DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 145 EA 027 252

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TITLE Stimulating Partnership between Research and Practice: Insights from Evaluations of the Canadian Strategic Grant Program.
PUB DATE Jun 95
CONTRACT 410-92-0983; 421-93-0007
NOTE 52p.; Paper presented at the Dissemination and Utilization of Research Knowledge symposium (Oslo, Norway, May 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Grants; *Information Dissemination; *Information Utilization; Interprofessional Relationship; *Partnerships in Education; Program Implementation; Researchers; Resource Allocation; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Canada; *Strategic Grants

ABSTRACT

To enhance the relevance and usefulness of social-science research, large-scale research grant-allocation policies are emphasizing, if not requiring, the formation of research partnerships between researchers and members of the community of practice. The emergence of a revisionist conception of traditional dissemination and utilization of theoretical frameworks is consistent with this policy direction, but supportive empirical evidence remains thin. This paper presents findings of a study that evaluated a major Canadian strategic grant program that has such partnership guidelines, in order to investigate the nature and impact of policy-induced partnerships. Data were obtained from surveys of 74 funded projects, 4 case profiles, and interviews with researchers, practitioners, and grant-application adjudicators concerning the Education and Work in a Changing Society program. The partnerships had favorable impacts on research and dissemination strategies and in the practice community; however, ideological and pragmatic issues surfaced as inhibitory factors. A conclusion is that mutual benefits and maximum utilization of resources are more likely to occur when there is mutual project ownership. Higher levels of partnerships contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks and more accessible information than do more traditional approaches to applied research. Continued interaction between communities is recommended. It is suggested that grant agencies recognize the nonlinear nature of projects as well as the different cultural realities of researchers and practitioners. Three tables and one figure are included. (Contains 46 references.) (LMI)

STIMULATING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE: INSIGHTS FROM EVALUATIONS OF THE CANADIAN STRATEGIC GRANT PROGRAM

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Paper presented at the symposium Dissemination and Utilization of Research Knowledge, May 1995, Oslo.

Running Head: Stimulating partnership

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In order to enhance the relevance and usefulness of social science research large scale research grant allocation policies are emphasizing if not requiring the formation of research partnerships between researchers and members of the community of practice. The emergence of a revisionist conception of traditional dissemination and utilization theoretical frameworks is consistent with this policy direction, but supportive empirical evidence remain thin. The present study reports on a multi-method evaluation of a major Canadian strategic grant program that has such partnership guidelines. Surveys of 74 funded projects, four case profiles and interviews with researchers, members of the community of practice and grant application adjudicators concerning a strategic grant program called *Education and Work in a Changing Society* provided the primary basis for investigating the nature and impact of policy-induced partnerships. Results show favourable effects of partnerships on research and dissemination strategies and impact in the practice community, but ideological and pragmatic issues surfaced as inhibitory factors. The results are discussed in terms of implications for the revisionist dissemination and utilization framework, the role of granting agencies and ramifications for further reserach and grant allocation policy.

STIMULATING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE: INSIGHTS FROM EVALUATIONS OF THE CANADIAN STRATEGIC GRANT PROGRAM

1. INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have shown that strong links between academics and practitioners in research activities are propitious for a variety of reasons. Both communities stand to benefit from enhanced connections through such gains as more efficient use of research resources; improved, more responsive research methodologies; and enhanced utilization of research data. The resurgence of various species of action research (e.g., McTaggart, 1991; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Whyte, 1991), the continued viability of different forms of stakeholder-based evaluation (Bryk, 1983; Cousins & Earl, 1992; Greene 1988) and the emergence of user-driven dissemination and support systems (Huberman, 1993; Klein & Gwaltney, 1991; Louis, 1992) may be taken as indications that the dismantling of the iron curtain separating the academic world of the researcher from the pragmatic world of the practitioner is well underway.

The rhetoric of collaboration has been highly seductive and has played a key role in prompting research granting agencies to provide financial incentives to researchers to develop partnerships and collaborative projects with members of the community of practice. A case in point is the Canadian federal government which, through the Strategic Grants Program of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), has adopted such a posture. As one consequence of Hanson's (1989) recent review of the Strategic Grants Program, the Council decided to increase its emphasis on the establishment of partnerships in guidelines for research proposal writers (Paquet, Banting, Gervais, Ledwell, & O'Connel, 1989; SSHRC, 1990a). This policy decision is fully aligned with both the evaluation data provided by Hanson and the rhetoric of partnership. It is also consitent with contemporary research dissemination and utilization theory (e.g., Huberman, 1994). But recent reviews of the empirical research literature (e.g., Cousins & Earl, 1992) reveal that while support for

enhancing researcher-practitioner linkages is accumulating, data remain thin and many questions need to be answered.

The present article has as its focus the intended and unintended effects of policy-induced partnerships between researchers and practitioners. A major study of one of SSHRC's strategic grants programs (Cousins et al., 1993a) provides data relevant to this question. Secondarily, we draw on data from an independent review of a separate strategic grant program (Christiansen-Ruffman, Descarries & Stewart, 1992). These data provide the opportunity to describe the nature and dynamics of partnerships that evolved in the context of research funding allocation policy inducements and to assess their consequences. Data from these studies also suggest ways to develop partnership related policies and incentives.

2. FRAMEWORK

In keeping with SSHRC's stated objectives, it was both logical and sensible to frame the present study within the research dissemination and utilization domain: "Council welcomes the cooperation of public and private sector organizations as partners in strategic activities, to enhance the *relevance and usefulness* of thematic research to society" (SSHRC, 1990b, p.28, emphasis added).

Conventional conceptions of the dissemination and utilization of research-based knowledge, such as the research, development and diffusion (R,D & D) model, have been criticized on epistemological grounds. Such models are located within the positivist framework and assume that well-developed, research-based innovations will spread within defined populations of users thereby reducing the gap between what we know (according to knowledge producers or researchers) and what we do (defined by action of knowledge users or practitioners). The chief criticism is that the models place a heavy focus on the development and diffusion of knowledge while simultaneously minimizing emphasis placed on the linkages between knowledge production systems and users or contextual processes within which the knowledge is to be used. "Studies of knowledge utilization ignoring such

linkages and interactions and based on simple linear relationships are likely to be limited in their contributions and could actually be counterproductive" (Larson, 1981, p. 157). These models are hyperrational and relatively insensitive to the contextual parameters of the setting in which the knowledge is to be used (Huberman, 1994).

Over the past few decades, knowledge utilization theorists have acknowledged the complexity of the link between knowledge production and utilization (Havelock, 1969) and focused much more directly on contextual issues. Patton et al. (1977), for example, highlighted interpersonal and political context factors as being powerful predictors of instrumental and conceptual utilization patterns. Weiss also emphasized the political context for research knowledge utilization and its implications for the nature of use patterns. She demonstrated empirically that even highly rigorous and credible research products will not necessarily have an impact given the array of potentially potent organizational constraints and mitigating circumstances such as values held by policy and decision makers (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980).

Close attention to context has meant, for many, embracing elements of an interpretivist perspective of knowledge and knowing. While, in the extreme, interpretivism implies that knowledge is entirely dependent on the social and cognitive construction of meaning by groups and individuals, and the relativistic assumption that the interpretations of one party (individual or group) cannot be seen as more valid than interpretations of another, many theorists have latched on to the more moderate perspective that information is communicated, transmitted or otherwise picked up and it becomes usable knowledge only when cognitively processed by the user (Huberman, 1989; Kennedy, 1984; Lindlom & Cohen, 1979; Louis, 1994, 1995). This blending of elements of social constructivism with the traditional view is central to modern conceptions of dissemination and utilization (Huberman, 1994).

While, revised modernist perspectives on research dissemination and utilization are currently operating within the contemporary policy arena (Louis, 1995), a serious and thoughtful challenge to

this trend is grounded within the postmodern realm of critical theory. Watkins (1994), for example, denounces, on the one hand, traditional perspectives as being bounded by positivist assumptions about the nature of knowledge and suggests that its most significant contribution can be only to arrive at the conclusion that the dissemination and utilization model does not work because it underestimates the complexities of settings and people attempting to disseminate and use knowledge. On the other hand, he eschews interpretivism as being unrealistic since "groups do make validity claims; they have interests and they exert power over other groups. They argue for one interpretation over another, one value system over another" (p. 59). In viewing knowledge as having emancipatory and repressive potential, Watkins advances a postmodern critical theory of research utilization by proposing that all knowledge is an artifact of culture; knowledge systems and structures are not separable from the knower; and the production of knowledge is deeply values-driven. He further contends that knowledge is "partial, contended and influenced by the interests and values of those creating, promoting or using it" (p. 58) which raises the question of whether we need a research community at all since the traditional role of researchers in creating and promoting knowledge locates them in a position of power, control and influence, a position that they would be motivated to defend. He argues that we ought to, as an alternative, think seriously about infusing the culture of inquiry into organizations and communities of practice and leave it at that.

