Building the Reciprocal Relationship: How Students in an Affluent Private University and Low-Income Public High School Became Partners in Service and Learning

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Abstract

This paper presents findings from an embedded case study of a service-learning project that paired primarily white students from an affluent, research university with black students in a struggling inner-city high school. The study identifies four mechanisms that helped foster reciprocity between individual participants and change the balance of power in their relationship. The article also proposes a framework for evaluating reciprocal relationships.

Introduction

In American higher education, service-learning is experiencing unprecedented interest (Kelshaw, Lazarus & Minier, 2009). According to *The Guide to Service-learning Colleges and Universities 2008-2009* (Student Horizons, Inc., 2008), more than one-third of all American colleges and universities offer service learning courses. Some universities, such as Georgetown University, Drexel University, Notre Dame University and Temple University, have even instituted mandatory participation in service-learning, academically-based community service learning, or community-based learning courses.

The vast majority of such programs for college students involve service to children and youth. In fact, mentoring and tutoring students in K-12 schools is the most popular service-learning activity on college campuses (Campus Compact, 2006). Morton and Callahan (2009) argue that K-8 tutoring may appear to be "the simplest initiative" for a college-based service-learning program because schools are stable institutions, college students are already familiar with the context, and the age difference between college students and K-8 students helps to ease classroom management and leadership challenges. Nonetheless, they point out "service-learning partnerships with K-8 schools are complicated" (p. 41).

Service-learning researchers, theorists and advocates assert that a hallmark of effective service-learning and university-school partnerships is reciprocity (Anderson & Hill, 2001; Bailis, 2000; Donahue, Bowyer & Rosenberg, 2003; Jacoby, 2003). How to achieve a truly reciprocal relationship, however, is less clear, especially when the activity involved inevitably demarcates participants as either service-providers or service-recipients, as is the case with tutoring (Hillman, 1999). As Rick Sperling (2007) observes, "Even if they are instructed to approach their service from a social change orientation, participants still are being taught to dichotomize the world into the needy, whose schools are extensions of the university classroom, and the benevolent service providers, who have all the answers and quick fixes (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996)" (p. 314).

This article explores how one tutoring and mentoring project defied this tendency. We examine the structural features that enabled a particular service-learning project to challenge the traditional service-provider and service-recipient binary relationship and foster a spirit of reciprocity between the university and high school representatives.

Literature Review: Partnerships and Reciprocity

The last decade has witnessed a burgeoning literature within the service-learning field on partnerships. Numerous case descriptions and sets of principles have been articulated,focusing on characteristics of effective college-community partnerships (see Campus-Community Partnerships for Health, 2001; Kelshaw, Lazarus, Minier & Associates, 2009; Jacoby, 2003; Jones, 2003; Pickeral, 2003; Ramaley, 2000; Torres, 2000).

The terms reciprocity and reciprocal appear regularly in these works, usually in reference to the mutual benefits that accrue to all institutional participants. Lawrence Bailis (2000) describes reciprocal partnerships as "long-term, well-designed, and mutually beneficial" (see RMC Research Corporation, 2008). Barbara Jacoby (2003) defines "truly reciprocal partnerships" as "collaborations" or (citing Mattessich & Monsey, 1992, p. 7) as "mutually beneficial and well-defined relationships" (p. 7). She notes that in such relationships all individuals and institutions learn about themselves and others. Jones (2003) also emphasizes joint learning, declaring "reciprocity exists when all involved in the service-learning partnership are teaching and learning, giving and receiving" (p. 152). In Jones's formulation, not only are the benefits received mutual, but so are the contributions offered. This conceptualization of a reciprocal

relationship builds one of the most classic definitions of reciprocity in the field: Sigmon (1996) discusses how a reciprocity principles emerges when all participants engage in "learning and teaching" and identify as "server and served, care giver and cared acquirer, contributor and…beneficiary" (p. 4).

