Partnerships in Service Learning and Civic Engagement

Robert G. Bringle, Patti H. Clayton and Mary F. Price

Abstract

Developing campus-community partnerships is a core element of well-designed and effective civic engagement, including service learning and participatory action research. A structural model, SOFAR, is presented that differentiates campus into administrators, faculty, and students, and that differentiates community into organizational staff and residents (or clients, consumers, advocates). Partnerships are presented as being a subset of relationships between persons. The quality of these dyadic relationships is analyzed in terms of the degree to which the interactions possess closeness, equity, and integrity, and the degree to which the outcomes of those interactions are exploitive, transactional, or transformational. Implications are then offered for how this analysis can improve practice and research.

As institutions of higher education develop their public purposes, new models for how campuses establish partnerships and interact with their communities in ways that intentionally guide program design, implementation, investments, assessment, and growth are at the heart of renewing community engagement (Kellogg Commission, 1999). But what is meant by the term "partnership"? When does an interaction constitute a partnership? And, what are the attributes of the types of relationships that are the basis for service learning and civic engagement partnerships?

Civic engagement refers to teaching, research, and/or service that is both in and **with** the community (Bringle, Hatcher, & Clayton, 2006; Bringle, Hatcher, & Holland, 2007); civic engagement, then, includes service learning and participatory action research (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999b). One of the defining characteristics of contemporary models of civic engagement is mutually-beneficial collaboration, in which all persons contribute knowledge, skills, and experience in determining the issues to be addressed, the questions to be asked, the problems to be resolved, the strategies to be used, the outcomes that are considered desirable, and the indicators of success. These qualities that interactions in civic engagement are expected to possess are what define new and different approaches for how the academy develops civic engagement, outreach, and public service (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999a;

Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Harkavy & Puckett, 1994; Jacoby, 2003; Langseth & Plater, 2004; Percy, Zimpher, & Brukardt, 2006). Such interactions involve complex and dynamic relationships that are necessarily subject to re-negotiation over time and that hold the potential to catalyze significant growth for the participants as well as substantial new work and new knowledge production. Progress on developing, understanding, and evaluating relationships constitutes a key goal for practitioners and researchers that can enable civic engagement activities to become more effective and more meaningful work for all constituencies. This will be facilitated when practitioners develop scholarship (i.e., theories, analysis, research) to address the following issues:

- More explicit differentiation and definition of who and what constitute the "campus" and the "community" in a given time, place, and context.
- More explicit differentiation of the kind and nature of campus-community relationships.
- Evaluation of theories about both the dynamic and structural nature of these relationships.

Analyzing the forces that shape these relationships and the ways these relationships shape the work and outcomes of engagement will improve civic engagement by the academy and become a basis for augmenting support and recognition within the academy (e.g., academic leadership, faculty governance, promotion and tenure) and from outside the academy (e.g., funders). Our analysis of relationships involved in civic engagement, including service learning and participatory action research, will examine the structure of these relationships, identify constructs that are relevant to the nature of those interactions, and analyze how these conceptualizations and their operationalizations contribute to the capacity of those relationships to produce and improve individual and collective outcomes for those persons involved in and affected by the activities.

Moving Beyond the "Campus-Community Partnership"

"Partnership" is a pervasive term, perhaps most frequently used in contrast to "placement" in service learning and in contrast to "uni-directional flow of expertise" in some approaches to outreach and the application of academic research to community issues. In most cases it is assumed that the term "partner" refers to "community partner," which may be a person or an organization. This journal, however, is one of an increasing number of opportunities to develop and sharpen the field's use of the terms "partner" and "partnership." The interactions between campus and community through civic engagement are an appropriate arena in which to discuss partnerships (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jacoby, 2003). Cruz and Giles (2000), however, call attention to the important details that are masked by holistic reference to the campus-community partnership, principally on the community side. Which community? Which part of the community? How will the community be represented? Additionally, the same issues are mirrored on the campus side of the partnership. Which aspect of the campus? How will different constituencies be represented and how specifically does each contribute to the work?

Cruz and Giles (2000) recommend as a remedy for the paucity of solid community-focused research "that the university-community partnership itself be the unit of analysis" (p. 31). Although we endorse the spirit of this recommendation, as have others (Jacoby, 2003), we suggest that focusing on the campus-community partnership per se is still too limiting because it is too broad and lacks precision. For example, there are multiple entities that can be identified as relevant to this work, and greater accuracy is needed in order to analyze the processes that contribute to diverse outcomes. In some instances in the literature, the pairing for analysis has been more specific (e.g., the school-campus for a K-12 partnership). In addition, reference has been made to a campus-school-community triad (e.g., Miller & Hafner, 2008). The work in South Africa on the Community-Higher Education-Service Partnership program expands the campus-community dyad and delineates a campus-resident-service provider triad for capturing the important relationships (Lazarus, 2004). A graphical representation of the partners in service-learning (Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005; Ash, Clayton, & Moses, 2008) uses a Venn diagram including students, faculty/staff, and community partners, thus differentiating campus into students and faculty/staff. This analysis also examines the heterogeneous nature of each grouping. For example, students can 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 as well as clients of those organizations or residents of geographic communities. Bringle and Hatcher (1996; 2000; Bringle, Hatcher, Hamilton, & Young, 2001) differentiate campus into campus administrators, faculty, and students, in the Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning, which is a framework that can be using for planning and assessment. Jacoby's (2003) analysis of partnerships examines many different kinds of partners, including, for example, neighborhoods, community agencies, schools, and corporate entities. Thus, there is accumulating evidence that practitioner-scholars are making more precise delineations of the various types of entities involved in civic engagement partnerships to encompass multiple participants and groupings of participants.