Recent critics of the postmodern perspective on research use conclude that a revisionist traditional conception of knowledge dissemination and utilization may be more viable as an aid to our understanding. First, Huberman (1994) argues against the postmodernist perspective on the grounds of utility. He warns that their assumptions render dissemination a "dead letter" since they imply that even practice-based knowledge, such as that arising from educative research (Gitlin et al., 1992) or various forms of emancipatory or critical action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1992; McTaggart, 1991; Tripp, 1990), would not travel and that all "empirical research amounts to inflated assertions, derived from a particular way of seeing the world" (p. 30). He also criticizes postmodernists as not having in

place a mechanism for evaluating the credibility of their own stance[2] and reveals that, for him, he cannot avoid sensing in their work elements of romanticism, on the one hand, and radical reactionism, on the other. Huberman provides a traditionalist framework upgrade that captures in an antecedent capacity the contexts of both the researcher and the user, and the "linkage" mechanisms connecting them. These conceptual clusters influence both the resources for research and effort expended in creating the conditions for utilization (dissemination). This framework acknowledges the contingent nature of knowledge and the non-linear complexities and problematics of dissemination. It still casts, however, the researcher in a dominating role on the knowledge production side.

A second critique of postmodernist critical theory of research utilization is provided by Louis (1995) who asks, if its assumptions held, why would practitioners continue to line up for research-based knowledge products? In her words, there is

> clear evidence that people in normal positions and regularized circumstances seek and use knowledge that they believe to be, if not "objective" in the philosophical sense, at least useful, comprehensible and applicable. . . . My contention is that, if we see many examples of people looking for and/or using externally generated knowledge as if it had real meaning then the versions of postmodernism that argue that all knowledge is local must be suspect. (p. 6)

She critically analyzes several contemporary theories of information and knowledge production, processing and dissemination and concludes that while postmodernists have taken us forward by demanding that we revisit a wide array of assumptions underlying our traditional conceptions of knowledge dissemination and use (e.g., the minimalist role of local context and values) even their most profound insights are compatible with a revised version of existing theories.

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[2] Watkins (1994) submits that postmodern critical theorists must hold their own theory critically; that ongoing inquiry must be open to all interests; and that ideas must connect with ideals of freedom, equality and justice. He is, however, silent on the mechanics of accomplishing this.

If we adopt a revisionist posture, then, one that embraces Huberman's (1989) notion of "looking with both eyes" or framing the use of research knowledge through two simultaneous lenses, the positivist and the interpretivist, a central element becomes the concept of "sustained interactivity" or the development and nurturing of linkage mechanisms (Huberman, 1990, 1994), or interactive processes (Cousins & Leithwood, 1993b) between research and practice communities. The stronger the links the higher the potential for the researcher to develop an understanding of the practitioner's needs and communication system and for the practitioner to fully understand and appreciate the implications and relevance of a given set (or sets) of data.

While several alternative approaches to enhancing linkage mechanisms are available, collaborative research projects that involve practitioners as not only the objects of research but as co-researchers may be particularly effective because they have the potential to enhance the development among such participants of sophisticated understandings of systematically collected data that will be grounded in their own interpretations and understandings of the settings in which they work. Moreover, if multiple organization members participate collaboratively on local research projects, shared cognitive representations may develop and, consequently, organizational learning may occur (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1991; Comfort, 1985; Cousins & Earl, 1992, in press; Cousins et al., 1993a; Whyte, 1991). This perspective is grounded in principles of social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) which proposes that knowledge is socially constructed and that "shared meaning" or jointly held cognitive representations will develop through processes of social interaction or social processing (Louis, 1994; Louis & Simsek, 1991). It provides a theoretical basis for some forms of participatory evaluation (Cousins & Earl, 1992, in press) and participatory action research (e.g., Whyte, 1991).[3]

[3] It should be noted that several other forms of participatory evaluation (Fetterman, 1994; Greene, 1988; Shapiro, 1988) and participatory action research (e.g., McTaggart, 1991) are explicitly normative and ideologically tied to principles of emancipation and empowerment.

The benefits of sustained interactivity between members of the community of practice and researchers are not likely to be, and indeed are often not intended to be, limited to the local domain of practice. A legitimate outcome of participatory forms of action research, for example, is the generation of valid social theory (Gitlin et al., 1992; Whyte, 1991). The essence of this perspective is the reformulation of Lewin's well known aphorism "there is nothing so practical as good theory" to "there is nothing so theoretical as good practice" (personal communication, David Hunt, 1987). While some express reservations about whether practitioner participation in research will necessarily render the knowledge created more usable (e.g., Louis, 1995), proponents of teacher research (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) and various forms of action research (e.g., Noffke, 1992; Tripp, 1990) would be likely to disagree on the grounds that such knowledge would be meaningfully situated within the practical milieu in which it was created, thereby minimizing the disconnectedness inherent in perceptions about more conventional modes of social science inquiry.

A second benefit of sustained interactivity that transcends the bounds of local practice is the intellectual enrichment likely to be encountered by the researcher. As we have noted, Huberman (1993) envisions two points of interaction between researchers and practitioners, one being the *transfer* of knowledge from the research community to the community of practice, the other being the *communication* of practical needs to the researchers. It is the latter to which we refer now. Rewards to the research team of enhanced linkages to the community of practice, suggests Huberman, include the adoption of new constructs for interpreting phenomena; a more differentiated, reconfigured way of representing processes underlying a given study or research program; and the reconceptualization of the approach to the research program. He proposes that empirical confirmation of such effects would have significant implications for the research community.

> Up to now, mainstream researchers in education have often avoided dissemination as a thankless burden, a distraction from their priorities, or even as a handicap to professional advancement. Members of the research community who have, in fact,

devoted blocks of time to "the field" have often defined that activity as social activism, or as altruism, or as a gesture of good faith toward the profession at large. What we see now is that sustained, interactive dissemination may be of as much value to researchers as to practitioners, but of value in a different way for each, according to the community in which each looks for professional intelligibility and satisfaction. (1993, p. 15)

While these assertions are seductive, further empirical study and demonstration of these effects would add significantly to our knowledge base.

In addition to considering the pluses of sustained interactivity, and recent empirical evidence is accumulating in support of this facet of systematic inquiry (e.g., Cousins & Earl, in press; Greene, 1988; Huberman, 1989, 1990) one must also give due to the "dark side" of the issue. Watkins (1994) hastens to point out that differences in power and stature between researchers (traditional producers of knowledge) and users (traditional receivers of knowledge) and the former's desire to maintain their privileged position may lead to inadvertent or unconscious acts that are consistent with their motives or even to mischievous behaviors designed to protect the status quo. His comments on sustained interactivity illuminate his apprehensions,

> . . . we might see researchers attempting to maximize the use of research findings by coopting interpretivist methods, building linking structures that act like temporary communities of inquiry, and as such creating shared rituals, ideologies, and patterns of knowledge creation and use across the traditional boundaries of "research" and "user" communities. Those communities could be manipulated by researchers or linking groups to infuse research findings into the process, thus creating knowledge transfer without a corollary examination of the values or interests behind the enterprise. (p. 67)

Other features of the downside of sustained interactivity might be of a pragmatic nature, linked, for example, to the pains of making communicative adjustments between research and practice

communities including the development of a shared vocabulary, an appreciation for one another's incentive systems and an understanding of the demands of daily activities. Again, additional empirical study would help to shed light on these issues.

In summary, sustained interactivity has been highlighted as an integral component of a revisionist framework for knowledge dissemination and use. Theoretical benefits of improved linkages between research and practice communities were identified as improved local practice, the generation of valid social science knowledge and intellectual stimulation and conceptual development for researchers with concomitant implications for research programs and methodologies. The so called dark side of sustained interactivity may be grounded in either ideological or pragmatic concerns. While fairly strong theoretical evidence is accruing in support of the revisionist conception and the benefits of enhanced linkages between researchers and practitioners (Huberman, 1994; Louis, 1995) empirical support remains thin at present. The evaluation of SSHRC's strategic grant programs, 'esigned to stimulate and promote sustained interactivity in the form of research-practice partnerships, provides an excellent opportunity to revisit the forgoing theoretical issues from an empirical perspective and thereby add to the discussion.

The present study seeks to understand the impact, broadly conceived, of funding agency policies that encourage the development and nurturing of researcher-practitioner linkages. Two sets of research questions guided the present inquiry.

