

From circles (in)to spheres:
creative and collaborative enrichments
of EAP practitioner identities

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From the Call for Papers ...

- [...] EAP practitioners [...] may find ourselves very differently positioned and/or valued by our institutions.
- BALEAP 2025 invites an exploration of **unique positionings**, **'third spaces'**, and **collaborative projects** that reach across and **beyond** the university.
- Our interpretation of 'third spaces': we draw on and develop Oldenburg and Christiansen's socio-geographical notion of 'third place'

Today's four-part journey ...

- **Part 1:** Theoretical and conceptual background: some words on (EAP) (Practitioner) identity
- **Part 2:** Two Practitioner Fourth Place (PFP) narratives
- **Part 3:** Intersections, interactions and mutual influences: within, across and beyond
- **Part 4:** Looking ahead

What we hope to achieve today

- Leave attendees with two sets of questions to consider, one **individual**, one **institutional**, regarding identity and identity positionings in relation to EAP practitionerhood.

A Shakespeare quote

What a piece of work is man*! How noble in reason!
How **infinite in faculty!**

Hamlet II, 3.

*I.e. 'humankind', 'humanity'.

PART ONE

- Theoretical and conceptual background: some words on (EAP) (Practitioner) identity
- 'Practitioner Fourth Places' (PFPs)



Personal identity/-ies

- **Multiple and complex:**

- we all have and play multiple roles
- actual (real) roles and imagined (unreal) roles (e.g. possible, alternative, future..)
- not necessarily aligned/ in harmony

- **Infinite and unbounded** in principle ...

- the 'Saturday morning feeling'

- ... yet **Bounded** when enacted:

- we necessarily delimit the domain/ the reach of any given identity in any given social context

What we think we mean here

- Something slightly deeper than 'social role' (i.e. a performative face/ mask) but higher level than the philosophical notion of a unitary individual identity
- Examples: parental identity, citizen identity ...

Complex and multiple

- Various **perspectives** (psychological, somatic, sociological, neurological, philosophical, legal, professional ...) and **models**.
- Example term 1: '**self-concept**'.
 - Carl Rogers' (1959) model of self-concept: self-image, self-esteem; ideal self; many other models.
- Example term 2: '**motivation**'
 - Innumerable models e.g. Dörnyei's L2MSS (e.g. 2005, 2019) for capturing (aspects of) motivation in particular domains.
- Many identities - and ways of conceptualising identity

Infinite and unbounded in principle

- **In a moment-by-moment sense:** infinite choices about how we present to the world / how we enact our identity at a given moment in time.
- **In an imagination sense:** we imagine ourselves to be different/ other but may not always enact these visions of ourselves.

Enacted identities are **bounded**

- When operationalised in a social context, identity/-ies are bounded:
- Conventions, traditions, laws, expectations of others serve to delimit and define identities.
- **Positives:** predictability, agreed norms, ease of effort
- **Challenges:** the familiar, the routine; self-limitation

EAP practitioner identity as a case study

- EAP practitioners inhabit an interesting range of spaces in the academy (e.g. Ding and Bruce, 2017)
- In-sessional identity/-ies (e.g. Tibbets and Chapman, 2023)
- Leadership and management identity/-ies (e.g. Brewer and Wilding, 2017)

Oldenburg and Christiansen

- Work by **Ray Oldenburg** (1932 – 2022) and **Karen Christiansen** (e.g. Oldenburg 1989, 2001; Oldenburg and Christiansen 2023) on first, second and third spaces.
- A sociology of place and space identity.
- Has penetrated into popular discourse (e.g. Henshall, 2021; Liddy, 2023; McGowan, 2024; Roberts-Ganim, 2023).
- Part of EC/ DK's interpretation of 'third space' in the CfPs.

First, second and third spaces

- **First space** = home; **second space** = work.
- **Third space** (Oldenburg and Christiansen 2024): 'The third place is not home and not work, but instead one of the physical settings that have throughout history encouraged a sense of warmth, conviviality, and that special kind of human sustenance we call community. These settings include cafés, taverns, libraries and hair salons, where people from different walks of life gather to hang out in an informal atmosphere.'
- Significance, value, importance: Third spaces carry import for democracy, civic engagement

Fourth places

- We propose the Practitioner Fourth Place (PFP) as a socio-psychological **identity** space.
- An **elected/ constructed identity** that is distinct from O&C's three spaces
- E.g.: A commitment to hill running as a sustained lifestyle choice (as opposed to going to the gym to stay fit)
- A felt sense of meaning, a sense of belonging to and developing the identity (in a community)