At the most basic level of analysis, and the one which constitutes our starting point, civic engagement and service learning activities principally (although not exclusively) involve interactions between persons. Thus, each person in service learning and civic engagement activities is a candidate for the term "partner," and the many relationships between and among them can all be examined, evaluated, and studied.
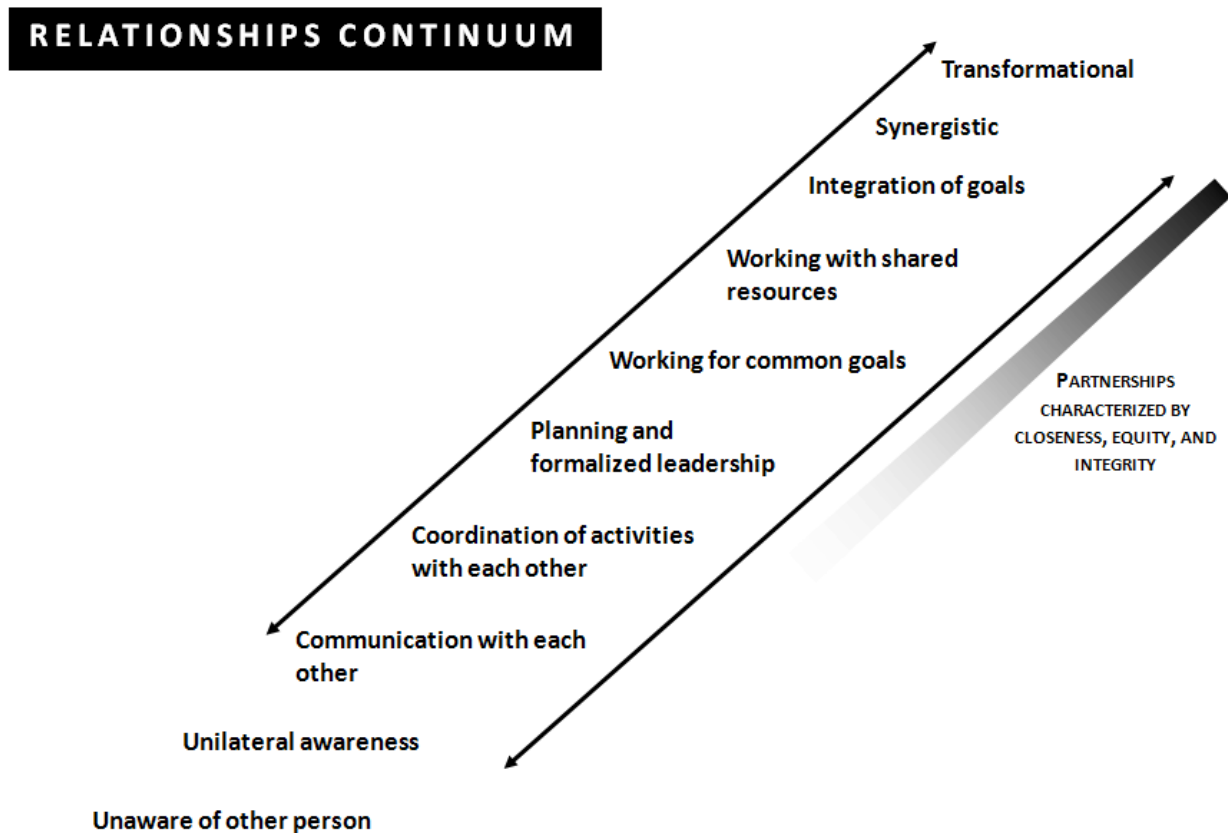
Another issue with "campus-community partnerships" is the use of the term partnership, which, on the one hand, is used in a general sense to refer to any type of interaction but, on the other hand, is used to refer to interactions that possess particular qualities (e.g., reciprocity, trust, honesty, good communication). The time has come to advance a richer, more nuanced, more precise, and more useful conceptual framework for the analysis of relationships and partnerships in civic engagement and service learning. For our analyses, we will use *relationship* as a general and broad term to refer to all types of interactions between persons, and ***partnership*** to refer to relationships in which the interactions possess three particular qualities: closeness, equity, and integrity (see Figure 1).

We posit that relationships become partnerships as their interactions develop *closeness*. Closeness ranges from unaware through transformational and is a function of three components: (a) frequency of interaction, (b) diversity of activities that are the basis of the interactions, and (c) strength of influence on the other person's behavior, decisions, plans, and goals (Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto, 1989; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Bringle, Officer, Grim, & Hatcher, in press). The quality of *equity* exists, even when the inputs and outcomes are unequal, to the degree that outcomes are perceived as proportionate to inputs and those ratios are similar; equitable relationships are more satisfying relationships (Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979). Morton (1995) suggests that relationships with high levels of *integrity* possess,

> deeply held, internally coherent values; match means and ends; describe a primary way of interpreting and relating to the world; offer a way of defining problems and solutions; and suggest a vision of what a transformed world might look like. (p. 28)

Although the types of relationships portrayed in Figure 1 can all vary in closeness, integrity, and equity, we posit that the closer the relationship, the greater the integrity and equity, with transformational partnerships always having high degrees of all three characteristics.