1. How successful are policy inducements in fostering the development of researcher-practitioner partnerships? What is the nature of such partnerships? What factors influence partnership formation?
2. What are the effects of policy-induced researcher-practitioner partnerships on research practices and dissemination activities? Does partnership enhance the utility of research results?

To answer these questions we draw primarily on data collected as part of an evaluation of one of SSHRC's strategic grant programs: *Education and Work in a Changing Society* (EWCS) reviewed by Cousins et al. (1993a). At the time of data collection the program had been in operation for eight years thereby permitting a reasonable assessment of impacts of the sort mentioned above. The investigation reported here is essentially a case study with the usual limitations of a non-experimental, single treatment design. But these limitations are significantly offset by the use of triangulation strategies which relied on mixed-methods and multiple sources of data. In addition, we draw secondarily from a review of a separate strategic grant program, *Women and Work*, reported by Christiansen-Ruffman et al. (1992). This program had been in operation for nine years at the time of data collection and its review also relied on mixed-methods and multiple sources of data. A brief statement about the contexts for the evaluations precedes an elaboration of the methods used and the findings they generated.

3. CONTEXT

The Strategic Grant Program was established by the SSHRC in 1983. The goals of this thematic program are to support research in areas of Canadian national interest and importance and to develop strong research capacities in areas needing special attention. Thematic areas within the program are "born to die" once having contributed to the development of a "critical mass" of researchers in a designated content area. The general objectives of the Strategic Grant Program are laid out in SSHRC guidelines (1990b, p. 27):

- stimulate pragmatic, problem-oriented, multidisciplinary research on issues of national importance, with a view to building a body of knowledge and critical mass of research in these areas;
- create links or partnerships between academics, practitioners and policy makers with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness and impact of their individual and collective efforts;

- encourage intellectual and financial participation by public and private sector partners in strategic projects;
- raise awareness of issues and facilitate the communication of research results to scholars, policy makers and the general public;
- enhance the elaboration of new theoretical and methodological approaches to important national issues and concerns, especially by promoting multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary work; and
- assist in the development of policies in the public and private sectors.

In a document outlining a five year strategy, the Council writes "The Council is promoting the establishment of research partnerships between academic researchers and public and private organizations in all its strategic themes. Under this new program element, researchers will be encouraged to establish formal links with a body, or bodies, in the public or private sector, for the purpose of jointly conducting research projects or other related activities" (1990a, p. 15). It adds further:

> Applications . . . that include a partner will be given priority. Ideally, such a partner is to be involved in all phases of the project, from its conception and implementation to the dissemination of the research results. Partners may provide monetary assistance; their participation may also take the form of a loan of premises or equipment, pledging staff time to assist in the project or providing access to experts within the partner's network of contacts (1990a, p. 15).

The new 1990 guidelines encouraged the development of partnerships between researchers and practitioners in three ways. First, the guidelines for strategic research grants made it clear that adjudication would favour proposals that contained strong evidence of partnership development and involvement. Second, partnership development grants worth up to $5,000 were to replace the seed grant subprogram and were made available for the purposes of stimulating the development of

collaborative projects. Finally, allotments for dissemination activities were increased to 10% of the total project budget thereby encouraging breadth of dissemination (i.e., to include the policy and practice domains in addition to normal academic outlets) through innovative means.

In the period 1986 to 1992, 320 requests for funding were received by the Council and upwards of $9M (Canadian funds) was awarded to fund 143 studies within the *EWCS* program, including 93 research grants (65%), 31 seed grants (pre 1990 only, 22%), 12 workshop grants (8%), 6 partnership development grants (4%), and 1 research network grant. From 1983 to 1991, the *Women and Work* strategic program awarded 166 research grants, 82 seed grants, 20 research workshop grants and 3 partnership development grants for a total payout of $7.7M.

4. METHODS

The reviews of the *EWCS* and *Women and Work* thematic programs (Cousins et al., 1993a; Christiansen-Ruffman et al., 1992) each relied on many sources of data and were similar in design. Instrumentation and data collection methods included survey questionnaires to applicants; interviews and non-participant observations with members of adjudication committees; interviews with assessors, SSHRC officials, and unsuccessful applicants; and finally, focus groups with policy makers from private and public sectors and researchers (see Christiansen-Ruffman et al., 1992 and Cousins et al., 1993a for more detail). The *EWCS* evaluators also conducted in-depth "case profile" studies of four funded projects. Each procedure is briefly described in the following sections.

Surveys

The *EWCS* survey population included all grant holders and associates who received funding from the program's inception in 1986 to the 1992-93 funding year, with the exception of seed money grant holders ($\underline{N}$ = 143-31 = 112). All investigators named on each grant were sent a questionnaire. Usable questionnaire responses from 111 project participants associated with 74 of the 112 projects in the population (66%) were received. For the purposes of analysis, data were aggregated to the

project level (N=74) by selecting a single representative respondent (see Cousins et al., 1993a for decision rules). A survey instrument was developed and pilot tested for the study and mailed to the researchers in the spring of 1993. This questionnaire was loosely based on an instrument developed by Cousins and Leithwood (1993b) in their study of information use among educational policy implementors. The survey contained both closed-response and open-ended questions.

The *Women and Work* questionnaire was sent to all funded principal investigators and co-investigators as well as to all unsuccessful applicants,[4] for a total of 502 persons. The similarity in characteristics between the sample of 132 respondents who returned the questionnaire within the specified timeframe (38%) and the total population attests to an adequate level of representativeness of the sample (Christiansen-Ruffman et al., 1992).

Case studies

The *EWCS* review purposively sampled four case studies to enhance comparability and to maximize the extraction of information on major assessment criteria.[5] Two cases were selected because partnership ties were an explicit focus of the project. Cases A and D emphasized partnership with community of practice in their proposals. Case B was selected for other reasons (i.e., principal investigators from two distinct disciplines) but also had a strong partnership component. Case C was selected because of its distinctly traditional research approach that involved non-researchers as objects of study rather than as co-researchers.[6] The cases involved the collection of interview data in six Canadian provinces across the country with all regions being represented. Prior to interview data

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[4] The views of unsuccessful applicants in the EWCS evaluation were explored using an interview format.

[5] The authors are indebted to the following researchers for carrying out and reporting the case studies: Case A Jane Gaskell, Elizabeth Smyth and Elizabeth Reilly; Case B Rouleen Wignall and Margaret Oldfield; Case C Diane Gérin-Lajoie and Francoise Pelletier; and Case D Creutzer Mathurin and Marcel Fournier.

[6] The cases were selected on the basis of their proposals rather than the self-reported extent of collaboration/partnership because the timeline for the review necessitated parallel collection of survey and interview data. Clearly a sequential approach would have better informed the selection process.

collection, SSHRC project files were culled for documents describing the selected projects. Generally, most of the researchers and co-researchers involved in the projects were interviewed. In Case A interviews were also held with members of the community of practice who were participating in the project.[7] A standard interview guide was used to ask about project characteristics, impact, factors affecting impact, and outlook for research in the strategic theme area, among other things. The evaluation of *Women and Work* did not use the case study method.

Group interviews

Eleven group interviews were held across the country by members of the *EWCS* research team. Seven of these were attended exclusively by researchers the majority of whom had participated in the *EWCS* research program. Two more were jointly attended by researchers and practitioners and the final two were held exclusively with practitioners. The achieved sample of participants was 67, of whom 43 (64%) were men and 35 (52%) were researchers.[8] Researchers reflected diversity in geographic location, gender, linguistic group, and funding period. Practitioners were also located in different parts of the country and their occupations varied widely to include private sector employees, school board representatives, bankers, college representatives, federation of labour representatives, accountants, lawyers and civil servants.

Group interviews were forward looking and respondents provided their views and opinions about: perceived priorities and future outlook in the education and work domain; grant criteria, including partnership and dissemination in proposals; and suggestions for further work. The group interviews were generally tape recorded and attended by two members of the research team.

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[7] Limits on time and resources available for the evaluation limited similar data collection in Cases B and D.

[8] All group interviews addressed factors affecting partnership formation and dissemination issues. Whereas group interviews that included researchers tended to emphasize funding allocation policy and proposal guidelines, sessions attended exclusively by practitioners were more oriented toward substantive issues.

The *Women and Work* team also conducted group interviews as one of seven strategies in their "prospective" design to gather data for the purpose of identifying new themes. The groups were regionally based and were organized by members of the review team or other university scholars requested to do so. The group interview sessions ranged in size from 5 to 50 individuals.

Individual interviews

Persons serving as members of the *EWCS* adjudication process and a sample of grant applicants who had been turned down were also contacted and asked to participate in the study. Nine past and present adjudicators of the 20 in the population who had served either one, two or three year terms were contacted by telephone. The interview guide asked about the quality of applications, features of the adjudication process and opinions about the evaluative criteria in use. Additionally, data were retrieved from the minutes of past adjudication meetings and from non-participant observation of the process for the 1993-94 granting period.

