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The power of social capital: the significance of relationships in third space practice

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Abstract

Relationships, and relational working, are key for third space professionals in higher education and their practice. This article considers the literature on third space working and social capital, explores findings from qualitative data collected during practice-based research, and examines in more detail the nature and significance of relationships in third space practice, and in particular the power of social capital (Bourdieu, e.g. 1990; Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998; Lin 2001). It offers insights into the way that relationships are developed and harnessed and provides a steer on future scholarly investigation, which promotes the importance of high-quality relationships in realising the benefits that third space professionals bring to the academy. It also offers perspectives on how recognised affiliative networks of practitioners, such as academic developers (Staff Educational Development Association) and learning developers, via the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education Network (ALDinHE), are fundamental to supporting and nurturing this partnership working.

Keywords: learning development; third space professionals; social capital; relationships; relational working; networks.

Introduction

Relationships, and relational working, are a vital part of third space professionals' higher education practice, and it is recognised that third spaces are inherently collaborative and based on strong partnership working (Abegglen et al., 2023). In 2009, Whitchurch

Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
the significance of relationships in third space practice

published a framework where she considered the importance of relationships and relational working as one part of four recognised domains that underpin third space working (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022b, based on Whitchurch, 2009). Whitchurch's work has been explored by a number of authors since her original framework was developed, and as higher education has changed and expanded in the UK and beyond, third space practice has become an important topic in policy and practice debates (Grant, 2021).

Despite the growing work on third space practice, how third space practitioners successfully negotiate their roles and activities continues to be an area worthy of further consideration. Some of our own recent work has considered aspects of this, including the role of third space practitioners in student success initiatives (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022b) and the significance of social networks for scholarly enquiry in third spaces (McIntosh and Nutt, 2024). We have noted in a number of contexts the particular significance of relational work. This article, based on qualitative data collected during a practice-based research project on third space careers, examines in more detail some of the nature and significance of relationships in third space practice, and in particular the power of social capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). It is important to note that we were not specifically researching relationships as the research project focused on the career and career journeys of third space practitioners; however, relationships came out as a much stronger focus in the data than was expected. This has led to a deeper exploration of this aspect of the research findings and of third space practice.

Given the significance of relationships in the data, the focus of this article is a theoretical consideration of the importance of social capital and social networks to the development of relationships and how these are impacted through the notion of strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973; McIntosh and Nutt, 2024). This article offers insights into the way that relationships are developed and harnessed and provides a steer on future scholarly investigation, which promotes the importance of high-quality relationships in realising the benefits that third space professionals bring to the academy. It also offers some discussion on how recognised affiliative networks of practitioners, such as academic developers (Staff Educational Development Association) and learning developers, via the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education Network (ALDinHE), are fundamental to supporting and nurturing this partnership working. A table of examples of formal networks is included at the end of the article.

Literature

Third space

Interest in the topic of third space professionalism is topical, with some important discussions taking place in recent times around the role of third space work in contemporary HE (e.g. see Grant, 2021; Hall, 2022). Hall (2022) suggests, 'from a leadership perspective, the skills of "third space professionals" are those that will ensure universities adapt and survive as hegemonic discourses are disrupted' (p.26). There has been increasing research and writing about third spaces and third space practice and in 2023, Veles et al. provided a comprehensive systemic review of the literature, specifically considering university professional staff roles, identities, and spaces of interaction (Veles et al., 2023).

As noted in the introduction, in 2009, Whitchurch published a framework where she considered the importance of relationships and relational working as one of four domains framing third space working practices (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a, based on Whitchurch, 2009). The four domains are: institutional spaces; knowledges; relationships; and legitimacies. We have explored these domains in more detail in other publications (e.g. McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a; 2022b; 2024). Although a much wider body of work has been published in recent years by Whitchurch and others on the topic of third space professionalism and the play of these four domains (Whitchurch, 2008; 2012; 2023; Veles and Carter, 2016; Veles et al., 2019), including our own work on the importance of scholarship and scholarly networks in the third space (McIntosh and Nutt, 2024), there still exists an opportunity to examine in further detail how third space practitioners effectively engage in the domains. Our own interest here is in the relationship domain and specifically the relationships between third space professionals themselves, and their relationships with others in academic and professional spaces in higher education. Little and Green (2022) have already highlighted the importance of credibility and trust in relationships and collaborative practices in third space work.

