

Paradigmatic Shifts in the Study and Practice of Community–Campus Partnerships

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Abstract

Partnerships are centrally important to the quality of service-learning/civic engagement (SL/CE), with implications for all forms of community engagement (e.g., participatory action research, outreach, extension) and with multiple partners (government, nonprofit, residents, special interest groups). However, these partnerships are an underexamined aspect of practice and an underdeveloped topic of scholarship. In this article, historical and contemporary developments within SL/CE partnerships, principally in the United States, are examined, such as shifts related to (a) focusing on them as a unit of analysis, (b) conceptualizing which stakeholders (if any) position them at the center, (c) embracing criticality in their practices, and (d) conducting them virtually in online service-learning. Exploring these shifts yields insights relevant for global practitioners as they seek to embed more authentic partnerships in SL/CE.

Keywords: service-learning, partnerships, transformational, reflection, democratic

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Service-learning has evolved through a dynamic history encompassing various paradigms (i.e., theoretical perspectives, political orientations, terminology, methodological approaches, disciplinary influences) around the world (see Tapia et al., 2024), including in the United States (Zlotkowski & Duffy, 2010). Both a pedagogy and a change strategy, service-learning and civic engagement (SL/CE) involve different forms of community engagement (e.g., service-learning, participatory action research, outreach, extension) and with multiple partners (government, nonprofit, residents, special interest groups). Although our primary focus is on service-learning, many of the aspects of our analysis of partnerships have implications for all types of community engagement activities, and we will note that accordingly (i.e., SL/CE). Service-learning engages students, community members, instructors, and staff in co-creating partnerships that integrate academic material, community-engaged activities, critical reflection, and assessment to advance public purposes and to achieve clearly articulated academic learning, civic learning, personal growth, and critical thinking goals (Bringle & Clayton, 2023, p. 479, as cited in Kniffin, Botkin, et al., 2023, p. 208). In addition, other forms of community engagement possess goals, learning outcomes, and evidence of contributions to the community and the campus. The potential benefits of partnerships to both community and campus have been documented around the world (e.g., Aramburuzabala et al., 2019; Pacho, 2019; Tapia et al., 2024; Xing & Ma, 2010).

Community-campus partnerships are integral elements of all SL/CE: “They are the heart of new paradigms for framing activities in the community that can be just and meaningful because they integrate knowledge, resources, experience, and questions from a variety of perspectives” (Bringle & Clayton, 2023, p. 482). Numerous possibilities emerge when considering potential types of partnerships: They may be local, international, or virtual, and they may occur inside, between, and among the campus, nonprofit or for-profit organizations, government agencies, funding agencies, faith-based institutions, special interest groups, residents, and schools. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) examined partnerships as a series of interpersonal relationships that have different stages (initiation, development, maintenance, dissolution) and dynamics (exchanges, equity, distribution of power).

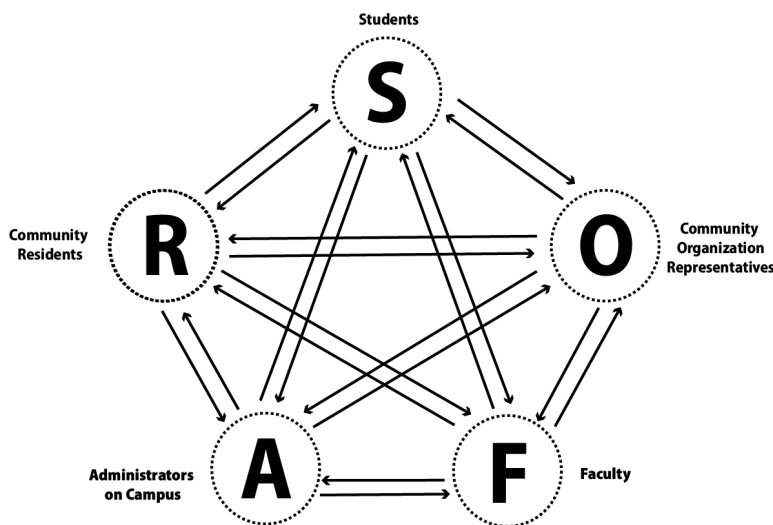
Although service-learning presents fundamental shifts in teaching and learning and in epistemology (Kniffin, Clayton, et al., 2023), we focus on significant calls for change that give rise to elements of paradigmatic shifts related to its core partnership processes. Five historical trajectories of service-learning in the United States, and to varying degrees elsewhere around the world (Tapia et al., 2024), have involved refocusing the ends toward which it is implemented: social justice (Phase 1), disciplinary learning (Phase 2), student-centered learning (Phase 3), democratic civic engagement (Phase 4), and social justice/critical service-learning (Phase 5; Bringle et al., 2014; Clayton & Bandy, 2021; Zlotkowski & Duffy, 2010). Each of these phases has had implications for how community-campus partnerships are conceptualized, studied, and practiced in the United States and elsewhere. Just as Copernicus faced a geocentric view of the universe and worked to shift it to a heliocentric view, service-learning practitioners have faced campus-centric views of service-learning and have called for alternative models (e.g., Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Srinivas et al., 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Our purpose is to document some of these shifts regarding how community-campus partnerships have been conceptualized, analyzed, and practiced during the past 30 years. Each of these shifts is unique in nature (e.g., proponents, disciplinary perspectives, origins, motivations, consequences), but each raises issues about epistemology and inquiry that both ease and generate tensions. We presume that

