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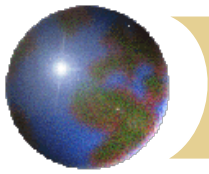
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# **Developing self-authorship through participation in student research conferences**

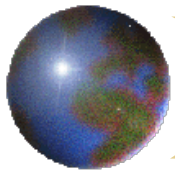
**Jennifer Hill<sup>1</sup>, Helen Walkington<sup>2</sup>  
& Harry West<sup>1</sup>**

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**<sup>2</sup>Oxford Brookes University**



RGS-IBG Annual International Conference, Exeter, 1-4 September 2015



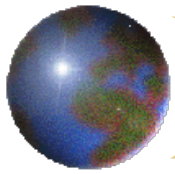
# 1. Context

- emphasis on graduate attributes in HE indicative of global debate about role of HEIs in producing employable graduates (Arrowsmith et al. 2011, Erickson 2012)
- our graduates should possess knowledge, skills and values to enable them to cope with dynamic employment opportunities

*but ...*



- they must also understand who they are and how they might contribute positively to the heterogeneity they will encounter in their communities (Barnett 2000)



## 2. Research aim

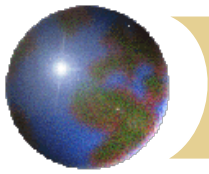
- to examine how participation in BCUR by undergraduate GEES students might develop their **graduate attributes**:

*‘the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable to a range of contexts’*

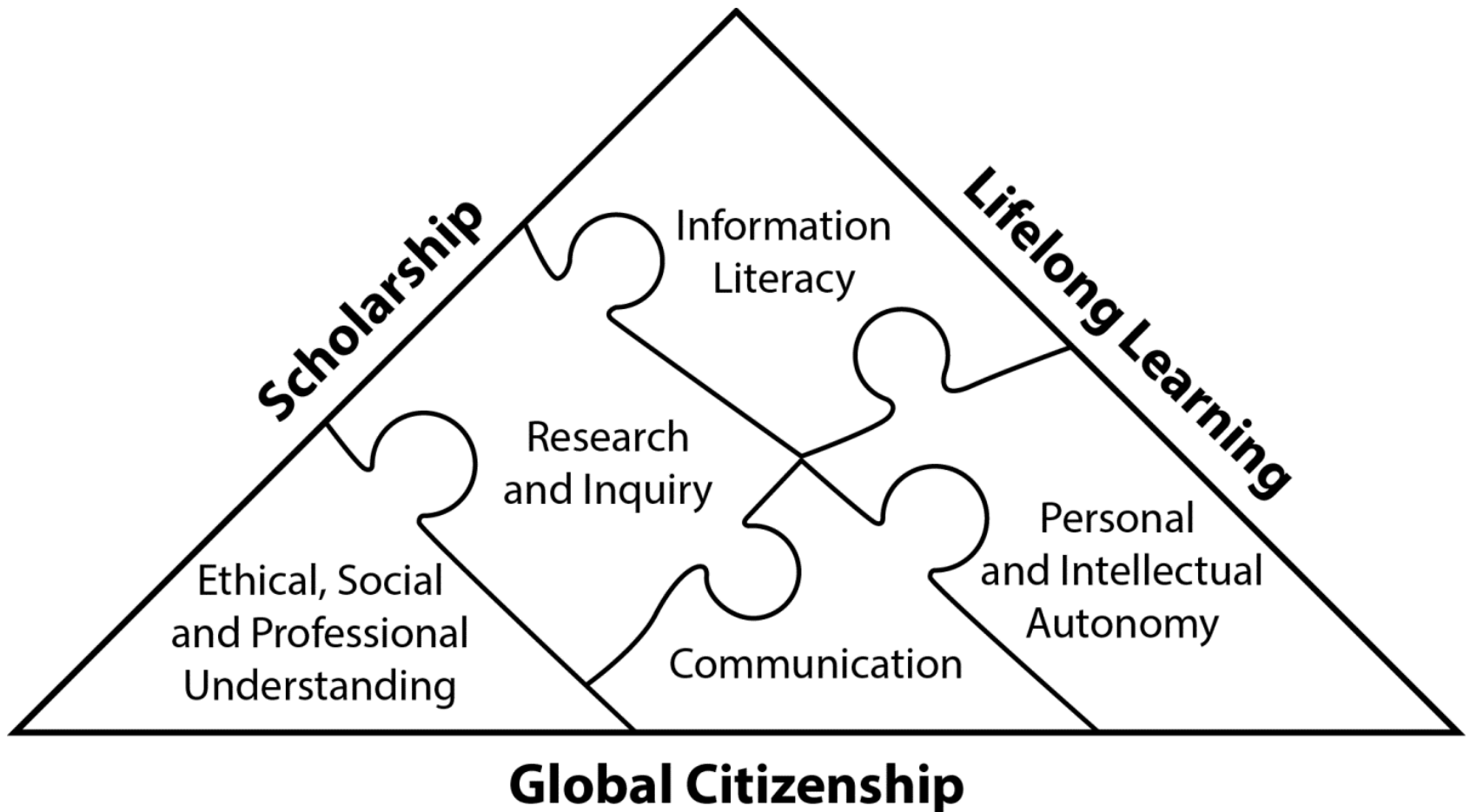
Barrie (2004)

