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Better Together: An Analysis of Collaboration and Reciprocity in Service-Learning Partnerships

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BETTER TOGETHER: AN ANAYLSIS OF COLLABORATION AND RECIPROCITY

IN SERVICE-LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS.

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Abstract

This study sought to measure the value of building a service-learning partnership around mutual benefits. The survey created a quantifiable assessment of the importance of collaborating towards mutual benefits (i.e., reciprocity) as well as individual satisfaction. Seventeen faculty members (n = 10) and community agents (n =7) involved in service-learning partnerships in the preceding academic year completed questionnaires. The questionnaires asked participants to agree or disagree with statements regarding collaborative practices—defined in the literature as indicators of reciprocity—as well as their personal satisfaction with the service-learning experience. The researcher surveyed and analyzed both community agents and faculty members' perspectives. The literature suggests that, often, community agents do not experience the same degree of benefits as faculty members. The results of this study supported the value of reciprocal partnerships, yet added further insight into the realities of campus-community partnerships. Certain characteristics of reciprocal partnerships did not prove evident, despite overall satisfaction. The conclusions suggested additional questions for future research to explore further the paths to reciprocity and holistic satisfaction within service-learning partnerships.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Colleges and universities play a vital role in their immediate and greater

communities. Higher education places a strong emphasis on equipping students to

engage with their community, both in preparation for future engagement and as a goal for

student development. Many colleges list civic engagement as a vital aspect of their

mission (Maurrasse, 2001). Wise et al. (2013) asserted the purpose of college remains to

prepare students for the workplace and prepare them for lifelong learning. However,

while colleges seem to serve the community through equipping students for future

service, college students, faculty, and staff still play a role in present engagement.

Connections to the community happen through community service opportunities, field

trips, the encouragement to work or live off campus, and other opportunities. However,

service-learning stands out as one of the most significant experiences for connecting the

purpose of higher education with the present community.

What Is Service-Learning?

Service-learning grows from the experiential learning methodology of David

Kolb (1984), in which he stated, "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created

through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). The theory includes a four-stage

learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization,

and active experimentation. Simply put, a learner must become actively involved in an

experience, reflect on that experience, use analytical skills to understand the experience, and process skills and new ideas from the experience. Effective learning occurs when the individual integrates and interacts with all four stages of the cycle.

Service-learning utilizes experiential education methodology through specific community service activities. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) defined service-learning as

> A credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 222)

 The use of service-learning in multidisciplinary coursework proves increasingly popular; 64% of schools reward faculty for service-learning integration and 62% of schools require service-learning as a part of core curriculum (Campus Compact, 2013). Service-learning often serves as a successful and meaningful course component for students in higher education.

Service-learning remains distinct from volunteerism (i.e., community service). Service-learning utilizes service to enhance the overall material or topics in the designated course. While community service may allow for unintended educational benefits for volunteers, service-learning purposefully integrates education into the service activity and vise-versa (Rider, 2012). Additionally, one major distinctions between service learning and community service comes in its core principle of reciprocity.

Reciprocity plays a foundational role in service-learning activities (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Jacoby, 2003; Mintz & Hesser, 1996). Simply put, learning enhances

service and service reinforces learning. Reciprocity in service-learning entails the outcome that occurs when all parties benefit through teaching, learning, and serving in the project (Kendall, 1990). Kendall further defined reciprocity as giving and receiving for the intent of producing mutual benefits. However, best practices among genuinely reciprocal partnerships may yield a new definition of reciprocity. This study posited reciprocity as the process of intentionally engaging in collaborative practices for the intention of achieving mutual benefits. However, service-learning has become distinguished as an educational activity, and therefore, research often emphasizes the benefits to student development, potentially overlooking a key variable: the community.

Adding Community Perspectives

Previous literature reveald under-representation of community needs (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Assessment cannot focus on solely students, especially if they become represented as the only beneficiaries to service-learning. Instead, integrative assessment proves vital for developing successful service projects and sustainable community partnerships (Holland, 2001). Inclusive research provides an opportunity for all partners to address the beneficial practices from their own perspective (Holland & Ramaley, 1998). However, scholars admit the challenges in attempting to represent community voices accurately.

Researchers may find it difficult to identify the perspective of an entire community. Cruz and Giles (2000) appropriately admitted the lack of understanding of community benefits results from even more elusive description of whom and what defines community. When looking at community in service-learning research, one must distinguish if research will focus on the partnership itself, the direct community served,

or the community at large. Cruz and Giles specifically recommended research focus on the dynamics of community-campus partnerships rather than student learning or even community outcomes of service-learning coursework. Relational elements prove key to understanding the comprehensive facets of service-learning components, especially as outcomes seem to serve multiple parties. Jacoby (2003) suggested that healthy, mature partnerships between campuses and community agencies produce reciprocity and equally beneficial outcomes for both students and community members.

The most appropriate means of understanding the desired community outcomes comes through the voice of community partners (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Community partners represent the organization or agency with which the faculty and students work. Similarly, faculty members typically represent their institution through service-learning projects. Thus, when discussing a campus-community partnership in light of specific service-learning activities, the relationship between faculty members and community agents best represent the actual interactions. Defining successful partnerships between campuses and communities may overgeneralize or leave specific points of tension ambiguous. Instead, assessing faculty member and community agent partnerships provides a path to understanding generally the unique dynamics among partnerships.

Purpose of Study

Despite an increase in community-based research in the past decade, there remains a gap in understanding healthy and satisfactory partnerships between faculty members and community agents. The current study sought to measure collaboration in service-learning partnerships and observe specific practices of reciprocal partnerships that may lead to individual satisfaction. The researcher chose to focus on the reciprocity

between community agents and faculty members. In the case of this study, a reciprocal partnership exists when faculty members and community agents intentionally work together to produce mutual benefits. This study argued reciprocity in a partnership occurs through collaborating on the implementation of service-learning projects. The research explored implications for partners seeking to create a mutually beneficial experience. Each partner spoke to his or her own prerequisites for satisfaction. The ultimate goal was to add further support to the body of literature on reciprocal approaches to campus and community partnerships. In light of these intentions, the following research questions guided this study:

1. Are community partners and faculty members, collectively and respectively, exhibiting and experiencing reciprocity in their partnerships?

