Acts of reciprocity: Analyzing social exchange in a university theater for social change project

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William & Mary - School of Education
ACTS OF RECIPROCITY:
ANALYZING SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN A UNIVERSITY THEATER FOR SOCIAL
CHANGE PROJECT

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by
Nicole Birgit Cloeren

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Abstract

In this study I sought to understand the complexities of the processes of reciprocity within a theater for social change service-learning project. My sample included three university students, one university faculty member, four high school students, one high school principal, and one high school teacher. As a participant-observer, I conducted an ethnographic study from within an interpretive paradigm that focuses on reality as perceived by participants. I collected my data through interviews, observations, and course related documents. In this study, I accomplish four things: 1) I present a user-friendly model of the processes of reciprocity 2) I make concrete nebulous notions of exchange by defining reciprocated goods between partners. 3) I emphasize a physical component to our understanding of reciprocity 4) I suggest that tools and elements of TFSC practice can be applied to other non-theater service-learning and civic engagement projects. My model includes three core building blocks to reciprocity: trust, covenant, and power sharing; and consists of a continuous cycle of four steps that partners engage cooperatively around a central common goal. These four steps include: understanding the social milieu of the partners, fostering integrative bonds through group development, identifying niches of exchange, and isolating and addressing imbalances in the interactions. My results illuminate that reciprocity is not achieved through a simple agreement at the beginning of a project partnership, but rather is a complex, iterative and volatile process that needs attention throughout a partnership.
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Chapter One

A group of students sits in a uniform circle. At the tap prompt of the professor, a young man stands up and begins: “Once upon a time a woman moved into her daughter’s apartment.” (The speaker puts one hand on his hip and gestures with the other hand.) “She was 62 years old, but” (he leans over slightly and looks towards the floor) “the stroke and the cancer gave her the appearance of being…” “Older” continues a second student, taking the center of the circle and assuming the same hunched over position. Speaker one returns seamlessly to his seat on the floor. Speaker two goes on: “But also wiser.” The story continues this way, with new speakers picking up where the previous speaker ended and “stealing” both the physical and verbal cues of the proceeding storyteller. “Every day Miss Lula would take her goat for a walk. And every day onlookers would comment about the strange old lady with her pet goat. They would point and snicker and make gestures that…” Suddenly the story comes to a jarring halt. The professor has tapped another student in the circle on her shoulder. The student stares, dumbfounded, falters, and says, “Oh sorry, I was so absorbed in the story I forgot I had to take over, I just wanted to know what happens next.” The spell is broken.

The circle begins a new story. Again, the same student breaks the cycle for the same reason. This time the professor is less sympathetic. He tells the whole group that in life, they have to take responsibility for taking action, being engaged, and involving themselves in the stories surrounding them. In life, as in theater, he explains, they need
to make choices about how they want a story to end and they have to work—work hard—to approach this story ending. The work includes listening and paying attention as much as it demands creative and physical contribution. In this Improvisation Circle, the rules dictate that participants may not simply sit and watch.

The narrative above stems from my observation of a college-level Theater for Social Change course. The theatrical training exercise is intended to help students build trust and unearth significant stories and issues from within a community. The class exemplifies a creative approach to introducing students to the concepts of social efficiency, through civic engagement. Striving for social efficiency means taking on the responsibility to apply one's education, not solely for individual gain, but for the good of larger groups in society. For colleges and universities, goals of civic engagement are not new, though they are frequently neglected.

Historically, the term social efficiency has been embraced by various people with some controversy between them (Drost, 1977). In the early twentieth century, prominent educators such as William Bagely and David Snedden believed educational institutions work towards social efficiency by preparing students for the specific vocation for which they are best suited, as opposed "simply" to enriching the individual mind in esoteric knowledge (Drost, 1977). But this is not the spirit of the term I wish to convey. I use the term as John Dewey defined it. John Dewey was a strong supporter of civic engagement as the mission for higher education and probably would have enjoyed the moment described above. Dewey felt social efficiency went beyond the notion of an individual

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1 This particular “Improv Circle” is an actor’s training and storytelling device which was developed by Chuck Mike in Nigeria at the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) over a period of 14 years working with student actors and professionals.
flourishing in society in terms of practical economic gains to embrace any number of interactions that lead to the enrichment of the greatest number of people. Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education*, “In the broadest sense, social efficiency is nothing less than that socialization of mind which is actively concerned in making experiences more communicable; in breaking down the barriers of social stratification which make individuals impervious to the interest of others” (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 67). Theater for Social Change (TFSC) embraces Dewey’s educational aim of social efficiency in that it strives to improve understanding between people and thereby encourage interactions that lead to positive contributions or change in our communities. Additional words of Dewey (1916/1968) appear to speak directly to TFSC as well. He wrote, social efficiency includes the “ability to produce and to enjoy art, capacity for recreation, the significant utilization of leisure,” in short, “all that makes one’s own experience more worthwhile to others, and all that enables one to participate more richly in the worthwhile experiences of others” (p. 120). As an art form meant to be practiced by even those with no prior training, TFSC helps communities share their experiences through creative expression in an effort to achieve greater social fairness, equality, and general community defined social improvement.

For me, these two parts of Dewey’s definition provide inspiration for engaging universities and students with their surrounding communities. Theater for Social Change uses art to bring people together and to be exposed to one another’s experiences. Beyond exposure, TFSC strives for dialogue and understanding. Both are necessary for social efficiency, productive social change and greater social harmony, a worthy mission for any institute of higher education.
In this study, I considered Campus Compact’s call for academe to become involved “through actions and teaching, with our communities” (Ehrlich & Hollander, 1999, ¶ 1). I investigated how university students gain deeper understanding of community and of the nuances of civic mindedness through an artistic process. Specifically, I investigated how the processes of a Theater for Social Change project can address issues of reciprocity while teaching participants to consider individual choices and daily actions within their communities.

Theater for Social Change is an artistic expression that works towards social change from within communities. I have come to understand that TFSC seeks to encourage a more enlightened and complex understanding of the issues concerning a community. Its performance also permits audiences to participate in envisioning a better future (Kuftinec, 1997). It challenges its participants to confront their fears, angers, and daily choices, and to envision their lives with new solutions (Amkpa, 2002). In my experiences, TFSC embraces the opportunity to celebrate the strengths of communities and find ways to use those strengths in tackling obstacles.

Theater for Social Change provides a forum to introduce students to a creative approach to political life. Mathews (1997) explains that undergraduates seem to be educated for only one kind of political life—one in which citizens play a limited role as taxpayers and, occasionally, as voters. ... They don’t entertain the possibility that politics is an integral dimension of

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2 Campus Compact, “a national coalition of more than 1,100 college and university presidents” is the only national association dedicated “solely to campus-based civic engagement.” (http://www.compact.org/about/history-mission-vision/) Campus Compact believes colleges and universities, as members of a democracy, have a responsibility to teach students about civic engagement.
everyone's life. Their civic education gives them neither the language nor the concepts to explore "the political". (pp. 15-16)

Theater teaches a new language of expression to students, one that invites dialogue and engages participants on a local level and begins with individual concerns and personal narratives. Such a process can help strive for what Mathews (1997) claims we need: "more contact [for students] with the democratic public [and] ... more public space on college campuses where citizens can carry out some of this public work" (p. 17). TFSC necessitates interaction with community members and has the potential to raise awareness beyond the confines of the classroom in a combined campus and community performance.

By reconstructing and enacting community narratives students are asked literally to embody others' perspectives. Assuming the viewpoint of others may help students to advance their cognitive as well as psychosocial capabilities and to hone crucial civic skills such as open mindedness, the capacity to change, and group decision-making (Mathews 1997, p. 16). These skills are often among those touted in mission statements of institutions for higher education. For universities committed to preparing their students for civic responsibilities, the exploration of various approaches to teaching and learning civic engagement remains vital.

Mathews suggests preparing students to be actors in the political arena; I have studied the political interactions of student actors in the context of theater. By "political interactions," I mean those exchanges in which the participants are overtly considering the rules that govern their community behavior and actions. The strengths and success of these actors, as understood by Mathews (1997), is determined by their ability to "[reason]
together to arrive at a course of action that will serve the common interest” (p. 15).

Working together for the common interest is also a key component of successful TFSC. “Togetherness” includes not only those normally involved in theater (actors, producer, director, stage hands, set designers, etc.), but equally important includes the community out of which the project grows and takes its identity.

A number of college campuses and or individual faculty are experimenting with this theatrical form as they address the call for more civic engagement between the campus and surrounding communities. As they work, the scholars are identifying diverse issues and exploring the role of theater in regards to, amongst other concepts, racial & ethnic understanding (Carlebach & Singer 1998; Kuftinec, 1997; Uno, 2002), construction of individual and community identity (Armstrong, 2000), public response (McConachie, 1998), participant response, and ruptures incorporating theater in curriculum (Burgoyne et. al., 2005), developing political activism (Kent, 1994), and developing communication across generations (Schonmann & Hardoff, 1999-2000). A common thread in all of these theater projects is the interaction between community and theater group. This interaction begs to be examined more closely in the context of the core service-learning concept of reciprocity. This study addresses Campus Compact’s call for university involvement in the community through the use of TFSC and contributes to the sparse conversation on reciprocity within the service learning literature (Mintz & Hesser, 1996). To understand the complexity of reciprocity, I utilized specific constructs from social exchange theory (see chapter three).

I chose Theater for Social Change, a specific form of service-learning, as the focus of my study because the medium is particularly and self-consciously concerned
with reciprocity, and because it employs creative approaches to introducing political engagement into the arts. Two core elements that commonly define service-learning are reciprocity and reflection (Jacoby, 1996). Studies on service-learning have addressed the use of reflection, especially through journaling, as it relates to student development. In fact, many studies focus on various connections between service-learning and student development (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Fenzel & Leary, 1997; Sax & Astin, 1997), but no study to date has explored the issue of reciprocity in depth nor considered theater processes as a form of reflection. My exploration has led to the identification of core elements and procedures of reciprocity that can be applied to a wide range of service-learning programs. In addition, my description of TFSC processes offers service-learning practitioners a variety of reflection strategies beyond journal writing and group discussion, the currently prevalent techniques of reflection.

Defining Theater for Social Change

Theater for Social Change is only one of many terms used by specialists in this field. Each different term reflects specific aspects of the history of political theater and emphasizes various artistic as well as civic goals and values. Some of these terms include: grassroots theater, theater for development, community theater, community-based theater, alternative theater, progressive theater, regional theater, and popular theater. These terms are not merely a matter of semantics, but rather a link to a particular history and culture. Though these varied forms of theater share many attributes, they also encompass important differences. Several scholars and practitioners have helped shape my understanding of Theater for Social Change (Cohen-Cruz, 2001; Goldbard, 2001; Kershaw, 1992; Leonard, 2003).
The various names are rooted in a historical moment, tied to political situation, strategically chosen for funding, or differentiated for other reasons. But at the heart, they share the foundational concerns and goals of a theater by the people and for the people. Ultimately the goal is to bring about social change or at least give voice to silenced stories. I use the term *Theater for Social Change* for three reasons. First, the term carries the broadest definition. Second, the name most overtly expresses its purpose. And third, the population I used in this study was of participants in a course using this title. I should clarify, however, that my particular use of the term *Theater for Social Change* incorporates a strong sense of Grassroots Theater and Theater for Development.

*Theater for Social Change* is the coined expression with the broadest understanding of the processes involved in community activist theater. Cohen-Cruz (2001) uses this as an inclusive phrase spanning the developing history of activist theater and including the practice of “arts-for-civic-dialogue” that she states we have arrived at today. As its name indicates, TFSC emphasizes the goal of transformation. This is, indeed, a key element of the theater I have studied. However, the name does not reflect the view that change must come from within a community. The title, Theater for Social Change, could just as easily incorporate an outsider coming in to produce change, which resonates with past histories of propaganda and colonialism. Although Goldbard’s (2001) definition includes the prominent features of reducing the barriers between audience and participant by including community members in all elements of the conception, production, and presentation of the theater pieces, even she admits, somewhat cynically, that “theater for social change is nothing if not polymorphous; any season features everything from culturally specific companies unearthing buried history
to mainstream artists claiming they invented ‘civic dialogue’ as an art form” (p. 130). Because of this limitation of the term, I wish to add a few sentiments from Grassroots Theater and Theater for Development.

Participants in a symposium on Grassroots Theater at Cornell University constructed a matrix of principles of Grassroots Theater (Cocke, Newman & Salmons-Rue, 1993) that states in part that:

Grassroots theater is given its voice by the community from which it arises. … The people who are the subjects of the work are part of its development from inception through presentation. Their stories and histories inform the work, their feedback during the creation process shapes it. The audience is not consumer of, but participant in the performance. … Grassroots theater is linked to the struggles for cultural, social, economic, and political equity for all people. It is fundamentally a theater of hope and often of joy. (p. 81)

Plastow (personal communication, September 8, 2005), who prefers the term Theater for Development, would add that as humans, individuals, or societies, we are never fully developed. Theater for Development may originally have been so named because of its involvement in development projects in third-world countries, but Plastow and others continue to use the term to remind us that social, economic, and human development is (or ought to be) an ongoing effort in every neighborhood around the world.

Because I am drawn to theater as a means of fostering and hopefully developing a sense of civic engagement in students of higher education, and because I believe that even a first-world country such as the United States has developmental issues, I include this sense of development within my own use of the term, Theater for Social Change.
Thus, I propose that Theater for Social Change provides the skeleton for a learning model that emphasizes the aspect of personal connectedness and personal efficacy that leads to deeper understanding and further engagement in civic matters.

**Statement of the Problem**

*In Theater for Social Change, communities and individuals have the opportunity to engage deeply and personally with one another. What is made of this opportunity is critical to the outcome of the theater project. Reciprocity within and throughout the project is absolutely crucial for the project to be carried forth fairly and to its greatest potential.*

Reciprocity is one tool that can be used in achieving social efficiency. Dewey (1916/2009) described social efficiency in simple terms as "the capacity to share in a give and take of experience," (p.67) thus implying a reciprocal relationship. If everyone, as Dewey’s definition aspires to, strives to enrich the experience of others, than we must tell each other how we wish to be enriched and work towards each other’s needs. It is, of course, possible to be socially efficient without practicing reciprocity, but reciprocity is a tool for preventing what Dewey (1916/2009) deemed “a benevolent interest in others [that] may be but an unwitting mask for an attempt to dictate to them what their good shall be, instead of an endeavor to free them so that they may seek and find the good of their own choice” (p. 67). In other words, reciprocity provides a self-perpetuating feedback loop of sorts, to ensure that what we contribute to society’s well being is invited and leads to further contributions that continue to increase society’s well being. Beyond that, in striving for reciprocity in social interactions we acknowledge the importance of self-worth that comes from responding to a valuable action or contribution with an
equally valuable service or good. Including reciprocity in one's approach to social efficiency acknowledges and encourages the right of all members of society to be socially efficient in their daily interactions.

Understanding reciprocity is critical to exploring our realities as they intersect with others' realities because each social exchange has the potential to enrich or to damage others and by extension to the whole of society, our selves. Awareness of the experience of others may help facilitate the ability if not desire to act on behalf of others' well being while simultaneously enjoying the rewards of such interaction. Good citizenship, in Dewey's (1916/1968) view, aims to distribute the power of choices broadly and fairly to all people regardless of class, sex, race or other social construct used to unnaturally elevate or oppress the importance or nature of their roles in society (p. 120). Allowing and even encouraging people or groups to respond to benevolent actions reciprocally, encourages the sharing of power.

In this study I sought to understand the complexities of the processes of reciprocity within a Theater for Social Change service-learning project. Reciprocity in this study means that while practicing cooperation and compromise in social engagements, the goals of both partners in the theater project are reached without detriment to the other partner. The specific problem of this ethnographic study was to analyze the processes of social exchange within the relationships between participants in a university-based Theater for Social Change course and the community with whom it engaged to determine the degree of reciprocity present and the struggles to attain and sustain reciprocity. Studying this problem contributes to a deeper understanding of
reciprocity and how it might be achieved within service-learning projects more broadly.

The research questions that enabled me to address this problem are:

1. How can Theater for Social Change help us understand the complexities of reciprocity and how can this understanding be applied to service-learning more broadly?

2. What are the processes of establishing a Theater for Social Change project that promote social exchange between university and community participants?
   a. What is the goal of the faculty?
   b. What is the goal of the community partner facilitator?
   c. What is the final outcome of negotiating the various goals?

3. What are the processes of social exchange between participants in a university-based Theater for Social Change course and the community with whom it engages?
   a. What forms does social exchange take?
   b. When is social exchange reciprocal?
   c. When is social exchange not reciprocal?

4. What are the struggles to attain and sustain reciprocity?
   a. Is reciprocity recognized by participants?
   b. What prevents reciprocity?
   c. When does reciprocity break down?

These questions guided my ethnographic study as I sought to understand participants' experiences from an interpretive paradigm. I conducted my research as a participant observer in order to build trust amongst the participants, be present as unobtrusively as
possible, and understand the experience through both attached involvement and detached observation and analysis. My data collection included interviews, observation, and document analysis of journals and course texts.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study was to arrive at an understanding of the nuances of reciprocity in projects of civic engagement as characterized in the Theater for Social Change process. Some (Blake, 2006; Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Ehrlich, 2000) have argued that institutions of higher education must address civic engagement systematically, incorporating service-learning opportunities throughout the curriculum, and supporting and compensating faculty and staff adequately for the intensive preparations and involvement required for a successful program. I agree that such an approach is ideal and some universities, such as the University of Pennsylvania, have made admirable steps in this direction. A more common reality, however, finds individual members on campus and in the community working hard towards creating an independent service-learning experience for one or two groups of students in either a course or other program. Such a group includes faculty across disciplines and administrators in student affairs or other divisions, as well as members of community organizations who work towards involving students with service-learning. This study aims to assist these determined individuals to understand how reciprocity can be achieved within one semester. The focus here is on practice as well as a deeper knowledge of the intricacies of reciprocity within the service-learning model.

Theater for Social Change suggests a unique approach to both a theoretical understanding and a practical implication of reciprocity within service-learning. I found
that this particular model of theater showcased many dimensions of social exchange that are transferable to other forms of service-learning and allowed me to identify reciprocity on an action by action basis. For example, in this TFSC project, social exchange included conversation between participants, physical representations of ideas, audience participation in performance action, and resulting change in a community. Each of these vehicles of social exchange was comprised of numerous steps (e.g. words, movements, gestures, action plans). At any point in these steps reciprocity may be considered. Hence, reciprocity is linked to social efficiency because each action may have a reaction that is either helpful or harmful to the community.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This study is an in-depth analysis of one particular Theater for Social Change project. It provides a rich description of one particular course that occurred over one semester at one type of institution. I chose a selective private university with predominantly privileged students on an insular campus located in the middle of a city. I delimited the study in this way because I think this type of population and institution has a great need for guided introduction to civic engagement. Without guidance, it is easy for students to remain isolated from the surrounding community in their self-contained campus environment. I also chose this institution as a matter of practical convenience, but only because the course fulfilled the basic needs of the study. The university students worked with a group of students from a local high school identified by the course instructor in part because of its lack of access to the arts. Besides the university and high school students, participants included a university faculty member, a high school teacher, and the high school principal who all played a significant role in facilitating the project. I
also delimited the study by focusing on reciprocity guided by elements of social exchange theory. I did not generate data about other forms of development that might have occurred but that were unrelated or tangentially related to civic mindedness.

Giles and Eyler (1998, p. 82) raise caution for studies that do not have a control group and cannot identify other influential variables such as other events in students' lives, the course separate from the service project, and a maturation effect. I admit that these are limitations of my study. In particular, individual personalities played a role in participants' attitudes and approaches to activities that I analyzed for elements of reciprocity. Although my approach prevents me from making certain generalizations, it does provide a foundation from which future studies can build. In addition it allows me to examine details that might be overlooked in a large-scale or multi-site study. Studying one site in depth provided me with the time to utilize multiple data-gathering techniques. I was able to examine the contents of individual written responses that in addition to observations and interviews helped me gauge the process of the project, and the complexities of reciprocity.

Some might feel that a major limitation includes my lack of involvement with the course design. I purposely chose to study a course that was designed by an insider of the campus community in order to study the process of a service-learning course in its most familiar form, designed and led by a single faculty member based on his particular syllabus. I acknowledge, however, that this approach prevented me from applying knowledge of best practices from previous studies in setting up the current project. Because my focus is on reciprocity, however, and few if any guidelines have been researched for best practices on reciprocity, I believe my lack of input in design did not
negatively impact this study. In fact, I believe a strength of the study comes from the population I chose, a course designed by an accomplished professional in the field of Theater for Social Change.

Other limitations that I consider included the composition of the class (students self-selected in registration), the willingness of the high school and university students to engage with one another, and the positive or negative effects that the professors, teachers, and other facilitators may have had on both the high school and university students. As with any class, the participants developed their own group chemistry. This group chemistry, growing out of personalities, relationships, enthusiasm, and knowledge is in fact part of the examination in the study. I am grateful for working with students who were eager to learn, respectful of one another, and bright enough to understand and incorporate their learning throughout the semester.

The class size was smaller than I had hoped and expected, but this was not as much of a challenge as I had feared. Because my focus was on the process of TFSC, it was less important how many participants were involved and more important to observe how the participants contributed individually and as a group to the process. Also, though there were only three university students, the entire project including the professor, the principal, a teacher, the researcher, and the high school students had a total of ten participants that agreed to be questioned for this study and an additional seven high school students who participated in the class and though they did not consent to being in the study, contributed to the overall interactions and processes of the theater project. For observing group work and conducting group and individual interviews, this number worked very well. More participants might have offered more varied perspectives, but I
would not have been able to delve as deeply into their experiences and follow them as closely throughout the semester.

Time was a limitation for this study and project identified by almost everyone involved. The more time spent in a community, the deeper understanding one gains and that provides the good potential for a meaningful, positive and deep impact. In short, one can never spend enough time in the community. Our time was greatly confined by the structure of both the university and high school academic semester. Additionally, the high school students had little time to meet with us after school. The university students admitted to giving more time to this project than other classes, and still coming up shorter than they would have liked. I carved out time from a job, graduate studies, and family to attend all the meetings I could—and still I missed two or three sessions that met outside of the scheduled meetings. Furthermore, given more time, the university students could have worked on perfecting their technique and approaches to TFSC that might have resulted in even more success. An additional limitation of the one semester time frame was the inability to follow up on participants post project. Still, everyone involved in this study gave generously of their time and made the most of what we had. The project results reflect the participants' efforts and the material I gathered provided sufficient data for analysis.

Finally, I was limited in the focus of the project. The essence of Theater for Social Change projects dictates that the topic of focus must arise from the interaction between the two groups and is not imposed on either group by the other or from an outside source. For this reason it was impossible for me to know in advance which issues students would choose for the focus of their work. Still, because I was interested in the
interactions between students, the particular focus of the project was of secondary importance, though it surely illuminated and guided the social interaction within the project.

Conclusion

The nature of this study is very much an emergent process. Just as the theme of the theater project emerged from the interaction of the two groups, so did my understanding of theater processes and the complexity of reciprocity emerge throughout the data collection process. It was my charge to follow the unfolding stories closely and to pay careful attention to cues so that I too, when tapped on the shoulder (metaphorically speaking) to continue the story of Theater for Social Change in higher education would have a valuable contribution to make. In the following chapters I present the principles, concepts, and studies that provided a basic structure for my study and explain my specific approach to examining reciprocity within Theater for Social Change. Then I analyze my data and present my findings.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

An important goal of higher education is to provide the environment and the encouragement for students to develop morally as well as intellectually and socially (Chickering, 2001; Colby & Ehrlich, 2000; Ikenberry, 1997; Pascarella, 1997). During the past two decades, higher education has renewed its emphasis on civic engagement. This revitalization of a core mission to help shape students' moral and ethical compass along with their intellectual acumen is related to at least two movements in higher education. First, a wave of accountability issues has lead administrators and scholars alike to reexamine institutional approaches and effectiveness towards reaching goals of student education (Ikenberry, 1997; Rice, 2003; Wellman, 2000). Second, higher education faces the potential for a paradigm shift away from teaching and towards learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995), which requires a restructuring of pedagogies (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). In this new paradigm, community trumps individualism and hence the quest for knowledge is multidirectional rather than emanating from expert and flowing to novice.

In the fall of 1997, the journal Educational Record dedicated an entire issue to the "exploration of college and character" (Ikenberry, 1997, p. 7). In the introduction to this issue, Stanley Ikenberry (1997), then president of the American Council on Education, stated:
The time has come for higher education to expand its role in equipping students to live productive lives through and beyond their careers – to be civic-minded, to embrace civic life, to take on leadership roles, and to exercise personal, professional, and ethical judgments that are based on values. (p. 9)

In January of the same year, *Change* magazine devoted an issue to exploring the connection between higher education and civic life. The authors in these journals were building in part on John Dewey’s foundational ideas of democracy in education and more recently Campus Compact’s work on civic engagement. Other scholars (Brukardt, Holland, Percy, & Zimpher, 2004; Chickering, 2001; Ehrlich, 2000; Holland, 1999; Percy, Zimpher, & Brukardt, 2006; Zimpher, Percy & Brukardt, 2002) since these two 1997 journal editions were published have echoed Ikenberry’s call and gone beyond to discuss effective means and challenges to fostering and measuring the development of civic mindedness in colleges and college students. Civic engagement occurs not when students provide only a service to the community, but when they work *with* the community, reach an awareness of themselves within the context of the community, acknowledge the meaning of their contributions from various perspectives, and are able to reflect on the questions and ambiguities that their engagement raises.

This study heeds the call to civic engagement. In this chapter, I provide pertinent background to my study by reviewing the extant literature on the three pillar concepts of my research: service-learning, reciprocity, and Theater for Social Change. I explain the position of service-learning in higher education along the dimensions of institutional mission, student development, and pedagogical approach. I introduce and define reciprocity within the context of service-learning, while uncovering the gaps and
complexities this study addresses. Finally, I discuss TFSC in relation to its contributions to civic engagement, as a form of unique theater processes, and as a conduit for transformation. Here the focus is on an explanation of the concepts and a summary of previous studies that inform my own work. Additional discussion of theoretical underpinnings of this study occurs in chapter three.

**Service-Learning: A Primary Response**

The discussion on higher education's role in civic engagement is extensive. Currently service-learning is one of the most popular pedagogical approaches used to foster an understanding of community issues and community identity amongst participants while simultaneously addressing community needs and student learning and development. Jacoby's (1996) definition provides a solid starting point: "Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (p.5). However, I would add that students' personal investment in the community and an overt exploration of identity are important components of service-learning that aim to instill a sense of civic engagement (Dolan, 1997; Kent, 1994; Kuftinec, 2003; McConachie, 1998; Rhoads, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1997).

In light of the increasing concerns of accountability and learning more than teaching, scholars address service-learning in a number of ways. One main focus is on institutionalizing the larger mission of civic engagement, another is on student development, and a third is on pedagogical processes.
**Institutional mission.**

Institutionalizing service-learning requires an understanding of the roots of civic engagement as a part of education that reaches back to John Dewey’s (1916/1968) work in *Democracy and Education*. According to Dewey (1916/1968), a democratic society “must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder” (p. 99). Today, many involved with civic engagement, especially those using theatrical performance as a service-learning tool, may welcome momentary disruption of the semblance of order as a necessary catalyst to change. A forced shift of perspective brings about intense questioning of the status quo and facilitates discussion that can lead to action based on new community understanding. Colleen Sheehy refers to this shift in perspective as “radical transformation” (Sheehy, 1999, p. 1).

Still, Dewey’s point that the importance of shared interests and a sense of efficacy can be taught remains relevant. Although acknowledging that education must teach the industrial skills that are necessary to find economic success, Dewey (1916/1968) also warned of resulting inequities and pointed towards “civic efficacy or good citizenship” as a way of “breaking down the barriers of social stratification which make individuals impervious to the interests of others” (120-121). He understood that educational institutions bore the responsibility for providing the tools for students to act accordingly. Today this sentiment is as important as ever. In our market driven society, higher education has become a commodity (Chickering, 2003, p. 41). Institutions of higher education that value civic engagement and a sense of moral responsibility to our communities are working to restore balance between preparing students for the job
market and focusing on students' personal development. Unfortunately, some students enter college with the expectation that a degree alone will assure them of a higher paying career and neglect deeper interrogations of how their careers can benefit society. The pressures inflicted by the increasing reliance on tuition dollars sometimes cloud an institution's mission and create barriers to the institutionalization of service-learning that is perceived as detracting from career preparatory courses by tuition paying parents and students. This misfortune is only underscored by the irony that service-learning does not inherently prevent students from finding higher paying careers or excelling in their fields and in fact, may provide students with additional skills for success after college (Sax & Astin, 1997).

Campus Compact, a national organization founded in 1985, supports community service and related initiatives on- and off-campus, including service-learning. Its leadership and current membership of over 1100 colleges and universities across the country work toward defining the challenges, offering support in finding solutions, and celebrating success in the field of civic engagement. In 1999, Campus Compact published the Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, which comments on the state of civic engagement at colleges and universities at the time and communicates the urgent need for increased commitment to teaching students how to become involved in the democratic process. The declaration begins by challenging the system:

As presidents of colleges and universities, both private and public, large and small, two-year and four-year, we challenge higher education to re-examine its public purposes and its commitments to the democratic ideal. We also challenge
higher education to become engaged, through actions and teaching, with its communities. We have a fundamental task to renew our role as agents of our democracy. ... We share a special concern about the disengagement of college students from democratic participation. (Ehrlich & Hollander, 1999, ¶1)

Scholars and practitioners have taken up this charge to “become engaged, through actions and teaching, with [our] community” in a variety of ways (Ehrlich & Hollander, 1999, ¶1).

Universities can be successful in institutionalizing civic engagement in a number of ways including top down administrative models, designated centers, and individual efforts (Thomas, 2000). A pioneer of successfully foregrounding service-learning into institutional mission is the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). Its extensive work with West Philadelphia public schools illustrates higher education’s ability to work with community partners to revitalize a city and strengthen educational opportunities both on and off campus simultaneously. The West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) makes public schools the center of community wide problem solving that draws on the resources of UPenn. Faculty, students, schools, and community members work together in a variety of curricular and programmatic initiatives to improve local education and surrounding issues of health, poverty, and violence (Benson & Harkavy, 2000, pp. 182-188). Programs organized from the higher administration and trickling down have the advantage of widespread support, implementation, and profile. Centers in place for the purpose of nurturing the civic soul of the university can be very effective with sufficient funds and a successful image campaign, but struggle somewhat for widespread faculty participation and acceptance.
Vogelgesang, Drummond and Gilmartin (2003) look at how service-learning and diversity issues can work best in a given administrative context. Their important work identifies challenges of resistance to change and limited resources, issues of politics and efficacy, and institutional culture that fosters or prevents collaboration between key players in establishing service-learning with a focus on diversity. Although they look at specific structures within organizations and examine the goals of various offices and or groups who collaborate or fail to collaborate, they do not examine the ebb and flow of needs, such as reciprocity, as partnerships help provide certain resources or knowledge or other forms of intellectual, social, or monetary capital.

What about individual faculty contribution? Is it possible for individuals to make a difference in the culture of the university? The challenge is great, but at least a few are persevering. A few faculty members are making progress in reshaping their specific fields to embrace civic engagement. In the field of theater, Jan Cohen Cruz and her colleagues at Tisch School of the Arts in New York City are building a new focus of theater arts education. Additions to the program include a minor in applied theater, a new department of Art & Public Policy, and an Office of Community Connections and the Laboratory of Community Cultural Development (Burnham, 2005). These efforts represent a bottom-up approach. Although Bacon (2002) places general responsibility of reaching out to the community on colleges and universities, Ehrlich (1997) places more specific responsibility on individuals within the institution. An obvious conclusion is that a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches might be most successful in reaching a greater part of both the on and off campus community.
Student development.

Service-learning produces several progressive cognitive outcomes related to civic engagement including improved critical thinking, analytical skills, problem-solving, and written and oral communication skills, as well as signs of moral and ethical development (Hesser, 1998; Markus, Howard, & King, 1998). In addition, psychosocial growth related to identity, caring and empathy for others (McEwen, 1996), and maturity of values and preparation for democratic citizenship (Hayward, 2000) has also ensued from service-learning.

From an outcome perspective, service-learning can influence the structural way in which students think and reason (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Gray, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 1999; Sax & Astin, 1997). Sax and Astin (1997) have found that participants showed a greater awareness of social problems, greater acceptance of different races and culture, greater interpersonal skills, and increased interaction with faculty than non-participants (p.29).

Giles and Eyler (1998) determined that participation increases students’ understanding of citizenship to “contain personal values that go beyond self-fulfillment to values about civic involvement and social obligation” (p. 77). When students begin to interact with their communities they realize both a sense of personal efficacy and social responsibility, and they change their views of social service clients (Giles & Eyler, 1998). Students are significantly more likely to attribute misfortune to circumstances beyond the control of the service clients, and are significantly more likely to endorse the need to give priority to equal opportunity after they had served in the field (Giles & Eyler, 1998). Students attribute their change in attitude and understanding to their direct involvement
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with individuals in the community, getting to know them on a personal level (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1998; Giles & Eyler, 1998). The discovery of the importance of close community ties to positive service-learning outcomes has implications for service-learning program design.

**Pedagogical approach.**

For Ehrlich (1997), being a citizen involves “becoming and staying informed about one’s community, its needs, and its problems...[as well as] engaging in collaborative activities that are designed to strengthen a community. Civic engagement means believing that you can and should make a difference in enhancing your community” (p. 57). Ehrlich (1997) points to three pedagogies that work towards merging these goals with Dewey’s vision of education leading to a democratic society: community-service learning, problem-based learning, and collaborative learning. I use these terms the way Ehrlich defines them. Community-service learning comprises academic learning, community service, and structured reflection (Ehrlich, 1997, p.60). Problem-based learning involves an interdisciplinary course approach to a particular community problem (Ehrlich, 1997, p. 62). Collaborative learning encourages participants to work cooperatively on a team to address community issues (Ehrlich, 1997, p. 63). All three of these interrelated learning forms share a foundational understanding that individual student development, both cognitively and psychosocially, requires practice in thinking and acting collectively. Furthermore, civic learning and moral learning are interdependent (Ehrlich, 1997, p. 61). Ehrlich defines civic learning as understanding how a community works and helping to improve its functions. Moral learning, for Ehrlich (1997), is encouraging ethical action by reinforcing “respect for the
autonomy and dignity of others, compassion and kindness, honesty and integrity, and a commitment to equity and fairness” (p.61). In Ehrlich’s framework, to be a citizen one must be civically involved in a way that considers community structures, purpose, and work, while maintaining a keen and sensitive awareness of community members’ individual contributions, gifts, needs, and personalities. Higher Education has a role to play in preparing students for such citizenry.

But how do we encourage these commendable qualities? Eyler’s (2000) list of key questions regarding “how particular instructional designs and techniques might enhance the intellectual power of service-learning” (p. 15) is helpful in guiding our awareness as we put together the elements of a service-learning project. She reminds us of the importance of preparatory activities, support for students to integrate their community experience into their course objectives, new forms of reflection, self-monitoring of learning, facilitation of students' engagement with the community, alignment of projects with subject matter, and consideration of what will lead students to “the likelihood of long term community use of problem solving, community action and learning skills” (Eyler, 2000, pp. 15-16). She also emphasizes the importance of reflection before, during, and after the service (Eyler, 2001). During all three phases she recommends “mapping service-learning reflection” by including reflection alone, reflection with classmates, and reflection with community partners.

The American Association of Higher Education (Schneider, 1998) provided a list of 13 themes that in combination represent a best practice model for service-learning. These themes result from a close study of 27 colleges and universities nominated by community service and service-learning experts to aid in the study of successful service-
learning around the nation. AAHE, Campus Compact, and the National Society for Experiential Education collaborated on this study. The 13 themes are as follows: Have a vision and a well-defined mission; Capitalize on what you do well and do it with quality; Support and leadership are important ingredients; One person can make a difference; Service-learning is found in every discipline; Roles and rewards for faculty; Complexity; Student support and leadership; Agency and community involvement; Cutting-edge work; Defined outcomes; Programs age well; Keep an eye on the national, state, and local scenes (Schneider, 1998).\(^1\) Perhaps every service-learning project cannot embrace every one of the above themes, but working with an active awareness to as many as possible and a focused effort on at least a few, will probably yield a richer and healthier learning environment for both the students and the community. Another key component, not mentioned in the thirteen above themes, is reflection. Considering convincing work on the importance, purpose, and benefits of reflection within service-learning by Eyler (2001), Jacoby (1996), Fenzel and Leary (1997) and others, directed use of reflection should be included in any suggestions for best practices of service-learning.

The opportunity to process the service-learning experience is a key component in helping participants develop their values, self-efficacy, and leadership (Astin et al., 2000). Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee, (2000) analyzed reflection journals, discussion of service experience amongst participating students, and discussion of service

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\(^1\) Further tips can be taken from “How professors can promote service-learning in a teaching institution”(O’Byrne, in Canada & Speck, eds. 2001), “Principles of Good Practice in Service-Learning (Mintz and Hesser, 1996); “Intensive Service-Learning Experiences” (Albert, 1996); “Starting a Service-Learning Program (Bucco and Busch, 1996); “Administering Successful Service-Learning Programs” (Rue, 1996); and Building Bridges: The Allyn & Bacon Student Guide to Service-Learning (Hamner, 2002).
experience with their professor. They found that discussing the service experience with peers had the strongest effect on commitment to social activism, making future service plans, and commitment to promoting racial understanding. Also important is emotional support from faculty, which contributed to improved critical thinking and writing skills (Astin et. al., 2000; Eyler, et al., 1997). What is not understood from Astin, et al. (2000) is how the students were encouraged to use their peer discussion, faculty consultation, and journal entries. Over all, various forms of reflection are necessary for student development on a number of levels. These are important components to service-learning, without which the projects in themselves may not contribute as strongly to student development (Astin et al., 2000, p. 33). The authors recommend that faculty work to incorporate ample opportunity for students to engage with one another about their service experiences (Astin et al., 2000, p. 85).

The importance of reflection in service-learning has been argued reasonably and persuasively. But we may still think more about the connections between reflection and reciprocity. Is reflection necessary to achieve reciprocity? Probably not, though surely the quality of reciprocity and the participant's experience can be enriched through directed reflection on the issues that define, prevent and enable reciprocity. How does reflection on issues of power and the availability of resources affect participants' ability to achieve reciprocity? One possibility is that students' reflection on their own needs, skills, privilege, and/or oppression helps them identify the barriers and common paths to reciprocity. Though TFSC offers unique reflection strategies, the specific relationship between reflection and reciprocity is not a focus of the current study and therefore leaves an opening for future research.
Previous studies also point to several areas in need of further exploration. One area concerns the kind of training that prepares student-service providers; “much more evidence is needed concerning the type and duration of training, and whether the importance of training varies by discipline and type of field placement” (Astin, et al., 2000, p. 100). Another area focuses on the role in and perception of the service project from the agency partner. For example, “is the educational value of the experience dependent upon the manner in which the service is perceived and experienced?” (Astin, et al., 2000, p. 99). Some participants and practitioners are concerned about program design, success and impact of programs, and the long-term sustainability of service-learning (Gormley, 1996). Participants, concerned about sustainability without federal funding, underscore the vital importance of community involvement in program design and implementation and students’ critical reflection on their experiences (Gormley, 1996).

Reciprocity: The Evasive Variable

Barbara Jacoby (1996), a leading scholar in the field of service-learning asserts, “reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5). She underscores the importance of reciprocity in her definition by hyphenating the term and explicitly stating the purpose of the hyphen in suggesting a linked relationship between the two concepts of service and learning. I have chosen to follow suit in using the hyphenated term, which also implies reflection and reciprocity. Other scholars employ similar emphases (Mintz & Hesser, 1996; Porter & Monard, 2001), but few researchers have studied the core service-learning concepts of reciprocity.
Although the common assertion of the importance of reciprocity helps to establish an important principle of service-learning, what are the dynamics of a reciprocal relationship? How do we negotiate complicated structures of power within a reciprocal relationship? Who is in charge of establishing and maintaining reciprocity? How, if at all, can we measure reciprocity?

Reciprocity in service-learning refers to reciprocal gains for both university participants and community members with whom they engage. Those desired gains must be identified by both sides of the partnership and be acknowledged by each individual involved in the project for reciprocity to exist. Depending on the design and goals of the project, the reciprocal relationship could be at the individual student and community member level, or at institutional and organizational levels. Expectations for gains can vary widely and include, for example, new skills or knowledge, the construction of a physical object or production of a useful or desired document, the shared use of space or resources, an action plan for continued community improvement, peaceful eradication of a negative force in the community, resolution of conflict, or even new relationships. Reciprocity requires students to think more about their relationship to those around them (Porter & Monard, 2001) as they consider what kind of community they prefer and how their actions benefit others and how others’ actions can benefit them. When reciprocity becomes an essential core to communal interaction, it is considered within the context of every decision and permeates many aspects of a group’s culture (Porter & Monard, 2001). Only when this level of focus is achieved—when reciprocity stops being incidental or peripheral—can service-learning come close to fulfilling its goal of civic engagement.
Hayward's (2000) study of the impact of a public relations service-learning course on students, faculty and the community hints at the importance of reciprocity. She premises her study, in part, on the service-learning principle that interaction between the theoretical and the practical and participation with the community can help foster student development. She then outlines the importance of “traffic meetings” (p.4) that allow for discussion and negotiation, but she does not explain what kinds of discussions are taking place in these meetings and in the interactions between students and community. Are the exchanges in these meetings reciprocal? Why or why not? How so? These questions we still need to explore.

When students interact with community members to help address community-identified needs, they should make an effort to seek out and listen for individual community member’s perspectives, thereby advancing their own understanding of diverse perspectives and situations. Likewise, community members should feel they are learning something from their interaction with students. Jones and Hill (2001) found in their study of the use of service-learning to broaden students’ and community members’ understanding of diversity that this end was achieved sometimes when both community members and students alike acted as teachers. However, at other times, reciprocity broke down.

Jones and Hill (2001) found that although students felt their abilities to make a positive contribution grow, members of the soup kitchen and the AIDS center continued to feel that “they are not capable of changing things” (p. 210). Inherent in this statement is a sense of disempowerment and implied is the lack of reciprocity. Even though community members recognized their role in helping students learn, equal contribution
does not appear to be present from the point of view of the community member. They remain feeling powerless; they have not gained something new for themselves. Because they feel their presence is important mainly as an object of educational observance (which they are happy to provide), they do not actively seek to achieve common goals.

Two questions raised by Jones and Hill (2001) include whether reciprocity is really possible in service-learning and how the relationships developed during service-learning projects can be sustained (p. 213). They define reciprocal relationships as “those in which all partners are involved in the design of the activity, all learn from the relationship, and all benefit as a result” (p. 214). But they are also careful to point out the complication of one “community voice” that is really made up of diverse individual interests. In order to answer the question about whether reciprocity is possible, they recommend further studies that examine processes of understanding differences and “power dynamics between community and university” (Jones & Hill, 2001, pp. 214-215). They caution that true and full reciprocity requires that institutes of higher education redefine their community role and community partnerships, otherwise “reciprocity will be shallow, stereotypes reinforced, and power dynamics between the community and university clearly tilted in the direction of the university” (Jones & Hill, 2001, pp. 214-215). A lack of reciprocity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to build relationships intimate enough to explore barriers of diversity, life experience, and prejudice. If anything, these barriers are merely suspended temporarily. The degrees of reciprocity delineated by Jones and Hill help to illuminate the complexity of reciprocity itself, and the tenuous nature of sustaining reciprocity throughout a project.
The notion of reciprocity and the concern for power dynamics between community and university are topics of conversation in the creative realm of theater. Theater for Social Change may be viewed as a specific niche of the service-learning model.

Although a few studies have examined TFSC processes (e.g., Kuftinec, 2003) and student learning through theater (Burgoyne et al., 2005; Garcia, 1994; Horn, 1992; Jorgensen & Speidel, 1994; Schonmann & Hardoff, 1999), most scholars suggest the potential of the theatrical form through self-reporting measures of faculty who have led TFSC projects. These authors, though not providing any empirical data, provide a framework for developing questions to interrogate the form more deeply. The literature related to Theater for Social Change falls into three distinct categories: civic engagement, theater processes, and transformation. Civic engagement through TFSC considers the role of both students and community in effecting change and the complexity of defining and understanding individual and group identities. Theater processes include social exchange aspiring to reciprocity through diverse forms of communication and creative expression. Discussion about transformation describes the power of theater in its contribution to intellectual and ethical development. The pedagogy of TFSC stems in part from the ideas expressed in the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's seminal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Freire (1970) opposed an education system that imposed oppressive understandings about society upon students who were seen as empty vessels. Instead, he proposed a cooperative search for truth that helped individuals shape them selves and thereby freed and empowered the oppressed.
Civic engagement.