delineating some of these dynamic shifts will assist practitioners and scholars around the world as they advance future work on partnerships in SL/CE.

As part of our analysis we will present the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES, pronounced “trees”) reflection framework as one approach for understanding the nature, quality, and development of community-campus partnerships in community-engaged activities, including service-learning. We are aware that there are other frameworks for understanding, analyzing, and improving community-engaged partnerships. Sometimes approaches focus on the project, sometimes a community issue (e.g., health, environment), sometimes at the campus level, and sometimes at the network level (e.g., networks of universities, networks of community agencies). For example, Loh et al. (2021) examined partnerships in terms of relationships and power, noting that partnership development is an appropriate and meaningful outcome in its own right (a position with which we agree). Farnell et al. (2025) examined partnerships on three core dimensions: outcomes, process, and ethos. The SPACE Partnership Resource Kit from Europe presents a partnership planning grid, a partnership assessment survey, a partnership dialogue framework, and a dialogue report template. Another example of a framework is the HEI-Community Partnership Index, “a 47-item questionnaire designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of a given HEI-community partnership’s strengths and areas for improvement across the three broad categories of assessment (inputs, process, and outcomes)” (Plummer et al., 2022, p. 11).

Partnership as a Unit of Analysis

The early developers of service-learning in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s viewed achievement of its purposes as dependent on partnerships, particularly within communities (Ramsay, 2017). Higher education’s interest in service-learning in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in a shift to emphasizing student-centric and campus-centric frameworks and rationales. In response, Cruz and Giles (2000) analyzed the historical, political, intellectual, and practical aspects of the excessive emphasis, at the time, on student outcomes in scholarship and research on service-learning. They proposed that the partnership itself—distinct from student or community processes or

Figure 1. The SOFAR Model of Relationships

Note. From “Partnerships in Service Learning and Civic Engagement” by R. G. Bringle, P. H. Clayton, and M. F. Price, 2009, *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*, 1(1), p. 5 (<https://www.digitalgreensboro.org/record/601503?ln=en&p=bringle+clayton&v=pdf>).

outcomes—should be a unit of analysis for both scholarship and practice.

How can community–campus engagement partnerships, as a unit of analysis, be conceptualized, measured, and analyzed? Bringle and Hatcher (2002) drew from theories, research, and constructs from the study of interpersonal relationships to examine phases of partnerships (i.e., initiation, development, maintenance, dissolution) and dynamics of interpersonal relationships (i.e., exchanges, equity, distribution of power) as multiple dyadic interactions. This work led to developments related to interpersonal relationships and partnerships in service-learning. For example, we reconceptualized the phrase “campus–community partnerships,” which suggests the salience of a campus–centric perspective, to “community–campus partnerships,” which decenters higher education institutions.

Second, Bringle et al. (2009) presented the case that “community–campus partnership” is too simplistic as the unit of analysis because it does not clearly represent multiple stakeholders in SL/CE who can have interpersonal relationships and who contribute to outcomes for all stakeholders. They introduced the SOFAR model (see Figure 1) to distinguish the wide range of common partners in service-learning: students (S), representatives of community organizations (O), faculty (F), administrators/staff

on campus (A), and community residents (R). The SOFAR model does not limit SL/CE interpersonal relationships to only those entities or to only dyadic interactions but also supports examination of how interpersonal relationships between two individuals “can develop into networks, coalitions, common interest groups, and communities beyond these groupings” (p. 15). Third, they suggested that partnerships can vary on equity, with some being exploitative, some transactional, and others transformational, and they posited an E–T–T continuum for examining partnership quality.