2. Are community partners and faculty members equally satisfied with their partnership and service-learning experience?

3. What specific practices for reciprocity are perceived among community partners and faculty members?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Student Outcomes

Research on service-learning courses demonstrates benefits to student development. Eyler and Giles (1999) described four indications of successful service-learning: personal and interpersonal development, application of course material, perspective transformation, and sense of citizenship. Literature supports claims of interpersonal development, personal growth, cultural awareness, applicable life skills, and civic engagement (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hesser, 1995). The University of California collected data from 22,236 students to assess the impact of service-learning courses on academic outcomes, values, self-efficacy, leadership, career plans, and plans to participate in future service. In this particular study, service-learning added significantly to all outcomes, except for self-efficacy and leadership (Astin et al., 2000).

Civic engagement. Writers and researchers asserted the core purpose of higher education as developing engaged citizens with the skills and capacities to lead their communities and nation (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Boyer (1990) commented on the growing responsibility for higher education to properly prepare students for engaged and effective citizenship: "If the nation's colleges and universities cannot help students see beyond themselves and better understand the interdependent nature of our world, each new

generation's capacity to live responsibly will be dangerously diminished" (p. 77). Engaging students with the community proves valuable for long term, post-college service to a community (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Therefore, service-learning, as a learning methodology and service experience, plays an important role in developing cultural competencies and citizenship for student outcomes.

Some studies noted a strong connection between civic engagement and service-learning outcomes. Prentice (2007) found students in service-learning courses developed a commitment to civic engagement when they felt personally connected to the project. Other literature argued service-learning naturally produced citizenship. For example, Brundiers, Wiek, and Redman (2010) and Caulfield and Woods (2013) found service-learning offered students "real-world" context for classroom lessons. Service-learning required personal investment, invoked concern and responsibility, and inspired attitudes to encourage personal action.

On the other hand, some studies questioned the development of civic engagement through service-learning. Nixon and Salazar (2013) assessed 30 service-learning courses and found no significant difference in students' commitment to civic engagement after participating in a service-learning course. However, 80% of surveyed students already reported a strong commitment to the community before taking the course. Perry and Katula (2001) addressed similar skepticism and posited any engagement as temporary at best. Service-learning may focus too heavily on cognitive development and academic learning, ignoring valuable lessons that advocate long-term moral commitments to community service (Cushman, 2002). Also, beyond long-term student development, the direct impacts of service-learning projects on the community still require analysis.

Community Impact

Since the early 1990s, the service-learning movement has received criticism for using the community more as a means of education rather than as a significant member and partner in community development (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Cushman, 2002; Eby, 1998). In research, studies have focused solely on community as one variable among others, rather than as its own entity with its own outcomes (Cruz & Giles, 2000). More recently, current models of service-learning have faced critique for not listening to the voice of community partners and, thus, community members (Stoecker & Tyron, 2009). Bell and Carlson (2009) further elaborated on the challenge to develop mutually beneficial partnerships. This challenge often resulted from an unhealthy power dynamic in which the resource provider, often the university, controlled the outcomes of service-learning activities.

Literature called for better representation of community voices (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Cruz and Giles (2000) asked, "Where's the community in service-learning research?" (p. 28). While service-learning projects need the community, the research often prioritized educational outcomes. Concerns with academic rigor call for constant justification of experiential education such as service-learning. University funders require outcome-based research, focused on students, to determine the value of their investment in the institution. Nevertheless, much literature called for stronger community outcome representation in research (Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

To integrate community voices does not mean to neglect the institutional goals at colleges and universities. Faculty members of service-learning courses should develop

outcomes and expectations alongside community partners, and community partners should also work within the intended student learning outcomes. Uneven expectations of outcomes and goals between community partners and faculty members can ignore the symbiotic nature of service-learning. Assessing service-learning partnerships over distinct outcomes may provide insight on how to improve campus and community relationships, benefiting the purpose of service-learning.

Faculty-Community Agent Partnerships

The pattern of research has focused on the impact of service-learning on the community, as opposed to specific partnerships between faculty and community agents (Schmidt & Robby, 2002; Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000). This imbalance may result from the complexities of campus-community relationships, inhibiting the ability to critically assess partnerships. For example, Dorado and Giles (2004) noted the variability in any partnership, rendering generalizations and recommendations difficult. Though problematic, it remains important to analyze partnerships for common relational dynamics amidst the unique goals of universities and community agencies. In addition, addressing common barriers to goal alignment helps, in turn, to identify the strength of a partnership.

Challenges for partners. Despite the best intentions, many faculty and community agents struggle to develop healthy service-learning partnerships (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005; Wandersman, Goodman, & Butterfoss, 2005). Most concerns with service-learning partnerships stem from the challenge of balancing different values and missions (Carriere, 2008). Due to these distinctions, Prins (2005) warned about the inevitability of tension and conflict in any partnership. To add another

layer, service-learning partnerships often cross cultural lines, resulting in conflicting expectations and goals (Janke, 2008). Unchecked, partners of distinct dispositions may approach service-learning with damaging misunderstandings about their partners.

Unfair or uninformed perceptions also may impede on healthy partnership development. For example, faculty members who view student learning as the sole end of service-learning run the risk of community partner dissatisfaction (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). Another concern comes with viewing the community as helpless recipients of charity, rather than individuals who make up a complex system (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Eby, 1998). This approach, often referred to as a "savior mentality," implies hierarchy, undermining the nature of a partnership (Blosser, 2012; Jones, 2003). These perceptions harm not only partnerships but also the quality of service-learning outcomes on communities (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Aspects of reconciliation include trust, mutual respect, focusing on commonalities, effective and consistent communication, and long-term devotion (Torres, 2000).

Partnership approaches. Enos and Morton (2003) described three types of partnerships: transformational, transactional, and exploitative. Transformational partnerships prove comprehensive, continuously evolving, and consider the complexities of human beings. Transactional partnerships require little collaboration and primarily focus on fulfilling individual needs. Finally, in exploitative partnerships, the outcomes and intentions favor one party, inevitably resulting in intentional or unintentional harm to the other. Simply put, transformational partnerships hold reciprocity at the core, transactional partnerships allow indirect reciprocity, and exploitative partnerships work against reciprocity. Due to the value of reciprocity, scholars assert transformational

partnerships specifically as ideal for producing mutually beneficial results and strengthening community and campus relationships (Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010; Enos & Morton, 2003).

Two elements are crucial to determining a genuinely reciprocal partnership. First, partnership evolution over time necessitates a continued analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the relationship (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). This form of analysis helps to foster sustainability and longevity. Second, the degree of collaboration among partners proves vital to understanding the strength of the relationship. Naturally, partnerships that combine diverse skills and approaches allow for more holistically beneficial outcomes (Israel et al., 2003). Strong partnerships between faculty members and community agents intentionally design partnerships based on the values of collaboration (Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011). These two elements provide an environment conducive to developing genuinely reciprocal outcomes.

