Globalizing scholarship for sustainable development: Insights from an academic partnership program

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I. Abstract

It is increasingly recognized that achieving sustainable development will demand global partnerships and globalized, inclusive research. For young researchers in the Global South, global partnerships are critical: they can serve to amplify their voices and ideas, to provide career opportunities and entry points into global research networks. This chapter presents findings from an exploratory initiative to globalize sustainability and poverty scholarship through what we call "micro-partnerships". Drawing on expert interviews and surveys with participating poverty scholars, and in the context of literature on partnerships, power and the science-policy interface, we provide lessons from our experience which we hope can be instructive for similar programs. We find that micro-partnerships can fulfill an important role for both partners if designed in light of participants' motivations, aspirations and challenges faced. We highlight particularly a) the type of support young scholars seek, b) the type of sustainability research young scholars wish to see to tackle global challenges, and c) the ways in which partnerships can be made equitable.

II. Introduction

"Five years from now I want to be working as a professor and researcher in any of the several public universities in the region where I live. I would like to contribute to make university and the extra-academic community more close [to] each other, besides being a scholar who could produce important insights about the most challenging questions our society faces in the present time." – Earlier-career colleague participant response to the question "Where do you want to be five years from now?"

The concept of global partnerships is prominent in discussions about sustainable development. For young researchers in the Global South, global partnerships are critical: they can serve to amplify their voices and ideas, to provide career opportunities and entry points into global research networks. Such partnerships are important for the future of global sustainability scholarship and the achievement of sustainable development. How can such partnerships be structured? On which best practice examples can we draw?

This chapter provides findings from survey and interview data, as well as informal feedback gathered during the pilot cohort of an initiative to globalize sustainability and poverty scholarship through "micro-

partnerships" between "earlier-career colleagues" (ECCs) working on sustainability and poverty based in resource-constrained institutions in the Global South and "senior-career colleagues" (SCCs) (mid-career or beyond) working on related topics at well-resourced, research-intensive institutions all over the world. Launched in May 2015, the *Global Colleagues* program brought together 68 diverse sustainability scholars together in one-to-one partnerships for an initial one-year period, with the aim of better integrating scholars commencing academic careers in challenging circumstances into international research networks focused on poverty, and providing opportunities for both partners for research collaboration, mutual learning and professional development.

Interested individuals were invited to apply for the program and were matched by project volunteers. ECCs responded to a global Call for Applications, while the majority of SCCs (highly distinguished academics) were personally invited to participate by a selection committee.[1] In determining colleague pairings, shared research and disciplinary interests were prioritized and, where possible and appropriate, matches were made across regions.[2] Pairs were required to agree a statement of aims and maintain regular contact, and were supported by the program management team with suggestions on optional joint activities to pursue, such as providing feedback on papers or funding applications.

Friesenhahn and Beaudry's (2014) the "Global State of Young Scientists" is one of few attempts that explore the opportunities and challenges facing young scholars. Even less is known about young sustainability scholars working in the Global South. Among other things, our research therefore aimed to explore who the ECCs are and what motivates them.

As managers of the program, we were able to draw on colleagues' insights as participants in the program and as experts on poverty research. The findings shed light on the aspirations of young scholars, their motivations for joining the program, challenges faced and the type of support they seek, as well as how they view the current state of global sustainability and poverty scholarship and how they think it should be changed to meet twenty-first century challenges. We analyze why scholars wanted to participate in a micro-partnership and what they expected of it. Subsequently, we draw conclusions on the role of power asymmetries in such partnerships, how these can be mitigated through effective

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[1] This was done in cooperation with the association for poverty-focused academics, Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP).

[2] Note how this differs from other programs such as the INASP-based AuthorAID, in which matching is done via a web-based platform which includes over 10,000 researchers.

program design and how mutual learning can be maximized. We provide lessons from our experience that we hope can be instructive for similar programs.

III. Global micro-partnerships in context: Partnerships, power asymmetries, and the role of academia at the science-policy interface

While talk of "sustainable development" is far from new (dating back at least to the "Brundtland Report") (WCED 1987), 2016 could be considered the beginning of the era of sustainable development. Mainstream development discourse has taken an unprecedented turn– from focusing on the needs of the poorest in developing countries (the Millennium Development Goals) to achieving sustainable development for all (the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The shift to a universal agenda indicates a recognition by the global community that prominent twenty-first century challenges such as inequality, climate change and health pandemics are global challenges that require action from a diversity of partners in all parts of the world, and which can only be addressed through collaboration and partnership. This demands a parallel shift in research and education on sustainability and among academia.