Twenty *EWCS* unfunded applicants provided telephone interview data. The respondents were identified using a stratified random sampling procedure with year of application defining the strata. The interview guide focused on reasons for applying, opinions about application procedures and requirements and aspects of the selection and feedback process.

Formal and informal semi-structured interviews were conducted over the course of the *Women and Work* review with assessors, SSHRC officials, policy-makers from public and private sectors, and researchers within the field including those who had applied and some who had not applied to the Strategic Grant Program. At least one member of each adjudication committee from 1983 to 1992 was also interviewed in order to gather information on the process of assessing and awarding grants.

5. RESULTS

Although partnerships were encouraged throughout the lives of both strategic programs, the number of projects with partnership components was relatively low overall but increased following the

1990 policy change. In both 1991 and 1992 only 6 formal partnerships per year were formed among the funded *Women and Work* projects representing 25 and 39% of the successful recipients in the respective years. In the *EWCS* review, data from 1991 to 1993 indicate that between 55 to 88% of the funded studies involved partners. Compared to the other thematic programs, *EWCS* was the most successful in establishing partnerships, but a significant drop in applications in the 1993 funding year (almost 75%)[9] and the low response to partnership development grant (4%) foreshadow difficulties with the partnership guideline. The following sections describe the nature and dynamics of policy-induced partnerships and the impact these projects were observed to have.

Nature of policy-induced partnerships

In considering the nature of partnership arrangements we keyed on such variables as number of partners and size of partnerships; location of organizations in public or private sectors; whether partnerships were new and came about as a consequence of the grant proposal or previously established and building on prior networks; and the nature (e.g., contribution of financial or human resources or "in kind" contributions) and level of participation of members of the partnership (e.g., consultation, collaboration, cooperation, full partnership). Related to level of participation is stage in the research process (e.g., planning, doing, disseminating) at which participation and involvement occurs.

The types of partnerships and levels of involvement of members of the community of practice were, in general, quite limited and fairly conventional. While the vast majority of *EWCS* researchers surveyed (85.5%) reported having academic colleagues and members of the community of practice as intended audiences and users of project data, Table 1 shows modest degrees of practitioner involvement at all stages of research, the highest levels being restricted to interpretation and

[9] Our guess as to how best explain this drop is that the cadre of researchers working in the area already had active funding and therefore were ineligible and partnership development grants were underutilized because of either poor marketing and/or perceived inadequate amounts.

dissemination phases of the project. Administrators, institutional policy developers, curriculum developers, teachers and training consultants figured prominently among educational practitioners involved in *EWCS* projects, whereas non-educational practitioners included federal, provincial and municipal government employees, and private sector managers and staff, mostly those responsible for human resources functions such as selection and staff development. Participation by practitioners in reporting and dissemination activities, were found to increase significantly, however, in the period following the policy changes in 1990. Participation in conceptualization aspects of the project and engagement in technical research activities such as data analysis and writing were quite limited. This was also the case with the *Women and Work* funded projects. Christiansen-Ruffman et al. (1992) report that "collaboration took various forms, from opening up archives, memberships lists or meetings to scholars, to joint projects such as setting up local history exhibits and participatory theatre about issues identified by working women" (p. 81). There was little evidence in this study to suggest that practitioner partners were involved in actually carrying out the research process.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The *EWCS* case studies provide insight into the dynamics of partnership arrangements. Case A researchers experienced severe difficulties and protracted time delays in initiating linkages between educational organizations and business and industry as well as partnering business with academia. The grant recipients proposed a qualitative, emergent methodology that did not permit them to make predictions about outcomes at the time of grant proposal writing; the consequence was, in the eyes of the business community, that the researchers came off either looking to be undecided about aspects of the study or to be making promises they could not keep. To compound the problem, efforts to establish a partnership link with one outfit were aborted after 12 months when the initial contact person took on a new organizational responsibility and for all intents and purposes, left the scene. Moreover, the university's "industrial liaison office" proved to be woefully inadequate in breaking through the cultural barrier and in the final analysis it was prior links between one of the principal

investigators and a corporation that provided the research team with the credibility it needed to establish the partnership.

Once the project was up and running, however, other problems surfaced. For example, individuals who had given support at the time of the proposal were no longer in the same positions; SSHRC cut the project budget significantly, forcing the researchers to seek additional project funds from elsewhere; and, after obtaining administrative consent, additional grass-roots support needed to be cultivated in order for project objectives to be realized. Business partners were less interested in emergent qualitative data than they were in the rapid flow of facts and figures that could be used to evaluate the consequences of their involvement with the educators. Despite the obvious differences in desired goals from the three types of partners (i.e., university, education, and business), all informants remarked that they had benefited in some respects through their involvement with the project. These benefits are addressed in the following section.

Partnership links in Case B, by comparison, took a different turn. Funded researchers were able to "hit the ground running" regarding the establishment of a partnership because their recent completion of a collaborative project had stimulated them to propose a much larger scale study involving the same "partnership association." The partnership association's mandate was to establish links between senior business managers and administrators of educational organizations for the purpose of improving school-to-work transitions. The pilot project, which was solicited by the partnership association, had been a great success. However, one consequence of the evidently strong connection between the principal investigators and the practitioners was for the SSHRC adjudication committee to cut back the proposed budget by a whopping 65% with an eye to having the principal investigators secure the balance of the required funding from their partnering agency. According to the research officer working on the project,

> I was shocked, absolutely shocked to see how much of the money we asked for we actually got. . . . I remember the principal investigators paring down and trying to

cut corners [before applying to the SSHRC]. We thought that they were going to think we had been very conservative about the budget and that they would appreciate the fact that we were not making it into an elaborate study. And then to see that we only got one third of what we asked for, especially considering that the study was exactly the area that the funding was supposed to support . . .

Given that the partnership association was unable to make up the shortfall, the researchers were faced with the prospects of watering down the project to a level that would be unacceptable to them, cancelling the project, or recruiting funds from elsewhere. The funding recruitment option was pursued with some success, but at high costs in terms of the principal investigators' time and effort.

Whereas Case C opted to limit the involvement of members of the community of practice to the role of objects of study, Case D on the other hand, provided somewhat of a "rags to riches" perspective on the partnership dimension. The research team reported early reticence from the community of practice about developing formal partnerships at the proposal submission stage. The large scale enterprises in the industrial and service sector tended to view academics as consultants who ought to be able to size up and develop immediate solutions to their problems and rapidly produce resource material and results. Thanks to two intensive recruitment efforts, the initial network of ten business enterprises grew to 25 once funding was awarded and the project meetings got underway. Twenty-five additional partners joined the network at later stages when the initial financial condition was amended to include organizations willing to contribute the equivalent of three person-days per annum. According to one of the principal investigators, motivation for enterprises to become partners in the network was attributable to their curiosity, the alignment of the project with their own organizational objectives, the possibility of joint activities, the services rendered, and a desire to be part of a network.

The perception of a financial component to the partnership guideline caused great concern for *Women and Work* researchers partly because they quickly became aware that most of women's groups

do not have the financial ability to contribute. As Christiansen-Ruffman et al. (1992) stated in their review, "Given this criteria, researchers expressed concern that their proposed studies with women's groups might be judged less important than those with well-funded organizations" (p. 81.)

EWCS group interview participants described further the challenges confronting researchers working with non-academic communities particularly at the proposal writing and submission stage. First, preconceived views of partners, differences in organizational culture and the time needed to establish effective working linkages were reiterated. For example, one researcher complained about the prospect of having to recruit partners at the time of proposal writing. "It is difficult enough to work up a grant without worrying about who specific partners will be and the exact nature of relationships." Participants noticed that "It takes time to build trust, to learn how to effectively partner another person" and "sometimes you go forward sideways."

The impact of preconceived views of the partners were also obvious in the *EWCS* case studies. One principal investigator in Case A articulated his frustrations this way, "Educationists have little experience with industry; we don't know how to speak their [industry's] language, and we don't know what types of projects they are likely to find interesting or useful." Another commented, "We [academics] sound naive and money-sucking. They [industry] sound ruthless and heartless." Unfunded applicants voiced a variety of concerns about the negative decision to the proposal after so much time and energy had been invested in the partnership development process. They suggested that rejection, in and of itself, is difficult to accept, but the task of going back to partners with the rejection notice is very difficult, particularly when the partners are involved in the conceptualization of the research design. Many unfunded researchers reported a loss of credibility, and for that reason would not consider re-applying with the same partners. This perception was also evident in the *Women and Work* program, "Researchers were reluctant to go through the process of developing a working partnership and building expectations and trust unless there was a relatively good chance of receiving funding" (Christiansen-Ruffman et al., 1992, p. 81).