Please note that the terms 'integrated practice' and 'integrated practitioner' are used alongside and largely interchangeably with third space practice and third space practitioner. We discuss this term in more detail in McIntosh and Nutt (2022a, e.g. see p.

Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
the significance of relationships in third space practice

280), however the term is designed to highlight the integrated nature of third space working.

Relationships

Relationships are key to the third space, as noted above, and as identified in McIntosh and Nutt (2022b), those working in roles associated with student success, such as learning developers, 'nurture strong relationships and this is the predominant form of capital that their work is based on' (p.4). Furthermore, 'the ability to work relationally, across both professional and academic divides, enables those who work with agility to enter and understand academic discourse and debate, and form alliances with key partners, most especially students' (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022b, p.4). This relational work has been a core consideration of literature on student engagement and co-creation in recent years (Bovill, 2020; Felten and Lambert, 2020) and, we argue here, is fundamental to integrated practice. These relationships with multiple stakeholders allow integrated practitioners 'to be reflective, to develop their practice and to construct networks, both internally and externally. Often these networks are based on … the relational principles based on affiliative connections rather than formal university structures' (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022b, p.4).

Exploring the significance of networks in third space practice, it is worth revisiting some early literature, which still has relevance for understanding the importance of network relationships. Granovetter (1973) in research on personal social networks identified the importance of 'weak ties' in career development. Strong ties are relationships with close contacts, e.g. friends, family, close working teams; weak ties are contacts that are more casual or temporary (Granovetter, 1973). His influential article 'The Strength of Weak Ties' (1973) has underpinned a range of work on relationships, particularly in workplace contexts including in HE (e.g. Fronczak et al., 2022). Our own recent work has explored the significance of weak tie relationships for developing scholarship in the third space (McIntosh and Nutt, 2024).

Social capital

It is insightful to explore these relationship practices in terms of social capital. There are a number of definitions of social capital available to provide contextual understanding to the

Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
the significance of relationships in third space practice

importance and value of relationship work and the nature of social 'power' within and from that work. Bourdieu is perhaps the best-known proponent of a concept of social capital. Bourdieu (e.g. see 1986; 1990; and with Passeron, 1977) considered several aspects of power in society in terms of 'capital'. In Bourdieu's terms, types of relative capital lead to differential experiences for individuals and groups within society and are influenced by social context (in terms of class, race, and gender). The most familiar to most of us is probably economic capital: the power of money. He also talked about symbolic power (e.g. in identified leadership roles). But for Bourdieu, a key feature of societies was cultural capital: the power of education in the widest sense. His concept of cultural capital also involved social capital. In the simplest terms, this is the value and power of who we know, but while social capital for Bourdieu is about individual 'power', a vital feature of this for him was the social context – social capital cannot be understood outside the social norms, values, and attitudes of the environment. He also argued that it is developed through social processes and continues to change over time (Bourdieu, 1990). It provides resources and potential resources and can be used to both challenge and reinforce social norms (discussed in Zembylas, 2007). The social context and conditions are intrinsic to how we gain and use social capital, and power remains relative. Nan Lin (1999; 2001) explored social capital in terms of networks and suggests that the resources gained from connections and relationships are critical to achieving objectives for individuals and groups. She argues that who you know as well as what you know makes a difference in society. Social capital for Lin is: 'resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions' (Lin, 2001, p.41). For Nahaphiet and Ghoshal (1998), who draw on Granovetter (1973) and network research in their thinking, social capital is 'the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit' (p.243).

Social capital is an aspect of individual 'power' within complex social contexts, and it is notable that Buckley (2024), in discussing five types of power drawn from Blanchard (2007): position, task, knowledge, personal, relationship, also argues for an approach to networked leadership for learning developers. Hood (2024) discusses 'harnessing the power of the third space' and says 'having other third space allies also reaps rewards' (p.342). She talks about allies in other services as well as beyond the institution, for example through ALDinHE, to provide social support as well as making individual voices louder.

Research on a wider range of fields shows that having greater, or increasing, social capital can empower those who are in relatively low authority environments. For example, Ikhar et al., (2022) researching relative power of women in rural India found that social capital was an important factor in empowering women in an environment which was male dominated. If third space practitioners are usually in roles which have less authority than other roles (academic, professional managerial) in many HE contexts, in part because they work between the conventional structures of HE (which is argued by a number of authors, e.g. Grant, 2021; Campbell-Perry, 2022), then they too may be empowered through social capital.