The UN has consistently emphasized the value of partnerships for at least twenty years. This focus has intensified recently as the necessity of multi-stakeholder partnerships for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication has become clear, and greater variety of actors have become involved in international policy-making. Most recently, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (UN 2015) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015) include commitments to broad partnerships and underline academia's important role in reaching the SDGs. The 2012 "Future We Want" highlights the need to 'strengthen the science-policy interface' to enable academia to contribute to sustainable development, while the AAAA points to the role of academia in "mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise and technology".

Research partnerships sit "at the intersection between the scholarly and development worlds" (Carbonnier and Kontinen 2014 p7). Further, "transformational research requires effective research

partnerships that move away from the former philanthropic, paternalistic relationships" (*ibid*. p3). However, practice shows that "implementing equitable partnerships is difficult" (*ibid*., p4) They make the case that we need to pay attention to "tensions and conflicts permeating unequal power relations accruing from unequal access to funding, knowledge and expert networks" and that we must "explicitly address the issue of power relations in development research".

In designing *Global Colleagues*, we sought to position the program in the context of these policy developments and relevant literature, in order to contribute a practical example to the debate. In particular, we aimed to situate the program in the SDG context, focusing on equitable Global *partnerships* as opposed to North-South *mentorships* (echoing old donor-recipient relations); we hoped to enable a greater diversity of scholars to engage at the science-policy interface (through their integration into international networks); and to anticipate power asymmetries in partnerships and try to mitigate these through program design and framing.

IV.   Research Questions and Methodology

There is little data available on the best ways to include earlier-career sustainability scholars in global research networks Furthermore, there have been very few surveys conducted with earlier-career scholars, drawing on their expertise, experience and expectations.

Given this context, we developed the following exploratory research questions:

- Who are the ECCs participating in this program and what motivates them?
- What opportunities and challenges exist for young scholars trying to establish careers in sustainability research in the Global South?
- What support can be provided to these scholars to seize opportunities and address challenges identified?
- What do ECCs think about the current state of poverty scholarship and how it could be improved?
- Do power asymmetries affect these partnerships and how can program design mitigate negative effects?

In answering these questions, we use a multi-pronged approach, drawing on multiple data sources:

1) Results from two surveys conducted prior to the program's start, which included both multiple choice and open-ended questions. An extensive survey was completed by 34 earlier-career scholars (100 per cent response rate) shortly before matching, and 26 per cent of SCCs completed a shorter survey two months into the pilot;

2) Data from five in-depth interviews[3] conducted with earlier-career colleagues half-way through the first year of their partnerships;

3) Accumulated feedback from nearly all program participants during day-to-day program management.

The ECC survey comprised four parts: (a) outlook on academia, poverty research and policy; (b) experience of academia; (c) program expectations; and (d) personal information. The following questions were included in both the ECC and SCC surveys to provide a basis for comparison and analysis[4]:

1) What motivated you to participate in the Global Colleagues program?

2) What are your expectations of the program?

3) During the partnership, who [of you and your ECC/SCC] will be more likely to:
    a. Have their interests reflected?
    b. Decide the agenda?
    c. Initiate communication?
    d. Learn more?

In addition, SCCs were asked "what do you think you could learn from your younger colleague?", while younger colleagues were asked "what do you think your senior colleague could learn from you?" and "what are the main academic strengths that you think you can contribute to the partnership?".

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[3] Case selection aimed to maximize the diversity of the pool of interviewed participants with regard to academic expertise, national and educational background, gender, and career stage. Interviews lasted around an hour and the interview guide was developed in line with themes of a recent study on "The Global State of Young Scientists" (Friesenhahn and Beaudry, 2014).

[4] Questions 1 and 2 were open-ended while for question 3 (a)-(d), respondents were asked to choose from the following options: "definitely me/mine; maybe me/mine; neither; maybe my colleague/my colleague's; definitely my colleague/my colleague's".

The interviews focused on (a) the participants' work, motivations for pursuing an academic career, and career related concerns, (b) academia in the interviewee's home country and (c) feedback on the program.

There are obvious limitations to this study. For example, given that the program is small-scale, unfunded and managed by volunteers, our participant cohort - and hence the sample from which we collected data - is of modest size. Furthermore, all participants self-selected into the program. These factors limit the degree to which our findings are generalizable. However, the data collected is high quality and participant input can be considered expert data. In addition, the results of this article have been shared and discussed with participating scholars.

V. Initial Findings

Part 1: What we learnt about the ECCs

A. Demographics

At the time of data collection, the cohort of ECCs exhibited the following characteristics:

- **Self-selection**: 34 scholars were selected among all applicants that fulfilled the admission criteria after showing a proven commitment to becoming a career academic.