Although reciprocity is frequently invoked as "the most fundamental ingredient" (Jones, 2003, p. 152) of not only of high quality service-learning practice (see, for example, Mintz & Hesser, 1996; RMC Research Corporation, 2008), but also of effective service-learning partnerships (Anderson & Hill, 2001; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000), empirical research on the cultivation of reciprocity in service-learning partnerships remains thin. Most theorists who discuss reciprocity cite the importance of changing the power differentials that exist between institutions of higher education and their community partners (Jones, 2003; Saltmarsh, 1998); however, few studies show whether --and how-- that can be done, especially at the level of the individuals who constitute the partnerships (for an exception, see Donahue, Bowyer, & Rosenberg, 2003). In addition, we have few documented models of reciprocal relationships between colleges and K-12 schools, the most frequent type of service-learning partnership. Pickeral (2003) declares "the lack of effective models of such partnerships in the literature [is] … unfortunate" and calls for "more case studies [to] be written and shared" (p. 186). This article responds to that call.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the existing theoretical work on service-learning has focused on defining what service-learning is (and what it is not) and identifying principles or characteristics of effective service-learning. One oft-cited theoretical framework proposes that service-learning consists of two dimensions (Furco, 1996). One dimension addresses the primary focus of the activity, with service on one side of the spectrum and learning on the other. A true service-learning program strikes a balance between these two outcomes. The second dimension concerns the intended beneficiary of the project, with the service provider on one side and the service recipient on the other. Again, service-learning can be distinguished from other activities that involve service and learning, like volunteering or internships and field placements, because service-learning treats the provider and the recipient as equally important beneficiaries.

This model offers a starting point for analyzing reciprocity in school-university service-learning partnerships. Indeed, it is based on Sigmon's early work on reciprocal learning; however, it may not go far enough. To explain, in order for a relationship to be reciprocal, the first dimension proposed by Furco (1996), focus, must pertain to both institutional partners. If the project is framed as a service-learning experience for one site and its members only, an automatic imbalance of power and interest surfaces. The participants at only one site—the service provider—get to serve and learn; indeed it is their service that enables them to learn. Meanwhile the members of the other site typically receive rather than serve. They may or may not get to learn, but generally when they do learn, they do so as passive recipients, empty vessels, mere beneficiaries of some unspecified charitable act, stripped of their own agency.

In a more balanced relationship, individuals at both the university and the K-12 school sites offer a service to one another and individuals at both sites experience learning, thereby benefiting relatively equally and engaging relatively equally. This conceptualization blurs the lines between service and teaching on the one hand, and learning and receiving on the other. In a sense, it is reminiscent of the old adage: "Give a man a fish, feed him for one day; teach a man to fish, feed him for life." It suggests that the ultimate service is teaching, and the ultimate benefit is learning.

To achieve these more balanced ends, both partner educational institutions must collaborate in the processes of designing, implementing, and assessing the service-learning experience (Pickeral, 2003). They must have commensurate levels of power in order to embed their needs in the development of the project, protect their needs when it is enacted, and evaluate how their needs have been met once the project has ended.

In order to determine the reciprocal nature of a service-learning project, then, one must attend not only to its focus and intended beneficiaries, but also to the relative power of the institutional participants in setting that focus and designating those beneficiaries. I propose a third overarching dimension of service-learning, "agency," which includes this design element, and also goes beyond analyzing the intentions of the project to assess how it was carried out (see Figure 1). The agency dimension captures the relative power of each institution to frame needs and set parameters; to act; and to reflect and evaluate. When the balance of power across these three domains is equitable, reciprocity becomes more likely. This proposed third dimension encompasses and extends Furco's framework and offers practitioners and researchers a conceptual tool

they can use to evaluate the extent to which reciprocity may be evidenced in a service-learning project or program. In what follows, I illustrate the application of this tool.