PART TWO

- Two PFP narratives



Emma on music practitioner (MP) identity

- Entrepreneurial musicianship enacted through both membership of professional musical groups and facilitation of music education courses
- As a **performer**:
 - Writing
 - Recording
 - Touring
- As a **producer**:
 - Working as a team to project manage large-scale events around the UK
 - Working individually to plan, promote and deliver regular courses in Yorkshire
- As a **facilitator**:
 - Design and lead singing workshops and courses in the UK and abroad

Emma: MP >> EAP

- Creativity in the classroom
 - Pronunciation, e.g. connected speech
- Co-designing events with students
 - Welcome, Induction, Transition
 - Belonging
- Management experience
 - Conflict-resolution, mediation, Restorative Circles
- In-sessional teaching
 - Performance and Cultural Industries (PCI)

Emma: EAP >> MP

- Curriculum design
 - Strong underpinning in pedagogy and scaffolding learning
 - Microcosm of a specific exercise / lesson plan
 - Macrocosm of syllabus design spanning semesters
- Mentorship / 1-2-1 consultations
 - Guiding individuals and groups on a personal and collective learning journey
- Supporting people to find their (academic) voice
 - e.g. affective factors, self-confidence, self-expression, being heard

DK on sustained second language learning

- I engage with languages (or lingua-cultures) in a PFP way; I call this sustained second language learning ('SSLL'; Kirkham 2025)
- Current focus: Cymraeg [Welsh] and Kernewek [Cornish]
- Over the years this has encompassed various kinds of languages including (among others):
 - two dead languages (Old English and Koine Greek)
 - two conlangs (Esperanto and Ido)
 - two minority languages (Cym and Ker)
 - two cross-continental languages (Spanish and French)

DK: SSL >> EAP

- Putting oneself in the learner's shoes and taking the journey inc. affective dimensions – insecurity, outsider status, belonging
- Profound connection between language, culture, place, people
- The place and role and English in relation to other languages
- Writing:
 - Genres (both in and of themselves and also in terms of what I can do)
 - In a second language

DK: EAP >> SSLL

- **Motivational:** One of the drivers of my SSLL: a desire to continue to do some of the things that I teach about and remain 'authentic' as I understand the term
- **Self-shaping:** Sustained exposure to a multilingual academic context from a language and text perspective
- **Knowledge:** A set of critical tools and understandings around language and related concepts
- **Skill:** Confidence to teach and support others in practical ways

PART THREE

- Intersections, interactions and mutual influences: within, across and beyond



Intersections, interactions, mutual influences

- Our **call**: Make the EAP practitioner membrane more porous
- We **ask**: What are some other relevant identities and how do we allow them in to shape our understanding of EAP?
- **WITHIN** i.e. EAP internal: materials and curriculum development, pastoral concerns, scholarship, leadership and management, mentoring
- **ACROSS**: Institutional e.g. Loizou and Kirkham (2025), Academic Lead for Student Opp and Engagement (Coleman 2015-2017), e.g. Student Union, International Student Office
- **BEYOND**: PFP examples here

What we asked ourselves in preparing this

- What is/ are our understanding(s) of EAP practitioner identity?
- What are the potentialities of my interacting circles/spheres?
- Am I maximising all the **within**, **across** and **beyond** opportunities that are available to me?
- How can I grow as a person and a professional in capitalising on the many identity interactions available to me?
- **Conclusion:** openness and curiosity around identity can be a refreshing and illuminating journey to take: circles into spheres

What's your integrationist identity?

- Are you primarily...?
 - A within-ist
 - An across-ist
 - A beyond-ist
 - A mixture of
 - Something else

- We have focussed on a beyondist approach to enlarging the tent of EAP Practitioner; is this the *only or best way*?

PART FOUR

- Looking ahead: a concrete proposal



Disciplinary specialism

- Disciplines can offer particular expertise within the academy as well outside it e.g. a Business School contains commercial know-how and experience in addition to the research and teaching.
- What about EAP?

A proposal

- EAP may be one area of the academy where the formation, constitution, enactment, and negotiation of academic identity/-ies is foregrounded or given particular focus.
- **CfPs:** '[...] EAP practitioners [...] may find ourselves very differently positioned and/ or valued by our institutions'.
- **Proposal:** could EAP centres seek to enlarge their role in the academy as the 'mentor discipline' for (questioning) academic / practitioner identity?

Prompts to consider/ discuss

- What is / are your identity/-ies as an EAP Practitioner (consider within, across, beyond)?
- How do(es) your EAP Practitioner identity space/ get shaped by your First, Second and Third Spaces?
- Are there un(der)explored areas to your EAP Practitioner identity/-ies? If so, what are they and how might you explore them?
- Do you consider yourself to have a PFP as defined here? If so, are there any fruitful interactions between this and your EAP work?
- Could/ should EAP position itself as a mentor discipline to the Academy in respect of academic identity/-ies? If so, how?

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