- **Young and male:** 77 per cent aged 25- 44. 73 per cent male, 18per cent female and 9 per cent chose not to disclose their gender. 67 per cent did not have children.

- **Highly educated:** 56 per cent already held a doctoral degree and 29 per cent had completed a lower level of education. While only 14 per cent were native English speakers, 59 per cent were fluent in English and 9 per cent had working proficiency.

- **Urban:** 78 per cent lived in urban areas.

- **Majority social scientists:** Nearly three quarters were social scientists, followed by scholars of law, arts and humanities, business, and inter- and trans-disciplinary studies. There were no natural scientists selected in the cohort.

- **Majority employed:** 59 per cent were employed full-time, of whom 65 per cent were working for an academic institution.

Socially mobile: A range of socio-economic backgrounds among colleagues and high intergenerational social mobility was inferred by the variety in level of education attained by participants' parents. 24 per cent of colleagues' mothers had obtained a higher education degree, while 26 per cent had not completed any schooling. On the paternal side, the figures were 31 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. Remarkably, not a single parent had acquired a doctoral degree.

Table 1: Reported home countries and countries of residence represented in first cohort

Earlier-Career Colleagues (home countries)	Senior-Career Colleagues (countries of residence)
Argentina	Argentina
Brazil	Australia
Cambodia	Austria
Cameroon	Brazil
Chile	Cambodia
Ethiopia	Cameroon
Ghana	Canada
India	Germany
Mauritius	India
Mexico	Italy
Nepal	Kenya
Nigeria	Mexico
South Africa	Norway
Tunisia	Poland
Turkey	South Africa
Uganda	Switzerland
	UK
	USA

B. Motivations and Aspirations

When asked why they had chosen to pursue an academic career, the majority were most concerned with social impact and personal growth, while only some ECCs were motivated by prestige. Key reasons cited included: considering academia a good "fit" given desires to advance knowledge and to develop

solutions to societal problems; the autonomy and independence that academia offers vis-à-vis other professions; and academia as a means to attain the credibility needed to have social impact. As one interviewee explained: *"I do not want to be an academic, I see my future as a community developer. If I really want to make a significant contribution, I need an academic title to have a reputation".*

The findings reveal a group of motivated, passionate and organized scholars. When asked where they wanted to be five years from now, a remarkable 90 per cent of scholars indicated that they wanted to be in their home country in the Global South and were able to articulate in detail their career goals.

C. Challenges and opportunities

"Academia here is a bit hopeless." - Interview with a Global Colleague mid-way through the program.

Writing about research capacity in the Global South, Nchinda presents a dim view: "[....] isolation from peers, poor access to literature, very low salaries all compound the problem and prevent the few trained researchers from responding rapidly to ever-changing demands and needs of their countries" (2002 p1701). Is this consistent with the experiences of ECCs or are there glimmers of hope?

Limited integration in global academic networks
Nearly half of participants indicated that they were either relatively poorly or poorly integrated in global academic networks. For academic networks in the Global South, levels of integration were even lower – with 58 per cent reporting that they are either poorly or relatively poorly integrated. 61 per cent say that they have either very limited or limited access to international research projects while access to journals and bibliographic resources is a challenge for at least 47 per cent.

Limited professional development and training opportunities
52 per cent of colleagues reported very limited or limited access to professional development and training opportunities. 59 per cent considered themselves to be 'definitely not visible' or 'not very visible' in international academic circles – in turn impacting the international reach of their academic work, which 49 per cent of colleagues regarded to be 'very little' or 'relatively little'.

Limited mentorship opportunities

The first year of the Global Colleagues program endorsed the commonly held perception that there is a major imbalance globally between the demand and supply for mentorship opportunities among young academics. Demand outstrips supply both in the *number of individuals* seeking guidance and in the *amount of time* sought.

Lack of mentorship was highlighted repeatedly in survey and interview responses as a pressing problem for young scholars. 27 per cent of survey respondents had no academic colleagues in the Global North who would regularly read their work, while 43 per cent had 1-3 colleagues who would do so. In general, participants had more support from researchers in the Global South, where 41 per cent had at least three colleagues to comment on their work. Nonetheless, several interviewees lamented the lack of local mentors, networking opportunities and spaces for academic exchange. As one participant put it: *"I have not had any local mentors or individuals that supported me… not in terms of how to build a career, get research activities going"*

