

Differentiating and Assessing Relationships in Service-Learning and Civic Engagement: Exploitative, Transactional, or Transformational

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As a defining aspect of service-learning and civic engagement, relationships can exist among faculty members, students, community organizations, community members, and administrators on campus. This research developed procedures to measure several aspects of these relationships. Investigators collected information from 20 experienced service-learning faculty members about their relationships with representatives of community organizations using the newly-developed Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES). Results indicate that transactional and transformational qualities can be differentiated using TRES and are related to other characteristics of relationships (e.g., closeness). Conceptual work underlying this study aims to advance practitioner-scholars' understanding of partnerships as one type of relationship, offering a refinement on and an expansion of the terminology associated with service-learning and civic engagement.

Relationships are a central, defining dimension of community-campus engagement (e.g., Cruz & Giles, 2000; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Jacoby & Associates, 2003), and “partnership” may be among the most frequently used words in the literature on service-learning and civic engagement. The label “partner” is used to indicate both a person in the community (e.g., staff member at a community organization) and an organization in the community (e.g., nonprofit or governmental agency); and the term “partnership” is most often applied to the relationship and interactions between the community and the campus. But are these terms being applied appropriately and clearly? This research is based on the conviction that the field needs clearer nomenclature and tools to conceptualize, investigate, evaluate, monitor, and nurture partnerships.

We contend that the terms “relationship” and “partnership” are not interchangeable. Relationships may be casual, short-term, and/or informal in nature; or they may be formal, complex, long-term, and/or multi-faceted; in any of these cases, they may be characterized by any of a wide range of interactions

with differing characteristics, capacities, goals, and outcomes. The term partnership is too often casually applied to the full range of connections between communities and campuses. For the sake of clarity, we use *relationship* to refer to interactions between persons and *partnership* to describe a particular subset of relationships characterized by three qualities: closeness, equity, and integrity (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bringle, Officer, Grim, & Hatcher, 2009). Thus, not all relationships are partnerships, perhaps because the relationship in question is new and developing, has deteriorated, or has reached a stasis short of partnership (i.e., low levels of closeness, equity, and integrity) that may or may not be appropriate. Although other studies (e.g., Janke, 2009) examine inter-organizational relationships and partnerships in service-learning and civic engagement, our analysis focuses on interactions between and among persons.

Delineating the nature of relationships in civic engagement,¹ including characterizing their attributes, provides a basis for evaluating their status, under-

standing the changes that occur in them over time, and nurturing them in desired directions. Experience and research (see, for example, Dorado & Giles, 2004) confirm that relationships can progress and regress in quality because of a variety of circumstances (e.g., changes in work, individuals involved, goals, resources), although it may be the case that all civic engagement relationships could benefit from aspiring to some, if not all, of the attributes of partnerships. Understanding and operationalizing good practice associated with various types of relationships will be facilitated by enhancing the clarity and precision of terminology and developing capacities to assess the qualities of these relationships. A better understanding of the dynamics and aspirational qualities of relationships may enable practitioners to strengthen their own relationships and those of others. In turn, improving relationships in intentional ways may enhance outcomes for all constituencies, although this is a hypothesis that can be empirically evaluated. Such improved understanding also may allow civic engagement administrators to evaluate a range of relationship-building processes as well as facilitate the development and testing of theory related to the formation, evolution, and dissolution of relationships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Saltmarsh, Giles, O'Meara, Sandmann, Ward, and Buglione (2009) conclude from their analysis of Carnegie Elective Classification dossiers that a consistent shortcoming of community engagement efforts is the lack of convincing evidence about the authentic nature of campus-community reciprocity.

This article reviews the relevant literature related to relationship development in service-learning and civic engagement, the nature and type of relationships found in community-campus interactions, and the attributes of transactional and transformational relationships. A structural model and conceptual framework for relationships in civic engagement is offered, and an instrument designed to distinguish between exploitative, transactional, and transformational aspects of these relationships is presented, along with data from its pilot use. Based on this work, implications for future research and practice are discussed.

Moving Beyond the "Community-Campus Partnership"

Reviewing the state of research related to external communities in service-learning, Cruz and Giles (2000) identify difficulties of conceptualizing "the community" as an entity: Which community? Which part of the community? How will the community be represented? Further, they suggest that "the university-community partnership itself be the unit of analysis" (p. 31), calling the field to do a better job of

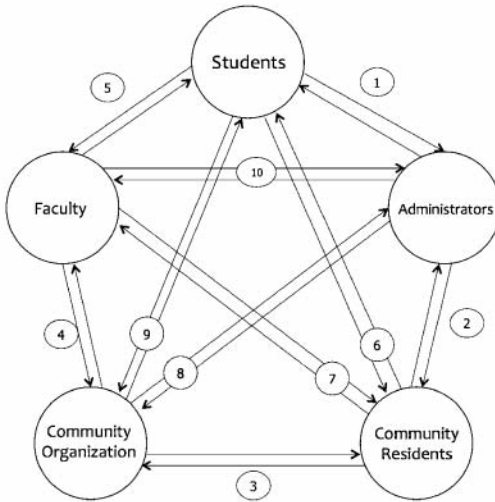
assessing not only the outcomes of service-learning in communities (e.g., enhanced reading skills among children) but also the nature of the partnership itself.

When considering institutional approaches to service-learning as an integral component of civic engagement, practitioner-scholars are broadening their descriptions of the constituents involved to encompass multiple participants and groupings of participants (Jacoby & Associates, 2003). In the pairing of "community" and "campus," multiple entities can be differentiated, since neither of these is a homogeneous body; such precision has the potential to enhance practice and research. For example, one simple, graphical representation of the partners in service-learning is a Venn diagram (e.g., Clayton et al., 2005) with overlapping circles for (a) students, (b) faculty/staff, and (c) community partners – a triad that explicitly differentiates campus into students and faculty/staff and supports examination of the heterogeneous nature of each stakeholder population. Students, for example, may include those enrolled in a service-learning class as well as those in leadership roles supporting the class, and community partners can include representatives of community organizations, clients of those organizations, or residents of geographic communities. Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan (2001) advocate comprehensive assessment of service-learning focused on four stakeholders: students, faculty, community partners, and institutions. Similarly, in addition to including the community, Bringle and Hatcher (1996, 2000; Bringle, Hatcher, Hamilton, & Young, 2001) identify three constituencies – administrators, faculty, and students – in the Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning, a framework useful for assessment and planning. The work in South Africa on the Community-Higher Education-Service Partnership program (Lazarus, 2004) similarly distinguishes community residents and service providers, thus suggesting a faculty-resident-service provider triad for capturing the important relationships.