The function of Theater for Social Change is to help bring students and community together in civic engagement. An understanding of the complexity of community identity and community relations is paramount to successful TFSC. By successful I mean a production that incorporates the work and ideas of the community from start to finish, builds knowledge about self and others during the process, and results in a meaningful performance that points the way to change. Many practitioners agree that to reach a communal understanding each individual must first explore his/her own identity (Dolan, 1997; Kent, 1994; McConachie, 1998). Sharing this sentiment, Awbrey and Scott (2000) suggest a transformation of universities to “transversities” (¶ 5). The ideal of a transversity is to move from selfishness to community and from a fragmented society to interconnectedness (Awbrey & Scott, 2000, ¶ 2). In short, “to enter fully into community a foundation of individual dignity and self-identity is first required” (Awbrey & Scott, 2000, ¶ 4). TFSC functions as a tool to help participants to understand the complexities of their own identity and engages them in a quest to discover the multiple dimensions of a community identity. These important skills help prepare students for future civic engagement projects.

Sonja Kuftinec’s (1997) work with youth from war torn former Yugoslavia is an excellent example of how TFSC can be used to examine identity. Because the war itself was fought in part over ethnicity, Kuftinec’s project involved a very sensitive subject over which much healing had to take place. She writes about some of the difficulties of getting youth from different backgrounds to work together, noting language barriers and prejudices as major obstacles. And yet, with perseverance and careful facilitation,
Kuftinec was able to engage the groups in a shared exploration of individual and eventually community identity.

As a site or re-presentation, performance becomes a medium through which this redrawing [of identity boundaries] can occur. The performance process reinforces commonalities, illuminates difference, and alters boundaries of identity, bringing together, for a time, those who perceive themselves as belonging to different communities. (Kuftinec, 1997, p. 178)

TFSC helps participants recognize their own and others’ multiple communities and the individual identities within these communities. Such a complex understanding is necessary to build the trust required to cooperate in a joint project and to address the needs of each partner.

**Theater processes.**

The focus of Theater for Social Change is on the process, not the final production. It is the collection of stories, the negotiation of communication and the struggle with representation that makes TFSC a tool for civic engagement. Any discussion of Theater for Social Change is incomplete without acknowledging Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theater activist who fathered Theater of the Oppressed with such practices as Image Theater, Invisible Theater, and Forum Theater amongst others.

Boal’s practices are a common way to foster understanding of self and others in a community. Boal (1992) writes, “The Theatre of the Oppressed is theatre in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!). They are Spect-Actors” (p. xxx). This idea of the “spect-actor” is evoked in his methods of “Image Theater,” “Invisible Theater,” and “Forum
Theater.” All of these forms encourage the participants to cooperate in a learning process about themselves and others. In Image Theater participants are asked to embody and express problematic social realities without using words. Invisible Theater involves prepared actors and unsuspecting participants who witness the performance unwittingly in an open space and become participants, or spect-actors. Finally, Forum Theater employs a stop-and-go theater in which problems are performed in increments and interrupted for suggested solutions from those watching.

Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed (T.O.) practices, and variations thereof, are currently prevalent amongst such an array of groups including colleges, community centers, activists, etc. Some argue the reason for this popularity is that the form allows participants to imagine and reconstruct an improved community (Green, 2001; McConachie, 1998). As participants work through issues of disenfranchisement they come to see the possibility of new and stronger connections. Ultimately this sense of connection and belonging is at the heart of civic engagement, and TFSC can serve as an important reminder of the need and power of community as well as a space in which to cultivate community or nurse it back to health.

Theater games like those Boal advocates can help build trust in addition to raising awareness. Trust is important for the sharing of personal stories such as those Julie Salverson (2001) uses in her exploration of how communities effect social change by performing testimony. At the core of her investigation is an issue of “ethical space” (Salverson, 2001, p.119). How, she asks, can we have an interaction that is “a contact that lets us come together differently and binds me deeply to another without collapsing either the “I” or the “other” into a totalizing ‘we’?” (Salverson, 2001, p. 120). By this
she refers to the difficult task of an actor to represent community stories truthfully while preserving a sense of personal artistic expression that suggests a certain interpretation of events. Her observation of audience and actors, detached from pain of tragedy, representing stories in a voyeuristic, almost glorified manner, destroys the authenticity of experience. A connection to the testimony that reflects a respectful understanding is critical to authentic portrayal. One of the most difficult aspects to negotiate in TFSC is the balance between authenticity and artistry because the stories constantly threaten to take on an imaginative life of their own. Too much poetic license is a violation of the community’s experience, whereas too little poetic license fails to move the story beyond lived experience into a realm of critical reflection and analysis. Salverson’s solution is to spend time deeply examining the moment of experience. She summarizes:

The problem of mimesis, then, is a problem of both relationship and responsibility. It is an ethical move to consider mimesis not as a mirror or reality, but as a faculty that refuses to reduce testimony to either an interpretive frame where “the unworded is sentenced to meaning,” or to an ever-unmeetable absence where all otherness is sentenced to loss. (Salverson, 2001, p. 124)

The balance necessary for an ethical representation of a community’s story requires that at least some aspects of the story remain uninterpreted and unexplained but also that representation invites viewers to explore their own interpretations with some guidance. Salverson reminds us that simply giving voice to stories may not be enough and may even create pain. The interaction between community and theater production must be one of honest, open, and reciprocal learning and communication.
Transformation.

Mezirow (2000) argues that it is especially important to consider transformative learning in the curriculum for adults. "Transformative theory," writes Mezirow (2000), "refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (p. 8). We begin to see, and Mezirow acknowledges, the responsibility implied in transformative theory. Transformative learning is a natural partner to civic engagement programs because it recognizes the collectivity of our actions and the responsibility to act in consideration of our communities. Theater for Social Change provides an arena in which to practice what Mezirow (2000) calls, “participation in constructive discourse” (p. 8). Other classes succeed in pushing students towards critical thinking and consideration of various perspectives, but Theater for Social Change, through community participation and performance, helps student practice taking their perspectives one step further to applying them to their lives.

Transformation has a special place in theater. Actors are asked to transform themselves into characters, as they take on roles in theatrical performances. A successful actor will in some way come to understand the psyche and context of the character he portrays. In fact, the successful actor does not simply “show” us what his character would do; in his mind he actually “becomes” his character. Related to method acting, this work is demanding and difficult because the actor must fully embrace a particular point of view and way of being, possibly not his own. The skills required for this
transformation are practiced and polished over time. In a similar way students at college are expected to consider new perspectives, wrestle with varying points of view, and build their understanding by fully considering a number of competing frameworks. The practice of character transformation within theater illustrates the flexibility of an actor to adapt to an ever-mutating reality.

At Connecticut College, Carlebach and Singer (1998) used psychology and theater studies and activities to bring together interpersonal issues and a sense of empathy for others. They found their approach effective in addressing "real-world problems of bias and intolerance" (p. 199). This and other projects already described raise interesting questions about the role of colleges and universities as agents of change, or transformation, through their theater. Green (2001) writes that it is easily understandable how this form is being successfully applied in "North American prisons, impoverished neighborhoods, and other places where power imbalances are obvious, extreme, and severe. But when [Theater of the Oppressed] moves into elite colleges and high-priced workshops, does all this popularity threaten to sap its potency as a tool for cultural and political interventions?" (p. 48). The question is a good one, mostly because it reminds us to be vigilant of more subtly expressed power imbalances (e.g. in terms of race, gender, and class) and because it points to the importance of maintaining the integrity of the form. To maintain this integrity, one must thoroughly examine and understand the form, including its engagement with reciprocity.

Theater outcomes are often discussed in TFSC literature, but rarely are conclusions about outcomes based on scientific analysis. Most presumptions result from observations and recollections of key moments by both facilitator and participants.
Rigorous investigations must be carried out to determine more precisely what the outcomes of TFSC might be.

The layers of transformation through TFSC may come as a surprise to some. Armstrong (2000), who worked with a community-based, oral history play at The College of William and Mary, admits that she was primarily concerned with the political implications for the community. Not until after the project had been completed and the original play performed, did she begin to reflect on the “dramatic transformation” that her students had experienced through participating in the grassroots theater project (Armstrong, 2000, p.113). Armstrong found that students, although outsiders to the community they worked with, formed emotional bonds with the community participants that allowed them access to and helped form an identification with the community. She summarizes the students’ transformation as the following three shifts: understanding their own political agendas, becoming cognizant of the complexities that surround the reconstruction of truth, and developing a sense of civic responsibility to one another (Armstrong, 2000, p.114). In addition, the final project exemplified the core element of reciprocity and agency in that it invited community members to participate with their own words and bodies in the final scene of the play. During this cooperative finale, students provided the community a stage to voice their memories, share their experiences, and in some ways validate (or revalidate) certain episodes in their lives. The community reciprocated this valuable opportunity by offering students an intimate understanding of community experience as well as a concluding scene to their performance.

Because of the reciprocation of the valuable opportunity to speak out between community and students, we might expect that TFSC may transform its audience as much
as it participants. Dianilo Cora (as cited in Leonard, 2003) speaking about the transformation of the audience when it broke out in approving uproar says, “It is this magical moment, the communal and private transformation of the spirit that is the event of theater” (p. 8). With this connected transformation and subsequent energy, change becomes possible. But McConachie (1998), who also has focused on spectator response, has a more critical perspective. He believes

> For community-based theatre especially, when close attention to spectator desires and anxieties is a necessary part of the ongoing process, the emphasis on meaning apart from judgment and pleasure can lead astray those of us particularly concerned with furthering the goals and practice of grassroots theatre.

(McConachie, 1998, p.33)

McConachie finds that community members in the audience may not interpret the action on stage as a critical commentary or a complicated portrayal of “the truth.” He is dubious about whether performance can actually transform a community or lead it to action, but he does say it can at least help them imagine their ideal ethical community, and some may possibly work towards achieving it in small ways in their lives and work.

Other examples have shown more clearly the transformative power of TFSC. In Schonmann and Hadroff’s (1999-2000) work with adolescent actors and physicians, the facilitators achieved the principle intention of Boal’s forum theater to “transform the spectator into the protagonist of the theatrical action and by this transformation, to try to change society rather than contenting ourselves with interpreting it” (Boal, 1992, p. 224). The work also placed students in the position of instructor, reversing traditional roles and empowering the students. Similar to the refugee youth in former Yugoslavia having
transformed the way they thought about their own and others' identities, and the meanings of the war, students in Schonmann and Hardoff's study transformed physicians' understandings of their own role in communicating with adolescents. The physicians reported "the training had great value in improving creative thinking and communication skills with adolescent patients as well as having learned something new about themselves" (Schonmann & Hardoff, 1999-2000, p. 149). They learned most through the feedback they received from the actors portraying patients. In response to the study's results some physician training programs have begun to incorporate the creative education technique of actors role-playing patients (Schonmann & Hardoff, 1999-2000, p. 149). Kufinec (1997) underscores that the transformation in her participants resulted from the active learning style that required students to reflect, question, comment, synthesize, and analyze information, and additionally required cooperation and long-term involvement (p. 172).

**Conclusion: Setting the Stage**

The goal of Theater for Social Change is to raise awareness about community issues and stories, provide tools for addressing or celebrating these issues and stories in an equitable forum, and ultimately provide the space in which a conversation for change arises. Although many scholars and practitioners eagerly express their optimism for the potential effects of Theater for Social Change on college students' understanding of community and civic engagement, few have put their observations and suppositions to rigorous tests. Some who have conducted important and useful studies on service-learning admit that the core concept of reciprocity remains under-examined. Others continue to point to the neglected issue of sustainability, which might be linked to issues
of reciprocity. For relationships to be sustained, partners must continue to adapt to new exchanges as partners continue to identify new needs.

Jones and Hill (2001) illustrate the gaps that often exist in trying to achieve reciprocity and suggest that relationship building is a crucial step to improving a sense of reciprocity. Porter and Monard (2001) help us to understand reciprocity within Andean culture, illustrating important subtleties such as giver/receiver perception, rituals of initiating reciprocity, and the negotiation of power during transactions. To these important contributions I add in the following chapter a discussion on how social exchange theory and network theory explores reciprocity as a complex, volatile, fragile, and ever-changing state in which we must consider relationships on a number of analytical levels.

For civic engagement to become a sustainable endeavor, participants must feel equally invested in their projects. Theater for Social Change offers a creative venue to bring participants together to explore how they might work cooperatively, offer reciprocal help through sharing of intellectual, physical, and material capital, and grow towards a sustainable relationship. At best, TFSC may lead to sustainable projects with energy to continue the important social change initiated.
Chapter Three: Conceptual Framework and Methods

Theater for Social Change (TFSC) shares certain goals with the mission of service-learning, but its structure and processes are different in several important ways that should lead us to consider it as a unique approach towards civic engagement. Although some service-learning programs may utilize creativity in a number of ways, TFSC, by its very nature as theater, draws its breath of life and its expression from creativity. Additionally, group process and communication comprise its core. These attributes of creativity, group process, and communication nurture a space in which TFSC concentrates on social concerns while fostering a shared sense of freedom and play in exploration of civic issues amongst its participants.

Learning about social concerns is largely based in interaction with the community and supplemented minimally by readings. TFSC’s similarities to service-learning (attention to community issues, civic engagement, providing a service, learning about community and self identity) allow us to expect that the form will foster similar benefits of student development as has been investigated in service-learning studies. However, as a result of theater’s unique nature, other questions emerge. Does the creative process foster a collective sense of identity, an esprit de corps within the participants? To what extent does the creation of esprit de corps require negotiated reciprocity among its participants? How is reciprocity negotiated through and within the project? And finally, what happens when the project is finished? Can TFSC set the stage for continued
reciprocity? TFSC provides the forum in which to examine these questions that lie at the still under explored center of service-learning studies.

To address these questions, I studied a Theater for Social Change project involving a university class and a local community high school in the spring of 2007. The theater project resulted from the interaction between the two groups in which values, goals, negotiations, and imagination came together in a creative expression of teamwork and social awareness. Careful observation, description, and analysis of group dynamics shed light on the complexity of social interactions that led to the final product. My aim was to unpack the complex nature of reciprocity within a college Theater for Social Change project in order to understand its processes.

When I began this study, I envisioned the dynamics of the project as three hexagons. This initial framework guided my work and finally led me to a more precisely defined framework and more complex model of reciprocity that I present in the conclusion of this dissertation. In Figure 1, the hexagon illustrates that groups are multifaceted and are influenced from many directions and constituents. Even when a group is unified and members identify as a singular unit, group interaction is not necessarily seamless nor are members always in agreement. Negotiations take place in the process of achieving reciprocity. Among the hexagonal sides of the university class were, predictably: class group, class individual, and other university-related forces. For the community, hexagonal sides included: community group, community individuals, and other community-related forces. Other components that I identified during the course of the study are explained in the following chapters and summarized in the conclusion. A hexagon is somewhat arbitrary, meant only to suggest a multitude not a finite number of
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.
possibilities. Each of these group components has the potential to interact within its own group. If we imagine that each of the hexagons can rotate on its center point, each side of one hexagon can line up with each side of the other hexagon and establish a new specific relationship in each of the 36 combinations. The arrow connecting the first pair of hexagons shows the dynamic process of reciprocity that attempts to bond two groups together.

The third hexagon represents the project that resulted from the combined goals and efforts of the two groups as they engaged in the processes of TFSC. In the course of this study I investigated the complex and multifaceted relationships and interactions between groups and their relationship to the theater project. This study explored whether participants during the processes of Theater for Social Change established reciprocal relationships and sought to define the nature of that reciprocity while looking to understand its effect on the final project.

Two past studies helped to shape my focus. Jones and Hill (2001) challenge those in the field of service-learning to study service-learning program design with an eye on community outcomes and sustainability (Jones & Hill, 2001, p. 215). In working to understand how service-learning can help participants learn about diversity, Jones and Hill uncover the key role of relationship building. I continued to explore this issue as it tied to reciprocity and the outcome of a TFSC project. Porter and Monard (2001) describe the Andean concept of reciprocity, “ayni”, in terms of covenant, empowerment, skill and resource cultivation, and dynamism. The breakdown of this key concept in service-learning into components guided me in exploring and explaining the depth of these concepts and their many qualities and functions within Theater for Social Change.
Reciprocity

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), reciprocity is "a state or relationship in which there is mutual action, influence, giving and taking, correspondence, etc., between two parties or things." Within service-learning then, reciprocity is an active component in which participants are engaged in an ongoing fashion. To understand reciprocity in service-learning better, the task becomes identifying the actions that balance out other actions and the location of mutuality.

Reciprocity presupposes an interactive relationship that begins, progresses, and potentially ends; therefore it is crucial to examine how participants enter, relate within, and exit such relationships. Porter and Monard (2001) suggest viewing these relationships as a covenant not a contract (p. 6). As a covenant, the relationship suggests a personal and group promise based on a shared belief. These beliefs guide actions towards the attainment of set goals. A contract, on the other hand, places undue emphasis on the end result rather on the process of the journey. A contract suggests that if certain tangible elements are present and exchanged for other tangible elements, the relationship is upheld, but in service-learning and in TFSC specifically, the relationship strives for common ground and lasting relationships whose responsibilities ideally do not end when the contract expires.

The act of accepting the burden and responsibility of reciprocity is an empowering step (Porter & Monard, 2001, p.9). Choosing to work towards reciprocal relationships acknowledges that a combined effort can achieve more than an individual effort. Empowerment ensues from the understanding that a participant is not being acted
upon, but plays an active role in establishing relationships and finding strategies to achieve collective goals.

Within service-learning, the concept of reciprocity demands continued mindfulness for cultivating unique skills and resources, the third property (Porter & Monard, 2001). Exchanges between participants should evidence growth in the individuals' capabilities demanded within the project and of social interaction. This property of reciprocity is a special challenge; members need to focus attention on setting goals and measuring outcomes.

To achieve the properties of reciprocity outlined above, Porter and Monard (2001) describe “reciprocity as passionate search, not passive [state]” (p.16). Their comments resonate with the OED’s definition of “reciprocity” including a “giving and taking.” To achieve reciprocity in service-learning Porter and Monard suggest we must search for balance of exchange in our interactions with others rather than wait lazily to have our needs met. We must continuously and thoughtfully assess our role in achieving reciprocity for it is not something that can be given to us by someone else. It is a state that exists only with the mutual attention of partners. Such dynamism may not be the immediate orientation of participants, and facilitators can help in establishing this proactive mindset. Embracing the “passion of the search” can help garner the energy needed to cooperate, build relationships, and sustain a project successfully to completion and perhaps beyond.

**Network theory.**

One of the biggest challenges in studying reciprocity is identifying and evaluating the degree of reciprocity present in a TFSC project and the form it takes. For this I turn
to network theory. Network theory is complex. Diane Felmlee (2003) defines a social network as “a set of actors and the ties among them. Thinking in network terms requires branching out from the individual actor to the larger social milieu in which that actor is embedded” (p. 389). The social network perspective analyzes the nature of relationships between humans in communities rather than focusing solely on an individual’s characteristics. Understanding these relationships is important in comprehending both individual and group choices and their intertwined nature. It reveals an interconnectivity of individual actions within group projects.

In TFSC, members are asked to work with one another and in doing so, continually negotiate power dynamics. Recurring questions about who holds expertise in which instances, who leads and who follows, and what roles each individual plays swirl around the issue of power. The processes of this theater include sharing stories that illuminate identities as well as context of life experiences. Diverse perspectives can push participants, especially under proper guidance, to open their minds to various worldviews and realities. This delicate process may reveal deeply entrenched values that reflect power dynamics based on race, gender, social class and other identifiers and constructs. Under the leadership of a well-trained facilitator, TFSC participants can begin to entertain the notions of a world in which they are empowered to identify and dismantle or cope with entrenched power dynamics. In any case they are asked to reflect on them consciously.

Like all theater, TFSC also demands creativity on the part of all participants to bring the stories to life in a believable, engaging, and moving manner. Multiple approaches exist to accomplish this very difficult task and competing approaches within a
project can be the cause of dispute in the group and an unraveling of any relationships that might foster reciprocity (Burgoyne et al., 2005). An equally possible and positive outcome of diverse ideas within the group is collaboration and growth within individual members as they move toward a new collective soul of the theatrical piece (Armstrong, 2000).

The physicality of theater helps participants develop their skill in navigating complex social networks, and even helps to build new networks through the process. For example, symbolic physical expression such as a freeze-pose embodiment of oppression and then liberation (often adapted from Boal’s *Theater of the Oppressed*, 1979), can lead actors and observers to contemplate and understand these complex social issues in a forum other than the purely intellectual discussion. It is a way to incorporate kinesthetic learning to a philosophical debate. The physical representation of stories and the process of devising the performance itself allow participants a tangible visual from which to discuss and negotiate the narratives and their underlying dynamics. When worked on collectively, these experiments provide a venue for a stronger social network on stage. The participants’ shared experimentation, variety of expression, and open discussion of different points of view, mutually enrich and complicate their relationships. Indeed, the physical nature of expression in theater is one of the most prominent attributes that differentiate TFSC from other approaches to communication in service-learning.

In most successful service-learning programs, professors or community liaisons navigate social networks before students enter the equation. This time-consuming footwork is absolutely essential to a productive semester of work for the students and a healthy relationship with the community. Faculty members and community partners
must explore the needs on both sides of the relationship in order to find a balanced exchange of energy, resources, learning, and service. Theoretically, when students begin the course, their learning and their service can be maximized if facilitating partners have already agreed to a basic relational agreement that begins to address mutual needs. For example, students agree to provide social visits and recreational activities to residents in a nursing home, while residents agree to share their stories with participants who are studying the sociology of aging.

In the above scenario, students are welcomed into the partnership as visitors and begin their work. At this point, students may take for granted that Professor X agreed with agency Y that they would participate in the mutually beneficial project Z. And they go about focusing on Z. Thus, the social network is already at least loosely established when students begin their participation. Looking at this relationship more closely, we might find that only a superficial or beginning relationship has been established between X and Y. The students, though connected to Professor X, have a separate and different identity from him/her. Therefore we could call them X2s. The X2s have only a tenuous relationship with Y and the Y2s based on the groundwork laid by X. If the X2s hope to go beyond achieving a one-time final product, and contribute to the continued reciprocity between their institution and Y, students have to spend time developing relationships with Y and the Y2s themselves. Only when these X2-Y2 relationships are formed will students be able to elicit meaningful personal stories. Often within service-learning programs, the focus of the project is directed more on the task to help the community rather than on building relationships. TFSC places a heavy emphasis on understanding the social structures in which projects are performed and further to help communities
both to identify pressing issues and open a forum for discussion. Thus, it offers a good
venue to explore the steps of building reciprocal relationships and navigating networks.

TFSC projects ask cooperation between individual participants as well as
represented groups. They attempt to create a landscape (or a playscape) that is
constructed entirely from the contributions of the participants. This act of devising from
a blank slate, helps to allow, even encourages, traditional hierarchies of leader/follower to
be dismantled. It is not the vision of one that shapes the plot and the issues; rather the
collaborative contributions of the group give rise to the final performance. Because
projects are driven by and rely on the genuine engagement of the participants, forceful
implementation of any given topic or exercise can result in attrition of players. And yet,
without some guidance, especially for first time participants, TFSC will most likely not
succeed. For this reason it is helpful to think of the one providing guidance as a
“facilitator” as opposed to a “leader” with a vision.

In fact, successful TFSC requires an astute process facilitator who can maintain a
delicate balance of participants’ input, preventing individuals and sub-groups from
dominating. The facilitator also helps participants by recommending exercises and
suggesting when to linger or move on from exercises to maintain steady progress.

Kuftinec (1997) in her work with youth of former Yugoslavia, illustrates the challenges
facing the facilitator:

Often operating as “outsiders” to a local population, community-based theatre
facilitators must constantly renegotiate their positions in relation to the
community. They must balance their role of soliciting participants’ input with the
agency implicit in artistically shaping and editing a performance. The facilitator
must remain aware of her power to evoke the emotionally effective material that provides such memorable experiences for performers and audience. At the same time, the fluidity of community borders illuminated through the production process suggests the potential for shifting the facilitator’s position as “outsider” in relation to the “community.” (p. 181)

As Kuftinec makes clear, the TFSC facilitator must not only understand the tools and goals of TFSC, but must also be a motivator, a visionary, an effective communicator, and a mediator. She has to understand how to motivate and empower participants so that they can believe in their ability to enact social change. She does not impose a vision but rather aids the group in shaping a shared vision. She must communicate well with the particular group, which involves building trust, and listening to participants’ ideas and concerns and helping the group identify themes for their theatrical piece. Finally, the facilitator must know how to deal with conflict on the route to change, mediating clashes stemming from opposed value systems and diverse working styles.

Social exchange theory.

Building on Kuftinec’s (1997) analysis of the facilitator’s role, I suggest that reciprocity between the two groups and among individuals within the larger project must also be reassessed and renegotiated constantly. As relationships and power structures shift and change, so does the nature and definition of reciprocity in the project. Social exchange theory can help to frame our understanding of the negotiation required for reciprocity within TFSC.

Essentially, social exchange theory explores the costs and rewards of social interaction. In some very basic ways it borrows from the idea of supply and demand in
economics. However, because the rewards and costs are not measured in easily counted monetary units, and because human nature is infinitely complex, social exchange is complicated in its own unique way.

Social exchange theory helps to explain the organization and maintenance of relationships. Social exchange is defined by ongoing negotiation of needs and resources governed by both concrete logic and human emotion. The goal is to strengthen, continue, and improve or adversely to sabotage a social relationship in a physical and/or intangible way. Social exchange relationships can be as small as between two people or can encompass a whole group or organization. The individuals or groups between which links are formed are commonly referred to as “nodes” (Kadushin, 2004, p.6). Relationships can be directional or non-directional, reciprocal or non-reciprocal; and they can be based on, among other things, similarities in likes, dislikes, shared experiences, or on the ability to fulfill needs.

Reciprocity refers to a perceived equal exchange of rewards and/or costs. This perception of equality is key in maintaining a power balance between partners. Homans (1961) explained “social equals are people who provide equally valuable services, therefore they can exchange on equal terms; and though the services may not be very valuable in themselves, they at least cost nothing in confessed inferiority” (p. 334). In other words, an underlying premise of “equality” in social exchange is a sense of personal self-worth (“no confessed inferiority”) within the exchange regardless of the value of the exchanged service itself. I am not sure how self-worth can be measured, but when power imbalances occur, partnerships are more likely to break down, and reciprocity will end unless balance can be restored and reciprocity renegotiated. The
rewards of such relationships can be intrinsic or extrinsic, temporary or long lasting, tangible or intangible. Extrinsic goals for a community can include, in the case of a TFSC project, cost free theater education and extra curricular activity for students, entertainment for the school in the form of a theater performance, and guidance in designing a plan for initiating community desired change. The theater students engage in experiential learning, learn about their surrounding community, and practice their theater facilitation skills. The rewards can best be measured by an overt discussion of what partners wish to get out of their collaboration and what they propose to contribute. These two answers from both partners must be in alignment. Degrees of satisfaction are possible, making constant negotiation necessary to continue to strive for reciprocity.

Although ideally service-learning aims for such an equal exchange in order to achieve reciprocity and empower its participants to facilitate social change, projects sometimes inadvertently reflect a superiority/inferiority divide or an active learner vs. passive teacher divide. In some cases, community participants feel they are helping students learn but are not conscious of any learning on their own part (Jones & Hill, 2001). In other cases, as Gugerty and Swezey (1996) point out, community partners may feel that they do not have any say in the project and their needs are not addressed. In none of these cases is reciprocity, as Homans defines it, achieved. Following recommended “best practices” (e.g. Gray, Ondaatje, Zakaras, 1999; Mintz & Hesser, 1996) can help prevent students from feeling they are being exploited and unappreciated, and furthermore can encourage them to examine their stance as privileged vs. underprivileged.
People are often motivated by the positive rewards that result from their behavior. In particular, social approval strongly reinforces behavior (Homans, 1961). Yet, we know little about motivation and its relation to social approval in service-learning. Service-learning researchers (e.g., Carlebach & Singer, 1998) generally delve no further into an explanation of exchange than establishing that each partner (usually students and organization) brings physical and/or intellectual labor to the exchange. Absent, or glossed over, is an understanding of the need for those negotiating or establishing the “exchange” to take into account what Homans describes as the value of each contribution, as well as an exploration of the discussion inherent in this process. Value is determined by each receiver and is qualified by what he needs and how little of the contribution he has had in the recent past (Homans, 1961).

Sometimes this need is assumed, and even verified by participants at the end of the interaction. Carlebach and Singer’s students (1998) led an oppression workshop for a group of racially diverse men in a residential substance abuse rehabilitation facility. Their goal was to use theater as a way to help the participants explore the social problem of racial tension while they gained valuable insight from the shared stories of participants’ experiences. In many ways the students’ workshop was a success, helping participants to open up to one another, facilitating healthy communication, and gaining perspective on existing tensions within the group. The spirit of reciprocity, however, demands that the needs addressed in a service-learning project are openly negotiated at the beginning and throughout the interaction. The gap of understanding this vital step of a discussion of values is illustrated when two men chose to “slip out” of the theater workshop run by students that addressed racial issues. Participants should always feel
free to withdraw from a project, but advanced discussion of the project details can prevent attrition and put participants at ease. Students did work towards identifying and addressing participant values and needs by choosing one resident “insider” to help plan the workshop, but then they neglected to report the experience of this resident, so it is unclear whether the interactions were reciprocal (Carlebach & Singer, 1998, 193-194).

The shifting value of particular actions of exchange ensures a dynamic process. Social exchange occurs as a dialectic in which these actions aim for reciprocity and balance, yet simultaneously cause an imbalance (disequilibrium) in other aspects of social interaction, thus perpetuating the system of social exchange (Blau, 1964). This fundamental principle is frequently overlooked in service-learning programs (see for example, Hayward, 2000; Vogelgesang, Drummond & Gilmartin, 2003). In a potentially reciprocal relationship, isolating the imbalance on both sides of the partnership points to the potential for further exchange as well as further modification of the values held by the participants. In a TFSC project, for example, one partner may have the stories of oppression and the other the skills to craft a healing play. After reciprocal negotiation, these two elements can come together to produce not only a therapeutic piece for participants, but also a theater production that can be used as leverage for social change in a larger social context. This power of the art form is illustrated masterfully in the work of the Performance Studio Workshop (PSW) of Lagos, Nigeria. By educating and allowing individuals and groups to express themselves through Theater for Development (the term used by PSW), PSW worked to reduce and even eradicate female genital mutilation in some practicing African communities (Mike, 1999 p. 78). When PSW first arrived in Oluwole some information about the physical and psychological dangers of
FGM had already been distributed by local governmental health officials through radio (Mike, 1999, p. 66), television, and printed material, but the information left many questions unanswered and did not address the issue of the importance of tradition (C. Mike, personal communication, February 16, 2010). The theater group worked together with health officials to explain the truths and myths surrounding the procedure. The performance included community members and presented a scenario in which a family argues over the need to perform the circumcision. Characters made arguments both for and against the procedure. Then the characters asked for the audience to intervene and make a decision for them. After the audience decided the circumcision should not be performed, theater workers conducted additional interviews with audience members, answering additional questions and gathering further community reaction. In follow up visits to the community, both local health officials and the Baale’s (village chief’s) wife reported an end to female circumcision (Ewu, 1999), and villagers brought out a newborn infant to show that she had not been circumcised (C. Mike, personal communication, February 16, 2010).

In analyzing social exchange, we must continually ask who is being empowered, when, why, and at whose cost? In so doing, we recognize the exchange dynamics within the group, between the groups, and finally between the larger group and its “audience.” In other words, both the micro-structures (interacting individuals) and macro-structures (interrelated groups) are equally important to social exchange (Blau, 1964).

Service-learning literature has stressed the importance of equality in power relations between partners, but has not clearly defined the various levels on which these powers play out (Green, 2001; Jones & Hill, 2001; Kustinec, 1997; Schonmann &
Haroffs, 1999-2000). A struggle for power always characterizes social exchange, according to Blau (1964). Competition and differentiation are key elements at play in power dynamics. We must also consider social expectations when examining and interpreting reactions to experiences and power structures. Blau (1964) states that "while reciprocal services create interdependence that balances power, unilateral dependence on services maintains an imbalance of power" (p. 29). Therefore, service-learning must work hard to set up a situation in which power is appropriately negotiated. Imbalances in power can arise if both groups do not recognize or appreciate (value) the service rendered. When power is consistently concentrated in one area of the hexagon (see Figure 1), we end up with a loaded six-sided die where one side is much more likely to land facing up with its concerns given preference, while the other side lies face down with its concerns neglected.

We need to take a harder look at investigating individual roles of the exchange and considering the wants/needs of the various individuals within the partner groups. Some scholars have pointed out the interplay of diverse opinions, but few have taken the issue of negotiation as a focal point for examining reciprocity within service-learning or Theater for Social Change. Armstrong (2000) acknowledges the individual relationships between students and community members and the struggle of identifying with stories while simultaneously renouncing ownership. She also recognizes that transformation of students and community occurred simultaneously on multiple levels. These multiple levels of transformation and individual struggles point to a hotbed of issues of reciprocity. Without considering reciprocity, the dynamic nature of the social interaction is oversimplified and the identity of the group is flattened, losing the depth of and
changes within its diverse members. When this occurs, we fail to acknowledge the ever-changing dance between the partners and assume that the identified groups remain stable. One outstanding exception to this neglected area of study is the work by Burgoyne, Welch, Cockrell, Neville et al. (2005), who focused on the riffs that occur within a group when needs and values differ. They demonstrated how theater of the oppressed projects could be designed to aid in the necessary negotiations to move a group forward as one unit.

Homans (1961) and Blau (1964) both argued that when a need is fulfilled, the value of the benefit goes down. If one party continues to supply the fulfilled benefit, the value of that benefit decreases and the exchange is no longer equal. Service-learning interactions involve many different players; therefore, social exchange or reciprocity needs to be constantly reevaluated by both partners in the exchange. The relationship is not merely an agreement struck between the leaders of the two partnered groups at the onset of a service-learning program. Taking time to explore individual and group values and goals, to find some common ground, and to build trust of one another may aid in building a dynamic and productive relationship.

**Crosscutting TFSC and Reciprocity**

As we have come to see, reciprocity is not a simply defined concept that we can easily recognize as present or not present. Nor is it one that is adequately defined once at the beginning of a project. In order to examine the role and nature of reciprocity in a TFSC project and the relationship between reciprocity and the final project (see Figure 1), we need to examine several elements of reciprocity throughout the TFSC process. Keeping in mind that reciprocity might be expressed verbally, physically, or
ideologically, I examined five components of reciprocal relationships with and across eight stages of TFSC in order to determine the state of reciprocity evident. The examination led me to a model for the process of reciprocity that is explained in the conclusion.

Eight stages of TFSC.

I examined the Theater for Social Change project through a partly chronological and partly elemental schema that encompasses eight stages. Because relationships develop over time, it is important to delineate the progression of a TFSC project chronologically. However, because the TFSC process is somewhat iterative, we must also recognize elements of practice. Together, these two defining characteristics help us to dissect the project to examine it for continuing development of reciprocity. The eight stages of Theater for Social Change I considered are: preliminary preparations, introduction period, project definition, role identification, devising process, rehearsing, performance, and reflection.

I began my field work with the following assumptions about the eight stages that I based on previous projects and my understanding of how the course I studied was designed. During the preliminary preparations, the faculty member organizing the TFSC project makes connections with the community and seeks student participants. The foundations for reciprocal relationships are laid, though the major building is still to come. The introduction period follows in which university students and community students first begin interacting and introducing themselves to each other. During this period of introduction, identities and values are first explored communally.
Once the two groups have begun to trust one another by carefully revealing their identities and beginning to establish a working relationship, they can move on to the project at hand. During the project definition stage, the newly formed group (previously two separate groups) negotiates and establishes mutual goals for the theater piece. Throughout their work together, they have to work to clarify and redefine their mission.

Two key aspects of creating the theater piece include identifying participants' roles and devising the story and how it will be played. These two stages are not absolutely linear though they do begin midway in the process. Roles may be chosen or negotiated based on talents or needs, but should not be assigned. Assignment inevitably implies an imbalance of power. Participants may claim several roles or switch roles throughout the process. Roles may include but are not limited to such things as acting, scripting, aiding in direction, prop management, set and costume design. Often these roles are not limited to one individual and are shared by the group. Still the team must come to an agreement of how it will address the many production issues.

At the same time, the team must begin creating the theater piece itself. The devising process is the heart of TFSC. Here all participants must work the hardest to uncover the stories that reveal the core issues of the community, seek meaningful and powerful ways to portray the events and at the same time remain free enough to allow for organic suggestions to arise that might help solve or positively address the issues at hand. Rehearsing usually works in tandem with the devising process, allowing participants to practice both their theatrical and their problem solving techniques.

The last two stages are those of performance and reflection. The performance encompasses the presentations within the framework of the semester-long course. More
than simply a "final" presentation, the performance is an opportunity to continue dialogue with the audience. This dialogue ends the performance and begins the reflection process for participants and audience members alike. In some ways the dialogue and reflection signify the conclusion of the TFSC project, but in other ways, it is just the beginning of continued work in the community. The eight stages are linear to some degree, but all stages (especially 3-8) can occur or repeat in any order. After completing the study I verified that my assumptions for the eight stages were basically correct, but stages did sometimes run parallel or repeat themselves more frequently than the neatness of the figure suggests and is indicated in the discussion of the following chapters. Key indicators of the direction of a project comes from the feedback loops of participants as they debrief after exercises, encounter challenges along the way, and share creative ideas during devising and from faculty and school administrators who may make suggestions, impose restrictions, or provide resources.

**Five components of reciprocal relationships.**

Ideally, the cycle of stages will repeat itself, shifting from one stage to another, as needs arise, and working in a reciprocal framework that addresses all groups involved. At the onset of this study, this framework was made up of five key components of reciprocal relationships including: identifying nodes, establishing and adhering to a covenant, strengthening relational ties, enabling dynamic nature of social interaction, and recognizing power structures. In the course of the study I tested this framework and reworked my understanding of the components as the data suggested. Identifying and analyzing these five components and being open to discover additional components, helped answer central questions of reciprocity: Who are the participants involved in
relationships? What are the individual needs? On what do they agree and what marks the foundation of the relationships? How do they strengthen their relationships? When and how do they negotiate and renegotiate needs and resources? Why, if at all, do they strive for reciprocity?

The first component of reciprocal relationships is the node, a term I borrow from social network theory to acknowledge the existence of relational dynamics before the project begins and underscore the importance of interaction within the project. Nodes are individuals or clusters of individuals who already have a communication pattern. Their relationship can be positive or negative, but their interaction is regular. In studying reciprocity in a TFSC project, I had to seek to understand these existing relationships between individuals and groups as well as identify new nodes and new connections between nodes when they formed. Both microstructures comprised of a smaller group in immediate proximity and in frequent contact as well as macrostructures comprised of larger groups separated by distance and infrequent direct contact factored in to an examination of the role that reciprocity plays in TFSC projects. Integrative bonds between nodes hold promise for reciprocity because deep and multi-layered connections associate the nodes to one another.

A reciprocal relationship demands the establishment and adherence to a covenant. The covenant expresses an agreement on the values and goals underlying the project. To achieve a covenant that can support a reciprocal relationship participants in TFSC must discuss individual values and goals as well as group values and goals and must agree on the costs and rewards of their exchanges. Once participants have established their
covenant, they can work to strengthen their ties by building trust and building a shared identity as they move forward with the goals of the project.

To maintain reciprocity, TFSC processes must enable the dynamic nature of social interaction. Continuous negotiations are necessary to balance needs, resources, and rewards. As we observe such negotiations it is imperative to recognize power structures. TFSC strives for reciprocity in order to keep a balance of power. To ascertain whether the project of this study was successful in this endeavor, I described the power dynamics, watched for dismantling of traditional leader/follower hierarchy, looked for signs of empowerment, and asked about the satisfaction of achieving goals throughout exchanges.

In the course of this study I considered each of the five components of reciprocal relationships throughout the eight stages of the TFSC project (see Figure 2). Each combination of stage and component contributed to a critical and detailed understanding of the role of reciprocity within the processes of TFSC.

A third overlay to this process of examination is Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia’s (1964) affective domain of the taxonomy of educational objectives. This model provides a guide for considering the progress in achieving the goal of not only acting reciprocally, but internalizing the value of reciprocity. Krathwohl et al. describe five levels and several sublevels in a learner’s journey to a new affective understanding of a phenomenon. The five levels are: receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization by a value or value complex. In each level the learner demonstrates a more complex awareness and a deeper commitment to the phenomenon. At the earliest level of this continuum students are introduced to the phenomenon through initial
Components of Reciprocal Relationships

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<tr>
<th>Reflection</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Rehearsing</th>
<th>Devising</th>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Project Definition</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<td>Nodes</td>
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Figure 2. Components and Stages of TFSC Project.
exposure that is attended to in a progressively conscious and active manner. The learner then begins reacting to the phenomenon in a participatory manner. Next, the learner evaluates the phenomenon and eventually is able to place it within his/her own frame of reference to the world and the tasks at hand. Finally, the value becomes so deeply ingrained or accepted, that it guides a significant portion of thought and action. Although I knew it would not be possible in the limits of this study to gauge students progress within the affective domain in a quantitative way, mindfulness to these levels in designing interview questions and observation guidelines helped give me a sense of the level of commitment or at least depth of understanding that students developed towards the concept of reciprocity.

**Conclusion: Conceptual Framework**

In review, social exchange theory leads me to suggest that the construct of reciprocity must be considered throughout the service-learning project, not just during the phase of conceptualization, at the level of a contract, or during the final evaluation process. It must be thought of as an ongoing, morphing attitude that needs continuous modification and attention. To describe and analyze elements of exchange in a TFSC project we can draw from the theories above, paying particular attention to the following: describing the social milieu, recognizing distinct stages of group development, identifying the goals of the groups, determining the value of exchange interaction, understanding micro- and macro-structures, and looking for integrative bonds. By considering these stages and components in relation to one another, we can gain a better sense of how the TFSC process works towards its educational objectives.
The specific objectives of TFSC can vary depending on the preferences of the community. General educational aims, however, include employing creativity as a resource, teaching technique, learning about issues in the community, raising awareness about community, and leading to empowerment and change. Change can include changes in attitudes of cultural beliefs (e.g. choosing to cease female circumcision), an action plan for change (e.g. a plan to build new roads), structural change (e.g. sinking a new well), or enacting preferred social practices (e.g. inclusiveness instead of exclusivity based on class, gender, or race). The aims of TFSC are connected to Dewey's ideas of "social efficiency" as they encourage participants to play both an active and productive role in society. In the case of TFSC, the activity is a form of community introspection, communication, and performance that can include both an enlightening theater production and physical labor. The productivity is best measured if the community sets clear goals towards the beginning of the TFSC work. Depending on how buried and politically burdened a community issue is, productive progress can include speaking openly in a community with buy in from those in power, documentation of new policies, completion of physical projects, or the establishment of a sustainable forum for empowering community members to continue discussion and action. Follow up with the community at an appropriate time past the initial theater work is necessary to gauge the success of the partnership.

In the project of this study, the balance of goals between social change and student learning was complicated. Unlike in professional TFSC, in this project the university students were still learning to facilitate the medium. While they were teaching TFSC to the high school students, the university student were simultaneously learning
about facilitation along with learning about the community. The high school students likewise were learning about theater, unearthing their community issues, and learning how to address these issues. Social change was an ideal, but teaching and learning the form of TFSC in order to take the first small steps towards a change in the community’s social climate was the main focus.

