Title
Rapport at the core: Relationships in service-learning program development

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At this stage, there is little doubt that service-learning can offer benefits for students, universities, and communities alike. Yet, even as endorsements for service-learning become increasingly widespread, there is still difficulty implementing programs, especially in research-oriented universities.

In order to explore the process of program development, this qualitative case study explores the experiences of a service-learning program director who, in her own words, "built something from nothing" at a major research university. In Dr. Hall's (pseudonym) time as director, a thriving multi-faceted program has come to fruition that included, at the time of the study, a civic engagement minor, a disabilities minor, student-run community research projects, alternative spring break trips, academic internships, and service-learning courses across many academic departments. Campus Compact recently acknowledged the caliber of the program and the director's role in its cultivation through a major award, suggesting that Dr. Hall's work is exemplary. Through a series of in-depth interviews with Dr. Hall, this study explored factors that enabled her success. In these interviews, the theme of relationships repeatedly emerged. This paper explores the centrality of relationships in program development accordingly.

This paper argues that for Dr. Hall, service-learning leadership is fundamentally a social endeavor; rapport is at the core of her success. I also explore the role of relationship-building in service-learning programs more generally. This paper highlights the power of rapport in service-learning program development.

Contextualizing the Study: Review of the Literature

Programs with punch, the established potential of service-learning

This study focuses on leadership approaches and program development within a nuanced community engagement program. A brief review of the literature that points to service-learning's potential emphasizes the importance of these kinds of programs. In other words, their established value helps justify further study into the pragmatics of developing them.

There is a deep research base that points to their possible benefits. Service-learning has been connected with civic development and credited for fostering students' tolerance, community-mindedness, and civic engagement (Cipolle, 2010; Colby, Erlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Goering & Henderson, 2012). The literature, which typically attributes the pedagogy's roots to both Dewey (1938) & Kolb (1984), hails service-learning's counter-normative teaching strategies; instead of traditional teaching approaches, service-learning pedagogy compels students to get involved directly in communities and then critically reflect on the link between course content and these genuine community contexts (Jacoby, 2003). Students are able to

individually uncover their relations to their communities which can promote a deeper commitment to them (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Several have noted a clear correlation between university-level service-learning and students' long-term community involvement (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Many other positive student outcomes have also been associated with the pedagogy, including: increased engagement in academics both during undergraduate studies and beyond (Astin et al., 1999; Stelljes, 2008), a heightened sense of self-esteem (Eppler, Ironsmith, Dingle, & Errickson, 2011; Whittig & Hale, 2007), a refined sense of identity gained through a values reflection process (Yeh, 2010); increased first to second year college retention (R. Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010), and openness to diversity and reduced negative stereotypes (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Teachers also describe better class discussions, higher levels of student engagement with material, and stronger teacher-student relationships (Hou, 2010). I should note that not all service-learning necessarily results in the outcomes listed above. There have been some warranted criticisms about the varying degrees of rigor in service-learning programs, weak research methods in service-learning studies, or the potential for service-learning projects to inadvertently reinforce issues of privilege (Butin, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Keshen, Holland, & Moely, 2010). Even still, research largely highlights a host of positive outcomes. The wide range of benefits provides a clear justification for attention to universities' attempts to implement service-learning pedagogy.

The expansion of the field in higher education settings offers further justification for this sort of study. There are calls for more widespread implementation in higher education classrooms (Campus Compact, 2014). According to Campus Compact's (2012) survey, 557 Campus Compact member schools reported that they offer service-learning courses and 96% reported a center devoted to community and civic engagement. As university programs grow across the nation, there is a greater need for understanding the processes that enable program development.

Bumpy roads to implementation

Just as the literature has already established a wide range of benefits for service-learning programs, it has also highlighted challenges involved in program development. The literature suggests that leaders have to navigate a range of obstacles. I highlight two key challenges below that this study directly addresses.

One of the most frequently cited challenges involved in service-learning establishment is faculty resistance to the pedagogy and unfamiliarity with its approaches. As Butin (2010) noted, there are many reasons faculty may still resist adopting service-learning pedagogies, ranging from a preference for more normative teaching strategies to anxiety over the more disruptive elements of service-learning. As he explained, "Service learning is a strategy, specifically, a

strategy of disturbance (…) service-learning challenges and decenters our static and singular notions of teaching, learning, and research by moving against the grain of traditional practice" (2010, p. 19). Service-learning is not only a disruptive practice, as described above; it is also a practice that asks faculty to gain new skills—something that they are not all eager to do. Considering that most Western-trained educators were trained in teaching methods more consistent with what Freire (1993) described as the "banking method," one might question if faculty have sufficient training and resources to prepare them to teach in such counter-normative ways (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Penuel et al. (2007) argued that teachers should have sufficient background in both the content and pedagogy implicit in any progressive educational reforms. As Howard (1998) highlighted, teachers are often less versed in the "counternormative pedagogy" of service-learning, and more hesitant accordingly. In short, faculty concerns and insecurities contribute to the stalled embrace of service-learning pedagogy. Those who wish to expand universities' programs need to convince faculty that they are both interested in and able to implement service-learning pedagogies. This is not an easy task. This article explores the way that Dr. Hall uses relational strategies to help address this issue.