Another major concern was project control. Some *EWCS* group interview participants suggested that financial contributions by partners encourage territorialism and enhance expectations that projects be aligned with organizational priorities that are not necessarily related to the study. In one participant's view "partners ought not to support a project financially if they ask in return for control over the type of research conducted or the eventual reporting of results." Some explained that fiscal resources are tight and that organizations would be more apt to a stance of "what's in it for me" if funding were contributed.

Finally, in the *EWCS* study adjudicators acknowledged confusion over the meaning and intent of the partnership criterion. In particular, it was not always clear whether the term implied that financial commitment on behalf of partners was a prerequisite, which it was not.

Perceived impact on research and practice

In order to test the impact of policy-induced partnerships on research and practice in the *EWCS* study, an indicator variable called "level of participation" was constructed using the questionnaire items appearing in Table 1. A linear combination of these items was created (Cronbach's alpha = .73), followed by a median split to arrive at norm-referenced high participation and low participation groups ($N = 68$ using listwise deletion of missing cases). This variable was then used in bivariate and multivariate analyses to determine the extent to which participation predicts self-reported research and dissemination practices and, ultimately, perceived project impact. Table 2 (panels a through c) shows that the participation variable was not a strong predictor of research practices. The only noted effect was on projects that included public sector employees on the actual research team, X^2 (1, $N = 68$) = 6.47, $p < .01$. Studies involving members of the community of practice were more likely, however, to use descriptive statistics, X^2 (1, $N = 60$) = 9.49, $p < .01$, to use emergent, as opposed to previously established codes for content analysis, X^2 (1, $N = 60$) = 4.05, $p < .05$, to employ triangulation techniques to help validate findings, X^2 (1, $N = 60$) = 5.73,

$p < .05$, and to use non-parametric statistics (e.g., Chi-square, rank order correlation), X^2 (1, N = 60) = 5.00, $p < .05$.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Some differences attributable to participation were also evident in dissemination practices (panels d and e). Regarding audiences for dissemination, projects with relatively high levels of participation were more likely to target academic audiences, X^2 (1, N = 68) = 6.22, $p < .01$, labour groups, X^2 (1, N = 68) = 3.71, $p < .05$, and community groups, X^2 (1, N = 67) = 4.64, $p < .05$. They also tended to present papers at scholarly conferences, X^2 (1, N = 62) = 3.61, $p < .05$, attend public policy and public forum meetings, X^2 (1, N = 67) = 4.51, $p < .05$, publish information in association newsletters, X^2 (1, N = 67) = 5.36, $p < .05$, and publish practice-oriented monographs or books, X^2 (1, N = 67) = 5.96, $p < .01$. Delegates from projects with relatively high partner involvement were also more likely to attend public forum meetings, X^2 (1, N = 67) = 3.93, $p < .05$. This propensity toward broad dissemination practices was also evident in the *EWCS* case studies.

Cases that involved partnerships revealed dissemination patterns that spanned the spectrum from academia to practica. At the time of the *EWCS* review, Case D researchers working in partnership with the large corporate consortium had attended five academic conferences (six papers) in Canada, the U.S., and France. Also, they had written four book chapters, established a network, created a bulletin to update participants on project progress, and put together a central repository of documents numbering upwards of 2,000 titles. In-service workshops, practical conferences, and interviews with media were among the practical activities undertaken by Case A principal investigators who had struggled for so long to establish links with business and education organizations. Case B researchers, who entered the project with strong partnership ties, wrote articles for their partnership association annual report, spoke regularly at their meetings, and placed a high premium on opportunities to share their data broadly. These researchers were described by some practitioners as being particularly adept at "sizing up" an audience. As one practitioner stated,

"They [researchers] can produce the product in more than one way. They've learned how to read the audience very well." By contrast, researchers in Case C, who made no partnering connections to the community of practice, had done relatively little by way of dissemination even though the project had been running for quite some time.

The *EWCS* case studies indicate that project impact may mean different things to the various partners (i.e., business community, educators, academics). Researchers from all three partnership cases (i.e., Cases A, B, and D) needed to incorporate changes into their design in order to accommodate their funding recruitment strategies. Case A researchers struggled with variable research site development patterns forcing them to abandon initial plans in order to finally find sites that were on the "same wavelength." The following excerpt from the case profile shows how the initial disappointment and frustration turned out to be a conceptual benefit for the researchers.

> The researchers discussed this at length among themselves and concluded that the differences in development of the sites was in itself an excellent opportunity for study and analysis. The analysis of these differences was integrated into the research design and became a component which complemented other aspects of the study. (Cousins et al. 1993a, p. 5.2.4)

In addition to conceptual benefits, both researchers and practitioners described the development of new friendships and learning partnerships as unexpected benefits of the project. Case B changes included alterations in sampling design, the addition of survey items in the questionnaire and an obligation to conduct corporate-specific analyses. As mentioned previously these researchers were also forced to invest heavily in fund raising activities in order to successfully implement the project. As the following comment reveals, while being very disruptive, even these activities had some positive spin-offs.

> I benefited from getting a grant [in addition to that provided by SSHRC] and I don't know that we would have got one had SSHRC not cut back the budget. I learned a lot from raising funds but we would have finished a year sooner [had we not had to expend our energies in

raising funds]. We would have had the information out to policy makers about a year earlier. Still, I learned a lot about organizations and I have made a lot of contacts. . . . I may write an article about the process of raising funds for research.

The active involvement of practitioners in the planning and design stages of the study led Case D researchers to adapt many previously proposed activities such as interview and survey methods in favour of the more timely and immediate feedback resulting from focus group methods. They quickly came to realize that the approach outlined in their grant proposal would not fit the needs of the private sector without adapting the methods and extending the timelines.

> The researchers realized that in responding to the needs of businesses they had to extend significantly the activities originally proposed but they were able to do this without deleterious consequences to the project because the businesses remained committed to carrying out the original activities. (Cousins et al., 1993a, p. 5.2.32)

Once new or altered methods had been implemented, the researchers were able to appreciate the value these approaches added to the project. One of the principal investigators shared that he had grown throughout the project to the extent that he was able to approach research problems from a different perspective and work them through to solution more effectively. Researchers, overall, felt constrained in their ability to meet practitioners' needs by the structure of the granting program, as the following comment shows.

> The initial grant proposal was organized in a linear and logical manner. But our work with the partners who had other expectations implied another dynamic. . . . We could not work seriously with partners in a sequential order. However, if we did not conceive of the original proposal that way we would have had nothing to put forward to either the granting agency or the partners. But I knew that beforehand. (Cousins et al., 1993a, p. 5.2.31)

In addition to the need to develop skills in continuously adjusting the study design to better fit both the research community and the community of practice, the *EWCS* group interview participants

described a need to acquire specific partnership development skills, skills not usually necessary when researchers and practitioners work independently. Such essential skills include marketing and lobbying competencies, negotiation strategies and communication skills. These skills were thought necessary to viable projects given the differences in organizational culture that were encountered. The following excerpt from the evaluation report brings these differences to light.

> Perhaps the major challenge was the differences in organizational culture between the academic research milieu and the "workplace." Differences are found in terms of research needs, values, timelines, and the like. One [group interview] participant explained it as "differing cycles, differing time frames. The academic world marches at a different pace than the field practitioners do." Another mentioned that "Even when the workplace was defined as an educational setting--a school or a university--differences in language, methodological orientation and timelines created challenges." (Cousins et al., 1993a, p. 111).

Researchers also felt they had the responsibility of "providing structure, giving leadership and providing some training about the whole process."

Figure 1 shows from the survey the perceived level of impact on practice and practitioners. Although bivariate analyses revealed that these perceptions of impact were not differentiated by the partnership indicator, Table 3 shows that *EWCS* projects with higher levels of participation were more likely to lead to increased activities in the community of practice, $t_{(64)} = -2.35$, $p < .05$, and to encourage continuing joint partnerships between researchers and practitioners (approaching significance). On the downside, case study researchers did not think that any project activities would carry on once funding had expired because the necessary infrastructure was not in place.

[Insert Figure 1 and Table 3 about here]

EWCS joint ventures were also perceived by the researchers surveyed to have changed the thinking of members of the community of practice, $t_{(59)} = -2.28$, $p < .05$, and to provide support for

local decision making, $t_{(64)} = -2.28$, $p < .05$. This view was supported in the *EWCS* case studies. Case A researchers suggested that the industrial partners really benefitted from "by-products" such as the technical assistance provided by one of the university staff members and in Case B, the administrator of the partnership group was glowing about the potential impact of the work that had been undertaken.