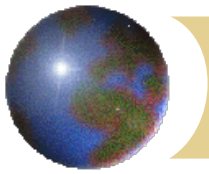
*‘They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future’*

Bowden et al. (2000)



- we adopt the Conceptions of Generic Attributes model (Barrie 2004)





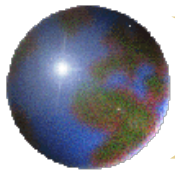
- we further identify **self-authorship** as an overarching pedagogic concept emanating from the acquisition of multiple graduate attributes:

*the ability to know oneself, to know what one knows, to reflect upon it, and to base judgements on it*

(developed from Baxter Magolda 2004)

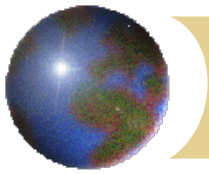
**Marcia  
Baxter  
Magolda's  
Theory of  
Self-Authorship**



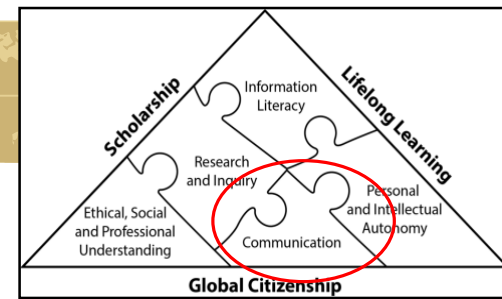


### 3. Research methods

- 22 semi-structured interviews with GEES students following participation in BCUR 2012, 2013, 2014
- respondents:
  - final-year geography students presenting dissertation
  - equal proportions delivering poster / verbal paper
  - balanced gender
- transcripts coded manually and independently by both authors in relation to the five translation graduate attribute clusters of Barrie (2004)



## 4. Results

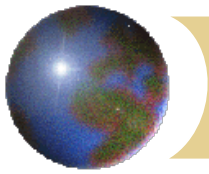


### 1. Communication

- specific aspects of oral delivery: pacing and fluency, not reading from notes, maintaining eye contact with audiences
- students mindful not only to convey their key messages clearly to a diverse audience, but to keep audience engaged
- acutely aware of thinking critically about their research, to **re-purpose** it for a multi-disciplinary external context:
  - summarising content (n=20):

*'I found after doing a dissertation, **condensing 16,000 words onto a side of A1 was quite challenging**, but also I think it **really makes you own your research**, because you can't abbreviate that much without really **having a firm understanding** of what you're talking about' R18*





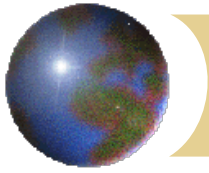
- organising a global structure (n=13)

*'It was a case of **going back** through my ... **breaking it down into kind of more bite-size chunks** and making what I'd written more **accessible for a wide audience**' R6*

- clarifying GEES-specific terminology (n=13)

*'this was **presenting to people with a wider range of topics** and I think it was quite **important to make sure that I didn't use jargon** and hide behind long words that people might not understand' R22*