Achieving Reciprocity

Collaboration among partners plays a key role in developing a mutually beneficial, sustainable partnership. As one way to collaborate, partnerships develop common goals with shared vision, seeking commonalities in their individual missions (Jacoby, 2003). Practitioners of reciprocal partnerships also contribute to the distinct objectives of their partner. For example, both partners partake in advancing educational outcomes, usually drawing from their own resources and knowledge (Kendall, 1990). Despite different positions, reciprocity requires equality and equity among partners. Each partner plays an equal role in decision-making and implementation of projects

(Birge et al., 2003). As the crux of reciprocity, communication allows for identification and evaluation of personal and collective expectations (Jacoby, 2003). Scholars assert these practices produce the ideal partnership for successful service-learning participants.

  Logistical barriers. Existing literature does not unanimously affirm the benefits or even viability of partnerships centered on reciprocity. Certain scholars question whether partners can achieve genuine reciprocity between community agencies and institutions of higher education because of the foundationally different organizational goals or mission (Camacho, 2004; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Logistical and time constraints also interfere with the practicality of complete collaboration (Camacho, 2004; Crabtree, 2008). Some organizations and colleges desire a transactional relationship, as it fits best with their expectations for the service-learning experience (Enos & Morton, 2003). A study of 65 rural, non-profit organizations reported overall community satisfaction with service-learning, despite lack of effective communication or collaborative training (Cruz and Giles, 2000). However, service-learning best practices support that idea that successful partnerships emphasize reciprocity at the core.

Best Practices for Reciprocal Partnerships

  Northeastern University (2011) provided a model for successful service-learning partnerships. The university compiled a collection of best practices for service-learning community partners. One partner spoke directly to the effectiveness of their students in expanding their program:

  Northeastern service-learning (S-L) students visited and engaged . . . staff,

  community partners, and patrons through site visits and interviews. Their hands-

  on approach and probing questions pushed us to think about methods of

evaluation and improvement [for our organization], which we might not have

otherwise considered. (p. 19)

Northeastern called for open communication, clear pre-service expectations, and

mutually decided outcomes. Furthermore, the institution recommended inviting

community partners to classes in order to further integrate their expertise into

coursework. Many community partners take on supervisory roles. However,

Northeastern warned that, when community partners exceed their own work hours, they

might strain their ability to assist service-learning professors effectively. Northeastern's

program offered a voice to community partners to articulate their needs and satisfaction

levels, as well as take charge in the outcomes of service-learning courses.

Mutually-beneficial outcomes. Arizona State University (ASU) offers service-

learning in capstone programs (Brundiers et al., 2010). Instead of individual internships

or research, students complete a Collaborative Project Course with service-learning

requirements. This approach promotes a reciprocal approach to service-learning among

students. ASU applies input from Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) on service-learning

objectives, working with the community, not simply for the community. Examples

include coordinating volunteers for environmental education, implementing projects to

increase composting and recycling, or developing a community garden. Students engage

with knowledgeable community members and leaders to address relevant issues and

needs, thus increasing societal literacy and civic responsibility (Brundiers et al., 2010).

Comprehensive evaluation. Steiner, Warkentin, and Smith (2011) assessed the

community forums' ability to vocalize the often unheard voice of community partners of

service-learning courses. A college in Winnipeg, Manitoba, co-designed a forum

alongside their largest service-learning community partner. The forum sought to address collaboratively a pressing social issue in the community. Findings indicated 96% of attendants to community forum felt satisfied with the organization and outcomes of the forum. The attendees noted the importance of the forum for community partnerships. The community forums produced a necessary platform for representing a stronger community voice, while still emphasizing curricula.

Any evaluation of service activities proves vital for sustaining good practices. Portland State University developed a comprehensive model for assessment of their service-learning projects. Their evaluation equally weighs community outcomes equally with those of faculty, students, and the university (Driscoll et al., 1996). Community outcomes do not simply provide a variable for understanding student development, but a significant and interdependent subject. Jones (2003) called for research and assessment that includes the input of all parties in the development and execution of the evaluation.

Collaboration. Another example of reciprocal partnerships came from Purdue University and the Homelessness Prevention Network. The partnership was established under the Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS) program (Oakes, 2001). EPICS promoted undergraduate commitment to long-term participation in service-learning, working alongside community organizers. Students experienced the entire life cycle of a community project, committing to service for several semesters (Oakes, 2001). Furthermore, projects were designed and implemented collaboratively and included community organizers, engineering faculty, and industry advisors. Students worked closely with faculty and community agencies and gained applicable knowledge for themselves while under the close instruction of professionals. Therefore, community

organizers held students accountable to completing their mission and service effectively while remaining integrally involved in the teaching.

A non-profit organization, Stone Soup, teamed up with California State University-Fresno (CUF) to address community needs in the neighborhood adjacent to the university. The neighborhood, known as El Dorado Park, faced extreme poverty, gang violence, illiteracy, and language barriers (Campus Compact, 1999). CUF assisted community organizers in developing Stone Soup with the goal of utilizing university resources and the knowledge of the community developers to identify and serve the specific needs of El Dorado (Jones, 2003). Roughly 70 faculty and staff and over 300 students participated in service alongside Stone Soup over the course of a year. Though the partnership was not exclusively service-learning, community agents focused heavily on educating students so that their work remained effective and sustainable while also encouraging future civic engagement.

While notable institutions presented a good example of reciprocity in their service-learning practices, research continues to call for further analysis of community-campus partnerships. An analysis into the specific relationship between faculty members and community agents may provide practitioners with examples of how to achieve mutuality in their outcomes. However, the summative literature in service-learning focused heavily on student development outcomes, often ignoring the perspectives of community partners. To improve the analysis of these outcomes, more research needs to develop from the perspective of community partners involved in service-learning courses and address practices towards genuine reciprocity.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

Participants for this study included faculty members who taught a course with a registered service-learning component in the fall of 2014 or spring of 2015, as well as community agents involved with service-learning courses at the same institution. The study took place at a private, faith-based institution in the United States. The researcher specifically selected participants from the list of community partners and faculty members provided by the Office of Student Ministries. Those selected participated in credit-bearing courses and completed appropriate registration to associate the service-learning component into the course. The survey distinguished participants by asking their position as either a faculty member or a community partner. All responses otherwise remained anonymous. Furthermore, the study required respondents to sign and agree to a consent form attached to the first page of the survey before beginning.