> I'm very enthusiastic about this work. I think it's a way of beginning to try to change the way we look at teaching and learning. It's a totally new concept the kind of things [that the principal investigators] are doing are going to help us take advantage . . . to understand that the nature of self-directed learning on behalf of a student is going to have to be far more consciously developed.

Overall the results indicate some positive project impact attributable to working within policy-induced partnership contexts but a number of challenges remain. First, cultural barriers include preconceived notions and expectations regarding the partner (academic vs. practice); high personnel turnover and movement within the workplace; and different cycles, time frames, languages, levels of commitment, and methodological orientations. "If partnership links are to continue under a program such as EWCS, prospective investigators must work at identifying specific benefits to all potential partners." (Cousins et al., 1993a, p. 5.2.5). A second challenge is related to the issue of relative administrative and financial control over the study. In some cases, as indicated above, problems arose as to the "intellectual property" or ownership of the data.

6. DISCUSSION

In general, researchers and practitioners in the present study supported the concept of partnership and agreed, in principle, with its purported benefits. However, as the results show, significant obstacles and contradictory dimensions inherent in policy-induced partnerships surface in practice. Unless such barriers are overcome strategic grant programs of the sort reviewed here are

likely to have limited success in meeting stated objectives. In the discussion to follow we summarize the main themes emerging from our investigation of the nature and impact of policy-induced partnerships and the conditions and factors influencing these arrangements. These themes are situated among the conceptual issues raised earlier and consideration is given to promising directions for further research. Finally, we consider implications for policy makers wanting to stimulate the development of such partnerships.

Conditions and factors influencing partnership arrangements

Two main themes emerged regarding conditions and factors influencing the establishment and development of successful policy-induced partnership arrangements. These may be loosely considered under ideological and pragmatic banners. From an ideological perspective issues of project control and ownership were undeniably influential in determining the nature and impact of partnerships. On the one hand, in the *EWCS* group interview data, researcher concerns were noted about the implications for project control of financial support provided by participating agencies. There was also evidence to suggest that practitioners had strategic intentions for data usage. This was particularly the case when they made financial contributions to the project, and, in some instances, such as in Case A where researcher attempts to initiate partnerships with business were frustrated, was a source of consternation for researchers. By and large, projects were dominated by researchers, with practitioner partners being most active in data interpretation and dissemination activities. Survey data suggest that participation in planning and design activities and in actually carrying out the research was limited for practitioners. To that extent, practitioner participation in knowledge production activities was minimal. Their role appeared to be more directly tied to interpretation and the deployment of research knowledge once constructed.

On the other hand, where project control was more balanced or evenly distributed among partners mutual benefits were more likely to accrue. For example, participating corporations in the *EWCS* Case B profile were not satisfied to be merely either the consumers of research or the objects

of it. They wanted direct involvement in all phases of research including setting objectives, designing and carrying out research methods, and also in raising the necessary funds. Although it took a considerable investment of time and energy to secure the additional funding, prior linkages between researchers and practitioners, in no small measure, led to the ultimate success in obtaining the needed financial support.

Conceptually, these data provide a very interesting basis for interpretation. First, although direct evidence of mischievous or repressive uses of data by researchers was not apparent, researchers were very much invested in protecting their dominant role in the knowledge production function, an observation that is consistent with the postmodernist posture put forward by Watkins (1994). But these findings are not necessarily reflective of the dark side of sustained interactivity. They are also consistent with the revisionist perspective put forward by Huberman (1994), in particular, his cyclic representation of the flow of knowledge and information; communication of practitioner needs and contextual parameters to the researcher and the transfer to users of knowledge the production of which is informed by such information. Our data suggest that this revised version of the traditionalist dissemination and utilization framework is limited to the extent that it maintains an exclusionary posture concerning the participation of non-researchers in the knowledge production function. Indeed models of collaboration that relegate practitioners to consultancy roles, as was usually the case in the EWCS example, cannot be considered true partnerships and will necessarily tip the balance of power and control to the researcher. We suggest that where true partnerships are formed, where the balance of control is evident, and where members of both research and practice communities participate fully in knowledge production, mutual benefits are more likely to occur and utility of research knowledge is maximized.

Mutual project ownership is most likely to occur once participants from both communities have developed a long-term relationship based on the need to study a shared issue from different perspectives. But the development of such relationships are subject to formidable pragmatic concerns,

several of which we highlight below. First, problems associated with establishment and initial consolidation of researcher-practitioner partnerships were painfully evident. Investigators who took partnership guidelines seriously met with considerable frustration and consternation, much of this stemming from the cultural differences that separate research and practice communities. This should come as no real surprise since the respective communities have unique demands, reward systems and time frames (Weiss, 1991). Each community views research differently. For example, some practitioners want quick solutions to their problems whereas academics tend to be preoccupied with issues for which no solutions are yet available. The challenges presented by cultural barriers are underscored in the present study as having the significant potential to determine the effectiveness of the partnership arrangement.

A second pragmatic concern is associated with the time available for partnership development. Mutually beneficial relationships require collegiality, on-going interaction, shared decision making and assignment of responsibilities, shared ownership of intellectual property and flexibility in aligning and adapting project characteristics to both parties' personal and organizational priorities. The complexity of these relationships suggests that successful partnership formation requires not only sustained commitment from all partners but sufficient time for establishing effective working relations to develop and mature. These conditions are most likely to be achieved if the research is initiated by an established partnership arrangement such as a partnership association, a consortium, a coalition, a collaborative group or a steering committee, rather than by individual groups or partnerships formed for the purposes of competing for grant monies.

Finally, the stability of partnerships may have been threatened by a variety of factors. In some cases it was noted that financial awards were significantly trimmed back in view of the perceived stability and resources available through already existing networks or consortia. This often faulty assumption may have been a source of hardship and tension among partnership members. Instability was also apparent when links with the community of practice made by researchers were

with individuals as opposed to organizations. Given limits on the infrastructure supporting researcher-practitioner partnerships in the community of practice, elements of instability introduced by individual promotions or transfers could be extremely detrimental. If partnerships are to maintain themselves once funding has dried up, it will be necessary to develop ongoing support mechanisms and it is therefore important to define the unit of analysis at the organizational rather than individual level.

Consequences of partnership

An important finding in the present study is that partnerships do conditionally affect the utilization of research data and, ultimately, dimensions of practice in ways that are both intended and helpful. The finding confirms the critical importance of interactive processes (see Cousins & Earl, 1992) and provides further justification for Huberman's (1990) linkage hypothesis. While not new, this finding does add to a growing body of empirical support for enhancing partnerships in research and it does so in the context of grant allocation policy designed to do just that. To our knowledge no other studies of this sort are available. These results better enable policy makers to move beyond rhetorical support for the establishment of partnership incentives.

But probably the most significant contribution of the present study lies in what it tells us about the impact of true partnership arrangements on the research process itself which helps to fill a gap in our empirical knowledge base identified by Huberman (1993). In the context of policy-induced partnerships, our data revealed influences on the design and structure of research, and substantial impact on the breadth of dissemination. Research process effects that we observed were the development of creative and responsive research methods and improved, more far reaching dissemination practices. Clearly, higher levels of partnership lead to the production of wider, more accessible research information than is the case with more traditional approaches to applied research. This finding supports Louis' (1995) assertion that adherence to the view that all knowledge is local is misguided and that externally generated knowledge can travel. It also brings into question, in our

view, her resolution that "involving the 'users' in research will not necessarily make the research more useable -- except at that particular site" (p. 18). We would offer a somewhat more optimistic view and choose to argue that practitioner involvement in true partnership will greatly enhance the potential for data to be used.

The present data also showed quite clearly that policy-induced partnerships imposed new demands on researchers and that although frustrations were encountered, generally, these demands were well-received. Researchers developed valuable "partnering skills" such as marketing, lobbying, communication and, the ability to "size up" the partner. These observations suggest that partnership activities can be intrinsically rewarding for researchers. Such rewards include, but are not limited to, gratification from seeing research data having a practical payoff, development of conceptual perspective, extension of research program, and skill and competency development. In the face of existing cultural barriers and the plethora of extrinsic disincentives to participation that currently operate within the academic setting (Mathisen, 1990) intrinsic motivators are key to sustained researcher involvement in integrated projects of this type.

Finally, we observed the development of new theoretical frameworks by researchers from issues, principles and interpretations of data raised by practitioners in problem-solving situations. The development of such frameworks and their evaluation by practitioners has strong potential to enhance practice as well as advance research in specific domains. Research of this sort has been referred to by Lieberman (1992) as "scholarly activity." Partnerships should encourage both practitioners and researchers to refine, change or transform their respective frameworks and organizational cultures that can meld and emerge into a new culture that values research and systematic inquiry.