Figure 1. Different Types of Relationships

RELATIONSHIPS CONTINUUM

Transformational

Synergistic

Integration of goals

Working with shared resources

Working for common goals

Planning and formalized leadership

Coordination of activities with each other

Communication with each other

Unilateral awareness

Unaware of other person

PARTNERSHIPS CHARACTERIZED BY CLOSENESS, EQUITY, AND INTEGRITY

SOFAR: A Structural Framework for Relationships

Figure 2 identifies five key constituencies or stakeholders who can be delineated for an analysis of relationships associated with service learning and civic engagement: *Students, Organizations* in the community, *Faculty, Administrators* on the campus, *Residents* in the community (or, in some instances, clients, consumers, or special interest populations). Across these five categories, there are ten dyadic relationships, and each of the ten has two possible vectors representing the direction of communication and influence.

Figure 2. SOFAR: Dyadic Relationships between Five Constituencies
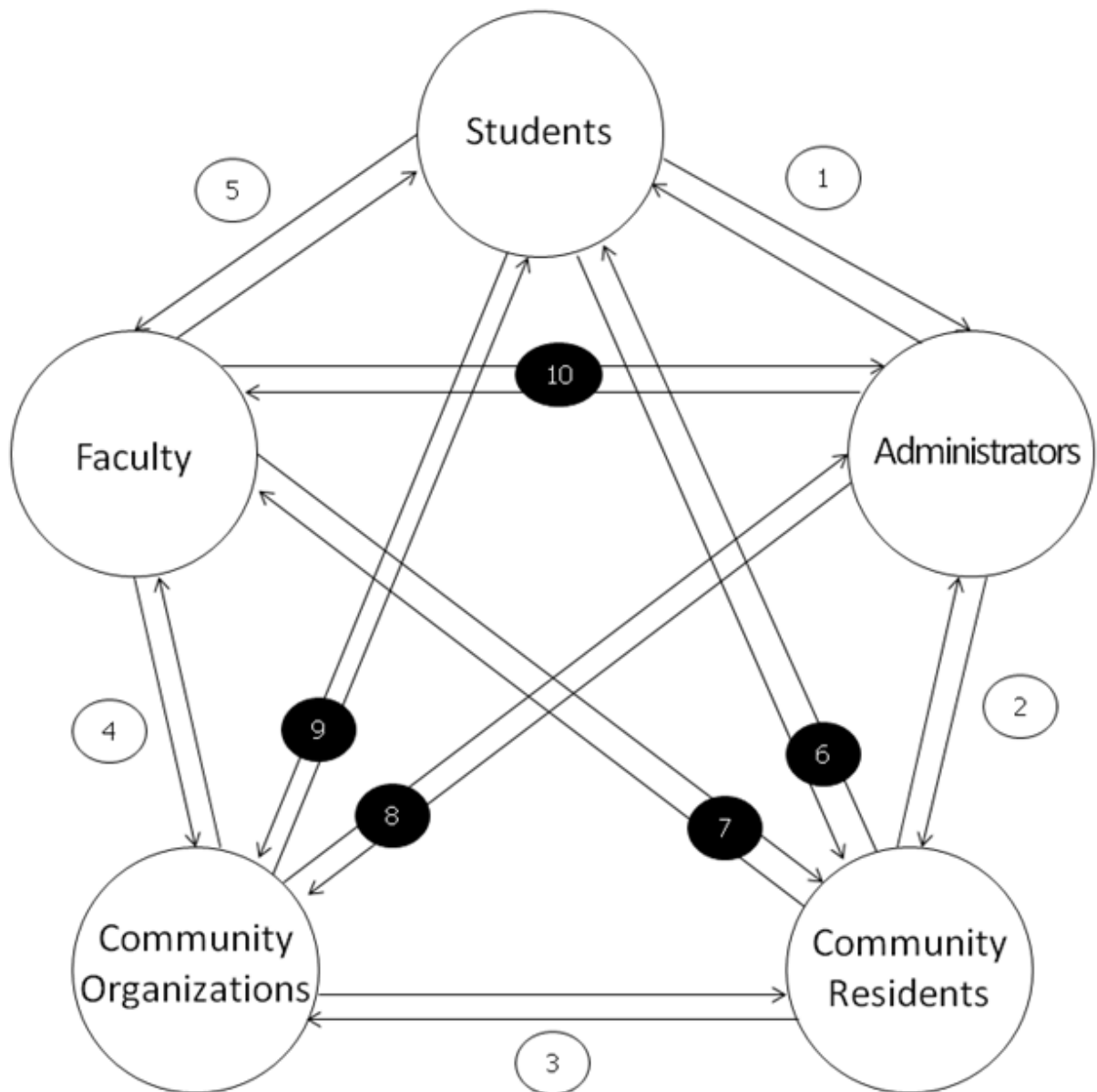
SOFAR allows a more detailed analysis of the nature of the wide range of interactions and relationships that are involved in service learning and civic engagement. The differentiation of community into Organizations and Residents acknowledges that persons in these two groups often have different cultures, goals, resources, roles, and power. It also recognizes the possibility that staff at community organizations may not always share or provide adequate representation of the views and positions of residents in communities. This differentiation 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, different types of organizations). Nevertheless, the modal points of interacting with the community in service learning and civic engagement include these two groups.

The differentiation of campus into Administrators, Faculty, and Students acknowledges similar heterogeneity across perspectives, agenda, cultures, resources, power, and goals. Furthermore, it allows for an analysis of both the dyadic intra-campus relationships and the construction of campus social networks that focus on civic engagement. Administrators play a key role in allocating resources, developing policies (e.g., Promotion and Tenure), interpreting mission, and providing acknowledgement for students and faculty working with individuals in communities (Langseth & Plater, 2004). Students and faculty interact with each other, each influencing the other's behavior. In addition, each of these three campus constituencies has its own relationship to residents and community organizations that warrant unique attention.