Design

The study utilized a survey research design to collect quantitative, descriptive data, administered after the beginning of the fall semester of 2015. The survey research sought to gather measurable data that described certain trends in higher education (Creswell, 2013). In the case of this survey, the design attempted to measure the collaborative efforts that produce reciprocity in service-learning partnerships and

determine if any relationship between partnership reciprocity and individual satisfaction existed. Participants received surveys though an email and completed them on an online form. Both faculty members and community partners received the same survey. The separation of two participant groups allowed the researcher to compare the means of reciprocity and satisfaction of each partner and address notable practices separately. The survey took less than ten minutes to complete and remained open for two weeks.

Instrument

The study utilized a descriptive survey for data collection. The researcher adapted the questionnaire from the Transformational, Relational, Evaluation Scale (TRES II) generated by Clayton et al. (2010). The questionnaire adapted original questions to suit a five-point Likert scale model. TRES II provided context to directive questions that measured reciprocity. Questions did not explicitly ask partners to rate reciprocity, since individual respondents cannot speak on behalf of his or her partner's benefits. Instead, the researcher organized questions by measuring six characteristics of reciprocal partnerships described in the literature review: missional alignment, communication, mutual goals, collaborative decision-making, shared authority, and co-education. The analysis used these characteristics to indicate reciprocity within partnerships. Additionally, the survey measured each partner's satisfaction with service-learning activities and the partnership, generalized by the overall service-learning experience. The researcher measured satisfaction in order to describe how each partner—community agent or faculty—values collaboration.

The survey also sought to measure the influence of implementations common of reciprocal partnerships on satisfaction in service-learning activities. Breaking down

characteristics of reciprocal partnerships allowed for the assessment of the importance of each characteristic in producing genuine reciprocity through satisfaction. Participants rated statements about their service-learning experience on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The survey measured satisfaction of service-learning activities on the same scale.

Response Rate

The researcher initially sent a total of 44 emails to both community partners ($n =$ 28) and faculty members ($n = 16$). Eight emails from the community partner list returned as undeliverable due to incorrect or out-of-date addresses. Therefore, the researcher included 36 participants for this research project ($n = 20$, $n = 16$). Eighteen participants responded to the survey, eight community partners and sixteen faculty members. However, one community partner respondent did not complete the survey, making that particular response unviable. Community partners' response rate equaled 35.00%, while the faculty member response rate totaled 62.50%. The total number of full responses, 17 ($n = 7$, $n = 10$), equaled a response rate of 47.22%. Survey research regards a response rate of 50% or higher as preferable, making the total response rate just below the average (Creswell, 2013).

The surveys asked if community partners and faculty members worked directly with one another. This question sought to clarify the nature of the partnership, as certain partnerships do not have the time, opportunity, or desire to engage directly with one another. Of the seven community partners, five indicated they worked directly with a faculty member. Seven of the ten faculty members indicated they worked directly with a community partner. Three chose not to respond. Surveys also asked when participants

last involved themselves in a service-learning course, as this study focused on partnerships that existed in the previous academic year. Ten respondents participated in the spring of 2015 (CP=4, F=6); five participated in the fall of 2014 (CP=2, F=3); and two participated in another time frame, such as a January term (CP=1, F=1).

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, as well as some supportive correlational statistical analyses. Three different processes made up the analysis. First, descriptive statistics measured the degree of reciprocity in respondents' partnerships as well as satisfaction with their overall service learning experience and partnership. Correlational analysis added information to determine if a potential relationship existed between reciprocity and satisfaction, though the sample size proved too small to make a definitive claim of this relationship. Finally, descriptive analyses addressed six characteristics of reciprocal partnerships described in the literature. This study refers to these characteristics as "indicators of reciprocity." The choice of a separate analysis for each indicator gave insight into specific practices used by respondents and explored their potential importance on satisfaction.

The survey measured reciprocity and satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4 =agree, 5=strongly agree). Questions answered higher than three on the five-point scale indicated reciprocity in the partnership by the high degree of reciprocity. Questions on satisfaction rating higher than three signified a high degree of satisfaction. Answers averaging below three indicated little to no reciprocity or satisfaction. A rating of five suggested a higher degree of reciprocity and satisfaction than a rating of four, and so forth.

Chapter 4

Results

Reciprocity and Satisfaction

Average Degree of Reciprocity and Satisfaction Among Community
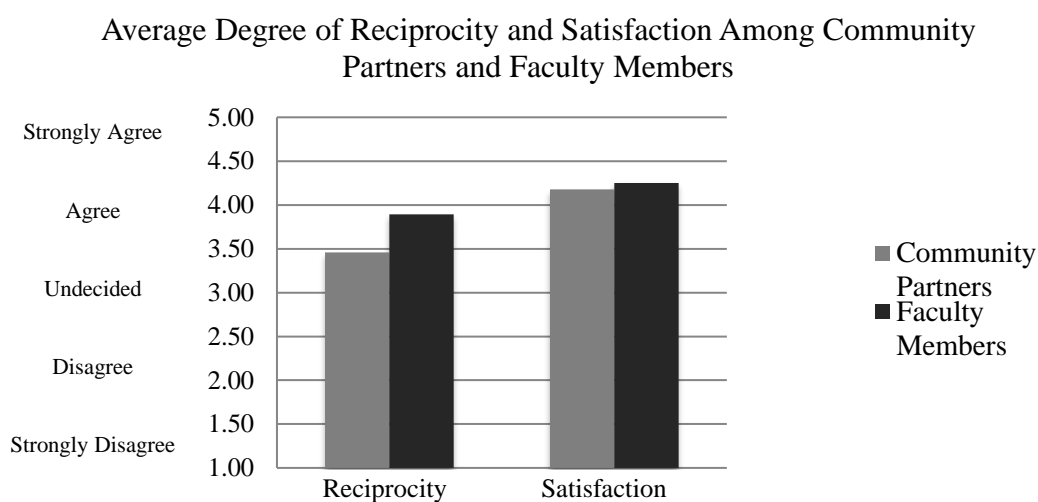Partners and Faculty Members

Figure 1. The average response for community partners and faculty members indicated a moderate to high degree of reciprocity (>3). The average response showed high satisfaction among community partners and faculty members.