Reconsidering funding allocation

The foregoing discussion of the nature and impact of research-practitioner partnerships and conditions and factors influencing them, has surfaced a variety of intrusive ideological and pragmatic forces. To better understand these forces it will be useful to more directly consider the role of the

grant allocation or funding body. In the paper we have considered this body merely as a provider of the impetus for the establishment and development of partnerships. In this role SSHRC defines for study broad themes of national interest (e.g., EWCS, Women and Work), provides guidelines for proposal preparation and adjudication (which include such elements as definitions of partnerships), provides support for proposal development, and, of course, allocates research dollars. Given the level of involvement of the funding agency, one is tempted to conceive of it as a third, perhaps silent, partner in the projects it stimulates. Is this a reasonable way to view SSHRC involvement? Our answer to this question is no, but it should be.

The private sector in scenarios where one encounters partnership arrangements with silent partner involvement, typically such partners' stake in the given enterprise is directly linked to their investment interests. In other words, of utmost importance to the silent partner is fiscal productivity and return on investment. Although general expectations for how the money put up might be spent are likely, by definition, the partner is silent on issues of management and operation. While these latter features may describe SSHRC involvement, the issue of accountability and productivity is a point of departure. First, as a matter of policy and unlike other granting agencies such as the National Science Foundation, SSHRC remains uninvolved in dissemination activities. Second, as was evident in our review of the EWCS theme, the emphasis placed on following-up grants for the purposes of ensuring that projects reach closure (let alone accomplish proposed objectives) or for informing the adjudication of subsequent proposals of previously funded researchers was minimal at best (Cousins et al., 1993a). The extent to which a stronger role as a legitimate silent partner would aid in the establishment, development and ultimate viability of partnerships remains to be seen but this route seems to be desirous from the point of view of accountability if not substantive contribution.

Examinations of trends in the data cause one to ponder the assumptions held by the granting agency and the extent to which these are valid. Three examples are particularly vivid. The first example maps directly onto the foregoing discussion and requires no further elaborating beyond

restating that the assumption that the role of providing the impetus for partnerships with no further monitoring or accountability checks may be a faulty one. Second, partnership development grants were noted to be undersubscribed, either because they were not marketed well or viewed by researchers as being insufficient to the purpose. Moveover, researchers reported considerable difficulty in establishing partnerships causing delays and shifts of timelines, not to mention anxiety. It seems likely that the processes for the initiation and establishment of partnerships may have been underestimated or assumed to be much easier to implement than turned out to be the case. Finally, the funding agency may have been harbouring assumptions aligned with more traditional, and outdated, views of dissemination and utilization. While the emphasis on the establishment of partnerships might suggest adherence to a revisionist perspective of the type described earlier, clearly, research proposal guidelines and adjudication procedures favoured models with researchers firmly in control. The perceived necessity of proposing linear and sequential research processes and the marginalization of private scholars and practitioners as principle investigators support this claim by virtue of their implicit consistency with the view that the optimal role for practitioners may be in a consultative, interpretive or promotional capacity, rather than one that is integral to the knowledge production loop.

Implications for research

A variety of promising prospects for continuing research emerge from the present study, the most comprehensive if not obvious being further study of large scale policy efforts to foster the establishment and development of researcher-practitioner partnerships. Other than the work commissioned by SSHRC (e.g., Christiansen-Ruffman et al., 1993; Hanson, 1989; Paquet et al., 1990), we are unaware of empirical ventures of this sort. At a more specific level three foci seem particularly salient. First, the present study was to a large degree biased toward the researchers' perspective due in part to the needs of SSHRC in commissioning the evaluation and in part to the difficulties one might encounter attempting to access practitioner-user populations. The present study

helps to inform and extend thinking about the revised traditionalist perspective on dissemination and utilization and identifies some inconsistencies with the postmodern theory of research utilization. By no means, however, does it provide definitive answers. We need to know much more about the dark side of sustained interactivity particularly in terms of strategic utilization behaviors of researchers and practitioner-users. Data emerging from the point of view of the practitioner-users are likely to add substantially to our insights on these matters.

Second, we need to explore in more depth variations in partnership intensity. On the basis of the present data we asserted that full partnerships that witness the direct involvement of practitioners in knowledge production activities will culminate in the creation of data that are more usable than one might expect from more traditional researcher dominated enterprises. Comparative studies that manipulate as an independent variable the balance of project control among researcher and practitioner participants would help to test this assertion. Some of our own research (Cousins, 1994) has begun to shed insight here, although it is grounded within the cognate field of evaluation, as opposed to research, utilization, the chief distinction being that intended uses are limited to the local context.

Finally, we need to explore in more detail the role of funding agencies and in particular the assumptions held by them. SSHRC differs quite dramatically, for example, from agencies such as the National Science Foundation in its posture toward dissemination. Why is this the case? What assumptions are held by the different granting agencies? To what sort of dissemination and utilization framework do such organizations subscribe, and are their policies consistent with their underlying assumptions?

Implications for grant allocation policy

Sufficient evidence is provided here to warrant further consideration of inducements for collaborative researcher-practitioner research as a grant allocation policy option. However, the limitations that we observed necessitate a hard look at implications for policy.

The concept of "partnership," as defined in the SSHRC proposal guidelines, was viewed by researchers and practitioners as ambiguous and in need of clarification. Although we acknowledge that several types of partnership arrangements are possible and should be recognized as legitimate, the virtues of "full partnership", implying joint ownership and control in knowledge production, should be clarified and highlighted. The partnership requirement should be specified in broad terms, inclusive of applicants with practice-based knowledge or political awareness rather than favouring certain categories of partners, such as professionals, because of their "academic" background. Some focus groups in the *Women and Work* study recommended that SSHRC drop the explicit reference to financial resources and emphasize alternative contributions such as knowledge, experience, expertise, and human resources.

Given the complexity of setting up and sustaining effective partnerships it seems reasonable that grant agencies also recognize the non-linearity of the process and attempt to accommodate it. For example, it might be prudent to consider a "staged" grant process whereby funding for actually doing the research and subsequently disseminating it would be dispersed only after satisfactory results of preliminary partnership development funds had become evident. The development of formal long-term partnership links between the community of practice and academics should be encouraged by awarding attractive (i.e., substantial) partnership development funds and marketing them appropriately. On the other hand, criteria might be developed that would enable already established partnerships to bypass this development phase and proceed with the proposed research agenda. It should not be assumed that established partnerships will be replete with resources and are therefore prime candidates for budget trimming. In contrast, grant allocation agencies ought to view such arrangements as solid foundations worthy of substantial support.

Sensitivity to the separate cultural realities within which researchers and practitioners work is another implication for policy makers. Since incentives for dissemination in the world of practice or for working closely with the field are not typically provided in the university environment (Mathisen,

1990), support structures such as workshops on partnership development skills might be needed. It is also prudent to look for or provide for the establishment of structural or organizational partnerships rather than relying on individuals. Great difficulties were encountered not only in establishing partnerships but in keeping them alive after key individuals within practice-based organizations had moved up or on. It is likely that partnerships will dissolve subsequent to project completion due largely to the absence in the private and public sectors of the infrastructure necessary to sustain such activities. Guidelines should recognize the merits of previously established partnership organizations or bodies as opposed to teams or individual researchers.

7. CONCLUSION

While the results of the present investigation suggest that there is merit in large scale grant policy decisions to "encourage" partnerships between researchers and practitioners, they warrant caution until the dynamic complexity of such induced partnerships is better understood. For example, data concerning cultural barriers suggest that vestiges of the "two communities" metaphor (or two planets as Huberman, 1990 called them), especially concerning language and understanding, are alive and well within this context. These barriers will only be dismantled through continued interaction with one another, long periods of trust building and the development of an appreciation of what the partner is capable of offering. Efforts to stimulate meaningful organizational relationships through policy initiatives are vulnerable to artificiality and to a sense of *contrived collaboration* (not unlike the term "contrived collegiality" coined by Hargreaves, 1990) that will prove ultimately wasteful, if not harmful unless mechanisms are put into place to establish formal long-term partnership arrangements. Moveover, the infrastructure necessary to sustain partnerships over the long haul must be constructed. This too can only evolve through continued interaction between communities.

Granting policies should encourage partnerships in the form of collaboration equally useful both to academics and to the community groups. They should make researchers more aware of the

real needs of practitioners, ensure that the resulting research is well-grounded and responsive to the needs and interests of both groups. As Christiansen-Ruffman et al. (1992) so aptly put it, "The value of such partnership will best be measured in terms of exchange of information, services and resources long after the funding has depleted" (p. 83).