Quality of the Interactions in SOFAR. Differentiating the ten dyadic relationships provides a structure to delineate and organize relationships in a way that permits a more complete analysis of who interacts with whom and, in turn, how these interactions function to meet the objectives of the respective constituencies. Each relationship can possess quantitatively and qualitatively different levels of interaction and outcomes. At the most basic level, any instance of each of these ten dyadic relationships can be located on a continuum from unaware to transformational (Figure 1), as a function of the degree to which the interactions contain closeness, equity, and integrity. The lower end of this continuum acknowledges that influence can occur even in the absence of direct interaction or even of mutual awareness. For example, a student's behavior at a community site can be influenced by learning that the executive director will come to observe on a particular day, even if the person never appears, and even if the executive director is completely unaware of the student's existence. Unilateral awareness can influence another person's behavior. For example, the chief academic officer (Administrator) might not know the names of the service learning students, but develop a policy about the implementation of service learning courses that influences the students' behavior or outcomes. The progression of interactions in Figure 1 contains increasing closeness, equity, and integrity and, eventually, relationships become partnerships with mutually valued levels of each of these three qualities. To the degree that service learning and civic engagement activities are based on interactions that are grounded in collaboration, there

is the potential for any relationship to become a partnership that potentially produces a merging of purpose and growth of each constituency.

E-T-T Model of Relationship Outcomes. A dimension of the quality of outcomes from the dyadic interactions in SOFAR is the degree to which they are exploitive, or are transactional, or are transformational (E-T-T). Enos and Morton (2003) distinguish between transactional and transformational relationships. They view transactional partnerships as instrumental and designed to complete a task. In transactional relationships, no deep change or lasting relationship is expected. In contrast, transformational relationships result in both persons growing and changing. Transactional relationships are appropriate in some (or many) service-learning situations, including as an early stage of a relationship in which growth toward transformational partnerships is developing. Transactional relationships may also occur because that is what is viewed as mutually appropriate and desired. Transformational relationships may also deteriorate and regress from a transformational status to a transactional or exploitive status. Based on feedback from practitioners, Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, and Morrison (2009) added the exploitive category because some relationships function at a level that is lower than transactional (inadequate benefits to one or both persons). Exploitive relationships lack closeness, equity, and integrity because they possess unrewarding or harmful outcomes and are not satisfying to one or both persons, even if they are maintained. Clayton et al. operationalized the E-T-T distinctions around ten issues (i.e., outcomes, common goals, decision-making, resources, conflict management, importance to identity, extent of interactions, power, what matters, satisfaction, and change for the better).

Summary. SOFAR, a structural model, and the two conceptual models for analyzing (a) the qualities of the interactions (closeness, equity, and integrity) and (b) the nature of the relationships (E-T-T) offer at least eight improvements on past work in service learning and civic engagement that limited analysis to the campus-community partnership to (Clayton et al., 2009; Bringle et al., in press):

> (1) expansion of partnership from a single dyad (campus-community) to multiple dyads across at least five constituencies;

> (2) expansion of dyad to include other units of analysis (e.g., collectives, neighborhoods, departments, organizations, institutions);

> (3) differentiation of campus into students, faculty, and administration;

> (4) differentiation of community into staff at organizations and residents;

> (5) differentiation between partnership and relationship;

> (6) identification of closeness, equity, and integrity as three attributes on which the quality of interactions in each dyad can be evaluated;

(7) increased capacity to evaluate the degree to which the outcomes of the relationship are exploitive (i.e., lacks those qualities, involves net costs to at least one person), transactional (i.e., moderate degrees of those attributes), or transformational (i.e., possess those attributes to the extent that each person grows as a result of the interactions); and

(8) consideration of each person's perspective on the same interactions in a relationship.

Implications for Practice

The current analysis provides a means for service learning researchers, scholars, and practitioners to reflect individually and collectively (e.g., with community staff and residents, with students, with administrators, with faculty) about the primary relationships that are the basis for their civic engagement activities. As a structural framework, SOFAR provides, from multiple perspectives, a representation and organization of relationships that are typically involved in civic engagement and service learning. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) analyze the evolution of relationships in terms of the dynamics (i.e., theories, concepts, research) that are relevant to initiation, development, maintenance, and dissolution. Because relationships are not static, they can progress (exploitive → transactional → transformational) or regress (transformational → transactional → exploitive) on the dimensions of closeness, equity, and integrity. The E-T-T conceptual framework of outcomes can be applied to all relationships in SOFAR and be used to evaluate the status of a relationship and how a relationship can be improved, possibly toward the goal of being transformational.

When starting a relationship, two tasks exist for each member of the potential relationship (Wright, 1999): (1) "deciding what type of relationship we would like to pursue (if any) and, (2) conveying our interest (or lack of interest) to the other person" (p. 39). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) suggest that both of these tasks will be facilitated in civic engagement work by accurate self-awareness, communication, and self-disclosure by all persons (Duck, 1988, 1994). This requires a clear sense of identity and purpose (e.g., a mission statement, program priorities, strategic plan, learning objectives), procedures (e.g., policies, service learning contracts, liability issues, evaluation of student performance), and resources (e.g., personnel, facilities, time) (Walshok, 1999). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) propose that practitioners in civic engagement, therefore, must be prepared to articulate broad mission and particular goals to potential partners, knowing when relationships are mutually desirable (and knowing when and how to say "no" or "not now"), engaging in effective communication with diverse audiences, and having skilled staff in a centralized unit on campus to act as liaisons between the various constituencies (e.g., between the faculty and the community organizations, between students and community residents, between faculty and students, between administrators and faculty; Walshok, 1999).