The majority of respondents agreed that their partnerships implemented practices for reciprocity (82%, $n = 14$). However, some respondents reported a minimal to no practices for reciprocity in their partnership (18%, $n = 3$). Community partner respondents reported, on average, less agreement with statements measuring the collaboration in their partnerships than those reported by faculty members (see Figure 1). Fifty-seven percent of community partners affirmed experiencing collaborative practices in their partnerships ($n = 4$), and 90% of faculty members strongly affirmed experiencing collaboration in their partnership ($n = 9$).

The majority of respondents reported overall satisfaction with their service-learning partnerships (88%, $n = 15$). The average response for questions regarding satisfaction was 4.22 ± 0.84, with 5 (strongly satisfied) as the most common response. Most community partners' answers on satisfaction fell above a three (see Figure 1), indicating overall satisfaction with their partnerships (86%, $n = 6$). Similarly, most faculty members averaged above a three on questions regarding satisfaction (9%, $n = 10$). Results demonstrated both community partners and faculty members feel similarly satisfied with the service learning partnership.
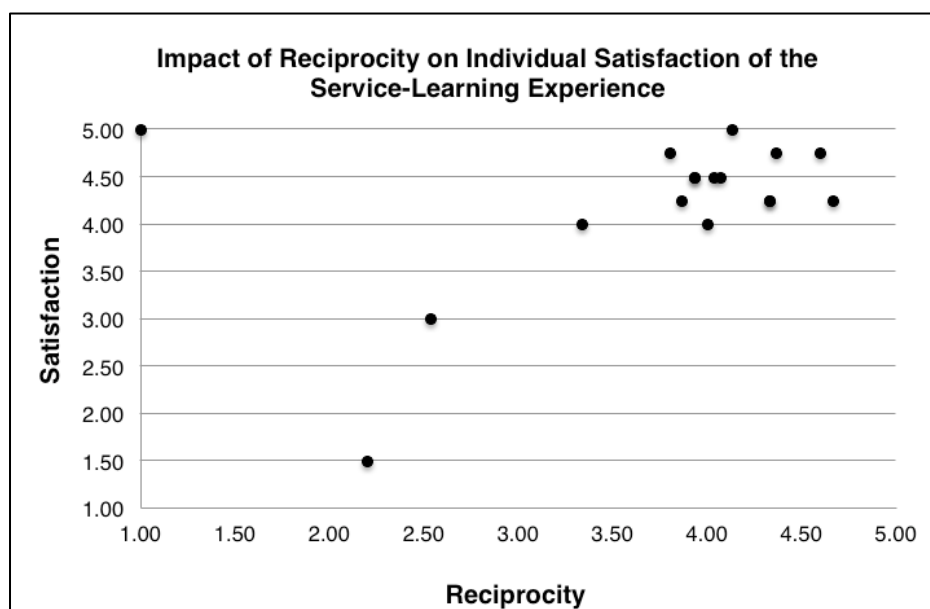
Figure 2. Respondents exhibit higher satisfaction alongside higher reciprocity in their partnerships. Points along the x-axis represent each respondent's average rating of collaboration, while y-axis represents average rating of satisfaction with service-learning experience. * $p = 0.01$

Reciprocity appeared to correspond with a higher outcome of satisfaction among service-learning partners (see Figure 2). Correlational analysis of a comparison of the two data sets suggested a possible relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.512$, $p = 0.03$). However, one respondent reported little to no reciprocity alongside high satisfaction, indicating a negative relationship between reciprocity and satisfaction. The

discussion further addresses the unique results of this respondent. When assessed without the outlier response, correlational analysis indicated a strong relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.848$, $p = <0.01$). The researcher removed the outlier to give a complete picture of the potential correlation between indicators of reciprocity and satisfaction. The sample size ($N = 16$) led to insufficient data to support a definitive correlation between partnership reciprocity and personal satisfaction. However, within the available data, the results suggest reciprocity in the partnership may relate to greater satisfaction with the service-learning experience.

Comparing Partners

Faculty member responses regarding reciprocity emerged, on average, slightly higher than those of community partners, meaning more faculty members agreed with statements regarding collaborative practices (see Figure 1). Still, their answers revealed no significant difference between groups in reported reciprocity ($p = 0.37$). Community partners and faculty members both reported similarly high satisfaction with the service-learning experience and partnership (see Figure 1). Similar to responses regarding reciprocity, community partners and faculty members reported no significant differences in satisfaction of service-learning activities and partnerships ($p = 0.87$).
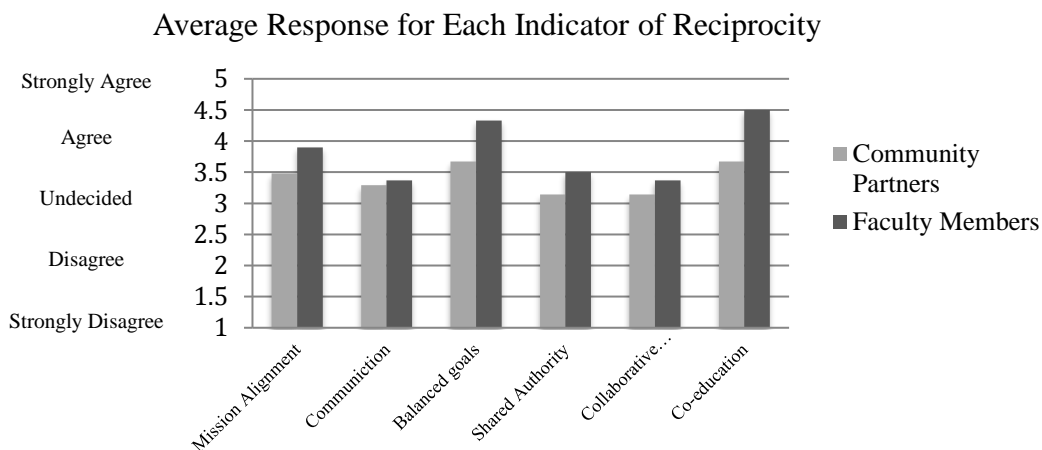
Indicators of Reciprocity

Average Response for Each Indicator of Reciprocity

Figure 3. The average response regarding statements on specific indications of reciprocity for both community partners and faculty members.

Missional alignment. Respondents reported that their partnerships both agreed with statements representing missional alignment, on average, with a mean of 3.69 ± 0.98. Partners most frequently responded with *agree* for statements signifying missional alignment (mode = 4).

Communication. The average response for all respondents denoted partners utilized communication within their partnerships (3.29 ± 1.25). Community partners and faculty members shared almost identical reports of communication in their partnership (Figure 3). Respondents most frequently agreed with statements on communication on the five-point scale (mode = 4).

