



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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In Vaill's (1998) forward to *The Power of Servant Leadership*, a challenge is offered to educational institutions: to increase the "sheer number of younger men and women who will be helped to develop as servant-leaders" (p. xiii). Vaill furthers this challenge by pointing out, "We in higher education know that only by accident are we producing visionary young men and women who aspire to leadership, to the extent we are producing them at all. We don't like to admit it. Greenleaf has found us out" (p. xiii). In response, one avenue that may assist in the intentional development of servant-leaders is the practice of service-learning. However, the purpose of this paper is not to provide a meta-analysis of the many service-learning programs at countless institutions of higher education that are aimed at increasing students' leadership abilities. Instead, this paper offers a philosophical platform for understanding the connections between servant-leadership and service-learning.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

An important element is the often overlooked contribution that settlement houses of the twentieth century played in establishing the field of experiential education (Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 5). The phenomenon of settlement houses, in part, fueled Dewey's theoretical argument for experiential education, which are the philosophical underpinnings of service-learning (p. 9). For Jane Addams, her reflective practice, the cornerstone of service-learning, came from "the stories of individual women and the most significant political and education trends of her time" (Seigfried, cited in Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 6). In the settlement house movement not only are the principles of service-learning present but possibly the deeper teleological



reasoning for such settlements: servant-leadership. The following sections will further this discussion between service-learning and servant-leadership by first defining servant-leadership then subsequently discussing the settlement house movement and linking the movement to the contemporary practice of service-learning in higher education.

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

It is my opinion that servant-leadership has become popular in the world of leadership studies in the last thirty years in part as a response to the negative effects of improper use of power. This power being wielded through phenomena such as: industrialization, globalization, and various other -isms, which have often widened the gap between the leader and the led, the haves and the have-nots, and men and women. Greenleaf (2002) is credited with coining the term *servant-leader* and defining it as such: “The servant-leader is servant first—as Leo was portrayed. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 27).

Greenleaf goes on to point out the important role power plays in the servant-leader distinction: “That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possession. For such, it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established” (p. 27). For the servant-leader, paying attention to the role of power is important, especially because Greenleaf asks, “What is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?” (p. 27). Understanding the implications of truly asking these questions can be overwhelming, in fact the mere ability to ask these questions supposes a level of power over those termed the “least privileged,” this power differential may cause the answers to these questions to be incomplete or altogether invalid. On the other hand, to not ask violates a foundational principle of servant-leadership.

SERVICE-LEARNING

Before continuing, a definition of contemporary service-learning is needed to clarify the underpinnings of servant-leadership in service-learning. Sigmon (1990) developed three principles of service-learning, formally



connecting his work to servant-leadership. The principles are: “*Principle one*: Those being served control the service(s) provided; *Principle two*: Those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions; *Principle three*: Those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned” (p. 57). Greenleaf inspired these principles through his definition of service, specifically, the best test: “Do those served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (cited in Sigmon, 1990, p. 59). From this definitional marriage, the philosophical underpinnings of service-learning and servant-leadership are therefore linked. The following section will detail the settlement house movement, and in particular Hull House through Addams’s experience, while pointing out the connections between servant-leadership and said movement.

Before continuing a brief note regarding Addams. Jane Addams was born in 1860 in Cedarville, Illinois. She had a strong relationship with her father, John Addams, who was a state senator, mill owner, and Quaker. Addams’s mother died when Jane was only two years old, and her father remarried. Addams attended Rockford Female Seminar and graduated in 1881. Post-graduation Addams experienced mental and physical health challenges and took several trips to Europe, where she was exposed to Toynbee Hall (a social settlement) in London’s East End. Toynbee Hall provided a template for the Hull House, and will be discussed more in the following sections. Addams went on to write several books, become a political activist, and was elected president of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). For all this work and more, Addams was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931; she donated her prize money to her organization, WILPF (Deegan, 2003, pp. 15–17).

THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE MOVEMENT

“In the unceasing ebb and flow of justice and oppression we must all dig channels as best we may, that at the propitious moment somewhat of the swelling tide may be conducted to the barren places of life” (Addams, 1910, p. 40). For Addams, her “channel” was to be in the formation of Hull House:

I gradually became convinced that it would be a good thing to rent a house in a part of the city [Chicago] where many primitive and actual needs are



found, in which young women who had been given over too exclusively to study, might restore a balance of activity along traditional lines and learn of life from life itself. (1910, p. 85)

Hull House was birthed in 1889 on the theory that the “dependency of classes on each other is reciprocal; and that as the social relation is essentially a reciprocal relation” (p. 91). At this time in American history, immigration to major American city centers was flourishing (Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 6), and because of systemic factors many experienced poverty. From Addams’s perspective and that of other like-minded individuals (i.e., Ellen Gates Starr, John Dewey, Dorothy Day) (Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 5) working to address social ills of the day, their focus was truly on the “least privileged of society” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). This came from a deep philosophical stance that Addams (1910) shared in her writing:

[T]he best speculative philosophy sets forth the solidarity of the human race; that the highest moralists have taught that without the advance and improvement of the whole, no [one] can hope for any lasting improvement in his own moral or material individual condition; and that the subjective necessity for Social Settlements is therefore identical with that necessity, which urges us on toward social and individual salvation. (p. 127)

CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE MOVEMENT AND SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

In reading Addams’s (1910) own account of her first twenty years at Hull House, all the elements of Burkhardt and Spears’s (2002) definition of the “servant-leadership” approach in philanthropic institutions are seen:

an approach which is based upon teamwork and community; one which seeks to involve others in decision making; one which is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior; and one which is enhancing the growth of people, while at the same time improving the caring and quality of our many institutions. (p. 224)

The following section will briefly provide examples of each quality listed above that are found in efforts of Hull House. Beginning first with a brief introduction to the work of Hull House and then continuing on with specific examples of teamwork and community, collaborative decision making, ethical and caring behavior, enhancing growth of people, and increasing the caring and quality of institutions.



Hull House was positioned in an area of Chicago where the needs of the community were ever-present. Starting first with an art-lending program, Hull House then moved to incorporate more programming that included a collaborative model rather than a top-down approach otherwise known as the “uplift” approach (Daynes & Longo, 2004, pp. 6–7). Additions to the programming, with the help of Hull House neighbors, included “a huge list of cultural events lectures, plays, concerts, and museum exhibits...[Hull House was also] involved in service, politics, and research over many years” (p. 7). In addition, Hull House is credited with creating “the first public playground in Chicago, the first kindergarten, citizenship classes, English classes, and Labor Museum” (p. 7). Despite Addams’s education program offerings and an openness to lecturing at area universities she rejected the institutionalization of education if it did the following: focused too much on research, preferred abstraction over emotion, and opted for specialization over universal interest (Addams, cited in Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 7). Addams’s work at Hull House and beyond focused on application. The following sections will highlight a sampling of such important application of not only her education but also the education of those associated with Hull House.

Teamwork and Community

Based on the list of its grand accomplishments, all having direct impact on the surrounding community, it is clear the work of Hull House required teamwork and at times came slowly but nevertheless was ever present in the end. One compelling example of both teamwork and community was the founding of the labor museum. From conversations with Dewey concerning “a continuing restructuring of experience” (Addams, 1910, p. 236), Addams realized that to narrow a generational gap between immigrants and their children, one idea would be to display “primitive methods of spinning” (p. 237). Addams found seven spindles, then was able to arrange them in historic sequence, to illustrate the development from more primitive tools to those that the large textile factories utilized, and thereby show the younger generation a connection with their families’ past (p. 237). From these exhibits, various aspects of community enrichment occurred: showing the connection between cultures, highlighting the evolution of industrialization, providing the larger community with a celebration and opportunity to become educated about industry, and finally, providing a platform to discuss abuses of said industry (pp. 239–240).



