The ethics of service: a new approach to service learning

Jonathan C. Zur

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The Ethics of Service: A New Approach to Service Learning
by
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in
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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCING A NEW MODEL OF SERVICE

The media are fond of covering “feel good” stories, describing acts of community service that uplift their audience. Generally, these reports profile a particular project that is usually short-term, such as a clean-up effort or the building of a new house or facility. Journalists will interview the volunteer and describe, in detail, the lengths to which the person have gone in order to successfully help others in need. At the end of the report, the recipient of the service may have the chance to say a few brief words, which usually amounts to a statement of appreciation. The report then ends, making the service seem like a simple project undertaken by a committed citizen to support someone in need. In this simple model, the benefits are portrayed as obvious, and there appear to be no problematic aspects.

Far too often, such narratives of service focus primarily (or even solely) on the individuals engaged in service, considering their stories and how and why they were motivated to help. Even some definitions of service learning are one-sided and imbalanced. According to the Virginia Campus Compact, 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.”¹ The problem with such a perspective is that it does not take into account at least three other central parties: the university (or supporting institution), the client being served, and the service site or sponsoring organization. Responsible service would take into account each of these stakeholders, as depicted in this new model of service:

As depicted by the arrows in Figure 1 that extend in every direction, ethical service takes into consideration all parties, is flexible enough to deal with all situations, and benefits or has no net effect everyone without harming anyone. By using such a model and making a fuller ethical evaluation of the act of service, the interests and well-being of each party can be considered. None of the four parties are able to be removed from the moral evaluation of the service experience, and thus each party must be considered for both its needs and interests. Considering service based upon current models (such as those used by journalists) allow one or more stakeholders to be privileged over others. In the new model, it is the responsibility of each party to consider its “bottom line,” or the point at which an act of service is no longer ethically responsible.

Several areas must be considered to fully understand the implications and scope of this new model of service. In particular, attention must be paid to self-interest and how each party can negotiate between servility and selfishness and exist comfortably at healthy self-love. Additional consideration must be given to how each party evaluates the success of the service in terms of both ethics and effectiveness. The three places for evaluation are each party’s intention, its level of preparedness, and the outcome of the service. Finally, the dilemma of mandatory service must be considered, with the implications for each party being analyzed and developed. Using the new model of service that takes into account the volunteer, the client, the service site,
and the university as a basis, the ethics of service can be responsibly analyzed and better understood. Through such a process, each of the parties can find ways to benefit by looking at their partnership through a new lens.

The Volunteer

For purposes of this paper, primary focus on the volunteer will be given to those who are students in an institution of higher education. This person is most likely to serve in one of three contexts: as a requirement for a class, as a member of an organization or student group, or individually. Motivation differs in each of those three contexts and understanding those motives helps to predict the nature of the relationship to and the outcomes for the other three groups. Of course, every case within these contexts can be different; there can be several motives for taking a class or joining an organization. Additional factors, such as the correlation between the service and classroom learning, the degree of practicality and applicability of the experience, the quality of opportunities for training and reflection, and the level of personal safety all influence the performance of the student engaged in service.

In the mind of many, the bottom line for the student doing service for a class is learning, and not necessarily positive or productive service that benefits a client. In this view, a student can feel successful about doing service when he or she leaves better understanding an ethical dilemma or a broader social issue. No benefit to the client is necessary for that service to be evaluated as a success! That is not to say that the student cannot or will not engage in meaningful and productive service that benefits the three other parties; instead, the reality is that the well-being of the client is often not as much of a priority as is the student’s learning. A shift in the current mindset about service to one that not only considers why the volunteer wants to serve but also why there are people in need of service is needed. Doing so will allow the
volunteer to more constructively support the recipient of the service and empower that person. Ideally, to become self-sufficient. Further development in understanding the role and priorities of the volunteer will take place in the forthcoming discussion of mandatory service.

An additional consideration for the student volunteer is his or her personal safety while at the service site or with certain clients. Such safety refers to that which is objective rather than subjective, meaning that it is not biased by racism, media views, or a “cult of security.” The student would be irresponsible to put himself or herself in a position of undue or excessive risk by volunteering at a location that is legitimately unsafe. Ironically, those areas that are most unsafe and unstable are generally the ones most in need of service. However, a cut-off point in the new framework for whether or not a volunteer serves must be his or her safety. As discussed below, Immanuel Kant’s idea of self-duty is relevant here because he would argue that the volunteer must not put himself or herself in a position of servility. Responsibility there lies as much with the volunteer and the university as it does with the service site. Though safety is a necessary condition, the ideal service situation would allow the volunteer to do far more than feel safe; ideally, he or she should learn, feel accomplished, and observe success.

The University

In order for the volunteer to have a positive experience, considerable responsibility lies with the university as the sponsoring institution. The university has a major interest in the service experience that takes place on a few levels: first, it is supporting the personal growth of the student, a priority in line with the educational mission of virtually all institutions of higher education. Supporting service learning initiatives allows the university to fulfill its responsibility to facilitate both the intellectual and character development of its students. Such support could be symbolically represented in the university’s mission and public statements but could also take
the form of financial allocations for service learning programs and faculty grants that offer appropriate training, application, and reflection. A second interest for the university lies in positive town-gown relations and press. While that necessarily must be a secondary priority to the educational benefit to students, this interest still brings with it some ethical questions. Among them are: is service that goes unpublicized more ethical than the one that is cataloged as part of a university brochure?; What impact does the university's perceived interest have on student interest in service?; and, Has the university gone astray when the service undertaken by its students is used as a means to better press and public relations? A university's motives will invariably contribute to the success or failure of the service experience. An excess of selfishness that focuses solely on the well-being of the university runs the risk of doing far great harm to each of the other three parties, thereby tainting the experience. A balance must exist between healthy pride and excessive self-promotion. Such a balance of self-interest and other-regarding interest will be discussed below. Ultimately, by considering these and other questions, the university will be better able to analyze its motives and support the best experience possible for its students.

While helping students to learn is the obvious goal and priority of the university, one of its bottom-line commitments must be to keep the student safe. The university thus has an obligation to work with the service sites to assure that appropriate safety measures are in place. To assure that a student is appropriately trained for the service experience, the university must work with the volunteer so that he or she understands ethical considerations of service and has formal opportunities for reflection. Other constituencies within the university must also be considered, including professors, administrators, alumni, and, in the case of public institutions, elected officials. The faculty must obviously have primary obligation to students, but also have a
commitment to the institution and maintaining its positive reputation. Administrators must justify why alumni donations and taxpayer funds are being allocated to service learning programs. By investing in service learning programs, other valuable and worthy areas are being passed over. A value judgment must be made about whether or not service learning fits in with other priorities and that is not always an easy battle to win. However, universities that are committed to their students will offer such opportunities because of the pedagogical benefit that will be discussed later.

**The Service Site**

The service site is generally a not-for-profit, community-based organization. Sites take on many forms depending on the financial standing, the community, the size of the staff, and the needs of the clients. They can be a part of a national network (such as the American Red Cross and the YMCA), or they can be more local (such as Homeward and CARITAS, both Richmond-based homelessness services and advocacy organizations.) The work that is done by volunteers at either type of service site generally takes on one of two forms: direct or indirect. Direct service is that which is hands-on with clients and is most often associated with tutoring or mentoring programs, though others, such as visitation and translation services, are also direct. Indirect service is the “behind the scenes” work, including filing, database entry, and administrative duties. Often, student volunteers and universities prefer the direct service to indirect because it provides more tangible and visible results. However, the indirect work is just as important for the service site to serve its clients. In addition, those service sites most in need are the ones who rarely can provide continuous supervision and direction for the students engaged in service. That guidance is the very thing students require when serving and it is that for which most formal service learning programs look when selecting potential service sites.
This supervision gives student volunteers a better understanding of the reason for their work and the sense of the benefits that are resulting. It also helps to make sure that the students are contributing in positive and productive ways, and their safety and well-being are not being compromised in the process of serving.