Bringle, Clayton, and Price (2009) further differentiate the community and campus in the SOFAR framework (Figure 1), identifying five key constituencies associated with civic engagement: Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on the campus, and Residents in the community (or, in some instances, clients or special interest populations). Across these five stakeholders, there are ten dyadic relationships, and each of the ten has two vectors representing the primary directions of influence.

SOFAR provides a structural model for examining dyadic interactions between persons and explicitly broadens and refines the set of potential partners in civic engagement beyond "community" and "cam-

Figure 1
SOFAR Structural Framework



pus.” This allows a more detailed analysis of the nature of the wide range of interactions and relationships involved. The differentiation of community into Organizations and Residents acknowledges that persons in these two groups often have different cultures, goals, resources, roles, and power and that they do not necessarily represent one another’s views; it also encourages investigation of the relationships among the various types of individuals that comprise “community.” There could be additional differentiation among residents (e.g., by neighborhoods, by demographic attributes), among organizational staff (e.g., executive director, mid-level staff), and across organizations (e.g., government, business, community). The differentiation of campus into Administrators, Faculty, and Students acknowledges similar heterogeneity across perspectives, agendas, cultures, resources, power, and goals. It allows for an analysis of both the dyadic intra-campus relationships and the construction of campus social networks focused on civic engagement; in addition, it acknowledges that each of these three campus constituencies has its own relationship with residents and community organizations that warrants unique attention. Here too, there could be additional differentiation, among students (e.g., students enrolled in a service-learning course, student leaders helping to facilitate the course, and co-curricular volunteers involved in the same project), administrators (e.g., executive officers, academic leaders, and program staff), and faculty (e.g., faculty teaching a service-learning course and faculty providing leadership to service-learning initiatives or offices) (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009).

Furthermore, SOFAR is not limited to the analysis of dyadic relationships but rather provides a starting

point for examining more complex interactions among larger groupings and networks (see Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). There may be multiple persons in each constituent group in SOFAR who warrant differentiation, representation, and analysis. For example, although interactions may occur between one student and one community organization staff person during a service-learning project, there also can be many students involved in the project and therefore interacting with one or various organizational staff. In addition, students are not only participants in isolated courses but also members of the broader campus community, and their service-learning activities may result in interactions with other students (e.g., in other courses, in student organizations or student government, in their major, with peer mentors). Further, SOFAR also has the potential to examine how relationships between two or more individuals in these primary groupings can develop into networks, coalitions, common interest groups, communities of practice, and communities beyond these groupings. An elaboration of this graphic representation of SOFAR that includes networks at each of the five nodes (see Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009) provides a template for delineating networks of persons outside each primary constituency and for considering how service-learning courses provide a basis for additional relationships across many persons. Although these extrapolations beyond the primary five constituencies and ten dyadic relationships are possible and may be meaningful, the nodes identified in SOFAR represent an important starting point for developing structural analyses, conceptual frameworks, and research projects that study sets of relationships.

Investigating the Quality of Relationships

But what about the quality of the relationships among this range of constituents in civic engagement? Building on the work of Burns (1978), who distinguishes between transactional and transforming leadership, Enos and Morton (2003) offer a framework for examining partnerships in service-learning. They define *transactional* relationships as instrumental and often designed to complete short-term tasks. Persons come together on the basis of an exchange, each offering something that the other desires. Both benefit from the exchange, and no long-term change is expected. This is distinct from *transformational* relationships wherein both persons grow and change because of deeper and more sustainable commitments. In a transformational relationship, persons come together in more open-ended processes of indefinite but longer-term duration and bring a receptiveness – if not an overt intention – to explore emergent possibilities, revisit and revise their own goals and identities, and develop systems they work within

beyond the status quo.

The study reported here operationalized the distinction Enos and Morton bring to the civic engagement literature by developing an instrument to assess relationships in light of their transactional and transformational qualities. Transactional relationships and outcomes may be appropriate in some situations; movement toward mutual transformation may be desirable in other situations. What is needed is a means of making visible the full range of possibilities and distinguishing between actual and desired states, so that persons involved in any given relationship (and those who support them) can more effectively discuss, diagnose, and, as desired, deepen the quality of interactions.

The primary research question under investigation in this project was whether the differences between transactional and transformational relationships in service-learning can be meaningfully measured. The project included developing, administering, and evaluating an instrument and protocol for investigating relationships with respect to their exploitative, transactional, or transformational attributes. This first phase of this research focused on one of the ten dyadic relationships in Figure 1: the faculty-community organization relationship, viewed from the perspective of the faculty member (F-O in SOFAR).

Method

Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale

The Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) was developed from a review of the literature and through feedback from service-learning practitioners and researchers. The initial version of the instrument (Clayton & Scott, 2008) was a simple continuum (Figure 2) based on Enos and Morton (2003), ranging from 1 (*transactional*) to 10 (*transformational*) as a quantitative rating of any given relationship.

Discussions with practitioners and researchers identified the need to expand the continuum to

embody one-sided relationships that fall short of transactional and in some instances are even exploitative (i.e., so unilateral that, intentionally or unintentionally, they take advantage of or harm one or both parties). Further, principles of best practice in designing scales (e.g., Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004) suggest the need for a more complex set of descriptors and a finer level of discrimination in articulating the characteristics of transactional and transformational relationships.

TRES was developed based on an analysis of attributes of transactional and transformational relationships (Burns, 1978; Enos & Morton, 2003) and the relationships literature applied to civic engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Items for TRES were written around nine key attributes: outcomes, common goals, decision-making, resources, conflict management, identity formation, power, significance, and satisfaction and change for the better (Table 1).

Item response options reflect different possibilities along a continuum from exploitative to transactional to transformational (E-T-T). Options in the exploitative range of the continuum reflect negative outcomes (e.g., costs exceeding benefits) to one or both parties. Options in the transactional range reflect net benefits to one or both parties but no growth. Options in the transformational range capture growth and enhanced capacity in and through the relationship.