Figure 1. The Agency Dimension of Service-Learning
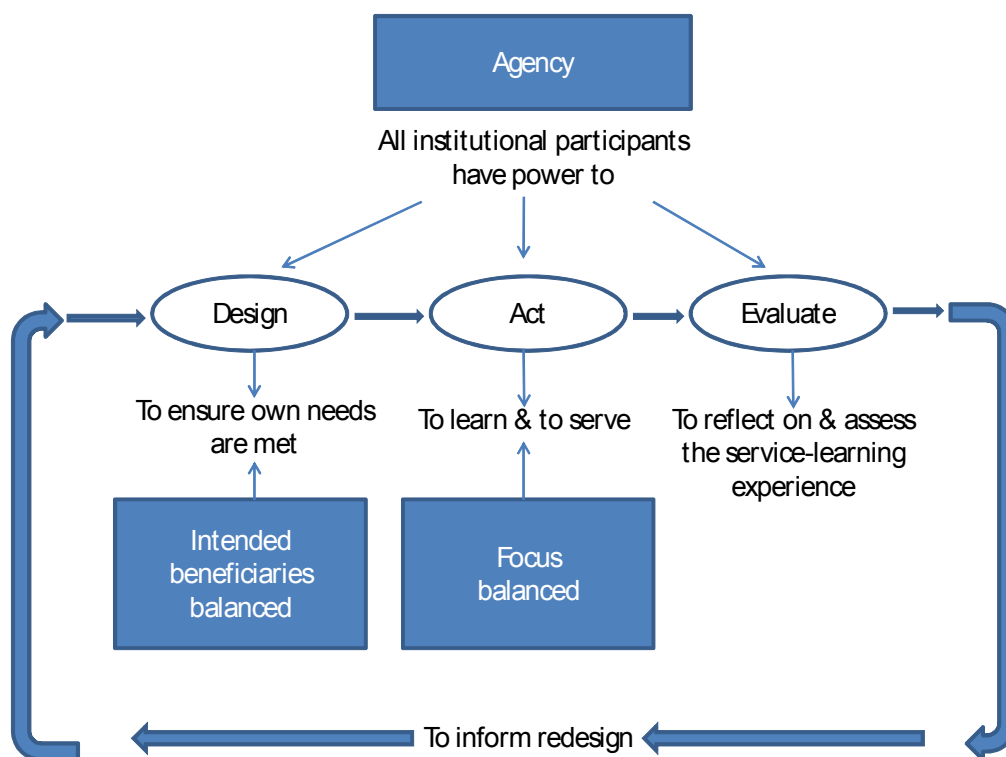
Case Study Analysis

Guided by the theoretical framework described above, I analyze how reciprocity was both intentionally and unintentionally developed in a service-learning project that paired college students from an affluent university with high school seniors from a secondary school serving low-income students. My analysis is based on extensive year-long field notes documenting tutoring sessions and group discussions, interviews with participating youth and adults, and artifacts of student work. Comparisons across these various data sources helped to identify the structural elements of the project that supported the emergence of a reciprocal relationship between the university and high school participants.

Although the service-learning project will be described in greater depth below, it is important to set the stage by depicting the two institutional contexts. Located in a well-

to-do suburban community, the university partner enjoys a favorable local and national reputation as a competitive academic institution with a strong athletic program. More than two-thirds of the university's students subscribe to the Catholic faith, 81% are white, and 40% do not receive any sort of financial aid to attend the university. The 21 students from this university who participated in the service-learning project were almost all secondary education majors and pre-service teachers. Six were male and only two students described themselves as non-white.

By contrast, all of the high school seniors who participated in the project were black. Their school, located in a distressed section of a major East Coast city, struggles to meet its Annual Yearly Progress targets under No Child Left Behind. Of the 500 students in the school, 99% are black and 89% qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Although only 10.5 miles separate the two school sites, the students at these two institutions inhabit vastly different worlds. These differences resulted in status imbalances (between black and white, affluent and low-income, older and younger) that were present from the outset of the project. In the face of these dichotomies, would it be possible for a service-learning project to challenge and change the inherent power imbalances and to reposition the partners in relation to one another?

The data show that despite initial inequities, a reciprocal relationship between the two institutional contexts and their members *did* emerge, supported by four core structures: the opportunity for both partners to teach and learn from one another; the opportunity to enter each other's worlds; the opportunity to see and critique one another's academic work; and the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the service-learning experience (see Table 1). Below, I identify and explain these four structures, while illustrating how to apply the agency dimension of the framework, as introduced above, to assess the reciprocity of the relationship between both institutions and their respective participants.

Table 1. Structures Supporting Development of Reciprocity

Agency Domain	Structure
Power to Design	
Power to Act	Both sets of students assume roles **serving** and **learning** from each other.
	Both get to learn about each other by **visiting each other's schools**.
	Both get to learn about each other and about the influence of their own teaching by **evaluating each other's work**.
Power to Evaluate	Both sets of students reflect on and assess the partnership by **participating in debriefing sessions** and **completing surveys and interviews** about the experience.