By focusing this study on program development within a research university, I intentionally explore the process of establishing faculty "buy in" within a setting that is frequently considered especially resistant to service-learning efforts. There is a research base that has shown this. For example, Abes, Jackson, and Jones (2002), in their study of faculty perceptions of service-learning, found that those specifically within research universities were more likely to be deterred by a rewards structure that fails to acknowledge service-learning efforts than faculty in other types of colleges or universities. This reinforced Furco's (2001) assertion that rewards structures in research universities serve as deterrents for faculty adoption of service-learning. While there has been evidence that some universities have begun offering incentives for service-learning use (Campus Compact, 2012), rewards structures nonetheless seem a barrier in research universities. In light of such challenges a study that focuses on an award-winning program within a research university context seems all the more important.

Study Design

This study was designed as an in-depth single-site, single-subject case study. As Merriam (2009) noted, case studies permit a high level of contextualization. While the narrowness may reduce the potential for generalizations, case studies offer an unparalleled level of rich description and concrete detail. Such descriptions and details can in turn reveal phenomena that might otherwise be missed. Thus, I assume that by exploring, in great depth, the

experiences of a single individual, new knowledge might be revealed about the process of service-learning program development.

Much like Small (2009), I questioned the existence of a representative sample. I adopted the stance that all programs and facilitators are intrinsically unique. Programs exist within particular historical, cultural, geographic, and political contexts. The leaders, participants, and stakeholders involved in each program inevitably differ. Accordingly, it is impossible to select a case that is truly representative of university service-learning programs or service-learning directors. If "representative" is not the goal, then, what is? As I selected an ideal case study participant, I shared Small's (2009) view that "rare situations are often precisely what the researcher wants" (p. 18). Small suggested that much can be learned from an in-depth exploration of unique cases.

Dr. Hall was identified as an ideal "rare" case study participant because her accomplishments are both formidable and quite unique. Dr. Hall is the director of a thriving center for community engagement at a large public research university, which I will refer to by the pseudonym Research University, or RU. When Dr. Hall was recruited approximately fifteen years ago to leave a tenured position at a different university to move to RU, RU possessed a strong research interest in service-learning, but provided few opportunities for students or faculty to actually engage in service-learning projects. Dr. Hall worked to, in her words, "build something from nothing" and to create a thriving, multifaceted community learning center. At the time of the interviews, the center oversaw a variety of experiential-education programs including service-learning courses, academic internships, alternative spring break trips, a civic engagement minor, a disabilities studies minor, Justice Corps, Jumpstart, and a civic engagement related research program for select college seniors. Dr. Hall was awarded a major award from Campus Compact for her accomplishments. Considering these and other achievements, Dr. Hall seemed a strong exemplar for this study. She graciously agreed to participate and underwent the formal IRB consent process.

Through a range of qualitative methods, I explored the following central questions from the director's point of view:

- *How does a thriving research center director explain her successes[1]?*
- *From the director's perspective, what enabled Research University's multi-faceted service-learning programs to develop?*

To answer these questions, I relied heavily on in-depth semi-structured interviews, as described by Merriam (2009). Over a period of approximately 10 weeks, I conducted four extended interviews with Dr. Hall, totaling approximately 7 hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. These

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[1] *Successes* is an intentionally open term; it includes both the establishment and maintenance of an externally recognized program

transcripts were coded initially for a range of emerging challenges and success factors, and analyzed prior to subsequent interviews. In this first round of analysis I included both topical and descriptive codes, as described by Richards and Morse (2013). I recognized the interpretive nature of coding as described by Merriam (2009):

> Devising categories [for coding] is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study's purpose, the investigator's orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves (pp. 183-184).

I entered each interview with a list of anticipated talking points. At the same time, interviews were quite participant-centered and flexible, a responsiveness encouraged by Schostak (2006) and Yow (2014), amongst others. The extended interview format permitted detours down unanticipated storylines-- which, in turn, allowed new factors to emerge.

As Merriam (2009) noted, document analysis can complement other forms of qualitative research. Throughout the ten week period, I continually reviewed a wide range of documents as they were made available to me including center reports, publications written by Dr. Hall, publications written by others about Dr. Hall, the center's website, select center publications, and a speech Dr. Hall delivered at a faculty address. These documents were primarily used to identify areas for subsequent interview discussion; however as appropriate, they were also coded for emerging themes.

Additionally, I used participant observation methods to contextualize topics raised in interviews and to identify areas for further discussion with Dr. Hall. I observed a service-learning sign up fair and a service-learning course during the interview period. I wrote ethnographic field notes on these observations and performed ongoing analysis. I strove for what Geertz (2003) referred to as *thick description* in my detailed field notes. I coded these documents as I did the interviews and continually reflected on emerging themes.