When constructing the nine items, variable numbers of options were included to capture different possibilities and nuances across the continuum for a particular attribute. The uneven number of response choices for different items was shaped by the desire to present respondents with reasonable choices spanning the conceptual continuum. Some analyses are based on these raw score responses, which were obtained by summing responses to the nine items and finding the mean score for each research participant. Despite the unequal number of response categories, summing or averaging these responses across items

Figure 2
Preliminary Continuum



Table 1
Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES)

Analysis of Partnership

Mark with an X the alternative that best characterizes the actual nature of the partnership from your point of view (as it is now, if this is a current partnership, or as it was at the time of the course, if this is a previous partnership).

Mark with a circle the alternative that best characterizes the desired nature of the partnership from your point of view (note that this might be the same alternative you marked with a X or it might be different)

1. Outcomes of the service-learning partnership
 - a. There are more costs than benefits for both of us in this partnership#
 - b. One of us benefits but at a cost to the other#
 - c. Neither of us benefits to a significant degree from this partnership, but neither experiences a significant cost either#
 - d. One of us benefits much more than the other, although not at a significant cost to either of us##
 - e. We benefit equally (in terms of getting something we value) from the partnership*
 - f. We benefit equally (in terms of getting something we value) and one of us grows through the partnership**
 - g. We benefit equally (in terms of getting something we value) and both grow through the partnership
 - h. We benefit equally (in terms of getting something we value) and both grow and the relationship itself grows
 - i. We benefit equally (in terms of getting something we value) and both grow, the relationship itself grows, and the systems (e.g., organizations) that we are part of become more capable of generating growth because of our partnership
2. Relationship among goals in service-learning the partnership: To what extent would you say that you and your community partner do or do not have / did or did not have common goals in your service-learning collaboration?
 - a. Generally our goals are at odds#
 - b. Generally our goals are not connected, although not at odds*
 - c. Our goals converge at some points*
 - d. We have common goals
3. Decision-making: When decisions have been made about the service-learning activities, to what degree have you and your community partner collaborated?
 - a. Decisions about this project are made in isolation and without any consideration of the other partner#
 - b. Decisions about this project are made in isolation but with some consideration of the other partner##
 - c. Decisions about this project are made in isolation and with significant consideration of the other partner*
 - d. Decisions about this project are made in consultation with the other partner*
 - e. Decisions about this project are made collaboratively and are generally driven by the interests of one or the other of us**
 - f. Decisions about this project are made collaboratively and are generally reached through a consensus process that reflects our shared commitment to our shared goals
4. Resources: In this service-learning partnership
 - a. One of us has contributed most or all of the resources to the work, and the other has contributed very little or no resources#
 - b. One of us has contributed more resources than the other, but the other has contributed some resources*
 - c. Both of us have contributed significant resources to the work
5. Conflict management: If (or when) conflicts arise about the work of this service-learning partnership
 - a. Both of us would actively avoid dealing with the conflict#
 - b. One of us would attempt to deal with the conflict while the other would avoid it##
 - c. We would both deal with the conflict, but it would be uncomfortable for us*
 - d. We would both deal with the conflict openly, with the shared expectation of resolving the issue

continued

6. Role of this partnership in work and identity formation: This service-learning partnership
 - a. _____ Has on balance hindered work for both of us#
 - b. _____ Has on balance hindered work for one of us#
 - c. _____ Has helped one of us to do our work but has no impact on the other's work##
 - d. _____ Has helped both of us to do our work*
 - e. _____ Has helped both of us do our work and has helped define "who I am" for one of us, but not the other**
 - f. _____ Has helped both of us do our work and has helped define "who I am" for both of us
 - g. _____ Has helped both of us do our work and has helped define "who I am" for both us and has enhanced the ability of one of us to contribute in significant ways through our work
 - h. _____ Has helped both of us do our work, has helped define "who I am" for both of us, and has enhanced the ability of both of us to contribute in significant ways through our work

7. Power: In this service-learning partnership
 - a. _____ One of us has most or all of the power, and the other has very little or any power#
 - b. _____ One of us has somewhat more power than the other*
 - c. _____ The power is equally shared in this partnership

8. What matters in this service-learning partnership
 - a. _____ Nothing of significance to either of us really matters#
 - b. _____ What one of us gets from this relationship matters##
 - c. _____ What both of us get from this relationship matters*
 - d. _____ What both of us get and the extent to which one of us grows matters**
 - e. _____ What both of us get and the extent to which both of us grow matters
 - f. _____ What both of us get, the extent to which both of us grow, and the capacity of our partnership to nurture growth around us matters

9. Satisfaction and change: As a result of the service-learning partnership
 - a. _____ Both of us are dissatisfied and both of us have been changed for the worse#
 - b. _____ Both of us are dissatisfied and one of us has been changed for the worse#
 - c. _____ Both of us are dissatisfied but neither of us is changed for the worse#
 - d. _____ Only one of us is dissatisfied and neither is changed for the worse##
 - e. _____ Both of us are satisfied and neither of us is changed for the better or the worse*
 - f. _____ Both of us are satisfied and one of us is changed for the better**
 - g. _____ Both of us are satisfied and both of us are changed for the better
 - h. _____ Both of us are satisfied and are changed for the better and the relationship itself is changed for the better
 - i. _____ Both of us are satisfied and are changed for the better, the relationship itself is changed for the better, and the world around us is changed for the better

Notes: Raw TRES scores were calculated by summing scores on individual items, where alternative "a" receives a score of "1," alternative "b" a score of "2," and so on, and then dividing by the number of response options to calculate the mean.

Conceptual TRES scores were calculated by giving scores of "1" for an item indicated above as # = exploitative for at least one; a score of "2" for items marked as ## = beneficial for one but not both; "3" for * = beneficial for both and therefore mutually transactional; "4" for ** = beneficial for both and transformational for one; and a score of "5" for an item left blank in the table above = mutually-transformational.

still provides an index of relationship quality (higher numbers indicate relationships closer to transformational), and other analyses may still be conducted on these values (e.g., calculating internal consistency), noting that items with larger numbers of options (and higher values) receive disproportionate weight.