The Agency Dimension of the Service-Learning Framework

Power to Design

In higher education, most service-learning programs arise when an organization or institution in want of service contacts a university professor, department, or service-learning office, or when a professor interested in incorporating service into his or her curriculum reaches out to a local entity to assess its needs. In the case I examine, neither the university nor the high school site initiated such a dialogue. Instead, the school district in which the public high school was located and a non-profit organization identified the need for a specific service to be performed at select district high schools and then requested local colleges and universities to participate as service providers.

The collaboration between the school district and the non-profit organization came about in response to state policy. In 1999, the state Department of Education instituted the "senior project" as a state-wide graduation requirement; however, the state left it up to the school districts, and in some cases, individual schools, to interpret this requirement. Not surprisingly, implementation has varied widely across both schools and districts. In 2006, in an effort to promote greater consistency and rigor within the district, the Sunset[i] School District's Office of Curriculum and Instruction decided to generate a new Senior Project model. Then, working with the non-profit organization, it

identified ten high schools to pilot this new method. The model included appointing a Senior Projects Coordinator at each school, who would handle logistics; requiring students to complete four components of the Senior Project (a research paper, 15 hours of field work, a portfolio, and an oral presentation in front of a panel of judges); and pairing each high school with a local university or college, which would provide some form of assistance to the students undertaking this project. The non-profit organization would provide trainings and support for both Senior Projects Coordinators and university personnel.

The university partner that is the focus of this case had a great deal of agency at the outset of the project in terms of design. The university partner was able to choose the high school with which it was paired, the students it would send to the high school, and the way in which the project would be enacted to meet the learning objectives of a specific course. The Director of Service-Learning at the university asked to be paired with Sun Valley High School, because she perceived it as a high-need school that would benefit from university support. She then approached the professor of a course required for education majors called Diversity and Inclusion, to see if she would be interested in revamping her course to accommodate the service-learning opportunity. The professor revised her syllabus to ensure that the service component was integral to the learning experience of her students, rather than a "tacked-on" requirement. She structured the course such that each student in her class would work one-on-one with a student at Sun Valley High School. This design would enable her students, all of whom were prospective teachers, to gauge the effectiveness of the instruction and support they offered their partners over time, and to tailor their instructional approaches in response to a specific student's needs. In addition, she hoped that the stable pairing would allow a relationship to develop between the two students, as they learned from and about one another over the course of the semester. This model differed from those adopted by other schools-university partners in the district.

Once enrolled in the Diversity and Inclusion course, the university students worked together to identify common days and times that they could visit Sun Valley each week. Although each university student went to Sun Valley at the same time every week, the times at which they arrived differed across the days of the week.

Sun Valley, meanwhile, had considerably less power to design the project. Instead, it was put in the position of receiving the university visitors and accommodating them.

The Senior Projects Coordinator at the school arranged a tour and a panel discussion for the university students' first visit. He then recruited seniors to be paired with the university mentors. When the university students arrived at their appointed times each week, the Coordinator pulled their partners out of class to meet with them. Because there was no "senior projects" class at Sun Valley and because the university students set the day and time they would come to the school, often arriving in the middle of a class period, their partners had to choose between meeting with the university student to work on their senior projects or staying in class. In other words, the highs school students who chose to participate in the program accepted a trade-off in their own learning experience.

Because the balance of power clearly rested with the university partner in the design phase of this project, it was imperative that Sun Valley students and staff have a greater hand in the implementation and evaluation stages, if a truly reciprocal relationship were to be cultivated.

Power to Act

The power to act. The "power to act" element of the agency dimension can be seen as the flipside of the "intended beneficiary" dimension described in Furco's (1996) balanced approach to service-learning. Where the intended beneficiary dimension requires us to ask, "Who benefits from this activity?," the agency dimension requires us to ask, "Who serves?" However, in addition to focusing on service, the agency dimension recasts learning not as a benefit received, but as an active process of engagement, involving interpretation and response.

The power to serve. The School District and the non-profit organization that designed the pilot program positioned and privileged the institutions of higher education as the primary, if not exclusive, service providers in the Senior Project collaboration. College students were cast as "mentors," who would guide the high school students through the stages of choosing a research topic, developing an outline, conducting research, and writing and editing. Certainly, the university students who enrolled in Diversity and Inclusion understood this responsibility. In addition, the professor of the course emphasized that they could be of service to their high school partners by offering insight into college life and the college admission process.