Methods

The purpose of the study is to arrive at an understanding of the nuances of reciprocity in projects of civic engagement as characterized in the Theater for Social Change process. The most effective way to study the phenomenon of TFSC is to follow closely the participants’ steps through the TFSC process as reciprocity does or does not develop by conducting an ethnographic study. TFSC projects are themselves a form of ethnographic inquiry. Through interviews, reflective exercises, theater games, and group discussion, theater facilitators and the community members who join them explore aspects of the community with whom they work. Fetterman (1998) reminds us “the ethnographer’s task is not only to collect information from the emic or insider’s perspective but also to make sense of all the data from an etic or external social scientific perspective” (p.11). A final theater piece produced by the combined group of university and community participants presents gathered data in a creative manner that allows the researcher and representatives from the greater community to analyze community issues and the achievement of proposed goals from a more etic perspective in the audience. Therefore, the inherent formatting and processes of enacting TFSC provides the researcher with a rich and multi-layered text to examine from several vantages. Only an
ethnographic approach allows the researcher access to these many layers and various perspectives.

The basis for discovering community identity and relating oneself to it in TFSC is closely tied to community-based ethnography. Ernie Stringer (1997), projecting a methodological contribution based on his experience teaching community-based ethnography to a graduate education class, explains that “in the educational context, such inquiry provides a means for making research responsive to the realities of schools and the communities they serve” (p. 17). Because TFSC projects encourage cooperation and collaboration in dealing with specific community issues, I looked from within the group processes at the ways in which this cooperation developed and played out.

In addition to gaining a more complex understanding of self and community identity, TFSC additionally works to build new or strengthen existing community bonds. In fact, “community-based research not only signals the intent to work with a group identified by common purposes, but also provides group members with a sense of community. It is, in essence, a community-building or team-building activity as much as it is an approach to the production of knowledge” (Stringer, 1997, p. 18). In this way, TFSC can work to bring together members of a community, who may differ in their attitudes, beliefs, and values on a particular issue, to help them to resolve or accept their differences (Cohen-Cruz, 2001, p. 102). As researcher, I entered into the forum of TFSC least obtrusively and most logically, by joining the community dialogue and posing my own questions while listening attentively to the questions community members were themselves posing and answering.
Paradigm, Perspective, and Strategy

By watching this creative process as it developed I took note of the participants' many perspectives and nuances of meaning by observing the five axioms of naturalist (ethnographic) inquiry set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, the naturalistic paradigm assumes that “there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically” (p. 37); second, the researcher and the focus of the research are inseparable, each influences the other; third, research will describe a particular case that can illuminate a body of knowledge without reaching generalization; fourth, all elements of study interact simultaneously and influence broadly, making cause and effect linkage impossible; and fifth, “inquiry is value-bound” (p. 38), including those values of the researcher, the paradigm, the theory, and the context of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In studying the TFSC group, each of these axioms was crucial in guiding my understanding of the processes related to reciprocal interaction. In order to understand the work that went into group formation and interaction, I began with the assumption that each individual in the group had a unique perspective that complicated and invigorated the group process. The work required both deductive and inductive thinking as I moved back and forth between theories and observations that shaped my inquiry. Some of what I learned from participants was based directly on my questions that inevitably reflected my own worldview and values. The answers to my questions, in turn, both helped illuminate my research as well as influenced the thinking of my participants. Any time a researcher steps into the field however, participants are affected in some way.
I worked from an interpretive paradigm (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 46) in studying how participants engaged in reciprocity through their individual and group interactions. An underlying assumption of this paradigm is that the social world is understood subjectively and constructed based on an individual’s or a specific group’s experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 46). This approach allowed me to engage participants in dialogue focused by social exchange theory and conceptualizations from service-learning research and theater studies, to gain an understanding of their perspectives.

Through the ethnographic method, I observed and extracted the collective experiences of one TFSC project to reveal the degree to which solidarity developed within the newly-formed group of university students and community members. I recorded how participants’ individual beliefs and values came together to form a new group culture that shaped their theater production. These were the prerequisite steps to identifying the dynamics of relationships within the new group to gauge how reciprocity emerged and changed during interactions between participants and in response to course material (see Figure 1). The various stages of TFSC and the components of reciprocal relationships (see Figure 2) provided a framework for me to gather detailed data throughout the process. The ethnographic approach allowed me to revise my framework to depict more accurately a model for reciprocity within Theater for Social Change. Before I continue with study design details that include methods of data collection and analysis and general trustworthiness and authenticity, I provide some background information on the partner institutions, individual participants, course concept, materials, activities and timelines.
A Brief Overview

In this study I was guided by my interest in how civic engagement can be learned and incorporated effectively, especially in regards to reciprocity, in the realm of higher education. Therefore, I focused my observations and interviews specifically on the enrolled students, their professor and the local high school community participants who were involved in a Theater for Social Change project. The course was taught at a small, highly selective, private liberal arts university in the southeastern part of the United States during the spring semester of 2007. The university Professor initiated the theater project with a local magnet high school in the community.

I chose this sample purposely because of the expertise of the professor with extensive international grassroots (and other) theater projects, the emphasis of the university on building community relations (embodied in part in their center for civic engagement), and the liberal arts focus of the institution, which might facilitate students who are not necessarily focused on a career in the performing arts to participate in a theater course. The professor formulated this class specifically to partner with a group of secondary school students in the local community who had a strong interest in, but no access to theater activity. In addition to the two groups of students, participants in the study included administrators and faculty who assisted in guiding the Theater for Social Change project. The facilitating faculty member taught a related course in spring 2006. One of my first interviews sought background context of the course under study from the faculty member. This professor agreed to permit me to study the development of this project to which he was the ultimate gatekeeper.
The cast, a growing list of characters, began with a core group of five participants. The playbill at the start of the semester read: Professor Lanton, three university students, and one qualitative researcher. Our roles, though varied and changing over the course of the semester and dependent on the demands of the project, were to find a way to achieve the goal of the course. Professor Lanton states “a goal of the course is to get closer to our potential positive impact on individuals and community and to learn about Theater for Development as a form of growth, progression, enlightenment” (Class Notes, 01/17/2007). And throughout this important journey, I, as the qualitative researcher, the participant observer, had to pay attention also to issues of reciprocity without compromising the greater goal.

Institutions

Before I introduce the participants of this study, I describe the character of the institutions that represent the project partnership, City University and Harmony High School.¹ I provide this overview because it gives valuable insight into the two communities’ cultures. Some of the perspectives with which participants entered this project were influenced by the culture, history, and/or identity of their schools. The descriptions also contextualize the specific point of entry for initiating this project.

City University.

City University is a private, highly selective liberal arts institution offering both undergraduate and graduate studies. The university annually enrolls approximately 2,800 undergraduates and 650 graduate students. The majority of students are white with 12%

¹ The name of all institutions, places, and individuals throughout this study are pseudonyms.
underrepresented minorities. Located in the mid-Atlantic, City University was founded in the early 19th century and is proud of its historic traditions.

Professor Lanton, the university course instructor, explained to me that the students at City University are nearly overcommitted to extracurricular clubs and projects in addition to their rigorous coursework. Students are bright and value their education. But, according to the City University participants in this study, the stereotype of a City University student is a rich, white, preppy dressed student with an innocent sense of entitlement (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). The stereotype assumes the student is ignorant of life experiences of anyone of lesser privilege. An attitude the participants believe leads to, among other things, a harmful unawareness of racial issues. And yet, these three students don’t appear to fit this stereotype, and when Billy, one of the university participants, admits, “to be fair, there are a lot of people that I’ve written off and then I meet them and talk to them and they are a lot deeper,” the others voice their agreement. Nonetheless, these stereotypes are ones that the students have to contend with both in their own interactions on campus and with the perception of the public when they venture off campus grounds. Two notable stories illustrate this point.

Jasmine, another university participant in this study, performed community work with children in downtown City with her gospel choir. During those times, she “always [got] a double take” when she mentioned that she was from City University. Some community members were surprised both that this gospel choir was from the university, and that these students from City University would care enough to participate in the community. In reality, the university sponsors a very active and committed Center for Civic Engagement, and the director of the center told me that 2/3 of undergraduate
students participate in some form of volunteer work annually. At the start of the semester, Jasmine expected that this same preconception would have to be overcome with the high school students.

Professor Lanton corroborates this experience. "Going out [into the community] is a trip," he says. "When I first got here, because of my work in community work, I would ask questions and talk to people everywhere. I was sitting in a restaurant and I spoke to one person there and she said, '[City University]? Oh.' – implying a kind of snooty place. So you get that again and again. And you are going to get it."

The on-campus community is also divided. Professor Lanton recounted a personal encounter in the cafeteria one day to the group, which illuminates the racial divide.

There's a woman [working in the cafeteria] who said to me: "Oh, I know you, you work in the back." I didn't know how to tell her that I taught here; I wasn't working in the back of the kitchen. Because if you look around, you see there are a lot of people of color doing the menial work. ... I said, "Noooo, that wasn't me." She said, "Ok. Ok. Where do you work?" I'm trying to tell her. I said, well, I'm in the department of theater and dance." She said, "Oh, all right. What you do there?" "Teach" [I say]. "Oh, yeah? ...All right!" And she proceeded to load up my plate.

This story drew lots of laughter, triumphant "yeahs", and incredulous "wows" from our class. It also illustrates several important aspects of this course. First, it was a space in which participants openly shared their personal stories that spoke volumes about their communities and indicated prominent issues. Second, it was a space in which
participants openly acknowledged and felt safe addressing the complicated racial issues of our country. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois referred to the “color line” as the problem of the 20th century” (1903). It is an issue that continues to be at the center of national debate today after electing our first bi-racial president of the United States, Barack Obama. As it turns out, this very important issue of race was an underlying preoccupation, though not the primary focus, of the university participants in this course. The predominantly minority racial make up of the high school community with whom the City University group collaborated is one of several defining components of the school’s identity. University students expressed interest in exploring issues of racial identity, but this was not a topic introduced by the high school students, and so it remained a latent interest.

**Harmony High School.**

Harmony High School is an alternative, or magnet, public high school that enrolls 200 exceptionally bright, creative, and motivated students. It was founded in the late 1970s to provide a strong education for youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. At that time, the students themselves named the school to emphasize a sense of shared goals and togetherness. Recently (12/09/09), *US News and World Report* reported that Harmony High received a silver medal for ranking in the top 3% in the country for its students’ performance on state tests, performance by disadvantaged students, and preparation for college studies. In short, Harmony High is exceptional in many ways.

Upon conducting field research at Harmony High, as part of their preparations for TFSC, City University students offered their opinions and highlighted several aspects of
the school. They noted that Harmony High students are proud but are stressed by their rigorous curriculum. Despite the work, and barring the most usual student gripes, school is a place these students generally like to be and feel safe. They had generally strong relationships with teachers and Principal Ridley and a strong sense of community within grades, but a clear distinction exists between grades (Community Profile, 03/25/2007). Disciplinary issues are present, but compared with many other urban high schools, they are extremely rare and minor for the most part. The racial break down of the student body is 78% black, 18% white, 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic and 1% identifying as other.

Students at Harmony High School work hard at their college preparatory courses, participate in community work, often work jobs after school, and despite already cramped schedules, lament the absence of more extracurricular school sponsored activities. Students at Harmony sense that they are different because they are not unified around sports teams. They wish for opportunities in drama, dance, and other activities. Further conversations between City University and Harmony High students revealed deeper issues and concerns that will be addressed again later. In brief, these included frustration with communication between students and school administration, the negative portrayal of their school in the media, negative feedback about Harmony High School from peers at other schools, and family and neighborhood concerns including gang warfare.

Upon entering the building I was struck by all the impressive student artwork along the walls. The school is a big brick building with wide halls lined with lockers. It is a fairly typical school building in need of some repair. Typical perhaps, yet it has a bit of a bare bones feel to it. What does stand out is that, unlike other city schools I visited
in the surrounding neighborhoods, this school does not welcome visitors with metal detectors.

Our first encounter with the school population was at its morning assembly. Students and teachers took turns making announcements that included meetings, acknowledgements of sporting events, recognition of a student for his work with Bosnia, and an invitation by a student to help in a community service project. Principal Ridley introduced us enthusiastically. I was struck by the overwhelmingly positive energy of the assembly. We were warmly welcomed and cheered by the students who seemed to relish the new opportunity we brought to them. So who exactly were the players in this new partnership?

Participants

Professor Lanton.

Professor Lanton joined the university staff only two academic years prior to the time of this study, and had taught this particular TFSC course at this university once before. He is an accomplished theater director who works around the world, regularly traveling to projects on the west coast of the US, England, and Europe, and having worked for decades in Nigeria. His body of work spans main stage production, Theater for Development, and work with children as well as adults. He emphasizes the importance of community in all of his theater projects and has a special interest in bringing theater about the African and African-American experience to the public.

Jasmine.

Jasmine’s theater experiences include high school stage performances and improvisational performance during a mission trip to Jamaica. The purpose of the
mission trip was to donate food and medical supplies to schools, but the participants employed theatrical tools to enrich its connection to the community. Jasmine spent an academic year preparing for the Jamaica trip with meetings and fundraising, planning skills that could be integral to successful Theater for Social Change as well. When her group arrived in Jamaica, in addition to delivering the supplies, it performed stories through improvised skits that received warm and enthusiastic response from the audience, thus connecting with the community on a more personal level. In joining the TFSC course at City University, Jasmine was looking for an avenue for community work and a way to contribute to social issues. Amongst other ambitions, she considers a career in journalism alongside of creative writing.

Sonja.

Sonja is a Peruvian visiting the United States to pursue her baccalaureate degree as a marketing major. Throughout the years she has participated regularly in volunteer work, much of which was in a children’s hospital in Peru. As a form of outreach theater, Sonja performed with puppets to entertain Andean children in need. Sonja’s interest in theater lies mainly in acting; she has therefore taken the basic acting course offered at the university. Her goal is to learn how to make a social contribution through the arts.

Billy.

Billy is the most experienced in theater work and the only student in the course with specific training in Theater for Social Change. He completed the Theater for Social Change I course in the 2007 spring semester as well as another theater course both with Professor Lanton. TFSC 1 was a precursor to TFSC 2, but at this time is not a prerequisite for TFSC 2. In TFSC 1, Billy worked on skits that were used to spark
dialogue on campus about campus community issues. He majored in film at another
college before transferring to City University. He has experience assisting with technical
aspects of high school plays. His mother works in the law center at City University and
much of her work is with children in the community. Billy shared this information as a
way to explain some of his knowledge and interest in reaching out to the community
schools.

The researcher, myself.

Like other participants, I have held a long fascination with the theater. From a
young age I performed with puppets, often in an improvisational setting in public spaces.
In college I took a Basic Acting course, where I performed acts, helped to build a stage
set and worked with props. As an English major, I studied theater from a literary
perspective. In graduate school I continued analyzing the importance of stories,
communities, scenes, settings, acting, etc. through film and literature in an American
Studies graduate program. At this time I also completed a course in Grassroots Theater
that was transformational for me. In pursuing my current degree in higher education, I
combine my passion for theater, community stories, and civic engagement.

The character of our initial group.

As we began to work together, our group started the process of developing a
caracter of its own. We became aware of our comforts and discomforts, strengths and
weaknesses, backgrounds and dreams, and these helped form our group identity. The
relationship networks that existed and the ties that strengthened are an important aspect
of this group identity and the study of reciprocity that will be addressed in the following
chapters. Of special interest, however, is the diversity in cultural background of our
small group. Professor Lanton made a point of asking us to examine our roots and know our histories, cultural, familial, and personal. We divulged only a few aspects of our backgrounds out loud with the group and kept a majority of details to ourselves both because of the time constraints of the class and because of the deeply personal nature of such information.

Professor Lanton is African American. He grew up in the Northeast of the US and moved to Nigeria as a university student to continue pursuing his theatrical training and career. He only recently returned to the US to be closer to family and make it easier for his children to pursue their higher education in the US. Jasmine is African American with Jamaican roots. Sonja is from Peru, currently in the US to earn her college degree. Billy and I are white, representing the racial majority of the university and the US and all the privileges inherent in that position. I am a first generation American, my parents having immigrated to the US from Germany. During the semester there were times when it became apparent that our cultural heritage has given us specific tools, experiences, or opinions. Acknowledging our cultural lens, as one of many lenses through which we understand and interact with our surroundings, helps heighten our awareness of the varied backgrounds of those around us, and this is critical to successful community work.

Especially in theater, our physical appearances and distinct mannerisms become part of our communication. The descriptions that follow are, for better or worse, filtered through my own impressions and opinions. Professor Lanton looms around 6½ feet, cutting an impressive figure underscored by his confidence and his telling facial expressions. In a kind yet firm manner, his physical gestalt demands attention and respect, a sentiment he reinforces verbally and shows to others as well.
Myself, I start off at five feet eight inches and around 130 pounds, but as the semester progresses so does my pregnancy, and my obvious belly cannot be denied. There are moments in the semester where students think of me as “the pregnant” participant, such as when a high school student kindly offers me a chair in the middle of a long, standing exercise. I slouch more often than I should, belying my own insecurities that I think I usually manage to overcome in my speech and actions. I perceive myself speaking with a very slight lisp. I smile frequently and listen eagerly, but sometimes babble on instead of making my point concisely.

Billy is trim and has the look of a cross-country runner. He wears glasses and throughout the semester his hair goes from light brown to blue. Like me, he has a tendency to slouch a bit. Billy smiles easily and enjoys sharing stories about his life, family and his love of film.

Jasmine’s voice is soft and she is especially well spoken. She often appears reflective and when she speaks, her thoughtful comments are punctuated with hand gestures. Like Billy, her hair is transformed throughout the semester but rather than experimenting with color, she varies the style.

Sonja wears her heart on her sleeve. When she is enthralled and excited, we know it by the broad warm smiles and frequent laughs that keep coming; and when she is busy and stressed we know it too by the concern on her face and the tiredness portrayed by her silence and taut features. Her English is close to perfect though her accent is a reminder that her home is Peru. A few times in the semester she mentions that she is insecure of a situation because of a possible linguistic or cultural misunderstanding.
Here we have the initial cast of characters. When the university class entered the community, more characters began to participate including Principal Ridley, Ms. Scott (a project liaison/mentor), the high school students, a drummer, some teachers, and a few parents. Individual participants were characters, but groups of participants added further characterization to the project. Two individual groups (the high school students and the university students) eventually evolved into one group collaborating on TFSC. I explore this growing and changing group dynamic in the following chapter. For now, here is a brief description of the key players.

**Principal Ridley.**

If it were not for the open-minded and open-hearted nature of Principal Ridley, this project would never have come to fruition. He quickly understood Professor Lanton’s goals and recognized an important opportunity for collaboration. Furthermore, Principal Ridley was willing to be flexible with practical issues such as school schedules to accommodate us. In an interview he explained that he continues to seek out positive opportunities for his students.

Principal Ridley has a lively, joyful energy. His face lights up in smiles easily and frequently. His body language speaks of confidence as he moves to and fro addressing his school in assembly. When our theater group attended a high school assembly, Dr. Ridley introduced us to the high school student body and briefly explained that Professor Lanton was bringing a new theater opportunity to the school and he was grateful for that. He said, “There is more than American Idol out there!” Also, with Professor Lanton’s verification he reminded students that career opportunities can come from this involvement in theater.
Ms. Scott.

Having formerly worked in broadcasting, Ms. Scott is currently a journalism teacher at Harmony High. She volunteered to be the liaison between City University and Harmony High. Not only was she an incredible asset in advertising our project and reminding students when and where we would meet, she also has her thumb squarely on the pulse of the youth culture in the school. Students gravitate to her and confide in her. She was present at most of the group meetings, participated in a few exercises, and gave honest and thoughtful answers to our countless questions.

The high school students.

Initially thirteen high school students joined the project, but quickly two left. Not having the opportunity to interview them, I do not know whether they lost interest, had expectations of something different, or simply did not have the time to participate. Of the remaining 11 students, all expressed interest (and some even honor) to take place in my study. Unfortunately, I was able to secure the written permission of only four students’ parents. I think this is mostly because students forgot to ask parents, or parents forgot to sign and return their forms, rather than that parents felt uncomfortable with allowing their students to be part of the study, but this is only conjecture. Therefore, any direct quotations or specific reference to students come from these four students. Still, I describe group interactions in which no individual can be singled out, or where the main focus is on one of the consenting participants.

The high school students ranged from freshman to seniors and included 9 females and 2 males. All were enthusiastic about being a part of a theater group, though they had to learn the difference between traditional main stage theater and Theater for Social
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Change. Throughout the sessions they learned how to use the medium to express their ideas and listen and respond to other people's ideas with respect. Some of the students were shy and others very outspoken. Most had to overcome some nerves and insecurities of taking part in an unfamiliar forum. The nervous energy was expressed through giggles and chattiness. When the students settled down, they became thoughtful and valuable informants about their communities. Every single student was a pleasure to work with and brought a true commitment, enthusiasm, inner strength, and determination to the project.

The drummer.

I did not expect the drummer to be a character in this story. Nor did I immediately realize when he was becoming part of the story. Therefore, most unfortunately, I did not seek his consent to participate in the study, nor did I ask him enough questions of his involvement with the theater project that surely would have proven of interest. For these reasons, I cannot include many details of our interactions. Still, I must at least include the drummer as a nebulous figure, providing a background beat to part of our story, even if I cannot crack the code or translate this beat for you.

The drummer was a visiting artist from Nigeria at City University whom Professor Lanton invited to one of our rehearsals. There he drummed for us during a theater adaptation of Musical Chairs in order to encourage students to share their ideas about community issues. The drummer's presence is important because it underscores Professor Lanton's work ethic to include community outreach in all of his work, and because his artistic contribution was a great asset in (literally) drumming up enthusiasm and inviting students to share their ideas.
The teachers.

The teachers at Harmony High were an important source of information. Upon Dr. Ridley's request, they gladly opened their classrooms to us, allowed us to invade their schedules and interact with their students. Thanks to the participating teachers, we were able to capitalize on valuable interviewing time gathering insight into the school culture and individual student and school and neighborhood community issues. Teachers' perspectives helped round out our understanding of the school and the students.

Course Materials, Concepts, Activities and Timelines

Aside from the participants, the design and intention of the university course shaped the community project. The syllabus provides key elements of the nature of the course which guided the work in the community. The syllabus outlines the course description as follows:

Drawing on global models Theatre for Social Change II is a production laboratory which extends the notion of Theater for development (TFD) by initiating intensive dramatic activity in a specific local community. ...The plays will reflect the concerns of the community participants and be by the people for the people and with the people. Students will dominantly act as facilitators and be utilized in their most appropriate capacity. They will pass on theatre skills to the community participants as well as learn and employ cultural norms unique to the specific community. Research, data analysis, scenario development, theatre games ad playmaking techniques will be used to investigate and inspire the community participants to question their lives and environment with a view towards progressive social action. Sustainability will be a key concern in the development
of activity. Seminar forums will offer background information and orientation in TFD with a view towards some major activity within a community.

Key concept words and phrases in this description include *specific local community*, *by, for, and with the people, facilitators, research, data analysis, scenario development, theatre games and playmaking techniques, investigate and inspire the community, progressive social action, and sustainability*.

A "specific local community" indicates the need to identify and build a partnership with a willing community. It also implies the importance of getting to know and understand the specific identity and culture of the community. "Local" further reveals something both about the practical side of this partnership as well as some ground for commonality. "By, for and with the people" is a mantra of Theater for Social Change, which was discussed earlier. It is paramount that the theater produced and the process followed is steered by the self-identified needs and desires of the community working with the professionals—or in this case with apprentices. Designating university students as "facilitators" (rather than directors) again suggests a power-sharing model and a respect for community ideas.

Maintaining the integrity of the process of the project was at the heart of the success of the project as well as at the heart of this study. Each component of the process, whether "research, analysis, scenario development, theatre games [or] playmaking techniques," followed a code of respect for the participants and focus on a positive outcome. The code was also reinforced in the university student evaluation.

Professor Lanton stressed that his students must show "equal participation"; they must "cover each other" and work hard. When one student reports, others should listen and
respond. Their work ethic is a “mirror of the outside world” and a model of discipline for the high school students with whom they will work.

The overall goal of the course, to “investigate and inspire the community,” is also that of TFSC in general. The goal requires those inside and outside of the community to understand something about the community’s identity and to create a positive momentum for self-actualization and positive change (“progressive social action”) that has some form of lasting effect. This last notion of “sustainability” cannot be judged based on the time constraints of this study.

In reviewing the syllabus, Professor Lanton emphasized the need for students to be flexible and prepared to adapt to change. In the community one cannot control the environment or even dynamics so he advised his students to prepare their temperaments by making the assumption that they know very little. With this in mind he asked students to “let the mission guide you.” Furthermore, students were required to come with a “generous and giving spirit” and specifically asked to bring “a suitcase full of patience, a room full of humility, and a warehouse full of purpose” (Course Syllabus, Spring 2007, p. 3).

The syllabus set the ground rules of the project. It underscored why this particular course was selected for this study. The course aimed to be an exemplary model for community work (civic engagement). The syllabus suggested the importance of a reciprocal relationship in its attention to community needs and integrity of learning. The syllabus also indicates that course materials included readings from select essays and segments of books on Theater for Social Change, videos of exemplary TFSC, community data generated by students through interviews, research, and theater interaction. I return
to these elements stated in the syllabus as I explain and evaluate the process of the project. Each concept is crucial to dissecting and more fully understanding the idea of reciprocity.

The flow of this study is directly tied to the activities and timeline of the course. Professor Lanton emphasized the important skill of being flexible. Likewise he told students that the syllabus was a guiding tool and that timelines and assignments might change. Core activities, however, would remain as stated on the syllabus. Individual and group reporting on readings and interviews, class discussion, analysis of videos, participating and leading theater games, facilitating the creation of a play, and producing the play, were the key activities of the course.

The semester can be divided into two halves that correspond closely to the eight stages of the TFSC project I outline in Figure 2. The first half of the semester was oriented to helping students understand the form of TFSC. It covered preparations, introductions, project definition and understanding roles. In these eight sessions City University students read and reported on articles about the form, watched and discussed videos of two TFSC performances, and practiced techniques and theater games on the floor. In the second half of the semester, students entered the field to engage with their community partner, the students at Harmony High. Although it was necessary to recap and even to some extent extend the preparations, introductions, and project definitions, here the emphasis was on devising, rehearsing, performance, and reflection. One session was devoted to information gathering and another to the debriefing of the community profile. Seven more sessions (three of which were additional days beyond what the syllabus and standard courses specified) were spent with the community and working on
technique. A final session with the community included a performance and reflection day. The semester was capped off with a celebratory meal amongst the university participants and some final sharing of thoughts at Professor Lanton’s home. Voluntarily a couple of university participants returned to the school, post semester, to brainstorm how Harmony High students would like to move forward with their new theater skills and forum.

The university students were evaluated based on their written as well as oral and physical participation. They were required to complete a joint community profile and a joint final report. Additionally they submitted an individual journal chronicling their progress throughout the semester. Fifty percent of their evaluation relied on play creation and performance laboratory – in short, all the interactive theater and community elements.

**Data Collection**

In conducting this ethnographic study, I used interviews, observation, and document analysis (described below and in Appendix A) to generate and collect data (Creswell, 2007, p. 79). These three tools allowed me a depth of access to cultural experience and triangulated my inquiry. Triangulation helps guard against the intrusion of the researcher’s own assumptions and increases the credibility and validity of the results. I acted as participant observer, limiting my interaction to the extent that it strengthened both my relationship with participants and my understanding of the process. I did not “go native” by attempting to fully integrate with the participants or take part in any theater project decisions or production. I address the specific challenges of the participant observer in chapter four. I worked with Professor Lanton to integrate my
interview questions with his course design and was able to minimize my intrusion by using additional class reflection sessions led by Professor Lanton as points of data collection.

I received permission to conduct this study from the Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary and the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants (IRB) at City University. I provided each student of the university class (Appendix B), the parents of each secondary school student (Appendix C) and relevant Harmony High and City University teachers and administrators (Appendix D), with a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study and its Human Subject protection. All members of the TFSC project were informed that choosing not to participate in this study would not prohibit them from participating in any activities necessary for the project. I conducted no interviews with such members, though I noted the absence of data when relative.

Interviews.

I used three different interview approaches, the focus group interview, the informal conversational interview and the general interview guide. I made each choice of approach based on the kind of information I sought, the purpose of the interview, and the practicality of logistics in setting up the interviews. The first focus group interview with the university students, the first generally guided interview with Professor Lanton and the generally guided interview at the end of the semester with Principal Ridley were all recorded on cassette (as was outlined in the participant's informed consent form) and transcribed. Informal conversational interview questions were recorded in my
observation notes. (See the appendices A, B, C, and D for interview protocol, questions, and informed consent forms.)

I conducted two focus group interviews with the participating university students, one at the beginning and one at the conclusion of the semester. The focus group interviews were semi-structured allowing for emergent discussion of related concepts and topics. My questions were focused on the five components of reciprocal relationships (see Figure 2). With generous permission from Professor Lanton, these interviews took place during the regular class meeting time and dovetailed with the professor’s required course reflection component. That is, Professor Lanton allowed my interviewing session to work as a prompted reflection session. A major advantage of focus group interviews in the context of this study was that participants could hear each other’s responses and follow up on their own thoughts. Patton (2002) writes, “the object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (p. 386). Because the focus of this study is the concept of “reciprocity,” which inherently implies interaction of participants, it was vital that participants could consider one another’s perspectives and experiences in addressing the interview questions. Another advantage of the focus group interview is that it allowed me to gather data from several participants in one time session. The logistics of setting up times to interview students who had very structured and busy schedules was greatly facilitated by the focus group approach.

In order to capture Professor Lanton’s, Ms. Scott’s, the high school students’ and the university students’ perspectives throughout the project, I employed informal conversational interviews. These interviews comprised anywhere from one to several
questions in one class meeting, posed to the entire group, to part of a group, or to individuals separately. This approach allowed me to collect impressions during the introduction stage, the project definition stage, the devising stage in which key strides were made towards cooperation and united efforts. Most importantly, because I was a participant observer, it often afforded me an opportunity to ask a question at the most relevant moment. Participants felt more relaxed and possibly even unaware that I was interviewing them when I could slip in questions seamlessly into conversations already taking place amongst participants themselves. Informal interview questions sometimes included a specific question I had formulated in advance, but usually flowed freely from the action and conversation of the moment.

To gain a deeper understanding of the class and community group I also conducted structured interviews using general interview guides with Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley who represented the partnership at the institutional level. I interviewed Professor Lanton at the beginning of the semester and administered a written interview at the end of the semester. I interviewed Principal Ridley at the end of the project. The focus of these interviews was on the goals, expectations, and concerns of the project facilitators.

While not defined as an interview, reflection and debriefing sessions provided me with one more opportunity to collect data very closely related to those which I sought with my interview questions. I was fortunate to be present at all the group reflection sessions. In these sessions, either Professor Lanton or other participants would ask each other to share and/or respond to a question, moment, challenge, concept or technique. On several occasions, I heard Professor Lanton pose a question that I had wanted to ask in an
interview. Additionally, without dominating, I would occasionally drop an appropriate question within this reflection or debriefing forum. Despite the similarity of approach and purpose of these reflection sessions to some of my interviews, technically they were recorded as observations in my notes.

**Observations.**

Regular observations allowed me to record group interactions, a crucial element of the process of Theater for Social Change. Observations are the main element in ethnographic study, allowing a thorough and ongoing collection of data throughout the study. As an outsider, the researcher studying a culture may not immediately know which moments are the most relevant to her focus of inquiry, therefore observation serves as a running log of events, impressions, reactions that can be reviewed for further analysis at the completion of the study when the researcher’s understanding of the culture has enriched her ability to interpret what she has witnessed. I attended all but two class meetings, throughout the semester. I recorded my observations in detailed field notes, bracketing my own thoughts with the notation of my initials. When I was unable to take notes unobtrusively, or sit to take written notes, I drafted an observation summary immediately after the session. My conceptual framework, specifically outlined in Figure 2, served as the foundation for my observations. In some cases it become beneficial to observe certain group members more intensely at one or another session. Observation helped me to contextualize and interpret the data I collected in the interview and written document components of the study.
Document analysis.

Document analysis reveals yet another layer of meaning to the context of participant’s interactions and their understanding of the concepts of TFSC. It can also point the way to additional inquiry in interviews and observations. I reviewed a number of documents and texts each providing distinct data while filling in gaps and verifying or revealing contradictions of other data collection methods.

In the beginning of the semester, the university students read a number of essays and chapters related to the theory and practice of TFSC, and watched two documentary films of TFSC performances. These texts introduced some important concepts related to reciprocity. As all the university students read the same materials, it helped me gauge their developing sense of their own goals for the project and the protocol for interacting with the community. These texts also provided us with a common field specific vocabulary that was useful in expanding our discussions and conceptualization of our actions. Finally the films and literature gave us reference points to call up when addressing the university/high school project.

Professor Lanton required the university students to keep a reflective and critical journal throughout their work with the community. Specifically, Professor Lanton’s guidelines explained that the purpose of the journal was “to show that you have been thinking about the process of your learning and the development of your understanding” (Journal Writing assignment sheet). Professor Lanton suggested 14 questions that might help guide students in “analyzing any shifts in [their] views during the process ... [and] identify and challenge their underlying assumptions, beliefs and views” (Journal Writing assignment sheet). The journals allowed me to follow the experience of individual
university students from their perspective without having to schedule numerous individual interviews. They verified what I noted as important in my observation notes, but also made me aware of what I sometimes missed in my observations. Journals were a space in which students could relay what they found most important to the project without the intrusion of the researcher prompting them for information most pertinent for her study. I discovered student-generated themes in the journals that helped me code my overall data. Additionally, the written journal entries allowed students who were unwilling to offer their opinions in front of their peers or simply less verbal during focus group interviews, to offer their opinions in writing. Analyzing the language as well as the content of the entries was an indicator of students' growing sophistication and understanding of civic engagement, particularly as it relates to reciprocity of actions.

The university students submitted a Community Profile and a Final Report to Professor Lanton who shared them with me (as part of the agreement of participation). These two written reports gave valuable insight into the university students' thoughts on their community partner and the work they performed together. The purpose of the Community Profile, according to Professor Lanton's assignment sheet, was "to provide information which will help to define and shape the intended activity – especially from a participatory base." In the profile report, the university students included statistical information about Harmony High, analyzed historical, social, economic, cultural political, health, and academic aspects of the Harmony High's identity, and identified topics of community interest for further discussion. The Community Profile shed light on how the university students were working towards understanding their project partner and how they strategized about entering the community and building a strong relationship. In
the Final Report, the university students provided a reflection and critical analysis of the
TFSC project. The Reporting Specs requested by Professor Lanton included the
following four sections: “A brief Background on the project; Methodology and
Implementation; Findings: impact of the work on you, the project team, target audience;
Summary, Evaluation, Recommendations.”

The high school students filled out a feedback survey at the conclusion of the
project (see Appendix A). Professor Lanton designed this survey with seven questions
aimed at discerning the high school students’ perception of their overall experience.
Specific questions asked about their expectations, challenges, achievements, preparations,
development of skills, suggestions for improvements and potential impact on their
community. The answers to these questions were crucial indicators of whether at least
some of the high school participants’ expectations were met (half of the reciprocity
equation), whether the students felt empowered, where the project might have fallen short
of meeting community goals, or even failed, what participants perceive as some of the
outcomes of the project, and what the general experience meant to students.

I videotaped the final performance, which gave me the opportunity to analyze
many key moments and perspectives that I might have missed in only one viewing. I was
able to analyze body language as well as word choice, pay attention to the audience as
well as the actors, and take an exact account of responses. Even though the videotape
duplicates what I observed live, the level of detail I was able to discern by reviewing the
tape gave me additional data and served to verify or correct any initial impressions I had.
Data Analysis

Because this study is an ethnography, I needed to generate thick detailed description of as many as possible of the experiences and interactions the students were having. Creswell (2007) reminds us that “ethnographers study the meaning of, the behavior, the language, and the interaction of the members of the culture-sharing group” (pp. 68-69). In this project there were two groups initially, the university contingent and the high school contingent. Eventually, especially amongst the students, one main group developed to share in the culture of TFSC. This was a culture defined by specific theater practices, community goals, and physical expression. To accomplish this ethnographic feat it was imperative that I spend sufficient time in the field. Analysis was an ongoing process that included description of the group and its themes from the first observations through the final meeting (Creswell, 2007, p. 79). Then I ordered the data in a focused way to reveal patterns from which I drew conclusions about their movement towards reciprocity. Primarily I implemented emergent theme analysis to group participants’ experiences in a way that presented an understanding of the complexities of reciprocity. I coded the observation field notes holistically. Each of the interviews and the written exercises were subjected to a process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the first phase of open coding, I identified 56 significant categories. The second stage of axial coding refined and organized the initial themes in a way that revealed connections between the initial categories. During the third phase of selective coding I consolidated the codes under 13 themes that began to suggest a pattern I could work into a new model for understanding reciprocity. The 13 themes included the 5 components of my conceptual framework. These codes revealed the most vibrant and
persistent components of the social interaction with in the TFSC project. Finally, as part of my analysis I organized and summarized all of my data in prose form under the five concepts for each of the eight stages in my conceptual framework, working the additional 8 themes in wherever they applied.

**Trustworthiness and Authenticity**

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), “competent practice, ethics, and political sensitivity all contribute to a study’s trustworthiness” (p. 63). In my study, I considered four dimensions of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These ensured that the study adhered to strict criteria for engaging in worthy research, documenting the steps of the process, and minimizing bias and other factors that might undermine the value of the results.

*Credibility* addresses the truth value of the study, and assumes the “qualitative researcher’s task is to render an account of participants’ worldviews as honestly and fully as possible” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 65). For this study, I used the following methods to ensure credibility: use of participant pseudonyms, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, reflexive journaling, and use of participants voices without filtering. Member checks were performed during interviews with follow up questions for clarification and after interviews by allowing participants to read the transcription. Additional member checks were performed through informal interviews or occasionally via email throughout the semester, especially as I identified areas that needed further clarification or verification.

*Transferability* refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) write: “The degree of
transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what we shall call ‘fittingness.’ Fittingness is defined as degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts” (p. 124). I used the following techniques in the present study: thick description, purposive sampling, and reflexive journaling. Although I cannot claim generalizability, these techniques allow readers to judge for themselves whether the results apply to other similar situations.

Dependability applies to the consistency of findings in a study that replicates the same contexts and parameters (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 317-318). I worked towards dependability by collecting data till I reached saturation, by keeping a reflective journal, and by producing a complete audit trail. I cannot claim full dependability because I believe that a study with the same focus conducted at a different time with different researchers could yield different results. Still I believe that my research steps and collected data are presented in a thorough fashion that allows readers of this study to follow my conclusions.

Finally, confirmability addresses the issue of neutrality and focuses on the extent to which the findings report the participants’ perspectives as opposed to the researcher’s opinions and biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In order to establish the confirmability of the study’s findings, I conducted two levels of member-checking for each interview. During interviews I repeated back portions of what participants had told me and asked for confirmation or noted clarifications. After the interview, I allowed participants to read the transcript and provide any alterations they preferred. Additionally, throughout this study I have used quotations from participants’ comments in class and reflective journals to relay their perspectives in their own voices.
In addition to trustworthiness, authenticity is also important. Five criteria of authenticity determine whether the research will “...contribute in some way to understanding and action that can improve social circumstances” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 63). Fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity are the five criteria of authenticity (Manning, 1997, p. 98-99).

*Fairness* is closely related to trustworthiness. It ensures that findings result from a trusting relationship between researcher and participant, “are contextual and credible for that particular time and place, [and] are plausible and multivocal” (Manning, 1997, p. 98). I ensured fairness by asking each participant to read and sign an informed consent form before the study began, using various forms of member checks throughout the study, and engaging in prolonged engagement and persistent observation.

I had wanted to invite participants to a thank-you lunch at the completion of the project to allow them to ask any questions about the study and reflect on what they might have learned through their participation. Unfortunately it was impossible to convene such a meeting because of participants’ schedules at the end of the academic year. Still, I ensured some *ontological authenticity* through my interview questions and reflective questions that I posed as part of a presentation on texts, Professor Lanton asked me to give. Similarly, the focus group interviews, debriefing sessions, and answers to participants’ questions about my work throughout the semester helped get at *educative authenticity*, when students learn about the experiences and perspectives of other participants.
Catalytic authenticity addresses the usefulness of the research study’s results to its participants as well as stakeholders. To reach catalytic authenticity I remained committed to understanding the point of view of the participants and interpreting data based on reputable texts and logical deductions. I have promised to make my study available to participants in hopes of illuminating them on their own growth and possibly encouraging them towards further exploration of the themes we exposed.

A researcher can reach tactical authenticity if she incorporates research techniques that empower her participants. I do believe that the Theater for Social Change class empowered students, but do not claim that the study’s process contributed to tactical authenticity. I hope that the results may empower educators and student affairs professionals to take action in the field of service on their campuses.

Conclusion

In trying to break down some of the traditional hierarchies of the academic setting, Stringer (1997) asked his students to regard him as an educational consultant (p. 24). He challenged the traditional paradigm of learning by introducing the negotiated curriculum and encouraging a learning community (Stringer, 1997, p. 26). This approach resembles closely the sentiments of both Armstrong (2000) and Kent (1994) regarding the potential of TFSC. Kent (1994) writes,

Creative drama can be a powerful tool for theatre for social change by transforming visionary creative artists into leaders—and passive observers into fully active participants—and by modeling more egalitarian, interactive relationships between teacher/guides and other participants. …Creative drama
presents an opportunity for collaborative leadership between faculty and students.

( pp. 71-72 )

Both authors identify the transformative nature inherent in the processes of their approaches to community related projects and point to issues of reciprocity by mentioning the break down of traditional hierarchies (Stringer, 1997) and “modeling more egalitarian, interactive relationships” (Kent, 1994). Only with attention to reciprocity, they suggest, can TFSC reach its goal of effecting change and fostering a sense of civic engagement in participants.

Higher education often addresses the skills needed to acquire both intellectual and social growth in separate spheres, academic affairs addressing the one largely through the classroom, and student affairs addressing the other primarily though extracurricular activities. Not often enough are students asked to exercise the ability to merge these spheres. Yet these elements must come together to encourage the development of civic mindedness and help students practice interacting in the interdisciplinary realities of their communities. Theater for Social Change lends itself to a co-curricular approach.

This study has been conducted at a time when professionals at colleges and universities emphasize “unlocking intellectual and personal possibilities for students” (The College of William & Mary, ¶1), work towards fostering engaged citizenship (Jacoby, 1996), and worry about the loss of community on campus (McDonald, 2002). It is of vital importance to students as well as institutions of higher education and communities in American society to explore how colleges can successfully achieve the goals they set. In the foreword to Creating Campus Community, Parker Palmer (2002) states:
The key to community is the capacity planted deep in the human soul to open up, to reach out, to give and take in a fabric of morally persuasive relationships. ... We must remember, too, that we have at our disposal one of the greatest vehicles for soul making and community building known to humankind – the one called education. (p. xv)

Sometimes, and for some students, the “capacity ... to open up” is best unlocked through creative and interdisciplinary means. The Chronicle Review laments that colleges are not rated for creativity, but rather for sports and alcohol consumption (Tepper, 2004).

Theater for Social Change is a highly creative process that works towards many of the general goals of a liberal arts education. If a study on TFSC can help define reciprocity it might lead to a better understanding of how to prepare students for civic engagement, making it a valuable tool for faculty, student affairs professionals, and students alike.

The best way to study reciprocity in TFSC is through an ethnography that allows the researcher to follow the progression of relationships, thoughts, and actions between participants. A key factor in allowing me to achieve closeness to the material, processes and participants was my position as participant observer. My own understanding of this position that I chose in designing the study has grown more nuanced. In chapter four, I discuss this position in depth, using examples from my entry into the classroom through the final video recording of the performance. In my presentation of the data I collected, I dissect the components of reciprocal relationships within the context of the TFSC project by describing and analyzing the relationships existing between the individuals and the groups (nodes), the sense of purpose that developed through out the course (covenant),
the strengthening of ties through relationships and purpose, the dynamism enacted in coming to a shared view, and the power dynamics at work on many different levels.