Far too frequently, volunteers who are not pleased with their service experience simply leave. While it is ironic to criticize volunteers, such a response does not show the level of investment necessary of a responsible and properly motivated volunteer. University service learning programs are sometimes guilty of removing a service site from its bank of potential organizations because one or more students have reported a “negative” experience. While the volunteer should not put himself or herself in a position of danger and should not be irresponsive to his or her own interests (especially to learn), he or she does have a responsibility, with the university’s guidance, to look at the bigger picture and understand why the clients are in need and what role the service site plays in the community. The site must work with the student to facilitate a meaningful experience that is catered towards the volunteer’s talents, but both parties must be flexible and understanding of the needs and desires of the other party.

**The Client**

Last, but certainly not least, in this discussion of the four parties in a service experience is the client or recipient of the service. His or her role is particularly interesting. This person is going to the service site in the hopes of receiving some form of aid, which can either be long-term or short-term. Among the issues worthy of consideration in relation to the client are why the person is in the position of need, how much personal investment he or she places in the process of service, how not to be overcome by a mindset of taking, and if and how one should go about repaying his or her debt (in both the tangible and metaphoric senses.) Without a client in need,
there is no reason for service. Unfortunately, though, input from the client regarding how that service should take place is rarely considered. How much say should the client have when he or she is benefiting from another person’s generosity? Guaranteeing the voice and agency of the clients is crucial for their dignity and for the overall dignity of the experience. That condition is only the first in many that the volunteer, the service site, and the university must work to meet in supporting the client.

Ultimately, all such efforts must go towards the empowerment of the recipient of the service. Leaving the client dependent on the service site, the student volunteer, or the university does not truly help him or her in the short term or the long term. The client must have the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency, and the other three parties must offer support to achieve that desired end. Anything less creates an unhealthy and unproductive dependence that only serves to perpetuate the need for the service site and for the service learning programs. While there presently is a definite need for such programs and they must exist into the foreseeable future, the end goal must be to establish a society without extreme social need. Obviously, in that case, the recipient no longer has dependence on the service that he or she is receiving. What, then, happens to the benefit received by the site, the university and the volunteer from the service experience? Some emergency aid will always be necessary, which will allow some benefits to be retained. In other cases, different priorities will naturally take precedence so that none of the parties have a need for the service and their balance between self-interest and other-regarding interest manifests itself in a new way.
CHAPTER TWO:
MAINTAINING HEALTHY SELF-INTEREST IN SERVICE

Deeply rooted within the inquiry into why people serve is the question of how self-interest and altruism can coexist. Thomas Hurka establishes the dichotomy between those two ideas by stating that "...self-interest is the love for itself of one's own good, and altruism is the love for itself of another's good."\(^2\) A new continuum of self-interest (as shown in Figure 2) breaks an absolute division between self-interest and other-regarding interest by taking into account many different elements of leadership, ethics, and community. The three points on the continuum are servility, healthy self-love, and selfishness. In order to understand the ethics of service, each of these three points must be explained and developed. An excess of self-interest is selfishness, and such behavior can be observed by any of the four constituents in a service experience: the volunteer, the client, the university, or the service site. A healthy and proper level of self-interest includes self-love that is constrained and moderated by self-command. Servility represents an inadequate level of self-interest, and it is based on one party putting itself in a moral position below another in a way that is unhealthy. Many philosophers, economists, and researchers offer ideas and suggestions about the relationship between self-interest and other-regarding interest. In particular, Robert Greenleaf, Immanuel Kant, Robert Putnam, Adam Smith, and Amartya Sen all provide insights into the continuum of self-interest and how it affects

![Figure 2: A Continuum of Self-Interest](image)

a service experience in both ethical and unethical ways.

**Servant Leadership**

Robert Greenleaf develops the concept of the servant leader as a new framework from which to look at leadership. Basing his idea on the character of Leo in Herman Hesse’s *Journey to the East*, Greenleaf argues that “the great leader is seen as servant first.”[^3] Such a leader “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”[^4] Greenleaf privileges such a person over one who is leader first and who therefore does not have as much consideration for other. He goes so far in his praise of servant leaders as to argue that they:

... may stand alone, largely without the support of their culture, as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count – wherever they are involved. This brings them, as individuals, constantly to examine the assumptions they live by. Thus, their leadership by example sustains trust.[^5]

In making servant leaders seem so alone in their struggle to preserve the caring side of humanity, Greenleaf almost makes martyrs of such individuals. Unfortunately, his definition and description do not clearly articulate the moral code for such a person to follow.

A loose interpretation of servant leadership, as it is defined and understood by Greenleaf, could include those individuals who engage in suicide bombings or other forms of murder to both self and others in a struggle for a particular cause. Such people are often alone or a part of the minority population. They are attempting to help their people “…become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous…”[^6] Also important, arguably, to both Greenleaf’s servant leader and those who engage in suicide bombings is their concern for “the effect on the least privileged in

[^4]: Greenleaf, p. 7.
society; will he benefit, or, at least, will he not be further deprived?" It is extremely important for the ethical rules of the servant leader to be further developed regarding his or her behavior in working on behalf of others. As long as such a person can uphold his position as a servant leader by killing oneself or another, the integrity of this type of leadership is diminished. The servant leader without ethical guidelines runs the risk of bringing harm to both self and others. Some such rules and requisites will be discussed later.

A second challenge for the idea of servant leadership is to assure that the person does not become servile in nature, putting the potential leader in a position of servitude so low that she cannot uphold her own dignity. Norman Bowie speculates that Immanuel Kant would have mixed views of servant leadership for that very reason. On the one hand, there would be benefit in that the leader would not be inappropriately using his or her followers for his or her own gain. At the same time, Bowie writes that:

I do not think that Kant would be on the list of endorsees [of servant leadership.] Given the emphasis on autonomy in Kant’s philosophy and given the connotations of the word ‘servant,’ I think we must make sure that the servant leader is not allowing himself or herself to be used as merely a means to the goals of those he or she serves.

While Greenleaf believes that the servant leader is one who stays in touch with followers and guides them without a need for the accolades and attention often given to a leader, Bowie brings up the important reality that placing oneself in a position below others could be unhealthy and detrimental to the person engaged in service. The word “below” in this context means that the person is being actively forced or willingly enters into a position of subservience, and, thus, the volunteer’s dignity is being harmed in the process of trying to help someone else. Kant likens

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7 Greenleaf, The Servant as Leader, p. 7.
such a situation to a denial of one’s self-duty. Thomas Hill develops his perception of the Kantian view by stating that:

The servile person displays this absence of respect not directly by acting contrary to his own rights but indirectly by acting as if his rights were nonexistent or insignificant. An arrogant person ignores the rights of others, thereby arrogating for himself a higher status than he is entitled to; a servile person denies his own rights, thereby assuming a lower position than he is entitled to.\(^9\)

Hill uses a series of examples to note how self-inflicted servility is harmful to a person and to society, whether or not the person is conscious of that harm. In one illustration, he describes a woman – a servile wife – who is essentially brainwashed into believing that her role and responsibility is to support the every desire of her husband. Even though she believes that she is fulfilling her duty to another, she is concurrently overlooking and ignoring her obligation to respect and care for herself. Hill argues Kant’s point that she has a duty to love herself, and, for that reason, the woman must avoid being placed in a position of servility. Society also has a certain obligation to work against an environment that encourages women to act in this way. On the surface, one’s avoidance of servility may seem to be focused solely on the self, but Kant would argue that it would actually fall more under the idea of healthy self-love.