At the same time, however, the course positioned Sun Valley students as service providers who had something valuable to teach the aspiring teachers. In fact, understanding why teachers should listen to their students and how they can do so was a central learning objective of the Diversity and Inclusion course. Although many accounts of service-learning projects that involve prospective teachers working directly with youth highlight the insights that the pre-service teachers gain about students (Baldwin, Buchanan & Rudisill, 2007; Barton, 2000; O'Grady, 1998; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002), few projects explicitly position the younger students as teachers. Instead, the learning that the prospective teachers do about their tutees or mentees is incidental, a simple byproduct of interaction. In the Diversity and Inclusion course, by contrast, the high school students were cast as experts on the topics the prospective teachers studied, including how to foster student engagement, how to accommodate different students' learning styles, and how to design relevant, culturally-responsive curricula. Each week, the Diversity and Inclusion students were required to ask their high school partner a specific question, called a "core question," which was related to the material discussed in class that week. They then brought their high school partner's answer to class, where it was analyzed as a text, alongside theoretical work and research studies. Following a model developed by Alison Cook-Sather at Bryn Mawr college (see Cook-Sather, 2006), this approach situated the high school students as teacher educators.

To underscore the point that the high school students provided as valuable a service to the prospective teachers as the prospective teachers provided to them, the professor of the course avoided terminology such as "mentor" and "mentee" or "tutor" and "tutee." Instead, in class and on the syllabus, she referred to the Sun Valley students and the prospective teachers as "learning partners."

The learning partner language, coupled with the core question model, changed the balance of power and status in the relationships between the younger and older students, by highlighting each individual's assets and strengths, while simultaneously addressing their needs. Each participant had something to teach the other; and each had something they wanted to learn from the other. Each lacked some understanding or knowledge; and each was informed or knowledgeable. This intentional design served as the primary structure supporting the development of a more reciprocal, balanced relationship between the two institutions and their participants.

An illustration of such reciprocity can be seen in the case of the learning partners, Karen and Daphne. According to Daphne, Karen taught her how to find resources for her senior project, how to do a works cited page, and how to organize a seven-page research paper by "breaking it down." Daphne recalls "wondering, 'How am I going to write 7 pages?' [Karen] said, 'With each subtopic, write its own little thing. So there's like three, three, and three.' I was like, 'Oh that's better. That makes sense.'" Meanwhile, Daphne taught Karen an important lesson about teaching. Karen began her sessions with Daphne by making an outline for her. She explained:

I tried with Daphne what works for me. I am a planner. I keep sticky notes and lists of everything. The outline, in my mind, was a perfect way to start a long research paper. I never considered starting anywhere else.

However, Karen soon learned that this approach did not work for Daphne.

It's not Daphne's fault that the outline was not helpful for her. She … needed me to talk it out…and to let her write… I have realized that not only do I have a lot to learn about teaching, but also a lot to learn about learning. There are so many different styles of learning and studying… In order to be a teacher, I have to understand that some of my students will be other types of learners. Daphne showed me a different learning style first hand.

Karen and Daphne each credited the other with having taught them something that they would use later in life--Daphne in college and Karen in her own high school English classroom.

The power to learn. In addition to learning from one another in order to complete the particular assignments for which they were responsible (the senior project for the high schools students and the core question responses and reflection papers for the university students), both sets of students were able to learn from and about one another by virtue of two other structures, one intentional and the other unintentional.

First, each partner had the opportunity to learn about the other's context not only by hearing about it from their partner, but also by entering it directly and experiencing it firsthand. The university students visited Sun Valley high school every week. As they drove to the school, they took note of the surrounding neighborhood. As they entered the school, they noticed the metal detectors. And while they worked in the school with

their learning partners, they paid attention to what else was going on around them: the stragglers in the hallway, the locked library doors, and the lack of heat in the building. They could not always make sense of what they saw, and they often brought questions back to the university classroom with them.

The Sun Valley students twice had the opportunity to visit the university. While on campus, they participated in a class, they toured the library, they ate in the dining hall, they visited a student's dorm room, and they attended a basketball game. Rather than having to rely solely on their learning partner's accounts of college life, they were able to get a glimpse of it for themselves. Just as the university professor allowed her students to debrief following their visits to Sun Valley High School, the high school students' English teacher devoted class time to a discussion of their experience at the University following the first visit.