Cooperative Decision Making

As mentioned before, Hull House upon its opening utilized an uplift approach that focused on providing an art-lending program to residents of the surrounding neighborhood. Soon after this program started, it became clear that the uplift approach was short-sighted and real change would be affected only through collaborative programming. Addams preferred to view the new style of programming as cooperative, and this became the heart of Hull House and a large part of what sustained the vision of Hull House as serving the surrounding immigrant neighborhood and greater Chicago citizenry.

Ethical and Caring Behavior

One of the many examples of Hull House and its leadership's adherence to ethical and caring behavior comes from Addams's (1910) own account of securing funding for the Jane Club, a housing complex designed for young working girls (p. 138). By this account, a trustee of Hull House had received a donation of twenty thousand dollars to build a new clubhouse for the girls. However, upon closer inspection of the donor it came to light that he was known for underpaying the girls, "among darker things" (p. 138). After a long deliberation, the money was not accepted, being deemed "tainted money" (p. 138). Addams stated, "Social changes can only be inaugurated by those who feel the unrighteousness of contemporary conditions, and the expression of their scruples may be the one opportunity for pushing forward moral tests into that dubious area wherein wealth is accumulated" (p. 139).

Growth of People

Hull House was uniquely positioned to offer space for social engagements, which locals did not possess. One of the main challenges immigrant families faced was a lack of leisure time and the resources to enjoy their respective cultural events. In response, Hull House offered nights devoted to the enjoyment of music, food, and plays. One outcome included a growing respect for elders in the community, a greater enjoyment of literature, and "an effort to bring together the old life and the new" (Addams, 1910, p. 234). Additionally, Hull House, especially in its early years, was deeply involved in the welfare of children, and in providing a safe and enriching



space for children. Addams reminisced in her writings about seeing children emerge as educated young adults:

Having lived in a Settlement twenty years, I see scores of young people who have successfully established themselves in life, and in my travels in the city and outside, I am constantly cheered by greetings from the rising young lawyer, the scholarly rabbi, the successful teacher, the prosperous young matron buying clothes for her blooming children.... I once asked one of these young people...what special thing Hull-House had meant to him...he promptly replied, "It was the first house I had ever been in where books and magazines just lay around as if there were plenty of them in the world...To have people regard reading as a reasonable occupation changed the whole aspect of life to me and I began to have confidence in what I could do." (pp. 345–346)

Improving the Quality of Institutions

One of Hull Houses most lasting impacts on society is found in its commitment to improving the quality of society's shared institutions. For example, Hull House and its residents were deeply involved in amending child labor laws to increase the legal age of employment to fourteen, among other policies (Addams, 1910, pp. 199-201). They were also integrally involved in holding the city of Chicago accountable for its sanitation policy and the daily operations of the sanitation department (p. 284). City sanitation was taken very seriously, as many children died from unclean conditions in the urban center (p. 283). In fact, Addams became the garbage inspector for her ward, thus creating a stir within the political community (p. 285).

Addams's leadership provided Hull House with the title of "one of the most famous settlement houses of its time" (Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 9). Davis pointed out, "In 1891, two years after the founding of Hull House, there were 6 settlements in the United States; by 1897 there were 74. The number quickly jumped to 100, doubled to 200 in 1905, and doubled again to more than 400 by 1910" (cited in Daynes & Longo, 2004, p. 9). While the Settlement House Movement has gone out of favor, Addams's impact on experiential education has blossomed. "During the early 1990s, service learning started to spread across college campuses nationwide, and it has continued to expand ever since" (Hollander & Saltmarsh, 2000). The following section details contemporary service-learning by discussing the debate regarding service-learning's definition and benefits found for students, primarily students in higher education settings.