Alternatively, because of the conceptual dimension underlying the response options and regardless of the number of options, responses can be collapsed to one of the five types of relationships: 1 = *exploitative for one or both*; 2 = *transactional for one but not the other*; 3 = *mutually-transactional, with both benefiting*; 4 = *mutually-transactional and, in addition, transformational for one but not the other*; 5 = *mutually-transactional and -transformational, with growth for both* (see Note in Table 1). This 5-point conceptual scoring scheme was used to obtain a

TRES score for each participant by averaging responses (scored in the manner indicated in Table 1) across the nine items. The TRES score yields an index of the quality of the relationship and, furthermore, permits interpretation of the numerical value in terms of the continuum (e.g., if a respondent's TRES average is ~3.0, this indicates that across those nine attributes the relationship is perceived, generally, as transactional).

Research Protocol

As the first phase of research using TRES, the faculty-community organization (F-O in SOFAR) relationship from the faculty member's perspective was selected for study. The investigators chose to begin with faculty to avoid imposing on community members' time with a not-yet-refined or proven instru-

ment; we also recognized that the first draft of the instrument contained somewhat academic language that will need to be revised in the next version, given the goal of developing a single instrument for use by all constituents represented in the SOFAR framework. Twenty experienced service-learning faculty participated – five each from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Elon University.

The data collection process consisted either of (a) a 60-90 minute face-to-face interview guided by a questionnaire ($n = 15$) or (b) the same questionnaire completed individually by respondents ($n = 5$). Face-to-face interviews were conducted by an undergraduate or graduate assistant to remove potential distortion of responses that could arise if a professional staff member in the institution's service-learning office or one of the investigators were involved. A unique identifier was assigned to each respondent to preserve anonymity in data analysis.

The protocol began with respondents identifying two community partners (representatives of community organizations) associated with a service-learning course, providing a total of forty relationships to be

analyzed (some analyses were based on a smaller number due to incomplete data). Respondents labeled these as community partner "A" and "B." The questionnaire included four sections; the order in which they were completed varied across respondents (those who completed it individually received the sections in a different order than that used by the interviewers). Sections I and II were completed twice, once for partner "A" and once for "B"; sections III and IV were completed once.

In Section I, respondents described each relationship's history, rationale, and characteristic types of interactions by responding to a set of specific prompts (Table 2). This section evaluated the nature of the relationship on four characteristics posited to describe *closeness* (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002): (a) frequency of interaction, (b) diversity of interaction, (c) the strength of influence of the faculty member on the community partner's decisions, and (d) the strength of influence of the community partner on the faculty member's decisions.

Section II of the questionnaire opened with a graphic measure (Figure 3) of the perceived degree of closeness in the relationship, as represented by the

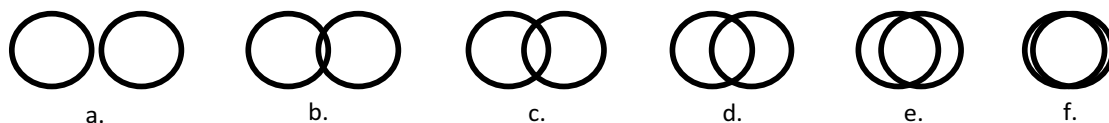
Table 2

Protocol Section I: Description of Partnership

-
- 1) Is this partnership CURRENT or RECENT or DID IT OCCUR SOME TIME AGO? (*circle one*)
- When did this partnership begin?
- How long did it last? / How long has it lasted?
- 2) Overall, what are the purposes of this partnership?
What brought you and this partner together initially?
What do you / did you do together?
- 3) Would you say that you and this partner interact(ed) frequently (at least a couple times a month) during the current (or most recent) semester/period of your partnership? YES or NO (*circle one*)
Would you say that your interactions with this partner have INCREASED or DECREASED or REMAINED THE SAME in the past 12 months? (*circle one*)
- 4) Would you say that you and this partner have / had a HIGH or a LOW level of diversity in your interactions? In other words, do you / did you engage in
____ MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TOGETHER
or
____ MOSTLY JUST ONE OR TWO TYPES OF ACTIVITIES? (*check one*)
Please provide examples of how you interact(ed).
Would you say that the diversity of your interactions with this partner have INCREASED or DECREASED or REMAINED THE SAME in the past 12 months? (*circle one*)
- 5) Would you say that you and this partner have / had a HIGH or a LOW degree of interdependence in your relationship? In other words, would you say that there are
____ MANY or ____ FEW (check one) examples that you have contributed to decisions made by your community partner (including but transcending the SL collaboration per se)?
Would you say that there are ____ MANY or ____ FEW (check one) examples that your community partner has contribute to decisions that you have made (including but transcending the SL collaboration per se)?
Please provide examples.

Figure 3

Venn Level of Closeness (from Mashek, Cannady, & Tangey, 2007).



overlap between circles in two-circle Venn diagrams (Mashek, Cannaday, & Tangney, 2007); respondents were asked to indicate which Venn diagram represented the current degree of closeness and which represented the desired degree of closeness in the relationship. Responses could range from $a = 1$ to $f = 6$.

Respondents then rated the relationship on each of the nine items in TRES (Table 1). They placed an “X” on the response option corresponding most closely with their perception of the current status of the relationship and an “O” on the response option that corresponded most closely with the desired status (instructions clarified that these could be the same option).

Having completed Sections I and II twice, once for each relationship, in Section III respondents compared each of the two sets of scale ratings using a series of open-ended and fixed-answer questions. These open-ended questions included the similarities and differences between the ratings, the sources for

each rating, the perceived capacity for partnership development in each case, and the barriers to partnership development overall. In Section IV, respondents were asked to reflect on the data gathering process to assess and refine the protocol and TRES scale. They were also contacted by email several weeks later and asked to reflect on what, if anything, they may have learned about themselves and their relationships with community partners from participating in this study (Table 3).

Results

First, the psychometric properties of TRES were examined. The raw scores for the nine items constituting TRES had a coefficient $\alpha = .90$ for perceived current status of the relationship and $.82$ for desired status. These values indicate that the nine items were a uni-dimensional, internally consistent set for both

Table 3

Protocol Sections III & IV: Respondent Analysis of TRES Ratings and Overall Process

Section III

- 1) Summary discussion of the ratings of the 2 partnerships in terms of where the responses were similar and different.
Similarities
Differences
- 2) In general terms, what are the sources of the ratings on each? What factors led each of these 2 relationships to the point indicated by the ratings? (e.g., your own previous experience, your partner’s, the design of your course or of their organization, personalities, etc.)
 A:
 B:
- 3) What do you see as the capacity for partnership development in each of these relationships? In other words, do you and this partner have the capacity to move toward the level you marked with a circle (if that is different than the level you marked with an X)? What resources do you have together to enable that movement?
 A:
 B:
- 4) What do you see as the barriers to partnership development in each of these relationships? In other words, what obstacles may keep the partnership at a lower than desired level on these continua, if that is the case?
 A:
 B:

Section IV

Overall, how well do you believe we have captured the nature of the relationship between you and these 2 community partners?