In terms of opportunities, all researchers interviewed were eager to build international research networks and had clear ideas about what international collaborations they would engage in if given the chance.
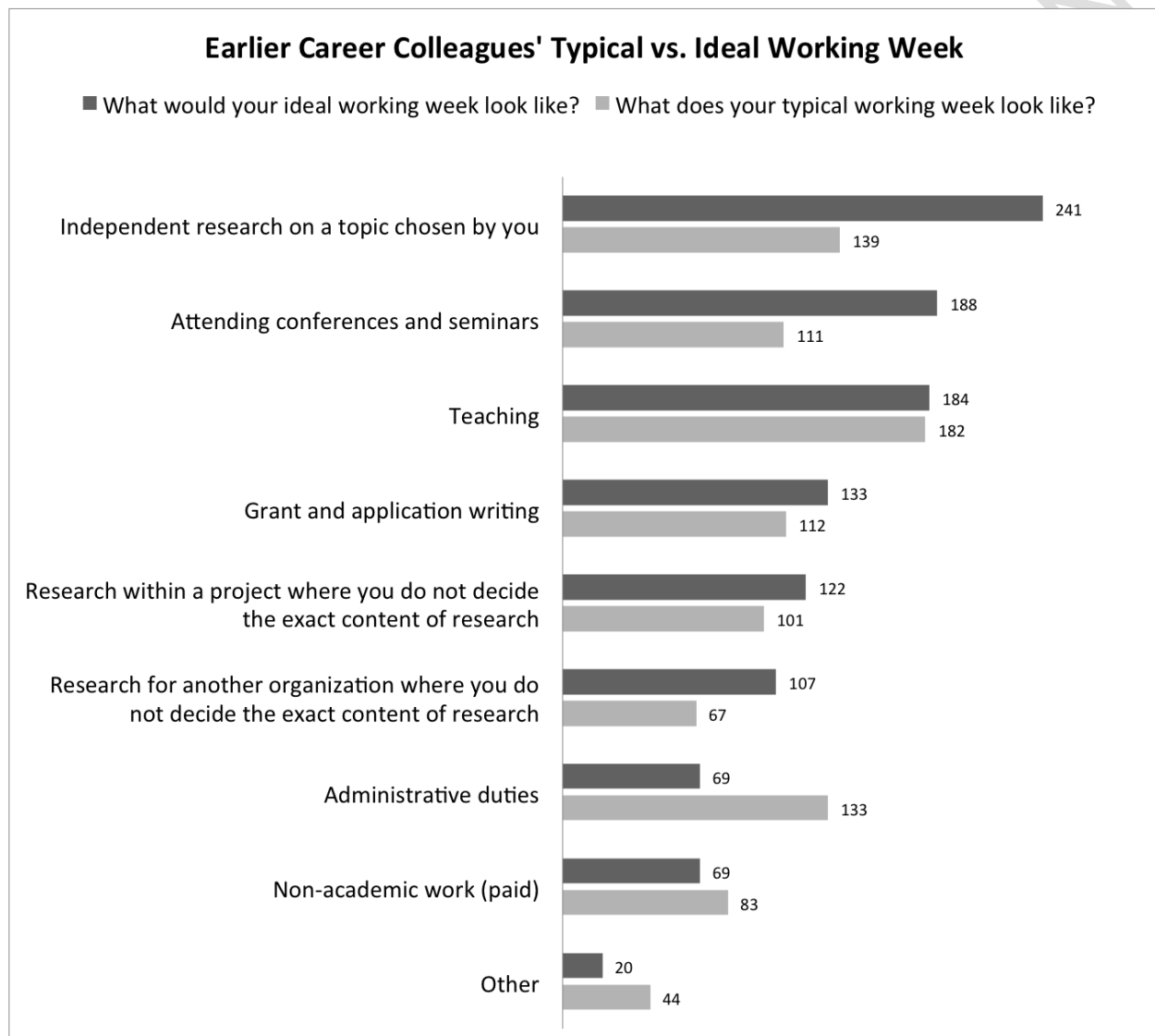
Pressure to publish

Uniformly, ECCs reported pressure to publish, in turn negatively impacting their ability to reflect on their findings. As one interviewee explained: *"I think the pressure makes research more difficult. You need to be able to say "I don't know", but in the current, violently competitive university system, you have to pretend to be sure about this."*

High workloads, skewed work-life balance

When asked about work-life balance, many survey respondents reported an exceptionally high workload in which most of a typical week is spent teaching and performing administrative duties. At the extreme end, some reported weekly teaching loads of over 20 hours. Given the challenging contexts in which many are trying to establish an academic career, it was not uncommon for ECCs to be juggling multiple jobs. Scholars also reported spending a considerable amount of time on research in their "free time", demonstrating the commitment necessary to make academia a viable career path.