SERVICE-LEARNING

Hollander and Saltmarsh (2000) state, "Service learning is not a recent phenomenon or an educational fad; it has a rich history rooted in the transformative education and social ideals of people like John Dewey and Jane Addams" (New Solutions, para. 5). Valerius and Hamilton observe, "Service learning can be defined as the practice of students becoming involved in their community in order to utilize knowledge learned in the classroom and to gain opportunities for learning through experience" (cited in Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004, p. 205). Dipadova-Stocks (2005) points out that "service-learning allows faculty and students to address what matters most in their efforts: what kind of people our students become and what kind of effectiveness they will demonstrate as leaders" (p. 352). Despite these accessible definitions, debate regarding the details of service-learning has ensued.

Service-learning has increased on college campuses over the last thirty to forty years; however, debate about the definition of service-learning has loomed large over institutions (Kezar & Rhodes, 2001, p. 151). The question is whether service-learning is facilitated exclusively by faculty and conducted in tandem with course content, or whether community service opportunities facilitated by student affairs practitioners qualify as service-learning as well (pp. 156–157). The debate stems from the distinction between affective and cognitive development (p. 154) and is beyond the scope of this paper; however, there has been movement in the academy to view the student experience more holistically (Love & Love, 1995, p. 21). Nevertheless, it is understood that "programs based in student affairs generally emphasize psychosocial, moral, leadership, and citizenship development, together with honing practical skills and developing students' appreciation of individual differences and communities" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 18).

Morton (1995) describes service as a continuum, the continuum being charity at one end and social change on the other end. For Morton, the continuum is imagined "not as a flat line, but as a series of ranges bounded by investment in relationship building and commitment to understanding and addressing the root causes of problems" (p. 21). Further, Morton sees three related community service paradigms: charity, project, and transformation, each with its own worldview, problem statement, and agenda for change (p. 24); if done well, Morton asserts, "all three paradigms lead ultimately toward the transformation of an individual within a community, and toward the transformation of the communities themselves" (p. 29).



In an effort to clarify the types of service-learning, Jacoby (1996) uses Sigmon's typologies of service learning: (1) "service-LEARNING, which implies that learning goals are primary and service outcomes secondary"; (2) "SERVICE-learning, in which the service agenda is central and the learning secondary"; (3) "service learning, in which the absence of the hyphen indicates that the two are viewed as completely separate from each other"; and (4) "SERVICE-LEARNING, in which service and learning goals are of equal weight and the hyphen is essential" (pp. 5–6). Given these typologies; disputes between what constitutes true service-learning are minimized. Jacoby and Associates (1996) "take the firm stance that service-learning is both curricular and cocurricular, because all learning does not occur in the classroom" (p. 6). Additionally, service-learning is a philosophy of "human growth and purpose, a social vision, an approach to community and a way of knowing" (p. 23).

With these variations of service-learning in mind, another way of viewing service-learning programs is provided by Williams and Gilchrist (2004):

Service-learning programs are distinguished from other experiential approaches by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service while pledging equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. This two-tiered equilibrium is achieved when the service-learning program adequately ensures reciprocity of service and learning—where both the service informs the learning and the learning informs the service. (p. 87)

To clarify further, Jacoby (1996) points out that if such programs "include the fundamental components of reflection and reciprocity, which distinguish service-learning from other community service and volunteer programs," they are indeed practicing service-learning (p. 6). Jacoby (1996) stresses that "if service learning is to be central rather than marginal it must be integrated into academic and co-curricular practice" (p. 19); this integration may in effect remove the element of voluntary participation. The differences between voluntary participation and required participation are beyond the scope of this paper. However, in defense of requiring service, Metz and Youniss (2003) found that high school students who were required to complete forty hours of community service before graduation raised their intentions to participate in community service after their forty hours had been completed. The researchers note, "There is no evidence that the requirement turned students off to service, but quite a bit of support for the notion that required service was a positive motivating force" (p. 285). When comparing



volunteering and community service with service-learning, the important distinction regarding service-learning is the opportunity that students have to use and gain skills in the “real world” (Schmidt et al., p. 206).