Is there anything you did not understand or struggled with as you completed the scale and/or answered my questions?

Is there anything you want to add?

Table 4

Frequencies of Relationships Described as Exploitative, Transactional, or Transformational, Based on TRES Conceptual Scores

Type of Relationship	Frequency: Current Relationship	Frequency: Desired Relationship
Exploitative for one or both (TRES < 1.5)	0	0
Transactional for only one (1.51<TRES<2.5)	3	0
Transactional for both (2.51<TRES<3.5)	8	6
Transformational for only one (3.51<TRES<4.5)	17	8
Transformational for both (4.51< TRES<5.0)	9	24

Note: Some data missing from total of N = 40 relationships studied.

types of ratings (i.e., current, desired). A paired or dependent t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference between the mean rating for raw scores for the current relationships and the desired relationships – in other words, to determine whether respondents wanted their relationships to be different than currently perceived. A significant difference $t(35) = -6.11, p < .01$, was found between raw scores for the current ($M = 4.16$) and the desired ($M = 5.07$) status of the relationship. The greatest discrepancy between current and desired was on power (item #7); the least discrepancy was on satisfaction and change (item #9).

Responses to TRES items were converted to the 5-point conceptual scoring scheme and the frequencies for each of the five categories of responses, for both current and desired states of the relationship, were determined (Table 4). The three highest rated items for both current and desired were satisfaction and change (item #9), managing conflict (item #5), and resources (item #4); the lowest rated item was collaborative decision making (item #3).

To evaluate the relationship of TRES scores to a different and independent index of the characteristics of the relationship, the correlation between the mean TRES rating on the 5-point conceptual scoring scheme and the selection among Venn diagrams representing degrees of closeness was investigated. For the current status of the relationships, the mean TRES 5-point (conceptual) rating correlated $r(36) = .63, p < .01$ with the choice on the Venn graphic representation of closeness for the current relationship; the mean rating for the desired status of the relation-

ships correlated $r(35) = .62, p < .01$ with the Venn graphic representation of closeness for the desired relationship. Thus, the independent measure of closeness of the relationships aligned well with the extent to which the relationship was described as exploitative or transactional or transformational.

On the basis of the interdependency theory of relationships (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult, 1980, 1983), several other indicators of closeness were identified (Berscheid et al., 1989; Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002): frequency of activity, diversity of activity, and interdependency (which was measured with two different items representing the direction of interdependence, yielding a total of four indicators). The mean 5-point TRES ratings for the current relationship were significantly lower for less frequent interactions, less diverse interactions, and less involvement in contributing to the other's decisions (Table 5).

These four indicators of closeness were combined into an overall measure of closeness that correlated $r(36) = .56, p < .01$ with current 5-point TRES scores and $r(34) = .47, p < .01$ with desired 5-point TRES scores. These two correlations demonstrate that relationships that were rated as being closer were also described as being more transformational. These findings converge with the findings for the Venn diagram measure of closeness, signaling that TRES is measuring closeness of the relationship between the faculty member (respondent) and community partners, from the faculty member's point of view.

Qualitative data were examined by each investiga-

Table 5

TRES Ratings for Indicators of Closeness.

Measurement	TRES M	TRES M
Frequent interactions	Yes = 4.71	No = 3.62 **
Diverse interactions	Many = 4.81	One or two = 3.97 **
Respondent contributed to community partner's decisions	Many examples = 4.76	Few examples = 3.87 **
Community partner contributed to respondent's decisions	Many examples = 4.70	Few examples = 3.86 **

Notes: TRES conceptual range: 1 = exploitative for one or both, 5 = mutually transformative

** $p < .05$

tor to determine themes within the responses from his or her own campus' five respondents. These themes were compiled and analyzed across the four institutions. Investigators have completed a preliminary analysis of the qualitative data and offer here suggestive results.

Overall, respondents selected two community partners to analyze with whom they had dissimilar levels of "closeness," without prompting from the questionnaire or interviewers. Describing the interactions with their community partners, respondents generally noted that they were more often at a distance (e.g., e-mail, phone) than face-to-face, across all levels of perceived closeness.

The primary barrier to growth in partnerships identified by the respondents was lack of time. This barrier was thought to be lessened – but not eliminated – when the partnership was a priority, built on a personal relationship, or accomplished multiple objectives, (e.g., in the case of faculty, teaching and research). A key theme was that some faculty had difficulty focusing on their own growth in their relationships with community partners and instead more frequently mentioned their students' growth. Several respondents slipped from discussing their own relationships with community partners to discussing those of their students. They frequently suggested that their students' perspectives, levels of satisfaction, and learning outcomes were more important than their own or their community partners'. For example, one respondent said, "The transformative dimension that I focus on is within my students. I do not necessarily expect a transformative experience for the agencies, or with my relationship with agencies." They frequently spoke of themselves more as facilitators of others' learning than as learners themselves. Such responses suggest that the faculty respondents viewed the student-community organization (S-O or O-S in SOFAR) relationship as being both more relevant and the locus of benefits and growth in the service-learning process. One interpretation of these responses, which begs further investigation, is that the faculty respondents not only did not view their outcomes as important as students', but they may not even have seen themselves as candidates for growth in the process.

The identification of this theme and a concomitant project examining faculty learning through service-learning (Jaeger, Clayton, Hess, McGuire, & Jameson, in preparation) prompted investigators to probe further into the effects of this study itself on faculty respondents. Several respondents indicated that it helped them to realize the potential extent and significance of their role in service-learning relationships; for example:

As faculty, we may enter into partnerships

assuming that we provide a "service" for our partner, but not realizing that we also stand to gain from this relationship...not only is it important to ask our community partners if the partnership was meaningful for them, we should also share the variety of ways we have grown as faculty through the partnership.