Merriam (2009) emphasized the importance of member checks where participants can speak to researchers' emerging findings. In the final interview with Dr. Hall, I performed a member check and shared a preliminary list of "success factors" and "challenges" that had emerged throughout our discussions. I solicited feedback on this and discussed each idea in depth. Dr. Hall's feedback molded my second-round analysis. I reviewed all data and conducted a more detailed round of coding related to specific success factors that Dr. Hall and I collectively identified in this final interview. It should be noted that Dr. Hall did not see "rapport" as the most influential factor during this meeting. Rather she ranked the top factors influencing her success as 1) experience; 2) relationships; 3) her creativity and adaptability (with strong roots); 4) freedom- with regards to both administration and funding. However, as I conducted this second round of

coding, I discovered that there was considerable overlap across categories clustered around the theme of interpersonal relationships. In other words, nearly every "top success factor" that Dr. Hall and I discussed included a social component.

I then returned to my field notes and performed a third round of analysis where I coded with a focus on social dimensions. I noted cases where Dr. Hall discussed rapport or where she expressed an awareness (or lack thereof) of the various parties that she interacted with. From this, I arrived at my central assertion: service-learning leadership for Dr. Hall is fundamentally a social endeavor and rapport is central to her success. Implicit in this focal claim are four related assertions. Dr. Hall: 1) is situated within various dynamic social realms, each of which has an influence on her and the center, 2) deliberately fosters rapport and acknowledges the centrality of relationships in her endeavors, 3) is keenly aware of her various audiences, including each audience member's desires and needs, and 4) employs a range of social skills to facilitate positive relationships.

Positionality statement. In any qualitative study, it is important to acknowledge the investigator's attitudes/beliefs towards the subject matter, for they undoubtedly influence project design and researcher interpretations (Merriam, 2009). I entered the research project with an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards service-learning and an understanding of the tenacity required for program development as an experienced service-learning facilitator, researcher, and participant. Dr. Hall was familiar with my background with and my deep academic and personal interests in community engagement efforts. Our shared passion for service-learning undoubtedly influenced our interactions. Dr. Hall often adopted a mentor role- a position I found compatible with my study aims.

Findings

Sub claim# 1: Dr. Hall is situated within various dynamic social realms, each of which has an influence on her and the center that she oversees. This study highlighted the constantly evolving nature of service-learning ventures. In our interviews, Dr. Hall described a range of dynamic physical and intellectual spheres that all impact each other—the center, the university, the city, the service-learning partner, etc. The domains may exist and evolve independently, and yet they regularly intersect and influence each other. For example, Dr. Hall described how shifting university imperatives impacted the center. She explained that emerging research and national economic priorities influenced university focal points and funding. She described how the center's shifting organizational structures enabled jobs to be delegated to her increasingly experienced assistant directors or to waves of graduate student assistants. Dr. Hall described how she connected university professors with long standing field

partners. These faculty members, in turn, liaised between students and field partners. In short, each of the various realms that Dr. Hall is situated within added a new layer to the complex and regularly shifting context of Dr. Hall's work.

In these distinct, and yet often overlapping contexts, Dr. Hall navigated a web of interpersonal relations. On any given day she explained that she might interact with any of the following: employees at the center, university faculty, administrators, funding agency representatives, university administrative support staff, undergraduate students, field partners, leaders of service-learning programs at other institutions, strangers who want to pitch their ideas, or graduate student assistants. These interactions seem to comprise the heart of Dr. Hall's work. When I asked Dr. Hall how many people are involved in the center each year, she did not have a precise figure. However, she estimated that at least 3,500 undergraduate students a year are involved in some capacity. She further indicated that a recent holiday letter was distributed to several hundred faculty members; then she emphasized that this represented just a small subset of the "friends of the center." These figures do not even begin to account for the numerous field partners, administrators, and support staff members that Dr. Hall collaborates with. In other words, thousands of people are involved in the center's operations on some level and play a role in Dr. Hall's work accordingly.

Sub claim# 2: Dr. Hall deliberately fosters rapport and acknowledges the centrality of relationships in her endeavors. With so many interpersonal relationships to maintain, it is not surprising that Dr. Hall emphasized the relational aspects of her work. As we discussed her role, responsibilities, and daily activities during our interviews, Dr. Hall regularly referenced meetings she had with various parties. However, more revealing than her allusions to many meetings was her explanation of these appointments. During three separate interviews, Dr. Hall expressed that "no one really knows what I'm doing." The third time she made this statement, I prompted her to explain further. Dr. Hall described how her calendar might indicate a meeting with a field partner. Someone could read the memo and understand this appointment in a literal sense. However, that individual would have little grasp of what Dr. Hall "was doing" during this time. This explanation suggests that it is the nuances of her interactions that are at the core of her work. Dr. Hall's job is not the act of meeting with administrators, family members, or graduate students; her work is the relationships themselves.