Positing that partnerships can be an important and useful unit of analysis in SL/CE presented a challenge: Can the quality of SL/CE partnerships be measured, and what kinds of measures are meaningful? Measurement of the nature of partnerships can have implications for practice and for research by assisting in the analysis of why partnerships have certain properties, how they change over time, what the effects are of interventions to improve them, and how partnership quality is related to other outcomes (e.g., student learning, community outcomes). Building on the continuum of statuses identified by Bringle et al. (2009), which ranged from exploitative through transactional to transformational, Clayton et al. (2010) presented the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES, now referred to as TRES I) to operationalize the

measurement of partnership quality.

Kniffin et al. (2020) expanded the TRES continuum to include partnerships that are unilateral, with benefits flowing in one direction. The resultant EUTT framework (exploitative, unilateral, transactional, transformational) is a way of conceptualizing differences in the quality of SL/CE community–campus partnerships. They also presented a new measure, TRES II, grounded in the EUTT continuum, with 10 domains: goals, conflict, decision-making, resources, role of the partnership in each partner's work, role of the partnership in sense of self, extent and nature of interactions, power, outcomes, and satisfaction (later replaced with communication). In both versions of the TRES scale, respondents indicate which response under each domain best reflects the current status and which the desired status of the partnership, providing a basis for reflection on the past, present, and future of the partnership. TRES II explicitly broadened the focus of inquiry beyond interpersonal relationships to apply additionally to higher levels of networks (e.g., multipartner, interorganizational) and partnership entities.

The TRES II scale was embedded into the TRES II reflection framework, which is designed to heighten the tool's meaning-making potential and its implications for practice. The reflection framework employs the DEAL model of critical reflection (Ash & Clayton, 2009). The DEAL model begins with describing (D) an experience in an objective and detailed manner; in the case of the TRES II reflection framework, respondents (preferably from all categories of SOFAR) describe a partnership rather than an experience, guided by prompts regarding, for example, who comprises it, what activities it undertakes, what resources it uses, and the values that ground it. Participants are then prompted to individually examine (E) the experiences of the partnership just described in accordance with the desired learning goals or objectives. TRES II is part of the Examine section, as are prompts that speak to such issues as alignment of values, activities, and supports; degree of success in fulfilling purposes; and reconsideration of the range of participants in the partnership (using the SOFAR model to invite additional inclusivity). Finally, participants are asked to collectively articulate learning (AL) based on the two previous tasks (describe and examine) while continuing to deepen their

thinking and exploring actionable learning by considering specific changes they want to make (e.g., changes in how partners share power or communicate or make decisions). The reflection framework is intentionally designed to embody the characteristics of strong critical reflection as outlined by various scholars: It is contextualized and challenging (Eyler et al., 1996), structured and connected to both values and practice (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Hatcher et al., 2004), and designed to generate actionable learning (Zlotkowski & Clayton, 2005). Furthermore, the process is a democratic way of reflecting on and improving partnerships because it is participatory, inclusive, and fair (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

Results of a multicampus study using the TRES II reflection framework confirmed that, for the first time, there is evidence that an intervention (i.e., critical reflection using the TRES II reflection framework by multiple members of a partnership) can lead to expecting improvements in community engagement partnerships and taking action steps to deepen them (Kniffin, Clayton et al., 2023). In addition to generating practice enhancements, it is also an important tool for research. Bringle and Clayton (2013) presented a research agenda that included examining multiple perspectives on partnerships (e.g., expectations, differences in values and outcomes), different types of partnerships (e.g., short-term vs. enduring, transitions in relationships), measurement strategies (e.g., self-report measures, non-verbal measures, focus groups), development of partnerships over time (no change vs. progression vs. regression), and relating the nature of partnerships to outcomes for different constituencies. TRES I, TRES II, and the TRES II reflection framework are useful and meaningful tools for subsequent research on these types of topics.

Who Is at the Center of Whose Table?