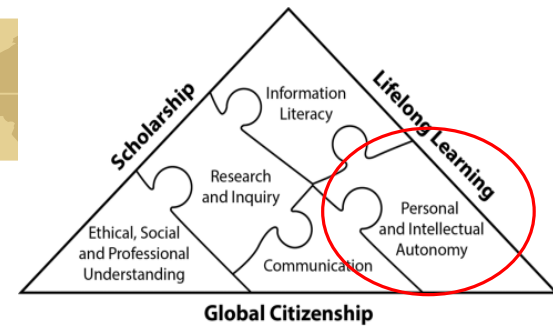
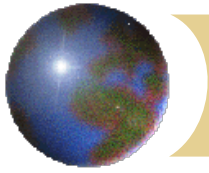


## 2. *Research and inquiry skills*

- GEES students felt responsible for communicating their research findings (n=19):

***'I don't think science is there just to have ... I think so much work gets done at an undergraduate level which could really help PhD research, academics' research ... It's a way of helping others in their own developments'** R15*

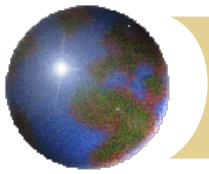
- participating in BCUR legitimised them as having undertaken research that matters - to their audiences, to their disciplines and to the wider field of science



### ***3. Personal and intellectual autonomy***

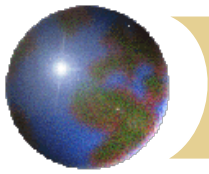
- students explicitly evidenced self-regulation in their BCUR preparations
- demonstrated a process of preparation, rehearsal, solicitation of feedback, and subsequent development of presentations (n=14)

*'I did about **three or four trial runs in front of people and I also did them on my own in my head.** We had practise sessions with a couple of tutors, which gave feedback' R20*



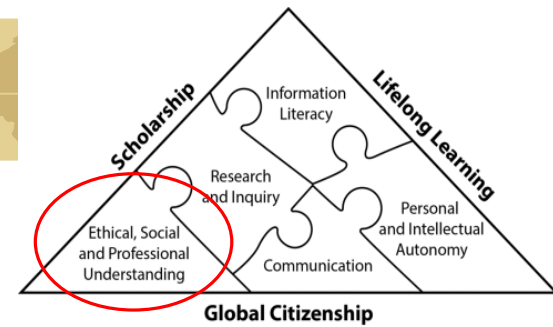
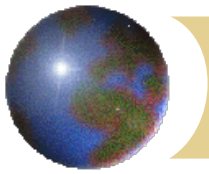
- students who presented posters, or who received relevant questions about their oral presentations learnt to negotiate and verbally organize their thoughts in real time (n=13)
- students were learning from / with each other in reflexive cycles that began before the conference and reached forward into future work





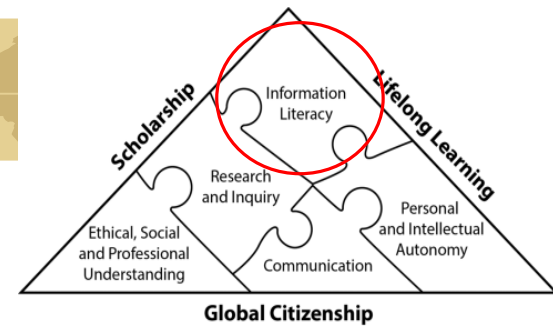
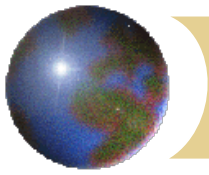
- 13 students noted the opportunity to present their work unconstrained from formal grading, to be judged by peers who they described as ‘genuinely interested’ in their work
- BCUR process not constrained by high stakes assessment, allowing freer expression of identity and argument:

*‘Here you’re [presenting] for a completely different reason compared to university. **At university you’re doing it with the mindset that you’re going to be marked and you have to meet all these different criteria**, whereas **here** it’s more for the enjoyment and because you want to do it - **it’s your own piece of research, you feel proud of that and you want to express it ... I learnt a lot more about myself as a person**’ R1*