Dr. Hall's definitions and expressed beliefs about service-learning explicitly highlighted the centrality of people and relationships in her ideology. I was exposed to Dr. Hall's conception of service-learning through: a PowerPoint presentation she developed for students in a service-learning course, numerous related interview discussions, an article printed in the university's paper on her accomplishments, and the State of the Center Report. All of Dr. Hall's definitions

of service-learning contained the following elements: a) service-learning should involve equal parts service and learning with clearly established fieldwork-academic links; b) student projects should involve 20+ hours of meaningful work in the community (per quarter) and should be connected to a credit-bearing course; c) relationships between students and field partners should be both long-term and reciprocal; d) projects should involve reflection activities; and e) all parties involved should develop an understanding of what service-learning is prior to engaging in it. Several of these central tenants, especially b and c, focus on people and positive relationships. Accordingly, through her definitions, Dr. Hall emphasized that service-learning is a highly relational endeavor.

Dr. Hall also emphasized the pragmatic functions of strong networks. For example, she described the importance of positive relations with administration: "If you don't have institutional support from the very highest level, you aren't going anywhere." While Dr. Hall was quick to recognize the power of these relations with those at the top of the university power chain, she also explained the importance of relationships with university "gate keepers" --- those who hold less overtly powerful positions, but serve as key access points to students or resources nonetheless. These included: staff in the residential life office, those who work in academic advancement, the community service commission, and the staff who facilitate various listservs and regularly send out "email blasts." Dr. Hall described her early efforts, in collaboration with her first assistants, to build rapport with these individuals: "We started building networks. We started identifying gatekeepers who had access to thousands of students and made them our friends. And then, when we'd get the word out, we'd contact our gatekeepers who would get it to the students. And that we still do today." In this explanation, the pragmatic function of certain relationships is emphasized and the pivotal role of rapport is highlighted. Relationships then are also integral tools for daily operations.

As described in the methods section, during our final interview, Dr. Hall and I discussed the factors that she perceived to be most influential in her progress and RU's service-learning program's growth. In both of her top ranked factors (experience and relationships), the social aspects of her work were emphasized. The latter is quite explicit—by articulating relationships as a key factor, Dr. Hall overtly recognized the centrality of networks and people. However, it was also interesting to see how the former factor provided a compelling link between Dr. Hall's successes and relationships. While *experience* encompassed a variety of related facilitation skills, Dr. Hall used the term to describe her refined social prowess and heightened ability to cultivate the relationships. In other words, *experience* included the refined skills that enabled her to cultivate meaningful and positive networks.

Dr. Hall's explanations of *experience* also captured the significant length of time that she had been intentionally networking. As Dr. Hall described in our final interview, "The longer you're in a place, the more you have relationships. So being in a place for a long time means you get to know a lot of people… and hopefully, people like you." This idea also surfaced in a subsequent discussion where Dr. Hall reflected upon her transition from a tenured position at a different university to RU. She lamented the highly connected network that she left behind and expressed the intentional effort that it took to expand her new network at RU. She explained her outlook towards networking as the following: "There are people who get to a place and they don't make friends. And they don't build relationships because they have other kinds of agendas. But if you want to work in this field, what you want to do is stay, and get to know a lot of people. It's important." Dr. Hall then described a huge faculty event that she was in the midst of coordinating. Through Dr. Hall's framing, I could see her ideological focus on networks. She alluded to the time and energy required to develop communities.

Sub claim# 3: Dr. Hall is keenly aware of her various audiences, including each audience member's desires and needs. It seems that within a rapport-oriented framework, audience awareness was crucial to relationship progress. A detailed look at Dr. Hall's relationships with three different groups-- faculty, administration, and students-- illustrates the nature and breadth of Dr. Hall's audience awareness.

Awareness of faculty. Dr. Hall seemed highly attuned to RU faculty members' perceptions of credibility, research orientations, and personal concerns. She also explained how she intentionally adopted a flexible stance on service-learning to include diverse faculty perceptions. Credibility is of special importance in research universities according to Dr. Hall. She described her perception that faculty members must either view her as a peer, otherwise they will dismiss her altogether; as she explained, interactions need to be "faculty to faculty, or no one will talk to you. You could never send someone with a BA and talk to the head of math. No one would listen. (…) Faculty with faculty only." In this statement, Dr. Hall recognized the prevailing faculty ethos at RU and her need to establish herself as a credible source according.

Dr. Hall further described one of the ways that she did this-- by wearing the simultaneous hats of practitioner, researcher, and scholar. These diverse roles, especially the latter two, granted her legitimacy in the eyes of research-oriented faculty members. In one interview, Dr. Hall explained: "At this point, (faculty) just see me as knowing about this stuff. I don't know anyone on campus who is as specialized in this stuff as me." She implied that such perceived authority facilitated positive faculty interactions. Dr. Hall explained how she intentionally integrated her knowledge of service-learning research into conversations with

faculty members, frequently supplying empirical backing. She described how she used research to sway reluctant faculty members; in such interactions, "the big convincing factor was a research base on best practices."