Balanced goals. Respondents, in general, reported an average of 4.00 ± 0.98 for statements measuring the use of balanced goals in a partnership. Overall, most respondents agreed with statements measuring the degree of balanced goals (mode = 4).

Shared authority. Respondents, on average, reported shared authority in their partnership, with a mean of 3.35 ± 1.17. Also on average, community partners reported a

lower degree of shared authority than faculty members (Figure 3). Responses on shared authority also had a mode of four.

Collaborative decision-making. Respondents rated an average of 3.27±1.24 on statements regarding decision-making. Most respondents agreed that their partnerships involve collaborative decision-making (mode =4).

Co-education. Respondents reported high degrees of co-education, with a mean of 4.47±0.98. Faculty members, in general, strongly agreed with co-education, while community agents simply agreed (Figure 3). Respondents reported significantly higher means of co-education than any other subcategory ($p = 0.03$). Most respondents *strongly agreed* with survey statements of co-education (mode = 5).

Chapter 5

Discussion

Research findings continue to reinforce the importance of intentionally

developing mutually beneficial partnerships in service-learning projects (Bringle &

Hatcher, 2002). The results of this study highlight reciprocity and collaboration as

important relational standards of satisfied partnerships (see Figure 2). Other studies

further supported this claim (d'Arlach, Sánchez, & Feuer, 2009; Kendall, 1990; Simons

& Clearly, 2006; Steiner, et al., 2011). Throughout the literature, collaboration benefits

the entire partnership through increasing each partner's satisfaction with the service-

learning experience. While the low sample size ($N = 17$) made it difficult to support a

definite relationship between reciprocity and satisfaction, the results provided insight into

the practices of community agents and faculty members in light of their satisfaction with

service-learning partnerships.

Comparing Community Agents and Faculty Members

The results suggest faculty members and community agents did not experience

disparities in their satisfaction with service-learning activities (see Figure 1). Previous

research implied community partners might have lower satisfaction with service-learning

activities and partnership (Bringle et al., 1999; Saltmarsh et al., 2009). However, in this

study, community partners appeared almost equally satisfied with the experience and

partnership (see Figure 1). On the other hand, community partners reported a lower

degree of collaboration in their partnership, revealing a disparate experience compared to the perceptions of faculty members (see Figure 3). An exploration into the complexities of partnerships may shed light onto unique answers of this group of respondents.

Partnership Identity

Not all respondents exhibited traits of transformational partnerships. Many respondents did not report their partnership strongly showed each characteristic of reciprocal partnership (see Figure 3). However, both partners appeared, on average, quite satisfied with their experience. One respondent reported extremely high satisfaction, while having strong disagreement with the characteristics of a reciprocal partnership. This respondent noted he or she did not work directly with a partner, perhaps implying collaboration simply did not exist. While some studies assert reciprocal partnerships require collaboration, not all partners may utilize collaboration to accomplish the desired outcomes for the partnership. Community partners may feel satisfied with service-learning projects because of the built-in reciprocity through service activities (Edwards, Moony, & Heald, 2001). The partnership itself may seem separate from those outcomes. Additionally, in some cases, high degrees of collaboration prove practically and logistically unrealistic (Camacho, 2004; Crabtree, 2008).

Though the study did not assess length of partnership, some respondents may speak from short-term or a single-semester partnership. Other respondents may work with multiple partners with varying degrees of reciprocity, perhaps in a manner most appropriate for the specific partnership. Partners may choose to collaborate selectively in areas most conducive of creating a mutually beneficial partnership. Therefore, the achievement of reciprocity in a partnership does not automatically imply that the

partnership embodies the ideals of transformational relationships, as referenced in previous sections. Clayton et al. (2010) noted demanding transformational relationships, when inappropriate or unachievable, may inhibit the effectiveness of producing mutual benefits through the partnership. In those cases, focusing on a spirit of collaboration and mutuality in accessible areas may assist practitioners in developing the best possible relationship.

Key Characteristics of Partnerships

Three of the six indicators of reciprocity emerged as notable in this study: shared authority, communication, and co-education. Respondents, on average, reported lower agreement with statements regarding collaborative decision making, shared authority, and communication in their partnerships (see Figure 3). Additionally, co-education showed a significant disparity between the responses of community agents and faculty members (see Figure 3). While both partners reported feeling generally satisfied with their experience, if partners desire growth and sustainability in their partnership, literature suggests the need for greater collaboration for reciprocity. The characteristics of reciprocal partnerships likely work in harmony with one another to create greater mutual and collective benefits. Greater attention to lower-rated aspects of reciprocity may provide specific areas of growth needed to determine the best fit for both partners.

The reasons partners can benefit from the practical characteristics of reciprocal partnerships, such as collaborative decision-making, prove obvious. On the other hand, the benefits of other characteristics seem more implicit. Collaborative decision-making results in direct and tangible benefits through developing the direction for service-learning activities together. Collaborating in decision-making translates into the practical

implementation of service-learning projects. Alternatively, the implications and need for shared authority requires further consideration. Scholars note differentials in authority may undermine a sustainable and engaging partnership (d'Arlanch et al., 2009; Ring & Van de Ven 1992). However, thoughts on authority seem often left unsaid (King, 2004). This approach may result in the reason why both community agents and faculty members proved less likely to agree with statements on shared authority. The undefined state of authority may not only impact the quality of the partnership but also reveal a deeper concern with communication.

Open dialogue can render authority becomes less vague (King, 2004). Regardless of the depth of partnership, communication remains a valuable tool. However, communication can help move partnerships from transactional to transformational. The distinction relies on how partners address mutual benefits through communication (Cushman, Powell, & Takayoshi, 2004; Jacoby, 2003). Open communication increases satisfaction by addressing important dynamics of the relationship such as authority and decision-making. Perhaps with higher reported communication, other indicators of reciprocity, such as balanced goals and co-education, would not show uneven responses between community agents' and faculty members' experiences.

Responses regarding co-education emerged higher than other characteristics. However, community agents proved less likely to agree with statements on co-education than faculty members. These reasons relate back to the discussion on community partner satisfaction. Partners may not necessarily need to collaborate in teaching because educational responsibilities typically fall under the faculty member's role. In many partnerships, resource or time constraints remove the ability or desire in community

partners to engage actively in teaching (Clayton et al., 2010). Adding additional tasks, such as the responsibility to educate students, to already busy individuals may hinder a partnership rather than helping it succeed. Partners instead may feel most satisfied with service-learning when partners empower each other, instead of combining distinct roles. Unfortunately, this explanation does not align with previous research on co-education.