As operationalized in the TRES II scale, one of the keys to developing SL/CE community–campus partnerships that have desirable qualities is to surface—and often modify—how power operates. One of the ways power is expressed is through the acts of defining and convening the partnership “table,” roles most frequently held by instructors who establish projects well ahead of the beginning of a service-learning course or community engagement activity, but sometimes by students and by community members. A first

issue is “who initiates the partnership?” Glover and Silka (2013) pointed out that this is not only a practical question, but one that has implications for framing the partnership, how inertia influences agenda setting and power relationships, the temporal perspective, and epistemology.

Although all members of a partnership should have a seat at the table when designing, implementing, and assessing SL/CE partnerships, whose table people are being invited to has shifted within service-learning since its inception. Indeed, one of the founders of the pedagogy in the United States, Robert Sigmon (1979), insisted from the beginning that everyone involved in service-learning partnerships should be seen as and should function as teachers and learners, servers and served. As noted by another of the founders, at a time when numerous agencies and programs oriented toward community development and economic improvement were beginning to materialize (e.g., the Peace Corps), stakeholders from all sectors were called on to offer insights, marshal resources, and mobilize change agents as service-learning was being conceptualized (Ramsay, 2017). Perspectives shifted, however, on who convenes, where the table is, who is invited to the table, and whose outcomes matter most, especially as issues related to faculty work and curriculum development took center stage in the quest for legitimacy of service-learning as an academic endeavor (Zlotkowski, 1995).

Because service-learning was conceived mostly in pedagogical terms, academic partners (i.e., instructors, students) have been seen to hold primacy within service-learning partnerships—at least in terms of institutional power, which has taken precedence. As service-learning began to take hold as a curricular practice across institutions and came to be framed as an experiential approach to disciplinary learning in the United States, a pattern of instructor centeredness prevailed. Zlotkowski’s 21-volume series, *Service-Learning in the Disciplines* (Zlotkowski, 2006), is an example of how higher education professionals have given much attention to developing service-learning as a pedagogy across a wide range of curricula and largely for the sake of the disciplinary curriculum and student learning. Barr and Tagg (1995) highlighted the need for learner centeredness to emphasize not the teaching of content but rather the creation of conditions in which students

can best learn. Both the instructor- and student-centered paradigms can create situations in which the table is an academic one and community members are invited to that table to partner on the project—with “partnering” often understood to mean serving as a placement site, with no significant input, leadership, or power. The notion that academics often start the partnership has important implications for its nature (Glover & Silka, 2013).

This framing of instructor- and student-centered service-learning partnerships is not without critique and, indeed, is beginning to shift. Hartman et al. (2014) and Hartman (2015) called for a community-driven approach to service-learning partnerships, albeit one balanced by and integrated with a focus on students. The fair trade learning model that Hartman codeveloped with community members insists that “human and community flourishing on both sides of an exchange [i.e., community and campus] should be enhanced” (p. 98) and includes both community-centered standards (e.g., community preparation, local sourcing, reciprocity) and student-centered standards (e.g., student preparation, connection of service-learning to courses and learning goals, mentoring; see Hartman et al., 2014 for the full set of standards).

Stoecker and Tryon’s (2009) aptly titled book *Unheard Voices* called attention to the general lack of consideration of community voices and community outcomes that had come to characterize service-learning partnerships in the United States. They wrote that the almost complete focus on student learning excluded attention to community perspectives and outcomes, and they furthermore warned that service-learning that primarily serves academic interests may not just ignore but even undermine community interests and cause harm. Further developing the argument in his call for liberating service-learning from its overly academic orientation, Stoecker (2016) conceptualized service-learning as primarily a social change strategy, not a pedagogy, insisting that “community outcomes [be] the first priority” (p. 187) in service-learning partnerships.

Writing in *Unheard Voices*, long-standing community partner Mondloch (2009) drew on her own organization’s experience with service-learning to articulate and call for a powerful alternative that decenters any one stakeholder category: “It all comes down to

Table 1. Technocratic and Democratic Engagement Paradigms

Technocratic Civic Engagement (TCE)	Democratic Civic Engagement (DCE)
<i>For</i>	<i>With</i>
Deficit-based	Asset-based
Uni-directional flow of knowledge from credentialed academic experts; distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers	Multi-directional, synergistic flow of ideas and questions within a web of knowledge centers; co-creation of knowledge
Engagement is apolitical	Engagement facilitates inclusive, collaborative, deliberative democracy
At best transactional exchanges	Potentially transformative partnerships (transformative of self, others, organizations/institutions, systems, paradigms); change result from co-creation
Hierarchical power dynamics	Powershifted dynamics that disrupt hierarchy and position all partners as co-educators, co-learners, co-generators of knowledge and practice