At the same time, Dr. Hall recognized that faculty members had more nuanced concerns than alignment with best practice alone. For example, she explicitly recognized the "classic, nationwide challenge" of faculty concerns over service-learning logistics and described her deliberate attempts to offset these hesitations. She described how she emphasized the support the center could offer and highlighted personal incentives for service-learning involvements accordingly. She explained:

> If they use what the center has to offer, it's not much more (work). An extra bit of preplanning, but they would normally be doing work for midterms, discussions, etc. It's just like other prep, but more fun. I always say, 'It's just like other classes, but people like it more' That's my hook. 'If you have class that you've taught every year in a row for ten years, and you're getting bored with it, turn it into a service-learning class. I guarantee you'll get excited about it all over again.'

In this, Dr. Hall both acknowledged faculty perceptions and how she adjusted her framing of service-learning to match their concerns, tapping into their potential cravings.

Dr. Hall spoke at length on her early efforts at RU to spread faculty interest and buy in amongst faculty with divergent views. She expressed the centrality of an inclusive model in these early relationships. She described the theoretically divided and charged service-learning landscape that surrounded her transition to RU; debates raged, for instance, on whether service-learning was a general teaching pedagogy or a practice for social justice pursuits alone. Dr. Hall intentionally framed herself as a neutral party in such disagreements. In her words, she "did not plant her flag in either camp." Instead, she encouraged faculty to do whichever form of service-learning they wanted to embrace. As Dr. Hall explained, "I wasn't an ideologue. I wasn't cramming ideas down anyone's throat, so I was able to get many people involved." By adopting an inclusive stance towards of service-learning, Dr. Hall recognized the range of faculty thinking within RU and deliberately drew many in.

The considerable expansion of service-learning offerings under Dr. Hall's leadership suggests that faculty members from across diverse academic fields have bought into service-learning pedagogy. For example, when Dr. Hall arrived at RU only one service-learning course was being taught. Meanwhile, as one center report suggests, from 2009-2012 faculty offered approximately 30 different service-learning courses from disciplines ranging from German, anthropology, statistics, applied linguistics, Chicana/Chicano studies, life sciences, English, math, architecture, civic engagement, Spanish, urban planning, women's studies,

and civil engineering, to world arts and cultures. While the precise motives for involvement within this diverse constituency of service-learning faculty are not altogether clear, Dr. Hall's anecdotes of recruiting and encouraging new service-learning faculty suggests that her understanding of their perspectives may have enabled increased faculty buy in.

Awareness of university administrators. Dr. Hall expressed that university administrators had unique interests and priorities, and catered her interactions accordingly. For example, Dr. Hall recognized university initiatives and their role in administrative decisions. During our fourth interview, Dr. Hall reflected a perspective she heard at a recent conference on cultivating university administrative buy in for service-learning efforts. Another service-learning director had said, "You have to go to your president/chancellor and tell them how much they love this idea; even if they don't know it yet." Dr. Hall agreed: "And it's true. If you go and you say, what are the institutional goals for the chancellor? And we say, 'we're doing stuff that's going to make you look good or help you meet these goals, so embrace this.' We help (administration) know that (they) love this, before (they) know that (they) love this. That's a good idea." Implicit in this explanation is an understanding of university constraints and administrative priorities. Dr. Hall recognized that service-learning initiatives must be articulated in terms that are complementary with university imperatives.

Over time, Dr. Hall has become keenly aware of the degree of oversight that administrators, such as the Vice Provost of RU, crave. She described how in her early years at RU she sent administrators regular memos outlining her activities and accomplishments. However, over time she discovered that they were more interested in the bigger picture than her daily operations. Recently, she has focused more on communicating any major center shifts or new projects. Dr. Hall emphasized that she always ensures administration is aware of new endeavors. However, she has built sufficient rapport with administrators for them to trust her with daily operations.

Dr. Hall offered several possible reasons for administrators' confidence in her ability to oversee daily operations. First, she explained in our final interview her own emphasis on rigor; she is only satisfied with work that could not be questioned by administrators. Second, Dr. Hall met their expectations during her early years as director: "I did an awful lot of things in the first few years and so they were happy." Regardless of administrators' reasons for trusting Dr. Hall's leadership, it seemed clear from Dr. Hall's explanations that they did have confidence in her management. She catered sufficiently to their administrative needs to keep them satisfied with her progress.

As Dr. Hall described her interactions with various administrators, it became clear that these relationships were quite positive. As Dr. Hall framed her work in terms of university imperatives and respected administrative desires and

needs, administration continued to provide supports for service-learning programs. For example, over her time at RU, Dr. Hall's role expanded to the point she could no longer singlehandedly manage the workload. Rather than ask Dr. Hall to scale back the program, administration offered the personnel supports required to expand her efforts. This seems a clear indicator of an affirmative rapport between parties and alignment between service-learning initiatives and university goals. Administration supports Dr. Hall's initiatives. Dr. Hall continues to develop programs that bring the university acclaim and fit within university goals.