Because Kant also concerns himself solely with the intent of an act and not the outcome, an individual would only be expected to try to maintain self-love. The person would still be considered ethical if he or she attempted to maintain self-love but ended up in a position of servility. In that case, outside factors (which will be discussed in more detail later) affect the service experience in unforeseen ways. Most likely, such placement in servility would be due to the bad acts of others, such as Hill’s example of society pressuring women to become servile. If the individual engaged in service still upholds a respectable amount of self-love, an outcome of servility is less destructive if it does result. In considering service, a person must therefore

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attempt to work on behalf of clients and maintain a healthy level of self-love and self-command; failure to achieve benefit for either party, if not consciously intended, is not as harmful as intentional preference to either the volunteer or the client being served.

Greenleaf counters this possible critique by Kantian scholars with his belief that the servant leader is actually making a positive contribution to society by maintaining a status below others. He writes that “the servant-leader is functionally superior because he is closer to the ground – he hears things, sees things, knows things, and his intuitive insight is exceptional. Because of this he is dependable and trusted.”

Because the servant leader takes on the responsible role of helping and supporting others, Greenleaf sees his contributions as being greater than those who benefit from their service or receive accolades for their work. Whereas Kant would criticize such instrumental calculations and would say that placing oneself in a position of servility is irresponsible. Greenleaf counters that not doing so is actually the irresponsible action and maintains that the servant still has responsibility to himself or herself, as will be discussed later.

Social Capital and Community

Robert Putnam addresses the issue of self-interest less directly, but still has commentary that is pertinent to the development of the continuum. His connection to self-interest comes from his discussion of why people are committed to each another and support one another in acts of service. In Making Democracy Work, Putnam defines social capital as “… features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.”

In comparing it to its physical and human counterparts, Putnam notes of social capital in Bowling Alone that “whereas physical capital refers to physical

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10 Greenleaf, The Servant as Leader, p. 32
objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals. Social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.”

Putnam presumes that one of the main reasons people are engaged in service is for the communal bonds that can be formed. Putnam writes that social capital is at least partly founded upon “…a norm of generalized reciprocity: I’ll do this for you without expecting anything specific back from you, in the confident expectation that someone else will do something for me down the road.”

While there is an indirect kind of personal interest and benefit from serving, his idea would best fall under healthy self-love on the continuum of self-interest, because there is an appropriate balance of interest for both self and other. In the context of service learning, the student could serve in an effort to benefit the community, while he or she is at the same time receiving an education. To help make that exchange a reality, it is the responsibility of the individual engaged in service to maintain a balance and work to prevent either servility or selfishness from becoming prominent.

Both Putnam and Greenleaf are realistic about the fact that without having concern for oneself, one cannot responsibly offer support to another. As an extension, one must also naturally expect others to have concern for themselves, but the potential for selfishness is moderated by an expectation that they will also support others in need. In the view of both authors, then, healthy communities are grounded in healthy self-love. Greenleaf’s idea of community concurs with such an assessment. He writes that “Community is… any gathering of persons in which the incidence of people caring for people is high, in which the more able and

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less able effectively serve each other.” Recognizing the possibility that an idea of generalized reciprocity is inevitable in communities, Greenleaf continues by writing that:

I think of responsibility as beginning with a concern for self, to receive that inward growth that gives serenity of spirit without which someone cannot truly say, ‘I am free.’ One moves, then, to a response to one’s environment, whatever it is, so as to make a pertinent force of one’s concern for one’s neighbor – as a member of a family, a work group, a community, a world society.

A responsible balance of self and other-regarding interest represents an ideal in the continuum of self-interest and in developing strong, caring communities.

**Self-Interest and Other-Regarding Interest**

Kelly Rogers offers an additional perspective in the discussion of self-interest. She argues that establishing a dichotomy between self-interest and other-interest is counterproductive and unrealistic. In making this claim, she discounts many of the premises behind the continuum of self-interest. Instead, she would likely state that varying degrees of the middle point of healthy self-love exist, but that true, independent selfishness and servility are impossible. Because it is impossible for humans to be completely, absolutely, and entirely focused on oneself at the expense of another, or completely, absolutely, and entirely focused on another person at the expense of oneself, true servility and selfishness are impossible. Rogers writes that:

Requiring unself-interested concern for other people borders on the oxymoronic: it tells one to act toward them in a concerned – i.e., interested – way, but not to be motivated by that concern, i.e., interest... Seeing it as involving both the self and others yields a far richer conception of other-concern than is possible when one tries to ignore or block out the connection between benevolence and one’s other values and interests.

Adam Smith would agree with Rogers that a separation between self-interest and other-interest is artificial and unhelpful. He argues that people who are pleased with and proud of their behavior

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15 Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, p. 293
and actions will be more invested in their work and will put forth greater effort because of an innate desire to be praised. It is therefore ethically necessary for a person to consciously serve others and be passionate about doing so. While Smith would want a person to fulfill his or her duty to others and be invested in doing so, he also believes that there is an intrinsic bond that exists between humans. His idea bears some similarity to Putnam’s generalized reciprocity, but Smith places more weight on subconscious human connection. Guiding such a bond is what Smith calls the impartial spectator. Whereas Putnam’s generalized reciprocity seems to be a more conscious or active choice, the impartial spectator subconsciously and inherently instills a sense of community and fellow-feeling. The Adam Smith character in Jonathan B. Wight’s *Saving Adam Smith* notes that:

> This impartial spectator’s view is critical for creating a conscience. When I look at my possible actions from the view of another, I learn that while I may be ‘number one’ to myself, I am not ‘number one’ to others who don’t share my egoistic partiality to myself. Moreover – and this part is absolutely critical – we desire not only to gain the external praise of others, we desire to gain the internal respect and praise of ourselves... we ultimately want to be worthy of our praise. We desire to be praiseworthy.17

While humans do desire praise (both internally and from others), the impartial spectator’s impact reaches far beyond personal satisfaction. Over a period of years, it will become internalized, to the point that consideration of pride or accolades does not enter the equation. Once that occurs, self-interest and other-interest are inseparable. Smith is also realistic about the possibility that a person can ignore or deny the impartial spectator, though guilt will inevitably result from such situations.

Two premises serve as the basis for Smith’s concept of the impartial spectator. The first argument is that humans have a conscience that creates self-command to offset their selfishness. James and Rassekh develop Smith’s point that:

we are endowed with many impulses, including self-love. But [Smith] maintains that we are also endowed with the capacity to exercise self-command to contain our passions when the pursuit of self-love injures other people. Self command plays a central role in Smith’s ethical system, and it is a key to understanding his interpretation of self-interest as a proper motive for individual behavior.18

A second premise of Smith's is that humans seek approval by being sympathetic with others. According to Wight, “By sympathy [Smith] mean[s] no particular emotion, either good or bad, but rather an understanding of the passions of another. It is the ‘fellow-feeling’ shared with others.”19 While there may be self-interest in the idea that one person is committed to another because of the benefits of camaraderie, it could be argued that such a benefit exists for both parties. In that case, it shares qualities with James MacGregor Burns’ idea of transforming leadership, which exists when “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.”20 Such a situation fits in that middle point of healthy self-love, since it is a middle position between servility (only supporting others) and selfishness (only supporting oneself.) A person’s regular appeal to the impartial spectator would guarantee his or her purity of motive as much as it is possible when both parties are improving so that neither selfishness nor servility dominates a person’s intent. And, if one’s intent and behavior somehow do go awry, they will be redirected by the impartial spectator in an effort to assure that they will not be repeated.

Ultimately, the issue of self-interest is not one that can be easily understood or interpreted. Some say that intent is of value, while others look at the issue based solely on the outcome. Still others see self-interest as a secondary and counter-productive issue to consider and discuss. To those people, the question of why people serve does not matter. Instead, they

19 Wight, p. 193.
focus on the interests of the other, emphasizing either the server’s interest to help or the outcomes for the one served. Adam Smith disagrees with Immanuel Kant that intent is all that matters, though he does find it to be of greater importance than outcome. In Jonathan Wight’s view, Smith believes that “…we cannot pass moral judgment solely upon the utility or disutility of an action’s outcome.” While Smith agrees with Kant that intent is a valuable consideration, value is additionally placed on the outcome. His belief is that the success or failure of an intention when carried out necessarily affects how one measures its success.