Establishing understanding of purpose, goals, and expectations can apply to each of the ten dyadic relationships. Some common instances would include: faculty and students (e.g. syllabus for a service learning course, guidelines for a collaborative research project), faculty and community organization (e.g., descriptions of service learning activities that meet learning objectives), faculty and administrators (e.g., promotion and tenure guidelines that incorporate community-engaged scholarship), administrators and community organization (e.g., memoranda of understanding in collaborative grant-funded projects), and students and residents or clients (e.g., service learning objectives agreements). Each one of these mechanisms can be further analyzed for how effectively each person communicates with the other. For example, the syllabus can be evaluated for how clearly it communicates to students a rationale for the service learning component of the course, expectations for the community service activities, and rubrics for evaluating the learning from reflecting on the service experience (Ash, Clayton, & Moses, 2008; Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001). Looking at this relationship from the other direction, the faculty-student dyad can also be examined for the degree to which student voice shapes the service learning course, creates opportunities to individualize learning and service objectives by each student, and provides evidence of student roles as co-generators of knowledge in research projects. SOFAR provides a structural model for organizing a critical examination of each vector and for practitioners to develop plans for improving civic engagement relationships.

The importance of establishing goals and expectations during the early stages of relationships suggests that not all relationships may hold the potential of becoming transformational. Indeed, expecting transformational relationships when this is not desired or appropriate according to one person might be counterproductive to the relationship operating effectively at a transactional level to the benefit of all participants. Analysis of social networks demonstrates that relationships that are of shorter duration and limited scope are more prevalent than close, intensive, and extensive relationships (Milardo, 1982). There is little empirical basis for knowing the distribution of relationships in civic engagement across the exploitive-transactional-transformational continuum. Clayton et al. (2009) found that most relationships with community agency staff in service learning courses were described by faculty as being transactional and that faculty expected many of those relationships to stay transactional. Clayton et al. hypothesize that this expectation may be influenced by concerns about the time commitments required for transformational relationships and may derive as well from strong norms in the academy that explicitly position students, but rarely faculty as well, in the position of learning and growing through service learning. Further study is needed to determine whether students, representatives of community organizations, residents, and/or administrators—as well as other populations of faculty—have similar expectations or aspirations, and what factors influence whether any individual from any of these groups aspires to and is willing to commit resources (e.g., time) to being in a transformational relationship.

Bringle and Hatcher (2002) note that, although longevity may be viewed as a desirable characteristic, enduring relationships are not necessarily characterized by closeness, equity, or integrity. Exploitive relationships may persist because of chronic dependency that prevents one

of the persons from developing the capacity to be self-sufficient and because it maintains power differences, to the benefit of at least one of the persons. Furthermore, some relationships end by design (e.g., short-term service to meet an acute need) and mutual consent, and their brevity reflects a clear and shared understanding of purpose and intent.

Nevertheless, relationships that are close, equitable, and have integrity are desirable, regardless of their length, because they are assumed to contribute to the identity, mission, and growth of the individuals involved as well as to their shared work and to the broader contexts in which they are enacted (Clayton et al., 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (2002) suggest that persons with responsibility for relationships (e.g., executive directors in communities organizations, campus administrators responsible for service learning or civic engagement, faculty developers, peer mentors, neighborhood leaders) should develop effective means to monitor relationships in ways that provide feedback to all constituencies, convene diverse advisory groups that can monitor activities and relationships, look for opportunities for relationships focused initially on one activity (e.g., service learning course) to expand across additional activities (e.g., grant writing, joint staff positions, collaborative scholarship), and identify ways to recognize and celebrate how the activities are rewarding to the persons involved and to their organizational contexts. These activities should at least detect relationships that may be exploitive to a person or group of persons, and may also promote activities that focus growth toward transformational relationships.

Thus, SOFAR and E-T-T can also be used to illustrate and map the current status of existing relationships in specific contexts, to study the implications of the analysis to determine if the current status is desirable, and to discuss next steps in the development of relationships. From the standpoint of offices engaged in developing civic engagement and service learning initiatives on their campuses, SOFAR and E-T-T offer several entry points for rethinking programming directed toward advancing partnership development. For example, SOFAR and E-T-T provide tools to those working to develop student practitioners (e.g., service learning teaching assistants, reflection leaders, peer mentors) by helping them to build relationships and improve their contributions to quality service learning, community service programming, and community-engaged research. SOFAR and E-T-T are also tools for faculty to discuss and communicate their expectations and needs with students and community members when designing, implementing, and revising a service learning course. Both tools enable faculty and staff mentors to structure reflection on program expectations for the quality and nature of interactions across the range of constituencies in SOFAR. They may also be used as a visual tool for structured reflection by all constituencies, at various points during the semester for formative and summative evaluation, and to enhance elements of project implementation, including communication flow. In addition, they can be used by any of the constituencies to frame exploration of individual as well as shared perceptions of the closeness, equity, and integrity across the range of their relationships in the service learning or civic engagement process. Critical examination of the issues implicated in this analysis (e.g., closeness, equity, integrity, growth) provides a basis for evaluating the degree to which everyone involved in

these relationships can, if the vision is developed and the capacity is built, function as a co-educator and co-generator of knowledge.