Respondents also noted that the study helped them problematize some of their own assumptions about service-learning. Said one, "Participating in this research has made me realize that closeness of a relationship with an individual community partner and length/quality/depth of the service-learning partnership do not necessarily correlate." Others did not believe their participation changed their understanding of their own service-learning relationships, as evidenced by the following quote: "It served as a good opportunity to reflect on partnerships, but I don't think participating in the study has had a long-standing impact on my normative practices and professional goals."

Discussion

General Implications

Giles and Eyler (1998) identify community impact of service-learning as one of the top ten unanswered questions in service-learning research. Clark's (2003) 3-"I" model – which focuses on the initiators, the initiative, and the impact of community-campus partnerships – captures the importance of relating process and outcomes. In addition to outcomes in communities (e.g., improved reading scores through tutoring), the relationships formed through service-learning constitute a tangible and significant outcome themselves. The quality of these relationships is not only important for the work in which the partners are currently engaged, but also because it may represent the capacity of the individuals to engage in future work together, without needing to initiate new relationships with others.

Following Cruz and Giles' (2000) call that the community-campus partnership be considered a unit of analysis, this research focused on developing and refining tools to measure qualities of relationships; it was preceded by the development of models intended to improve analyses of the relationships at the heart of service-learning (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). SOFAR, a structural model, and the associated conceptual models for closeness and for the exploitative, transactional, and transformational nature of relationships yield at least eight improvements on past work on partnerships (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009):

(a) expansion of the community-campus relation-

- ship from a single dyad to multiple dyads;
- (b) expansion beyond the dyad to additional, higher-level units of analysis (e.g., networks);
 - (c) differentiation of campus into students, faculty, and administrators (noting that each of these stakeholder sets can be further differentiated, as in distinguishing between administrators at the executive level and at the service-learning program level, or between students enrolled in service-learning enhanced courses and student leaders who help to facilitate those courses);
 - (d) differentiation of community into staff at organizations and residents (alternately understood as clients or consumers of services, as advocates, or as geographic neighbors);
 - (e) differentiation in the language of partnership and relationship;
 - (f) analysis of the quality of interactions between individuals in terms of closeness;
 - (g) differentiation of relationship processes and outcomes along a continuum from exploitative to transactional to transformational; and
 - (h) development of tools to support consideration of each person's perspective on the same interactions in a relationship.

Scores on TRES from this research provide a meaningful summary of the faculty-community organization dyad (F–O) from the point of view of the faculty member. The results indicate that TRES captures important differences in the qualities of relationships that are related to indicators of closeness. The results also indicate that faculty members desired relationships with their community partners are more transformational than they perceive them to be at present.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

TRES taps key dimensions identified by (a) Burns (1978), who distinguished between transactional and transforming leadership, (b) Enos and Morton (2003), who offer a framework for examining the distinction between transactional and transformational service-learning partnerships, and (c) Bringle and Hatcher (2002), who apply the interpersonal relationships literature to civic engagement. The nine items comprising TRES (outcomes, common goals, decision-making, resources, conflict management, identity formation, power, significance, and satisfaction and change for the better) are offered as a representative sample of key attributes of relationships but not as an exhaustive list. Presumably, they will apply to many if not all relationships in civic engagement (see Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009). As such, TRES possesses content validity as adequately sam-

pling the conceptual domain as scholars have described it. Therefore, TRES can be used to evaluate the status of existing relationships on the E-T-T continuum. The Venn diagram that presents graphic representations of closeness characterized by overlapping circles (Mashek et al., 2007; Figure 3) correlated very highly with TRES and can be considered a good summary of closeness that is short, nonverbal, and user-friendly. Similarly, one practitioner-scholar who examined TRES (personal communication) posited that the original transactional-transformational continuum (Figure 2) might serve as a sufficient proxy for TRES scoring when time or other constraints limit research. Nevertheless, TRES can provide additional, nuanced diagnostic information about how the attributes compare in terms of the E-T-T continuum. For example, one could learn that several of the attributes receive high ratings, but one (e.g., decision making) does not, and such information could guide future research by raising new questions about the conditions under which the various attributes do and do not align as well as future programming to improve relationships.

Because TRES does not presume to be exhaustive, there may be other, equally important attributes that would be important to include in assessing the quality of the relationships involved in particular activities. Similarly, it is likely that closeness, equity, and integrity are necessary but not sufficient conditions for relationships to take the form of partnerships. As an example of additional attributes, Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton (2009) speak of a democratic orientation that values and integrates knowledge from multiple sources and shares authority for knowledge construction. Similarly, Jameson, Clayton, and Jaeger (in preparation) explore the meaning of and necessary conditions for positioning all partners in civic engagement as “co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge” and posit such elements as transformational learning and commitment to a shared developmental journey.

The results of this research provide preliminary evidence for the validity of TRES, although these measures (i.e., TRES, closeness, Venn diagram) possess common-method variance (they all involve self-reports rating methods) and, in this research, they were used with the same type of respondent (i.e., faculty). Any individual's perspective captured by TRES also may be related in future research to other types of information and sources of quantitative and qualitative evidence, such as antecedents of the relationships (e.g., characteristics of the individuals, resources invested), to other indicators of the processes involved in the relationship (e.g., archival records of communications, decisions about the distribution of resources), and to other outcomes (e.g.,

changes on performance indicators) associated with the relationship. Such research will provide an enhanced understanding of the processes that underlie improvement and regression in civic engagement relationships.

In addition, although this project investigated only one perspective on the relationships, data could also be collected with TRES from the other half of the dyad (i.e., in this research, the community organization representative in SOFAR) or any of the other persons associated with the particular service-learning projects in question. Similarities and discrepancies between the perceptions of the persons involved in the same relationship could then be analyzed. Furthermore, each person in the relationship could give estimates of the other person's ratings; then actual similarity (difference between each person's actual ratings), perceived similarity (differences between one person's actual ratings and the same person's perceived ratings of the other person), and mutual understanding (differences between one person's perceived rating of the other person and actual rating of the other person) could be investigated. Montoya, Horton, and Kirchner (2008) found in a meta-analysis of research in the field of interpersonal attraction that perceived similarity was a significant correlate of attraction across a wide range of relationship types (e.g., limited interactions, short-term relationships, existing relationships) and a better predictor of attraction than actual similarity. Similar analyses could be undertaken in the area of civic engagement relationships to understand better the dynamics of both developing and established relationships.