**Sympathy and Commitment**

Drawing on Smith, Amartya Sen makes an important distinction between sympathy and commitment that can help us better understand why people serve. His discussion of these two moral sentiments also helps to clarify the three points on the continuum of self-interest. Sympathy, according to Sen, refers to how a person’s welfare is affected by the welfare of others. Self-interest and other-regarding interest are not necessarily opposed. He writes that “when a person’s sense of well-being is psychologically dependent on someone else’s welfare, it is a case of sympathy; other things given, the awareness of the increase in the welfare of the other person then makes this person directly better off.” The example he uses to describe sympathy is when one is depressed while viewing misery. Sen’s idea of sympathy would most often correspond to the middle point on the continuum, as an example of healthy self-love, for the sympathetic person is concurrently interested in himself or herself and another person. However, a person could, in certain cases, be in a position of servility while having sympathy because excessive focus is placed on the recipient of the service at the expense of the welfare of the volunteer. In other words, the sympathetic person might not value other interests that should

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21 Wight, p. 177.
comprise his or her own objective welfare. It is the responsibility, then, of the person engaged in
service, to maintain some attention on the self while focusing primarily on the party in need.
The other parties also have, at varying levels, obligations to keep the volunteer at a place where
he or she will not be placed in a position of servility.

In contrast to sympathy, Amartya Sen sees commitment as "breaking the tight link
between individual welfare (with or without sympathy) and the choice of action."23 Commitment may take place when a person acts to remove some form of misery from which he
or she does not personally suffer. Sen notes that “one way of defining commitment is in terms of
a person choosing an act that he believes will yield a lower level of personal welfare to him than
an alternative that is also available to him."24 On the continuum of self-interest, commitment has
a far greater chance of falling under servility, because the individual is helping others, potentially
at the expense of himself or herself. There is the possibility that the person would end up with
healthy self-love, though it would require a certain level of preparedness to assure that the
commitment would maintain a healthy level of personal interest (as will be discussed in more
detail later). Neither sympathy nor commitment would be considered selfish, because both have
inherent interest in another person.

Applying the Four-Party Model

It is obvious that the issues of self-interest and intent versus outcome are paramount to a
consideration of the ethics of service. Using the premise that there are four main constituents in
a service experience (the volunteer, the client, the university/sponsoring agency, and the service
site), each of the four should be considered for its placement on the continuum of self-interest
and for the balance that is attained between intent and outcome. Only then can the service

23 Sen, Amartya. “Goals, Commitment, and Identity.” Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization 2, (Fall 1985),
p. 347.
experience be evaluated for its ethical contribution and worth. In thinking about the intent of the
volunteer in an act of service, a tricky dilemma arises. While selfishness could automatically be
considered unethical because it blatantly exploits the client for personal gain, both self-love and
servility can allow the service to be genuinely supporting others. However, the possibility still
exists at that point for the experience to be harmful to the individual engaged in service. Placing
the volunteer in a position of servility would not be moral, because the volunteer's own dignity is
then violated. Ultimately, the only true ethical service experience is one in which the volunteer
upholds a healthy amount of self-love and self-command. If the volunteer is willing to be servile
(either consciously or unconsciously), it is the responsibility, then, of the other parties to help
him or her reject that arrangement.

The same values also hold true for the other three parties in the service experience. If the
University puts money into a service learning program that provides educational benefit for the
students, an improved academic climate, and improved status for the service site and the client,
the greatest outcome is achieved. In contrast, should the motive be pure but the outcome
unsuccessful, the University remains ethical but should refocus the program and the funding.
However, if the University promotes service solely for selfish reasons (primarily publicity) or if
the students, site, or client are unsafe as a result of the service, that experience would be
unethical. Furthermore, if the University provides money for service programs when it cannot
uphold its other financial obligations, it is in a position of "institutional servility" that is
unhealthy because it is helping others at the expense of itself.

When considering the placement of the service site along the continuum of self-interest,
the absolute necessity shifts from helping the student volunteer learn to helping the client in need
improve his or her status. Virtually all of the other considerations would remain. Ideally, the
service site could support clients while maintaining fiscal strength. In such a case, an appropriate amount of self-love exists. If the site exploits the clients or the volunteers for the gain of the organization, or if it is unprepared or unqualified to help certain clients but attempts to do so anyway, that result is unhealthy and unethical. Either the client is harmed in that situation and is used as a means for the benefit of the organization, or a staff member is harmed because he or she is being used to present an image of organizational capacity for the service site that does not exist. Because of the challenges facing non-profit organizations, both of those examples are quite possible; the site therefore has a responsibility to avoid them and maintain a balanced commitment to itself and its clients.

The final party, the client, has potentially the biggest challenge in upholding healthy self-love on the continuum of self-interest. In many ways, the client could be placed in a position of servility and could be used by others. These are people, generally, whom society tells that they are not worthy or that they are less than full participants. The volunteer could use the client to feel good about himself or herself or could be using the client as a means to receiving a good grade on a class assignment. The university could use the client for “photo opportunities” or other public relations opportunities while overlooking their true needs. The service site could use the client in justifying their existence or by making the client need the site when that need was otherwise not there. In that case, the client is not being empowered to be self-sufficient, but is instead being placed in a position of dependence and servility. The converse is also true for the client: it would be very simple when being supported by others to become selfish. Receiving some form of positive attention could become absorbing, to the point where the client feels that he or she is deserving of other people’s time and energy and does not have to work to maintain his or her own dignity. A challenge for the client, then, is to maintain self-love while being
helped by others. The client also can contribute fully to the service exchange. Among the benefits that the client could provide are educational growth and exposure to new perspectives and life experiences.

An important distinction to make in this discussion is the reality that an intended outcome could be radically different from that which results. In that sense, the view of Adam Smith is upheld and both the intent and the outcome must be considered. If a person intends to do service for selfish reasons but ends up moving towards the point of healthy self-love, the intent is initially bad but the outcome is good. It would appear from such an experience that the individual benefited from the service by recognizing that consideration for both self and others must be present. The same would hold true for a person who begins in servility and moves toward self-love. In cases where healthy self-love is the result, the outcome has significance and the service is ethical. However, in a case where self-love is the intent, but servility is the result because of unforeseen negative acts of others, the motive is still ethical, so the overall experience would still be ethical. Of course, such a result is undesirable and appropriate measures must be taken to avoid it even if it can be considered pure. When self-love is the intent but selfishness results, the same positive intent exists. The person in that case intends to support others but is left only desiring to help himself. The influence of others again likely affected the volunteer. In that case, the intent is good, but the outcome and overall experience are unethical. Ultimately, though, because of the intent, the experience is ethical. Further discussion of the intent and outcome separate of self-interest can be found in chapter three.

Further Discussion

By understanding the relationship of other-regarding interest and self-interest as foundational to ethical service, much can be gained from the thinkers discussed in this paper.
Greenleaf and his servant leader attempt to dignify the act of serving others, though he leaves great room for exploitation without further ethical specification about servant leadership. Kant (as interpreted through Bowie and Hill) would discount Greenleaf's servant leader for not fulfilling responsibility to oneself. Kant would also argue that sole emphasis must be placed on the intent, which is contrary to both Greenleaf and Putnam, who both offer theories that attend primarily to the outcome. Smith believes that humans can (and regularly do) inherently act with healthy self-love and he accepts the idea that a person can harbor some level of appropriate self-interest. Expanding on Smith, Sen's distinction between sympathy and commitment shows the delicate divide between servility and self-love. Ultimately, the major conclusion that comes from all of these thinkers is that self-interest and other-interest are both extremely important and are not mutually exclusive, and each party has an obligation to itself and to the others. With this understanding, the four parties involved in a service experience can each be further analyzed and developed to clarify their placement on the continuum of self-interest and their role in developing ethical service.

CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATING SERVICE LEARNING

When considering how to evaluate the success of a service experience, the student volunteer, university, and service site often give most attention to the short-term improvement of the client and the educational benefit to the student. However, the immediate outcomes of service for client and student are only two of many factors that must be considered in assessing its moral worthiness. Three broad areas of evaluation must be held up against each of the four parties: the student volunteer, the client, the service site, and the university. These three areas are the intent of each party, the degree to which each party is prepared, and both the short and
long-term outcomes for the parties. Many ethical considerations regarding how and why people serve will emerge from the ensuing discussion, but one basic standard remains: no harm should be brought upon any party, and the client should in some way improve in status. Each area (intent, preparedness, and outcome) plays an important role in meeting that requirement.

A Consideration of Intent

Before holding each of the parties up to the three areas of evaluation (intent, preparedness, and outcome), those areas must first be developed and analyzed. The concept of intent is central to much philosophical thought. Immanuel Kant’s argument that the intention of an action is all that matters morally is relevant here. He writes that “[a] good will is good not because of what it effects or accomplishes, nor because of its fitness to attain some proposed end; it is good only through its willing, i.e., it is good in itself.” Kant goes on to write that:

...there are many persons who are so sympathetically constituted that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in spreading joy around them and can rejoice in the satisfaction of others as their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however dutiful and amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth. In Kant’s view, one should do that which is good solely because it is the right thing to do; if helping someone else is good, then it should be done. To gain pleasure from such an action as a tangential outcome is not a bad thing as long as the action is being undertaken for the right reasons. However, if pleasure or fulfillment for the individual serving is the sole intent, then the service experience is impure and immoral. Mindfulness and intentionality are therefore central to Kant’s idea of how one should behave.

One question left by Kant’s theory is how one should best apply a person’s good intentions. It is very simple for a person to want to do something helpful or to want to see

26 Kant, p. 99.
someone improve in status, but that does not mean that he or she is equipped to bring about that positive change. Kant seems to believe that if a person intends to do good, the appropriate next steps will naturally fall into place. Unfortunately, that assumption just is not always true. An individual can intend to help an underprivileged child learn skills in mathematics, but if that person does not know the specific lessons to teach or if that person is not equipped to be tutoring the student, the result could be quite negative. Thus, preparation and consequences are worthy of moral attention. There is also the possibility that a person could intend to help but could end up leaving the recipient of the service in a worsened state because of a lack of skill. Something more must be coupled with good intentions to make sure that the entire experience is positive. Further discussion of that need will take place in the section on preparedness.

A Consideration of Outcome

John Stuart Mill disagrees with Kant’s point that intent is all that matters and instead believes that humans should act in a way that provides the greatest good for the greatest number of people. His theory of Utilitarianism prioritizes the outcome of an action over the intent in terms of the greatest good. Mill promotes the idea that one should live a life “…exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality.” With that perspective as a premise, a person should engage in service with concern for an improved outcome. However, because the greatest good is also the emphasis, it would seem that, in Mill’s frame, one of the four parties could be harmed or put in a lower position as long as the other three benefit (or increase enjoyment) in the end. That possibility brings with it a serious ethical dilemma, especially if the party that is harmed is the client (the person on whom the service should be most focused.) Thus, a problematic feature of Mill’s theory is that he

allows the outcome of an action to benefit some parties but not all. In this case, for instance, the volunteer, university, and the service site could improve in status, while the client remains unimproved at best, and he or she could potentially have a worsened condition. To go into an act of service knowing that a realistic outcome could harm the client is irresponsible, and yet is an allowable possibility under Utilitarianism. One requisite for ethical service learning is that the service must not harm any party, and should, at the very least, help the status of the client for whom the act is taking place. Many cases allowable under Mill’s Utilitarianism do not meet that minimal standard. Further, Mill’s frame includes the possibility that the volunteer will put himself or herself in a position of servility. That situation is also problematic, for it hurts the person who is engaged in the service in the hopes of helping everyone else. As with Hill’s point drawn from Kant, a certain level of self-interest must be present that keeps the volunteer from being placed in a position of servility. In leaving open either possibility that the client or the volunteer could be harmed, Utilitarianism is not a solid foundation on which to base a service learning program.

Another application of Mill’s view that is cause for concern is that a timeframe for measuring the greatest good is not directly offered. Given that a service project can net short term benefits but can be detrimental in the long term (or vice-versa), the period during which the greatest good is assessed must be clarified. The way in which outside parties often evaluate service is based upon the immediate aid to the client or student; that is, they evaluate whether the recipient improves his or her status on a particular pre-determined measure in the near-term and also consider whether a student has learned the intended lesson for that unit of one course. However, one who focuses solely upon that instant progress does not account for the greater benefit or detriment that can result in further down the line through either intended or unintended
consequences. At the very least, Mill’s Utilitarianism should clarify at which point the greatest good is measured or how short and long term good are both considerations. Further, from the framework of ethical service developed in this paper, one should not measure “success” of outcome until far after the experience.

A Consideration of Preparedness

Ivan Illich further addresses, albeit indirectly, these two problems with Mill and Utilitarianism in his address “To Hell With Good Intentions.” In doing so, he provides a foundation upon which to develop the concept and idea of preparedness as central to the service experience. Illich condemns those who engage in service with the intent to do good but who, in doing so, do not consider the long-term ramifications for the recipients of their actions. He also goes on to criticize those volunteers who offer short-term benefit (such as construction of a house or road) without considering the long-term needs of the community. Looking particularly at cultural and socio-economic difference on an international level, Illich tells his American audience that “you cannot help being ultimately vacationing salesmen for the middle-class ‘American Way of Life,’ since that is really all you know.”28 By working with communities out of one’s circle, American volunteers give to those “aided” populations a false sense of what can be when they have no capacity to achieve that ideal or vision. Illich criticizes American service trips to Mexico, arguing that:

All you will do in a Mexican village is create disorder. At best, you can try to convince Mexican girls that they should marry a young man who is self-made, rich, a consumer, and as disrespectful of tradition as one of you. At worst, in your ‘community development’ spirit, you might just create enough problems to get someone shot after your vacation ends and you rush back to your middle-class neighborhoods where your friends make jokes about ‘spics’ and ‘wetbacks.’29

29 Illich, p. 318.
Illich implores his audience to stop engaging in what is actually selfish behavior by taking service trips, instead urging them to focus on their own local communities that are also in need. By working with the population that is closer to home, the volunteer has the opportunity (if he or she takes it) to gain adequate, culturally specific preparations and to provide appropriate long-term support. Otherwise, volunteers are simply unprepared to help those outside communities with whom they cannot relate and with whom they are unable to support over time. The intent of the volunteer in this case may be good, but the outcome (possibly in the short-term and definitely in the long-term) can harm the so-called recipient (or beneficiary) of service.

Preparedness, as Illich points out through his criticism, is a critical mediating element in the intent-versus-outcome debate. In the context of service learning, preparation on the part of the volunteer, university, and service site means being both equipped to support the client's immediate needs and also having an understanding of the greater social policies and structure that contribute to creating those needs. More specifically, these parties must take action to help the client in a particular and measurable area of need. Preparation additionally requires that necessary steps must be taken to meet those needs in both the short-term and the long-term. If a person intends to do good but is unprepared, it is far less likely that he or she will be successful. Therefore, the judgment can be made that it is indeed an ethical imperative to be adequately prepared before engaging in service. Indeed, preparedness is one indicator of intent, so, if one prepares first, then one intends to have a certain outcome. A person can be forced to prepare (in a classroom setting) without intending to help someone else. However, one is still able to help the recipient of the service because he or she has been prepared. In that sense, preparedness overcomes the lack of good movies. Conversely, one can intend to do something good but not take appropriate preparatory measures. In that case, the fate of the recipient of the service is
grounded in sheer luck. Preparedness and intent combined hold the strongest possibility for success. Should a negative outcome result from a situation of good intentions and good preparation, it is the result of outside, uncontrollable circumstances. In that sense, a Kantian view still has relevance, in that the outcome is of lesser importance, while the intent – expanded to include preparation as an element of genuine intent – is what matters ethically. In the majority of cases in which both preparation and good intent are present, though, the outcome will be positive for all of the parties involved.