Although this analysis has focused primarily on dyadic interactions in relationships as a building block, a broader goal of civic engagement in higher education is to enable centers, institutions, and community groups to engage in and model processes of culture change as they relate to collective problem-solving, shared knowledge production, and the construction and social reproduction of healthy and vibrant communities. When viewed from the perspective of these larger organizational units (e.g., the university, the community organization, the student body, the local community or neighborhood, the special interest group), individual relationships may be weakened by the fact that if civic engagement activities involve a very limited number of individuals, resulting in some important constituencies feeling or being excluded, underrepresented, or marginalized. For example, a faculty member and a community organization may develop a transformational partnership characterized by high levels of closeness, equity, and integrity, but they cannot sustain their involvement due to the intensity of the time commitment, communication breakdowns, bureaucratic obstacles, and project needs that transcend the scope of the individual. If the partnership exists only at the level of the individual practitioner, such factors can limit the partnership even if the relationship possesses all of the best qualities of transformational partnerships.

SOFAR is not limited to the analysis of individual relationships. Individual relationships, whether transactional or transformational, can be the basis for developing long-term partnerships between groups. Analysis of the strategies and methods that individual partnerships use to develop into coalitions and networks will enable institutions and administrators to revise their policies, processes, and protocols.

The development of transactional and transformational relationships can result in benefits for both persons involved; however, Clayton et al. (2009) and Abes, Jackson, and Jones (2002) found that "lack of time" is an inhibitor to partnership development. The issue of time deserves further consideration as it relates to the development of closeness. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) address the frequency of interaction between persons as a component of closeness and increasing the frequency (and diversity) of interactions can increase familiarity and contribute to future work. However, transactional versus transformational relationships imply distinct approaches to the use of time. For example, transactional relationships between faculty and community organizations or between students and residents are temporally discrete due to their project focus, whereas transformational relationships leave open the possibility that the process of relationship development will be sustained and ongoing beyond the completion of a project (Clayton et al., 2009; Enos & Morton, 2003).

Time is an important factor not just in partnership development but in the development of social groups generally (Fabian, 1983; O'Brien & Roseberry, 1991; Roseberry 1989). Relative to relationship development, social groups distinguish different types of bonds and linkages through a variety of cultural acts and expressions including gift-giving, forms of address, food-

sharing, and offering mutual aid (e.g. Joyce & Gillespie, 2000; Mauss, 1989). Such practices can appear in short-term relationships but take on deeper social meaning and are more elaborated when enacted and reproduced over the long term or across generations (Goody, 1962). The manifestation of social bonds through linguistic expression and material culture is an important marker for the shift from an "I" and to a "we" that is integral for the development of a shared sense of community and transformational partnerships (Janke, 2008). For some types of relationships, time factors little into their expression. In other cases, individuals exchange markers of their relationship as a sign not only of their closeness but as a sign of their continued commitment to mutual engagement (Weiner, 1976). Partnership development in service learning and civic engagement raises the question of the extent to which the frequency of interaction and the intentionality surrounding the duration of interaction will shape the expression of social bonds between individual partners. Theoretically, we posit that transformational partnerships should establish social bonds between individuals and social groups as the diversity of their interactions and the interdependency of their interactions increases. An outcome of this development should be increased expression of social bonding. As a result, new questions emerge. For example, how do social bonds manifest themselves in civic engagement and how can they be enhanced? How significant is marking social bonds linguistically (e.g., being labeled a strategic partner versus just a partner) and materially (e.g., establishing special contracts, special access to property, resources) for creating the conditions for lasting and sustainable civic engagement partnerships at higher levels beyond the individual person?

When time that is invested in relationship development fulfills multiple purposes, then its investment will be less scrutinized, less criticized, and more freely given. For example, when the student-faculty relationship contributes to the faculty member's research, teaching, and service, the time devoted to that work and the relationship is viewed less as a load or sacrifice and more as a worthwhile investment that is rewarding in many ways. Time devoted to a partnership that results in multiple outcomes also applies to the student in civically-oriented mentoring partnership with a faculty (e.g., the student completes a course requirement, satisfies altruistic motives, enhances professional preparation, develops social relationships with other students and the community). The same outcome can occur for each person in SOFAR: when a relationship becomes a partnership, time is invested more freely because of the diversity and richness of the rewards. Transformational relationships that demonstrate a merger of purpose ("This is our work."), identity ("This work with my partner defines who I am."), and outcome ("If my partner loses, I lose.") transforms the temporal dimension from a resource invested on an episodic basis to a long-term commitment.

Research Agenda

SOFAR as a structural model and E-T-T as a conceptual model of relationship quality provide a template for soliciting information from any one of the primary constituencies in service learning and civic engagement about interactions with any of other four. Clayton et al. (2009) developed the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) to measure dimensions of

relationships in terms of the degree to which the relationship displays properties associated with being exploitive, transactional, or transformational on ten issues (i.e., outcomes, common goals, decision-making, resources, conflict management, importance to identity, extent of interactions, power, what matters, satisfaction, and change for the better). That research provided an analysis of the Faculty-Organization dyad, as assessed with TRES from the perspective of the faculty member. As part of the validation of TRES, Clayton et al. (2009) used a graphic representation (Figure 3) of the relationship's degree of closeness characterized by overlapping circles (Mashek, Cannaday, & Tangney, 2007). The results demonstrate that as relationships were described by faculty as having more transformational qualities, they were also characterized as being closer (frequency of interaction, diversity of interaction, interdependency) and more merged on the graphic representation. The TRES instrument and the Mashek et al. figure can potentially be adapted for use across all of the dyads in the SOFAR framework. In addition to enabling formative interventions that can help to deepen relationships, the TRES instrument can benchmark progressive and regressive longitudinal changes in relationships and be used to describe and analyze strengths and deficiencies on each of the dimensions.