Note. Modified from *Democratic Engagement White Paper*, by J. Saltmarsh, M. Hartley, and P. H. Clayton, 2009, New England Resource Center for Higher Education.

one motto: ‘Everyone a learner, everyone a teacher, everyone a leader.’ That’s it. That’s the radical view of the world that changes how community works and shuffles the balance of power” (p. 136). Through this statement, Mondloch crafted the vision of an equitable table that is shared by everyone in service-learning rather than centered on any one entity. Even as a community partner, she does not argue for community-centered partnerships, but rather envisions a democratic process in which all partners contribute and learn. This systems-oriented understanding in which no one stakeholder group is positioned at the center is also embodied in the abovementioned SOFAR model of service-learning interpersonal relationships (Bringle et al., 2009). Through frameworks such as these, the table itself is shared, which makes inclusivity of community and campus partners more attainable and sustainable due to equitable power-sharing.

This decentering shift in how SL/CE partnerships are conceptualized and enacted was also explored by Saltmarsh et al. (2009), who identified two civic engagement paradigms. As articulated in Table 1 (modified from the original), the technocratic civic engagement model operates in a technocratic mode characterized by deficit views of community, with knowledge and information flowing from academic experts to communities. The authors documented and called for an alternative democratic

civic engagement framework that positions everyone involved in SL/CE partnerships as coeducators, colearners, and cogenerators of knowledge. This asset-based understanding of community encourages multidirectional flows of knowledge and therefore enables and, indeed, insists upon, the shared power and authority of full inclusivity in service-learning relationships.

The democratic framework illustrates an approach that decenters campus or community, broadening ownership of the table, and centers the partnership among all partners, the cocreated nature of the processes they undertake, and the public purposes toward which they engage with one another.

Critical Orientation to Service-Learning

Having emerged alongside and coexisting with Phase 4 (democratic civic engagement) is a fifth phase (criticality) that brings forward the original focus on justice with a systems orientation. Even when interacting in the same community, academic partners (students, instructors, administrators) and community partners (residents, organizational representatives, government officials, business community) in SL/CE partnerships may have different lived experiences of that community due to social (e.g., race), economic (e.g., socioeconomic status), or academic (e.g., access to higher education)

factors. Stewart and Webster (2011) observed that “social dominance is particularly relevant when discussing service-learning because of the structure, setting, and context of many service-learning activities” (p. xv). The turn toward critical service-learning starts with the concept of critical community service, which considers whether all participants in SL/CE have an opportunity to contribute to and learn from the partnership as well as whether the service experience is connected to broader social contexts (Rhoads, 1997).

As service-learning became more institutionalized in higher education in the United States in the early 2000s, power dynamics became more apparent: Service-learning was increasingly championed by marginalized instructors, disproportionately available to traditional-aged students who had fewer out-of-class responsibilities, and without a convincing record of bringing about meaningful social change (Butin, 2006). Upon examining the largely homogeneous demographics of college students at the time when service-learning was beginning to emerge in the curricula in the United States, which themselves have subsequently shifted significantly, it became clear that the usual approaches to service-learning tended to uphold practices and norms rooted in Whiteness and deficit-based approaches. Mitchell et al. (2012) observed that service-learning was “being implemented mostly by white faculty with mostly white students at predominantly white institutions to serve mostly poor individuals and mostly people of color” (p. 612).

Critical service-learning, initially named by Rhoads (1997) and more thoroughly examined and developed by Mitchell (2008) in the United States, moves beyond the dominant deficit-based, placement model, which these authors referred to as “traditional service-learning.” Critical service-learning is considered a departure from traditional service-learning in that the latter tends to emphasize student outcomes and does not explicitly engage questions of inequality, injustice, or oppression. Critical service-learning emphasizes the social contexts and power structures that are present in any service-learning partnership, an orientation toward social change, and the building of authentic relationships. Authentic relationships are rooted in breaking down barriers between campus and community and “self” and “other.”