Building upon Illich’s framework helps to resolve many of the questions left by both Kant’s and Mill’s models. While Kant focuses solely upon the intent, Illich uses the long-term outcome as evidence to show why preparation is a necessary addition to intent. Kant’s notion of intent may in fact include preparation as an implied component, but he is not as clear as Illich in making that a requirement. The focus of Utilitarianism almost solely on the outcome can be irresponsible when dealing with the well-being of the client. As Illich’s frame suggests, both the idea of the greatest good (without careful concern for those being served) and the lack of consideration for a timetable are major gaps. While Illich is quite critical of service trips to Mexico, his perspective provides insight for constructing service programs that are ethical. He endorses service in local communities that includes full preparation in order to bring the greatest outcome to the intended party: the client.

Applying the Four-Party Model

Understanding the three areas (intent, preparation, and outcome) as a foundation, each of the four parties can now be considered in this new context. To do everything possible to guarantee an ethical and effective service experience, the volunteer must intend to act in a good way and must support the recipients of the service. Responsible preparation must include
consideration of both the short-term and long-term effects of the service on the client or recipient of the service. Central to that consideration must be an understanding of the social problems, the context in which the service is taking place, and the needs of the client and the community. The volunteer must also consider both the university and the service site and make sure that neither is being used, compromised, or manipulated for personal gain. An additional focus must be on the safety and well-being of the volunteer, preventing that person from being placed in a position of servility. That responsibility falls under preparation, with primary accountability in the hands of the university as the sponsoring party. The volunteer only consider the outcome by consciously and conscientiously preparing for the service. In doing so, he or she is responsibly making possible a positive outcome for the other parties. One goal in service learning is shared benefit for all four parties, but that cannot be so much of a priority that it takes precedence over intent or preparation.

The university plays the most significant role in equipping the volunteer for ethical service. By responsibly allocating time and money to prepare students for their work, the university has the potential to dramatically affect the success of the service in terms of all three areas: intent, preparedness, and outcome. Requiring service without preparation may have a positive intent (educational growth for the students and/or persons in the community), but it could lead to very negative outcomes for the volunteer, service site, and client. In fact, the university could even suffer in that instance because of its liability in mandating the service. Those universities that have bad intent, such as only hoping to receive positive media coverage, are unlikely to devote appropriate time and energy towards preparation. Proper intent plays a very large role for the university, especially because it is a key factor in determining how much of an effort will be devoted to preparing the student. If a university intends to provide the
greatest benefit, it should commit the necessary resources to the preparation of the students; not doing so would be showing the lack of genuinely good intentions and could potentially put all four parties at risk.

The service site is most often measured based upon the outcomes for its clients. That view is limited, however, because it does not take into account the methods employed by the site to prepare to empower the clients and to support and train the volunteers. Service sites also are obligated to prepare by collaborating with other organizations in ways that truly benefit the client. Universities are one such organization because of the resources that they can offer in both student volunteers and potential funding. Those service sites that create unhealthy barriers between one another have unethical intentions and are not doing all that they can to support recipients of service. In preparing improperly, the site likely intends to do good but fails in the practice. That is an example of a question left unaddressed by Kant’s theory when applied to the service learning context: how can one assure that good intention will be coupled by responsible preparation?

The client takes an odd place in this discussion of intent, preparedness, and outcome, though the same overall principles hold true. That person’s intent should be to improve his or her situation, and he or she must prepare to receive service by cooperating with whatever standards are already in place. That does not mean, though, that the client is to be blamed or faulted. Instead, it means that the client needs to be open to the support and must also invest in the volunteer-client relationship. Although social forces (poverty, racism, etc.) may make it difficult to see a way out, the client must work to be the best participant possible and contribute in areas in which he or she is capable. This obligation of preparedness is complicated by the fact that many of the recipients of service are children who either are not equipped to prepare or who
have not chosen for themselves to receive service. In that case, the obligation for good intention and preparedness is mainly on the other three parties, since the child is not in a position to prepare and has not invested in the service experience. Parents or guardians also assume some responsibility in that case for the preparation of the recipient, though the primary burden is on the volunteer, university, and service site. They must join with the parent or guardian in being especially prepared because of the long-term affects of service on younger clients.

Further Discussion

Ultimately, by directly considering the four parties on the basis of intent and preparedness, each with great implications for the outcome, one can better understand how service can and should be evaluated. The volunteer, university, service site, and client all have important responsibilities in creating an ethical and effective interaction. Other elements, including self-interest, also serve to complement this discussion and offer further areas for assessing a service experience. For all four parties, intent entails a combination of appropriate self-interest and the attempt to help the client. Preparation and outcome may also hold those qualities. Should the experience harm any of the parties (especially in the long term), the service is unsuccessful and could be considered unethical if responsible steps had not been taken to prepare prior to the service. Should only one party benefit while the others remain neither helped nor harmed, it is the client who must improve. Otherwise, the intent and preparation to engage in service are for naught. The flipside, though, the case in which one intends to do good, prepares appropriately, and leaves the recipient in an improved long-term state should be the goal of all service. In that case, the responsible steps are taken so that all parties contribute to and benefit from a healthy, successful service experience.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE DILEMMA OF MANDATORY SERVICE

In recent years, the movement to make service mandatory at the high school and college levels has become more widespread. Michael Ferraraccio cites estimates made by both the Educational Resource Service and the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities when he states in 1998 that “one-quarter of the public schools in the U.S. currently impose some form of volunteering requirement.”30 Lottie Joiner writes that “[i]n 1992, the District of Columbia became the first U.S. school district to mandate community service for graduation... That same year, Maryland became the first state to require service learning for high school graduation.”31 Other states vary in both requirements and funding, allowing individual school districts to make such decisions. Such expectations do not come without a community of detractors. In fact, the issue of mandatory service has been faced with challenges on the legal front, with critics claiming that it is a violation of the first and thirteenth amendments by imposing a particular set of values and forcing “involuntary servitude” 32 upon students. Though court cases have not been held up, criticism of required service on these and other grounds remains prevalent.

At the college and university level, service learning is also becoming a more prominent pedagogical tool, though criticism also remains present in that context. Because it is more difficult to use the legal route successfully when dealing with private institutions, arguments against service learning in this setting focus more on the long-term view of the student on volunteering after being required to do so. The data on that issue are both empirical and philosophical. Proponents counter the criticism with some discussion of the improved outcome

32 Ferraraccio, p. 139.
for the client or recipient of the service, though that discussion usually comes as an afterthought. The main basis for their promotion of service learning is the idea that schools have an obligation to promote and develop healthy citizenship. In their view, service is as legitimate a pedagogy as any other required coursework. Rather than hold the view the schools are required to teach a few core subjects and nothing more, proponents of service learning often support their argument by looking at the school as a venue through which young minds can be cultivated for meaningful and fulfilling lives. That cultivation includes more than traditional courses such as science and English, and must, in their minds, include courses and programs that foster more responsible, concerned citizens.

In establishing a service learning class at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, David C. Smith uses goals established by Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok in their book The Teaching of Ethics in Higher Education. Their goals are: “(1) stimulating the moral imagination; (2) recognizing the essence of ethical issues; (3) developing analytical skills; (4) eliciting a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility; and (5) learning to tolerate – and resist – disagreement and ambiguity.” Smith and like-minded academics view the requirement of service as being a means to a healthy, vibrant, and engaged society. Furthermore, they argue that mandatory service enhances the in-class educational experience by providing practical and real examples for the theories being taught. In this view, required service programs that meet certain requisites are educationally valuable on many different levels and can have great benefit for both the student and society.