Dorado and Giles (2004) provide an analysis of three different pathways of engagement between campus and community organizations: tentative engagement, aligned engagement, and committed engagement. The relationships literature, for the sake of analogy, similarly has provided descriptions of different pathways as social and romantic relationships develop (Surra, 1987). TRES provides an additional tool for describing patterns of change over time within relationships in service-learning and civic engagement. Longitudinal research on these relationships can help practitioners anticipate and nurture different kinds of relationships resulting from civic engagement activities and identify specific areas warranting attention for relationship development. Conducting research that increases understanding of progression and regression of relationships over time and/or that compares and contrasts different dyadic relationships in the same or different engagement activities can contribute to a knowledge base about civic engagement relationships and when and how they become transformational partnerships.

SOFAR can be adapted to include constituencies other than those identified in Figure 1. Bringle, Officer, Grim, and Hatcher (2009) conducted an analysis of a campus-school partnership across a variety of civic engagement activities (e.g., service-learning courses, volunteers, Federal Work Study tutoring, research) by examining dyadic relationships between the campus (collapsing across faculty, students, administrators), the public school, residents, and community organizations because this set of constituencies best aligned with the particularities of the activities in question. Other configurations could be developed that fit a particular set of circumstances.

Interestingly, even though the focus of this research was on the faculty-community organization dyad (F-O), the responses from the faculty members indicated that often the quality of that relationship was related to or dependent upon the quality of the student-community partner (S-O or S-R) relationship. This suggests that only considering single dyadic relationships may be too limiting. SOFAR provides the opportunity to examine social relationships involving multiple dyads and groupings beyond the dyad (e.g., triads). Each of the five stakeholder categories in SOFAR is also embedded in its own network of relationships. Students and faculty in a service-learning course, for example, have relationships with a range of other student and faculty populations that may be affected by or involved in the service-learning experience, and administrators on campus are involved in networks of relationships with individuals at other institutions; directors and staff at community organizations involved in a service-learning course have relationships with colleagues at similar organizations, just as their clients are involved in multiple relationships with family, friends, and community members (see Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009 for an elaboration of SOFAR in terms of networks).

Although SOFAR puts an appropriate emphasis on the interactions between and among persons, analyses can also be expanded to include relationships among organizations and institutions (Domegan & Bringle, in press; Janke, 2009). Domegan and Bringle, for example, note that service-learning research may be dominated by analysis at the individual level and suggest that more emphasis needs to be placed on structural and environmental influences (e.g., community, inter-organizational, media, political forces, corporate sector, policy and policy makers, and international factors). Transformational relationships may contain not only higher-order growth and outcomes for the individuals involved but also for other persons, organizations, and communities. When relationships in service-learning and civic engagement implicate others, as is often the case,

they can be the basis for developing long-term relationships between groups and networks. Analysis of the strategies and methods used to develop relationships between individuals into coalitions and networks will enable researchers to understand additional outcomes from civic engagement and allow campus administrators to develop and revise their policies, processes, infrastructure, and protocols (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009).

Input from practitioner-scholars suggests a wide range of questions that SOFAR and TRES can help the field investigate. For example, to what extent is the sustainability of a civic engagement partnership a function of the exploitative, transactional, and transformative qualities of the relationships involved? How and under what conditions do relationships move back and forth along the E-T-T continuum? What interventions facilitate and/or hinder such movement? What characteristics of individuals, disciplines, and professional fields lend themselves to either transactional or transformational relationships? In what ways do closeness in relationships and/or positioning along the E-T-T continuum influence short- and long-term student and community outcomes? How does a service-learning office mediate perceptions of relationships, and under what conditions does such an office's involvement enhance the transformational potential of civic engagement? When might transactional relationships or moderately close relationships among participants in service-learning be judged "healthier" than transformational and/or closer relationships? How could we measure the ways in which each SOFAR constituent influences the evolution and qualities of relationships between other stakeholders?

Understanding the interactions and relationships between the constituencies represented in SOFAR is highly instructive for practitioner-scholars concerned with the quality and effectiveness of student learning and community engagement. Practitioners play an important role in connecting the constituents in SOFAR, whose relationships, in turn, deeply influence the processes and outcomes of service-learning and civic engagement. The investigators hope this work provides a stimulus for posing and answering a broad range of questions that can inform practice, such as: Why do some relationships flourish while others falter? Why do some faculty integrate community partners in their curriculum design while others minimally engage partners only on a logistical level of providing placements? Under what conditions do some community partners identify themselves as co-educators, while others retain more limited views of their roles (Sandy & Holland, 2006)? How are the benefits experienced by the various constituencies in SOFAR evaluated, and how are they related to rela-

tionship characteristics? How can relationships become more balanced in nature and impact over time, and through what sorts of interventions and supports? What role can institutions play in nurturing the processes of relationship development? Dewey (see Hatcher, 1997) emphasizes the importance of face-to-face interactions in building relationships and a sense of community, but how critical are they in a world of increasing technology-assisted communication? Bringle and Hatcher (1996) identify the importance of drawing on exemplars in developing service-learning programs and courses; what role does the availability and visibility of exemplary transformational partnerships play in fostering the development of other civic engagement relationships? In what ways and under what conditions does the transformational quality of one relationship in SOFAR render it an effective model for others? For example, if the faculty-community organization relationship (F-O) in a service-learning course is transformational or growing in that direction, will student-community organization relationship (S-O) be of higher quality than if the faculty-community organization relationship is transactional? Will student's academic learning be higher? Will their civic growth be greater? If so for any or all of these outcomes, why?

SOFAR and TRES also may be of direct use in the practice of civic engagement and associated capacity-building activities. For example, they could be used to structure reflection mechanisms that support students in examining the relationships involved in their service-learning activities, their own and others' experiences of and aspirations for those relationships, and changes in the quality of those relationships during the course or project. Further, they could be used to facilitate goal-setting with faculty, students, and community partner teams at the beginning of projects and to provide guidance in enacting changes they might wish to make in their relationships as they evolve. And they could be used in a variety of professional development activities with faculty and/or community members to introduce the complexities of establishing and maintaining partnerships.