Several Sun Valley students also reflected on their University visit in follow-up interviews. One commented:

When we went on the trip out to [the university], it was fun. We got to know each other outside the school and projects… And I think it strengthened the work because knowing us personally, they wanted us to do better.

The university students similarly indicated that their connection to and respect for their learning partners deepened when they saw them on campus. As one explained,

The culminating point was when the Sun Valley kids came to visit our classroom at [our university], and it … brought everything that we have been talking about for the entire semester like into one final, wow! Most people wouldn't give these kids a chance, ever, and they came here and are having intelligent conversations and speaking their minds and they are articulating their opinions and beliefs very well. We had talked about this, and now I saw it.

Certainly, the two sets of students did not enjoy equal access to one another's contexts; however, in allowing each group to serve as both guests and hosts, the project took an important step towards accomplishing greater balance and mutuality, while also deepening the students' understanding of and respect for one another in the process.

Another important step towards reciprocity was unintentionally taken when the student participants at Sun Valley had the chance to see and evaluate their university

partner's final reflections on what they had learned from the service experience. This structure enabled the Sun Valley students to learn more about their university partners' perspectives and about their own influence on their partners' growth and understanding.

With their permission, the professor of the Diversity and Inclusion course shared her students' final papers with the Sun Valley teachers with whom she collaborated. Unbeknownst to the professor or her students, one of these teachers, in turn, decided to share the papers with the high school students involved in the senior project partnership. Not surprisingly, the seniors had powerful counterpoints to offer to the university students' reflections on urban schooling and urban youth. For example, many took issue with a section in one university student's paper, in which she tried to explain how she had become more aware of her "unearned white privileges." She wrote:

The students at [Sun Valley HS] were so accustomed to their 99.8% African-American student body that they looked at my classmates and me as superiors; they moved out of our way as we walked through the hallway and they made sure to smile and greet us. Despite their affectionate treatment of my classmates and me, they were tense and disrespectful towards one another.

The Sun Valley students argued that if they smiled or moved aside for the university students, it was because they had been taught to treat visitors politely and not because they had internalized inferiority complexes based on their race.

Seizing the energy generated by the Sun Valley students' readings of the reflection papers, the Diversity and Inclusion professor and the Sun Valley teachers arranged a meeting in which the Sun Valley students could share their reactions with the professor and one of her students, who had remained on campus after the semester ended.

The sharing of papers and the debriefing session created a space for the Sun Valley students to critique the learning and understanding of the University students, as represented in their papers, *and* to present their critiques to those affiliated with the work. Just as the University students throughout the semester had read and critiqued the work the Sun Valley students produced for their senior project research papers, now the Sun Valley students were able to evaluate and respond to the written work of their partners. And just as the university students learned how to deliver their critiques to

support the development of their partners' research and writing skills, so too, the Sun Valley students had to think about how to deliver their critiques to the professor of the course and a student in a respectful and constructive manner that would build deeper mutual understanding. Although it was not planned, this parallel structure underscored the expertise of the Sun Valley students and emphasized their right not just to teach, but also to evaluate the results of their teaching as evidenced in student work.

Power to Evaluate

The opportunity to read and respond to one another's work was not only an opportunity for learning, but also an opportunity for assessing the partnership. Debriefing sessions at Sun Valley served a similar function to classroom discussions at university: in both cases, students were able to reflect on their own growth in understanding and how they thought their partner was or was not benefiting from their interaction.

In addition, both sets of students were given the chance to reflect on and evaluate the partnership formally by completing surveys and participating in in-depth interviews. The surveys the university students took were distributed on the last day of class, and they included closed-choice questions, such as "How likely are you teach in an urban school," and open-ended questions, such as "What is the most important thing you learned from this course? And How did you learn it?" The university students also completed a second survey in which they evaluated the work load, the overall value of the course, and the extent of their intellectual stimulation, among other factors. Follow-up interviews, conducted by graduate research assistants a full month after the completion of the course, focused on the undergraduate students' general experiences at Sun Valley and what they learned specifically about teaching, about urban youth and urban schools, and about themselves from the course.

After completing their senior projects, the Sun Valley students who participated in the partnership filled out surveys and participated in an hour-long interview with the researcher and one of the students involved in the project. Items on their surveys included: Rate your comfort level with your university learning partner; rate your experience with the senior project partnership program; and how much would you say that your senior project benefited from the partnership program? In interviews, the Sun

Valley students were asked (among other things) to describe their relationship with their university partner, the benefits, drawbacks, and challenges of working together, and what they believed their university partner learned from them, if anything. Suggestions for improving the program and advice for next year's students were solicited from both the university and high school students.