Civic Engagement as an Intended Outcome

Robert Putnam presents what many proponents of service learning would consider to be the desired outcome of mandatory programs when he describes the civic community:

Citizens in a civic community, on most accounts, are more than merely active, public-spirited, and equal. Virtuous citizens are helpful, respectful, and trustful toward one another, even when they differ on matters of substance. The civic community is not likely to be blandly conflict-free, for its citizens have strong views on public issues, but they are tolerant of their opponents.\(^{34}\)

Though Putnam does not directly reference mandatory service programs at the college and university level as the catalyst for the civic community, he does endorse service as an important component of any healthy society. He writes in *Bowling Alone* that “altruism, volunteering, and philanthropy – our readiness to help others – is by some interpretations a central measure of social capital.”\(^{35}\) In that sense, Putnam presents the argument that service (and service learning programs) can help to develop a society founded upon strong connectedness and support if certain conditions are met. Putnam goes on to note that “Social philosopher John Dewey... rightly emphasized the distinction between ‘doing with’ and ‘doing for’,”\(^{36}\) a point that will be considered in more detail as a necessity for appropriate mandatory service.

In mentioning John Dewey’s point, Putnam makes an important classification and also introduces an important figure into the conversation on required service programs. Dewey places the responsibility of developing what scholars now call social capital on the schools. He writes that “all education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral. It forms a character which not only does the particular deed socially necessary but one which is interested in the continuous readjustment which is essential to growth.”\(^{37}\) Lottie Joiner attributes the formal introduction of the idea of service learning to Dewey, writing that he “believed that you learn by doing and that learning is most successful if it takes place in a realistic


environment.” She goes on to note that “Dewey believed that students would learn better and become better citizens if they used what they were taught in the academic curriculum to improve their communities.” In that sense, the required service learning is done to improve the citizenship of the student and to help the student learn. It is important to note that these lessons are not ones that could be learned in the same ways using pedagogies other than required service. The students are therefore benefiting and growing in distinctive and positive ways from the experience. Another beneficiary is the community, meaning that neither party is being used as a means to a desired end. When students are actively learning and the clients are improving in status, service learning has the potential to be a win-win situation, with no party being harmed. Of course, that situation is not always the reality, for reasons that have been and will continue to be discussed. While idealistic, applying the principles introduced by Dewey and expanded upon by many others offers the strongest argument as to why service learning should be a part of the curriculum, because they directly consider the benefit to both the student (including the long-term benefit of being educated, engaged citizens) and the recipient of the service, which should, in turn, benefit the university and the service site.

**Challenges to Mandatory Service**

Many challenges exist when making service mandatory. Prominent among them are the points that Dewey attempts to remedy. However, not all service learning programs consider his perspective, and so the possibility remains that both the service site and the client receiving the service are being used as means rather than as ends. Kant would argue against such a situation; in his practical imperative, he implores readers to act in ways that treat others only as ends and never as means to an end. When the intention of mandatory service is solely on improving the

student serving, the other three parties are being used as means, whether or not they are actually harmed from the experience. In fact, an extreme case would have the volunteer being used as a means for the university to publicize a certain number of hours being served. That would particularly be the case when the requirement is not combined with classroom opportunities for reflection and analysis of the experience. Any time one of the four parties is being used as a means, the service runs the risk of being unethical. A major flaw of service learning in general, but especially those programs that are mandatory is that they can be perceived as using one or more of the parties as a means, whether or not that is actually the case. Even more frightening is that some required programs actually are using one of the four parties as a means and do not even consider the greater, long-term results of such an action. Because mandatory service programs run a greater risk of having disengaged students, more problems exist. Additional care is also necessary for both the university and the service site to make sure that neither the student nor the client is used as a means as a result of the requirement.

Harry Brighouse discusses the broader implication of civic education (which would include service learning) as a way to subversively promote a liberal state. One who takes his position would argue that service learning is promoted and required solely to advance and further legitimize the state and the idea of liberal political society. He writes that:

...something is puzzling about the idea that liberal states may regulate the educational curriculum by mandating a civic education aimed at inculcating the values on which liberalism is based and behaviors which sustain it. If the state helps form the political loyalties of future citizens by inculcating belief in its own legitimacy, it will be unsurprising when the citizens consent to the social institutions they inhabit, but it will be difficult to be confident that their consent is freely given, or would have been freely given.\(^\text{40}\)

Brighouse is, in effect, arguing that the parties in service learning run the risk of being used as a means for the desired end of the state – loyal citizenship. If the state endorses and requires

service as a way to build support for itself as a legitimate entity. The students involved in service learning are being used because their genuine ability to consent to their political society is, arguably, compromised. However, Brighouse does offer an outlet, stating that “...civic education is permissible only if it includes elements that direct the critical scrutiny of children to the very values they are taught.”

Students are then empowered to question the societal norms that govern their behavior, with the intent of improving the community. A liberal state such as the American democracy should not then force students to do service as a way to understand the benefit of a democracy; ideally, citizens will want to do service because it is the best way to back the state and community that they support. Mandatory service would then introduce students to this opportunity to contribute. It can also be justified as a way to improve the critical thinking skills of students to better understand the problems with which they will be faced as responsible adult citizens. With that point, Brighouse presents perhaps a stronger case than Dewey, in stating that required service can encourage students to be critical and independent thinkers who intend to improve the welfare of their communities. Every educational institution should aim to provide such an outcome.

Another angle from which to examine Brighouse’s concern about service learning is to look at the organizations at which students volunteer in mandatory service programs. Some authors note that organizations that address controversial causes are not supported by public schools (or many public and private universities), which they see as reason for concern. Lottie Joiner asks “...will schools tell young people they can’t volunteer for something they believe in? What does that teach them about democracy and diversity?” Michael Garber and Justin Heet note of public schools requiring service that “some citizens will inevitably object when their tax

41 Brighouse, p. 719.
dollars are used to advance causes with which they disagree." Whether it is a public institution or not, the dilemma still remains as to whether funds or time should be allocated for causes with which people have great reservations. Can a university prohibit a student from serving with the local office of a pro-life organization? If it does so, can it allow students to volunteer for a class at the local branch of a Christian, Jewish, or Muslim relief organization? While the issues may be controversial, in my view, the service must be in an area about which the volunteer is curious or interested. Otherwise, the student is being used as a means for a particular agenda and is not being given the opportunity to learn in a context that is educationally engaging for him or her. That said, a value judgment must be made, by which sites that are exclusive or polarizing should not be used in this setting. While service sites can and should deal with controversial issues, the students should only have the option to select those that are inclusive in nature, meaning that they do not impose only one worldview without allowing for other voices or opinions. That does not unilaterally restrict students from serving at sites about which they are curious, but instead offers a condition for selection. The lessons of serving are certainly important, and the same lessons cannot be learned in an educationally responsible way if the service site is excessively divisive and only exposes the student to a single limited agenda.

**Effect of Mandatory Service on Future Service**

Even if the student is able to work at a site with which he or she is interested or curious, that does not necessarily translate into a successful experience. The student must still be given the opportunity to engage in the work of the organization and the issues to which it is committed. Some studies show that making service mandatory actually does more harm than good with respect to the long-term community engagement of the student because of that lack of

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commitment. Arthur Stukas, Mark Snyder, and E. Gil Clary conduct one quantitative and one qualitative study to find that “...individuals who had higher perceived external control had lower intentions to volunteer in the future after being required than after being led to freely choose to volunteer. Individuals who had lower perceived external control... were relatively unaffected by the mandate versus choice conditions.” In other words, within the service programs studied, students who would have served anyway would continue to do so, while those who otherwise would not have served are less likely to do so after doing mandatory service.