Figure 3. Venn Level of Closeness (from Mashek, Cannady, & Tangey, 2007)
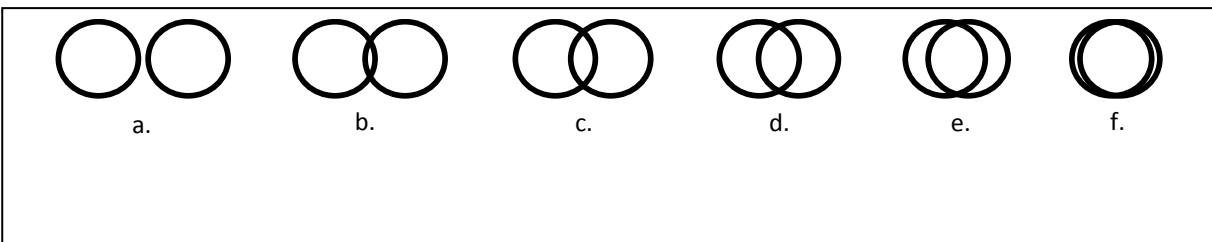
The utility of studying the individual's perspective on a relationship extends beyond improving the efficacy of the individual's interactions (e.g., students with faculty and residents) and can serve as a valuable tool for institutional planning and analysis. For example, Bringle and Hatcher (2006) found that community partners and residents reported that the campus was more involved in the community's activities and decisions than the community was in the campus's activities and decisions. This evidence of asymmetry on the interdependency of the interactions was important diagnostic information for future planning around the campus's civic engagement activities. Determining if faculty (or students or administrators) have similar or different beliefs would have offered additional information that could have been useful in shaping future work.

Although Clayton et al. (2009) solicited information using TRES only from faculty members on relationships with their community partners, TRES could also collect information on the same relationship from the community partner's perspective. Collecting this information from each person in a dyad is a reflective exercise that permits systematic examination of the nature of

the relationship and may stimulate the motivation to develop the relationship to a different level of interaction. Sharing information from each person's perspective, with their prior approval, may also be a useful step for improving and developing relationships. Similarities and discrepancies between the two persons could then be compared. Furthermore, each person could give estimates of the other person's ratings. Research could then examine the actual similarity (difference between each person's actual ratings), perceived similarity (differences between a person's actual rating and the same person's estimate of the partner's ratings), and understanding (differences between predicted rating of other person and actual rating of the other person). These similarities and differences provide a powerful means for analyzing complex issues in any particular dyadic pairing (e.g., faculty/student, faculty/organizational staff member) and could be related to other relationship characteristics (communication patterns, markers of bonding) and outcomes (e.g., learning, student satisfaction, community outcomes) in service learning or civic engagement activities.

Discussion of SOFAR and E-T-T

The analysis and discussion to this point have presented the unit of analysis as a person-to-person interaction. This is intentional because we view interactions between persons as being critical for establishing the character and capacity of the activities in a relationship that contribute to meeting each individual's goals as well as collective goals of individuals, groups, and networks. Outcomes can also be assessed at other units of analysis (e.g., the program level, student learning in a major, meeting service objectives, performance indicators for a campus's civic engagement activities, quality of life among residents in the community). Relationships and interactions can also occur between the campus as an entity and the nonprofit organization as an entity (e.g., a Memorandum of Understanding or a contract exists).

SOFAR is not limited to the main constituencies identified in Figure 2 and may be modified, expanded, or adapted. Bringle et al. (in press) conducted an analysis of a campus-school partnership across a variety of civic engagement activities (e.g., service learning courses, volunteers, Federal Work Study tutors, research) by examining dyadic relationships between the campus (collapsing across faculty, students, administrators), the public school, residents, and community organizations. Other configurations could be developed that fit a particular set of circumstances.

Although SOFAR concentrates attention on dyadic relationships, more complex interactions beyond the dyadic relationship can be analyzed (e.g., triadic). There may also be multiple persons in each grouping in SOFAR that warrant representation. Although interactions may occur between one student and one agency staff person during service learning, there can be many students interacting with organizational staff, maybe with the same staff person, maybe with different staff persons. Faculty work with many students in a course and they discuss their teaching with other service learning faculty (e.g., collaborating on research on service learning or through civic engagement), other faculty in their department (e.g., goals for the major), and

administrators (e.g., through Promotion and Tenure review). In addition, students are not in isolated courses, but members of the 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, peer mentors). Similarly, faculty interact with other faculty groups (e.g., in their department, through faculty governance, on committees). As a result of the service learning course, staff at a community organization may engage in developing new relationships with other community organizations that have common interests.

SOFAR examines partnerships from the perspective of the individual by taking a social psychological view that the basis of all (most) relationships lies in the interactions of individuals and that the development of these interactions can lie on a continuum from exploitative to transformational. As a general model, SOFAR also has the potential to examine how individual partnerships between two individuals in these primary groupings can develop into networks, coalitions, common interest groups, and communities beyond these groupings. The future prospects of this model lie in mapping the character (strength, quality) and flow of relationships across multiple levels of analysis and social landscapes (e.g. individual, dyad, network, interest group, community, institution, city, region; Low, 1996; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003).