Being so closely involved with the participants helped me understand their processes and identify their challenges and success. This in itself was a positive achievement of the study. I was able to conduct my study from beginning to end, much as I had set out. I succeeded in conducting focus group interviews, noting observations, and collecting written material. I am delighted by the frank conversations we had about what participants were putting in and getting out of the project, and count this as an achievement as well. The close alignment between my own goals for this study and those of the professor for his course made my work easier. My study was so well embedded in the course structure, that my presence caused little disruption to the project. I have come to a deeper understanding of reciprocity in community work and developed a more precise vocabulary to help discuss it that I eagerly share in the following chapters.
Chapter Four: The Participant Observer

Without a clear understanding of the field and activities I encountered in my emergent study, the role of the researcher as participant observer remains vague. In the method section I wrote that I did not plan on “going native,” a position that would imply “full and complete participation” according to Patton (2002, p. 267). I recognized that I would not be able, nor did I want, to fully integrate with the participants. Instead, I prepared to slide to and fro on the participant observer continuum. Patton writes,

Degree of participation and nature of observation vary along a wide continuum of possibilities. The ideal in evaluation is to design and negotiate that degree of participation that will yield the most meaningful data about the program given the characteristics of the participants, the nature of staff-participant interactions, the socio-political context of the program, and the information needs of intended evaluation users. Likewise, in applied and basic research, the purpose, scope length, and setting for the study will dictate the range and types of participant observation that are possible. (p. 267)

In this chapter I begin by reemphasizing the appropriate use of the participant observer in research on Theater for Social Change. Then, I explain the degree of my participation and the nature of my observation through a number of examples. These examples mostly illustrate strengths in my research, but also illuminate a few weaknesses when I struggled with my position as participant observer. Finally, I discuss how an analogy to puppetry
helped me to cope with the complexity of the nuanced position of participant observer by heightening my awareness of self and role in this study. In this analogy, I as researcher, become both the puppet and the puppeteer. The participant (the puppet) performs, and the observer (the puppeteer) is aware of the performance. I bounced between the exciting reality of the theater project (absorbed in the action like a puppet on its stage) and the sometime tedious reality of collecting and analyzing data (the disciplined practice of the puppeteer). The puppet is not a controlled piece of fabric, but rather an engaged piece in the fabric of the Theater for Social Change process.

**Participant Observer and “Spectactor”**

Participant observation is a particularly appropriate tool for studying Theater for Social Change because it is closely related to the methods of the theater process itself. Boal (1985), a contemporary authority on Theater for Social Change, coined the word “spectactor” for his specific form or TFSC called *Theater of the Oppressed*. By coining this word, Boal blurs the line between observer of theater and participant of theater. He emphasizes the vitality of audience participation to the success and essence of TFSC. The spectator is necessarily and simultaneously, even if unaware, an actor or contributor to action of the theatrical spectacle. My role as participant observer in many ways and instances mirrored that of the spectactor. For Boal (1995), one of the values of the actor is “the division or doubling of self which occurs in the subject who comes on stage, the fruit of the dichotomic and ‘dichotomising’ character of the ‘platform’, which allows – and enables – self observation” (p. 28). Boal places emphasis on the actor who becomes self-aware of his position as subject and object. My challenge was to become comfortable and effective shifting from observer to participant while maintaining a self-
awareness of my role as researcher and simultaneously being a committed member of the theater project team. The similarities of technique made it easier for me, the researcher, to gather data seamlessly. My work did not stand out, but rather blended in with the ongoing activities of the phenomenon I was studying.

In addition, because I focused on the issue of reciprocity, I was mindful of my own contributions to the course while I was simultaneously mining the field for data. Participant observation suited my goal of giving something back to the class I studied. In exchange for letting me observe and interview the participants, I could help facilitate theater games, summarize articles, and offer my moral support.

**Transitioning into my role as participant observer.**

When I first entered the university classroom I felt like an outsider. I had established a good relationship with Professor Lanton who kindly had taken me under his wing, but I did not know any of the students. A visitor from another university, I was worried how they would perceive me and if they would eventually accept me. I was at least 12 years older than the university students in the course, and this presented an additional potential disconnection between the participants and me. Thus, on the first day, I entered the field feeling very much like an observer. It did not take long, however, to begin the transformation to participant. Professor Lanton, who explained the importance of the participation of all members, reinforced the challenge I had set for myself. I was suddenly accountable to both the professor and the students, not merely to myself and the goals of my study. This additional personal commitment added value to the participant observer and made the role both more urgent and more enjoyable.
Professor Lanton’s gracious introduction of me and my study and his request that students help me in any way they could, eased my task considerably.

Before the first session was over I was already well ensconced in the roles of spectactor and participant observer. Professor Lanton asked us to play a game called “Grandmother’s Keys.” In this exercise, one person is appointed to play the grandmother. She stands with her back to the rest of the players who are positioned approximately 20 feet behind her. Her keys (borrowed from anyone in the room) are placed just behind her on the floor. The object is for the rest of the players to obtain the keys and bring them back over the starting line without being caught moving or with the keys in their hands. Grandmother can turn around anytime to see who is moving. When she is looking at everyone, she can 1) catch someone moving and send him back to start, 2) hazard a guess at who has the keys and if she is correct send the player to start and replace the keys, or 3) simply turn her back again and allow play to resume.

Right away I felt myself tested in the role of participant observer. The game demanded that we each strive to reach the keys successfully, yet I did not want to dominate in any way. When we started the game, students tried to gain the keys independently as though in a competition with one another. Eventually, after multiple failed attempts, they began to whisper and gesture suggestions about how to obtain the keys and bring them back to start undetected making a group effort. I had ideas about achieving this goal, but kept my mouth shut until several others had made suggestions as well. Combining our efforts and ideas by making distracting and diverting noises, deceptive moves, and blocking formation with our bodies, we eventually succeeded in duping poor grandmother out of her keys.
In a follow up discussion, students determined the lessons of the game and their application to Theater for Social Change. They noted that a shared goal and teamwork was integral to achieving their goal. Paramount to this collective effort was effective communication, which included not only verbal cues but also physical ones. Additionally, listening to others, improvising and being open to changing the course of action all aided in playing the game successfully. All of these skills are important for a successful Theater for Social Change project. In retrospect, I find it amusing and poignant that this very first exercise encapsulated in miniature my own points of focus for the study: networks between nodes (the relationship between the players), covenant (shared purpose), strengthening ties (learning to cooperate), dynamism (progress and positive energy through navigating group conflict), and power dynamics (as we sought control of the keys and the game).

An additional lesson that I learned is the delicate tightrope walk of the participant observer. As participant, I had the advantage of understanding the students’ challenge from a first person perspective, physically and psychologically. I also had an opportunity to show students I was willing to cooperate, play fairly, and take risks right along with them. The challenge was to keep my personal enthusiasm and competitive nature in check. I wanted to participate without being overbearing. To do this, I had to pay attention to the task at hand and simultaneously analyze others and myself within the task. I believe that I met those challenges, but I was keenly conscious of every thought I had, move I made, and word I spoke. This self-analysis and monitoring took considerable effort, but became easier throughout the semester.
After playing Grandmother’s Keys, Professor Lanton asked us to direct a short skit of a dramatic moment. Each of us took turns directing the other participants in a scene of our own design. A new challenge became apparent to me as participant observer. How could I participate, and at the same time take accurate notes on the action? I realized that sometimes the participant observer must sacrifice one position to give more room for the other. The name “participant observer” suggests, as I believed naively at the onset of the study, that the researcher maintains a constant and steady position fulfilling both roles equally. In reality, the role is more like a seesaw in motion than a leveled board. The researcher faces a far more nuanced task of negotiating her position as needs and situations arise.

**Strengths of participant observation.**

The participant observer role was vital in allowing me to build a connection with the students and make a contribution to the course. Making a contribution was important to me because I wanted to practice the reciprocity I was so keen to study. It took time, effort and the professor’s help to make these connections and contributions possible. Another strength of the participant role was my easy access to the high school community. I was introduced along with the university students and present from the start of the joint project work to witness the two groups of students as they began forming their early and essential bonds and group identity. The flexibility to observe exclusively was a strength of my role because it allowed me to take detailed notes about the process of the theater. My observation through a video recorder even became another contribution to the course participants who used it to analyze their own work.
At first, students struggled to see me as part of the group because they knew that I was studying them and the course. Early in the semester, during the first focus group interview, Billy raised the concern that perhaps his ideas were “getting overbearing.” We agreed that they were not but that it was important to talk about this issue. Upon which he stated, “Yeah, because the three of us, I mean, we are it. ... I mean, the four or us, sorry. We are all equal, that is what I figure, and we have to act like it” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). Only after Billy’s correction was I (the fourth) included in the “we” of the group. Although students acknowledged and included me in their conversations from the start, they were a bit confused about my double role as both observer and participant. The more I shared in their work, the more I felt I was being accepted as part of the group. Professor Lanton helped me assimilate into the group by formally including me in several assignments.

In the first part of the semester, Professor Lanton asked me to introduce the students to approaches of data gathering from the community without using traditional interviewing techniques (Class Notes, 02/21/2007). In this way I could make a contribution to the class based on my qualitative research knowledge and the students could apply it to their theater work. I chose to teach them Roadside Theater’s technique called “Story Circle.” In the Story Circle, each participant is given approximately three minutes to tell a story related to a given focus topic. No one may interrupt or respond to a story until each participant has been given the opportunity to make his/her three-minute contribution. This first round is followed by crosstalk in which participants may respond to, reference, or ask questions about other stories. The facilitator then helps lead the group in identifying common themes within the stories. If desired, a second round of the
story circles can focus on an identified common theme to take the discussion to a deeper level.

Originally I had planned to use this technique myself in some of the focus group interviews. Unfortunately time constraints prevented me from returning to the Story Circle. Still, the request and my teaching lesson provided a very important moment in defining my role as participant observer and establishing my relationship to the students and the purpose of the class. Leading the story circle allowed me to teach and learn from the students, make myself vulnerable along with the students, and build a culture of trust in our interactions. The experience permitted me to introduce my own work, while allowing the students to access my tools and have the process of my research somewhat demystified for them. I know at least one student used the tool in sharing stories at the high school on our information-gathering visit (Class Notes, 03/21/2007).

One of the rules of story circle is that no one may take notes during the process. Students were relieved when they heard that no part of their stories would be used in my study. They breathed easier when I promised not to turn on the tape recorder and not to take notes. For this reason, I cannot share the details of our stories or the discussion that followed. I can however, write about the general experience. Our topic for the story round was “an unexpected friendship.” Each participant was invited to tell a story. As facilitator, I began with my own story, exposing my own vulnerability in the process and assuring participants that we were all contributors to the same process. Similarly, I hoped that they would see my role in their classroom as a contributor and that they would feel they could learn about me personally, just as I studied them in their course. I wanted to build trust by honoring the rules of no notes and not pressuring anyone in his/her
contribution. One student chose at first not to share a story, an option that is presented in the rules of story circle. Professor Lanton and two students each shared at least one story. As we continued, I found that we became more absorbed in stories and less concerned about the pressure to "perform" or to have a "good" story. In the end all members of the story circle shared a story.

Although I was facilitating the process, I showed them that each member could be empowered through their participation. Momentary control belonged to each member as they chose to share their thoughts and chose whether and how to answer questions from their peers during the second phase, cross talk. One member’s story often inspired the direction of a second member’s story, and so we learned how stories themselves have the power to move people, and how we grow closer when we take the time to listen to each other’s stories. These lessons are valuable to the process of TFSC and also were meant to assure participants that I was a part of their group because I was genuinely interested in what they had to tell me, rather than hiding a secret agenda and trying to sneak information from them in a backhanded manner. Naturally they were curious, and perhaps a bit wary of my intentions, which became evident when they asked me what I was studying and what kind of things I wrote down in my notes. I answered honestly that I was interested in the process of TFSC and that I took notes on almost everything because I did not know what themes would emerge as significant until I completed the study.

Throughout the first eleven (of seventeen) course meetings I continued to share in assignments. In the last six meetings I worked primarily as observer with occasional short participation. When Professor Lanton assigned me to present on an article just like
the three students, I was able to show students that I was learning right along with them and to give back to the course that was, after all, giving me my research data. Then, in another example of shared assignments, when we entered the high school to gather information for our community profile, I teamed up with Sonja, while Jasmine teamed up with Billy to visit classrooms and gather stories from the high school students. In other important group assignments later in the semester I did not participate. For example, I did not help facilitate the theater work with the high school students, and I did not work with the university students on their written group report. In both cases I chose to observe rather than participate because I did not want to intrude in the students’ learning process and I felt I could learn more myself from watching and reading their work.

As participant I also had an easier time entering the high school community. It allowed me to meet the high school community in the same way the university students did. Rather than conducting independent interviews, I could ask my own questions in the context of the course community profile exercise and benefit from the questions the university students asked. At the same time, I could observe how the university students interacted with the high school students and teachers. And I could compare my analysis of how I thought they were interacting with their own summation of the same topic in their class debriefing and their journal entries.

An advantage of the seesaw nature of the participant observer position is that I could choose when it was more useful either to participate or to observe exclusively. One of several occasions that demonstrates the usefulness and success of this flexibility was when the high school students came to the university for a session. Professor Lanton felt an invitation was important for a number of reasons. First, it would help the high school
students feel part of the college team. It opened up the facilitator’s vulnerability the same way story circle does, by inviting the high school community to learn about its college partner. Second, he hoped it might inspire the high school students to think positively about their own college plans. Third, we had a practical and user-friendly space to work with. On the day the students came to the university, I sat on the sidelines and watched and took notes, speaking to both the university and high school students during the breaks and even to a parent who had come to observe the class. This invitation, therefore, served as a gesture of reciprocity. The college participants worked at the high school and the high school students had at least one opportunity to work at the college.

At the end of the course my role allowed me to videotape the students’ final performance in the high school. Professor Lanton wanted a recording of the performance so he could review it with the university students. Because I had been involved with the class mission from the start, and present at almost every class meeting, it did not strike the students as unusual that I should be filming them. My researcher role as observer, in this case, permitted a valuable contribution to the class, allowing Professor Lanton and students to concentrate on the performance. The added benefit to me, of course, was that I would have access to this important document to analyze for my study. After the performance, at a final class meeting, we debriefed about the semester’s experiences. Again, I benefited from being able to ask my own questions and join in the conversation led by Professor Lanton.

I do not know how much students thought about my strategies to become a group member. I can only say that as the course progressed, they clearly became a bit more relaxed and willing to speak with me, as evidenced by their email responses to my
questions, course related discussions in the van rides, and general chit chat about our lives before and after class. The participant observer role served my research very well; I became enough part of the group that participants felt comfortable with my presence, but not so much part of the group that I lost my objectivity.

Weaknesses of participant observation.

The participant observer position also posed specific challenges towards different issues and there were moments I felt my approach broke down. Specifically, I struggled to conduct my research without disrupting the flow of the course, to illicit students’ ideas about reciprocity without explicitly using the word “reciprocity,” to connect with the high school students, and to witness every important interaction between participants. Perfect participant observation, like most perfection, is only an ideal meant to guide the researcher. By nature of trying to do two things at once, it is virtually impossible in reality to reach the ideal of participant observation. I nonetheless strove for the ideal and now acknowledge my shortcomings.

Sometimes, my data collection was overt, such as in a Focus Group interview. At other times, it was more discreet, or at least passive, such as when I recorded students’ presentations on readings, or videotaped their performances for later analysis. My goal for collecting data, whether overtly or discreetly, was to avoid being intrusive or obstructive to students’ processes in the course. When Professor Lanton asked me, just like all the other participants, to give an oral synopsis of an assigned article, I found myself faced with a conflict of interest. What I thought was a seamless way to maximize my opportunity to ask questions related to the articles that would contribute to my data, became a distraction from presenting information in the article that would help students
prepare for their TFSC project. My problems in the analysis and summation of articles was that I had trouble separating my analysis for the study (as course material) and my analysis for the students in helping them prepare for their work. Though several key points could address both my goals at once, I think my presentation was convoluted because I tried to cover too much information. To complicate matters more, I could not take notes while students answered my questions because that was awkward and broke the pace of conversation. I used a tape recorder and unfortunately some of the voices were not picked up very well.

When I did have a good opportunity to ask overt questions, I was still faced with the tricky business of discussing reciprocity without using the word itself. Had I only conducted a survey at the beginning and end of the course, I might have been more explicit about my questions about reciprocity. I did not want to make the students think about the issue only because I was talking about it, but rather wanted to see if it was a topic they would identify on their own through the course material and experiences. As it was, I had to wait to pick up on cues when students brought up the topic of reciprocity on their own directly or indirectly. A few times I found the perfect wording to solicit ideas about reciprocity, such as “I observed what you contributed to class today, can you tell me what you got out of class today?” (Class Notes, 04/11/2007). Several times students brought up issues related to reciprocity, but sometimes I was unable to harness the momentum and steer the conversation into a deeper analysis. My harshest self-criticism is that for a study on reciprocity, I have more data on the university student experience than the high school student experience.
Because of the time I spent with the university students, I found that I was able to connect with their experiences and gather much rich data. Unfortunately I do not feel that I had equally deep access to the experiences of the high school students. The reasons are obvious. I did not spend as much time at the high school. The semester simply was not long enough, and the course ended up emphasizing preparation somewhat more than work with the community. Furthermore, my interaction with the high school students during our visits was limited because I was observing and staying out of the way as the university students facilitated the theater project. These observation periods were valuable, but I would have liked to balance them out with more discussion with the high school students. There just was not enough time to connect. Other than my visit to the classrooms on one occasion, I relied mainly on the university students to be my eyes and ears when it came to learning about the high school students. I think now, that a study like this one could be conducted more effectively with two researchers; one building relations with the university participants, the other with the high school and its students and then sharing the collected data for joint study and analysis.

Finally, the participant observer position is strongest when the researcher can be present at all sessions and witness all action. I was unable to attend only two meetings, both of which took place outside of the planned meetings on the syllabus. In one of these meetings, the university students practiced staging social issues with an audience. In the other, two university students met with six high school students to work on developing the high school skits. Although the meetings did not introduce new material, I felt I missed some valuable opportunities in the progression of the course, the bonds that formed, and the events that might shape my understanding. Missing a session makes
certain comparisons difficult, and I wonder if I missed a key moment of negotiation, a
gesture of reciprocity, or any other momentous development of the project. For the most
part I was able to gain access to the missed events through students’ recapitulation in the
following class meeting, or in a journal entry, but I still was left wondering how I might
have interpreted their experiences. Additionally, when students broke into groups to
work on the theater project I could only concentrated on observing one group at a time.
And when students chose to continue their work outside of the classroom, I had no way
to observe at all. I simply must accept that I was unable to witness every moment of
interaction and trust that my presence for the majority of the theater process sufficed in
providing me adequate data for analysis.

An Analogy to Cope with the Challenges of Participant Observation

When I became confused and frustrated with the challenges and demands of the
participant observer, I searched for an explanation that could make the illusive nature of
the role more concrete in my mind. I drew from the field of puppetry arts, a widely
diverse yet specific niche of theater with which I am comfortably familiar. The
relationship between a puppeteer and her puppet is more complex and multi-dimensional
than the layperson’s supposition of controller and controlled would suggest. It helped me
understand my role as participant observer more precisely by thinking of the “puppeteer’s
position,” a paradoxical perspective that is both attached and detached to the puppet at
the same time. My analogy helped me embrace the same duality of awareness in the
participant observer.

The puppeteer, especially one who improvises with her audience, has a difficult
task of paying attention to multiple signals at once. She must be attentive to her ideas
and quick in making choices about what the puppet should do. She must study the puppet to be sure it is successfully executing the movements and expressing the emotion she intends. And, she must pay attention to and react to the audience's response while all the while trying to disappear from the audience's awareness. This triad poses many challenges: technical, physical, and intellectual. But to a trained puppeteer, skills such as using peripheral vision, redirecting attention, and contorting the body become second nature, or at least habitual tools. Equally, the researcher has to acknowledge her analysis of the action as observer and still be attentive to decision making about her participation. Furthermore, her actions should not call attention to herself and her research motives, but rather should appear natural and be genuinely reactive, despite her constant self-analysis. At the same time that she is observing the participants in her study, she is also observing herself and analyzing her own actions, as she becomes a participant herself. The tools of the participant observer include the ability to hear as well as listen, improvise, take strong notes, connect well with others, and quickly assess a moment for the potential of deeper investigation.

The puppeteer's qualities are highlighted in Heinrich von Kleist's (1810) essay, *Über das Marionetten Theater (On the Marionette Theatre).* Much as the dancer in Kleist's essay purports that a man in his profession has much to learn from observing the movement of the marionette, so does the researcher of TFSC benefit from the unique awareness that a puppeteer practices as part of her art. Kleist's narrator explains that his friend the dancer "...assured me that the mute gestures of these puppets gave him much satisfaction and told me bluntly that any dancer who wished to perfect his art could learn a lot from them" (Kleist, trans. Parry, ¶1). The dancer in the essay asserts that the true art
of marionette performance is not merely mechanical, but in the soul of the puppeteer that he transfers to the movement of the marionette. In a similar sense, the researcher who wishes both to participate and observe, must engage emotionally and intellectually with the other participants while maintaining some form of objectivity and performing the mechanical acts of recording data. Without this engagement, the researcher misses an aspect of the “soul” of the action.

According to Kleist’s character, the advantage of the puppet dancer over the human dancer is its complete oblivion to its grace. And yet the puppeteer behind (or above) the puppet must be aware of his doll’s actions. To prevent the movements from being completely mechanical, this awareness must at times become lost in the mystery of the art (¶6). The speaker further asserts that the advantage of such movement is that the marionette, unlike the dancer, “would never be guilty of affectation” (¶18). Kleist’s essay presents a paradox. Grace is found in the absence of affectation, the speaker explains, but since man’s Biblical fall from grace, we are no longer able to return to a state of unawareness. Put another way: to be fully aware of and absorbed by our surroundings, we must be completely unaware of our own role. And yet, to learn from our surroundings, we must, of course, be aware of our participating role. Kleist’s essay suggests that technically, only the puppet and not the puppeteer can achieve this state. But, by extension and acknowledging the critical role of the puppeteer, I use the term “puppeteer’s position” to call to mind the attached observer who is successful when balancing on this paradox between awareness of her role and absorption in her participation.
Kleist is not the only one to have recognized and expressed this unique skill required by the talented puppeteer. Professional puppeteers and scholars alike have expressed similar sentiments. What Kleist suggests is a mysterious transposition of the soul. Frank Oz, a Muppet performer, refers to as the state of being of “Zen.” Oz says of his art:

What we are doing is so complicated that you don’t really have time to think about how you are doing it. ...I don’t want to sound pretentious, but there’s a kind of Zen thing that happens. First your body understands, and then your mind grasps what you are doing. (Finch, 1981, p.75)

And what Boal calls “the fruit of the dichotomic and ‘dichotomising’ character of the ‘platform’” is referred to by Tillis (1992) as “double-vision.” Tillis writes he “attempt[s] to comprehend the puppet by examining how the deployment of abstracted signs creates an illusion of life that the audiences know is not real, and ... develop[s] a concept called double-vision, which postulates that an audience sees the puppet in two ways at one time: as a perceived object and as an imagined life” (p. 7). A puppeteer is, therefore, keenly aware of her participation in two realities and able to fuse and navigate both the mechanics of the object as well as the spirit of the imagined life. Similarly, the researcher as participant observer is navigating two equally important and complex roles.

From my own experiences as an amateur puppeteer, I identify strongly with these experiences and expressions. As a puppeteer I am trained in accepting dual (and sometimes dueling!) realities. In my role as researcher in this study, I was reminded again and again of the parallels to the role I have played as puppeteer. I, therefore, adopted this concept of the puppeteer’s position, a term that should call to mind a special
awareness of both perception of the mind as well as physical location of the body. The puppeteer’s position emphasizes the ability to be both aware of one’s participation and yet removed from it and watching, as from a marionette stage, from above. As researcher in the role of participant observer, I was simultaneously attached to and involved in the action, and yet, removed and observing the other participants and audience of the spectacle.

**Conclusion**

As a researcher, I am aware of my precarious position in interpreting, analyzing, and assigning meaning to what I observe, and so my role must go beyond that of Boal’s spectactor. Where the spectactor is active in the moment, contributing thoughts and action to an important moment of community theater, the researcher has responsibilities to carry out beyond the immediate theater project. She is responsible for representing the experiences of her subjects honestly and fairly, and she is responsible for demystifying the process and making clear her interpretations to her readers. Additionally, the researcher has a responsibility to make a valuable contribution to her academic field of study and perhaps even to the community being studied. For this reason, I, as participant observer, was continuously reading, interpreting and analyzing the signs presented in the project.

In *Mythologies* (1972), Roland Barthes examines the language of mass-culture by breaking it down into signifiers, signified, and signs. He works to unmask collective representations by recognizing the sign-systems behind them and discovering that myth has the double function of making us understand the certain signs it points out to us, and
imposing them on us so that we must cooperate with the collective acceptance and language of the sign system, for to resist would be to be misunderstood. Barthes writes:

The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but destroy it and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. (Trans. Lavers, p.159)

As researcher I was looking for meaning by understanding the participants’ language, both kinetic and oral, and was careful to assign meaning correctly. I attempted to maintain this integrity as participant observer by spending as much time as possible with the community, by finding multiple examples that represent repeating patterns that strengthen my interpretation, and by member checking my understanding.

In the following chapter I present my interpretations and move toward an understanding of reciprocity within this TFSC project. Earlier I mentioned that the very first theater exercise Professor Lanton asked us to play, demonstrated five points of focus in my study. I maintain that nodes, covenant, strengthening ties, dynamism, and power structures are five components integral to examining and understanding reciprocity. Additionally, in coding my data, I found that several other ideas play an important role in understanding how TFSC can provide opportunity for reciprocity. Among these ideas are an awareness of personal contribution in the roles participants play and an exploration of community identity and community building. I am guided both by my matrix represented in Figure 2 of chapter three and also by the revelations of students about their experiences
throughout the semester. For, in addition to discovering a deeper understanding of reciprocity, I have also learned what the process of TFSC meant to the participants and what themes both the high school and university students identified as critical in their own learning experience.
Chapter Five: Building Blocks of Reciprocity

When the semester began participants had only vague ideas of what they wanted to accomplish, little to no training on how to create, perform, and facilitate TFSC, and possessed some apprehension about successfully completing the project. Due, at least in part, to the attention to reciprocal relationships the project succeeded on a number of levels. Returning to the OED (Simpson & Weiner, Eds., 1989) definition of reciprocity that I referenced earlier in this study, the term, at its core, means a relationship of mutual give and take. Homans (1961) adds to our understanding that the item exchanged is considered equal based on the sense of necessity or gratitude for the exchanged item as perceived by each partner, not based on any outsider’s measure of value. These definitions are crucial to a basic understanding of reciprocity. However, neither explanation describes the process or spirit in which these exchanges are rendered. In this theater project, partners were striving for a kind of reciprocity that contributes to community building and social change. Therefore, the nature of the project’s reciprocity was uniquely complex in a way the earlier definitions do not address.

Trust, Covenant, and Power Sharing

The building blocks for this project’s reciprocity included trusting relationships, a covenant, and power sharing. Trusting relationships were built on respect, transparency of expectations, and proficiency in skills. The covenant defined the form, purpose, code of work ethics, and content that guided the theater project. Power sharing occurred
predominantly through teamwork, taking turns, and transference of leadership. Trust, covenant, and power sharing worked together as a three-pronged approach that led not only to one reciprocal exchange between partners, but rather a deeper ongoing practice of reciprocity within several layers of social interactions. These three elements helped form the foundation for a figurative playhouse in which reciprocity could take place. The building blocks do not stack one upon the other in a hierarchical order. Rather, they sit side by side, and in the iterative nature of TFSC, they are called upon repeatedly to help provide structural integrity to the project. The detailed design of the playhouse (and the project), a marker of participants' creativity, rises above the foundation becoming the focus of attention.

Facilitators and participants nurtured reciprocity through many steps and various approaches including research, theater games, and performance. The trusting relationships allowed for an exchange of ideas and evoked honest discussion and a supportive environment to assist participants through challenging moments. A covenant codified the reciprocation of action as well as sentiment, focusing participants' ambitions and enthusiasm towards a common process and end. Power sharing fostered an equality that opened the opportunity for reciprocation of the various specific goals enumerated in the covenant and enabled participants to empower one another to be community activists. In the first three acts of this chapter I define the building blocks of reciprocity and provide examples of how they function. The fourth act reviews what goods were exchanged once participants had successfully set the stage for reciprocity.
**Act 1: Building Trusting Relationships**

"To share yourself, you have to give yourself up."

--Professor Lanton (Class Notes, 04/11/2007)

Trustyng relationships were the foundational block on which participants constructed and enacted reciprocity. Trust was contingent on respect for one another, transparency of purpose, and proficiency in TFSC skills. Respect manifested itself in acting with civility, honoring partners' identities, and valuing partners' contributions. Transparency was achieved by making expectations clear and fostering open conversations. Mastering TFSC skills in one semester is impossible, but proficiency indicates participants working hard to practice their new art as best as they could. This proficiency is defined by their research and facilitation skills, their ease in the physical and improvisational nature of the theater, and their assumption of leadership responsibilities within the project. All three of these traits (respect, transparency, proficiency) were cultivated throughout the project from establishing partnerships and conducting interviews to playing theater games and performing for and with the community.

The primary relationships of trust in this project lay between the professor and the principal, between the professor and the students, between the professor and me, between me and the students, and among and between the high school and university students. Although trust begot more trust in a recursive pattern, the invitation to trust was handed down in a more linear fashion. Professor Lanton laid the groundwork for trust with his university students by guiding them confidently and gently. The university students then mimicked this effort by reaching out to the high school students in a similar fashion,
leading many of the same trust building exercises Lanton had played with them.

Professor Lanton eventually backed away to allow the university students to facilitate the theater project between the two groups, though he continued to offer suggestions, guidance, and reassurance from the sidelines. The ultimate goal of TFSC is to empower a community to enable change on its own. In this project we hoped the high school students could learn to trust themselves well enough to continue in leading theater activities at their school.

**Scene one: Respect.**

Demonstrating respect meant acting with civility, honoring the partner’s identity, and valuing the partner’s contributions. Acting with civility is the most important component of respect. Ideally it should permeate and guide every decision made, every action taken, and every interaction between participants. As the initiator of the theater project Professor Lanton set the example of respect. The university participants followed the professor’s lead in being gentle with one another’s feelings and listening attentively to one another’s ideas. They applied and modeled this civility in conducting a community profile in an effort to understand and accept the high school identity.

Accepting a group’s identity is a way of showing respect and gaining trust because it validates their existence on their own terms. To further emphasize that they could be trusted, the university students respected that this proposed partnership was a joint effort by inviting the high school students to make vital contributors to the work right away.

**Civility.**

Professor Lanton’s guidance was respectful in that it was gentle, to the point, and not judgmental. He explained the reasons for his recommendations and peppered his
commentary with praise as well. The university students were somewhat guarded when first playing theater games. Lanton had to encourage them to put more physicality and emotion behind their movements and expressions when they played the Animal Game and ask them to “focus, concentrate, surrender” during several attempts at learning the improvisation circle (Class Notes, 04/11/2007). If they felt as I did, their inexperience made them feel inadequate and awkward, which could plausibly open them up to humiliation in front of their peers and professor. Although the students might have felt vulnerable, the context of games promised that the emotional stakes were relatively low because the expectations for play are not as serious as those for performance. Some laughter was accepted and even helped release some of the nervous tension. Recognizing that Professor Lanton respected their efforts, they began to trust both him and themselves. When they saw that they were all eager but imperfect learners and that no one was laughing maliciously, they began to trust that they would proceed respectfully with one another’s feelings and this aided in improving our practice.

The university students emulated their model and in turn replicated the same behavior to the high school community, who easily reflected back the same civility. I believe a good deal of credit for acting civilly is due to both the university and the high school students’ good-natured personalities. They genuinely cared about each other and came to the project socially adept at cooperating kindly. Billy told the university participants in the focus group interview “that you have to treat everybody with respect. You have to do that” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). When the high school students were not focusing on theater work and joking around instead, Georgia, a high school student, made an earnest plea that her peers “be serious” in their practice (Class
Notes, 04/24/2007). Professor Lanton followed up on her plea by suggesting the participants adopt the language “don’t disrespect me” (Class Notes, 04/24/2007) to call each other back to the civil interactions they desired. Participants formalized this promise to act with civility throughout the project when they included the elements of patience and cooperation in their code of ethics, which will be discussed in Act 2 (Class Notes, 04/04/2007). An overall sense of civility in their actions carried over to specific tasks of the TFSC process such as those that helped the two communities respect each other’s identities.

*Honoring community identity.*

The first step to honoring a community identity is to realize that one already has some assumptions that need to be verified or debunked. At the start of the semester, the university students discussed their preconceived notions about this project and individual and community identities (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). In one way or another, each university student expressed the possibility that the high school students’ identity may be defined in part as at-risk youth. They were concerned that this history might cause some challenges in their work and be an obstacle to overcome in building the relationship between themselves and the high school students. Billy considered that the students might come from “serious backgrounds” or “tragic home lives.” Jasmine imagined there might be some “financial/cultural barriers” to overcome. And Sonja hinted at troubled personal history when she emphasized, “They are worth to be cared for. Whatever they had done in the past, that doesn’t matter.” Despite these concerns over gaps in relating to one another, Jasmine also expected that the university students’ individual experiences might help them connect to the high school students. All three
students graduated from high school no more than three years ago. Billy went to high school in the same city. Additionally, Jasmine noted her own background growing up in a majority black community and predicted that she might feel “comfortable” and have an easy time relating to the majority black students at Harmony High (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007).

Conducting a community profile allowed the university students to test their assumptions and build their knowledge of the community. Each of them spent approximately 6 hours speaking to students, teachers, and administrators. The university students entered the high school community with the explicit intention of building trust by showing respect through civil behavior. In a discussion of their readings, students discussed how to avoid a polarizing “us vs. them” attitude that inhibited cooperation in Okagbue’s (2002) experience. Billy said that it was important to assess how group members feel and to treat them with respect (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). Sonja suggested remaining open-minded and trying to form a friendship by getting to know them first (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). To get to know them she chose to employ Roadside Theater’s Story Circle method that encourages participants to share stories from their lives and emphasizes respect in a number of its guidelines. Following through on their intentions to act respectfully proved their trustworthiness at least in regard to decorum.

After gathering stories, statistics and impressions about Harmony High the university students pooled their information on the chalkboard for analysis. They listed the most important information they discovered about the school under the following headings: historical, social, economic, cultural, political, health, and academic. Though
the issues of at risk youth were verified as part of the demographics of the school, this
fact turned out to be far less important to the formation of the theater piece than City
University students had expected. Instead, the very strong motivation of these high
school students and the sense of community in this small school were two of the most
significant defining characteristics out of which the final theater project topics eventually
evolved. The interactions necessary to conduct the community profile familiarized the
two communities with one another and laid the groundwork for trusting one another in
the theater process itself.

Valuing contributions.

Through their research, the university students learned that trust was strengthened
when the project ideas evolved from inside the community rather than being introduced
by an outsider. Based on the example of a TFSC project conducted by Leeds University,
they decided to conduct an Inside-Out project. This choice exemplified to the high
school students that their university partners respected their ideas and contributions to the
process. When the university students began working with the eleven high school
students who chose to participate, they respected the partnership by involving the
younger students in theater activities right away. On the first meeting in early April, the
university students played a few introductory theater games (stretching and Animal Tag)
with the high school students to introduce them to the physical nature of theater and to
build a playful camaraderie. Then they played Musical Chairs, which invited the high
school students to contribute their thoughts about their community. The information was
vital to the project as it was the first step in shaping the purpose and content of the
upcoming performance. As such, this latter game will be discussed in greater detail in Act 2 regarding the covenant.

The university students respected the high school students' ideas by allowing them to choose topics for theatrical representation, but also by abandoning other topics that the high school students wished to leave behind. Ms. Scott, the teacher helping to guide the high school students, introduced the community issue of upperclassmen boys preying on freshman girls, a phenomenon she referred to as "webbing" or wooing and seducing. Sonja, Jasmine, and Billy were intrigued to learn more. Respectful however of the high school students reluctance to explore the topic further, Jasmine insightfully wrote "I really wish we had more time with them so we could dig into these deeper issues, but the ones that have surfaced repeatedly, while not as 'juicy,' [are] obviously important to them and an important issue to tackle" (Jasmine's Journal Entry, "Image at Large"). This demonstration of respect encouraged the high school students to trust their university partners and consequently they were more likely to continue contributing their thoughts and ideas.

**Scene two: Transparency.**

Acting with civility and showing respect invited participants to trust the university students' intentions for an amicable and peaceful partnership. Equally important for all participants, however, was achieving transparency by making expectations clear and fostering open conversations. For transparency to permeate the project, each participant had to make the effort to achieve it within the realms of his/her role in the project. I was responsible for clarifying my intentions to the professor and to the university and high school participants. The professor expressed his expectations clearly to the principal of
Harmony High as well as to his students. The university students in turn worked to convey the project and explain the activities to the high school students. Even the high school students had to work to make their ideas clear to one another and the audience. Having made expectations clear it was then easier to engage in open conversation because participants felt united around the project and the tasks at hand. The theater activities invited discussion in a relaxed and often playful atmosphere and participants showed their enthusiasm by entering into conversation easily. Conversation further helped clarify any confusion, allowed project ideas to grow and helped us all achieve a more complex understanding of community issues and TFSC process. This clarification of expectations and goals for both the theater process and the form of communication was formalized in the covenant to be discussed in Act 2. Knowing what was expected of them and that there was an open forum for discussion and clarification should questions arise, gave participants a security that facilitated trust amongst and between them.

*Clarifying expectations.*

In order to conduct this study, I first had to form a trusting relationship with Professor Lanton. The assistant director of City University’s center for civic engagement, a mutual acquaintance at the university who was familiar with both of our academic interests, introduced us. Both of us trusted her, and this paved the way for our working relationship. In the year prior to my research, I sat in on a few of Professor Lanton’s Theater for Social Change classes and his students’ performance. I also gave an oral presentation in another theater course of his upon his request. Through these encounters, my admiration and respect for Professor Lanton and his work grew. I assume that I showed that I was reliable, conscientious and legitimately interested in the process
and goals of Theater for Social Change, as Professor Lanton invited me to lunch to discuss the possibility of working with him on my research. Professor Lanton had to trust that my research would contribute to the field of civic engagement, but more importantly he had to trust that I would help and not hinder his students, the community, and their project. I had to know definitely whether his class was a good fit for my study questions, and whether he would allow me to conduct my research as I set forth to him in my proposal. It did not take long for the two of us to discover, first over a meal and then through subsequent conversations, that our quest for knowledge and our love of theater arts were compatible. Lanton’s endorsement of me helped tremendously in gaining the trust of the university students whom I needed to participate in my study.

On the first day of class I introduced myself to the university students and explained the reasons for my participation in the project and the focus of my dissertation work. I explained that I was interested in the processes of TFSC as a service-learning model for civic engagement, and answered any questions they had. I did not state outright that I was studying the concept of reciprocity. I asked students to consider being a part of my study, emphasizing the value of their participation to me personally, and perhaps even to other academics in the fields of higher education and theater. Students then saw me as someone who wanted to participate with them, but also as someone who was studying them. This idea occasionally unsettled them, for they would sometimes ask a question such as, “What did you just write down?” I answered honestly. For the most part, however, they saw that I was as absorbed and committed to the theater project as they were and therefore generally trusting not skeptical of my presence. All students who
remained in the course signed my consent form that reiterated the purposes of my study and the value of their participation.

Even Professor Lanton attended to trust between himself and his students. He used transparency to build trust with the students by thoroughly reviewing the syllabus and by including students in important decisions, such as choosing a community partner. Professor Lanton reviewed the syllabus on the first day of class so that expectations for course performance and evaluation were clear. He placed a great emphasis on the time commitment required. Perhaps as a consequence, one student dropped the course. The others embraced the expectations, showing up to both required and optional activities that took place outside of our regular class meeting time. For example, the university students and I each had at least one opportunity to accompany Professor Lanton to a meeting with a principal to explore the possibility of collaboration. When I entered another school with metal detectors, I realized that the protective barriers to trust are multifaceted. The biggest challenge however, lay in explaining the nature of TFSC in a way that made clear the mutually beneficial properties of the partnership. In the end, Principal Ridley at Harmony High agreed enthusiastically to take a leap of faith based on the belief that the partnership could offer his high school students a new and enriching opportunity that his school could not provide alone. During the semester, the two communities would continue to build their trust on the foundation and example of the principal and the professor’s initial relationship.

Though the foundation for the relationship was established between the professor and the principal, it was the university and high school students who worked to solidify this relationship of trust between the two communities. The high school students had a
fairly easy time being clear with each other because as part of the same community, they
felt a bond that fostered the trust that allowed them to speak frankly with one another.
Additionally they did not have to explain new concepts (as did the university students)
rather their main responsibility was to explain their creative vision.

The university students had the responsibility to describe the project and explain
the theater exercises with clarity. Some of the university students’ explanations were
better than others. Image Theater was a big success, while Forum Theater was not
explained sufficiently. Consequently, the high school students did not leave their skits
open ended in the original versions. Despite their best attempts at explaining the general
process of TFSC, the university students did not reach everyone. As late as rehearsal
time, one high school student still had not fully comprehended what and how they would
be performing. He expressed surprise and dismay that this theater was not like traditional
theater (Class Notes, 04/24/2007). Even though only one student responded this way, his
misunderstanding underscores both the difficulty of ensuring clarity and the potential
danger of failing to do so. Participants must understand one another’s expectations and
challenges to trust that they are working towards the same goal in a reciprocal manner.

Fostering open conversation.

The advantage of my participant observer position was that students often shared
with me their intellectual and emotional responses about the project. The disadvantage
was that they might have withheld certain thoughts, or felt more guarded because they
knew I was taking notes on everything we discussed, unless I was specifically asked not
to do so. In fact, in an email to me about my recording class discussions and interviews
Professor Lanton wrote that he “noticed that the students froze up initially which means
that they probably need some advance notice as to when [the recording] will occur” (02/05/2007). Consequently, I cut back on my recordings and gave students advance notice whenever possible. As the sessions advanced, I felt they became more used to and more comfortable with being recorded and observed. In the beginning, we did not know each other at all, but the distance between us shrank as we participated in trust-building exercises and believed that we all prioritized the success of the project.

In addition to gaining participants’ trust as a peer by performing along side of them, I tried to demonstrate that I could be trusted in my position of researcher. I used the first focus group interview to strengthen our relationship by sharing our thoughts and questions. We began to trust one another enough to have conversations about our observations of our surroundings, our hopes and fears for the project, and our understandings and questions about our personal and surrounding communities. By building a trusting environment through exercises and dialogue, we exchanged (or reciprocated) ideas, feelings, and small bits of information about ourselves. This exercise also established a precedent for open dialogue and cooperation in my study as well as in project debriefing sessions.

TFSC by nature requires communication between participants. Still, this communication can be more or less effective. Professor Lanton made open conversation a part of the course learning objectives by requiring debriefing sessions and assigning oral presentations. The debriefing sessions took place either directly after a visit to the high school, or on the following class meeting. A few times, because of the evening hour, we debriefed over dinner in the university cafeteria. These sessions addressed students’ questions and concerns, gave Professor Lanton the opportunity to focus
students’ attention on particular matters, and helped Sonja, Billy, and Jasmine to plan their next steps. During one such meeting, the students expressed their frustration at not being able to focus the high school students. Professor Lanton told them not to show fear. Students agreed to follow the professor’s suggestion to hold a company meeting, in which they would openly confront students about the matter and help them get back on track. Lanton also urged them at this meeting specifically to review the process of facilitating Forum Theater (Class Notes, 04/24/2007).

Oral presentations offered another even more structured opportunity to share ideas and confront any confusion over the course material. Each student (and I) gave a presentation on one or two articles about TFSC. In our presentations we summarized the content of the article, related it to performances we had watched, examined its uses in our own practice, and finally and very importantly, addressed questions to our peers that initiated reflective conversation. After reporting on a theater project of the Performance Theater Workshop (Mike, et al., 1999) that sought to address Female Genital Mutilation but failed to change the health system in a Yoruba community in Nigeria, Billy asked his classmates, “Do you see value in a failed project?” (Billy’s Oral Presentation, 02/28/2007). After some thought, Jasmine replied that determining value depends on the perspective of the participant and the unit of measure. The theater facilitators could learn from the experience to improve their process the next time and the community members could continue to think about the health issues raised. In this there is some value, but Jasmine continued, if the goal had been health reform, they would have to wait longer or try again to achieve this value of the project. Both Billy’s question and Jasmine’s response point to an important element of reciprocity: assigning and assessing value.
They have recognized that each partner expects something from the experience, and that the gain for both partners needs to be valued, but can only be understood if expressed explicitly by the participants. Thus, Billy and Jasmine’s point emphasizes the importance of fostering open conversation in which expectations can be expressed.