Methods

The research we have drawn on for this article received ethical approval in October 2023 from the University of the West of Scotland's (UWS) ethics committee in the School of Education and Social Sciences (ESS). While we conducted a two-part data collection exercise with a mixed-methods approach, including: (1) an online questionnaire and (2) semi-structured interviews, this article draws only on the data from the interviews.

To attract suitable participants for the wider research, we targeted various affiliative HE networks via JISC mailing lists, including the HEA Principal Fellow's network, the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), and the Association for Learning Development in HE (ALDinHE), amongst others. Participants were provided with an information sheet and gave their informed consent to take part in the study, as well as given information about how their data would be anonymised, analysed, and stored. There were a total of 63 responses to the questionnaire. Those who filled out the questionnaire were asked whether they wanted to participate in an interview. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted with 14 participants in the style of a 'professional conversation' (Jarrett et al., 2022).

All interviewees identified themselves as being third space practitioners, or as working in the third space. Interviews were carried out with 4 men and 10 women at various stages of their careers: 11 were from the UK (2 of these had also worked outside the UK during their careers, both in the USA), 2 were from Australia, and 1 from New Zealand. They worked in

a range of HE institutions (research, teaching focused, practice orientated) and in a variety of departments and units. Some were on professional contracts and some on academic. Of these respondents, nine respondents were based in central units or departments, including two who were library based, and five were primarily based in academic departments: one was in an academic role (having held a number of third space and professional roles); two were 'pracademics' (academic practitioner or dual professional), one of whom was retired at the time of interview; one was a teaching fellow working on cross university third space projects; and one was a faculty-based learning developer. The interviewees were all volunteers who had responded to our call for participants; however, we were careful to select from the volunteers respondents who came from a range of third space roles, including both women and men, some of whom aligned with learning development, at different career stages. Significantly more women than men volunteered to be interviewed, though this may reflect third space practitioners. We saw the two Australian and one New Zealand respondents as providing an important perspective; our previous work on third space practice had gained a significant interest in Australia in particular (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022b). The model of HE institutional structures in Australia and New Zealand is also similar to that in the UK.

The research project focused on careers in the third space and built on previous work we had undertaken (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a; 2022b; Nutt, 2022). Our aim was to better understand the complex career processes and patterns for those working in the third space and to further examine the notion of a 'career frame' (Veles and Carter, 2016) rather than a 'career ladder'. We were particularly interested in the choices individuals made in third space career journeys and the challenges they faced and support they gained.

As noted above, the semi-structured interviews were modelled on the style of a 'professional conversation' (Jarret et al., 2021) and took place on Zoom. Question sets were identified to help us to explore and identify common themes around relationships and connections in further depth given these were areas highlighted in the questionnaire responses. The interviews, which were each approximately one to one and a half hours in length, began with an opening question inviting the interviewees to reflect on their response to the questionnaire. Interviewees were also asked to speak about their career beginnings and future plans and to offer their reflections on the connections that they had made, and their career journeys. They were also asked about how they overcame any

barriers and challenges, as well as what support they had received. Each interview was recorded, with transcription software in place.

The interview transcripts were reviewed and further transcribed. The data from the interviews was then analysed and subsequently coded to identify both general codes and thematic/conceptual codes via a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2008). The interviewer also made notes immediately after each interview to note impressions. These notes were also coded. The codes were identified from the literature and directly drawn from common themes and discussion points within the interviews.

Limitations and specific constraints

It is important to note three particular constraints. Firstly, for this article we are drawing on one theme in particular from the data analysis: 'relationships'. Our initial project was not researching social relationships in the third space, but rather career journeys; however, relationships were so strongly showcased in the data (both the questionnaires and interviews, though we are only drawing on interview data in this article) that this became a particular area of examination and theoretical analysis. Other findings will be explored more fully in other publications. Secondly, we would also highlight the fact that our data did not reveal specific issues relating to gender or nationality. This is not to suggest that gender and nationality may not be highly significant in third space practice, but that in our study, we did not note specific differences related to these two characteristics. We are unable to identify, in this article, each respondent individually by gender, role, country of origin because we believe this risks breaking our agreement to maintain confidentiality. This is a relatively small community, and several of our respondents could potentially be identified if their specific comments were linked to the details. Where the details are significant to the point being made, we have included that information while continuing to maintain anonymity. Thirdly, this is a small study undertaken as practice research; therefore, generalisability is limited, however we believe that we can explore theoretical issues in the light of the richness of the qualitative data we have collected. The following discussion section provides that exploration.