   Awareness of undergraduate students. Through her director role, Dr. Hall spends much of her time collaborating with faculty, field partners, center employees, or graduate students rather than with undergraduate students. Yet her rapport with undergraduate students is helpful to examine, for it shows the breadth of her audience awareness. The ways that she taps into undergraduate cravings and interests demonstrates that she knows that particular group well.

   Dr. Hall and her team use a range of strategies to entice students to get involved in service-learning. As I first entered the Center for Community Learning, the welcoming atmosphere struck me as both deliberate and effective. A brightly lit lobby, accessorized with live plants, orange accents, and colorful pamphlet displays beckons students to a neat office space with a sign that encourages them to "please ring for assistance." As students announce their arrival with a soft bell, center employees greet them with smiles and quickly address their needs. While students wait, they can sit on comfortable seats and can leaf through the informative flyers (focused on various center offerings) arranged on the coffee table before them. Such details may seem trivial, but they subconsciously welcome students and put them at ease. It could be assumed that students are more likely to engage in center programs if they feel comfortable and supported. The physical space of the office fosters such sentiments. Dr. Hall also discussed more overt attempts to attract students to the center. These advertising strategies ranged from brief presentations in classes, to online campaigns, to "old school sandwich board" announcements. Dr. Hall referenced varied student preferences and the multiplicity of advertising methods used to meet diverse leanings.

   Once students get involved in the center's programming, Dr. Hall also seems aware of the sorts of things that keep them motivated. For example, students offer input on their choice of sites for service-learning courses. The students that I observed at the freshman cluster sign up fair had approximately ten options for potential field sites. After meeting representatives for each site and learning more about prospective involvements, students ranked their top three choices. The coordinating teaching assistants use student preferences and schedules to assign field partners and to organize groups of students that can visit

each site together. Within this field placement structure, Dr. Hall recognizes students' preferences of choice and peer support.

Most of the above examples refer primarily to structural or program design elements that promote good relations between students and the center. However, Dr. Hall also strives for positive rapport in her face-to-face interactions. For example, Dr. Hall explained that she is regularly asked to speak in classes. When she does, she puts considerable effort into making her talks engaging and encouraging. For example, in our final interview, Dr. Hall explained her attitude towards student talks: "I think you have to add inspiration. You can't put a hand on it-- inspiration. When I give a talk, I definitely go the whole nine yards for inspiration. Inspire people to become bigger and better than they were that first day when they moved into the residence hall. Think bigger ideas. See themselves as more capable. I mean, isn't that college in a nutshell?" As Dr. Hall described her visions for undergraduate education, her face lit up. Her contagious optimism brimmed. While I had no opportunities to observe Dr. Hall directly interact with undergraduates, I had no doubt that undergraduates would thrive off her energy and would gravitate towards her visions for their potential.

Sub claim#4: Dr. Hall employs a range of social skills to facilitate positive relationships. In this section I will explore four social skills that could be replicated by service –learning facilitators on other campuses.

Code switching. In the last section, I explored Dr. Hall's awareness of different audiences and their respective needs. Here I explore a related skill: her ability to code-switch. I delve into Dr. Hall's ability to modify her language to meet context expectations. In our final interview, Dr. Hall's discussed her code-switching efforts directly as we looked at two different documents she wrote: a script for an opening speech at a faculty gathering and a State of the Center report. She joked that in the report, she "was trying to be as boring as possible." She laughed about how the dry informative tone of that piece contrasted with the tone in her faculty speech, which was upbeat and interactive. She explained her deliberate language variations:

> There's different ways you write-- business communication style. Then a way you write when it's an inspirational aspect. Then there's a third way: the grant proposals that I wrote this morning (…) That was just tapping into exactly what I thought the funder wanted to know. (…) There's very different styles of writing.

In this snippet, Dr. Hall not only reiterates her awareness of audience expectations but her intentional language modifications to "tap into" specific needs and desires.

I watched Dr. Hall slip seamlessly between tones on many occasions. During our interviews, which were largely informal in nature, Dr. Hall adopted a didactic tone when she explained structures, a sarcastic, casual tone as she told amusing anecdotes, and a more reserved tone as she discussed sensitive topics.

Each of these shifts revealed Dr. Hall's awareness of the different aspects of our relationship. For example, Dr. Hall recognized my respective roles as a student, interested listener, and researcher and shifted her language accordingly. Such patterns were not limited to our personal interactions. As she spoke with center employees, for example, she adopted a casual yet direct tone. As she encountered faculty members on our walks around campus, she immediately elevated her diction and adopted a more professional tone. The PowerPoint presentation that Dr. Hall wrote to introduce undergraduate students in a service-learning class to the center was far less formal; it was packed with catch phrases and adorned with images. In short, Dr. Hall adeptly modified her language to match different audiences. It is assumed that her code-switching prowess contributed to affirming interactions with diverse individuals and, in turn, promoted better relationships.