It took the cooperation and skills of both the university and high school students to bring about open conversation. The university students, sometimes based on suggestions from Professor Lanton, led games that fostered communication such as a variation on Musical Chairs, where students left without a chair had the floor to speak about their community. In their facilitation, the university students took care not to dominate or interrupt the exchange, but rather guide it to a productive end. After the games, they followed up with a discussion that examined the significance of the exercise and the information or skills it provoked (Class Notes, 03/21/2007, 04/04/2007, 04/11/2007, 04/18/2007). The high school students played their part by participating in games and taking initiative to ask questions and participate in the follow up discussion. With guidance from the facilitators, the high school students eventually created an open-ended skit, encouraging further conversation with their larger school body.

Transparency of expectations and a mode of open communication assured participants that they would be guided throughout the new theater process. They could trust one another to be following one and the same path, even as that path encouraged differing ideas to be expressed and explored through theater activities and discussion. Throughout the project there was never a hidden agenda, freeing participants to share with one another without fear of having their ideas and efforts misappropriated. This freedom enhanced the potential for reciprocation through participation. The process of
TFSC, however, is unique and students had to become proficient in the skills of the theater form in order to follow through fully on reciprocation of ideas and participation.

**Scene three: Proficiency of skills.**

Participants could trust themselves and one another to contribute adequately in their shared venture when they demonstrated proficiency in the necessary skills. Most notable for the university students were skills in preparing to facilitate the practice of TFSC. These preparation skills are separate though closely related to the skills of leadership itself, which are discussed briefly as part of power sharing in Act 3. For the high school students, it was paramount to assimilate the physical nature of the language of TFSC. Both groups worked on the critical skill of improvisation. Confidence waxed and waned as skills were practiced and improved. With confidence came trust in themselves as individuals and trust in one another and between groups.

**Preparing to facilitate.**

Before entering the high school community, the university students conducted research into facilitating TFSC work. They reviewed a number of texts that addressed the importance, challenges, and techniques of community trust building. They also watched videotapes of the preparation and performances of two TFSC pieces.\(^1\) In my comparative analysis of the readings, the university student journal entries, and my observation notes, I determined that research the university students conducted helped them make tactical choices for forming their new partnership and shaping the project.

\(^1\) *Mamatunde* (Collective Artistes & Performance Studio Workshop, 1990) took place in Nigeria, was an example of Outside-In work, and focused on educating communities about prenatal and infant health care issues. *Encounters with Afrika* (University of Leeds, 2004) took place in Leeds, England, exemplified Inside-Out work, and enabled a school curriculum to explore the history and culture of Africa.
The university students implemented approaches to facilitation directly from the literature. *Mamatundele* (Collective Artistes with Performance Studio Workshop, 1990), Boal (1979), Epskamp (1989), and Okagbue (2002) all point to the importance of building trust by relating to the audience through incorporating folk elements and local cultural norms. In this way, performers begin from within a community audience’s worldview and strive to deviate away from the norm enough to motivate change while not alienating the audience and consequentially losing its trust. The university students encouraged the high school performers to incorporate unique school traits, such as common school events, well-know personalities, and manners of interaction, into their skits to encourage the high school audience to participate in a milieu they would recognize. Following Boal’s (1979) teachings, the university students employed both Image Theater and Forum Theater and strove to engage the spectactor. After facilitating several games on the first day of theater work between the two groups, Billy wrote in his journal “Well, I loved this day! ... Even though our ‘kids’ were [not] highly skilled theater people, they were the driving force behind our activities. We may have introduced the games, but they were the direction. It’s the ‘Spectactor’ theory in play” (Billy’s Journal Entry #3, 03/30/2007). In comments like these, the excitement for successfully implementing new knowledge is palpable.

**Physical nature of theater.**

An important bridge between learning theory and practicing TFSC is becoming comfortable and proficient in the physical nature of theatrical expression. Grasping this skill built confidence in the individuals so they could trust themselves to contribute effectively to the project. Physical skills included using the whole body to express ideas
and emotion, stage blocking, and voice projection. The university students built their confidence by practicing their skills on campus amongst themselves and even during a session with visiting artists. But the high school students had to catch up; they appeared to gain confidence with each floor exercise, volunteering readily to try out new games, reducing the amount of nervous (and disruptive) giggling, and contributing freely with their informational, creative, and critical input.

The “Animal Tag” game, in particular, encouraged participants to trust their bodies and their peers while expressing themselves on stage. In this game, “it” walks around the space enacting an animal and eventually tags someone. The person who has been tagged must assume the movements and behavior of the animal before morphing into a new animal and then tagging another player. The university students liked this game so much that they chose to teach it to the high school students in one of their early meetings. The high school students found morphing from one animal into another and tagging someone in character to be difficult. The university students helped the high school students by modeling the activity and giving gentle pointers and reminders. This game challenged actors to use their bodies to portray a variety of characters, each with specific and unique traits. The exercise exemplified both the fun and the hard work that lay ahead of everyone. Later in their performances, actors would be expected to morph from one character into another, adapting their emotional and physical presentations. A male student might play a female student, a student could play a principal; most students would have to learn to play more than one role both as characters in skits and as facilitators of community conversation.
Improvisation.

Improvisation was a key skill for both groups. It was practiced in almost all of the theater games, because no game allowed for advance preparation. The university students coveted this expertise because it helped them think on their feet when they felt stuck as facilitators. On one day (04/11/2007), only six students were present, so the university students had to change their class plan at the last minute. On another day (04/18/2007), their first version of Animal Tag did not accomplish the goal, and they adapted it on the spot to direct students’ attention better. In their Final Report, the City University students explain this use of improvisation as “listening and adapt[ing] vs. not listening and panicking” and “going with the flow” (Final Report, p.6 & p.8). The high school students needed to perfect their improvisation skills because their final performance required them to change the action in their skits based on audience intervention. Additionally, because there was very little time to rehearse, skits were loosely outlined events rather than tightly scripted pieces. The performers did not memorize most of their lines, but rather reacted in an improvisational manner to the action they were setting forth. As with all skills, the more they are practiced the easier they are performed. The game that best illustrates the skills of improvisation was the aptly named “Improvisation Circle.”

The Improvisation Circle emphasizes equality and shared purpose, making it a strong tool for practicing reciprocity. The content of the story is not the most important outcome of the improvisation circle exercise, though in some cases it may bring up themes that can be discussed in another forum. For example, one story went something like this: Marcello kissed Sally. They went to a house. It caught fire. They ate popcorn.
Then the participants began to laugh and started the story circle anew. Professor Lanton instructed students to exchange emotional value as well. He also explained that to make the circle complete, participants must be “spontaneous, focus, concentrate, and surrender” and “stop people from being untruthful to the process” (Class Notes, 04/11/2007). Adhering to these guidelines helped to strengthen the group because, as Lanton told his students, “your circle is only as strong as the weakest component” (Class Notes, 04/11/2007).

A successful story circle is one that has fed off of reciprocal responses. One student introduces one emotion, another students takes that emotion and adds a response, sending it back to a group or individual. Likewise, the story itself is a constant give and take of information, feelings, and energy that comes together in an organic fashion. If participants stop thinking of the collective, stop responding freely and either lose concentration or try to force an agenda, the story circle falls apart. For example, one student might have started a story with an end, instead of the process in mind. He might want to try to return to this train of thought and force a particular ending, but the story might want to conclude earlier and differently. Professor Lanton cautioned students to “feel the pulse [and] know when the story is over.” “Feeling the pulse” conjures up the sense of being in tune to changing needs, carefully listening for participants’ intentions, and sensing the very life of the project. It is also a difficult attention to master. The students had many starts and stops in their story circle practice.

Each time that the students began the circle anew, they agreed to try not to laugh and to pay attention to the emotion of the story that was passed on to them. Story: There was a girl that was going to die. In her house was a flesh-eating monkey. Her 15th
birthday was coming. She was sad about getting older. Emotion of anger passed successfully to sadness and then from sadness to humor. The story continued to include children watching cartoons and suddenly ended up as a story about AIDS. The shifting tides of both topics and emotion brought a new dimension to understanding the intricacies of reciprocity. Professor Lanton explained this dimension best. He said: “To share yourself, you have to give yourself up” (Class Notes, 04/11/2007). In the improvisation circle and in TFSC, reciprocity is not just about the learning process and the solution performance, it is about revealing and inspecting yourself and letting others be a part of that. Such positioning makes people vulnerable and frightened, which is why the TFSC process takes time to cultivate a safe and trusting environment in which individuals and communities may grow. The improvisation circle taught the participants reciprocity as a skill, a mode of operation, presenting it as Porter and Manard (2001) might say as a “passionate search, not passive [state]” (16). As the high school students became more confident in improvisation, they were generally more comfortable with all aspects of performing because they felt they could always improvise their way out of a trouble spot.

Conclusion: Act 1.

Partners fostered the trust that was formed in the crucial early stages of collaboration throughout the devising, rehearsing and performance stages of the project. Relationships grew stronger and more complex as trust was established. The high school students shared more intense and private moments, such as the story of a high school student who became pregnant, in their brainstorming for skits and their image theater depictions. It was obvious that Jasmine grew closer to her students, the way her group
would huddle around her, and in the way she wrote of being “proud of my girls” (Jasmine’s Journal Entry, “Richmond Community, Opening Morning”). Sonja too wanted to pursue closer bonds as she learned more about individual students. She wrote in her journal “I really want to find out more about Dave: coming from a rough past with lots of family problems and violence, I can feel his desire to fear home” (Sonja’s Journal Entry #6, 04/11/2007). Billy’s group showed their close relationship to him by teasing him affectionately about his dyed blue hair in their final performance. Trust made it possible for the new group of combined university and high school students to move on to establishing a covenant. They had opened the lines of communication and shown each other their commitment to the project. The next step was defining more specifically the nature and outcome of their collaboration.

**Act 2: Establishing and Supporting a Covenant**

Professor Lanton hoped “that the dialogue provoked unfolds into positive action in the lives of all participants and the community that we worked in and that the community can continue to use theatre in a beneficial way.”

--Professor Lanton (Exit Interview, 05/15/2007)

The second building block to reciprocity, the covenant, was a multi-layered agreement with details that participants continued to refine over time as specific contexts arose. The covenant eventually embraced four precepts that guided the project: form, purpose, code of work ethics, and content. These precepts helped participants to define their roles and focus their energy. In its broadest sense, the covenant established a respectful and cooperative partnership that would entail the university students guiding the high school students in using Theater for Social Change techniques to tell at least one
story illuminating an issue of concern in the high school community and inviting community members to contribute ideas for improving the school’s social environment.

Each precept posed a question, and each answer illuminated the nature of reciprocity between the two partner groups. Form asked, “What is the project medium?” In this project, Theater for Social Change was the medium, one that embraces and encourages an exchange of ideas. Because TFSC was a condition of the class, it is the first precept, but because it took the longest to embrace, I discuss it last in the context of its role in the covenant.

Purpose asked, “Why are we participating?” Here the answer was multifaceted and encompassed three broad reasons for participation: 1) to practice theater generally and TFSC specifically; 2) to empower the high school voices and galvanize the high school into examining and improving its community; and 3) to bridge the gap between City University and the local community. Practicing this theater allowed both the university and the high school students to explore community activism. The partners needed each other’s participation to fulfill their purpose, and so it was a reciprocal partnership. Each partner reciprocated a lesson to the other, the university students taught the high school students how to devise skits and perform; the high school students gave the university students an opportunity to learn to facilitate.

The code of work ethics asked, “How will we behave in our interactions?” This question was answered with a series of qualifications that mainly point towards reciprocating respect and dedication in a cooperative effort. Content asked, “What do we want to say?” Participants chose to enact skits that addressed their school’s social climate, portraying cliques and the qualities and realities of being a community. The
content was framed in a way that invited the audience to engage in the material, thus reciprocating the effort to work on improving their shared community. In this Act, I examine the exercises (Musical Chairs, brainstorming, and focus group) and expectations (of the university and high school students) that, over time, guided the participants towards defining the meaning of each precept. Image Theater provides an in depth illustration of how TFSC brought these components together to shape the project and enable reciprocity.

**Scene one: Purpose.**

Though the syllabus was a catalyst and invitation for the general purpose of practicing TFSC, specific goals and perspectives from diverse participants, including faculty, the university students, the high school students, and me gave this project multiple purposes. Professor Lanton explained to the university students that “a goal of the course is to get closer to our potential positive impact on individuals and community and to learn about [TFSC] as a form of growth, progression, enlightenment” (Class Notes, 01/17/2007).

Because the university students chose to participate in the course based on at least a course catalog description, it is not surprising that their initial comments of what they hoped to achieve in the course were already closely in line with Professor Lanton’s comments. Similar to most other typical college courses, students shared their reasons for joining the course on the first day of class. These expressions comprised the first crucial step towards sharing a purpose and establishing a covenant. Jasmine wanted to be involved in social issues through community work. Sonja, interested in acting and frequently involved in volunteer projects, wanted to learn to make a social contribution
through the arts. Billy wanted to continue the training that he began in the TFSC 1 course during the previous semester. I, of course, wished to learn about the processes of TFSC and how they may provide a space in which to foster and study reciprocity in a service-learning project.

This sharing of intentions also took place when the two groups met for the first time. The high school students chose to join the project either because it offered them the opportunity to join a theater program specifically or to engage in an extracurricular activity more generally, neither or few of which were otherwise offered by their school. Participants had to tie their closely related but disparate goals by a common thread or else amend them to fit together in a covenant that would strengthen the project’s chance of success and for the participants to receive reciprocal rewards.

PRACTICE TFSC.

All participants became students of TFSC, although they focused on differing components of the art and community building. The university students learned the facilitator’s role, initiating trust building, teaching skills, and guiding the high school students in performing. To more fully understand how to lead the process, they also practiced the performance side of TFSC. The high school student participants, on the other hand, were focused on performance. Initially, they signed up because they were eager to be involved in a drama production, something HH does not offer. Despite the explanations by their university mentors and Professor Lanton, it took a while for them to understand that TFSC does not follow the format of traditional stage theater.

The high school students were curious to know what their end goal was in the project, if not a traditionally staged production. Professor Lanton simply said the goal
was to create something together, something that would be long term. On the road to this end they would develop their acting, communication, and community leadership skills, which are as important as the final project itself. As the high school students discovered more about TFSC and their roles became more defined, they had more focused expectations for themselves and their group. Throughout exercises such as developing a code of work ethics for the full group, the high school students expressed the desire to experience teamwork and cooperation. They relished more practice with improvisation when given a choice to perform Image Theater. And they became explicit in expressing a desire to improve their high school community. All these intentions and preferences shaped the covenant.

*Galvanize.*

In the first focus group interview (at the end of the second class meeting), I asked each university student what he or she wanted to “get out of the course,” asking them to specify any objectives they hoped to achieve. Jasmine had the most specific response, basing her goals on expectations from what she had observed by attending a performance of the TFSC 1 class. She wanted to “spark more dialogue about things like stereotypes ... race and class.” Sonja expressed the desire to “leave [the high school students] with hope that things can change... and... a different perception of the university.” Billy, like Sonja, touched on a utopian theme that often draws participants to community work. He said, “I want to make as big a difference as I can with the kids we are going to be working with.” When questioned what this difference would be, Billy said “I hope we can get them fired up about what we are doing and get them excited, so much so that [we can] inspire a little hope.” Most of all he reiterated that he wanted to do “something that
mattered." Billy’s “making a difference,” Sonja’s “hope,” and Jasmine’s “sparking” all point to a shared desire to inspire the high school students to use theater to improve their lives. As a group, this class was concerned for the well being of the high school students with whom they would work. They cared deeply about identifying important social issues and helping the students deal with them in a positive, empowering way. The university students’ purpose for participating did influence the high school students.

On their exit surveys, the high school students expressed the hope that their TFSC project had raised awareness about school issues, showcased student opinions and feelings, set an example for others on how to act in school towards peers, and introduced a creative form of conflict identification and resolution. During the process, they had moved from simply wanting to be part of a theater group, to wanting to open a conversation about community behavior at their high school. They wanted something for themselves—the theater activity and the acting and facilitating skills—but they also wanted something for their peers, staff, and faculty, a better understanding of school social issues and how to deal with them. Their broadening scope illustrated how the covenant evolved over time and incorporated reciprocity through both providing and gaining something valuable.

Bridge gap.

In our Focus Group discussion early in the semester it was clear that the university students perceived a noticeable schism between the university community and other surrounding communities in the city, and they were eager to help bridge the gap. Jasmine noted, “Since coming [to the university], I realized that not a lot of people go out into the ‘community.’ They are either scared of it, or they just have no desire to be a part
of it” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). In other examples, the university students described outsiders’ perceptions of the university members as elite, out of touch with reality, entitled, and snobbish (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). Students of the class agreed with these descriptions at least in part, and looked forward to representing more positive qualities to their community partner.2 The high school students never expressed any awareness of their role in bridging a gap between city communities, yet their participation inherently worked towards this goal.

Scene two: Code of work ethics.

Perhaps the most important activity of the first group session was establishing a code of work ethics. Professor Lanton led the combined group of the university and high school students in identifying a code that the group agreed to adhere to in their work together. Unlike other exercises that took the form of a game, this one focused students’ attention in a simple brainstorming circle. Professor Lanton asked students directly what they thought should guide their group work ethics.

Although Professor Lanton’s question directly initiated the discussion to generate the code of ethics, previous activities and interactions had primed students to think about their group behavior. In the syllabus, Lanton had already emphasized to the university students the importance of group work, dedication, and respect. From their readings, the university students reported the need to act with respect and dedication as they discussed methods of building trust and preparing to work with the community. Initial theater games had given the high school students an opportunity to experience group interaction

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2 This class, a few others, and a very active and successful Center for Civic Engagement at the University continue to work on bringing communities together to share knowledge and broaden awareness about community issues.
within the context of the project. In fact, directly before developing the code of work ethics, students had participated in Musical Chairs. At one point Professor Lanton interrupted their game to say, “No climbing over chairs. [There are] no short cuts to success!” Students, in their frantic struggle for a seat, had started to climb over chairs to reach a free one facing the other direction. The instance, though comical in part, served as a vivid image and lesson when paired with Professor Lanton’s words. Students were reminded that to achieve a worthwhile outcome to their practice they had to preserve the integrity of the process. Such moments gave students concrete examples to consider in designing their code of work ethics.

During the brainstorming activity, the high school students took turns suggesting how they believed the group should interact. The university students remained mostly quiet during this brainstorm, allowing the high school students to draft this code largely by themselves. This empowered the high school students to take control of their project and held them accountable to one another. Still, the university students were active listeners and it was understood that everyone in the project would adhere to the guidelines. The student-generated code finally included the following:

- **Effort** – a promise to put forth one’s best effort
- **Motivation** – a promise to be motivated and motivate others
- **Talent** – acknowledge and use one’s special gifts for the good of the project
- **Patience** – practice patience with oneself and peers
- **Enthusiasm** – express care and positive attitude toward project
- **Cooperation** – work well with others
- **Confidence** – believe in yourself and your peers
Participation – give your all

Determination – be focused

Commitment – see the project through from start to finish

Discipline (added by Professor Lanton) – essentially incorporated students’ notion of Determination and Commitment

Mutual Respect (added by Professor Lanton) – Listening to one another, giving everyone’s ideas full considerations, and responding kindly.

Professor Lanton’s call for a code of work ethics underscores the importance of including an agreement of behavior in a covenant and resonates with Porter and Monard’s (2001) use of a covenant over a contract. The code of work ethics was based on shared values and attitudes that would guide the action. Because TFSC is equally based on process and outcome, defining acceptable behavior is vital. Furthermore, the definition must be generated or at least embraced by the group, not imposed from the outside. It clearly lays out some of the expectations for what all students should be contributing equally, thus aiding the potential for a reciprocal relationship. This code-building exercise revealed to students the responsibility that they individually shouldered for the success of the project. Accepting the code empowered them to determine their own authority.

Scene three: Content.

After covering introductions to one another, to the course, and to some theater games, the combined student group began its thematic work with the modified game of Musical Chairs, led by the university students under the guidance of Professor Lanton. A Nigerian drummer, a visiting musician to City University, provided a drumbeat as the music. When he played his two drums, students walked in a circle around the chairs that
were set up in a row in alternating orientation. When he stopped, students scrambled for a seat. The one student left standing had to tell the group one thing that made him/her unhappy in the school and one thing that made him/her unhappy in one of his/her communities outside of school. This exercise effectively surfaced a variety of the students’ community concerns that were later incorporated into the content of their performances. After the student had spoken, he/she joined the drummer on his second drum for one rotation, before joining the growing audience of players who were out of the rotation. Although eliminated members sat out of the exercise, they continued to be engaged in the action from the audience, shouting out commentary on students’ testimony or guffawing at classmate capers in the struggle to find a chair. In effect, the students became audience participants, or *spectactors* using the term coined by Boal (1979).

Responses pertaining to issues at school focused largely on student behavior with a few comments about more tangible issues such as a dislike of lunch food and the aging school building. The high school students felt that a significant number of students at their school misrepresent themselves and thereby the community by pretending to be something they are not. One student remarked specifically that she disliked “two-faced fake people.” And another student put a face on this artifice by expressing her dislike of students who pretend they are “little gangsters.” The sentiment of the “little gangster” was also reiterated by Principal Ridley who identified an assumed “thug mentality” as one of the issues keeping a few students from excelling and getting in the way of the school mission as a high caliber college preparatory school (Principal Ridley’s Exit Interview, 05/01/2007). Further, a freshman complained that many people in the school
stereotype freshman. She saw this as a technique for the upper classman to exert control by imposing a negative identity onto the lower classman, essentially keeping them in their place. The topics raised in the Musical Chairs exercise were the seeds for the content of the skits.

At the end of this groundbreaking session, before the high school students hurried out to catch rides home, Professor Lanton gently focused students by telling them that in the coming sessions they would concentrate on two goals: getting them ready as actors and looking at the material that emerges in the theater exercises in order to fashion a drama out of it. Immediately one high school student, Dave, piped up enthusiastically, “We should do a play about our school!” (Class Notes, 04/04/2007). With nods of agreement from peers, the community had spoken and taken an important step towards defining their project. Professor Lanton recommended that in the time before their next meeting, participants should ask their peers in school whether they share their priorities of issues that make them unhappy at school and in their communities.

After this day, Professor Lanton stepped back to allow the university students to facilitate the rest of the preparations largely on their own. In the following meeting, the university student facilitators assigned each high school student to a group and pulled the topic of forum style performance for each group from a hat. Billy’s group pulled the topic “community perception [of school]”; Jasmine chose “cliques and social separation”; and Sonja chose “fakeness.” Other themes that remained in the hat included segregation and teen pregnancy. With this structured selection, another dimension of the covenant fell into place. Image Theater then helped students explore their topics in more depth.
The university students relished Image Theater because they felt it tapped into issues that were missing from the information they gathered for the community profile and Musical Chairs. Originally the high school students had reported that they felt left out of the typical high school experience, noting most frequently the lack of extracurricular activities that they perceived created school spirit at other schools. After further examination, they discovered that the *sub-rosa* issue the high school students felt most strongly about and therefore chose for their focus was the negative aspects of cliques at their school. On the outset I found this ironic because cliques are a normative high school phenomenon and presumably made the school look more like other schools. But as I observed the high school students at work, listened to them grapple with the many complex manifestations and ramifications of cliques I realized they had truly searched the soul of their community and identified a hotspot for discussion. I began to recognize that though the issue of cliques may be ordinary for a high school, these exemplary students expected more from their specialized community. Their frustration and their suggested solutions presented in Image Theater showed that they believed they should excel in social relations as well as in academics. Unfortunately, this study did not explore whether cliques have differing meanings or roles in white student groups and minority student groups, an important question that deserves attention in the future.

**Scene four: Form.**

Theater for Social Change was the conditional form of the course and project from the outset. But TFSC can be performed in a number of ways using various techniques. Not until after the group had determined the purpose, code of work ethics, and content of the project, did they return to investigate and practice the form they would
use to express TFSC. The university students chose Image Theater and Forum Theater as the major media for exploring social issues at the high school. Image Theater presents ideas and searches for solutions to problems through physical non-verbal representation. Forum Theater invites a community audience to participate and make changes in the action of the performers. Both forms are followed up by discussion of the action and images represented.

Image Theater made the covenant of the project clearer than any other exercise. Jasmine wrote in her journal “the questions of ‘What’s the point’ went away after [practicing Image Theater]” (Journal Entry, Week 6). Through Image Theater all participants began to embrace the form of TFSC more concretely. With an understanding and practice of the form, came an understanding of how the purpose, code of work ethics and content all fit together. As they used Image Theater to prepare for Forum Theater, the high school students began to identify with the role of community activist and agent of change and the university students felt their success as facilitators empowering others.

The university students asked the high school students to return to the community themes they had identified in a previous exercise, thus pointedly focusing students on the topic and purpose of their performance. The high school students chose the topics they felt most urgent to them: rumors, cliques, and fake people. They used their bodies to show, not merely tell, a circumstance that occurred because of cliques and rumors. Then they rearranged the bodies to suggest another interpretation, and finally, a solution. Participating in this exercise required students to work cooperatively and to examine their identity and role as part of a larger group. They represented themselves as part of a system but also started to see themselves as a group of individuals who might have the
power to change something in their communities. Below follow descriptions of the images.

Three students representing one clique stood together on the right in a “ready to fight” stance. Two students representing another clique stood on the left “talking junk” to clique one. (“Talking junk” is the high school students’ jargon for throwing insults and instigating a confrontation). A single student stood off to the side egging on the rising tension. When asked to change this image of undesirable reality into a more desirable reality, the students formed a different physical image. Three students belonging to one clique linked arms. The person on the end of the chain gave a high five to the cheerleader turned mediator. The mediator used her other hand to high five the first person in the chain link of clique two. Hereby the two previously feuding cliques have learned to get along through the mediator. This solution allows for cliques to exist harmoniously. Another solution had all participants linked in one continuous chain. Here, no cliques existed and the whole school got along as one harmonious community.

A second scenario portrayed how cliques can make some students feel left out and without a group. Four students stood in a circle as though engaged in conversation. Four more students stood in another circle engaged in their own conversation. One student stood by herself with a sad expression. When Professor Lanton asked the students how to transition from cliques to unity, one representative from each clique came forward to shake hands. Everyone else from the two cliques and the lone student faded together into the background. Though the solution does not directly address the issue of students who feel lonely at school, it does suggest that ridding the school of individual, selective cliques offers students one greater sense of school community with which to identify.
A third scenario depicted two groups fighting. One onlooker simply raised his hands and shoulders as though asking, “What can I do?” Another bystander beckoned the authority to come. One solution had the authority arriving to help. But students argued that sometimes authority gets tired of being involved in these petty fights and would prefer the groups to govern themselves. The scenario provided a forum through which students could probe and come to a deeper understanding of their community issues. Their “arguing” was respectful and constructive in that it led to additional scenarios and more discussion.

Image Theater was a form that empowered the high school students to address their community and strengthened their sense of purpose. A key question Professor Lanton asked was: “How does our new knowledge influence our next actions?” The question prompted the students to think about their actions in both an immediate, individually physical way, as well as in a forward thinking community way. At first students thought about the meaning of a particular image and adjusted their bodies to create new meaning and possibly an improved image they could study as an ideal. Then, following Professor Lanton’s prompts for the exercise, students began to think in the context of community action and social change. They discussed how their actions could be applied off stage in reality to attain their community improvement or ideal. They practiced the exemplary action they hoped would be reciprocated by the rest of the community. In the words of Boal (1979): “Theater is action! Perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself; but have no doubts, it is a rehearsal of revolution!” (p. 155).
Conclusion: Act 2.

A covenant is different from a contract in important ways. Reciprocity in TFSC is about far more than simply delivering the end product or service one has promised and taking home the practice of a new skill set. It is about negotiating process and contributing equally at every small step towards progress. The participants in this study agreed to create and sustain a covenant that included both the overall project purpose and the process. Their code of work ethics, generated orally and recorded in writing, helped them negotiate reciprocity every step towards fulfilling the project goals. Therefore, not only did groups and individuals conclude the project with new knowledge and skills in TFSC, they also learned how to communicate and navigate relationships throughout the process. This covenant included larger goals such as learning certain theater skills and performing an interactive piece with their community, as well as equally important incremental steps such as expectations for focus, and respect in communication. Without the trust and caring of individuals for one another a covenant is incomplete. A covenant for a social change project requires affect as well as cognition motivated by interrogations about how to live life. Because these intentions were discussed within the community during the final performance, there is a good chance, as Professor Lanton hoped, “that the dialogue provoked unfolds into positive action in the lives of all participants and the community that we worked in and that the community can continue to use theatre in a beneficial way” (Professor Lanton’s Exit Interview, 05/15/2007). If indeed this hope was achieved, then the project will continue to invoke reciprocity through those who set positive examples and those who are inspired to live better lives because of them.
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Act 3: Power Sharing

“We don’t want to seem like we’re forcing anything, but at the same time we want to appear in control.”

--Billy (Journal Entry 3, 03/30/2007)

“You can’t only give punches; you have to take them too.”

-- Dave, a high school student (Class Notes, 04/18/2007)

One of the biggest challenges to reciprocal relationships is maintaining a balance of power. Blau (1964) explained that social exchange is defined by power struggles within and between micro and macro-structures of relationships. It takes a special kind of leadership to maintain a balance of power. The early trust building exercises neutralized some potential power struggles by openly recognizing an equality of individuals and their contributions. The covenant further codified that individuals and the two groups would work cooperatively on a shared vision. It is possible, however, to trust one another and work cooperatively while adhering to the rigid lines of assertive leadership and submissive follower. As I explain below, the university students enabled reciprocity by sharing power through the role of the “servant leader” (Greenleaf, 1977) and by acting as “SuperLeaders” (Manz & Sims, 2001).

Shared power was the third building block of reciprocity. Although power existed in knowledge and in decision-making, the most poignant aspects of power in this project were expressed through leadership. Participants shared the power of leadership through teamwork, taking turns, and transference. With teamwork, power is shared through concurrent leadership. In taking turns, power is shared by alternating leadership.
Through transference, power is shared by preparing others to take control of guiding themselves. The act of sharing power itself often led to or demonstrated reciprocity in one form or another. All approaches to shared power ultimately led to a reciprocation of empowerment. Fulfilling their roles as facilitators and performers, participants empowered one another to be community activists.

**Scene one: The power sharing challenge.**

Early on in the semester, Professor Lanton engaged the university students in an exercise that illuminated the complexity and difficulty of sharing power while simultaneously trying to lead. In this exercise, each participant, including myself, was given approximately fifteen minutes to invent a concept for a skit, create the action and/or dialogue, cast the actors, rehearse, and finally perform the finished product. Professor Lanton watched closely as we negotiated difficult choices such as how much input to accept from participants versus how much control to assert as director. We learned that though we idealized a community consensus approach, it often conflicted with the practical need to find closure within a given time frame. We could choose to celebrate and feed our own personal creativity when we were given the opportunity to direct, or to compromise and/or strengthen our own ideas by incorporating those of others. Ultimately, we recognized that the role of director is one of power. And we felt the weight, the opportunity, and the danger of this power. The exercise illuminated the necessity for a plan for gradual transference of leadership. In debriefing after the skit directing exercise, the university students discussed possibilities for balancing power. They settled on team building and turn-taking techniques to give opportunity and set an expectation for the high school students to lead. Though the university students did not
study any leadership models, their mindset and actions exemplify aspects of Greenleaf’s

The servant leader is motivated foremost by the desire to serve others and
approaches leadership as a way to enable that service, and to inspire and prepare others to
become servants as well (Greenleaf, 1977). When I asked the university students what
their objectives were in the class, Billy’s response embodied the notion of the servant
leader explicitly. He said, “I want to make as big a difference as I can with the kids we
are going to be working with. ... My time is less important; I’m there for them. And if
we can get something positive out of it, I’ll be happy” (Focus Group Interview 1,
01/24/2007). Sonja and Jasmine’s equally altruistic comments quoted earlier in the
section on purpose were in line with the notion of the servant leader as well. They began
with the desire to help and teach the high school students, and realized the only way to do
this efficiently was to find a way to lead. In leading, their actions were in line with Manz
and Sims (2001) ideas of SuperLeadership.

The goal of the SuperLeader is to transform the follower into the self-leader. In
sharing their knowledge of TFSC, the university students gave the high school students a
tool they could use to lead in their community. As SuperLeaders, the university students
tried to eliminate hierarchies, encourage all participants to contribute to the creative
process, make decisions, and problem solve, and offer positive reinforcement through
expressing compliments and confidence in the high school students. These traits have
already been exemplified in the earlier Acts. To recapitulate briefly, trust building helped
to eliminate hierarchies through a focus on respect; theater games were introduced
immediately to elicit the high school students’ participation in the process. Image
Theater and skit devising invited decision-making and problem solving. All along the university students encouraged the high school students to make this project their own and commended them on their achievements. The covenant formalized the partnership and allowed the high school students to express their own vision for the project. All of the choices that reinforced partnership and equality and valued participant input are a part of power sharing. But the university students had to engage the high school students actively in the responsibilities of sharing power. The university students chose teamwork and turn taking as their main tools for sharing power.

Despite having clear intentions, practicing power sharing within leadership was the university students’ biggest challenge. Throughout the project, the university students continued to grapple with the power dynamics of being facilitators who guided a project whose ultimate goal was to empower the participants to lead themselves. As Billy wrote in his journal “we don’t want to seem like we’re forcing anything, but at the same time we want to appear to be in control” (Billy’s Journal Entry 3, 3/30/2007). The facilitator is someone who stands ready with his/her power (in this case in the form of knowledge of the TFSC process) to guide and influence, but checking the temptation to dictate, and encouraging individuals to develop their own skills to direct the group effort.

**Scene two: Teamwork.**

With teamwork, the university students introduced power sharing through concurrent leadership. As a team, all participants worked together at the same time towards the same end goal. The university students exemplified the need to value each participant’s contributions equally by giving the high school students the opportunity to
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speak their mind and listening carefully to what they said. Ideas, action, discussion all occurred within team exercises.

“Grandmother’s Keys” was an excellent game for fostering teamwork among the beginners. The physical demands on the body were low; the goal was simple; and the execution was humorous. In order to excel at the game, participants made strategic decisions and movements together. When the university students and I first started playing the game, we each would take one or several steps forward trying to reach “grandmother’s keys” and freeze when grandmother turned around to try to catch us in the act. The longer we played, the more we realized the value of teamwork and the more creative we became in our approach. Working together took the individual competition out of the activity and encouraged us to trust one another. If we failed, we failed together. If we succeeded, we succeeded together. We discussed our differing ideas and tried out various approaches, thereby sharing the power of making decisions. To this end, some participants chose to crawl on the floor, finding it easier to freeze and less likely to be detected moving. One student made distracting sounds to redirect grandmother from the real source of key snatching. Two of us only pretended to exchange the key in our closed fists, while in reality a third snuck the key in hers. In our shared effort to steal grandmother’s keys without being caught, we giggled together at our awkward movements rather than fearing that we were scoffing at one another. Preserving our sense of dignity while sharing our vulnerability strengthened our trust in one another and our confidence in making decisions. The university students deemed this team-building game valuable and introduced it to the high school participants later in the semester with similar results.
The improvisation circle, explained earlier, demanded that students share the work and power of storytelling. In its execution it served as a unique bridge between teamwork and taking turns. Although the participants in the story circle take individual turns contributing to the story, no contribution in itself can complete the story. It takes team effort to successfully tell a story. The participants create a story by sharing the power of narration and the process of telling a story itself becomes a moment of group empowerment, exemplifying what the group can accomplish together.

**Scene three: Taking turns.**

In taking turns, power was balanced by alternating leadership. A game that illustrates the delicate balance of power sharing in a reciprocal relationship was Slow Motion Boxing. In this game, the students pretended to be engaged one-on-one in a boxing match. The object was for the students to make their movements as slowly as possible and recognize each position that their bodies moved through on their journey to strike, whether landing or receiving the punch. Power is illustrated at its most basic level in this physical game. But, metaphorically, the game made participants think about the give and take of reciprocity in any relationship between two people. Participants learned that in order to be able to throw a punch (or go after their own goals to achieve their gain) they must also accept their partner’s punch. To play this game effectively is to recognize and experience reciprocity. The university mentors gave pointers to the high school students, telling them the game was “about give and take” and instructing them not to “upstage your partner” (Class Notes, 04/18/2007). One of the high school students accurately summarized the point of the game by saying “you can’t only give punches you have to take them too” (Dave, 04/18/2007).
In reflecting on the exercise, Billy explained that games like slow motion boxing help you “grow familiar with your body, get an awareness of how it reacts in motion, and how your reaction affects those around you” (Billy’s Journal Entry 3, 3/30/2007). Sonja made a similar comment in her journal on the same day “these games helped us prepare for acting because they help us get to know our bodies, their reactions and typical uses, as well as how we respond with our motions to other people” (Sonja’s Journal Entry 3, 3/30/2007). Both Billy and Sonja (and presumably Jasmine as well) recognized that one individual’s choice and action affects another individual who then constructs a reactive response. Their analysis of the alternating power in slow motion boxing helped me understand the concept of reciprocity on another level—as a physical manifestation.

The physicality in reciprocating ideas continued with Image Theater when participants experienced the challenges and benefits of power sharing. For example, when a student was allowed to lead the Image Theater exercise, he was given the power to illustrate his own vision of a topic. When one high school student wanted to show how cliques caused conflicts in relationships, he physically arranged other participants’ bodies to depict a romantic relationship that was being torn apart by friends from competing cliques pulling the individuals in opposite directions. In this moment, the leader could fully explore his ideas with the cooperation of his team. The nature of TFSC encourages participants to take a turn at depicting their own vision. And because students trusted one another, valued the process (according to their covenant), and were eager to participate, they willingly reciprocated the act of follower, so that the new leader could have his turn. As leaders, students discovered the challenge of having to direct everybody on stage to successfully depict their ideas. They also faced the potential criticism of their peers if
they expressed disagreement during discussion of the image. But it is this opportunity of discussion and re-imagining (or re-imaging) that gives this theatrical form its vitality and capacity for social change.

**Scene four: Evidence of transference.**

Teamwork and taking turns gave the high school students the opportunity to practice the power of leadership both jointly and individually. The expectation that they would perform Forum Theater in front of their schoolmates further inspired their resolve to take the lead. Much of what has been laid out in Acts 1, 2, and 3 has demonstrated the intent and attempts of the university students to transfer gradually the power of leadership to the high school students. In short, leadership was transferred gradually by example, opportunity, and expectation through the facilitation of the major components of the project, such as games, assignments and debriefings, and performance. Several examples showcase evidence of achieving their goal to transfer the power of leadership.

As the high school students developed their own skills, they felt more comfortable on stage. This comfort helped to ease the high school students into a leadership role, taking ownership of their preparations. Having learned some games from the university facilitators, the high school students introduced a game from their own childhood. On the third of five theater practices between the two groups, the high school students taught the “Concentration” game to the university students. I do not know if this was spontaneous or planned, but it illustrated how shared leadership opened up a space for reciprocity in teaching. Participants alternated patting their laps, clapping their hands, and snapping their fingers. Keeping the rhythm going, they answered questions or kept a conversation
going. This took a considerable amount of concentration, as the name of the game implies, and taught students the importance of listening and focusing.

By the end of the semester more than half of the high school students were piping up confidently and taking charge of their work, like directing Image Theater. One high school student in particular, Laney, was very vocal about her ideas for the project and getting work done. Her determination and drive was contagious as the semester continued. All of the students eventually embraced the role of community activist to a degree by following through on their public performance. At the conclusion of the project, Laney led the charge to make permanent and further define their theater group. She asked if a National Drama Society for high school students exists that they could join. The question was not answered, either because no one knew, or because the focus of the discussion moved quickly to a more direct discussion of how the high school theater group should proceed in the future. Once again Laney spoke up confidently stating “I’m ready to move on to a real play with a story created by us and set at our school” (Debriefing, 05/09/2007). The high school students had clearly bonded with each other in their new role as theatrical community leaders, meeting on their own and electing to work on a new theater piece after completing the current one.

The project they began was a theater piece that they were writing themselves. In an adaptation of the *Wizard of Oz*, they wished to portray the realities of their school. In other words, their piece incorporated some of the elements of Theater for Social Change, but was essentially a mainstream theatrical production. Their choice fulfilled the need at the school for extracurricular drama activity, but lost some of the meaning of Theater for Social Change. Professor Lanton and the university students would have enjoyed honing
the high school students' skills a little more in TFSC to give them a better understanding of its uses and potential and allow them to make a more informed decision about whether to continue in the TFSC vein or change tracks (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p. 6; Lanton Exit Interview, 05/15/2007). Still, they respected and supported the choice of the high school students as representatives of their educational community (Class Notes, 05/09/2007).

Like in a relay race, the power (or baton) of leadership began with Professor Lanton who shared it with the university students who shared it with the high school students who shared it with their high school community. When the baton was offered up, the original possessor retained some of the power, like the flame on the Olympic torch after it lights the main caldron in the stadium. That light, representing empowerment, then shines on the general public. Continuing the metaphor, power sharing within TFSC is meant to empower the people to see and improve their own conditions. The opportunities to lead cooperatively through teamwork and turn taking, and the expectations of leading through performance and facilitating community discussion, led to an eventual, but partial transference of leadership. The process enriched participants approach and strengthened their chances of success. It engaged reciprocity on a physical level, in teachable moments, in re-imagining, and ultimately empowered both the university students and the high school students to be community activists through the facilitation of Theater for Social Change.

**Act 4: Goods Exchanged**

Trust, covenant, and power sharing formed the foundation for reciprocity in this project, but what were the actual goods exchanged and how successfully were they
reciprocated? To evaluate the nature of reciprocity between the two partners, I had to determine what each partner contributed to the other and what each had gained from the other. Also I had to compare their expectations at the start of the project to their review of the experience at the end of the project. The previous chapters and acts have outlined their expectations and contributions in detail. During our reflection period we focused on what participants perceived they had learned and gained from the overall experience, but a brief recap of expectations is included in this section as well.

**Lessons learned and taught from the perspective of the high school students.**

Two points are most prevalent among the high school students’ reflections on their expectations for the project. First, students’ expectations were for a traditional theater class, not the medium of Theater for Social Change. Second, they were happily surprised at how successfully they performed. Several high school students thought they would be participating in a theater form other than the one they experienced despite the fact that it was explained to them over and over again from the first day. Even though their perception was that they were learning something other than what they anticipated, they each embraced the mission passionately, commenting on their experience as “spectacular,” “fun,” “fantastic,” “excellent,” “exciting,” “surprising,” “an adventure,” “awesome,” and “enlightening” (The high school student Feedback Survey, 05/02/2007). These positive remarks followed their successful performance after some tension and nervousness emerged prior to taking the stage. They were surprised at how well they managed to perform with such little rehearsal and how effective they were in engaging the audience.
I do not have any interview or survey data on what the high school students perceive that they taught the university students because meeting times did not allow me to schedule or administer an interview or survey without detracting from or interrupting the agenda of the university course. Nonetheless, my observations of the two groups interacting combined with what the university students reported learning point to valuable lessons. The most obvious and quantifiable information that the high school students taught the university students was about the Harmony High community. Billy, Sonja, and Jasmine relied on both their interviews of students and the information gathering games such as Musical Chairs and Image Theater to understand the students' social environment. Most of all, though, the university students learned to perceive themselves as and practice being teachers and partners while negotiating the challenges of both.

What the high school students perceived as having gained from the course was most often tied to the challenges they reported facing. Although they were frustrated at feeling under-prepared and having little time to rehearse, they admitted to learning how to ad-lib, a skill some felt would be useful in their lives outside of theater. Challenges such as working together despite competing ideas compelled others to practice and improve their patience in addition to being a lesson in cooperation and teamwork. Participants identified the creative process of selecting topics and forming skits as well as the performance as additional challenges, but were eager to add that having overcome these challenges provided them with a sense of success and empowerment. One student wrote "it gave me a good feeling when people started to understand and were able to see different problems from different points of view" (The high school student Feedback
Survey, 05/02/2007). Another student wrote “It makes me feel great because all the examples we did really explain and touches some people” (The high school student Feedback Survey, 05/02/2007). Other students commented that their ability to communicate had grown to include improved speech, physical language, and awareness of the consequences of a comment before speaking (The high school student Feedback Survey, 05/02/2007). One high school student also listed as an accomplishment that everyone in the project “learned about each other” (Class Notes, 04/27/2007). The statement points to a reciprocal accomplishment in this community work.