Stukas, Snyder, and Clary’s study, however, looked solely at service as an hourly requirement to graduate and not combined with relevant coursework. That may be one reason why the study came up with such findings. These findings do not address the type of supervised and directed service that proponents of service learning promote. At the same time, the findings are still worthy of consideration and should serve as a warning to those who irresponsibly and arbitrarily require service hours to unprepared students. As long as the service is done independent of coursework and in-class reflection of the experience, the results of the study by Stukas, Snyder, and Clary are to be expected. One would expect, however, that the findings would be different if the service was made mandatory as part of a class in which the critical ethical and social issues were discussed. This question, at least, merits further empirical investigation. Students would also, in that setting, need to have some level of autonomy in selecting their sites (within the limits established earlier.)

The potential problems of mandatory service include not only possible harm to the person serving, however. Criticism of mandatory service also comes from those students who already do serve. They consider service that is mandatory to be “watered down” or inauthentic. When

service is done for a reward, it loses some of its meaning for these people. Michael Ferraraccio writes that “...students forced to volunteer may resent the experience precisely because it is imposed, rather than through choice. Alternatively, they may feel that upon completion of the program, that they have ‘served their time,’ and need not contribute any more.” The question lies in the educational value, since the mandatory service program is based in a school. Within that setting, educators make a value judgment that service is an important pedagogical tool that offers insight into areas that otherwise would not be covered. As a result, the students should leave understanding certain points. Using the previously made argument about service learning cultivating strong citizenship, programs that do not leave students with further motivation to be socially conscious (be it through service, voting, etc.) inherently fail. The recipient of the service may benefit (which is unquestionably good), but the place of service in the classroom is not justified. However, programs that meet the requisites that will later be developed will improve both the learning of the student and the well-being of the client.

Ben Wildavsky brings up an additional concern, asking “…how those on the receiving end will feel about helpers who are required to perform a service.” It is probable that those mandatory service programs that simply require hours without offering in-class support and reflection do not pay much attention to the recipient of the service, even though that is the person on whom a good amount of attention should be given. Those classes that supplement service hours should give students the opportunity to analyze whether or not they are actually helping those receiving their support. Otherwise, the client is being used as a means in every way that Kant sees as inappropriate. Classroom time must be spent helping the students understand how they may most responsibly successfully help the recipients of the service.

45 Ferraraccio, p. 139.
Requisites for Mandatory Service

In order to respond adequately to these and other criticisms, certain requisites, or ethical standards, must be met for mandatory service experiences to be considered morally acceptable. These are necessary, but not independently sufficient, conditions for mandatory service that build upon the previous themes of this paper.

(1) First and foremost, service learning programs that require hours must be supplemented by relevant academic readings and consistent in-class reflection time throughout the duration of the service. Holding a one-time meeting or only pre-service and post-service meetings is insufficient to offer even the minimal level reflection that should take place. Instead, an ongoing course discussion must be created.

(2) Class time and readings should focus on connecting service to an analysis of social issues. At least two outcomes should be prioritized from the time spent in class: increased civic engagement, and greater critical thinking skills. Ethical mandatory service must not brainwash the students to believe that one political system or framework is the ideal, which is why the critical thinking contribution is so vital to this discussion.

(3) Similarly, the service cannot be performed through or with an organization that is so exclusive and divisive that it does not invite the student to think freely. The professor may want to assume the responsibility of offering a variety of sites (that deal with a variety of issues) as a way to alleviate that concern. Having enough issues and potential sides so that the students' curiosities and interests can be piqued is also important, so that they have the potential to be engaged in the work and the organization.

(4) All of these requirements must be met with the best interest of the recipient of the service in mind; otherwise, the mandatory service is unethical and may do more harm than good
for this party. Being mindful of the client while also considering the educational benefit to the student by meeting these and other requisites makes mandatory service ethical. Failure to achieve these conditions puts each of the four parties at risk for a harmful, detrimental experience.

(5) The student must maintain some voice in each aspect of the service, whether or not it is a component of a mandatory course. That voice means that they should have some say in choosing the site at which they serve, as well as a say in the type of work that they are doing. While the student should not be so demanding that the focus is completely on him or her, some level of respect and authority must be given to this party, and, at all points, his or her voice must be heard.

(6) A sixth and final requisite for service is based upon John Dewey’s distinction between “‘doing with’ and ‘doing for’” that is discussed by Robert Putnam. The objective of the service, whether it is mandatory or voluntary, must be to empower the client and put him or her on a path of self-sufficiency. Creating a sense of dependency is unhealthy and counter-productive. Making that distinction requires that the in-class time be used to help students understand greater social issues that contribute to the client’s status. In addition, it cannot be stressed enough that the service must be done on the client’s terms as much as possible so that the empowerment process can be as slow or fast as needed for the particular situation.

CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The new model of service presented in this paper gives a framework for considering the possibilities for ethically grounded service. It does not solve all of the problems with competing

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interests or tradeoffs in wellbeing, but is a solid foundation upon which many important discussions can be based. By examining the continuum of self-interest, the discussion of intent, preparedness, and outcome, and consideration for mandatory service, the paper has offered a comprehensive assessment of the ethics of service. The four parties – the volunteer, the client, the university, and the service site – have particular responsibilities to their own interests and to their fellow parties that contribute to the success or failure of the service experience.

Credit and recognition that is currently given almost exclusively to the volunteer must be spread out more appropriately to identify the contributions made by each party. That is not to discount the contributions of the volunteer, but rather, it is to recognize and appreciate the contributions of the service site, the client, and the university. Each of them invariably participates in some way during a service learning exchange, and through consideration of how to best achieve healthy self-love and avoid acts of selfishness or servility, they can find ways to achieve an experience that benefits all of the parties. Such benefit comes not only from individual satisfaction and from a healthy level of self-interest, but also from the support that the other parties provide. In order to find such a balance, each person or group must be very intentional and understand the best way to contribute to and benefit from the service exchange.

By helping the reader to recognize and understand the importance of preparation when participating in a service experience, this paper makes another contribution to the discussion of service learning. Good intentions only take a person or organization so far, and they run the risk of very quickly putting one or more parties in a position of servility. Good outcomes alone, especially when focused upon the greatest benefit, run the risk of being harmful to at least one of the parties. When one considers the fact that the client is the one who could be harmed at the expense of the other three parties under a “greatest good” model, its ethical inadequacy in this
context becomes quite clear. Instead of staying with one of those two incomplete considerations (intent or outcome), a third qualification must be met: preparedness. Each party has an obligation to prepare in ways particular and appropriate to its role in the exchange, and the result of such preparation will almost always lead to a more positive result for all of the parties. Though each party must prepare individually, some collaborative preparation also must take place. In particular, the university has an obligation to help in preparing the student volunteer, and the service site should pursue ways to help prepare the client.

Mandatory service brings with it many questions when dealing with such issues as self-interest and preparation. By understanding the necessary requisites for mandatory service, universities can sponsor programs that have the best interest of the student volunteer, client, and service site in mind. Particular care must be taken to assure that mandatory service programs not meeting the requirements set forth in this paper do not turn away the student volunteers. Empirical research must be undertaken to find out feelings and actual commitment towards service that students have following programs that do, in fact, meet the requisites set forth in this paper. One can hypothesize that individuals engaged in mandatory service programs that are in line with the premises of this paper will become more knowledgeable about the greater social issues and more motivated to continue serving.

Future considerations and possible areas of inquiry are many, as the discussion of ethical service learning has only just begun. In addition to an empirical study on the effects of service learning on future behavior, possible topics to address are: the role of accolades on motivation to serve, whether recognition for volunteering ethically compromises the overall experience, how clients can best have agency in the service exchange, how other constituencies (neighbors, elected officials, voters, etc.) can each contribute in the new model, and what a community built
upon and supported by ethical service could provide. By building upon the proposed four-party model, the discussion of selfishness, healthy self-love, and servility, the qualities for evaluating service (intent, preparedness and outcome), and the consideration of and requisites for mandatory service, future discussions should have a solid basis upon which to develop new areas of inquiry into understanding the ethics of service.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