Humor. Within my first few minutes with Dr. Hall, it became clear that she possesses a strong sense of humor. She made jokes, used exaggerated facial expressions, and quickly sensed my affinity for sarcasm. Dr. Hall recognized this skill in herself; as she recounted a recent talk for students, she described herself: "I'm basically a stand up comedian when I get in front of a group of students. I mean I tell jokes the whole way through. I talked to a class of 200 students who laughed the whole time and the faculty member told me he had never heard them laugh—they're always so serious."

There is little doubt that people gravitate towards charismatic individuals, and based off her descriptions of student reactions, Dr. Hall is certainly that. While she did not rank humor as a strong contributing factor to her success, she did still acknowledge that her personality enabled people to listen to her messages: "I'm a pretty good public speaker." Thus her charisma seems an important attribute in building rapport with widespread audiences. Even in a classroom of 200 (likely unfamiliar) students, Dr. Hall was able to foster a degree of positive rapport.

Individual attention. One of the other ways that Dr. Hall fosters rapport with people is through personalized interactions. Dr. Hall explained that she personally contacts every faculty member involved in the center and every field partner at least once a year. While this is a time consuming task, Dr. Hall emphasized the importance of this individualized contact, especially in her relationships with faculty, administration, and field partners. This was not an isolated example of individualized communication; Dr. Hall wrote personalized invitations to her spring faculty party. Showing a similar level of personalized interest, Dr. Hall regularly forwarded me articles or documents that she thought might be of concern to me and always began our interactions with a personal inquiry. Through individualized attention, Dr. Hall made people feel appreciated and important. It can be assumed that this might lead to a greater sense of

connection to the center and might promote their continued involvement in service-learning endeavors.

"The sniff test." The final rapport-related skill that I will explore in detail is what Dr. Hall refers to as "the sniff test." By the "sniff test," Dr. Hall referred to an intuitive ability to read people and determine if their ideas were reasonable or not. The concept of a "sniff test" is important, for up until this point, I have predominately focused on Dr. Hall's attempts to deepen and maintain relationships. Yet, the "sniff test" implies that not all relationships are necessarily positive and not all ideas proposed can carry water.

In one of our interviews, I asked Dr. Hall what advice she could offer for novice service-learning practitioners based on her experience. She ranked the "sniff test" within her top five tips. As Dr. Hall explained to me, "Not everybody you meet is honest or talented. And you have to know how to have the "sniff test" on that. Cause you could get involved with people that will not be helpful. And are either not telling the truth or overestimating their own skills." In Dr. Hall's advice, she clearly differentiates positive relationships from corrosive ones. While relationships can make a program, they can be equally destructive if individuals' deception or poor practice are ignored.

Similarly, Dr. Hall demonstrated a healthy skepticism around overt or subtle resisters to service-learning. During one interview, shortly after a faculty member had raved to me about Dr. Hall and her efforts, I joked with her that the entire university loves her. Dr. Hall was quick to counter that claim: "There are certain groups of people that don't really care for me (laughing). We all know where people are that are not big fans and why. You gotta work around that. Just gotta navigate that. Cause they're on every campus. There are people who aren't fans." In this, Dr. Hall recognized that despite her solid research grounding, audience awareness, and rapport building skills, some of the individuals she interacts with may still be dissuaded by service-learning's potential. Accordingly, she recognized that problem-solving skills must be used to circumvent sticky interpersonal dynamics or possible service-learning resisters.

Discussion

There is something to be learned from each of the four sub-claims laid out above. This study has implications for program leaders and service-learning researchers alike. The first sub-claim argued that Dr. Hall's efforts are embedded within dynamic social realms; these different social spheres each influence her work. This suggests that attention should be paid not only to the diversity of stakeholders involved in service-learning efforts, but the evolving relationships that program leaders have with each respective constituency.

There is some existing recognition in the literature that efforts involve diverse casts. For example, Jacoby and Hollander (2009) emphasized that

programs need support from a wide range of university constituents, including university presidents, trustees, faculty, provosts, academic leaders, professional staff, and students. Bringle, Clayton, and Price (2009) also distinguished different groups of program stakeholders; their SOFAR model differentiated between the needs of students, community organizations, faculty, administrators, and community residents and suggested that relationships with these different groups take different forms. Certain relationships have received more attention than others in the literature. For example, several academics have underscored the importance of strong and reciprocal community partnerships (Dorado & Giles, 2000; Larsen, 2015; Morton, 2012; Sandmann, Kliewer, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010; Sandmann, Moore, & Quinn, 2012). Others have focused on students' roles and have implicitly addressed the relationships between faculty members and students (Cipolle, 2010; Cone, Kiesa, Longo, & Campus Compact, 2006; Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000; Wurr & Hamilton, 2012). A few other studies, through their focus on faculty perceptions of service-learning, have implicitly suggested that relationships between service-learning centers and faculty members matter (Abes et al., 2002; Furco, 2001; Holland, 1999). The discussion of relationships within service-learning literature is not completely absent. Even still, related discussions only look at parts of the picture. There is rarely a discussion of the wide breadth of relationships that need to be maintained simultaneously, or the discrete yet overlapping realms of influence, for example.