Finally, the investigators' goals for this ongoing project include refining TRES on the basis of this pilot. A single instrument that is easily used by all constituents – students, representatives of community organizations, community residents, and institutional administrators and staff, as well as faculty members – is highly desirable. The next phase of this project involves modifying the items in TRES in accordance with feedback from users to date. Response options for the original nine items are being simplified, and additional items are being developed. Usability tests are being conducted with community partners and students. The second ver-

sion of TRES will then be used with various dyads (e.g., S–O, O–F), and with student-faculty-community (S–F–O and/or S–F–R) triads. A version of TRES for use at the level of inter-organizational, rather than interpersonal, relationships is also being developed and piloted.

The Exploitative – Transactional – Transformational Conceptual Framework

Principles of good practice in service-learning and civic engagement recommend that community relationships be mutually-beneficial as a minimum standard (see, for example, Jacoby & Associates, 2003), although relationships that are beneficial to only one party might exist in this undesirable state temporarily, perhaps in their early stages, when they show promise of movement in the direction of mutual benefit. Furthermore, some persons may accommodate to short-term costs (e.g., start-up activities in establishing a working relationship) because of the promise of long-term benefits. The term “reciprocity” is sometimes used to convey this minimal commitment to mutual benefit through exchange of resources; however, a “thicker” use of this term is more resonant with mutual transformation. According to Jameson et al. (in preparation), such an understanding of reciprocity “emphasizes shared voice and power and insists upon collaborative knowledge construction and joint ownership of work processes and products” and therefore nurtures conditions supportive of growth on the part of everyone involved. TRES therefore has the potential to enable more precise distinctions between “thin” and “thick” reciprocity and, in turn, partnership processes that enact the latter.

Aligned with this distinction, educators may bring to this work a bias toward aspiring to transformational relationships. For example, in the case of faculty relationships with students (F–S in SOFAR), there is often the intention that service-learning experiences will enhance the students’ understanding of academic material and result in civic learning and personal growth (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005). Beyond these goals, faculty and students may seek to develop deep mentoring relationships that enhance transformational outcomes. Faculty and students who utilize service-learning pedagogy may strive to integrate readings, research, community experiences, and critical reflection so that students will have an educational experience that improves learning and meta-cognitive abilities and transforms students’ identities and capacities as learners, citizens, scholars, and leaders. A small group of student leaders at NC State University (Whitney, McClure, Respet, & Clayton, 2007) coined the phrase “shared developmental journey” to

articulate their experience of moving through ever-higher levels of learning, responsibility, and contribution across multiple community engaged teaching, learning, and scholarship activities:

We understand service-learning to be most fundamentally a relational process focused on capacity-building...; all participants...are engaged in relationships not only of [“thin”] reciprocity, in which all contribute and all benefit, but of mutual learning, growth, and change.... Mutual transformation through a process of co-creation in the context of a mentoring community is a powerful framework for the relationships that are at the heart of [this work]...We have each mentored and been mentored, challenged others and been challenged in our turn, given and received support. The growth of one has therefore been intimately linked to – indeed, interdependent with – the growth of another... (pp. 186, 187, 194).

TRES can provide a conceptual framework, a diagnostic tool, and a research instrument for better understanding how students and those who support them might capitalize on the transformational potential of service-learning and civic engagement.

One possible interpretation of the E-T-T continuum is that transformational relationships are always to be preferred over transactional relationships. Sometimes, however, transactional, mutually-beneficial levels of relationship are satisfying and perhaps appropriate. Because of time constraints and other responsibilities of both persons, a more involved transformational relationship may be neither possible nor desirable. Expecting transformational relationships when such is not appropriate (e.g., given the goals and investment of either or both persons involved) might inhibit the relationship operating effectively at a transactional level to the benefit of all participants. Most relationships in social networks are of short duration and limited scope (Milardo, 1982). In this study, faculty most frequently described relationships with persons in community organizations as transactional, with some but not all desiring that they become transformational. Time, investments of resources, past experiences, other priorities, and the nature of the goals at stake, among other factors, may constrain expectations.

Further, there are strong norms in the academy that explicitly position students, but rarely faculty as well, in the position of learning and growing through service-learning. Therefore, it may be the case that transformative relationships have not been a goal for other relationships in SOFAR besides those that involve students. As results in this project suggest, faculty members generally have not been as concerned with their own transformational learning or

the transformational potential of their relationships with one another, with students, with community members, or with university administrators. Additional research can determine what expectations and aspirations are held by students, representatives of community organizations, residents, and/or administrators – as well as other populations of faculty – and, similarly, what factors influence whether any individual from any of these groups aspires to transformational relationships and with whom. Respondents indicated informally that completing the measurement protocol caused them to reflect on their relationships and the desirability of improving them (i.e., the measurement was an intervention). There may be similar effects that result from having other constituencies in SOFAR complete TRES. The role of faculty as learner (Jaeger et al.; O’Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2009) is increasingly under investigation, and instruments like TRES can help advance the field’s understanding of how the relationships faculty members engage in within civic engagement shape and are shaped by their own learning and growth. Not only may “students best undertake a developmental journey when those who support and mentor them are also striving for growth through the same process” (Whitney et al., 2007, p. 195), but learning and growth among all stakeholders may be key to institutional change and sustainable community impact.

Conclusion

The nature of the research questions yet to be answered makes clear the significance of the stakes underlying investigation of relationships in service-learning and civic engagement. It is our hope that these models and tools will help build the capacity of the field to explore such questions and use what we learn together to enhance practice and, in turn, to generate ever-better questions regarding this important aspect of our work. We tend to expect that higher quality relationships are good (a) for their own sake (e.g., are more highly valued by participants) and (b) because they result in more desirable short-term and long-term benefits; however, each of these assertions warrants empirical investigation so that practitioner-scholars can have more confidence in both the importance of and the means of promoting relationships with these qualities. And, ultimately, the extent to which the field enacts engagement in democratic ways and toward democratic ends will depend on, in part, how well we operationalize a shared commitment to relationships that are at least mutually beneficial and often transformational. Authentically reciprocal and highly collaborative partnerships are challenging on many levels and therefore “require and foster collaborative capacity

building, which in turn engenders transformation in individual and collective ways of being, knowing, and engaging” (Jameson et al., in preparation). Improving understanding of what it means to be in and to nurture such partnerships may be a central dimension of deepening the practice of service-learning and institutionalizing within the academy and the broader community the cultural norms underlying authentic engagement.

Notes

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¹ “Civic engagement” is used here as an umbrella term to encompass service-learning. We use “service-learning” to indicate that particular method of civic engagement.

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