Benefits of Service-Learning

Due to the variations in the definitions of service-learning and its intersections with other forms of volunteerism and community service on campuses, the task of teasing out relevant research is challenging. However, because service-learning is a subcategory of community service, the benefits of community service can be extended to service-learning. Astin and Sax (1998) point out that community service involvement could enable students to:

1. Increase their civic responsibility (“students become more strongly committed to helping others, serving their communities, promoting racial understanding, doing volunteer work, and working for nonprofit organization”) (p. 256);
2. Increase their academic development (“participation in education-related service enhances the student’s college GPA, general knowledge, knowledge of a field or discipline, and aspirations for advanced degrees and is also associated with increased time devoted to homework and studying and increased contact with faculty”) (p. 257);
3. Develop life skills (“understanding community problems, knowledge of different races and cultures, acceptance of different races/cultures, and interpersonal skills”) (p. 259);
4. Increase their satisfaction (through “leadership opportunities, relevance of course work to everyday life, and preparation for future career”) (p. 259).

Additionally, Astin, Vogelgesang, Ideda, and Yee (2000) report positive effects of participation in service-learning to include:

1. Academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills);
2. Values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding);
3. Self-efficacy;
4. Leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills);



5. Choice of a service career;
6. Plans to participate in service after college. (p. ii)

In an effort to explore the developmental effects of the various forms of service-learning, Armstrong (2004) identified three types of service-learning: co-curricular, academically based, and alternative spring break trips. In short, this study using the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment, found “significant developmental differences among the three service-learning pedagogies” (p. 2). In fact, students involved in co-curricular service-learning demonstrated the largest gains in psychosocial development compared with the other types of service-learning (pp. 2–3). Furthermore, other well-designed service-learning programs have the ability to deepen student learning and promote student development, which is precisely why such programs are located on college campuses (McEwen, 1996, p. 53).

A study conducted by Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) titled “The Impact of Service-Learning on College Students” incorporated data from more than 1,500 college students at twenty different colleges and universities. From this information, the researchers found several differences between students who chose service-learning and those who did not: Those who chose service-learning scored higher on all scales except for valuing attaining great wealth. These scales included citizenship confidence, citizenship values, personal values, citizenship skills, perceptions of social justice, and close relationship to at least one family member (p. 8). Additionally, Eyler et al. found that “participation in service-learning has a small but significant impact on many outcome measures over the course of a semester” (p. 11)—outcomes such as citizenship confidence, student values, skills, and perceptions of social justice (pp. 11–13).

McKenna and Rizzo found that in addition to self-reports that indicated that students understood others better and increased their civic-mindedness as a result of engaging in service-learning, students also expressed an overwhelming increase in their understanding of themselves (cited in Schmidt et al., 2004, p. 207). Schmidt et al. (2004) also report on often-overlooked benefits of service-learning to the academic institution: Service-learning initiatives are serving to increase student engagement across campuses; service-learning can increase students’ perceptions of their institutions; and by supporting such initiatives through extracurricular activities, efforts by faculty to engage students in such activities are minimized (pp. 206–207).



This section has provided a nuanced look at the definition of service-learning and highlighted current literature regarding its many benefits.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper has provided a literature-based exploration of service-learning, especially as it relates to institutions of higher education, it has provided a description of servant-leadership, and has linked the two practices through the Settlement House Movement, particularly with Hull House and the work of Jane Addams and her many associates. In detailing service-learning and servant-leadership in this way the aim of the paper has been to provide evidence of the philosophical connection between service-learning and servant-leadership. In doing so, offering an accessible historical example of how each can be done, in tandem and in support of one another.

Further, in considering Vaill's (1998) challenge regarding the shaping of servant-leaders, it is my hope that the previous section regarding the many benefits of service-learning offers evidence that institutions of higher education are indeed making strides toward intentionally developing servant-leaders. Such institutions are utilizing service-learning and other forms of service as a mechanism for social justice as well. It is my view that those involved in designing service-learning missions and programs revisit the lessons from the Settlement House Movement and Addams's reflections. In doing so, they may find further philosophical connections between service-learning and servant-leadership.

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