The limited nature of this discussion is problematic because, as Dr. Hall's experiences suggests, various social realms constantly influence leaders' efforts. Leaders, especially those within large institutions or service-learning centers, are expected to cultivate and attend to hundreds or thousands of relationships. If there is little discussion of the social forces that contextualize efforts or the breath of relationships involved in programs, the tremendous task that leaders have to build and maintain positive relationships within complex social settings is minimized. Similarly, if there is little dialogue around these topics, there are few opportunities for practitioners to exchange strategies, collaboratively problem-solve challenges, or to discuss best practices. Accordingly, discussions of the highly social nature of service-learning leadership should become more prominent and investigations into the processes more frequent.

The second sub-claim in this piece is very closely related to these concerns. I argued that Dr. Hall deliberately fostered rapport and acknowledged the centrality of relationships. As a seasoned leader, Dr. Hall recognized the highly social nature of her work, even if the literature largely ignores this aspect of service-learning leadership as established above. While this study explored perceptions of influences rather than the causal nature of any given factor, it nonetheless highlighted the influence of deliberately attended to relationships. In other words, by recognizing that a successful community engagement director

emphasized the centrality of relationship-building, this study frames positive relationships as important, if not essential assets to programs. It implies that more attention could be paid to the mechanisms that support positive relationships.

Sub claims three and four highlighted some such mechanisms that an experienced program leader and developer used. Sub claim three established Dr. Hall's keen audience awareness. I argued that she demonstrated a heightened comprehension of the varied needs and desires of stakeholders. This sub claim stressed the importance of understanding stakeholder needs specific to the institutional characteristics (in this case, a research-focused university). Sub claim four highlighted several other specific skills she used to cultivate relationships. These included widely acknowledged rapport-building skills, such as audience-based language adaptation (Bell, 1984; Ede, 1984) and more unique personal approaches, such as the "sniff-test."

By detailing Dr. Hall's methods in this way, these two sub claims identify specific strategies and approaches that one established leader relied on. Another leader or program developer could consider their own application of these sorts of strategies. However, more than advocate for the transfer of specific strategies, this paper highlights the complexity of rapport building and the intentionality involved in relationship establishment and maintenance. By doing so, it calls for greater attention to these leadership demands. It suggests that there are skills or characteristics that leaders should possess. In short, through deeper scholarly exploration and further practitioner discussions, a more nuanced understanding of the role of relationships, the complexity of simultaneous relationship maintenance, and strategies that support positive rapport arises.

Limitations and Areas for Further Study

While the detailed nature of this study allowed a high level of understanding of Dr. Hall's experiences and perceptions, its qualitative and single case study design has limitations with regards to its generalizability. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted, "A qualitative study's transferability or generalizability to other settings may be problematic, at least in the probabilistic sense of the term" (p. 252). I recognize that Dr. Hall's experiences were uniquely her own and that her personal perceptions may not reflect those of all service-learning directors. Similarly, I acknowledge that Research University has its own unique attributes; accordingly, Dr. Hall's experiences of establishing a program may differ from those of leaders in different types of institutions. At the same time, I still suggest that there is much to be learned from Dr. Hall's experiences and perceptions. As groups such as Campus Compact have recognized, she has successfully established a nuanced program in what many would naturally consider a challenging university context. Accordingly, her strategies for building this program seem worth examining and perhaps emulating.

A second major limitation of this study is also closely tied to its methodological approach. In this study, the focus was on Dr. Hall's perceptions of influential factors. It did not aim to establish the precise role of any given strategy or contextual element. While this approach empowered Dr. Hall to articulate the most influential pieces of her own lived experiences, it makes it difficult to declare the effectiveness of any given method in any quantifiable manner.

There is considerable room for related research and this study begins to identify particular gaps that could be addressed through ongoing scholarship. Researchers could test the generalizability of this study by investigating the experiences of other established service-learning directors. Future studies could also establish the precise influence of relationships with different stakeholders, especially those that are less frequently considered. Similarly, they could systematically unpack the strategies that service-learning leaders use to cultivate relationships or balance the demands of various stakeholders.

In Sum

By recognizing the centrality of positive relationships in Dr. Hall's endeavors, this study highlights the potential of relationally oriented service-learning facilitation. It underscores the highly social nature of service-learning efforts and demonstrates that rapport can be intentionally fostered. It implies that a variety of skills can be used to bolster communication and relationships with a diverse cast of service-learning constituents. In short, this study suggests that rapport is at the core of service-learning endeavors and calls for a greater focus in future research on the relational aspects of service-learning facilitation.

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