The surveys and interviews showed the participants that their views mattered to the architects of the partnership. The individualized nature of these tools also enabled participants who might have been reluctant to speak up in large forums, such as whole class discussions or debriefings, to have a voice. Furthermore, the specific questions asked underscored the expectation that each participant teach as well as learn as part of the partnership.

Evidence of Reciprocity

While the approach to data collection allowed all participants to have equal voice in evaluating the program, the data collected through these methods served to confirm the reciprocal nature of the partnership. Both sets of students saw themselves as teachers and both saw themselves as learners. Furthermore, there was some evidence that each learned the lesson the other was trying to impart. The Sun Valley students credited their learning partners with teaching them how to write outlines, how to organize their ideas, and how to edit their papers—all skills the university students sought to teach (Knill, in press). At the same time, the university students appear to have internalized the lessons the Sun Valley students hoped to communicate to them. For example, when asked what he believed he had taught the university students, one Sun Valley student responded: "I guess they learn[ed] how I'm intelligent. Because a lot of people think 'cause I go here or where I live that I'm not gonna be anything. But I just like to prove them wrong. So I hope they learned that." Indeed, several university students responded to the question about what they had learned about urban youth by citing their intelligence (Conner, in press). As one put it:

I have learned to give them more credit than society does. Society typically, I think, considers them to be less intelligent and less motivated than [kids in] suburban areas, but they really have as great of ideas as anyone else. They just don't have the opportunities that we have. So I think it's really important to have high expectations for them too.

Another Sun Valley student indicated that she taught her university learning partner "you can't judge a book by its cover." She explained:

> *Given the things that happened in my life, you wouldn't expect me to act the way that I do. You probably would expect me to act down, always mad. But they see me as a cheerful person, and it's like, we tell our story, and it's like, "Really? I wouldn't expect that because you don't act like that." I guess that's what they learned.*

Echoing these very words, a university student explained how her conversations with her learning partner taught to question her own expectations and assumptions of urban youth:

I have learned not to judge a book by its cover. . .We worked with one girl who was pregnant and another's whose family member had been murdered. And sitting down with these people, you would think these kids must be messed up in the head, like, there is no way they are going to be successful. But, sitting down and having conversations [proved otherwise.] One girl I worked with was having tons of family difficulty, but like you sat down with her and she was so intelligent. She smashed all your biases.

The reciprocal nature of the project was well-captured by another Sun Valley student who explained, "They want to know how we live, and we want to know how they live. So they showed us how they live, and we shared our side."

Limitations to Equality and Full Reciprocity

Despite concerted efforts to support a reciprocal relationship in which each partner would enjoy an equal stake and status, some imbalances remained. Ironically, these imbalances resulted in part from the efforts of the professor of the Diversity and Inclusion course to promote reciprocity. For example, although both sets of students were encouraged to learn from one another about their different life experiences, only the university students had to produce evidence of this learning in the form of a written assignment: a case study. Because a grade rested on their ability to gather personal information from their partner, they may have been more aggressive in questioning the high school students, than the high school students were in questioning them. Furthermore, they had to spend time thinking about and synthesizing the information

their partner supplied. The act of writing a case study formalized this piece of the learning experience for the University students, while the same piece remained an informal consequence of the exchange for the high school students.

As discussed above, the high school students' inability to share their reactions to and evaluations of the university students' final reflection papers directly with the papers' authors also caused an imbalance in the relationship. The university students gave the Sun Valley students feedback on their work throughout the project; however, the Sun Valley students only had the opportunity to give their feedback to the professor of the course and one university student. With a slight re-arranging of due dates, this obstacle to balance could easily be overcome.

A third example of an easily rectified power imbalance can be found in the evaluation component. Although all the student participants had equal say in evaluating the project, they were limited by the questions asked of them, and these questions were crafted exclusively by the university-based researcher and by one of the Diversity and Inclusion course students. Had the researcher invited the high school Senior Projects coordinator to collaborate with her on the design of these evaluative tools, so that the data collected could have addressed his questions as well, the tools would have both reflected and generated more balance and reciprocity.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations described above, the project profiled in this paper did succeed in forging a relationship of mutual dependency and benefit between the two institutional partners and the student participants. The Senior Projects coordinator at Sun Valley echoed the sentiments of the Diversity and Inclusion professor, when he stated, "We want to continue our partnership… I strongly feel that everyone benefited from our first year together."