Authentic relationships also depend crucially on a shift from deficit- to asset-based orientations within service-learning partnerships. The latter positions the language, structure, relationships, and orientations within a service-learning experience to “engage everyone with curiosity and care” (Bauer et al., 2015, p. 92). Bauer et al. observed that service-learning relationships can easily perpetuate problematic narratives and generate deficit-based frameworks of community, in which those engaging in the service-learning experience come to view their participation as “helping the needy” (p. 89), and they embraced a call for service-learning to shift from deficit- to asset-based framing, which focuses on community strengths, skills, and resources. The articulation of such distinctions further represents a shift from traditional to critical service-learning in that it calls on those involved in community-campus partnerships to examine how their practice and partnerships engage—or do not engage—issues of justice. The elements of critical service-learning are also present in other national and regional perspectives on service-learning (e.g., Tapia et al., 2024), particularly in the Global South.

In practice, several tools have been developed to guide educators, students, and community members in their work toward more justice-oriented service-learning partnerships and practices. The Critical Service-Learning Reflection Tool (Stith et al., 2021), for example, provides reflection guidance for instructors across five focus areas: authentic relationships, equitable classrooms and cognitive justice, reckoning with systems, social change skills, and redistribution of power. The section on authentic relationships asks participants to examine the ability of partners to cocreate systems and practices that support their joint work; develop shared understandings of identities, histories, and assets; and plan for long-term activities and priorities. These tools assist partners in both reflecting on their partnerships and making future commitments to implement practices that can lead to more equitable partnerships and experiences.

Virtuality

Not all paradigmatic shifts result from intellectual insights and the emergence of social issues. Explorations of the nature of virtual/electronic service-learning (eSL)

predated the COVID pandemic due largely to the global proliferation of technology, including its ever-increasing presence within higher education. Waldner et al. (2012) identified four ways in which the merger of service-learning and technologically supported distance education can occur, each with its unique combination of activities, products, partnerships, strengths, and limitations:

Hybrid Type I (service fully on site with teaching fully online), Hybrid Type II (service fully online with teaching fully on site), Hybrid Type III (a blended format with instruction and service partially online and partially on site), and extreme e-service-learning (100% of the instruction and service online). (p. 133)

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many instructors, practitioners, students, and community partners to determine how they could safely convert service-learning courses to some form of eSL as an alternative to abandoning community-engaged activities entirely due to safety concerns. These revisions to service-learning courses resulted in a paradigm shift about the nature and structure of courses using digital technology as well as changes to the nature of the community-engaged activities and the relationships that support them. Indeed, according to Kniffin, Botkin, et al. (2023), fulfilling “the opportunity and obligation to intentionally incorporate digital technologies as a means of enhancing both access to and quality of education . . . opens new possibilities for service-learning partnerships” (p. 216). Acknowledging that access to the internet remains a challenge even among persons in developed nations, they noted that digital modalities “can make service-learning more accessible among students and community partners bound by geographic location” (p. 216). As another example that is particularly relevant to the study and practice of SL/CE partnerships, Kniffin, Botkin, et al. suggested that eSL raises such questions as “what ‘community’ means online, what responsibilities members of such communities have to one another, what it means to be civil in a digital world, and how relationships and dialogue form and deepen through remote interaction” (p. 217).

The way in which the widespread shift from face-to-face to virtual eSL was made during

the COVID pandemic raised challenges concerning inclusive and democratic participation in the redesign of courses, community-engaged activities, and the nature of partnerships (Ngai et al., 2023; Ong et al., 2023; Strait et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2025). We suspect that there was a spectrum of adaptations that ranged from a hurried, truncated scramble to keep a service-learning course going to more thoughtful, intentional transitions that integrated the best of service-learning with the best of distance learning (Tan et al., 2025). The latter case offers the possibility that eSL enhanced, rather than compromised, the educational experience in meaningful ways and that subsequent offerings of all service-learning can be improved due to a clearer understanding of how digital technology can contribute to service-learning partnerships, regardless of format (Strait et al., 2023). Tan et al. (2025) documented how institutional support and faculty development activities can be designed for eSL by combining principles of good practice for service-learning and for distance education, which can contribute to enduring SL/CE partnerships. Culcasi et al. (2023) developed an eSL course design framework that incorporates “partnerships” as one of three pillars, along with “places” and “people,” that contribute across four clusters of course design principles: basic principles, instructional design, engagement and inclusiveness, and availability of digital skills and resources.