Lessons learned and taught from the perspective of the university students.

In their final report, the university students concluded that they had “achieved [their] primary goal” which was “to go into an inner-city high school and teach theatre to the students there [and] that the students would begin to see theatre as an effective tool for dealing with problems in the various communities from which they hailed” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p. 5). Along the way, they were able to help the high school students to recognize their talents and teach them specific skills. Although Jasmine, Sonja, and Billy did not discuss their own learning as a goal in the final report, we know from their comments early on in the semester that they joined the class not only to teach the high school students about TFSC, but to learn the skills required to facilitate such a project. And they acknowledge that along with transforming the students, “the process changed [them] deeply as well” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.1). What the university students learned stemmed from Professor Lanton’s instructions, critical readings, practice of theater games, and in large part from their interactions with the high school students themselves.
The university students believed they had left the participating high school students with a new skill set and a sense of empowerment to improve their surroundings. In their exit interview they told me they had taught the high school students both theory and practice of TFSC. Additionally, the university students instilled or cultivated confidence in the high school students, helping them to trust their newly practiced skills and the process of TFSC. Two specific outcomes of this approach was that “several students were able to tackle fears of speaking in front of peers, while others interacted with students they would not usually talk to outside of the context of this class” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.4). Both of these results are equally valuable, but I am particularly impressed that, as the university students report, the project was able to bring students together from “different grades and social groups ... to transform their school” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.4). Their example performing at the front of the school as a mixed group reinforced the point they made about benefiting from dismantling cliques, or at least amending prominent negative clique behaviors. That the university students were able to teach the high school students interested in traditional theater to embrace and excel in a non-traditional and socially risky TFSC form is truly a success to celebrate.

The university students also reported learning new skills and feeling empowered themselves: “We educators were empowered through active engagement in theater, and we learned that our actions could have a larger difference in the community” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.4). Specifically they noted learning both to improvise but also to plan ahead. They used both of these skills to prepare themselves and the high school students throughout the semester and to pull together the final production successfully in the last few days. Like the high school students, the university students noted that they
learned the most when they were challenged the most. As they put it: “We were forced to step out of our comfort zone” and this helped them “[learn] to work under pressure and in unfamiliar circumstances” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p. 4). Most notable of these pressured moments was when the facilitators had to improvise performances or play new theater games in the first half of the class, and when they had to act authoritatively to help the high school students focus and pull their skits together shortly before performance day.

The university students told me they gained life skills as instructors when they introduced the high school students to TFSC. Through this process they refined their teaching methods and learned the importance of clarity of explanation, and adapting to change, two areas with which they struggled. Their experience as facilitators of the TFSC process also taught them empathy, they said, particularly through the use of Image Theater. This medium allowed them to see people and issues in distinct ways (The university student Exit Interview, 05/02/2007). Other classroom skills included negotiating a balance between encouraging student leadership while still taking control of facilitation so that the creative process moved along. Although they improved some of their teaching skills they also gained valuable information about areas they needed to continue to hone. They described controlling a group of high school kids as “daunting at times,” and learned they “were not strong enough in asserting [their] authority” when students were being too talkative, unfocused, undecided, or lazy (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.8). Finally, the high school students helped their university mentors adopt higher standards, for the mentors strove to be a good example both in theater skills and in respectful and committed behavior (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p. 8).
The details of each interaction can point to very specific and sometimes minute elements of exchange, but the main areas of exchange can be grouped into four categories: knowledge, creativity, skills, and empowerment. The university students provided the high school students with knowledge of TFSC, creative approaches to group work, performance and communication skills, and the opportunity for the high school students to empower themselves in their community. In exchange, the high school students provided the university students with knowledge of their community, creative skits, the opportunity to practice facilitation skills, and empowerment as community activist. The reciprocated goods are summarized below in Table 1.

**Goals achieved from the perspective of the professor and principal.**

The high school and university students were the central actors representing the two communities, but Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley also played important parts in facilitating the reciprocation between the two communities. Both Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley had a stake in student and community learning and growth. To begin with, these two educational leaders made the project possible by initiating the terms of their partnership. Their individual goals for the two communities worked towards reciprocal rewards. Although the professor’s and the principal’s rewards are closely in line with and support the goods exchanged between the students, they have their own specific delineation.

Out of the same community partnership then, but on a different level, Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley were able to fulfill one another’s goals for opportunities in curriculum, empowerment, and community relations. By opening his school to the City University students enrolled in TFSC, Principal Ridley provided a community
Table 1

*Reciprocated Goods Between Student Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The university student contributions to the high school students</th>
<th>The high school student contributions to the university students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>TFSC education</td>
<td>Community information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Approaches to group work</td>
<td>Devising skits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Performance skills</td>
<td>Facilitation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Community activist with voice in school community</td>
<td>Community activist with voice in city community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
partnership vital to the purpose of the university course, which was to teach participants to identify a need for social change and address those needs through the process of TFSC. Consequentially, the collaboration also offered an opportunity to empower participants and the community. Finally, Principal Ridley’s partnership gave Professor Lanton the opportunity he sought to contribute positively to and strengthen the relationship between City University and the surrounding local community. Specifically, Professor Lanton explained, “a personal goal is to have the university facility used more by the community to intensify diversity of color, class, gender and thought in the student and faculty body” (The university student Exit Interview, 05/02/2007).

The partnership was mutually beneficial because Professor Lanton’s expertise and course structure not only provided an extracurricular activity in the high school, a niche Principal Ridley wanted to fulfill, it further allowed Principal Ridley to test the waters for the reestablishment of a drama club and an eventual drama course. Additionally, Principal Ridley appreciated an opportunity for his students to be empowered through a creative and productive outlet of expression. Finally, the partnership provided Principal Ridley with a forum through which to showcase his students’ talents to the community. He said, “I have a keen interest in exposing the skills and talents of our school through a different medium than we see in the classrooms” (The university student Exit Interview, 05/02/2007).

After asking Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley individually what their goals were in joining the project, I asked both separately why they thought the other desired a partnership in this project. Both answers reflected an accurate understanding of his partner’s goals and motivation. They had entered a sound covenant with a clear
understanding of shared and reciprocal goals (see Table 2). Furthermore, both Professor Lanton’s and Principal Ridley’s understanding of what motivated participants was in alignment with each other and the participants. The high school students were hungry to participate in theater in general. The university students were eager to learn and practice a specific theatrical form that dovetailed with community organizing. Audience members on performance day wanted their voices heard regarding community issues. And, as Professor Lanton put it, “some just wanted to be noticed” (Professor Lanton’s Exit Interview, 05/15/2007).

Was reciprocity achieved?

At the beginning of the semester, the university students’ language reflected their preoccupation with what they could do for the high school students. By the end of the semester, their final report demonstrated an understanding of the reciprocal nature of the learning process in TFSC. They wrote, “even in the short time after its completion we can see certain effects this project has had on ourselves, our students, and Harmony High School” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p. 3). The high school students and principal expressed overall satisfaction in accomplishing the goals they had set for themselves. Details about the efforts, skills, and ideas that the two groups contributed and what they gained have been discussed throughout the four acts in this chapter and included both specific TFSC skills as well as the social skills of communication and group interaction.

Both groups were inspired by successfully eliciting feedback from the high school audience, thereby extending their partnership of exchange to a larger community. This public approbation that the process is worthwhile made the participants want to commit to the process of TFSC all the more. The university students wrote in their final report:
Table 2

*Reciprocated Goods Between the Professor and Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professor Lanton’s Goals</th>
<th>Principal Ridley’s Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Introduce participants to identifying the need for social change; &amp; Teach process of TFSC</td>
<td>Provide more extracurricular activities; &amp; Test the waters and lay groundwork for introducing a drama course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Empower participants to change their environment</td>
<td>Provide an outlet for student expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td>Contribute to the city community and strengthen City University’s relationship to the local community</td>
<td>Showcase student talents to the greater community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"several of us mentioned a desire to do this work on a long-term basis" (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.5). The university students recognized this same drive in the high school students. They wrote that after the final performance the high school students "all wanted to jump right back into the fray, talking about what topics they would go after next time and how they might handle them" (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.5). Indeed, by the end of our collaboration the high school students were already busy writing a script for a new performance. The university students recognized that "TFSC has had a deep impact on [their] lives and [their] future choices in theater, social development, and approaching the world" (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.5). They witnessed a transformation in the high school students as well and expressed their wishes for the high school students to inspire others as follows: "We hope that the change exhibited in these students stands as a model for all others in Harmony High, and that they continue to grow and shine in their classrooms and in their homes" (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.5).

**Conclusion**

If in this project trust, covenant, and power sharing were the building blocks for reciprocity then the processes involved in creating Theater for Social Change contained the machinery for crafting those blocks and setting them into place. A variety of games helped to build trust, group brainstorming and debriefing sessions helped solidify the covenant, Image Theater and Forum Theater allowed participants to share power, and improvisation kept the process flowing despite challenges and conflict. Each conceptual block inherently embodies one primary act of reciprocity in itself. Trust is gained but also given. The covenant is an agreement to help one another achieve the goals and keep the promises implicitly or explicitly made to one another. Power sharing is an expression
of equality in action. Each of these blocks further helped enable the myriad, reciprocal actions, deeds, and exchanges.

Participants could not walk across the stage of the playhouse without stepping on these building blocks. As they stood on them, they were enabled and encouraged to reciprocate knowledge, creativity, skills, and empowerment. If the blocks had crumbled, the whole project would have come tumbling down as well. True reciprocity, according to Blau (1964), is defined by interdependence between participants. Such interdependence requires a precise and detailed understanding of individual and group needs, goals, and expectations. The high school students needed theater as a creative outlet; they wanted their voices to be heard, but needed attentive guidance and education of the process along with supportive encouragement. The university students needed to hone their understanding of how theory applies to practice, become leaders of the process, and effectively help a community to communicate important issues. Each partner had an important role to play in fulfilling its own and its partner’s needs. In the dynamics of ever-evolving relationships and needs, reciprocity requires constant reevaluation. To preserve the foundation then, TFSC must continually reevaluate the balance of reciprocity and negotiate the challenges that threaten reciprocity. The following chapter explores the challenges that threatened reciprocity by breaching trust, covenant and power sharing and how participants negotiated these conflicts for the preservation or to the detriment of reciprocity. Examining these moments of tension casts a light on the specific nature and function of the exchanges in this project.
Chapter Six: Threats to Reciprocity

Often enabling social interaction is entwined with conflict, and when conflict arises, it may threaten reciprocity. TFSC is no exception, but its process offers strong tools that foster communication to work through conflict. In this project, three major challenges threatened the foundation of reciprocity. Lack of time, lack of confidence, and lack of experience led to a number of conflicts that posed mild to severe threats to trust, covenant, and power sharing and thereby illuminated the nature of reciprocity. The most prominent threats occurred during the skit devising and rehearsal stages when creativity, compromise and stress were most intense. In most cases participants addressed the threats successfully and avoided a breach, in some cases some level of breach occurred. Below I consider the causes of several exemplary breaches or near breaches, the resulting or potential damage to reciprocity, and the apparent remedies used to restore and/or strengthen reciprocity. Resolving conflicts that led to breaches or near breaches with consequent breakdowns of reciprocity helped participants to solidify trust, to form and strengthen the idea of reciprocity in the covenant, and to examine their use of power in relation to reciprocity.

The severity of the threats to reciprocity and the consequent breaches can vary and therefore are best understood on a continuum from mild to catastrophic. The milder the threat, the less chance of a breach and the stronger the elements of reciprocity remain; the stronger the threat, the greater chance of a breach and the weaker reciprocity becomes.
A threat or a breach becomes more severe either when the conflict occurs on several dimensions of the definition of a building block or when one area of conflict is particularly intense. When a breach occurs, the main areas of reciprocation, knowledge, creativity, skills, empowerment (as discussed in the previous chapter) begin to break down. Conflict, however, does not necessarily result in a breach of reciprocity. It may result in strengthening the foundation of the project as well as develop participants’ social skills. In working through conflict, participants hone skills of negotiation, compromise, and leadership that lead them to a more effective work of TFSC. Analyzing the moments of conflict and tension in this project leads us to a deeper understanding of reciprocity and methods/tactics/strategies to preserve it within relationships.

**Act One: Betrayal of Trust**

Table 3 summarizes the dimensions along which participants defined and enacted trust as explained earlier in Act 1 of Chapter 5. Conflict or tension can occur in any one or in several defining categories represented, and may spread to other areas as well, increasing the threat to reciprocity and the severity of a breach. It is sometimes difficult to infer whether one breach led to further breaches or if several breaches arose around the same time in response to the same stimulus (e.g., heightened stress). In any case, in several instances facilitators and participants struggled to retain and regain trust between groups and even within the larger group. As participants struggled to understand the form and expectations for TFSC, choose skit topics, differentiate skit material, and work with Forum Theater, conflict put the following areas of trust to the test: trusting the transparency of the agenda, trusting in a respectful work environment, trusting the proficiency of leadership in the facilitator, and trusting the motivation and dedication of
Figure 3. Continuum of Threats to Reciprocity.
Table 3

*Elements of Trust Defined*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Transparency of purpose</th>
<th>Proficiency of skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act with civility</td>
<td>Make expectations clear</td>
<td>Facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor partner’s identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foster open conversation</td>
<td>Physical nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value partner’s contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the high school participants’ contributions. All participants worked to maintain trust by understanding one another’s expectations and challenges so they could effectively achieve reciprocal goals. At times the attention to the elements of trust wavered.

A mild breach of trust occurred because of a lack of transparency in making expectations clear. Even as late as the first rehearsal, some high school students still had not fully comprehended what and how they would be performing. Some expressed surprise and dismay that they would not have costumes, props, scripts, etc. One said “What, no mics? No costumes? Just the three of us at 8:00 am?” (Class Notes, 04/24/2007). Their comments expressed a sense of betrayal because from their perspective they were not receiving what they expected in exchange for their participation. For the university students, the comments illuminated the challenge of clarifying expectations. Even though the process had been explained several times, some students had a difficult time envisioning what was described because the process of TFSC was new to them.

With more time and experience, facilitators might have checked in with their community performers to be sure that both individual and group expectations were in alignment with the project definition. This breach was patched up painlessly, even with humor. It ranks as a mild breach because only a small subset of one partner was confused. The high school students who did understand the theater format admonished their peers humorously for not having understood. Then, together with the university students, they explained the process to those still confused once again. Finally, all participants shared the same vision and could continue in working towards crafting skits for their performance. Thus, mild threats to reciprocity are characterized by a
misunderstanding, confusion, or mild frustration resulting in questions and misdirection that take the project off course temporarily. With full cooperation a mild breach can be deterred or repaired with ease, and the group can move beyond the incident that threatened reciprocity with minimal attention and few negative feelings.

The high school students had difficulty selecting only a few skit topics from their many ideas. Sonja wrote in her journal “It was hard to narrow these topics down though because our kids LOVE talking!” (Journal Entry 8, 04/23/2007). Billy agreed, “Getting these kids to talk passionately about issues they care about is easy. Getting them to stop talking, to settle on one issue and explore it fully, that is more difficult” (Journal Entry, 04/23/2007). The students had very limited time (only two weeks) to choose a topic, develop the ideas, and devise a skit, therefore, Sonja, Billy, and Jasmine stepped in to move the process along. As described in Act 2, scene 3, the facilitators finally narrowed down the topics by pulling three from a hat. Though at first this approach seemed effective, it later caused conflict that led to an escalating breach of trust and resulted in a breakdown of reciprocal creativity and empowerment.

Only six of the 11 participants were present on the day skit topics were chosen, two meetings prior to the performance. On the last rehearsal day, one day before the performance, the conflict erupted. The students who had not been present on the day topics were chosen felt dissatisfied about their perceived lack of voice in choosing a topic, developing a skit, and even rehearsing. This breach of trust arose from the “injured” students’ perception of a lack of respect because their input was not being solicited and therefore their contributions were not being valued. They felt they had been left out of an important part of the process and therefore lost trust in the process and in
ACTS OF RECIPROCITY

their partners. The breach at this point can be categorized as strong, with the injured students openly voicing their frustration at first and then, more dangerously avoiding open conversation and resisting silently by refusing to get up and rehearse.

In this struggle between the facilitators' and the performers' trust, each side felt wronged by the other. The university students felt they were offering their help as mentors in guiding the high school students. They were frustrated that the high school students were not reciprocating efforts to move the project along by showing up at rehearsal dependably and focusing on the tasks set for them. The high school students felt they were participating by sharing their many diverse ideas. They felt frustrated that the university students were not respecting their need to explore ideas thoroughly by rushing the process forward. Momentarily, each side perceived the other side as holding back the commitment to the process they had agreed to reciprocate. Their trust for one another wavered as they worried each would not uphold their promises and respect each other's contributions. Both body language and words revealed their mistrust. I observed a lack of cooperation when the high school students sat on their chairs refusing to get up and rehearse and rather sat and complained about their inability to construct a skit in the time remaining. In a debriefing the university students described the high school students as “agitated.” I also noted the anxiety in the university students who, in the same debriefing session, asked Professor Lanton more questions than usual about how to facilitate. The university student journals confirmed their insecurity over facilitation.

With the continued suggestions of the university students on how to prepare the skits and after some cajoling from the high school students who had been present at the time topics were chosen, injured students joined the process somewhat reluctantly, but committed to
finishing what they had started. They worked through their mistrust and began rebuilding new trust by reapplying themselves to the collaboration.

Therefore, a strong threat is characterized by frustration that results in resistance to specific project goals. A breach may or may not occur. Reciprocity diminishes on at least one of the main categories of exchange. Participants must address the situation that threatens reciprocity and agree on a solution for the project to continue. Some damage may linger in participants’ negative perception of the project.

Still proceeding with gingerly feelings towards the project, the high school students watched each other’s skits. The breach of trust, which was barely scabbed over, intensified from strong to severe. Even though three topics had been chosen, they were closely related. Jasmine’s group 1 skit was the most original and polished. Due to Jasmine’s strong leadership, her group avoided a further breach of trust, though it was tangentially affected by the ensuing conflict between Billy’s group 2 and Sonja’s group 3. Billy’s group devised a skit so similar to Sonja’s group that further frustration and conflict arose. By then, facilitators felt it was too late to explore a new topic, but the high school students were relying on the university students to help them create distinct skits. The breach escalated because it was now not only defined by a perception of a lack of respect, but also by a lack of trust in Billy and Sonja’s proficiency in facilitation. With the lack of strong leadership from Billy and Sonja in contrast to Jasmine, the high school students in groups 2 and 3 let their fears stagnate their progress. They expressed concern that the audience would not listen, that their scenarios were too unrealistic, and that they would make fools of themselves in front of their peers (Billy’s Journal Entry, 04/25/2007; Jasmine’s Journal Entry, p.9). In their fear and frustration students nearly sabotaged their
own work as their actions grew more and more passive resulting in a lack of interest in devising and rehearsing. This emotional distancing was a dangerous moment, made even more potent by its contagious nature. The project was grinding to a halt. Creative ideas and theater techniques were not being reciprocated. To make matters work, this breach was left to linger. Only moments after the problem was brought to light, the session ended.

A severe threat certainly results in a breach on at least one major level. The threatening action offends a significant number of participants and causes them some level of discomfort. Consequently, the breach likely leaves some permanent damage as participants hold back or lessen the dedication of their future contributions as an act of disengagement or protection against further offense.

When the university students returned to the school a week later, a new problem compounded the old one. The breach of trust deepened because the university students had not displayed adequate proficiency in their skills as facilitators to prepare the high school students for their interaction with the audience. With all the last minute revisions and panic, little time was left to rehearse Forum Theater, which is Boal’s (1979) technique of allowing the audience members to suggest a revision of action to result in a preferred outcome within the skit. In their skits, the high school students had already suggested a solution to the community problems that they had identified and found it difficult to revise their skits with an open ending in order to incorporate community input. When Professor Lanton asked who felt insecure about presenting on the following day, several high school students raised their hands. To remedy the breach, Jasmine and Billy managed to redirect their groups in instruction, but Sonja reported a particular
frustration for not understanding the expectations for Forum Theater better herself, and consequently not guiding her students appropriately. The mistake cost her group rehearsal time, which consequently heightened their insecurities about performing. Sonja could not successfully participate in the give and take of a reciprocal partnership because she had not prepared herself well enough to fulfill her role as leader and set expectations for the high school students to fulfill their role as performers. Regrettably, this breach of leadership trust between Sonja and her group was not repaired. As a result, Sonja's group did not feel confident enough to perform with her.

This moment was on the brink of a catastrophic breach. A catastrophic threat is characterized by deep alienation of a critical percent of participants. All positive reciprocity ceases, and in some especially destructive cases, the exchange of undesired contributions begins. The key element of a catastrophic breach is that the participants are unable or unwilling to address the problem and consequently the project fails. Although nearly catastrophic in regard to Sonja's inability to deliver her promised contribution and the consequent alienation of her group, the breach did not permeate the project to the extent that it sabotaged the final performance and ultimate completion of the project because participants were willing to find a solution to their dysfunction.

Working jointly as a large group with the overall goals of reciprocity in mind, the participants averted a catastrophic breach. In a display of admirable motivation, ingenuity, and reciprocity, the high school students in groups 2 and 3 made the decision to join forces. With this decision, groups 2 and 3 solved both the problem of differentiating skits and finding leadership for Forum Theater. Group 2 shared their leader (Billy) with group 3, group 3 shared their ideas for skit material with group 2
allowing the creation of one original skit, differing from group 1. In her journal, Sonja expressed disappointment in herself for not being able to facilitate Forum Theater, but also relief that the two groups combined under Billy’s leadership. What was a relief to Sonja was a new burden for Billy. By not upholding her promise to lead a group, Sonja caused additional work for Billy, who now had to manage a larger group with only 30 minutes left to prepare before the performance. Sonja was not upholding her promise to reciprocate the hard work of her university peers and gave up a most valuable opportunity to empower herself and her group members. Additionally, Jasmine’s group members suffered the residual of this fragile state because they did not receive the reciprocal attention they would have liked to improve their own work. Professor Lanton asked Billy and Sonja’s combined group to watch and critique Jasmine’s presentation by being the audience for group 1’s forum theater presentation. Instead of focusing on group 1’s work, the second group fretted over their own lack of preparation.

Unfortunately, though combining groups resolved the conflict, this very strong breach of trust left a scar on the project. In reading the comments of the high school student evaluations, it is clear that the breach of trust remained a disappointing moment of the project for some participants. Several students commented that they wished they had been better prepared and had more time to practice. One student wrote, “I thought we would have more to say in what we performed” (Anonymous high school student Feedback Survey). Professor Lanton also remembered this critical moment in his exit interview. He wrote, “I harbor a concern as to whether the second group [Billy and Sonja’s combined group] of performers felt so unprepared that they lost confidence in leadership and the decision to do future work by themselves was a result of this”
(Professor Lanton, Exit Interview, 05/15/2007). Professor Lanton referred to the choice of the high school students to draft their next project largely on their own. The high school students had to be persuaded to include a university student mentor to provide an outsiders perspective with suggestions and a link to a larger community and university resources, but did not acknowledge this mentor as an expert who could influence the content or presentation of the new theatrical production.

The university students critiqued themselves in their final report, pointing out they could have prevented these conflicts by communicating better with one another about skit preparations. In their inexperience, however, they were distracted and preoccupied with their own individual skills of facilitation and did not recognize the benefit of collaborating with each other. They allowed themselves to focus on the goals of the small groups, momentarily neglecting the covenant of the larger group. This is understandable because the university students, relatively new to TFSC themselves, were learning to facilitate the process as they went. Despite this justifiable criticism, the decisions made to move forward with specific topics did indeed help bring the project to fruition. Had the university students not held the high school students to the timetable, the performance would not have been prepared in time. A momentary compromise of reciprocity led to the ultimate achievement of the shared goal of performance.

The vigilant attention of both the university students and high school students to one another’s concerns and project conflicts nurtured the project to a successful conclusion. Threat assessment was crucial to taking corrective action. Some minor and strong breaches occurred, but other even stronger or catastrophic breaches were averted. Table 4 characterizes the degrees of threats to reciprocity. Each level of threat also
Table 4

**Degrees and Characteristics of Threats to Reciprocity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MILD</th>
<th>STRONG</th>
<th>SEVERE</th>
<th>CATASTROPHIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat is characterized by misunderstanding, confusion, or mild</td>
<td>Threat characterized by frustration and results in resistance to</td>
<td>Threat characterized by offending a number of participants personally</td>
<td>Threat characterized by deep alienation of a critical percent of participants. Breach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustration resulting in questions and misdirection that take the</td>
<td>specific project goal or goals. Breach may or may not occur. Reciprocity</td>
<td>and causing them discomfort. Breach occurs. Reciprocity ceases on at</td>
<td>occurs. Participants unable or unwilling to address the breach. All positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>project off course temporarily. Reciprocity is threatened only</td>
<td>diminishes on at least one of the main categories of exchange.</td>
<td>least one major level. Some permanent damage results in the future</td>
<td>reciprocity ceases; negative reciprocity may begin (the exchange of undesired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>momentarily. Corrected easily with full cooperation. Move beyond</td>
<td>Addressed to allow the rest of the project to continue. Agree on</td>
<td>contributions of participants.</td>
<td>contributions). Project falls apart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with minimal attention and few negative feelings Breach is averted.</td>
<td>solution. Continue forward. Some damage may linger in participants’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perception of the project.</td>
<td></td>
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indicates the nature of its consequential breach, if participants are unable to negotiate the incident of conflict successfully.

**Act Two: Dismissal of Covenant**

When trust started to break down, the foundational block of covenant began to crack as well. Because the high school students lacked trust in themselves to perform and in their facilitators to prepare them adequately for performance, their dedication to practice dwindled and they backed away from their commitment to Theater for Social Change. The threats to reciprocity occurred largely through the covenant components of form and code of work ethics, but also touched upon content. Table 5 summarizes the component parts of the covenant as explained in Act 2 of chapter 6. Ultimately, however, the crack did not shatter the covenant. In most cases, a rededication to the cause repaired the weaknesses that posed the possibility of a breach. In one case early on in the semester, a conflict between Professor Lanton and myself over work ethics even helped to develop the covenant.

The high school students feared their peers would not take their skits seriously, let alone be inspired to participate. In other words, they feared their efforts would not be reciprocated through a community conversation and so they withheld their own contribution to the dialogue. Their resistance to rehearsal by spending time complaining and worrying about their performance was dismissive of the purpose of the covenant to practice TFSC and to empower their community. Billy felt that students were resisting their skits because they felt “the concepts were … too unrealistic,” “there might be ‘backlash’ over controversial topics, or agreement could not be reached within a group (Billy’s Journal Entry, 04/25/2007). Jasmine noted in her journal that the high school
Table 5

Component Parts of the Covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Theater for social change (Specific use of Forum Theater &amp; Image Theater)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>To practice theater in general and TFSC specifically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To empower high school student voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To bridge the gap between City University and the local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code of Work Ethics</strong></td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Depict school social climate of cliques to interrogate qualities and realities of being a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depict outsider vs. insider perspective of school social climate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students expressed the concern that the audience members “are not going to listen” (Jasmine’s Journal Entry week 7, p.9). The high school students had little confidence in their skills and feared that their peers would not take their skits seriously, let alone be inspired to participate. Their insecurities posed a strong threat to reciprocity and indicated that the participating high school students did not feel they shared a covenant with the greater school community and were unsure whether they would be able to form one.

Sonja, Billy, and Jasmine tried to allay their fears by improvising a skit for them on the spot, to show them what is possible with even minimal planning. When this action still did not relieve the stress and tension, the university students became frustrated both at the high school students’ continued resistance and their own ability to galvanize them into action. Professor Lanton stepped in to help guide the high school performers and the university facilitators. Recognizing that the high school students were too nervous and insecure to focus on a covenant that purported a goal as grandiose as social change in the community, Professor Lanton tried to calm them down by giving them a sub-covenant to focus on. Trusting in the participants’ preparation and experienced in pre-performance jitters of his actors, he told them: “If you get this on the floor that is a great accomplishment” (Class Notes, 04/24/2007). In other words, Professor Lanton asked only of the participants that they focus on themselves and performing what they had practiced, not be responsible for audience reaction. Thus, momentarily, performers stopped worrying about bringing about social change and thought about remembering the plot line of their skits. Slowly their resolve returned. Then Professor Lanton gave them an option to walk away from the performances and replace them with a series of theater
games they could present to the school. All the participants refused, showing their rededication to the cause and averting a breach. Choosing the more challenging (and therefore potentially more damaging or equally rewarding) option despite their nerves and frustrations, proved the high school students’ commitment to executing the agreed upon performance in hopes of a community discussion. In short, a recommitment to the form and purpose of the covenant did ultimately keep all participants on track to the main goal of using TFSC techniques to engage the high school population in a conversation about their community.

Earlier in the semester, when the syllabus was the only early indicator of our future covenant, a conflict between Professor Lanton and me helped illuminate an issue that eventually defined a part of the code of work ethics in the covenant. The conflict posed only a mild threat to reciprocity because both Professor Lanton and I were eager to discuss the conflict and make amends. Ultimately, these amends averted a breach and even strengthened the covenant. The syllabus set forth the importance of regular attendance, “a generous and giving spirit,” flexibility for “activity alteration” based on the needs and schedule of the partner, and “patience, humility, and purpose” (Syllabus). With these words, Professor Lanton laid the groundwork for a covenant that respected participants, demanded hard work, and kept the goals of the project at the forefront of action. My lack of confidence in my ability to persuade the university students of the importance of their participation in my research, led me to consider an approach to soliciting participation that did not support the very nature of reciprocity I wished to study. I proceeded with a choice that shirked some of the harder work of building trust and might be considered a bribe, and was therefore disrespectful. Later in the semester as
I reflected back on the conflict in approach between Lanton and myself. I realized more clearly my own contribution to support the purpose, and code of work ethics of the project while still pursuing the purpose of my own research.

I decided to offer snacks during focus group interviews in exchange for students' valuable time. I thought that this gesture would strengthen my relationship with the university students as well as exemplify the reciprocity I was keen to investigate. Professor Lanton contested my strategy and taught me a valuable lesson in the process. He felt strongly that students should be motivated from within their hearts to contribute to my study. He also felt, as he wrote in an email, that the students “need to focus strictly on the work. Wouldn’t want them to think that [the food] is an incentive for the work” (02/05/2007). I believed that the food would help students stay focused just a little longer, since I was asking them to stay after class for an interview. And, from a purely practical standpoint, they might be hungry late in the afternoon after a two and a half hour class. Professor Lanton, however, was adamant. In the same email he encouraged me “to rely on [my] charming personality and being a comrade to them in ... gaining more of and sustaining their trust.” (02/05/2007). Professor Lanton did believe in taking students out to eat for discussion and debriefing or even in celebration at the completion of a successful project or project component. Ultimately, however, he felt the food should not become an incentive for participation in the early weeks, and I did. Although we disagreed on this point, I did not hesitate nor feel frustrated about changing my process and leaving out the food in future sessions. I respected Professor Lanton’s opinion, his years of experience, and his right to determine the circumstances of his students’ participation. Indeed, the lesson was valuable to this study and me.
The debate illuminated for me the complexity of recognizing and defining reciprocity at any given time and by different people. I recognized that snacks are not an equal exchange for something as valuable as thoughts and time. If introduced too early, before a bond of trust has been built around a shared covenant, such an exchange may distract students, cheapen the relationship, and even appear more as a bribe than a reciprocal action. I finally came to understand that the reciprocal rewards I could offer the study participants were my physical and intellectual participation when needed, at least a small sense of satisfaction in contributing to a study, and receiving not only a copy of the study, but also a modest thank you gift (for the university students) at the completion of the semester in the form of a copy of Boal’s (1992) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.

The Covenant had to endure fewer challenges to reciprocity then Trust and avoided a breach. I attribute the strength of the covenant to several factors. First, Professor Lanton’s ever present strength, whether in the fore or in the background, provided a security to the project, even in stressful times. The university students could ask questions after sessions and the high school students looked to him for pointers and felt equally comfortable asking him questions during class. Second, the high achieving nature of both the high school and the university students (both at selective institutions of learning) spurred them to persevere through challenges. Thirdly, the promise that TFSC offered an opportunity for these high school students to be heard in their community and to practice acting was a tantalizing attraction that the students could not resist. From the time they joined through the exit survey, the high school students expressed their relish for stage experience at a school that offered no drama courses. The covenant acted as
glue between trust and power, keeping participants in line with their goals of social change and using respectful means to attain the goals.

**Act Three: Power Struggles**

In the project power was located more heavily with one party than another at different moments. Though power at first appeared unbalanced in these moments, the temporary locus of power was a necessary and important step on the road to transferring leadership. On the way to this understanding, facilitators and performers struggled with the practice of power sharing through teamwork, taking turns, and transference of leadership, explained in Act 3 of chapter 5 and summarized below in Table 6. Their struggles to maintain a balance of power occasionally posed a mild or strong threat to reciprocity, but ultimately power was never abused and no breach in power sharing occurred. Still, the challenge of maintaining power sharing taught participants that reciprocity requires the identification and fulfillment of individual roles and contributions. To deal successfully with the high school group dynamics that included the lack of confidence and difficulty focusing, the university students had to take control of situations while not overpowering and alienating the performers. The performers had to do their part by learning to move forward without constant direction from the facilitators. Finally, both groups had to work as a team to use power sharing as a way to resolve conflicts.

Power sharing through transference of leadership was the most challenging for the group. In debriefing sessions early on in our collaboration, the university students had talked with Professor Lanton about the natural talents of the high school students and the emergence of some as leaders in their groups (Class Notes, 04/18/2007). Sonja wanted
Table 6

*Types of Power Sharing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamwork</strong></td>
<td>Guide through concurrent</td>
<td>Promotes shared goal, strategy, success or</td>
<td>Teaches cooperation, strength and confidence in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>failure under guidance of facilitator</td>
<td>group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taking Turns</strong></td>
<td>Teach by alternating</td>
<td>Promotes experimentation with individual</td>
<td>Teaches importance of and respect for individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>goal, strategy, success or failure under</td>
<td>contribution and builds individual confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>guidance of facilitator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transference of Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Through opportunity and</td>
<td>Promotes new group to set goals and strategies</td>
<td>Teaches power for independence in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expectation</td>
<td>without guidance of facilitator</td>
<td>activism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
confirmation that she should step away enough to allow the leaders to emerge. Professor Lanton confirmed this approach but emphasized that she, as authority figure, had to be sure that each participant was involved (Class Notes, 04/24/2007). His vocabulary of "authority figure" helped illuminate some of the power issues that we had danced around when talking about facilitation and shared responsibility in group work. The authority figures were not meant to dominate the course of ideas, but rather guide others in the creative process and maintain fair play. Therefore the words "authority figure" can be used to explain an essential element of the facilitator's contribution to the reciprocal relationship without implying an unequal power dynamic. Each participant possessed the power of knowledge and assumed leadership in different areas of the project. The university facilitators contributed structure and guidance to the high school students, and mentored them in learning and mastering the process; they brought expertise of TFSC to the forum, while maintaining fair play. The high school participants contributed community expertise, creative thought, problem solving and acting. Thus, both parties brought attributes to the social contract, which were needed by the other. Reciprocity was threatened, or at risk, whenever participants perceived an imbalance of contributions of the appropriate power. Maintaining this balance was a challenge that demanded vigilance.

The high school participants understood the theory, but struggled with the practice of TFSC. Taking turns with the university students in shaping the skits helped the high school students assert power. Constructing a skit was an opportunity for the high school students to assert power over content and creative expression, but the task included steps that the high school students had not yet considered. They needed a narrative that would
captivate the audience: A flow to carry the audience easily through the subject matter, action in the form of humor or drama to hold the audience interest, lines to speak and physical positions to convey the message, and actors to play the roles. Practicing their role as authority figure, the facilitators helped the students through this maze. In her journal, Jasmine wrote, “In deciding and casting roles, [the high school students] were ambivalent on who was going to do what, partially because the plot wasn’t fully fleshed out, so I asked questions like ‘How does it start? What happens next? What’s the conflict?’” (Journal Entry, week 8, p. 7). In the spirit of power sharing and trust building, Jasmine’s approach allowed students to stay in control of their skit and worked around the challenge. Sonja wrote that it was “hard to let them lead their own piece, because often when they got stuck I wanted to tell them: why not just do this or that?” (Journal Entry 9, 04/25/2007). But Sonja too reported overcoming this challenge by offering “suggestions and guidelines … but never in an imposing way” (Journal Entry 9, 04/25/2007). Billy, whose group had not yet created a skit, tried desperately to focus his students by “just [forcing] them to come up with SOMETHING” (Billy’s Journal Entry 9, 04/25/2007). He expressed ambivalence about this approach to authority. Watching Billy at work, I would not have used the word “force” to describe what he did. Rather, the kind and sometimes tentative Billy simply addressed the high school students with a frankness and urgency that reached through students’ anxiety and helped them focus their efforts on producing a final product.

When power is shared, conflicts and challenges arise that need to be resolved through the shared cooperation of teamwork as well. Improvisation proved one effective approach to work together through conflicts that occurred when exercises did not proceed
according to plan or when participants had to reconcile two competing ideas. Jasmine expressed the benefit of using improvisation to correct a plan gone awry. She said “It’s kind of fun to plan something and it not work out. You can do something else and it may even be better than what you did originally” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007).

When Sonja and Billy’s groups combined into one, they effectively reconciled their two skits by improvising a new skit that incorporated ideas from both. Improvising allowed the actors to experiment with various ideas until the group was happy with the resulting depiction. Additionally, it honed their skills of being flexible to comments and suggestions from within their own group as well as from the audience. Flexibility to change the action prevented further conflict, because students did not take suggestions as personal attacks on their creativity, rather as suggestions for development. During performance, improvisation skills also helped actors solve conflicts depicted on stage with the suggestions from the audience.

Another approach to resolving conflict during power sharing was to back up far enough to identify the last consensus and then move forward again using compromise when ideas began to diverge. Sonja believed a shared covenant would lead to constructive resolution of conflict. Ever the optimist, she chose to see the common ground between participants, trusting that cooperation would follow. She said, “We have different ideas… but we are all on the same page” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007). Sonja’s perspective offers a valuable approach not only to conflict resolution but also to preventing conflict in the first place. Yet, I also noted throughout the semester that in Sonja’s willingness to gain common ground she sometimes opted out of sharing power to avoid conflict, such as when she deferred her director duties in an
exercise by saying, “ok, whatever you guys want, that’s fine” (Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007).

Sometimes Sonja’s avoidance of conflict might have been attributed to her struggle with cultural barriers that she mentioned throughout her journal. In working with students she reported holding back because she “[feared] rejection for being a foreigner” (Sonja’s Journal Entry, 03/21/2007) and she felt “[unable] to lead my actors into doing a scene on a particular topic because maybe what I, a foreigner, think is important is not at all for my peers” (Sonja’s Journal Entry, 04/03/2007). Billy also noted in his journal that Sonja “needs to be more assertive” while he “needs to be less so” (Billy’s Journal Entry, 04/04/2007). Sonja’s avoidance of conflict might have stunted the opportunity for greater creativity that Jasmine alluded to earlier in her statement about improvisation. Quite possibly, Sonja’s Peruvian perspective could have enriched the group conversation. In one discussion, for example, Sonja remarked that her culture expresses itself frequently through lively discussion and physical games. Regardless of differences in cultural approaches, individual ideas can vary greatly. Competing ideas may lead to conflict, but working through the conflict can ultimately lead to a stronger project.

Sharing power was the challenge the university students addressed most throughout the semester, in their journals and in their final report. The high school students did not discuss the power sharing challenge with me explicitly, but their distress over taking charge of their skits indicated that they too found power sharing challenging. Participants shared power most successfully when each individual took on the responsibility of his/her role. In this partnership, the university students were charged
with authority over form and process. The high school students were asked to show authority over content and creativity. Both groups used improvisation to avert or work through conflict. They improvised rehearsal exercises as needed, solutions to problems, and actions suggested from the audience. Spending time trying out various solutions through improvisation was more productive than sitting around complaining or being anxious over possible weaknesses in their performance. Facing conflict together was a necessary act in moving towards a balance in power.

Conclusion

Participants liked the premise that TFSC works to improve a community, but realized close to performance time that addressing community problems in an open forum was a daunting task that could leave them vulnerable to attack; they were sensitive to critique and fearful of failure. This project addressed these pitfalls successfully with conscientious attention to the building blocks of reciprocity. With elements of trust, covenant, and power sharing in place, attacks became engaged conversation, critiques led to creative problem solving, and fear of failure gave way to a project of hope and change. Reaching this point required much practice and sustained effort through the growing pains of the project.

Despite working towards an ideal of cooperation, participants occasionally found themselves mired in conflict. Tension arose when the integrity of the building blocks were questioned. Studying these moments of tension and how participants navigated conflict within TFSC practices provided a better understanding of the complexity of reciprocity and the dangers that threaten it. The threats to reciprocity ranged from mild to severe, illuminating the importance of evaluating the conflict climate as well as revealing
tools to address the conflicts. Sensitivity to frustration and productivity proved a useful meter to rising tension and provided a strong indicator that a situation threatened the balance of reciprocity. Four approaches helped participants work through the conflicts that threatened reciprocity and helped them avoid or repair breaches of trust, covenant, and power sharing. These approaches were preparedness, improvisation, compromise, and the fulfillment of clearly defined roles, including specifically the employment of an authority figure. The conflicts further helped illuminate the import of reiterating and refreshing the properties of the building blocks throughout various stages and contexts of the project. We learned that trust is a delicate balance requiring constant attention. We watched as the covenant was extended to yet another partner, the audience, and revised in simpler terms during an anxiety-ridden moment. We witnessed power extended to voices in the community and protected and fostered within the combined group of performers and facilitators.

TFSC communication skills and creativity during the devising and rehearsing phases guided attention towards practicing reciprocity and exploring competing views in a productive fashion. Ultimately and pervasively, participants chose to trust one another, rallied around their covenant, and shared the responsibility of the performance. The community itself became participants in the playhouse, and the performance succeeded in facilitating conversation about community issues. The games, the conflict, the performance, in short, all that transpired in the playhouse showcases the centrality of reciprocity to the functions and process as well as outcome of TFSC.
Chapter Seven: Curtain Call

“That reaching out process, getting students involved and getting a college student and a high school student thinking and talking is going to be always productive for both. Something is going to be learned from both sides.”

--Principal Ridley (Principal Ridley’s Exit Interview, 05/01/2007)

Professor Lanton, what moments stand out for you as especially memorable and why?

“A) The first time I heard the word “we” from the Harmony High students in reference to everyone involved (City University students inclusive). This usually indicated the acknowledgement of a team.

B) When the Harmony High students showed up at City University during their break. This indicates commitment.

C) The decision of the second group to do a last minute change-up. This indicates courage.

D) The facilitative component of the presentation by the City University students. This indicates that they have the capacity for [TFSC] in the larger sense.

E) Comments in the report and journals that indicate “they got it.” This indicates that the training program is effective.
F) The comments from Harmony High that they wanted to continue the activity. This indicates sustainability.”

--Professor Lanton (Professor Lanton’s Exit Interview, 05/15/2007)

The conclusion of the school performance and closing thoughts of the participants marked the end of my data collection as well. I stepped out of the figurative playhouse to muse on the characters I had met, the themes they had raised, and the scenes they had enacted. This study has revealed the many intricacies and nuances of reciprocity. To examine the nuances, one must know where to look. The levels of reciprocity in this project existed between institutions on the administrative level, between individual students, and between both of these groups and their larger communities. It also existed on the level of the specific project, within the individual training activities, and during the final performance and interaction with the greater community. A closer look at these levels brings us to an examination of the network of relationships between the university students, between the high school students, between the university students and the high school students, between Professor Lanton and the university students, and between and among Professor Lanton, the project participants, and myself. But reciprocity is not just understood within the relationships in general between groups or individuals, it is also found within niches of action, reaction, and attitude such as communication, commitment, physical expression, and individual change. Overtly considering and regularly revisiting these levels, networks, and niches can improve civic engagement projects.
I begin this chapter with a brief recapitulation of the problem statement, methodology, and results of this study. Then I interpret my findings in four parts. First, I present a model that describes the process of reciprocity and discuss how this model relates to the findings of previous research. Second, I revisit the hexagons of my conceptual framework as presented in chapter three to clarify the dimensions of identity in reciprocal relationships. Third, I suggest that participants expressed certain qualities that helped enable the process of reciprocity. Fourth, I review the tools that participants employed to nourish reciprocity in this TFSC project. The tools are followed by my recommendations to educators on how my findings can be applied to the practice of service-learning and civic engagement projects more generally. Finally I suggest areas of continued research.