One interviewee outlined their typical day: *"I have two typical days because I have two jobs, but when I have no activities from my two jobs, I wake up, I sit in front of the computer and work all day long and late at night, I go to bed. And that's it."*

Figure 1 - Earlier-career colleague survey responses to question "what ['does'/'would'] your ['typical'/'ideal'] working week look like?" weighted according to the assigned priority

Earlier Career Colleagues' Typical vs. Ideal Working Week

■ What would your ideal working week look like? ■ What does your typical working week look like?

Independent research on a topic chosen by you	241 / 139
Attending conferences and seminars	188 / 111
Teaching	184 / 182
Grant and application writing	133 / 112
Research within a project where you do not decide the exact content of research	122 / 101
Research for another organization where you do not decide the exact content of research	107 / 67
Administrative duties	69 / 133
Non-academic work (paid)	69 / 83
Other	20 / 44

Occupational mobility

Most of the interviewed scholars viewed occupational mobility as very positive –whether for conferences, fieldwork, or positions as visiting researchers. They considered work-related travel as an

important and positive contribution to their professional life and a number of participants recalled travel experiences which were mind-opening and inspiring for their work. However, many reported limited mobility due to lack of funds and scholarships for travel: *"There is no support whatsoever, for travel, research grants. All I got (in terms of travelling) was due to luck."*

In some cases, high mobility contributed to high stress. As one participant highlighted, pursuit of professional advancement can force a three-fold separation between the location of one's family, job, and home country. Others reported long commutes to their workplace (the longest being 6 hours daily).

Political pressure

Political pressure was also emphasised as a challenge with the potential to negatively impact academic careers. As one interviewee explained: *"There is also political pressure not to do certain things, when talking to the press or students, you have to always think what you are going to say because there might be political repercussions and so on."* Another participant observed how political pressure can inhibit academic freedom: *"I supervise a few students [...] who wanted to do a project on eviction and land grabbing and community, and the university basically said no."* Some scholars are reluctant to engage in public commentary as a result: "*I used to write opinion letters to local newspapers, but I stopped doing this. It was not an outright threat, or censorship, or anything, it was more like a polite reminder from the university leadership – but you don't want to take a polite reminder lightly because it can turn into something else."*

Poverty scholarship: Low in the research pecking order?

Interestingly, some of the challenges reported relate specifically to the type of research undertaken and many poverty scholars felt that they have to work against social stigma. Some reported that poverty research is not valued as a topic and their research suffers from a lack of recognition. As one earlier-career colleague put it: *"... there are some people who don't think that this [poverty research] is important. Or who think that this is very easy to do… they think that you do it because you are not good in other areas. I think it's not fair and I think it's not true".*

Culmination of challenges: Severe lack of academic career paths

In combination, these factors mean that, for many, opportunities to pursue a career in academia are severely limited. As one interviewee shared: *"Countless colleagues have moved out of academia…*

University here is quite underdeveloped. There is virtually no research activity…. Socially and professionally, academic teaching is not an attractive career – and when you add the economic aspect to that, few people stay". This sentiment was echoed by others: *"To have a relatively proper career, it needs to be outside [my region]. Because here, there is no career track for a lecturer and we rely on occasional contracts [...] . So it's not viable for a livelihood."*

When asked about institutional changes they would like to see in their home countries, respondents cited a range of factors including the need for: greater accessibility of academic institutions for a broader range of socio-economic classes; increased core funding; the de-politicization of higher education; more meritocratic hiring practices; more opportunities for career progression; and more transparent funding decisions at national and university level.

However, the single sentiment expressed in nearly all contributions was this: *"[...] there needs to be a proper career path for academics – at the moment, we don't have any."*

D. Support needed

When asked in the survey what support young scholars considered to be most important for developing a career in academia, they placed involvement in research projects highest followed by receiving comments and feedback from academics.

Table 2: What support do you consider to be most important for developing a career in academia?

Items	Weighted Score	Rank
Involvement in research projects	135	1
Comments and feedback from other academics	97	2
Professional training	88	3
International visibility	72	4
Access to journals	69	5

When asked, in relation to the program, in which areas they would value most support, earlier-career colleagues had a range of ideas and high expectations - from joint publications to access to funding and journals, visits abroad and obtaining postdoc positions in the Global North. Access to senior scholars, expansion of networks, integration in global networks, career guidance, research collaboration and improved ability to advance research were all cited as key results ECCs sought from the program. For some colleagues, increasing their chances on the academic job market and securing a job and/or funding were also cited.