#### ***4. Ethical, social, professional understanding***

- students commented little about ethical responsibilities beyond the need to be honest in their research and in communicating the extent of their understanding
- aware of their need to develop social competence: many comments involved the terms 'network(ing)' (n=13)
- taking account of alternative perspectives from other academic fields, students recognised the opportunities and limitations of their own disciplines



## 5. Information literacy

- students made little comment regarding information literacy
- minority of students (n=5) mentioned specific skills associated with visual presentation and balancing text, images and verbal information for their presentations
- reference made to PowerPoint for supporting both poster and verbal presentations

**An investigation into the potential opportunities for improving the sustainability of low-income urban households by focusing on home energy efficiency and local food production**

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS  
SCHOOL OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT

**Background to the project**  
The energy use habits, consumption patterns and leisure choices of those in the UK's lowest socioeconomic strata are quite different to the rest of society (Jenkins et al. 2011) and the information gaps to these people should reflect these differences. Up to the present the Government's position has, for the most part, been to recommend blanket measures that are appropriate to all, such as the recently launched Green Deal (GCC, 2010). However in many social housing cases this does not offer value for money, either for the consumer or towards government climate change targets.

**Current Literature**

- First many have researched and suggested improvements in different aspects of sustainable consumption such as carbon accounting, ecological foot-printing, input output analysis (Druckman and Jackson 2009, Card and Roy 2006) and ethical-sourcing (Barnett et al. 2005, Bray, 2011) but none have tailored this advice to benefit social housing tenants.
- Second, authors have expanded sustainability and low carbon living from the individual micro-level to full scale communities, focusing on closed loop systems, reducing reliance on imported goods all the while acknowledging the three pillars of sustainability (Agenda 21, 2000, Department for International Development, 1991) again without specific advice for lower income groups.
- Third, others have investigated the lives and behaviours of financially restricted households looking at consumption, fuel poverty and adaptive capacity (Jenkins et al. 2011, Burningham and Thrush, 2001) but none have chosen to formulate an action plan for these types of communities.

**It is this gap this research intends to fill, by offering low carbon recommendations, both behavioural and technological, designed exclusively for disadvantaged households on urban housing estates.**

**Recommendations and Conclusions**

**Providing allotment style spaces to grow fresh healthy food can:**

- Reduced financial outgoings leaving more to spend on children, skills or leisure (Glickman, 1999)
- Build resilience into vulnerable communities (Wright, 2010)
- Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> aiding climate change targets (Kerchhoff, 2012)
- Increase food security and food sovereignty (Inalci, 2010)
- Provide physical and mental health benefits leading to NHS savings (WHO, 2000)
- People with healthy diets have decreased absences from school and work (Burningham and Thrush, 2001)
- Cleans polluted city air by growing plants (SEPA, 2014)
- Generate jobs in sustainable community building (Finley, 2015)

**Providing low-cost insulation techniques for a warm efficient house can:**

- Reduced financial outgoings leaving more to spend on children, skills or leisure (Watt, 2009)
- Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> aiding climate change targets (Ireland, 2008)
- Provide physical and mental health benefits leading to NHS savings (Wright and Fischer 2003; Evans et al 2000)
- Increase comfort in the home (Posner 2008)
- Offer some protection to energy price rises (DENA, 2011)
- Reduced damp mould and condensation (Burningham and Thrush, 2001)
- Improve the quality of the social housing stock (Barron, 2007)
- Make tenants proud enough to invite friends over (Markey, 1993)

**These measures could offer substantial gains in the standard of living for low-income communities, decoupling prosperity from CO<sub>2</sub>, building physically and mentally healthy communities while protecting the global and regenerating the local environments.**

**Flow Chart of Methods**

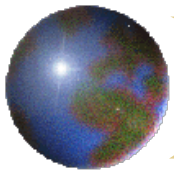
The flow chart shows a process starting with 'Community Footprint' and 'Energy Audit' leading to 'Energy Efficiency Measures' and 'Local Food Production'. It includes a 'Flow Chart of Methods' section with a diagram showing the relationship between 'Energy Audit', 'Energy Efficiency Measures', 'Local Food Production', and 'Community Footprint'.