**Statement of Problem and Review of Methodology**

In this study I sought to understand the complexities of the processes of reciprocity within a service-learning project. The specific problem was to analyze the processes of social exchange within the relationships between participants in a university-based Theater for Social Change course and the high school community with whom it engaged to determine the degree of reciprocity present and the struggles to attain and sustain reciprocity. I chose Theater for Social Change as the subject for my study because its inherent qualities of collaboration and exchange made a strong case study to surface and examine elements of reciprocity. Additionally, this project offered a creative model for exchanging ideas in a community, which is a special interest of mine. I began with the understanding that reciprocity in this study meant that while practicing cooperation and compromise in social engagements, the goals of both partners in the
theater project would be reached without detriment to the other partner. Throughout this study of civic engagement I also came to understand social efficiency as the responsibility of group awareness combined with the cultivation of skills to work for a common good.

I conducted an ethnographic study from an interpretive paradigm, working to understand the ongoing events from the varied perspectives of all participants. To enhance my ability to understand the participants’ experiences but also analyze them from my own subjectivity, I worked from the position of participant observer. During the semester long project I generated and collected data through five interviews averaging one hour each, 17 sessions of at least two-hour observations, and 30 documents including student journals, reports, and surveys, emails, theoretical articles on TFSC, and video recordings of performances. My model for collecting and analyzing data included eight chronological stages of TFSC (Preparations, Introduction, Project Definition, Roles, Devising, Rehearsing, Performance, Reflection) and five components of reciprocal relationships (Existing Relationship Networks, Covenant, Strengthening Relational Ties, Dynamism, Power Issues). Dissecting and coding the project and the elements of participants’ interactive relationships in this way facilitated a thorough examination of social exchange that led me to a deeper understanding of the processes and complexities of reciprocity in civic engagement.

**Summary of Results**

Overall, I found this project to be mindful of reciprocity and therefore it made a strong case study for the mechanics of reciprocity. The form of TFSC in itself is aware of fostering reciprocity within its processes and an overall goal of this particular course
was for community partners to learn from and teach one another. Professor Lanton actively engaged participants in exercises that promoted and practiced reciprocity in such exercises as Image Theater, Improvisation Circle, and Slow Motion Boxing. Critical analysis of readings about Boal’s (1985) “spectactor” and the “Theater of the Oppressed” and other elements of TFSC theories by other authors, heightened students awareness of the necessary attention facilitators must place in finding a balance between contributions and gains of community members. Watching and discussing examples of various TFSC projects raised awareness of the complexities of community work and the pitfalls of neglecting reciprocity. Other practices such as Grandmother’s Keys, Forum Theater, and the compromises inherent in devising, further addressed communication skills that aid and incorporate reciprocity. Finally, comments from Principal Ridley, Professor Lanton, the high school students and the university students about what they gained and what they contributed aligned, for the most part, in a way that point to achieving reciprocity.

The results of the study are a deeper understanding of the meaning of reciprocity and the processes to achieve reciprocity. Specifically we learned that 1) trust, covenant, and power sharing comprise three vital building blocks to set the stage for reciprocity; 2) theater games function as tools to aid in achieving the communication necessary to establish the building blocks; and 3) breaches to the building blocks threaten reciprocity and therefore conflict resolution serves a crucial role in deepening and maintaining an understanding of reciprocity. Below I present a conceptual framework for the processes of reciprocity.
Interpretation of Findings

If the goal of a service-learning project is simply to provide a desired product in the form of a material good, service, or skill and thereby gain an equally desired product in a similar form in exchange, simple reciprocity will suffice to fulfill expectations. If, however, the goal includes social exchange that enriches all participants' understanding of themselves and communities and perhaps even brings about social change, which it often does in the context of higher education, a far more complex understanding of reciprocity is required. This understanding acknowledges the nuances within the ongoing processes of negotiation that reciprocity entails. Therefore, I refer to the specific nature of this exchange as complex, attentive reciprocity (CAR).

Though previous studies have alluded to and even argued outright the importance of reciprocity, I have found none that have detailed the processes, tools, and functions of reciprocity as it applies to service-learning. My understanding of reciprocity builds in core ways on the important work of Porter and Monard (2001), who assert that reciprocity permeates every aspect of a group's interactions and requires individuals to consider their relationships to those around them. In response to Porter and Monard, I dissected the TFSC project into eight stages to look for permeation and/or gaps of reciprocity. My work not only acknowledges but also further supports Porter and Monard's conception of reciprocity as including "covenant," "empowerment," "skill," "resource cultivation," and "dynamism," but I found it helpful to reorganize and differentiate my conception of the concepts. For example, I understand skill and empowerment as goals and outcomes of reciprocity. To covenant, I added power sharing and trust as core elements of reciprocity. My examination of the specific dynamism of
TFSC revealed processes of building reciprocity as well as maintaining and restoring reciprocity in times of conflict, something simple reciprocity neglects. Table 7 outlines the basic differences between simple and complex reciprocity, leaving an empty column between the two where select elements of complex reciprocity may be added to simple reciprocity to suggest a median space for a range of reciprocity.

I chose TFSC as a topic partly because its form embraces the notion of debriefing frequently after each activity and each step or misstep of the process. The debriefing sessions allowed me to further investigate the specific nature of discussions and negotiation that Hayward (2000) deems significant and refers to as “traffic meetings.” I chose a qualitative study in part to address Jones and Hill’s (2001) concern about conflating individual perspectives into one community voice. In this qualitative study individuals were observed and questioned on multiple occasions and in various situations without the need to generalize their feedback. As in Jones and Hill’s study, both the university students and community members took turns as teachers, increasing the reciprocal learning outcomes. I discovered that, much like in Kuftinec’s (1997) study, combining the role of teacher and facilitator posed a great difficulty in maintaining a power balance between the outsider university students and the insider high school community member. Consequently, the project endured occasional breakdowns in reciprocity. This study goes beyond previous observations by examining more closely these moments of conflict and breaches of reciprocity. Because of the dynamic nature of balancing power, maintaining trust, and adhering to the covenant, I suggest that reciprocity is actively assessed, reassessed and renegotiated throughout the project.
### Table 7

*Comparison Between Simple and Complex Reciprocity*

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<th>Complex Reciprocity</th>
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The state of reciprocity is not a constant, but rather a variable. Jones and Hill (2001) hint at degrees of reciprocity that I examined more directly in my study with the help of perspectives from network theory and social exchange theory. Specifically I approached my study with the understanding that we must examine reciprocal actions between individuals and groups in a wider context of relationships as suggested by Felmlee (2003). We must understand individuals vis-à-vis their multiple identities and their micro and macro relationships (Blau, 1964) that are further defined by constant power struggles that can occur between and among them. Homans (1961) added to my understanding of equality in exchanges in regards to preserving each partner’s self worth, indicating the need to take into account the value of contributions to each partner and how that value is achieved or sustained. Blau (1964) similarly cautions towards the inevitable imbalance when needs change or conclude, further pointing to the need of renegotiation of goods and value to perpetuate reciprocal exchange. Such underpinnings led me to the discovery of the value of reciprocal exchanges at numerous levels (individual, group, and institution) and a variety of goods (words and gestures, thoughts and understanding, experience, knowledge, and skills). This study provides a new framework for reciprocity that integrates and builds on previous research and suggests a more active and volatile state of reciprocity.

A Model for Complex Attentive Reciprocity

The complexity of reciprocity lies in the constant negotiation of elements in relationships, chief among them trust and power. The relationships themselves are complex as they may exist on multiple levels, between two or more nodes (e.g. persons, institutions, or defining roles) (Kadushin, 2004), be linked by one or many factors, and be
micro-structures (interacting individuals) or macro-structures (interrelated groups) (Blau, 1964). In this project, for example, two people could exist on multiple levels of relationships simultaneously, including friend, classmate, student, community member, teacher, and participant. Their interactions could be influenced through the relationship of an intermediary node (Kudushin, 2004), such as the outside influence of parents, teachers, and neighbors not directly involved in the project. Relationships existed between participants who already knew one another and grew between new acquaintances. They became linked in countless ways through their group interactions that included a shared covenant, a cooperative creation, a performance in a skit, and generalized conversation and sharing of ideas. As they worked together, the high school students revealed the strain in relationships between groups at their school. To understand more fully the high school community's social milieu in which the individuals and groups interacted, the university students conducted a community profile. Through visits that included observations, interviews, and casual conversations, the university students tried to understand a variety of elements in the school environment including academic, social, historical, political and economic, which shaped their community participants' experiences, perspectives, and self-defined issues.

With this preliminary understanding of the community, the university facilitators then began to foster integrative bonds, adding an additional layer of complexity to reciprocity. The lines of networked groups continued to grow and shift. At first we had two small individual groups with inter-group relationships, then the high school and university students began their intra-group relationship, and finally, the lines were redrawn again with the high school student performers and the university student
facilitators as a new inter-group and the high school audience entering an intra-group relationship with them during the performance. All the while, elements of trust, covenant, and power sharing were being introduced, fostered, and negotiated through theater games, conversations, and the invention and construction of a performance. Depending on their strengths and the contributions they had promised, the two groups and individual students took on particular roles in conducting these give and take activities that nurtured their reciprocal relationship.

Complexity also references the variety in the nature and form of items reciprocated. As already explained, the main areas of exchange between student participants' were knowledge, creativity, skills, and empowerment. Representing the institutional level of exchange, Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley defined their goals of exchange along the categories of curriculum, empowerment, and community relations. These niches of exchange all supported the main goal of a TFSC performance created through the joint cooperation of City University and Harmony High students. On a more minutely defined level, exchanges included daily information, verbal interactions, and physical gestures. For example, the university participants shared emails and notes related to class; the high school students joked and conversed about non-project topics; one student rolled her eyes and another held out her hand defiantly in response. Not all exchanges were equally reciprocal, nor were they expected to be, but an understanding of the multiple levels and interactions at which reciprocity may occur is necessary to gage the ultimate qualities of reciprocity in the project. Additional qualifiers of reciprocity included the manner in which exchanges were conducted. In this project, actions of
reciprocation were predominantly kind, respectful, thoughtful, and often playful. Reciprocity, however, was not devoid of conflict.

A defining characteristic of CAR—complex, attentive reciprocity—is its dynamic, active nature as micro and macro structures form and interact; as participants build and test trust, develop and act by a covenant; and struggle both to give up as well as take on power. Attentive is a word meant to indicate the conscientious, on-going, and often hard work it takes to maintain reciprocity. While working towards the end performance goal, participants were mindful of trust, covenant, and power sharing. Simultaneously, participants worked hard to be attentive to one another’s needs, such as learning goals and stress thresholds; faculty suggestions, such as completing specific assignments and revising performance technique; and project demands, such as timelines, spatial limitations, and audience expectations. The processes of community interaction to attain and maintain reciprocity requires an on going awareness, communication, and checks and balances between individuals and groups at all moments of the project in order to address conflict as it arises.

Complex, attentive reciprocity, therefore, consists of a continuous cycle of four steps that partners engage cooperatively around a central common goal. These four steps include: understanding the social milieu of the partners, fostering integrative bonds through group development, identifying niches of exchange, and isolating and addressing imbalances in the interactions (see Figure 4). These steps often follow a consecutive cycle, but any step may be revisited at any time as often as needed. Each of these steps in the cycle fuels the main goal of exchange that partners set together for the project. Building trust, establishing and adhering to a covenant, and sharing power are
Figure 4. The Complex, Attentive Reciprocity Model.
fundamental building blocks to each step in the cycle. Although these three elements are concurrent, iterative, and interrelated, each may figure more prominently at differing times. For example, trust is paramount in group development, the covenant makes explicit both the niches of exchange as well as the main project goal, and power sharing addresses any imbalances in interactions. Furthermore, each building block functions to check and balance the other foundational blocks of reciprocity. Trust between participants can unite them over a divisive issue and help them to share power without fear of abuse. The covenant continues to build trust as participants acknowledge the importance of civil cooperation and reciprocal goals. The covenant can also make explicit the desire to balance power. Sharing power effectively helps to build trust and maintains the caring and reciprocal nature of interaction set forth in the covenant. Ever present on the outskirts of this theoretical model is the balance between theory and practice. Theoretical research fuels the cycle, as does the desired practical outcome. Study of both the medium in which a project works and the concept of reciprocity provides important conceptualization and tools that help participants achieve reciprocal goals. Equally compelling and necessary to direct the specific nature of a project is the practice that defines the vision and the interactions between community members. The two approaches work as checks and balances for one another in making sure that the project approach fits the community's reality. When theory and practiced are balanced, the effort one puts into the project is reciprocated by the outcome. The CAR model can be read from the inner circle out or from the outer circle in, and is best understood when considered both ways. Think of the rings as connected by rubber bands. We can pull the smallest ring up to create a three-dimensional cone with the tip at the top, or we can pull
the largest ring up to create a three dimensional cone with the base at the top. Imagining the model with this flexibility adds to its usefulness and our understanding of the fluid and iterative nature of the components.

Relationships revisited.

Above I assert the importance and complexity of relationships. A relationship is the first step to beginning a conversation, and a conversation is an opportunity for reciprocity if each party listens and contributes equally to an exchange of ideas. In this project of social exchange, trust was needed for reciprocity to flourish within the new partner relationships. Professor Lanton described the relationships between participants throughout the project as “initially suspect and estranged, but gradually trusting and collective” (Lanton’s Exit Interview, 05/15/2007). He admitted that some participants might have reached deeper degrees of trust than others. Principal Ridley clearly saw the value of relationship ties in this project in terms of reciprocity as well. He said: “that reaching out process, getting students involved and getting a college student and a high school student thinking and talking is going to be always productive for both. Something is going to be learned from both sides” (Ridley’s Exit Interview, 05/01/2007). He suggested that college students would gain an appreciation for their own developmental growth since their high school graduation and the high school students would find some guidance, even “another paradigm” for life after high school from the college students (Ridley’s Exit Interview, 05/01/2007). Important new relationships were formed between the high school students who had not worked together before, between the high school and college students, and between institutions (City University and Harmony High, and also Harmony High and the College of William & Mary).
As part of step one in the model of CAR, the university participants investigated the social milieu of their new partnership. In this project the investigation entailed, to begin with, creating a community profile. In thinking about the many dimensions that make up social networks and group identities and how these factors may influence or shape a project, I find it useful to return to my diagram of hexagons from chapter three. My reconceived idea of the hexagons can help us think about the first step in the cycle by defining the micro and macro structures of interaction.

In chapter three I defined my conceptual framework for this study in terms of three hexagons. The hexagons are metaphoric representations of the multifaceted elements of group and project identities. Additionally, each hexagon can rotate on its center axis, allowing many combinations of interaction as each side of one hexagon potentially aligns with each side of another hexagon. The framework suggests that negotiations are necessary to keep group interaction harmonious and productive and to work towards a sense of reciprocity. After completing the study I moved from assuming the existence of a few traits to discovering specific defining categories, and I redrew the three hexagons as three octagons (see Figure 5). To each of the eight sides I assigned a defining category of the identity naming the three octagons, “university class,” “community group,” and “project”. Below I present the figure and name the sides of the octagons. Ultimately, whether hexagon or octagon is not the point, the figure is meant to suggest a variety of dimensions along which groups manifest their identity and how such characteristics may influence interaction and define a project.
Figure 5. Dynamics of Project Interactions.
A closer look at each of the individual octagons reveals the specific nature of each by listing the eight component parts. Each of the component parts, as noted in the figures, has been discussed throughout this study. Here I explain their meaning only briefly. The City University TFSC class group identity and the Harmony High School participant group identity is defined by eight categories, almost identical (see Figures 6 and 7). The individual identities of each member of the university course and the high school course are major defining characteristics of each respective group. Each participant is a valued and important part of the project and brings his or her own needs, expectations, background, understandings, skills, and challenges to the group. Participant identities influence group chemistry, interests, and skill strengths and weaknesses among other factors. Professor Lanton’s role at the university is similar to that of Principal Ridley and Ms. Scott in that they are all authority figures representing their institution of learning and supporting their students’ efforts. That being said, Professor Lanton’s role is distinguished by the TFSC expertise he brings to the project and the intensity of his involvement with all participants. At any given time, specific institutional related forces can shape a group. Schedules, curriculum, friends, events, school issues, school politics may affect the student interactions that help define the group. Outside forces too may bear on the identity of a group; they include, among others, community issues, neighborhoods, families, church, and extra curricular activities. The defining traits of the two groups differ in two categories. My role figured prominently in the university group, where I was most actively involved in theater activities. The high school students were defined by another stand-alone category, that of youth culture. Youth culture was not discussed in depth in this study, but relative elements can be found in chapter 5 where
Figure 6. University Class Identity.
Figure 7. Community Group Identity.
signifiers such as lingo, fashion, and music figured into student interests, expression, and interaction. Both the university students and the high school students had their group specific goals and expectations for the collaborative work as well as the challenges they confronted. Relationships indicate the inter-group dynamics that existed between any of the previously described categories.

The identity of the TFSC project studied here is likewise defined by eight categories (see Figure 8). Subject matter, as described in the covenant, describes the intellectual and thematic focus of the TFSC process. At the end of the semester, it became apparent that participants had successfully executed their goals, making this a very important defining trait of the project. Community reaction to the theater performance was characterized by animated participation from students, a dearth of faculty participation, some points of dissent, general enjoyment of the presentation and some illuminating conclusions. Specific actions spurred in the community shortly after the performance (e.g. requesting further discussion and a continuation of theater activity) emphasizes the success of the project and points to potential elements of sustainability. Although undetermined in this study, any sustainable or historic aspects of the participants’ work would be an important defining characteristic of the project. The challenges as well as the lessons learned and taught give depth to the processes the participants engaged. The category of “relationships,” here again, indicates the dynamics that existed between any of the previously described categories, or nodes, of the octagon.

Because the octagons can rotate on their center point, each side of any octagon can conceivably line up with any side of another octagon, thus demonstrating the many varied dynamics of relationships and interactions requiring negotiation. For example,
Figure 8. Project Identity.
the university student goals and expectations need to be complimentary to the high school students' goals and expectations not vying for dominance. Also, two individual group member's personalities might clash, or the politics of the high school could either facilitate or call for further negotiation with the Professor's agenda. Such interconnectivity between project participants underscores the complexity of comprehending and negotiating reciprocity.

Two arrows in the complete model further indicate the dynamics inherent in the quest for reciprocity (see Figure 5). The arrow connecting the octagons of the university group and the high school group signifies the potential for reciprocity if participants address all the interactions that arise with the appropriate tools and motivation. The arrow leading from the university and the high school octagons to the project octagon connotes the process of TFSC. Following the steps of the process and experiencing challenges, discoveries, and changes in direction, participants eventually arrive at the conclusion of their project. Countless choices, circumstances, ideas and much hard work meet the end of a timeline, and the completed project can be evaluated along a number of defining characteristics (as suggested on the octagon).

Recognizing where relationship networks exist is vital to knowing where to look for and foster reciprocity in a project. I recognized that many levels of relationships are important in successfully practicing reciprocity, not just the one between the two communities writ large, or even the individual spokespeople of the two communities who may arrange the initial agreement to collaborate. Additionally, the process of establishing new networks sets the scene for future collaboration and continued reciprocity. An unexpected discovery of the study was that TFSC participants, on their
own accord, chose to focus their work in part on the issues of relationship networks in their exploration of the interaction between the high school cliques. Their own work led to greater awareness of nodes and relationships between nodes in their community.

**Enabling qualities.**

The CAR wheel identifies four process steps, three core elements, and two complementary approaches to achieving the main goals of a project with reciprocity. The octagons begin to define specific aspects of group and project identities. Working together, all of these components help to set the stage for reciprocal exchanges. Missing, however, is the evasive variable of the attitudes and mind set of the individual participants. No precise recipe exists, of course, to ensure successful reciprocity, and mindsets can hardly be pinned down or prescribed. Though not the focus of my qualitative study, observed and recorded data point to overall attitudes and qualities of the participants, and I would be remiss to overlook that participants in this study embraced distinct attributes that facilitated reciprocity. These enabling qualities included: respect, courage, assertiveness, commitment, helpfulness, and sensitivity.

*Respect* was a primary enabling factor for reciprocity in this TFSC project. Technically, according to both Blau (1964) and Homan’s (1961) definitions of reciprocity, exchanges do not have to be respectful; they merely need to be experienced as equally valuable to each partner. Showing respect, however, acknowledged the value of the person and the interaction not merely the commodity being exchanged. This recognition, I believe, encouraged deeper sharing of personal thoughts and creative energy, from which all efforts emanated in this project. I witnessed respect between participants and the community in the way they listened and responded to one another. I
even heard gentle but explicit reminders from various participants to be mindful of showing respect. Professor Lanton, Principal Ridley, the high school students, and the university students used the word “respect” at various times throughout the semester and performance (e.g., Sonja’s Journal Entry 6, Billy in Focus Group Interview 1, 01/24/2007, Professor Lanton supporting a student in class 04/24/2007, Professor Lanton and students after the final performance, and by Principal Ridley in his Exit Interview).

Participation in this TFSC project took courage by student participants, but also by administrators who took a risk at trying something new in their curriculum and establishing a new partnership. The special courage exemplified by students and recognized publicly by Professor Lanton and Principal Ridley required voluntarily exposing themselves and accepting vulnerability in front of their peers. Through the gift of performance, they gave their community a piece of their bodies as well as their thoughts and imagination. They gave in hopes of having their openness reciprocated; and it was. The audience opened up and shared many good ideas throughout the performance.

Assertiveness is a trait one might not immediately associate with reciprocity. But I witnessed that partners were more likely to feel satisfied about their collective efforts, if they had all been clear and emphatic about what they wanted to accomplish individually. Assertiveness works best in paving a way for reciprocity when it is paired with permission. Sonja alludes to this in her journal when she surmises, “the kids don’t know me well enough to trust me and let me lead them yet” (Journal Entry 5, 04/04/2007). The use of the word “let,” indicates that reciprocation of cooperation cannot take place until we permit one another to make demands of one another and know that our expectations
will be met. When co-participants asserted honestly whether they were comfortable moving forward with new ideas, they worked towards maintaining the power sharing that is vital to reciprocal action. When they refrained from asserting their opinions on the project and their progress, they unwittingly enabled the other partner to overpower the dynamic of project momentum.

Reciprocity requires constant commitment to the concept of shared exchange by the participants and facilitators. I reiterate the notion of the covenant here because it so aptly expresses the need to live the promise step for step, not simply sign an agreement and deliver the product at the end of the term. Professor Lanton’s quote at the top of this chapter expresses his recognition of the high school students’ constant commitment in attending rehearsal despite being out of school during spring break and expressing a desire to continue their theater work at the conclusion of the project.

Unfortunately it is also possible to reciprocate negative behavior and action. Stressful moments are vulnerable to a barrage of negativity that leads participants towards panic, which consequently leads to further negativity that can cause a project to stall or regress. Therefore, participants’ willingness to remain helpful, not harmful, in their actions, words, and work associated with the project was important in maintaining reciprocity. Stellar examples of this attitude included the high school students helping the university students explain instructions to their uncomprehending peers; the university students cooperating with one another in their written work; the university students spending time in debriefing sessions trying to find successful means to facilitate while allowing the high school students to express their ideas and creativity freely, and
the high school students supporting their community audience to participate in the final performance, despite facing criticism from some audience members.

Facilitators can be vigilant for any attitudes or approaches that might minimize or even sabotage the helpful nature of the project. Regular threat assessments to reciprocity might help to continue the engagement within communities. Threat assessments should include an understanding of the challenges and expectations for the project that can help guide the facilitator in addressing potentially harmful issues when they arise. Professor Lanton alluded to this as well when he stated,

Clearly recognizing what the mutual goals are and the strengths and weaknesses that accompany the forums, which strive for them, is essential. Accepting who has what kind of power and how it can be negotiated is also pertinent. Sensitivity to emerging problems and constant dialogue for clarification is another necessity (Lanton’s Exit Interview, 05/15/2007).

Sensitivity was another quality that helped participants successfully complete their project and fulfill reciprocal goals. The university students recognized the high school students’ frustrations during skit creations and were able to reinstate trust and authority by being sensitive to the needs of participants as they arose. Likewise, the high school students exhibited sensitivity to the emotional pulse of the audience and were able to modify their stage action and clarify their intentions to address the issues of greatest concern to their community.

**Tools for tending reciprocity.**

The metaphor of a garden is well known and often used. Here too, I think it can serve to remind us how to foster reciprocity in civic engagement projects. Reciprocity,
like a garden, must be tended lovingly and regularly. To do so, we may employ a variety of gardening tools. The tools in this project included: communication, preparation, improvisation, flexibility, certain practices of TFSC, the “spectactor,” and the act of *mitdenken*.

Communication is probably the most general and far-reaching tool that dovetails with all the other tools. Communication includes more than merely verbal expression and exchange; it includes physical expression, and the transference of ideas as well as emotion. Spoken language dominated the verbal communication, but the written word played an important role in the university students’ reflective processes as well. Through games that required problem solving, oral brainstorming, and debriefing sessions, participants shared their thoughts and feelings about the project structure and content and the community issues they unearthed. Journals and written reports provided a medium through which ideas, criticisms, aspirations, possibilities, and conclusions, could be communicated through a more reflective and organized form.

TFSC teaches resourcefulness; teams typically do not have much money or other resources for their projects. And so, Professor Lanton challenged his students by suggesting, “our body is the only tool we have. It includes the voice and mind. Exercise them” (paraphrased in Class Notes, 04/11/2007). Professor Lanton was echoing Boal’s (1979) thoughts in *The Theater of the Oppressed*, “that the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement” (p. 125). I was struck throughout this project at the effectiveness of physicality in communicating ideas and exploring solutions to problems. Nothing exemplified this more than Image Theater. Professor Lanton also mentioned “emotion” as a communication tool during the
improvisation circle exercise. He suggested participants recognize and be honest to their emotions, while allowing these emotions to guide their stories, discussions, and responses in a respectful, positive, and constructive manner. Furthermore, clarity of communication is paramount to its effectiveness. One specific area that the university students named as compromising their work was related to their own act of omission: being unclear. Billy noted in his journal that when he and other facilitators “were not clear... it slowed things down” (Journal Entry 7, 04/18/2007). Therefore, clarity is an important trait of the communication tool.

In the reflections of their final report, the university students identified another tool crucial to reciprocity: preparation. They noted, a challenge and goal is “being well-prepared for anything – any change in setting or task – according to the community’s needs, willingness, reactions and responses” (Final Report, 05/01/2007, p.7). It is difficult to impossible to be prepared for all possible events, questions, snafus, and the like, but this study’s participants demonstrated specific ways in which their preparations helped them stay responsive to reciprocal needs. The university participants read, reported on, and discussed theoretical articles on TFSC. They watched videos of performances and reviewed how certain techniques could be applied to their own practice. They rehearsed games before facilitating them. Finally, they made a plan for the activities of each meeting and a general timeline for the project, ensuring that they could meet both the identified needs of the community partner and their own within the confines of a one-semester course. The high school students came to class with fresh ideas to contribute, feedback from peers on community issues, and even the beginning of a written script. Such acts of preparations fostered reciprocity because they helped fulfill
the commitment of each partner. Immersing themselves in preparations also worked to reaffirm the focus of intent on reaching the combined group goals. Despite good intentions both groups were occasionally unprepared for project steps or challenges.

When preparations fall short or unexpected situation arise, improvisation becomes an especially valuable tool. Improvisation is a skill needed to support reciprocity and a dominant theme throughout this project. Not only is it a valuable theatrical tool, it is an invaluable tool for the processes of community work. Billy cited improvisation as “crucial, especially in the talkbacks, as the actors had to adapt and flow with the new ideas being given to them [by the audience]” (Journal Entry 10, 04/26/2007). Billy’s comment points to both the theatrical skill of improvising in a skit, but also the necessary skill as a community facilitator to listen and shape a conversation based on community input. This kind of give and take between community members and actors and community members is an essential aspect of TFSC and another manifestation of reciprocity.

Professor Lanton referred to improvisation directly many times throughout the semester, but he also referred to it indirectly when he told participants to “feel the pulse” during the improvisation circle exercise. Professor Lanton urged students to pay attention to several elements of the story, such as plot, emotion, and pacing, in order to help the narrative progress smoothly. He indicated that students must be ready to improvise based on the pulse they feel immediately, not on a preconceived idea about where the story might lead. This metaphor also applies more generally to the attention that must be paid to reciprocity throughout TFSC and other civic engagement work. If participants attune to one another’s needs and expressions, they are more able to
reciprocate them. But staying attuned to “the pulse” means being able to change course, or improvise at any given moment. Improvisation is one responsive action to the quality of sensitivity discussed earlier.

Flexibility captures the innovative spirit of improvisation in TFSC and enables communication to continue moving the project forward. It relates to reciprocity because each side must offer compromises and creativity that result from flexibility. Sonja alludes to the motivational factor of flexibility in her journal relating to one male high school student's ingenuity in choosing to play a female character with a jacket on his head to indicate a longhaired wig. Sonja related, “This was so inspiring and encouraging to the girls that their complaints lessened and they started to contribute and soon the story began being formed” (Sonja’s Journal Entry 9, 04/25/2007).

The practice of TFSC provided participants with a variety of approaches to collaborate with each other’s community in a meaningful and engaging manner that resulted in sharing and exchanging of both information and aspiration. Facilitators used story circle and Musical Chairs to exchange personal stories, express individual opinions, and unearth community issues. They used grandmother’s keys, the improvisation circle, and a game of concentration to encourage teamwork and build trust, strengthening the bond that allowed them to fulfill their role towards reciprocal goals. Image Theater helped the combined group understand one another’s perspectives as they explored problems and solutions. All of these games and techniques (and the list is by no means exhaustive) are meant to be enjoyable, but also to challenge the participants to “hear” one another and work towards a common goal. In this way, they chose to enact reciprocation
through their every interaction: sharing of ideas, physical responses, encouragement to lead, and fulfilling of goals.

One specific concept of TFSC that was especially useful in fostering reciprocity was Boal’s (185) “spectactor.” The spectactor is someone who is simultaneously being entertained and is entertaining, who is learning and teaching, and who can listen openly to other’s ideas while offering his own. It is a very engaged role that suggests a deep collaboration. The university students referred to Boal’s spectactor when implying reciprocity. Billy wrote, “we don’t want to seem like we’re forcing anything, but at the same time we want to appear to be in control. It’s the interplay between actor and ‘Spectactor’ as the two switch roles back and forth” (Journal Entry 3, 03/30/2007). The phrase “switch back and forth” implies reciprocity. Indeed, most community work requires facilitators and participants to take turns asking questions, providing information, guiding the project, and directing the action.

Another tool to gauge the collaboration necessary for reciprocity is to examine how ideas are formed and exchanged. The German language differentiates between nachdenken and mitdenken. Both words mean, “to think.” Nachdenken means to think about, where as mitdenken literally means “with thinking.” A more user-friendly translation is “thinking together.” The Collins German-English/English-German Dictionary (1991) gives the following definitions: “to follow somebody’s train of thought/line of argument” and “to help me/us etc. think.” The subtle difference between the words is very important. We may all be thinking about a problem, but are we thinking together as a community to approach a solution to our problems? In this study, participants were encouraged to engage in mitdenken. The high school students
introduced the community concerns, but the university students had to embrace them in a way that allowed them to encourage the high school students to enact their vision successfully. The university facilitators recommended process steps to devise skits, but the high school students had to embrace these skills in order to contribute their own creativity. When students truly collaborated together in thoughts and actions, they were most on track to meet each other’s fundamental reciprocal needs. The university students aided the high school students in realizing their theatrical experience while simultaneously the high school students helped the university students practice the facilitating TFSC, meanwhile both groups shared in the discovery of the power of TFSC to address community issues.

**Recommendations**

In analyzing the interactions of networked relationships this study has helped to reveal the processes of reciprocity. Below, I suggest ways in which these findings can be applied to service-learning programs. Because TFSC can be linked to a variety of pedagogies (Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Experiential Learning, Problem-based learning, Collaborative learning, Community-based ethnography, Transformational learning) the findings of this study are easily adapted by a variety of fields. I hope future review of these applications will strengthen the findings of this study and heighten our awareness of reciprocity. It is equally important to recognize what this study was unable to achieve within its time and design limitations. Therefore, I also offer recommendations to address the gaps and questions of this study and shape our future research of reciprocity in the field of civic engagement at institutions of higher education. As theorists and practitioners continue to explore and specify the components of and approaches to
reciprocity, I look forward to further clarification of the concept and revisions to my model.

**Recommendations for educators.**

Even without explicit discussion, I believe participants grasped the most basic elements of reciprocity found within collaboration, specific theater games, and community interaction. They knew that to achieve their goals of learning about theater, teaching the community about a new form of theater, and instigating a discussion in their school about community issues, they had to be open to power sharing, listening and speaking equally, and taking turns being instructed and instructing others. I also believe, however, that making the concept of reciprocity explicit and studying its meaning could strengthen its presence throughout many levels of the project. I witnessed the positive effect of the university students reading about Boal’s (1985) spectator. The concept influenced the way they approached and designed exercises, the expectations they had for participation, and the language they used in their journals. Clearly this idea took hold of them and elevated their understanding of and contributions to the project. The influence of other theoretical readings and performance viewings was also apparent in the way the university students referenced and analyzed their own work. For this reason I think an explicit study of the concept of reciprocity could equally inform participants’ decisions and their analyses of interactions. I recommend that such explicit study or at least exposure to the concept is offered to both of the collaborating partner groups.

The words and actions participants used to allude to elements of reciprocity point to the depth and intricacies of the concept and suggest that conceptualization of reciprocity is in part project specific. Words such as “respect,” “empowerment,”
“communication,” “permission,” “share yourself,” “improvisation,” “spectator,”
“courage,” and “commitment,” were used by the university students, the high school
students, Professor Lanton, and Principal Ridley and have shaped my understanding of
reciprocity in this project. Taking turns and body movements in responses to theatrical
cues were additional physical-linguistic indicators of reciprocity. I suggest that
participants of any civic engagement project identify the monikers that best describe their
desired interactions and the spirit of their collaboration in relation to reciprocity. They
can then use this common project-specific vocabulary as a road map to reciprocity. The
language can be used to guide their attitudes and actions and discuss the goals and
challenges of their project while further facilitating the understanding of the nuances of
reciprocity.

Likewise, by naming the “goods” we exchange, facilitators become more aware
of the many areas reciprocity are possible, and therefore are better prepared to monitor
and encourage the balance of exchanges. One suggestion is to create and keep an
ongoing list of possible or desirable elements to exchange so that they can be defined,
monitored and fostered throughout a project. It is not enough, however, to think about
reciprocity in terms of the goods exchanged. We must also consider the manner in which
the exchange is conducted. Participants’ attitude and action make a difference in setting
the stage for equal exchange. The participants established a mutually agreed upon path
for their attitude and action in their code of work ethics. In review, some of the words
this community chose to guide their attitudes and actions were: effort, patience,
enthusiasm, cooperation, confidence, participation, determination, and commitment. A
code of ethics can set guidelines for behavior. Establishing a covenant can further bring participants closer together and help focus their efforts.

Finally, I have created a worksheet with a guide to help participants in service-learning projects of any field strive for, monitor, and maintain complex, attentive reciprocity in their work (see Appendix E). This worksheet is based on the elements of the CAR model and extends the metaphor of the Playhouse, though it makes no specific reference to theatrical tools. It encourages the participants to identify the players, gather the appropriate tools in the medium they work, build a foundation of trust, covenant, and power sharing together, and then erect the walls by defining the niches of exchange, engage in activities in each room, and raise the roof of goals that cover all participants. A series of questions and activities guide the participants in constructing their playhouse and maintaining its structural integrity in an effort to lead to a project inclusive of reciprocity. Participants may fill out this worksheet individually at first, but eventually, if not originally, must work as a full group of partnered community members to discuss and agree on the architectural design of the playhouse.

Regardless of the field in which a service-learning project takes place, the CAR model is applicable and useful. The theoretical research and the practical work will be field specific. Because all service-learning requires a partnership ultimately between people, the building blocks of trust, covenant, and power sharing remain relevant to the social interactions between any groups. The four process steps allow participants to define the boundaries, nature, goals, and goods to exchange of their specific project. Group development can be based on interpersonal exchanges, but could equally be based on other factors such as contributions of skills. These project specifications will also help
alert the participants to the unique challenges and conflicts that they may face and lead them to consider how the building blocks and process steps can help them maintain and recover a reciprocal relationship. Especially vital is for participants and facilitators to identify the field specific tools and contributions that bring strength, stability, and success to the project.

**Suggestions for additional research.**

This study has illuminated some of the intricacies of reciprocity and provided a model for understanding the connectivity and the processes of the elements of social exchange in a university service-learning project. Simultaneously the study has left us with remaining gaps in our understanding of reciprocity. Some are gaps already cited by authors in previous studies, others are specific to this study. In any case, there are several areas that merit further research. Foremost of these areas include enlisting community partnership in the conduct of research, presenting reciprocity explicitly as a focus of study to participants, examining reciprocity in the context of identity development within student development theory, inquiring into the lasting effects of reciprocity, studying sustainability of a reciprocal project, and further testing and possible modification of the CAR model using other creative and non-creative community projects.

As researcher, I chose the position of participant observer so that I could more easily understand the experience of both community partners. The perspective did provide me with many valuable insights to reciprocity and visceral comprehension of theatrical power. And yet, in analyzing my data, I realized that I had fallen short of my expectations for studying reciprocity equally from both sides of a partnership. Due in part to choice, in part to the confines of the academic calendars and schedules of the
university and the high school and partly to a flaw in my study design, I found myself more closely affiliated with the university than the high school. Early on, I attached myself to the initiating partner, the university, because I approached my study with interest in discovering how institutes of higher education can improve their interactions with surrounding communities through service-learning programs. This attachment was also necessary to pursue the topic of my choice (TFSC), to witness the early steps in identifying a community partner, and to enter the community relatively unobtrusively as a researcher. But, while I was spending all my available time in the early weeks immersed in the imperative work of observing and participating with the university student class, I could not split myself into two and spend equal time observing the high school environment. Aside from the impossibility of being in two places at one time, or shirking other life responsibilities to have more time to conduct a study, no partnership had yet been identified and consequently my presence in any high school would have been without context for the future participants, if not completely irrelevant.

A more involved and meticulous study design would include a co-researcher from the community partner. This co-researcher would be able to fill in important aspects of community history and culture more thoroughly than the university students' community profile. Without disrupting the regular flow of community affairs, a researcher on the inside of the community could gather data on events, comments, challenges out of reach of the university researcher who could only have access to the community on rehearsal days and a few scheduled observation and interview days. The compilation of data and the dual perspective in analyzing the data would surely enrich our understanding and even elevate the level of active practice of reciprocity to an even greater degree.
Earlier I recommended that educators make the concept of reciprocity explicit to project recipients. Similarly, I suggest that researchers design a study in which the concept of reciprocity is explored explicitly. In my study I purposely choose not to make the concept explicit for primarily two reasons. First, I did not want to alter the focus of the TFSC course in which the university students were enrolled. Second, I did not want to influence participants’ responses to interview questions or actions during observation by suggesting that I expected a certain display of reciprocity. Having concluded this study, and having found genuine qualities and proponents of reciprocity, I now think it would be helpful to study how discussions and readings of reciprocity may affect participants’ involvement in and attitudes towards the concept.

Another area that merits attention is the understanding of reciprocity within the context of identity development within student development theory. In particular, I am interested in applying theories of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity development. In this study, university participants expressed interest in racial identity and how that may play into their partnership with the Harmony high school students. Racial, ethnic or culture identity, however, did not surface as a topic during theater exercises and activities, and so the topic remained dormant within the group theater work. This omission leaves the question of whether these definers of identity in any way influences understandings of reciprocity. Porter and Monard's (2001) study of reciprocity through the Andean concept of “Ayni” suggests culture does in some cases influence our understanding of reciprocity. Certainly the consideration of racial, ethnic, and cultural identity is important in building our understanding of the structure, functions, and meaning of reciprocity in a variety of contexts.
This study is important because it begins to reveal some of the nuances and complexities of reciprocity, making us more aware of the attention necessary in setting the stage for a partnership of equally relative exchange. Beyond the timeframe of a project, however, we still need to investigate the lasting effects of the reciprocal partnership to both community partners as well as the potential for sustaining a reciprocal relationship between partner institutions. Such study will require a strong relationship between researcher and institutions and a long-term commitment to the project being researched. Additionally, continued work from the perspective of student development will help us understand how working in reciprocal partnerships may benefit participants.

The institutional relationships deserve further examination as well. Although this TFSC had at least a momentary impact on the high school community and the university student participants, what impact, if any, did it have on the university at large or the curriculum of the high school? What would it take for the relationship between the Professor and the Principal to extend to others in the hierarchy or academia? And would such extension aid or harm the ability to foster reciprocity that deserves such meticulous attention specific to the needs of the individuals involved? In any case, to continue a relationship between two institutions, partners must be willing continuously to redefine their needs, create new projects, and find new participants.

Finally, I invite theorists and practitioners alike to test my model of Complex, Attentive Reciprocity. This study looked at a TFSC course, a unique design of service-learning in its reliance on creativity. Will the building blocks of reciprocity and the playhouse built upon the blocks hold up in other projects as well? Are there other more relevant and helpful ways to conceive of reciprocity in other creative or non-creative
service-learning projects? Can we make deeper connections between reciprocity and a variety of pedagogies? Considering how intricate the relationships of participants can be and how vital their identity is to a project, it is conceivable that changing the variable of the participant and the medium of interaction alters the game considerably. On the other hand, constructs such as trust, covenant, and power sharing are foundational to building lasting, functional relationships regardless of the projects on which partners collaborate. Perhaps future studies will further dissect and contextualize exchange in a way that will reveal more of the elusive methods to practicing successful reciprocity between institutes of higher education and their surrounding communities.

Conclusion

Ultimately, in this study, I accomplished four things: 1) I took the complicated multi-dimensional concept “reciprocity” and presented it in a coherent, user friendly model that can be applied to all disciplines 2) I made concrete nebulous notions of exchange by defining reciprocated goods between partners. 3) I emphasized a physical component to our understanding of reciprocity 4) I suggested that tools and elements of TFSC practice can be applied to other non theater service-learning projects. My results illuminate that reciprocity is not achieved through a simple agreement at the beginning of a project partnership, but rather is a complex process that needs attention throughout a partnership. And though this statement is not ground breaking, the definition of the complex processes is an important addition to the current literature. Additionally, I presented a continuum of threats and the importance of threat assessment, pointing out the value of addressing such threats through compromise, negotiation and improvisation.
Working through threats returns the participant again to the foundational work of building trust, adhering to the covenant, and sharing power.

Throughout this study I have presented the reader with copious details of a TFSC project in the hopes of illuminating the complexities of reciprocity. The bulk of my new understanding stemmed from work throughout the semester and up to the final performance. The final performance then invited an audience to share in the act of reciprocity by entering into a community conversation. The performance, audience participation and the ensuing conversation were inspiring and productive, and the final project can be judged a success. Having brought the reader this far, it seems only fair to share the concluding scenes of the project in the following epilogue, even if they offer few if any new insights. The narration of the final performance brings to life the many theoretical elements of reciprocity while highlighting the meaning of the project through an illustration of practice.
Epilogue: Performing Community

"Welcome to our school. Together we make a difference."

--Banner hanging inside HH hallway

“They are seeing something good though. Us up there showing them what’s bad is what’s good.”

--Dave (a high school participant)

The final, though by no means most important, test of participants’ ability to strengthen their community through the reciprocation of ideas and positive attitudes occurred during their performance for and with their greater high school community. On the evening before the performance, Professor Lanton sent the university students an email outlining the “game plan” that they had discussed earlier in the day. In a minute-to-minute breakdown of the final preparations, Professor Lanton reminded students to hold a company meeting, set up for the performance, and review pieces with examples of intervention. After a list of facilitation reminders and a short description of the requirements for their final report that was due on the day of the scheduled class final, Professor Lanton wrote, “Good luck – have no fear – all will be well” (email, 04/25/2007). Whether motivated by Professor Lanton’s email, concern over grades, fulfilling the expectations of Professor Lanton, meeting their own and the high school students’ goals or a combination of all of these, the university students facilitated the performance beautifully. The high school students in turn, reciprocated with a
performance so sincere and confident that I was both moved and surprised. In the moment of performance all participants were focused on the process of TFSC and the task at hand.