Open-ended responses to the question "what motivated you to apply to the Global Colleagues program" revealed a thirst for professional guidance: *"because it is aimed at exactly researchers with limited resources and guidance like me"; "an opportunity to have access to experienced scholars";* and *"the lack of proper career guidance in my country"*. One interviewee defined the ideal mentor as *"someone who is very responsive to the challenges that we have. Someone who would also maybe work together and collaborate. Someone who actually has time for you and who can steer you into the right direction and support you."*

It became clear that earlier-career colleagues were also very interested in peer learning and repeated requests were made for greater horizontal collaboration among ECCs. As one interviewee said: *"I think strengthening the relationship between the earlier career colleagues, this is important. And to start a project that many earlier career colleagues could be working on together, that sort of collaboration, promoting collaboration not only between the earlier and senior colleagues, but establishing horizontal collaborations between the earlier career colleagues."*

E. Priorities in poverty research

As part of the pre-program survey, scholars were asked a series of open-ended questions ranging from what ECCs considered the most important finding in their discipline, to the most important issues for poverty scholarship to address, and which topics and methods they considered the most over- and under-researched/utilized in global poverty research. The answers provided demonstrate the enormous potential of further integrating global voices into poverty scholarship and the high opportunity cost of not doing so.

ECCs underscored the importance of multi-disciplinary approaches and context-specific understandings of poverty sensitive to its complexity. While respondents valued practically-oriented research, they showed a dislike for simplistic solutions. Respondents advocated for novel methods and approaches in sustainability studies, for both principled and pragmatic reasons.

Respondents identified a wealth of topics that global poverty scholarship should address in the future. Recurrent themes included poverty as it relates to certain human characteristics; poverty as a result of discrimination; failure and success in poverty reduction strategies; sustainable development; climate change and ecological factors; migration and climate change; study of groups vulnerable to poverty; health care; role of national politics and international institutions.

Table 3: Over/Under Utilized Themes and Methods

Themes		Methods	
Overstudied	*Understudied*	*Overutilized*	*Underutilized*
"Economic aspects of inequality; economic growth; Poverty viewed in economical terms"	"The perceptions and understanding of poverty from poverty stricken communities' perspective; involvement of the poor and affected in the process of poverty elimination not just as targets but as partners"	"Quantitative method"	"Qualitative methods"
"Role of international community"	"The agency of poor communities in fighting poverty."	"Household surveys"	"Participation of the poor in the research; participatory approach"
"Class-based and development-based poverty."	"Globalization policies that are partial and skewed in favour of more advanced countries"	"Purely empirical approach to poverty."	"Caste-based poverty research method"
"Growth and poverty"	"Understanding the meaning of poverty in specific contexts"		"Narrations (life history of "the poor")"
	"How poverty and inequality is experienced and understood in the life course in social contexts different from advanced Western societies"		"Generalized Linear Latent and Least Square Method"
	"Research must focus on not only economic poverty but definition of poverty must be broadened to involve social justice, discrimination"		

When asked about the most over-researched topics in poverty research, a clear majority of earlier-career colleagues noted that poverty research today is dominated by what was frequently called a "Western perspective". Disdain was voiced concerning the perceived over-emphasis on income in defining poverty and methodological focus on household surveys. A great number of scholars argued that, due to the relatively low number of actors that perform poverty research and the relatively small number of institutions that fund such research, the purely economic aspects and conceptions of poverty are being over-studied, while other aspects are neglected.

Scholars passionately underscored the need to involve poor people in poverty research as one such 'blind-spot' in poverty research. As one ECC stressed: "*The people who work at alleviating poverty and the people who are poor have different views on poverty. Different views on what poverty is. Many poor do not conceive themselves as poor. We can learn a lot from the poor. We need a bottom-up approach.*" Another noted *"the poor are better placed to offer sustainable solutions to tackling poverty".* More qualitative and participatory approaches were endorsed – as one interviewee put it, poor people should be seen "not just as targets but as partners".

Part 2: Mentorship versus Partnership: Power Asymmetries in Global Scientific Collaboration

"When I started to exchange messages with my professor, I was afraid of having a problem because of different ways of thinking. [The SCC] sent me an article that [they] wrote. And I sent [the SCC] an article that I tried to write in English. And I was so afraid: What would they think? There is a different approach in a rich country and in a poorer country. I was worried about my stance/position that I argued for. [The SCC] said: "no, don't you worry, we have to think together, the world is very complicated, be calm about it." After that, it was great!", Earlier-career colleague response during interview.