Literature continues to affirm co-education as a key component of developing service-learning partnerships, especially for the benefit of the community partner (Torres, 2000). As a challenge in fostering effective educational collaboration, professionals in higher education seem more likely to view themselves as keepers of knowledge and the community partners as recipients of knowledge (Jacoby, 2003). Research shows community partners desire to engage with the content material and offer reflection from the context of their position (Abravanel, 2003; Jacoby 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006). The imbalanced responses of both partners seem to support the idea that community partners do not experience co-education, even if faculty members believe such a product comes inherently in service-learning experiences. This discrepancy may lead to even less shared authority, specifically educational authority. While community partners still feel satisfied, uneven expectations move partnerships away from reciprocal models and may lead to tensions in the partnership. The benefit of implementing co-education, as well as other characteristics of reciprocal partnerships, seems palpable. Specific implications for practices allow a practical opportunity to seek the more challenging relational goals.

Implications for Practice

Achieving a genuine reciprocal partnership appears challenging. However, partners who integrated collaboration and empowerment into necessary areas of their

relationship created a space for genuine mutual benefit. This study's implications center on the idea that the principles of service-learning (serving and learning) provide a foundation for partners to work towards mutuality. Four implications for practice emerged from this study based on the notable characteristics of reciprocal partnerships and the body of literature. First, strong communication remains necessary to improve issues of imbalanced authority. Second, creating opportunities to teach and learn from his or her partner opens the door to reciprocity. Third, defining the specific partnership while allowing space for growth helps to address unspoken expectations. Finally, opportunities for consistent reflection of the partnership help in maintaining mutuality.

Both faculty and community members gave low marks for certain characteristics such as collaborative decision-making and shared authority. This response may reveal that partners do not need to, or perhaps simply cannot, collaborate on every decision to have a reciprocal and satisfying partnership. However, low marks on authority cause concern, specifically due to the rhetoric of literature on the potential exploitation or devaluing of the community partner voice. Communication, possibly above all, serves as a crucial tool in determining if partners feel happy with less collaborative decision-making. Partners together must ultimately address if the partnership offers equal satisfaction. Developing initial and follow-up meetings to discuss roles, responsibilities, and expectations may address if both partners value less collaboration.

Facilitating meetings and dialogue on relational characteristics proves especially important on addressing common areas of concern and uncomfortable topics, such as authority. Previous literature has recommended partners utilize open dialogue to discuss potential power differentials (King, 2004). Listening and engaging with a partner's

perspectives may create a space for empowerment and help in deconstructing possible authority issues. For example, partners may need to name their roles, as well as the resources they provide. In addition, partners can express affirmation in each other's role and ask for help to enhance their own work. While not all partners have time to dedicate hours to discussing roles and expectations, no partnership should advance in service-learning projects without establishing expectations and opportunities for deeper communication. Similar to authority, co-education may also help support the benefit of other characteristics of reciprocity.

This study showed community partners might not perceive themselves as co-educators, despite those perceptions of faculty members. However, co-education, as a core principle of service-learning, is crucially important to establish as a characteristic of the partnership. Partners benefit from embracing their positions both as an expert and a learner (Woolf, 2005). Achieving meaningful co-education may require educating community partners on content material and inviting them into the space of learning (Worrall, 2007). Community partners provide a valuable resource for students and may feel empowered through deeper interaction, or even mentorship, of students. Faculty member could invite partners to speak during class time, emphasizing the value of their partner's expertise. This relationship dynamic trickles down into the educational core of service-learning: student development. Students that rely on a community partner's expertise enhance their experiential learning, and therefore, deepen their ability to develop social values (Jacoby, 1996; King, 2004). Modeling the practice of reciprocity represents an example of appropriate and impactful engagement.

Scholars recommend that practitioners allow each partnership to develop its own

identity, and determining a singular best practice may undermine the success of the partnership (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Dorado & Giles, 2004). A partnership orientation may allow initial space to discuss the desired relationship that best suits mutual goals. Partners can develop expectations and intended outcomes for their specific partnerships, a useful tool to remain focused on reciprocity for the extent of the course. Though the initial assessment should not inhibit evolution in the partnership. Communication is a useful tool in determining the qualities that "defines the relationship." Bringle et al. (2009) state that relationships are not static, and always hold the potential to develop more meaningful reciprocity in the partnership. To maintain healthy dynamics in light of this, reflection and evaluation may benefit the partnership.

Consistent evaluation creates space for listening and sharing between partners, lessening the risk of uneven expectations. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) stated, "Reflection activities provide the bridge between the community service activities and the educational content of the course" (p. 180). Reflection also aids in evaluating satisfaction with the partnership. Community forums, for example, may provide opportunities to address disparities in perceptions of reciprocity among partners (Steiner et al., 2011). Partners desiring a "transformational" partnership should evaluate mutual benefits and collaboration in an evolving relationship (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). "Transactional" partnerships may require evaluation of the reciprocity within specific projects, providing each other with tools to care best for future partners amidst practical constraints.

Implications for Research

Future research could expand on the sample of community partners and faculty members to measure the relationship between reciprocity and satisfaction in service-

learning outcomes. Research could replicate this study to assess the responses of 30 or more participants in service-learning partnerships. Furthermore, research could extend beyond a singular institution to gain insight into general trends rather than those specific to individual institutions. Studies may also add student perspective, allowing researchers to assess the holistic nature of reciprocity in service-learning courses. Additionally, student satisfaction may prove important to study along with partner satisfaction.

Alterations in the research design may add greater value to the implications of this project. Future research could strengthen current findings by utilizing a qualitative theory rooted in grounded-theory (Dorado & Giles, 2004). Because of the variability in service-learning partnerships, interviews may better represent the opinions of faculty members and community partners. To address further the opinions similar to those of the outlier (low reciprocity and high satisfaction), studies may benefit from testing reciprocal and nonreciprocal models. Research should continue to critique service-learning partnerships without relying on one particular model, especially due to the complexities between two philosophically and structurally distinct entities (Hammersley, 2012).

One important implication noted in previous research comes with the need to represent community members' voices in not only the focus of research but also the development of research projects. Since research affirms the benefit of reciprocity in practice, these principles also apply to research (Birdshall, 2005). Scholars advocate for the inclusion of community members to collaborate in inquiry and research development, which should create a more meaningful, holistic study (Crabtree, 2008; Marlow, 2011; Stoecker, Loving, Reddy, & Bollig, 2010). Forums or interviews may inform survey development, and direct research consultation may foster genuine reciprocity in research.