Figure 4 represents elaboration of relationships beyond each major group. Thus, SOFAR provides a template for delineating networks of persons outside each primary constituency and for considering how the service learning course or civic engagement activities provide a basis for additional interactions, actions, decisions, and growth across many persons. Although these extrapolations beyond the primary five constituencies and ten dyadic relationships are possible and may be meaningful, the primary constituencies identified in SOFAR in Figure 2 represent an important starting point for developing structural analyses, conceptual frameworks, and research projects that study how a manageable set of relationships contributes to collaboration and outcomes in service learning courses and in civic engagement activities. As such, SOFAR provides a basis for developing analysis of the interactions at broader units of analysis (e.g., networks, systems, communities, cultures).

Sustained culture change, requires that a critical mass is achieved in reproducing new cultural practices—in this case, university agents (faculty, staff, students) and community members (agency staff, residents) shifting the ways they understand and engage in civic engagement activities. Therefore, for practitioners and institutions interested in developing long-term, transformational partnerships, the challenge is to identify strategies that develop individual partnerships into social networks that achieve a critical mass and develop the capacity to assist many individuals. This may mean reaching out, up, and across existing institutional and social structures to engage members with greater or complementary influence, power, and resources. The question of what this critical mass looks like in relation to sustainable partnerships will vary depending on context, goals and needs; however, future research should be able to outline a developmental model for partnership networks.

Figure 4. SOFAR: Elaboration of Five Constituencies
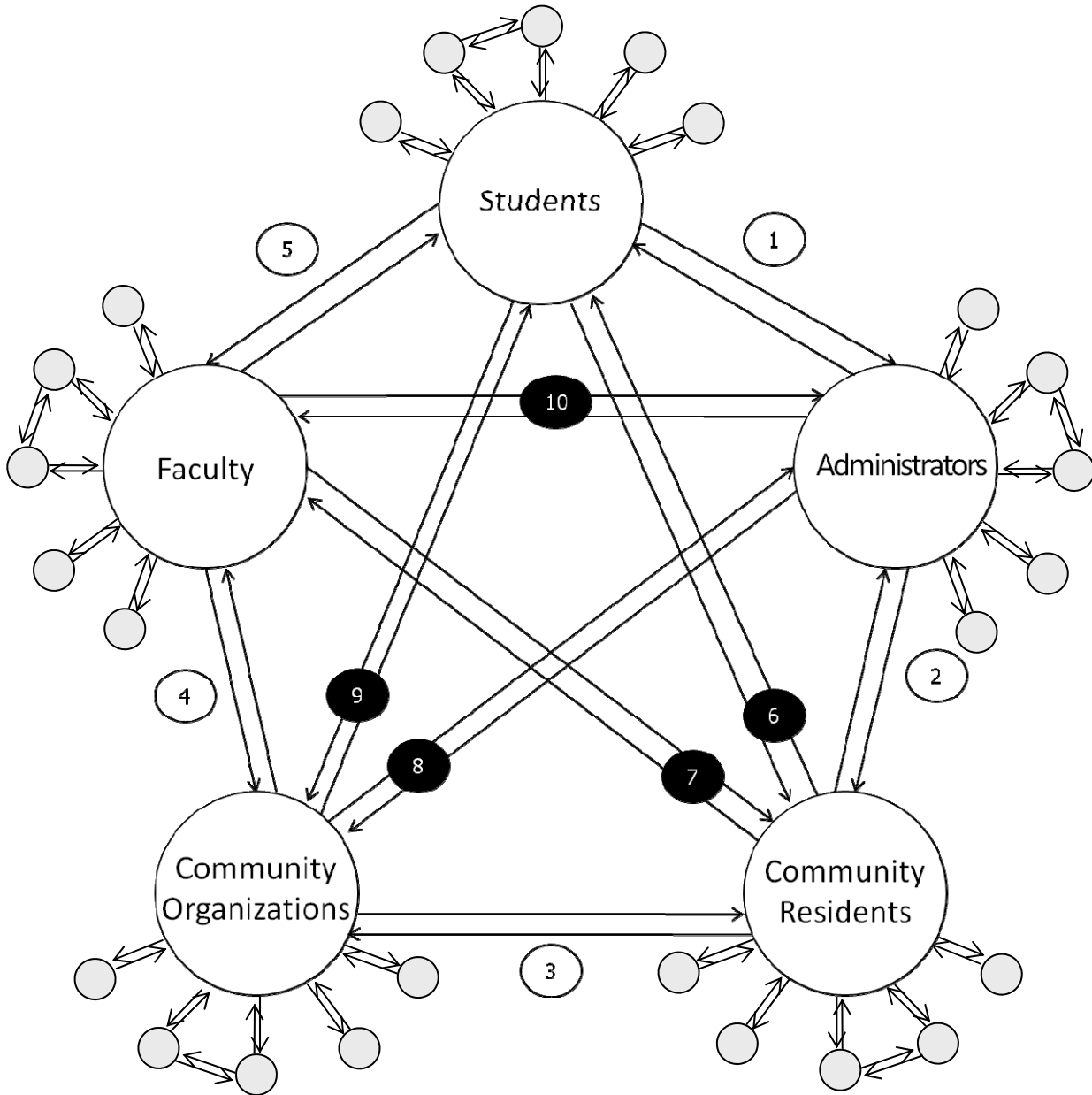
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