**Methods and Main Findings**

The aim was to create two representative, basic and robust data sets that allow advanced mathematical and literary analysis where findings could cross-reference each other and be triangulated through literature (Shah, 2011; O'Leary, 2010; Weiss, 1995). These were:

1. A carbon and ecological footprint of the community using the REAP-Home computer model. Each resident was given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire which created a representative community footprint. This identified that the proportionally high financial and environmental cost associated with energy and food could be reduced in a triple-win scenario.
2. Having identified food and energy as themes for further research, the project returned to the community holding interviews with residents regarding their attitude towards food and energy related projects which would culminate in instigable outcomes. This identified that residents actively wanted the space to grow their own food and increase the insulation and so heat retention of their properties.

**References**

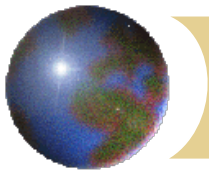


## 5. Discussion

### ***Undergraduate research conferences: moving to self-authorship***

- undergraduates unlikely to develop self-authorship if HEIs do not offer productively disruptive experiences (Glasser & Powers 2011)
- we must encourage students to transit from familiar contexts of their undergraduate experience to situate themselves in unknown, ‘other’, challenging spaces
- we define such spaces as **borderland**, prompting the fashioning of new identities, permitted by fluid configurations of power (Giroux 1992)





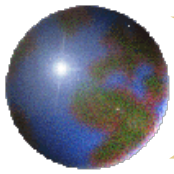
- initial expressions of uncertainty by BCUR students as to what they were letting themselves in for

*but ...*

- encountering unfamiliar contexts, diverse audiences and externally referenced benchmarks, they reassessed their knowledge, understanding and conceptions of self to develop potential graduate professional identities



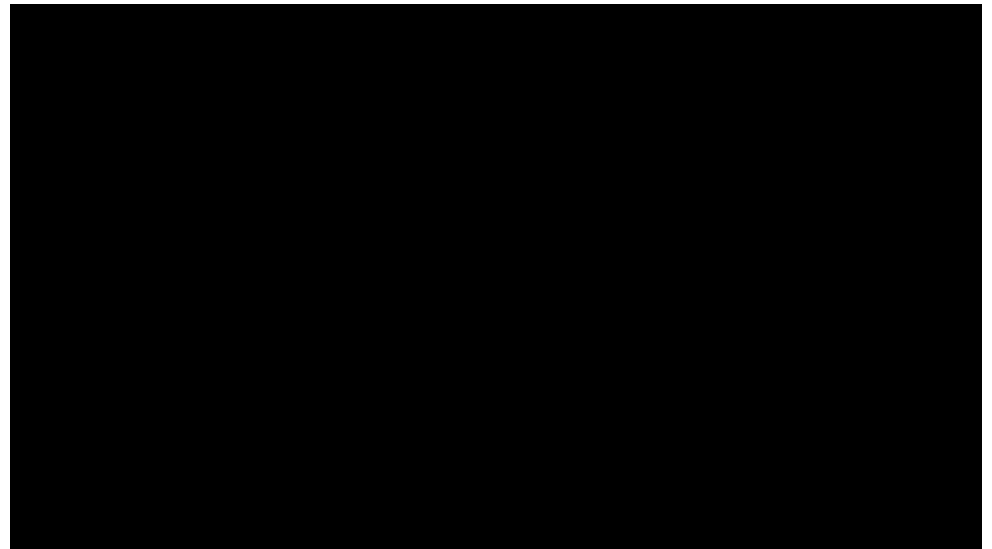
- perceived as meaningful by students because it connects to 'real-world' situations they may encounter outside their universities

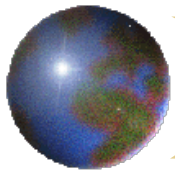


## 6. Conclusions

- participation in BCUR provides an extra-curricular **signature learning experience** (Spronken-Smith 2013), with the potential to develop multiple **graduate attributes** (Barrie 2004) and **self-authorship** (Baxter Magolda 2004)

*but ...* it is essential that *all* undergraduate students experience a research-based curriculum with opportunities for research dissemination





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