As Carbonnier and Kontinen argue, research partnerships are "far from immune to the tension and conflicts permeating unequal power relations accruing from unequal access to funding, knowledge and expert networks" (2014 p3). A big challenge for these interactions then is avoiding reproducing or deepening power asymmetries. The stereotype, write Jentsch and Pilley, is that "the North comprises experts, and the South needs capacity-building. It is hardly ever acknowledged that... the North would

16

also benefit from having its capacity built" (2003 p1958). Gaillard makes the case that collaboration is more likely to succeed when "based on a strong mutual interest and if both parties have something to gain from it" (1994 p57). Partner selection is therefore critical.

Carbonnier and Kontinen provide an initial list of "key ingredients of equitable and effective North-South research partnerships" that are highly instructive for this study: "long-term commitments, mutual interest and shared benefits based on a research agenda that is jointly negotiated" (2014 p16). Brown and Ashman (1996) add to the list with the development of trust, cooperative interpersonal relationships, active communication and joint learning as factors associated with effective partnerships. While Global Colleagues was designed with such considerations in mind, to what extent are power asymmetries present and/or inadvertently reinforced through the partnerships?[5]

As discussed in Chapter V, younger researchers applied to Global Colleagues for a variety of reasons, many of which were consistent with the aims that the program seeks to address. Nearly all the experienced scholars noted that they were motivated by a "desire to help", with some considering the current structures of global academia an "injustice" and the importance of making "science accessible to everyone". Others recognized the need to "listen to new voices from the developing world" against a backdrop of "unevenness and inequities [in] access to knowledge and networks".

In terms of expectations of the program, some senior scholars stated that they were attracted by the program's reciprocal design, arguing that the possibility of exchanging perspectives and learning from the earlier-career scholars motivated them, often taking up the framing and language of "partnership". One senior scholar hoped to "encourage (the) next generation of scholars in the field and build some transnational linkage", while others sought a "generationally different perspective"; to "get close insights into cultural and geographical contexts of which I am no expert to-date"; to forge new research alliances; to "provide connection between colleagues who would otherwise not meet"; to get a "fresh perspective on how science is done"; and –"to learn from others and to share knowledge".

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[5] It was noted by a Global Colleague who commented on this text that it is very difficult to separate asymmetries that are part of any mentor-mentee relationship (which are particularly important in academia generally) with asymmetries that pertain to North-South matches. There are very real difficulties in assessing in individual cases whether asymmetries between partners are weak or strong.

Interestingly, senior scholars tended to have more measured expectations of the program than earlier-career scholars. When asked what they hoped to gain from the program, ECCs had high expectations. 79 per cent of ECCs either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I will have more career opportunities because of the program" while 85 per cent thought they would "be better informed about career prospects" and 84 per cent thought that their publishing opportunities would be increased.

In contrast, one senior scholar said very early on in the process: "it will not work in my case; I see no common ground", while another was skeptical of mutual learning possibilities a couple of months into the program: "I could learn very little from [my younger colleague]" while another shared "I am skeptical that this kind of program can work".[6]

Responses given to the question on how relative interests, learning, communication and agenda-setting would be reflected, spoke to perceived power differentials in the partnerships even before colleagues were matched. The majority of both ECCs and SCCs thought that the younger colleague's interests would be comparatively better reflected in the partnership. However, views on agenda-setting revealed a very different picture: 62 per cent of ECCs thought that the agenda of the partnership would be decided by the senior partner, while not a single senior colleague thought their own interests would be more reflected and 63 per cent anticipated that their younger partner's would. This contrast demonstrates a perceived power differential on the part of the ECCs who assume that decision-making will ultimately rest with the senior colleague. The senior colleagues who answered the survey (arguably already a self-selected motivated group of very experienced scholars) appear to be much more open to shared agenda setting or for the earlier-career colleagues to take the lead.

Initiating communication again saw divergence between ECCs who expected they would be more likely to initiate communication and SCCs, 38 per cent of whom thought that neither partner would be more likely to initiate communication, and only 13 per cent of whom thought it might be their partner.

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[6] In several partnerships, individual scholars have stopped responding to messages, which has led to the discontinuation of partnerships and/or re-matching. This occurred more frequently among senior colleagues (5 instances) than with earlier career colleagues (3 instances). Possible reasons include a feeling among partners that they have ideological, personal or cultural differences/incompatibilities that prove difficult to overcome. Another reason which might explain the ease with which some partnerships were discontinued is that are no repercussions of any kind for discontinuing partnerships even for weak reasons.