On the day of the performance the university students and I got up very early to convene and drive to the school. Adrenaline pumped through our veins in anticipation of the big moment and the surge did more to focus us than any cup of coffee could. The performance was the culmination of what students had learned and practiced. It was also a dynamic exercise in productive community interaction. The skits and Image Theater would delve into a hotbed of community issues. I was reminded of the banner I had noticed on earlier visits to the school. In both a predictive and indicative manner, it stated, “Welcome to our school. Together we make a difference.” The final performance provided a stage for the high school to perform specific moments of community and also to critique their everyday performance of community. Skits presented topics of community behavior explicitly. Audience participation in Forum Theater and discussion became an act of community building in itself. Through many interactions, the large group reciprocated ideas and attitudes resulting in several instances of illumination and empowerment. Two hours after we arrived, our veins were not the only ones pulsing with energy and emotion.

In a packed cafeteria, Professor Lanton greeted the students and teachers assembled by acknowledging that their high school is one of the best in the city. After enthusiastic applause, he continued by reminding them that every community has some problems and can try to improve. He explained the nature of the students’ Theater for Social Change work and how it differs from main stage theater. He emphasized that
audience participation is extremely important because it is only through active engagement that change can come about. Then he introduced the players and asked the audience to show them the "respect" they deserve for their "courageous" work (performance video, 04/26/2007). Even in this short introduction, I saw Professor Lanton operate with reciprocity in mind. He began by offering an honest and heartfelt compliment about the school's high standards and reputation and concluded by asking for cooperation from the audience as a demonstration of the standards and reputation in return for an entertaining and potentially community-changing performance.

**Skit One: The Dance Clique**

Jasmine's group began by playing its skit about cliques and their hurtful exclusion of some. The simple plot told a story of a freshman girl who is snubbed and excluded from joining a dance club of upper classman despite her demonstrated talent. After performing the skit once, the group began anew, this time awaiting the intervention of the audience. Six audience responses were explored before moving on to the second group's skit. Of these responses, four resulted in revised stage action, while two of the comments largely emphasized what some of the action had already said.

Skit one opened with one student trying to explain a homework problem to another student. They were interrupted by a member of the dance team calling everyone to the floor for dance practice. This opening plot detail about the homework was meant simply to introduce the action realistically and considered by its creators (as expressed in the debriefing directly after the performance) to be of little significance to the meaning of the skit. The first response, however, was a wonderful illustration of the variety and therefore strength of ideas when drawing from many minds. A senior came forward from
the audience and, in accordance with the instructions from Jasmine, took the place of one of the actors in order to show, not tell, the audience how she would correct a problem she had identified in the social situation depicted. She chose to play the student explaining the homework problem. When dancers were called to the floor, she told the club to wait a minute so she could finish her explanation, thereby emphasizing the importance of academics over an extracurricular activity and the caring attention to a friend in need. As the skit continued, she also told the freshman who was excluded in the original version, "Sure [you can join]. I don't understand [the dance moves] yet either." Her comment drew consternation from the other dance club members and Jasmine called "cut" to end the performance.

In the second intervention, a senior, rather than a freshman asked permission to join the dance club. Like the freshman, she was asked to demonstrate her skills (or lack of skills as it turns out.) After some reluctance, she was included on the team. The third intervention tried to maintain the reality of the division between upper and lower classman, but attempted to make the exclusion a kinder event. The dance team apologized to the freshman that they were full and not accepting any new members. The audience understood the more precise and unspoken truth that the team was accepting no new underclassman members. The fourth and sixth audience participant commented that the clique would not be so kind as the third intervention suggested and that the student would not accept the rejection so easily.

In the fifth intervention, the audience member took the place of one of the dancers. When the freshman asked if she could be a part of the group, the participant preempted any of the other actresses by declaring loudly that she is the captain of this
team and if the freshman has "the moves" she could join the club. Additionally she commented to her club members that she does not like their negative attitude and wants to see them "put their all into" teaching the freshman the audition routine. This was perhaps the strongest and most complex solution suggested by an audience member, and one that built on previous suggestions. Here, the speaker moved from simply allowing a freshman to join (which the audience found unrealistic) or the still unsatisfactory solution to maintain the segregation in a "kinder" fashion, to where the captain, in a leadership role, set a good example and precedent for the whole group and the school it represents.

Watching the improvisation in this skit was particularly inspiring to me because it underscored the value and power of the process of Theater for Social Change. When audience members intervened, the original dance group actresses successfully stayed in character during improvisation. Continuing to act as students who did not want to include a freshman, they had to find ways on the spot to resist the audience intervention, while still allowing the audience members' approach to play out. When the "new" captain told them to accept the freshman as a member of the team, the actresses did not simply comply, rather they improvised their frustration and tried to resist the instruction to accept the student and sabotage her audition by giving her sloppy instructions. At this point the intervening audience member again stepped up and asserted her position by asking them to try harder at teaching the moves and essentially to try harder to be a better person and peer. The theater form worked to prompt authentic, spontaneous grappling with the issue at hand. The community practiced power sharing in exploring various approaches and considering possible results. No one "authority figure" was expected to solve a problem for the sake of closure.
The skit itself was replete with power dynamics and driven by relational networks. Power hierarchy existed implicitly in the class structure, but also in the leader-follower dynamic between captain and dance team. This structure was further complicated by relationship ties between the identities of friends, foes, peers, classmates, and teammates, all of whom might have had particular reasons and modes driving their interactions. The captain insisted on compliance with her behavioral expectations. We could view this as a dictatorial solution awaiting a coup. Alternatively, we can presume that her peers have elected her captain because they admire her kind and levelheaded leadership qualities that led her to request a change in attitude. If this were the case, then despite initial resistance, the team members would likely follow her directions. Regardless of what might happen in reality, the gem of the audience intervention was the suggestion that leaders can choose to use their power responsibly to try and improve their communities.

I have already discussed at length the preparation and involvement of the university and high school students and staff that led up to this point. During the two hours of the performance, however, the performing group and, to invoke Boal once again, the spectators made additional contributions. The performers stayed in their stage roles and formulated an appropriate improvisation under pressure. They listened effectively to their audience and were willing to enact individual audience member’s perspectives even if they did not share the view. The school body in the audience also listened attentively for the most part and participated appropriately when invited to do so. They shared their views and were not afraid of clashing with other views—a most valuable contribution to community work that I have been referring to as dynamism throughout this study. In
exchanging ideas and responding to one another’s comments, the larger group was also practicing reciprocity.

After the final audience intervention, Professor Lanton stepped forward to review with the audience what we all learned specifically. Noteworthy is that Professor Lanton did not ask what “they,” the audience, learned, but rather what “we”, the community, everyone in the room, learned through our group effort. Such subtle linguistic cues are essential in acknowledging equality and recognizing all the contributions in community work. According to student comments from the audience, we learned both about specific dimensions of the community as well as general rules to live by. Audience members said the skits taught them “that freshmen are not scared of anyone,” and “this school is nice and no one is scared of anybody for real.” And though many agreed, “there is too much separation between classes at this school,” some felt that the “separation between classes is by choice.” In trying to find solutions to some of the community issues represented in the skits, audience members decided “there are better ways to handle [community] situations” than they often choose to enact. Some came away inspired “to do onto others as you want others to do onto you”—an old, simple, and clear adage of reciprocity.

Voluntary audience participation demonstrated willingness for the community to come together in clarifying and dealing with a community issue, thereby effectively accepting the covenant of the performing group. One might argue that students in the audience listened politely but passively in response to coercive powers in the school administration. It is more likely, however, that students participated actively because of qualities of the presentation. The performance was entertaining and relevant and did not require or expect one right answer. These attributes made the performance a welcome
platform for the high school students, especially those with a propensity to "act out" (positively or negatively) or to voice their opinions. From the performances and the discussion, the school learned crucial information about its community and a new student-driven, student-inspired, student-empowered forum through which to explore its identity.

**Skit Two: Two-faced**

Billy led the second group in its skit about the high school portraying a reputation of community orientation to the outside, while simultaneously being Janus-faced and divided in its interactions on the inside. The performance began with an actress portraying the principal droning on about the perfection of the school. As the principal's voice faded out, student actors' voices rang out from the audience, "I want to go home" and other unhappy comments contradicting the principal. The bulk of the skit consisted of three friends greeting peers graciously and then, when the peers had passed them, making snide and derogatory comments about them behind their backs. For example, one said, "Hey Tricia (pseudonym), I like your purse," and then in a lower voice to her friends laughed maliciously and said something like, "cheap knock off from Walmart." The skit ends by making fun of the "guy in the audience with blue hair," who turned out to be none other than their beloved mentor, Billy.

The audience interventions again provided an opportunity for the community to exchange ideas. Working with the content of the skit focused the audience participants by providing a concrete example with which everyone was familiar. The example was specific enough to clearly identify the issue, but abstract enough not to offend anyone in particular. The audience volunteers attempted a variety of solutions: doing away with the
ugly behavior by replacing it with nice behavior; fighting ugly behavior with equally ugly behavior; ignoring the ugly behavior and finally rising above it. No interventions addressed the principal’s role, leading me to conclude either that students feared repercussions for critiquing the principal, or perhaps even more likely, that the problem for the students did not lie with the principal misrepresenting their school, but with a school body not living up to the standards and expectations of the community represented by the principal. Much like in the interventions to the first skit, those of the second built upon one another in search of a better solution. Students were putting forth an honest effort to tackle the issue at hand with their creativity and wits.

The audience’s interventions and the actors’ responses to them brought to light the delicate nature of relationships between nodes. In the first intervention, the audience member responded to the snide remark about the purse by contradicting her friend and saying, “her book bag is cute!” and meaning it. She follows this remark by telling her friend she should be honest about how she feels about the bag and tell “Tricia” to her face. The first comment, though well intentioned, produced no change in the skit action, other than a snicker and continued snide remarks. An audience member who said it was unrealistic and not necessarily a nice behavior to share an honest dislike for someone’s bag with that person rejected the second comment.

In these interactions, students painted a clear picture of the difficulty in speaking against the mainstream. At best, a friend might laugh at and discourage the activist student. At worst, a “friend” may stop associating with the activist student. Perhaps these paper-thin relationships that bind cliques together are indicative of the internet age in which Facebook users accrue hundreds of “friends” whom they may not keep in touch
with regularly and can just as easily “remove as friend.” Regardless of whether there is a connection here, the skits and their intervention made clear that a change in attitude would take more than a simple comment to a peer, and that something more would take a community effort to discover and enforce.

The next audience member tried a similar approach but stood up for the student with the purse a little more forcefully. This resulted in a fight between the one doing the insulting and the one defending. Again, this was not a solution that resulted in improved or preferred community behavior. It also drew the comment from one audience member that even if a clique member should not go along with her peers’ ugly behavior, in reality she probably will, attesting to the power of the clique. The next intervention came from a young man who disagreed with the previous comment. Before he took the stage he said, “I think here a lot of people have their own opinion about things and we actually voice them.” In a bit of brilliant improvisational acting, the student making snide remarks used her position in the clique and her power of manipulating language hatefully, but effectively, to shut down the defender. When he stood up for the insulted student, she simply scoffed and turned her back on him, illustrating that if he were not in agreement with the comments of the clique, he was no longer a member of the clique. Hereby we returned to the original issue of clique exclusion.

The complexity of the issue was again highlighted in the next intervention. Again a student attempted to defend someone: this time a student with an earring who was being called gay in a condescending manner. He confidently stated that he himself wears an earring, is not gay, and that a number of famous pop icons and sports stars wear earrings as fashion statements, not as symbols of their sexual orientation. An alternative approach
could have been to defend homosexuality rather than a person’s fashion sense, but
perhaps the topic of freedom of sexual orientation will be a future school discussion. In
any case, before he could consider another approach, the insulter once again used her
beguiling linguistic and fast witted talent to catch the defender off guard with a disarming
conspiratorial laugh. She gave him one more chance to agree with her by stating, “yeah,
but your earring isn’t of Michael Jordon.” The defender laughed in spite of himself and
lost all argumentative ground, essentially nullifying his own defense.

The insulting character finally met her match in the sixth intervention. A
classmate with equal skills in playing the dozens, or insulting people, lashed back with
his own derogatory comments when he was insulted. The action on stage was quite
heated, and for the first time the actress who had been insulting others was caught off
guard and had to take a breath to continue. She literally took a step back as her new
competition served a tongue-lashing. In fact, the stage action became so heated that Billy
wisely called “cut” and challenged the audience to think of a solution that would make
the community stronger, rather than simply portraying what they thought would happen.
An immediate response came from the audience: “be more mature.”

The comments following the skit interventions attested to student audience’s
involvement in the TFSC process. They had clearly been listening and were invested in
the issue. I was impressed at the astute nature of their comments that immediately
highlighted the complexity of the issue and the differing opinions amongst the student
body. Several comments recognized the validity of the skit’s message. Some students
asserted that the student body could work harder to be a closer more supportive
community, while others insisted that gossip and conflict between students is simply part
of teenage life and cannot be changed. Some who believed there could be no change did not seem to want to make an effort to change. Others had no hope for change, but acknowledged other strengths of the school as coping mechanisms. For example, they suggested ignoring the divisive behavior and finding a safe haven in personal friendships and gratitude for going to a school that is “better than others” in its social interactions and sense of community. Students suggested using social interaction to build to a new, shared covenant of change and improvement.

Among the comments were also poignant solutions that were reiterated in a variety of terms and garnered positive support through applause or shouts of affirmation. Students were learning about the power within their own ideas and the power of the support of their peers. Several students believed the best solutions came from within an individual, rather than in trying to change a school or the phenomenon of a clique as a whole. They recommended showing maturity and walking away from negative situations. Not participating in gossip meant both not spreading gossip and not listening to it either. They recognized that the gossipmongers thrived on an audience. Gossips say what they say to be heard, sound tough, and be in control, but without an audience their words are rendered powerless. Maturity included being civil: “Even when you don’t like another person,” one student said, “you should not talk behind his back.”

Students recognized the power of change, but where some students believed change should begin from within the individual, others believed the individual should not have to change. The intentions of two comments remain ambiguous in my mind. One student stated: “People will gossip. You can’t change them. If you change yourself you don’t have to worry about anyone else.” Another student stood up confidently and boldly
stated: “Don’t change for nobody!” He acknowledged that some people find him “talkative” and “annoying”, but that neither he nor anyone else should change himself to make someone else happy. Both of these comments are ambiguous. Certainly pretending to be someone one is not is not is dishonest and does not strengthen a community. Amending one’s behavior that may be hurtful to the community, however, would be a positive change. Either way, these comments allude to an underlying reciprocity in community relations. The comments recognize the give and take in social interactions. The skits effectively instigated the school community to begin to define publicly the acceptable parameters of its social interactions.

**Image Theater: A Community Not Being a Community**

After the two skits, the TFSC performers came together to demonstrate Image Theater. They created a frozen image depicting, in their words, “a community not being a community.” The image was made of one person, presumably the principal showing another person, presumably a guest, highlights of the school. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, out of sight of the visitors, students engaged in conflict. Essentially the theater players felt that the school represents itself as a community, but does not act enough like a community. Audience members again were invited to come up and change the physical representation to one that suggested a more desirable situation.

Community feedback to the Image Theater reflected a more tempered opinion by many. The strong and simplistic image of the imaginary good overshadowing the realistic bad galvanized the audience to agree or disagree. Although the exercise was meant to allow participants to shape an improved image of their community, the audience also used it as an opportunity to correct the image to be more realistic. In other words,
everyone did not accept the original image. Mainly, students agreed that no school is perfect and that their school is not trying to hide anything. One participant rearranged the image so that visitors saw both the good and the bad. Another pointed out astutely, that in this very session of TFSC in their cafeteria, the school was sharing its good and bad with its guests, the City University facilitators. Finally, dissent over the issue of in-school fights revealed an area where more discussion might be useful. Some students felt very strongly that the student body itself could prevent and stop fighting, whereas other students felt just as strongly that some individuals watch the spectacle of fighting rather than taking initiative to stop it.

Faculty and staff voices were largely absent from the forum work. Although Professor Lanton had explicitly invited all members of the community (students, faculty, and staff) to participate at the start of the session, it was not until after he offered a reminder late in the session, that three teachers chose to contribute. Theater students interpreted the paucity of teacher and staff input at the performance as a lack of commitment to the process, or courage to speak up, but Principal Ridley later explained that teachers wanted to allow student voices to be heard. The truth may lie somewhere between these two opinions. We must also remember participation by teachers earlier in the semester. Ms. Scott was committed throughout the collaboration and many teachers were very accommodating in allowing the City University students to enter their classrooms and disrupt their schedules.

All three teachers who contributed at the performance made statements to the effect that students were being too hard on themselves. One teacher emphasized that she had been at the school for over 10 years and had seen very few fights. A rare and recent
fight, another teacher noted, was broken up by the students themselves, attesting to their commitment to the community. The third teacher disagreed that the school was divided between classes, citing as an example the way students made friends in their assigned inter-class units called “families” (somewhat akin to homeroom) and took those friendships into the school at large and melded them with their other friendships. Although student and teacher perceptions diverge, the exercise allowed the community to share and hear one another’s perspectives.

The topic of fighting drew so much attention in the late minutes of the forum that one frustrated performer felt moved to address the issue. She clarified that the drama group was trying to provoke its school community to think about its identity, but also to think about what consequences behaviors have in our larger communities outside of the school. She reminded the audience to focus on solutions for problems, not merely on redefining the problems. Her words drew at least two opposing views. One student stood up and offered as a solution acceptance and love of one another despite varying opinions. Another student, however, felt that too much was being made of the suggested disharmony. She said, “Get over it, because we can’t change it.” This apathetic, or at best passive resolution, gave an important glimpse into how part of the community feels complacent about its reality. A final comment, however, ended the group work on a positive and visionary note. “The first step to solving conflict in the community and the world,” said one anonymous male student, “is to try to be respectful.” Professor Lanton picked up on the hopeful note, reiterating the importance of mutual respect. Turning the complacent students’ comments into another strong positive, he told students to celebrate
what they already have, and encouraged them to make it even better by continuing to
dialogue with each other.

Much like the first two skits, Image Theater allowed the school to explore its
community identity by recognizing certain weaknesses and working in solutions to
strengthening relational ties. The exercise enabled opposing viewpoints came to light.
The performers were constantly challenged by the audience and worked professionally to
maintain their mission—or covenant—of facilitating TFSC. Overall, general
expectations were met despite frustrations that arose over dissidence or unanticipated
turns in audience response or focus.

Audience comments offer strong evidence that the performers executed their
mission successfully. The topics of the skits were clear and had instigated discussion.
The community began to think about its collective problems and how it could actively
take a stand in improving its environment. The dialogue among audience members also
helped individuals recognize different perspectives and the challenge of working together
despite these differences. Some community members were less willing to acknowledge
any problems or express a desire to change their behavior. But for those who left the
performance wanting to improve their school, they had witnessed one strong, creative,
and peaceful technique to address this challenge. Those who participated could walk
away with confidence in themselves to work in and with their community towards
creating positive social change.

**Participant Reflection**

After the completion of a dynamic performance, participants were energized by
their success. Even though a reflection session days after the performance revealed that
some members of the school community felt the skits were irrelevant, others appreciated the initiative to make things better. In response to the students who thought the skits portrayed their school as all bad, one high school drama participant gave the clever remark: “They are seeing something good though. Us up there showing them what’s bad is what’s good.” Clearly, the high school drama players were proud of having learned the new process of theater well enough to present efficiently (if not master) their skits, of having voiced important community issues, of sparking participation and dialogue amongst the audience, and of having broken new ground at their school in terms of introducing both extracurricular theater and a unique social change instrument.

The university and high school participants believed that their shared efforts had left the greater high school community with several important messages. The first skit showed how clique exclusivity could hurt peers and divide the school community. The second skit and Image Theater presented a dichotomy between the ideal image of a harmonious school that is presented to outsiders and even celebrated by many insiders and the less than perfect reality as experienced by many of the insiders. Specifically the second skit addressed the issue of disingenuous attitudes when students pretend to be nice to a peer and then talk negatively about them behind their backs to other classmates. Image Theater brought about an additional awareness and discussion on the perception of fighting in the school. Both skits and Image Theater challenged the community to discuss the roots and implications of the situations and to imagine a solution that would help the community become their shared ideal. In their co-authored final report the university students said it this way: “We could tell that the vision of [Harmony High] being perfect—or at least as close to perfect as one could expect—was being shattered in
the minds of both students and teachers. It was almost as if we left the school with a challenge: ‘you’re not perfect, and we put it out there. What are you going to do about it?’” Audience responses during the discussion following the performances suggested that at least some community members considered how to address this challenge.

The high school students expressed surprise and excitement about their ability to affect their community. They felt that in their work they were “setting examples for other” and “mak[ing] others think about their actions” “from different points of view” (High school student Feedback Survey, 05/02/2007). As one of the most important aspects of their influence they recounted helping the community to identify and perceive its problems and think of ways to resolve them. They hoped that they had left their audience with qualities such as “awareness” of community issues, “courage” to address these issues with their peers, and “confidence” that they have the power to initiate change for the better. These words suggest empowerment. I believe this act of empowerment to have been one of the most successful and celebrated acts of reciprocity. Power, which can so easily be abused and often derail a project and the hopes of many, in this instance found a healthy expression that fed on itself and spread to others, at least on a temporary basis. The performers felt empowered by the tools that they learned from the university students. The university students felt empowered at having been able to pass along these teachings and make at least a momentary difference in the high school community. At least some of the audience felt empowered to step forward and take part in suggesting solutions to community issues by participating in both skits and post-performance dialogue.
Appendix A

Data Collection Tools

Details of Data Collection As Outlined in Methods Section

- Participants signed a consent form outlining the purpose of the study, the value of their participation, and the specific demands of the project.
- Participants chose or were assigned pseudonyms.
- Interviews were recorded on cassettes or in notes.
- Interviewees had the opportunity to review and amend interview transcripts and/or summaries.
- Every effort was made to let each participant speak, but no participant was forced.

Data Collection Sources

- 2 focus-group interviews with the university partner participants
- 2 general guide interviews with Professor Lanton
- 1 general guide interview with Principal Ridley
- Regular informal conversational interviews with the university and community participants
- 17 observations (10 of university, 7 combined with community group)
- Debriefing session with the high school students
- Journal entries from the university students
- Scholarly articles on TFSC
- 2 documentaries of TFSC
- Community Profile written by the university students
- Final Report written by the university students
- Syllabus and assignment sheets provided by Professor Lanton
- Feedback survey completed by the high school students
- Videotape of final performance

**Synopsis of Weekly Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of Event</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Documents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/10/05</td>
<td>Significant preliminary interviews and meetings with Professor Lanton</td>
<td>Interview with Professor Lanton</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/17/06</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/08/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Intro to class and syllabus. Grandmother’s keys. Direct dramatic moment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Observation 1</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/17/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
<td>Continuation of skits. Debriefing of skits. Purpose and skills assessment. Lecture on TFSC with many CM examples.</td>
<td>Focus Group 1</td>
<td>Observation 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/24/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 3</td>
<td>Watched two video examples of TFSC. (Outside In, Inside Out)</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
<td>Observation 3</td>
<td>Mamatunde [DVD].</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/31/07</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encounters with Afrika [DVD]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 4</td>
<td>Discussion of access to community. Debriefing of two videos in terms of Research, Analysis, Creation, Enactment, Evaluation, Follow up.</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
<td>Observation 4</td>
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<td>2/7/07</td>
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<tr>
<th>Meeting 5</th>
<th>Nicole &amp; Billy article</th>
<th>Informal conversational interviews</th>
<th>Observation 5</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ewu, J (1999). Arts and development II furthering the agenda, Ibadan.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting 6</th>
<th>Jasmine, Sonja, article review. Story Circle</th>
<th>Observation 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 7</td>
<td>Jasmine, Sonja, Billy article review.</td>
<td>Observation 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/28/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 8</td>
<td>Billy article</td>
<td>Observation 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/14/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 9</td>
<td>Enter Harmony High</td>
<td>Observation 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/21/07</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 10</td>
<td>Review of students' community profile (Chart created)</td>
<td>Observation 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/28/07</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/30/07</td>
<td>The university students meet to practice physical work. NC unable to attend.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4/04/07</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 12</td>
<td>The Harmony High students come to City University. Grandmother's keys. Improvisation Circle. Image theater.</td>
<td>Observation 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/11/07</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/23/07</td>
<td>On 23rd Sonja, Billy, and Jasmine went to Harmony High. Only 6 students showed up. Not sure of details, NC not able to attend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 14 4/25/07</td>
<td>On 25th Billy teaches Harmony High group what they will be doing. They devise and rehearse. Debrief in City Univ. cafeteria.</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 15 4/26/07</td>
<td>Final rehearsal and Performance at Harmony High</td>
<td>Informal conversational interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/1/07</td>
<td>Exit interview with Principal Ridley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting 16 5/02/07</td>
<td>Final debrief.</td>
<td>Exit focus group interview with the university students</td>
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</table>
### Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting 17 5/09/07</th>
<th>Billy, Nicole and Professor Lanton return to Harmony High for a follow up debriefing.</th>
<th>Debriefing session with the high school students.</th>
<th>Observation 17</th>
<th>High school student feedback survey completed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5/14/07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University students’ Final Report submitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/15/07</td>
<td>Exit interview with Professor Lanton (in writing)</td>
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### Interviews

**Interview with Professor Lanton prior to semester start.**

1) What is Theater for Social Change?

2) What pertinent work has preceded this Theater for Social Change course?
   
   a. On your part
   
   b. By others

3) Why are you doing this? What is your motivation and your hope for this project?

4) What do you want participants to learn through this project?

5) What kind of social change do you hope this theater project can bring about?

6) What can you tell me about the individuals and communities that will play a role in this project? i.e., What descriptions of the two groups do you find significant? Why did you choose these two groups?

7) What relationships already exist that will aid or challenge this project?

8) What do you think could be the outcome of this project in terms of the relationship between the University and the community?
9) What aspects of the course are designed to allow/promote organic development of storylines, scripts, symbols, characters, etc.? By organic I mean the free flowing creative process that is necessary for devising, etc.

10) What aspects of the course are designed to allow/promote dynamic interaction? Do you find that these activities encourage cooperation as well as compromise?

11) How do you define power?
   a. In what sort of interactions have you seen power at work in this sort of theater?
   b. What power structures can you identify before the start of the course that you expect will have an impact on this project?
   c. Do you believe that they will affect the participants? How?

12) What was your experience with power relationships last year within the theatre course?
   a. Do you anticipate that the participants will recognize power relations?
   b. How do you think they will deal with power issues?
      i. Among the University course students?
      ii. Between the University students and the high school students?

13) How important is it that both groups involved in the project identify what they want to get out of the project?
   a. Will you help them to identify their intended outcomes?

14) What do you think will be some challenges and approaches to achieving reciprocity within this project?

15) From where will the leadership to promote reciprocity emerge?
Exit Interview with Professor Lanton.

1) What were your goals going into this project?

2) Were your goals realized? Any unanticipated outcomes?

3) Why do you think the school wanted to be a part of this project?

4) What do you think the university students and the high school students achieved?

5) How would you describe the (primary) participants in this project? What motivated them?

6) What were some of the challenges you encountered in this collaboration?

7) Describe the development of the relationships between participants throughout the project.

8) What activities or moments in particular did you think contributed to building relationship?

9) What activities or moments in particular did you think allowed participants to explore competing ideas?

10) How did issues of power and empowerment come into play in this project, if at all?

11) What moments stand out for you as especially memorable? Why?

12) What are your hopes and challenges for continuation of such a project?

13) What do you think could be the outcome of this project in terms of the relationship between the university and the community?

14) What do you think will be some challenges and approaches to achieving reciprocity within this project so that both sides' goals can be met?
   
   a. From where will the leadership to promote reciprocity emerge?
Focus Group interview with the university students at beginning of semester.

1) How did each of you know each other before this class, if at all
2) What do you know about City community?
3) What do you expect from a high school we might work with?
4) What do you want to get out of this class? Put another way, what are your objectives, what are you hoping to achieve?
5) Can you think of any examples from the skit you performed earlier where competing views were brought to light and how you felt about them when they happened?

Focus Group interview with the university students at the end of the semester.

1) What do you think Harmony High students got out of this project?
2) How did your goals change or how were they met?
3) Describe your relationships in the small groups.
4) Name a challenge of facilitating.
5) How did previous theater experience influence your participation?
6) What life skills did you gain from your participation in this TFSC course?
7) How did power and empowerment factor in?

Exit interview with Principal Ridley.

1) Why did you choose to participate in this project? (What is/was your motivation and your hope for this project?)
2) What were your goals going into this project? For the students, the school, yourself.
3) Were your goals realized? Any unanticipated outcomes?
4) Why do you think the university wants to engage in this joint project with your school and its students?

5) What can you tell me about the students who participated in this project?
   a. What do you think they think about working with the university students?
   b. What do you think motivated them to be a part of this project?

6) What do you think the university students and the Harmony High students achieved in this project?

7) What activities or moments in particular did you think allowed participants to explore competing ideas?

8) How did issues of power and empowerment come into play in this project, if at all?

9) What moments stand out for you as especially memorable? Why?

10) What does “Theater for Social Change” mean to you?

11) What, if any, were some of the challenges you encountered in this collaboration?

12) What are your hopes and challenges for continuation of such a project?

13) What do you think could be the outcome of this project in terms of the relationship between the university and the community?

14) What do you think will be some challenges and approaches to achieving reciprocity within this project so that both sides’ goals can be met?

15) From where will the leadership to promote reciprocity emerge?

Feedback Survey for the High School Students (designed by Professor Lanton)

1) Did the experience differ from what you expected and if so how?

2) What were your most challenging/daunting moments?

3) One word to describe your experience with UR students and the instructor?
4) How could you have been better prepared for the experience?

5) How has the experience impacted your life and are there any life skills developed that you can use in the future? (For instance, your ability to communicate, patience, confidence etc.)

6) How could the activity have been improved?

7) Given your experience how in your view do you think this type of activity can ultimately impact your community?

**Journal Writing (assignment sheet from Professor Lanton)**

A journal is a record of thoughts about an experience. It will show that you have been thinking about the process of your learning and the development of your understanding. It may explore ideas or issues that you have been exposed to over a period of study and the various thoughts associated with them.

The journal which will be used for this course is “reflective.” A thoughtful account of your own observations and interpretations of events that allows you to examine your experiences to understand them better.

Your reflections will be about the experiences you have at [Harmony] High School. These should be critical, analyzing any shifts in your views during the process. As such, you will need to identify and challenge your underlying assumptions, beliefs and views.

Reflective writing is done after you have had time to think about the implications of your experience in relation to the ideas and theories you are studying. Some (but not exclusively) of the following questions may help you with this writing:

- What were the important elements of the experience, event or issue?
• Why did I behave as I did?
• What was I thinking and feeling at the time about the experience, event or issue?
• What do I think and feel now about what happened? Why?
• What should I be aware of if a similar situation occurs?
• What did I learn? What insights did I gain? How or why was this significant for me?
• What aspects of my practice or learning do I want to focus on?
• How can I apply my theoretical knowledge to this situation?
• Have my assumptions and perspectives changed as a result of this experience? How?
• How can I apply what I have learned to my life or future career?

Journal entries should be weekly commencing from your first day in the community. Entries should not be more than two to three typewritten pages per week or encounter. (This may vary depending on the duration of our experiences there.) Journals are to be submitted at conclusion of the project experience or semester.

**TFSC Reporting Specs**

1. Brief background on project to include
   - The objectives
   - The time frame in which it was covered.
   - No of people in the community
   - No. of people in attendance
   - Source of community revenue
• Make up (quantify): children/teens/women/men-age& occupation

• Nature of relationship between the above

• Who was most receptive?

• Religious factors & other institutional factors

• CDA factors CBO factors

• Expressed problems/needs/proffered solution

• Obstacles to implementation: conflicts or otherwise

• Potentials for development, actualization and empowerment

2. Methodology and Implementation to include

• When you started

• How you went about the project (A detailed scenario)

• Did all go according to plan? If not why not?

• What changes were there?

• Did changes affect the overall objective of the project?

  How?

3. Findings: Impact of the work on you, the project team, target audience

• Did you achieve your expected results, if no, why not, if yes state how

• Did you find that the problem never really existed? What are your findings?

• How many people did you impact? Age, social strata, educational background etc.
- Was there a change in the perception of people? State their new stance
- Statistics: what ratio to what had a change against what ratio.
- Was there a tangible element for social change left in the wake of your work with this community? What was it?
- Did you make new discoveries? What are they?

4. Summary, Evaluation, Recommendations

- Was the project successful? State how.
- What were the challenges?
- How do you intend to tackle them in the future?
- What suggestions can you make to achieve better results?
- What were the basic lessons learned

Professor Lanton’s Guidelines for Information Gathering Report (Community Profile)

A Community Profile is a picture of the environment in which one plans to do Theatre for Development work. Its purpose is to provide information which will help to define and shape the intended activity – especially from a participatory base. Information gathering is central to this process. While some information may be gathered from normal research sources such as libraries, IT data banks, etc., talking to associates and members of the community itself is very necessary for formulating a rounded and meaningful view of the target location. It is crucial to visit the community, meet and talk with people about their lives, hopes, experiences and circumstances in which they live.
In gathering information community members need to be told your reasons for taking information and a participatory open-ended format is best advised. Formalized interviews can sometimes be intimidating and very often leads to a failure in getting more in depth and truthful information. While it is good to focus on what the most burning issues are facing a community it is also useful to know what the positive aspects of a peoples lives tighter have also been. It is also important to know that a community is not one homogenous unit. There are youth, elders, males, females, rich and poor Groups and organizations also exist. Very often these groups will have different perspectives and priorities. A balanced picture will entail meeting with a cross section of the community. An agreement should be made between the community and theatre workers before any performance is done in a community.

Some information needed towards the formulation of a community profile:

- Age and history of the community
- Population statistics
- Gender statistics & make-up (Children, teens, women/men/age)
- Nature of relationships between the above
- Socialization activity between the above
- Occupation of residents (historical and current)
- Ethnic make-up
- Religious make-up
- Sources of community revenue
- Existing services: commercial, cooperatives, government
- Nature of local leadership (traditional & modern)
- Available Government organizations and impact (successful or otherwise)
- Community organizations (men & women’s clubs, youth groups, including the history, problems and accomplishments of these groups)
- Development projects that are taking place in the community, particularly those involving self help
- Local cultural groups, songs, Dances, Programs (TV, radio) that are popular in the community
- Expressed problems/needs/solutions
- Obstacles to implementation: conflict or otherwise
- Potentials for development, actualization and empowerment
- Basic lessons learned from the research experience
Appendix B

University Student Consent Form

Theater for Social Change as a Pedagogical Tool for Civic Engagement

I, _________________________________________________ , agree to participate in an ethnographic study involving individuals enrolled as students in a Theater for Social Change course taught at the University of ______ and ______ High School. Other participants include related faculty, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the relationships built and the processes of building relationships while collaborating on a Theater for Social Change project. The duration of the study is expected to be the length of this semester-long course plus one additional optional session of one hour after the conclusion of the course.

The researcher, Nicole B. Cloeren, is conducting this study as part of a doctoral dissertation in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership in Higher Education at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

As a participant, I understand that my involvement in the study is purposeful in that student participants were chosen because of the unique course in which they are taking part. I understand that I will be expected to participate in group interviews that will take place during class meeting time. The focus of these interviews will be related to my understanding and perception of relationships, interactions, group goals, and power.
ACTS OF RECIPROCITY

Dynamics as they relate to the issues and processes of the theater project. I will also allow observations of my participation in any Theater for Social Change course-related activities as well as provide specific course-related written materials for the researcher to review as part of the study data. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to read the information that is collected from me during the interviews so that I can review them for accuracy. I understand that the researcher and the material she collects for her project will have no influence on my grade in this course.

I have been informed that any information obtained from me in this study will be recorded with a pseudonym that will allow only the researcher to determine my identity. I also acknowledge that individual discussions will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy of information presented. All efforts will be made to conceal my identity in the study's report of results and keep my personal information confidential.

The study is interested in interactions between participants, patterns of communication and creative process. I understand that there will be no more psychological discomfort directly involved with this research than with the course I enrolled in and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time. My decision to participate or not participate will not affect my course grade or my relationships with faculty, teachers, or the administration in general. If I have any questions regarding this research I should contact Dr. Dorothy E. Finnegan the chair of the researcher's dissertation committee at 757-221-2346 or definn@wm.edu. Any dissatisfaction regarding any aspect of this study should be addressed to Dr. Michael Deschenes, the chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary at 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu.
My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participating in this study.

Date ___________________________ Signature of Participant ___________________________

Date ___________________________ Researcher ___________________________

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2007-01-15 AND EXPIRES ON 2008-01-15.
Appendix C

Youth Consent Form

Theater for Social Change as a Pedagogical Tool for Civic Engagement

Dear parent/guardian,

I am a graduate student at the College of William and Mary. As part of my doctoral degree in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership in Higher Education I am conducting a study about the uses of theater in schools and universities to teach about community understanding and community involvement. I have already spoken with your child and his/her classmates and teacher about their important role in this study. Please consider granting permission for your child to participate by reading the information below, signing the form, and returning it to me.

I _______________________ , as parent/legal guardian to _______________________, agree to allow _______________________ to participate in a study involving individuals enrolled as students in a Theater for Social Change course taught at the University of ___________ and ___________ High School. Other participants include related faculty, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the relationships built and the processes of building relationships while collaborating on a Theater for Social Change project. The duration of the study is expected to be the length of this semester-
long course plus one additional optional session of one hour after the conclusion of the course.

As a participant, I understand that my child’s involvement in the study is purposeful in that student participants were chosen because of the unique course in which they are taking part. I understand that my child will be expected to participate in group interviews that will take place during class meeting time. The questions within these interviews will be related only to my child’s understanding and perception of relationships, interactions, group goals, and power dynamics as they relate to the issues and processes of the theater project. I understand the researcher will be observing my child during his/her interactions with classmates during course-related activities and that the researcher will review my child’s written class materials as part of the study data. I understand that with my child, I will be given the opportunity to read the information that is collected from him/her during the interviews so that he/she can review them for accuracy. I understand that the researcher and the material she collects for her project will have no influence on my child’s grade in this course.

I have been informed that any information obtained from my child in this study will be recorded with a pseudonym that will allow only the researcher to determine his/her identity. I also acknowledge that individual discussions will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy of information presented. My child’s identity in the study’s report of results and his/her personal information will be kept confidential.

The researcher is interested in interactions between participants, patterns of communication and creative process. I understand that there will be no psychological discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent
and discontinue participation in this study at any time. My decision to allow my child to participate or not participate will not affect my child’s course grade or our relationships with faculty, teachers, or the administration in general. If I have any questions regarding this research I should contact Dr. Dorothy E. Finnegar the chair of the researcher’s dissertation committee at 757-221-2346 or definn@wm.edu. Any dissatisfaction regarding any aspect of this study should be addressed to Dr. Michael Deschenes, the chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary at 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am the parent or legal guardian of the participant, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to my child’s participation in this study.

_________________________  __________________________
Date                        Signature of Participant or Legal Guardian

_________________________  __________________________
Date                        Researcher

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2007-01-15 AND EXPIRES ON 2008-01-15.

Please keep one copy of this letter for your records and return one copy to me by asking your child to bring it to class and give it to the teacher, or by using the self-addressed, stamped envelope to send it directly to me at:

Nicole B. Cloeren
2808 Oak Hill Drive
Williamsburg, VA 23185
You may reach me with questions at nbcloe@wm.edu or 757-221-7768 (daytime), 757-565-3102 (evening & weekends).

Many thanks for considering this request.
Sincerely,

Nicole B. Cloeren
Appendix D

Faculty/Teacher/Administrator Consent Form

Theater for Social Change as a Pedagogical Tool for Civic Engagement

I, _________________________________________________ , agree to participate in an ethnographic study involving individuals enrolled as students in a Theater for Social Change course taught at the University of __________ and __________ High School. Other participants include related faculty, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the relationships built and the processes of building relationships while collaborating on a Theater for Social Change project. The duration of the study is expected to be the length of this semester-long course plus one additional optional session of one hour after the conclusion of the course.

The researcher, Nicole B. Cloeren, is conducting this study as part of a doctoral dissertation in Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership in Higher Education at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

As a participant, I understand that my involvement in the study is purposeful because of my connection to the Theater for Social Change course. I understand that I will be expected to participate in at least 2 interviews at a time convenient to me. The focus of these interviews will be related to my understanding and perception of relationships, interactions, group goals, and power dynamics as they relate to the issues
and processes of the theater project. I will also allow observations of my participation in any Theater for Social Change course-related activities as well as provide specific course-related written materials for the researcher to review as part of the study data. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to read the information that is collected from me during the interviews so that I can review them for accuracy.

I have been informed that any information obtained in this study will be recorded with a pseudonym that will allow only the researcher to determine my identity. I also acknowledge that individual discussions will be audio-taped to ensure accuracy of information presented. All efforts will be made to conceal my identity in the study’s report of results and keep my personal information confidential.

The study is interested in interactions between participants, patterns of communication and creative process. I understand that there will be no psychological discomfort directly involved with this research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time.

If I have any questions regarding this research I should contact Dr. Dorothy E. Finnegan the chair of the researcher’s dissertation committee at 757-221-2346 or definn@wm.edu. Any dissatisfaction regarding any aspect of this study should be addressed to Dr. Michael Deschenes, the chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at the College of William and Mary at 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu.

My signature below signifies that I am at least 18 years of age, that I have received a copy of this consent form, and that I consent to participating in this study.
Date ________________________________  Signature of Participant ________________________________

Date ________________________________  Researcher ________________________________

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2007-01-15 AND EXPIRES ON 2008-01-15.
Appendix E

Worksheet For Incorporating Reciprocity Into Your Project

Identify your Players

Perform a community profile. Imagine the definition of your hexagons.

Gather your Tools

Depending on the form and nature of the service-learning project, initiating and facilitating participants should practice particular skills, read theoretical and practical texts, gather any materials necessary. A syllabus will probably provide the necessary guidance.

Build your Foundation

1) Define your ideal for Trust within this project; discuss how you will achieve trust. How will you know when trust is present? How will you know when trust is not present, threatened, weakened, or lost?

2) Define the elements of the Covenant for this project. What are the overall goals for a final product? What is the code of work ethics? What goals are unique to individuals or separate partners? How can you ensure participants adhere to the covenant?

3) Who has Power in this project? What kind of power? How will you address power imbalance? Do you have a safety word to call if one group or individual feels a power imbalance?
Erect the Walls:

Identify the niches of exchange for each room. What does each partner wish to achieve and gain? What can each partner offer in return?

Raise the Roof:

What is the greater goal that covers all the niche goals of exchange and fulfills all levels of both partners needs?

Define the Rooms:

What process steps will you take, or activities will you engage in to achieve the niche goals?

Play in your House

Interact collaboratively towards your greater goal.

Inspect your playhouse:

Regularly check to see if niches are being fulfilled in the manner promised in the covenant.

Invite others to play in your house

Be prepared to start the process over again.
Draw the following diagram on a big piece of paper or chalkboard and consider the categories as explained above.

Project Goals:

Niches of Exchange:

Power Sharing:

Covenant:

Trust:

Players:

Tools:

Process Steps:

Inspection:
References


ACTS OF RECIPROCITY


(Original work published 1957)


(Original work published 1903)


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Vita

Nicole Birgit Cloeren

Birth date: April 06, 1973

Birthplace: Worcester, Massachusetts

Education:
2002-2010 The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
Policy, Planning, & Leadership in Higher Education
Doctor of Education

1997-1999 The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
American Studies
Master of Arts

1991-1995 The College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, Massachusetts
English
Bachelor of Arts

Noteworthy: March-April, 2003, Fulbright Seminar
US Administrators of International Education
Germany

1995-1997, Fulbright Teaching Fellowship
Höhere Internatsschule des Bundes
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Professional Experience:
The College of William & Mary
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2001-2002, Upper School English Teacher
Sandy Spring Friends School
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