Four core structures helped to facilitate the development of reciprocity. They included the opportunity for all the student participants to assume roles as both teachers and students; the opportunity for all participants to enter and experience each other's worlds; the opportunity for all participants to read and react to each other's work; and the opportunity for all participants to reflect on and evaluate the partnership program.

These four structures empowered all of the students involved, but they were especially instrumental in repositioning the high school students, granting them authority and access. The notion that the high school students had something important to teach the university students dramatically changed the power dynamic. As teacher educators, the high school students enjoyed a status equal to, if not greater than, the status enjoyed by the university students who worked with them to impart research and writing skills. Their authority to speak and to teach was further buttressed by the opportunity to critique the university students' work and to give feedback to the students' professor, and by the opportunity to evaluate the entire service-learning project. In these capacities, the high school students became teachers to the teacher educator. Again, the traditional hierarchy was upended as the high school students identified shortcomings and challenges of the project, offered suggestions for improvement, and generated advice for next year's participants.

Whereas the three structures described above—the opportunity to teach, the opportunity to critique their partners' work, and the opportunity to evaluate the entire project—have to do with authority and who has the right or the power to teach, the remaining structure, the opportunity to enter each other's world, has more to do with access and learning.

Oftentimes in service-learning projects, university students enter the context of the people they serve, and they learn as much by observing the site as by interacting with the people in it. The university students enjoy mobility, the freedom to come and go, and the knowledge that comes from direct experience of comparing and contrasting different contexts. Even if they benefit from the service provided to them, those served can remain relegated to and circumscribed by their own context; they do not enjoy the same opportunity to learn as do the university students, because they must rely solely on filtered accounts of what their service-provider's world is like. By contrast, the university students can integrate first-hand accounts from community members with their own direct observation of the community context, forming a deeper understanding of the other institution.

When both sets of institutional actors are given the chance to experience each other's worlds, both engage in powerful learning as their frames of reference are broadened. Both also experience what it is like to be a visitor and to be a host. When service-learning projects allow only the university students to enjoy these opportunities to

teach and to learn, to enter the "other's" context, to assess the "other's" efforts, and to reflect on the overall experience, reciprocity becomes more tenuous.

Implications for Practice

The four structures described above can be replicated with relative ease in many other university-school service-learning programs. Allowing both partners to take part in service provision is largely a matter of design and framing. In a service-learning project that seeks reciprocity, the service pieces should be constructed to leverage each partner's assets, rather than constructing one partner as deficient and the other as advantaged. When the project is first presented to the participants, it can be stressed that each person involved is expected to offer a service, that is, to teach the other, and each is expected to benefit (or learn) from the exchange. When the strengths and gifts of each institutional participant are recognized as being of equal value, an important channel for reciprocity opens.

In order to grant partners access to one another's contexts, the logistics of transportation and scheduling need to be thought through; however, even one short visit can bridge the space between the two partners, building greater understanding and reducing the power differential that may traditionally separate them. When both partners are granted the right to cross borders and enter each other's worlds, not only is learning enhanced, but so too are the conditions for reciprocity.

Allowing participants to share their work or evidence of their learning with one another, again, may require some coordination of schedules and some consideration of how to structure the experience to ensure that it is constructive for both partners; however, this opportunity, too, is relatively easily accomplished once learning goals have been made explicit and assignments aligned to those goals.

Finally, instructors or project administrators can use debriefing sessions, surveys, interviews, and focus groups to solicit the evaluations of the participants at the close of the project. By implementing these four structures, practitioners create important supports for building reciprocity in service-learning.

These supports, rather than the structures themselves, become the focus when researchers or practitioners set about evaluating the extent of reciprocity evident in a service-learning partnership. This paper argues that those supports fall under one

general heading, agency, which itself is composed of three domains: the power to design, the power to act, and the power to evaluate. When power imbalances occur across the three domains, reciprocity is likely to be weak or absent altogether. When the power of the institutions and their members in these three areas are commensurate, true and meaningful reciprocity can, in fact, be achieved.

ENDNOTES

[1] All names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

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