Discussion

Relationships are key to third space practice, as many authors have identified, and we have argued elsewhere about the value of networks for developing third space scholarship (McIntosh and Nutt, 2024); however, here we will explore more fully the ways in which third space practitioners draw on social capital to make cross-boundary working effective. Many integrated practitioners (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a) are in relatively low authority roles within university structures and hierarchies, but they are also often working beyond their roles to support enhancements in practice and support positive change for students and staff in HE settings. Being involved in cross-department projects and activities creates opportunities to make connections across disciplines, practices, and job levels. Despite the hierarchical dynamic of HE, with management and academic roles as apparently most influential, those working in the third space, however lowly their position, are often at the forefront of change, responding to current and future challenges, and involved in ongoing and future developments (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a; Quinsee, 2022). But many third space practitioners experience feelings of relative inferiority. One of the interviewees, for example, semi-jokingly talked about academics as 'the king and queen of the institution' having previously said: 'In higher education. I was a professional staff member. I wasn't, you know, part of the tribe' (Int12).

> For Bourdieu (1990), a necessary precondition for the practice of symbolic domination is that members of a subordinated group … believe that their lifestyle practices are inherently inferior to those of the dominant agents in the field (McAdam et al., 2019, p.463).

Grant (2021), however, in his analysis of the future of HE institutions, sees third space practice and those who work in these cross-boundary environments as key to a successful future for universities. Third space practitioners may experience relative low status within university structures in terms of job role and status (symbolic capital) and pay (economic capital). In terms of cultural capital, they may also experience a sense of subordination as universities contain an intellectual hierarchy aligned with discipline specialisms, giving academic voices the specific value of contextual cultural capital, but the very flexibility and cross-boundary working inherent in third space roles creates opportunities for gaining and making use of social capital.

Even with relatively little authority, integrated practitioners can influence and support positive developments for learners and colleagues through the relationships they build, the networks they establish, and the skills and knowledge they gain from the range of contacts

and interactions. While the knowledge third space practitioners draw on comes in part from study, experience, evidence-based practice, and research, some key elements are also gained from the diversity of relationships they establish in their cross-boundary working. Kinchin and Pugh (2024) suggest that third space work (in this case for educational developers) can lead to a kind of epistemological plurality. This would suggest that working across disciplines and fields leads to a flexibility of conceptualisation enabling rich development of ideas and practice. Little and Green (2022) also highlight the importance of credibility and trust in relationships and collaborative practices in third space work, underpinning the idea of relationship-building as important to finding shared understanding.

There are two different aspects to social capital for third space practitioners that were apparent in the interviews that we want to explore more fully here. The first relates to building connections and increasing social capital, which is then drawn on in both third space activity and for third space practitioners in their career journeys. The second is the importance of finding or creating one's group, or 'tribe'.

Building and using social capital

The cross-boundary communication and connection involved in third space practice leads to building relationships, which both increase social capital and draw on that social capital to influence and affect positive change:

> So that's generally what I find: being nice to people and being interested in them, because I am incredibly nosy, has probably been the biggest thing in the whole of my career that's paid (off) (Int 1).

> If you drop me on a desert island, I would probably start some … support network. That's just what I do … in some ways, everything I do is an inclusive support network, sometimes for belonging, sometimes it's for study skills, sometimes it's just for advisors who are having a hard time, you know, like that's what I do (Int 13).

Interviewee 7, who was based in an academic department, talked about working on cross-university projects with students and colleagues from different areas of the university, and having established these relationships, then re-connected for a subsequent third space project and ongoing other cross-institutional activity: 'And then there've been other projects which have kind of come out of that again'. Interviewee 8, based in a central development

unit over a number of years talked about the importance of going to faculty meetings to build the connections, and emphasised the value of knowing staff across campus:

> I have become sort of like a jack of all trades on matters academic. And I think I know oh, at least 90% of all academic staff personally. So I have a really broad network. …of people on the ground.

He also explained how he supported his team to draw on the same network and build their own relationships to support their work.

Lin's (1999) perspective on social capital argues that it 'is captured from embedded resources in social networks' (p.28).

