the Office of Student Career Advancement Services in the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Dr. Diaz's passion for pedagogy and teaching is rooted in futurist narratives, in the manifestation of 'how we became, who we are, and who we will be' as a creative and critical approach in nurturing inclusivity. Dr. Diaz's research explores the intricate

difficulties of first-generation hybrid (Indigenous) identities and the challenges of first-generation college students in surviving the impact of self-defeating internal dialogues (termed discrepancy narratives) in higher education. His scholarly work and teaching have created an important bridge between intersectional identities, first-year success, and culturally compassionate (communal) pedagogy. Want to discuss how cultural wealth compounds? Or how our ways of knowing and being nourish and heal us? How about how appreciative and narrative inquiry are community labors of love? Then say no more! Come curious and let's talk!

Mark Ostrom is the founder and executive director of Joy Collaborative, a Minnesota-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit that blends design excellence with social impact. After nearly 30 years in the architecture and design industry, Mark launched Joy Collaborative in 2019 to create personalized, life-affirming spaces—known as Joy Rooms—for youth with life-limiting conditions. Drawing on deep ties within the design, architecture, and contractor communities, Mark built Joy Collaborative from the ground up, assembling a dedicated network of professionals and volunteers. Since its founding in 2020, the organization has completed 16 projects across the Twin Cities, reaching over 7,000 individuals. Under Mark's leadership, Joy Collaborative has partnered with organizations such as Lifetime Fitness, Gardner Builders, Affinity Plus Federal Credit Union, Special Olympics, Make A Wish MN and the Hubbard Broadcasting Foundation, all working together to transform spaces—and lives—through the power of purposeful design.

Judith Pechacek, DNP, RN, CENP, is a Distinguished Professor and holder of the Katherine R. & C. Walton Lillehei Chair in Nursing Leadership. Her teaching responsibilities include courses in leadership, quality, business and global studies. Her scholarship is dedicated to interprofessional practice and the connection to organizational culture and quality patient outcomes. Dr. Pechacek is a Senior Quality Scholar, faculty member for the Veterans Administration Quality Scholars Fellowship program. She serves on multiple boards in the community, University and Affiliate faculty in the School of Public Health.

Elizabeth Weinfurter, MLIS, is the Nursing Librarian at the University of Minnesota Health Sciences Library. In this role, she brings expertise with question formation, evidence synthesis, and library information systems to partnerships with students, staff and faculty in the School of Nursing. Liz was part of the team that created IJPS in 2014, and she has been the Production Editor of the journal since its inception. She is driven by a passion for empowering her fellow humans to step into their unique power, and an unshakable belief that in spite of everything, people are really good at heart.