The responses regarding which colleague it was anticipated would learn more are very telling. In this instance, all ECCs assumed that they would learn more from the experience while 63 per cent of the senior colleagues suggested that both would learn equally, and only 13 per cent thought it might be the ECC. The responses from senior scholars are highly encouraging as they suggest that colleagues did not approach the initiative as a classic mentorship arrangement in which they impart knowledge and earlier-career colleagues learn, but rather as a genuine exchange that they approached as partners ready to learn.

VI.   Conclusions: Major findings and lessons learned

Our analysis aimed to better describe and understand the types of obstacles faced by earlier-career researchers in the Global South and their appetite for professional guidance. It is clear that poverty research is not sufficiently inclusive and inadequate attention is paid to earlier-career scholars, despite their valuable perspectives on the state and future of poverty research and the unique assets they bring to global scholarship. The earlier-career participants in this program were a heterogeneous group of highly motivated scholars, many of whom aspire to conduct meaningful applied work of social value in careers in the Global South.

We hope the following ten lessons learned can be instructive for similar micro-partnership programs.

Lesson 1: There is appetite for scaling up micro-partnership programs
As one colleague observed: *"This program would be helpful for other people… I know a lot of people who would like this kind of mentorship and opportunities but they never had the chance to do that."* All data collected from surveys and interviews backs up this observation.

Lesson 2: Partnership experiences and needs are context-specific and vary both within and between partnerships
Some partners reported very positive interactions, which have had a big impact, while other partnerships have been less successful. Earlier-career colleagues reported receiving support on both substantive issues and skills development. While some pairs have enjoyed regular correspondence, some ECCs have struggled to get any responses from their senior partner. Preferences for frequency of communication also vary within and between pairs.

Lesson 3: Meeting the diverse needs of partners from a management perspective is labor-intensive, but effectively doing so reaps results

A key ingredient of successful partnerships is consistent communication and high levels of personal interaction between partners. This can only be accomplished through tailored support on the part of the management team to the specific relationships at hand which vary greatly (by geography, discipline, career stage), while responding to concerns of colleagues (cultural, professional and personal in nature) requires time and thought.

Lesson 4: While a great deal can be achieved at no financial cost, funding does limit the ambition and scalability of programs

Fortunately, much of the support that younger scholars seek for their professional development can be organized at little or no financial cost. In this, we see huge potential for similar programs. However, the functioning of the program relies heavily on the goodwill and time of all participants. While Global Colleagues is lucky to be supported by outstanding senior colleagues, there is an obvious supply limit.

Increasing the ambition and scale of the program is limited by funding. Quick extensions of the program such as introducing in-country workshops and small research grants for individual ECCs could be achieved with low investment. More ambitious developments such as dramatically increasing the number of partnerships in the program, or introducing work shadowing opportunities for colleagues at each partner's institution would require a more substantial budget.

Lesson 5: Designing programs from a perspective of equality and mutual learning is critical and must be continuously emphasized as a key aim throughout the program

This includes briefing both colleagues sufficiently at the outset and addressing perceived power differentials up front.

Lesson 6: Horizontal collaboration and peer-learning should be integrated from the beginning

ECCs expressed a strong desire to be introduced to other scholars at a similar career stage around the world, and to collaborate and learn from each other. Recognizing this demand, the program was augmented with an interactions module to increase horizontal collaboration. In the module, earlier-

career scholars are asked to review each others' working papers and to skype with at least two other program participants during the year.

Lesson 7: The right attitude can go a long way

When both colleagues enter the partnership ready to collaborate and learn, both partners derive benefits and perceived power asymmetries dissipate. In determining success, the spirit in which both sides entered into the partnership was often more important than well-matched research interests. Pairs in which both colleagues kept an open mind were most likely to thrive. As one colleague shared, their colleague was "*always willing to help out despite low degree of compatibility between our research fields*". Another colleague reflected: *"The field of development is huge. My exchange with [senior colleague] has been based on academic writing. But we could also look at how do we bring our two different fields together. What's our common interest?... It could be an opportunity to explore opportunities and not just say: Oh, [they're] not in my field, there's nothing we can do. No, there's a lot of things we can do."*

Lesson 8: Joint projects focus partnerships

As program participants observed, without joint research activities about which partners can correspond, the partnership is unlikely to work. Funding for these was identified as the most important way the program could be improved.

Lesson 9: Embedding feedback mechanisms from the outset

This can ensure flexibility in approach and enable programs to incorporate new ideas and minimize negative experiences of participants.

Lesson 10: We can learn more from existing programs in other fields

More research should be undertaken on success factors for partnership schemes in other settings, for example, those within companies aimed at empowering women or between senior and junior employees. We are currently fielding a survey to more than a dozen organizations with similar programs.

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