Int 3 explained in a little more detail how drawing on social capital might work:

> You have to see that in the context … people are busy. People are passionate about what they do. Everyone says, "Don't come to me with x...". "We've always done it this way". "We don't like it". … So the amount of times I used to sit down, the amount of coffee and chats, and, you know, hearing also about things … I don't even need to hear [about]. But it was about relationship building. And ultimately they want to be heard right? Like, like, we say this about students. But it's the same for staff frustrated about a lot of things. … It allows us to then shine a little bit more of the bigger picture that they might not see.

Little and Green (2022) point out that 'Third space professionals perceive their credibility and influence as dynamic and shifting, rather than static or dependent on structural hierarchy' and that they develop what Whitchurch called a loose 'social contract' (Whitchurch, 2013, p.63, discussed in Little and Green, 2022, pp.804-805). They argue that this 'contract' is tentative and requires ongoing maintenance.

Int 14 discussed the fact that a colleague in a similar role at a nearby institution had moved on:

> She was one of my go-to-people in an institution, you know, 20 min away. So yes, I need to go and grow somebody else there, who I could hang out with ... I think [these sort of contacts] have been absolutely crucial.

For some third space practitioners, connecting with others may resemble the practice of academics' networking activity:

> My co-author in a book chapter that I wrote was from an American university. But that was really just kind of me going up to people at conferences and saying, You know, hey? I think your work's interesting, you know. Give me a call (Int 10).

But in a context where writing for publication is not necessarily part of 'the job', this type of activity may be a more deliberate attempt to increase both social capital and credibility. We have argued elsewhere that successful scholarship in the third space is strongly linked to networking with others, and in particular to a combination of strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973; McIntosh and Nutt, 2024).

Third space practitioners are not all confident outgoing individuals, and those who are happy staying in their context and being quietly effective also highlight the importance of relationships:

> I like doing lots of different things, but I like to do it in a place where I know people and build relationships and have an established kind of sense of who I am and what the places are I'm working in (Int 4).

Individuals we know can help us create contacts and establish the relationships which further enable effective working across boundaries, both in terms of gaining knowledge to work more effectively, and in building a power base for doing so. Individual direct ties can lead to further contact and extend those ties (Granovetter (1973) calls this 'the power of weak ties'). Interviewee 9 talked about getting a new manager who was from a different area of university work:

> She's a massive networker, and I was not used to that at all, and it kind of put me out of my comfort zone. But she was always throwing people at me like, "Oh, have you met this person? … I met this person from this institution … Let's have a meeting". So like, she was always pulling [me] into these meetings with other university librarians and associate directors and stuff from other institutions to talk about how they do things. She taught me … the power of networking.

Creating your 'tribe' within third space working

As Interviewee 14's comment above highlights, making connections with others in similar roles with similar challenges is an important aspect of effective third space working. And these contacts can become something of a resource network. Maybe even a 'power' family?

Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
the significance of relationships in third space practice

A respondent talking about setting up a network of fellow third space practitioners explained:

> You know I set that up partially because I was a one person team in a faculty unit and I didn't have anyone to talk [with] about the sort of questions that were coming out …, or just how you navigate systems, or whatever else and we [the network] have been very … kind of, proactive in trying to provide the support. We have created a framework where we're sort of providing a community, providing opportunities, professional development, trying to support research in this space and also undertaking … some kind of … advocacy, which is really about just getting in people's view where we know third space people aren't being represented where we think we should.

And it is worth noting that this network has been successful:

> And that really has become my community. It's been invaluable, and I mean, fortunately, a lot of people seem to feel the same way. People are regularly sort of talking about … how beneficial it is, you know … just having proximity to … those conversations. You feel a sense of belonging. And you know, they've kind of plugged in (Int 12).

Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998) argued that 'social capital is typically a by-product of other activities' and 'its development requires a "focus"' (p.261). They also suggested that social capital was linked to intellectual capital within organisational settings, and that networks were an important resource for creating intellectual capital. Tsai and Ghoshal (1998), reflecting on their research with a large multinational company, suggested that social capital and trust established through social interaction over time lead to more effective resource exchanges and innovation.

Working in cross-boundary third space work may not be sufficient common connection in its own right to create a 'power family' through networking in the way described above. The range of third space practitioners may be too different, even though they share a common space of experience. As one interviewee noted when talking about the connection of third space practice: 'I find it quite interesting that we're all these different professions. But we've identified this thing that we've all got in common: the burning issue' (Int 11).