Limitations

The relatively low sample size ($N = 17$) significantly limited the ability to draw conclusions and trends from the results. Low sample size resulted from the specific type of participants intended for this study. The study sought out only those faculty with a designated service-learning component in their course, eliminating staff and faculty members who engage in service-learning without the specific component. Furthermore, the study took place at a single institution located in a rural community with a small population. As a result, 36 individuals made up the participant base. The sample size weakened correlational analysis, impeding conclusions regarding the relationship between reciprocity and satisfaction. Nonetheless, average responses point to a trend of higher satisfaction among higher reported reciprocity.

Aspects of the survey design also may have also impeded the overall strength of the research. Though the survey sought to highlight community partner voices, the development of this study did not utilize direct assistance from any community members. Therefore, the survey design potentially presented a standard of reciprocity with bias towards higher education perspectives. Hammersley (2012) asserted the need for community participation in the development of methodologies: "Without the voices of community partners, research cannot sufficiently address 'how' the practice of service-learning results in mutually beneficial exchange" (p. 180). The specific questions chosen in the survey to measure reciprocity ran the risk of insufficiently representing how a reciprocal partnership looks to community partners.

Certain errors in the instrument weakened the ability to measure overall trends. After adapting from TRES II, the researcher did not formally pilot the instrument with a

respondent, potentially interfering with the clarity of questions, such as coeducation. The study also made no distinction between short-term and long-term relationships, a key aspect in determining the nature of the partnership. Because research focused on a single institution, data did not represent the overall trends of service-learning partnerships across institutions. Even still, trends prove difficult to determine in any relationship. Partnerships vary by logistics, time, and personal preference. The data from these partnerships, while valuable to literature supporting reciprocity, cannot determine the standard for all service-learning partnerships.

Conclusion

Joining any two distinct visions into one practice presents inevitable challenges. If practitioners seek to strengthen the relationship between campuses and community agencies, opportunities for healthy collaboration prove essential. By participating in service-learning, partners can continue to improve this relationship. Practically, service-learning provides a pedagogy that produces mutual benefits for both educational and community-oriented outcomes. Still, practitioners cannot always assume engaging in service-learning automatically produces mutuality. Practitioners can design a partnership specific for their intended relationship to produce reciprocity in key areas of their partnership. Actively engaging in specific practices of reciprocal partnerships allow for goal achievement, growth in the community partner-faculty relationship, and a satisfactory partnership. Even within short-term, single-project, transactional partnerships, a conscientiousness toward serving one another will likely produce overall beneficial experiences.

The principles of service-learning activities provide valuable standards for defining and developing partnerships. Simply put, by nature, service-learning encourages deeper learning through the act of service. Applied to partnerships, partners who seek to serve one another through consideration of both distinct and shared intentions stand out as those most satisfied with service-learning in general. A desire to learn from one another also reveals practical means for serving one's partner. Collaboration and consideration nurture not only the partnership; in effect, students and community partners can equally reap the benefits of a healthy and successful partnership.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

I. Demographics

Please indicate your role in the partnership (Community Partner /Faculty member)
_____

When did you participate in a Service-learning course?
1. Fall 2014
2. Spring 2015
3. Other (please specify): _____

Did you work directly with a partner on service learning projects? Yes / No
Did you work simultaneously with multiple partners on service-learning projects? Yes / No

II. Analysis of Partnership

Please respond to the following statements with the rating that best represents your experience with your service-learning partnership(s) (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree).

	Strongly Disagree		Neither		Strongly Agree
I understand my partner's goals for our projects.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel my partner understands my goals for the project.	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I have common goals for our projects.	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I discuss our organization's missions openly.	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I collaborate in decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
My interests and my partner's interests are equally weighed in decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I plan specific service projects together.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my partner's insight is an important asset for accomplishing my goals.	1	2	3	4	5

My partner and I are co-educators in service-learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
This partnership has involved frequent interactions and communication.	1	2	3	4	5
My partner and I have discussed expectations for communication.	1	2	3	4	5
In this partnership, authority is equally shared.	1	2	3	4	5
What each of us contributes as individuals is valued in our partnership.	1	2	3	4	5
Both partners benefit from service learning activities	1	2	3	4	5
Furthering my partner's mission is a priority in service-learning projects.	1	2	3	4	5

III. Satisfaction with Partnership

Please rate your level of satisfaction for each statement. (1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied)

	Very Dissatisfied		Undecided		Very Satisfied
Outcomes of service-learning projects.	1	2	3	4	5
Partner's contribution to service-learning projects.	1	2	3	4	5
Partner's contribution to your own goals	1	2	3	4	5
Overall relationship with partner	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Informed Consent

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how reciprocal partnerships impact Service-learning outcomes and satisfaction. You were selected because of your experience with Service-learning and as a partner. Please read this form carefully before continuing. *Clicking next will indicate your agreement to participate in this study. Keep in mind you may opt out at any time.*

PURPOSE

The goal of this project is to determine if a reciprocal and collaborative relationship between faculty members and their community partners increases the satisfaction of service learning activities and outcomes.

PROCEDURE

 If you click "next" and agree to this study, you will be directed to a survey with 22 questions regarding the dynamic of your service-learning relationships. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. You will be asked to submit your specific role as either "community agency" or "faculty member." If you have worked with more than one partner in the fall semester of 2014 or spring semester of 2015, please answer for your overall experience with service-learning partnerships.

RISKS

There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your partnership to bring about sensitivities or unaddressed frustrations. However, I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

BENEFITS

While there are no direct benefits to participating in this study, the results may be used to improve partnerships involved in service-learning courses. You may view published or presented results to personally improve your own experience with service-learning partnerships. Additionally, we hoped to use this instrument as a means of strengthening assessment for service-learning courses.

CERTIFICATE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private. In presentation of these findings, no identifiers will be included. All data will be submitted online and remain only in the access with a username and password. Only the researcher will have access to the online data. Log in information and account (including data) will be deleted after the researcher has finalized the project and presented the findings.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you begin the survey, you are free to withdraw at any time.

PAYMENT

You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher Elise Wetherell at 630-391-2631.. If you cannot reach the researcher during regular business hours (8:00am-5:00pm), please email Ms. Wetherell at elise_wetherell@taylor.edu. Any further information regarding the nature of the research, his/her rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to his/her participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at 756-998-5188 or ssgavin@taylor.edu.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

By clicking "next" on this webpage, you are formally agreeing to participate in this study.

To opt out, please exit the webpage now.