As Hansen and Clayton (2014) noted, service-learning’s integration with digital technologies “might well give us entre into an untapped set of possibilities for re-examining, re-conceptualizing, and re-enacting” (p. 23) what it is to be in partnership with and within communities. To the extent that this potential is realized, the pandemic’s proliferation of eSL represents a paradigmatic shift. Bringle and Clayton (2020) identified some of the promising ways in which eSL can contribute to these shifts. They noted that although “community” typically has a local, geographic referent, online communities can be created with digital technologies that transcend local boundaries. Thus, the number, nature, and diversity of relationships with community partners and other SOFAR partners can expand through the use of technology. Although there can be structural tensions in creating online communities when partnerships span time zones, languages, legal frameworks, technological infrastructure, norms, and inequities,

multiple questions arise with these new approaches: How can online communities encompass democratic values in partnerships that are just, inclusive, and cocreated? How can the partnerships establish connections, understanding, and empathy among persons who will never meet face-to-face? What contributes to enduring virtual relationships and partnerships? How are community-engaged partnerships changed, particularly when dispersed students assume more responsibility for establishing partnerships in their home communities (Hansen & Clayton, 2014)? Bringle and Clayton (2020) summarized the potential for new approaches to service-learning partnerships when they asked, “Might the integration of service-learning and digital technologies enable many more individuals, across all walks of life, to experience being co-creative members of transnational, transdisciplinary, transprofessional, transgenerational communities formed, for example, around pressing public questions and issues?” (p. 58).

Conclusion

Prioritizing partnerships as units of analysis is a development consistent with the overall goal of advancing practice, research, and scholarship in SL/CE. Understanding who is involved in a partnership and who plays what role—using the SOFAR model as an example—allows a more thoughtful perspective on inclusion and power dynamics that are present in any community–campus interactions. This analysis of the evolution of various historical and conceptual perspectives on partnerships can contribute to the continuing analysis of how to assess them and how to design interventions that can foster their development around the world. It also allows a more detailed analysis of the process of partnerships and how their attributes might be related to personal, institutional, cultural, and civic outcomes.

We strongly endorse a process for the use of the TRES II reflection framework that draws heavily on collaborative reflection across SOFAR constituencies. This democratic process can also be a model for the use of other partnership frameworks (e.g., Loh et al., 2021). The TRES II reflection framework incorporates the DEAL reflection framework and contains elements of strong reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler et al., 1996; Hatcher et al., 2004; Zlotkowski

& Clayton, 2005). In addition, the collaborative process of collecting and sharing individual perspectives on a partnership embodies the attributes of a democratic process: inclusive, participatory, and fair (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Finally, although there are other examples of interventions to improve community–campus partnerships (e.g., brokering; Levkoe & Stack-Cutler, 2018), to our knowledge the TRES II reflection framework is the only intervention for which there is evidence from multiple partnerships on multiple campuses that the tool and the collaborative reflection process can lead to expecting improvements in community engagement partnerships and taking action steps to deepen them (Kniffin, Clayton, et al., 2023). Although it is risky to speculate about additional paradigmatic shifts in SL/CE in the future, we expect that further developments in artificial intelligence, technology, spirituality, personal purpose and meaning, political democratic crises, interdisciplinarity, network analysis, and globalization may be precursors to subsequent paradigmatic shifts in the field, including partnerships. We look forward to subsequent complementary analyses of how community–campus partnerships have evolved in different political and cultural contexts and to the development of additional tools to improve community–campus partnerships.

This analysis of paradigmatic shifts in service-learning, with a particular focus on community–campus partnerships, is largely positioned on an analysis of trends and changes in the United States. We are aware that different regions and countries have experienced unique journeys concerning the assumptions, definitions, purposes, evolution, and processes of enhancing the curriculum through educationally meaningful community activities and partnerships to support that work (e.g., Aramburuzabala et al., 2019; Hall & Tandon, 2014; Ma et al., 2018; McIlrath et al., 2012; McIlrath & MacLabhrain, 2007; Netshandama, 2010; Northmore & Hart, 2011; Sachs & Clark, 2017; Shumer et al., 2021; Tapia et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2011; Xing & Ma, 2010). Nevertheless, we present the case that each of the paradigmatic shifts that we have described informs in different ways the practice, analysis, and inquiry on SL/CE partnerships elsewhere. We invite colleagues in other regions to explore the evolving nature of SL/CE partnerships in their context.



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