But Interviewee 11 also went on to explain that it could be difficult to find your 'tribe' within a specific institution. While there may be other third space practitioners, they are likely to be spread through the institution and many may be working primarily alone, as he commented: 'We have to look outside to find communities of practice. To find colleagues

in the same position'. Several respondents talked about the value of formal communities of practice like ALDinHE and SEDA, although for others their 'tribe' was smaller and more aligned with relationships established over time with a smaller group. Int 8 described his local (based geographically near) network of academic developers as like his 'extended family'. Int 3 talked about the advantages of post-Covid connecting: 'I will tap into these networks. And with online stuff it's so much easier to now take part'.

Some respondents, like Int 12 above, had decided to create their own third space tribe, and actively reaching out is one way to do this, as Int 9 describes: 'It was … a bit lonely. And I kind of wanted to sort of bounce ideas off other people in [a] kind of collegial way ... I wanted that sandbox, I think'. As a result, the participant called around other people in their field at other HE institutions: 'I just sort of started cold contacting people', and established a peer network of 28 people, which then got some attention and now has around 40'.

While networking with others who share roles and interests is clearly an important element of establishing social capital, it is worth noting that recent research on relationships in organisational settings suggests that 'social tie diversity' leads to 'innovative work behaviour' (Cangialosi et al., 2023, p.72). This aligns with Granovetter's (1973) early work on weak ties (referred to earlier in this article) and argues that connecting and building relationships with third space practitioners in different roles and spaces, as well as students and staff in professional and academic settings, may be important for ongoing creativity and adaptability in higher education settings. This is not, however, to disparage the vital importance of finding the support of one's 'tribe'.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the importance of relationships for third space practitioners through the lens of social capital. Drawing on data from recent research interviews with third space practitioners discussing their career journeys, we identified two important areas of relationships, which are important in supporting third space work and providing both power and agency to practitioners. We have used the concept of social capital to theorise this activity.

Within institutional structures, many third space practitioners are in roles with relatively low levels of formal authority, but they often also have significant influence and impact in the context of cross-university working and the vital aspects of work they support (e.g. student success). How do they manage this conflicting situation? What is key to successful practice? We would argue that relationships and relationship work are fundamental to effectiveness. In fact, relationship work is at the route of many third space roles. Some third space roles identify partnership and community working as inherent to their values or approaches (e.g. see Johnson and Bishopp-Martin, 2024, p.47 for learning developers; and for educational developers see SEDA, n.d.). Buckley (2024) highlights the importance of 'relationship power' in leadership in learning development.

We have argued elsewhere (McIntosh and Nutt, 2022a) that partnerships are both important and need to be cultivated in the third space, and a range of other authors have highlighted the significance of working together, some of whom we have referred to in this article. We would therefore encourage third space practitioners to make every effort to build their networks, to make contacts within and outside their institutions, and for them to see this as time well spent. We also suggest that institutions and managers of third space staff could look to identify ways to support the networking activities of third space practitioners. We have noted that it is often difficult, for example, for staff on professional contracts to attend conferences or networking events outside their institutions, or to attend lunchtime curricula development workshops, but it is in these spaces that some of the relationships that matter are created.

One of the respondents (an educational developer) in our research said:

> The easiest way to describe my job is … It's about building relationships. And once that happens, then it is a lot easier to keep the work going, even if the things around might change (Int 8).

We would encourage third space practitioners to recognise the potential power of relationship work to their practice and to explore ways to build their social capital and find their 'tribe'.

Role/activity	Organised network
Learning Developers	ALDinHE (Association for Learning Developers in Higher Education)

Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
the significance of relationships in third space practice

Academic developers/educational developers	HEDG (Heads of Educational Development Group); SEDA (Staff and Educational Developers Association)
Student engagement	RAISE (Researching, Advancing and Inspiring Student Engagement)
Learning technologists	ALT (Association for Learning Technologists); TELeadvisors
Third space leaders	ProfsinPrep; HEDG; Spinnaker
Third space researchers	Third Space Research Group
Pracademics (also known as: academic practitioners or dual professionals)	SPiHE (Supporting Professionals into Higher Education)
Please note this is not a comprehensive list of all organised networks, but a selection of groups/organisations that we are currently aware are active, and that can provide a supportive community for third space practitioners. The groups are generally not exclusive, and you may find 'your tribe' in a network, which is matched above with a different role/activity – so for example, some Learning Developers are involved in ALT or SEDA as well as, or instead of, ALDinHE.	

Acknowledgements

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Nutt and McIntosh
The power of social capital:
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