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FIGURE CAPTION

Figure 1: Perceived impact

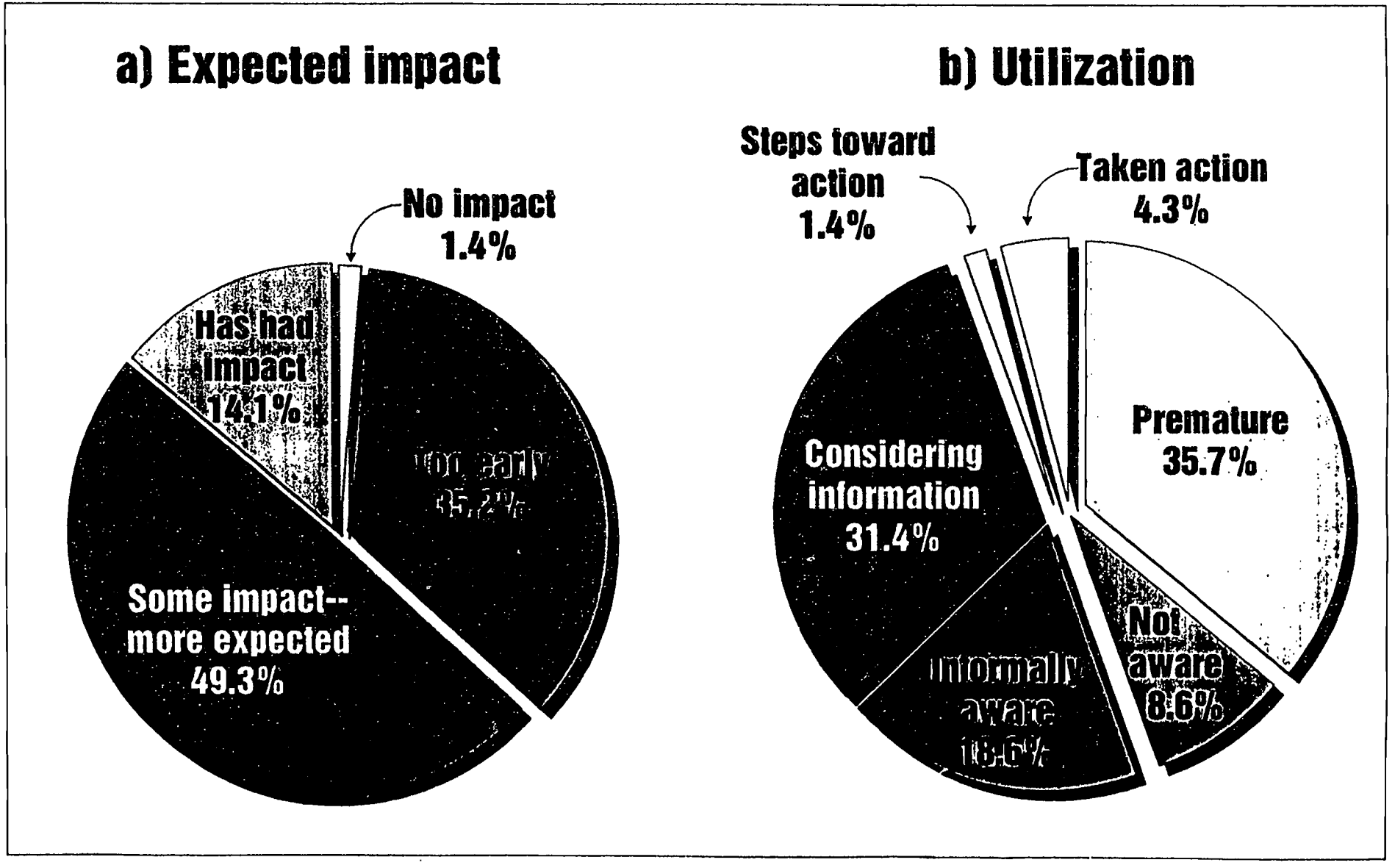

TABLE 1

Perceived Level of Involvement in EWCS Projects of Intended Audience/Users

Participant Role by Research Process Component	Mean[a]	SD	N[b]
Helped design the project.	2.04	1.07	69
Helped to develop data collection instruments.	2.04	1.14	72
Participated in collecting data/information.	2.03	1.25	71
Involved in analyzing the information.	1.83	1.06	69
Participated in writing parts of the report.	1.33	0.68	69
Assisted project personnel in interpreting the information.	2.43	1.16	70
Participated in disseminating information from the project to other intended users or audiences.	2.54	1.28	70

[a] Frequency scale: 1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Frequently; 5 = Always.

[b] Total N = 74 projects.

TABLE 2

Research Methods and Dissemination Activities by Level of Participation
(Rank-ordered within category)

Research Methods and Activities	%[a]	Probability of differences due to level of participation[b]
(a) Research team composition (N = 73)		
Graduate students.	46.6	N.S.
University scholars from different disciplines.	45.2	N.S.
University scholars from the same discipline.	42.5	N.S.
Practitioners / decision makers from the public sector.	17.8	p. < .01
Research associates / research officers.	15.1	N.S.
Practitioners / decision makers from the private sector.	9.6	N.S.
Private scholars.	8.2	N.S.
(b) Research methods selected (N = 64)		
Mixed-method (quantitative / qualitative).	51.6	N.S.
Quantitative (e.g., field survey, quasi-experiment).	32.8	N.S.
Qualitative (e.g., naturalistic, ethnographic, humanistic).	17.2	N.S.
Qualitative but guided by a conceptual framework.	17.2	N.S.
(c) Analysis methods and tools (N = 63)		
Descriptive statistics.	71.4	p. < .01
Parametric inferential statistics (e.g., t-test, ANOVA).	49.2	N.S.
Application of emergent codes for sorting textual data.	46.0	p. < .05
Triangulation of findings (e.g., multiple data sources/ observers).	41.3	p. < .05
Non-parametric procedures (e.g., crosstabulations).	39.7	p. < .05
Computerized textual data processing.	25.4	N.S.

TABLE 2 (continued)

Research Methods and Activities	%	Probability of differences due to partnership
(d) Dissemination audiences (N = 74)		
(Too early for dissemination)	27.0	N.S.
Academic audiences.	74.3	p. < .05
Public policy makers.	41.9	N.S.
Public education administrators.	35.1	N.S.
Private sector decision makers.	24.3	N.S.
Representatives from private sector associations and councils (e.g., chamber of commerce).	24.3	N.S.
Community college administrators.	20.3	N.S.
General public.	20.3	N.S.
Labour groups.	20.3	p. < .05
Community groups.	18.9	p. < .05
Groups outside Canada.	70.6	p. < .05
(e) Dissemination methods		
(Too early for dissemination)	24.7	N.S.
Paper(s) delivered at academic/scholarly conference.	79.5	p. < .01
Paper(s) delivered at practice-based conference(s).	60.3	N.S.
Academic refereed journal article(s).	50.7	N.S.
Summary reports distributed to specific audiences.	41.1	N.S.
Meetings with public policy makers.	31.5	p. < .05
Articles published in practice-based or lay periodicals.	27.4	N.S.

TABLE 2 (continued)

Research Methods and Activities	%	Probability of differences due to partnership
(d) Dissemination methods (continued)		
"Single session" in-service program(s) for practitioners.	24.7	N.S.
Association newsletters.	23.3	$p. < .05$
Monographs/books suitable for practitioner audience.	21.9	$p. < .01$
Newspapers/radio/TV.	19.2	N.S.
Public forum meeting(s).	17.8	$p. < .01$
Scholarly monographs/books.	16.4	N.S.
Integrated series of in-service sessions for practitioners.	9.6	N.S.

[a] Percentage of projects ($N = 74$) reporting method or activity.

[b] Chi-square test for independence.

TABLE 3

Perceived Impact by Level of Participation
(Rank-ordered by category)

Perceived project impact	Mean[a]	SD	N	Prob.
(a) Project attainments				
Led to the development of policies in education and work.	3.38	0.62	71	N.S.
Encouraged activities in the community of practice.	3.13	0.83	71	p. < .05
Encouraged joint research partnerships between researchers and practitioners.	3.09	0.87	73	(p. < .10)
Contributed to the development of new theoretical paradigms.	3.06	0.83	70	N.S.
Contributed to the development of new methodologies.	2.93	0.84	70	N.S.
(b) Consequences for Intended Audiences / Users				
Changed thinking.	3.09	0.60	66	p. < .05
Significant decisions based on data.	2.94	0.71	59	p. < .05
Changed performance in role.	2.85	0.61	57	N.S.
Influence on work.	2.74	0.81	58	N.S.

[a] Opinion scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly agree.