Introduction

Founders, Framers, and Futures

Timothy K. Stanton and Dwight E. Giles, Jr.

The request to write about founders and framers in the *Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Community Engagement* appeared to us at first as a monumental task. For who were the founders of this field or fields? For service learning we had some ideas, since we had researched the historical strands of early service learning practice twenty years ago for our book on service learning pioneers, *Service-Learning: A Movement's Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins* (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). For community and civic engagement we wondered: do we go back as far as the signers of the Declaration of Independence? To the first citizen councils of the Massachusetts Bay Colony? And would this make civic engagement's framers those who assembled in Philadelphia to write the United States Constitution?

No, we quickly decided, this chapter is not a national history. Having pulled back from that daunting task we decided to concern ourselves more narrowly with service learning's development as a pedagogical field – its earliest expressions even before it had a name and its founding practitioners within postsecondary education – the "pioneers" who surfaced in our research. We quickly survey the historical evolution of service learning's contested principles, definitions, and practice over the last half of the twentieth century and its evolution since 2000 as a key expression within wider postsecondary education reform movements now labeled civic and/or community engagement. We end with a few, nagging thoughts and questions about service learning's future, most of which have been on our minds for at least twenty years since our mid-1990s research.

Founders

In our research we found that the genealogy of service learning in the United States, its first concrete expressions in practice that we came to term its "DNA," could be traced back to the 1950s and '60s in the southeast, and specifically and surprisingly to the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies in Tennessee. But service learning's conceptual antecedents can be found in the philosophy and practice of "extension education" programs spawned by the land grant university movement of the 1860s, in "progressive education" and urban settlement house activities early in the last century, in work programs

of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, and in 1920s immigrant education and 1960s civil rights organizing efforts (Pollack, 1997). Indeed in Stanton's own family research he discovered that his great uncle, John Collier, engaged in activities in a lower Manhattan settlement house in the 1920s that very closely resemble his service learning teaching practice.

We chose a modified participatory action research design focusing our attention on individual pioneers and their oral histories.[1] What were the stories of people who first worked to combine education and social action in varied political, economic, community, and educational contexts? We *were* searching for people who were pioneers – "ones who go before, preparing the way for others" (Webster), who used *service* as a means to enhance *learning*, or *learning* to enhance *service* in activities connected to postsecondary education.

Our "pioneers" need not have worked in postsecondary education institutions, but their work had to be recognizable for "preparing the way for others" who did. (Thus, we included K–12 educators as potential sources.) We defined "service" and "learning" broadly, seeking to be inclusive of the widest expression of efforts to "serve," be they through volunteerism, activism, advocacy, policy work, research, or organizing, and efforts to "learn," be they aimed at academic knowledge, civic values, or personal development. Of course, we expected all sources to be people who had been practitioners of some duration, and who would be willing to share their stories of how they became involved in and sought to influence the service learning movement. We wanted our pioneers group to be the "founders" of the field, those who had up to that time the most influence on the field's development (as well as our own) and those whose influence came through advocacy, publications, or other means, as well as through example or practice. We wanted them to represent the most important (i.e., influential) strands of service learning history (e.g., experiential education, voluntary student action). Finally, cognizant that Goodwin Liu was developing a historical paper (Liu, 1996) that examined service and service learning from 1985, we added the criterion that our pioneers should have been active in service learning work prior to 1985.

Who were these founding pioneers? In terms of demographics, nineteen of the twenty-six "pioneers" we gathered for a participatory research conference at Wingspread Conference Center in Racine Wisconsin in 1995 were male, and seven were female. Twenty-one were Caucasian, three were Asian American, and two were African American. All of them were college graduates and almost all held master's and doctoral degrees. The overrepresentation of Caucasian males in this sample, while probably reflective of those engaged in service learning in its earliest days and certainly representative of the gender and ethnic/racial makeup of faculty and staff in postsecondary education at the time, became a topic of discussion at the conference. Interestingly, while the focus of our research, and of the "pioneers" nominations process, was on postsecondary level service learning history, more than one-third of the first wave of identified "pioneers" came from outside the academy in terms of locus (off-campus) and focus (on individuals other than postsecondary-level students)

of their work. This factor suggests that change, at least as it relates to service learning in postsecondary education, often came from outside the academy. It may also account for the strong community focus that emerged in the early days of service learning as well as some of the tensions in the academy as the field emerged often in contradiction to the norms of the academy in terms of both pedagogy and ways of knowing and partnering.

Advocates of community service as a means of developing in young people lifelong commitments to civic engagement will be pleased to learn that the "personal entry point" into service learning most often articulated by our pioneers was involvement in volunteer service as a youth or university student. Fourteen individuals pointed to rewarding experiences in Scouts, Key Clubs, student volunteer groups, and other group activities as leading them to their adult work path. In a related vein, four additional individuals viewed participation in a university-sponsored practicum or "service learning–type course" as critical, and five pointed to intensive summer camp experience (e.g., Quaker work camps, YWCA and YMHA programs, Boy Scouts leadership programs) as their personal entry point. Other entry points identified included experience in a "Deweyian school" while growing up, parental role models, and experience as an immigrant in the United States.

Sixteen of the twenty-six "pioneers" traced the early motivations to take up their work to political events or issues taking place when they were young. These included civil rights, peace movements and the Vietnam War, resistance to the draft, and rural and urban poverty. These "pioneers" had been active in these issues or movements, and thus tended to view pedagogy, which combined community action with critical reflection, as a means of addressing them in an educational context. While the high percentage of political motivations among the Wingspread "pioneers" probably reflects the period when most of them were coming of age, it contrasts with a lower percentage of students who claimed that political motivations influenced their involvement in service and service learning at that time (Glasser, 1994).

Many pioneers commented on the religious or spiritual motivations that surfaced among the group. Six of the "pioneers" studied in seminary and/or worked at some point as pastors or ministers. Three described the deep impact they experienced through study of and/or experience with Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist philosophies and Gandhian politics. Two additional participants ascribed the religious orientation of their family life as important.

In chapter 2 of our book, *Service-Learning: A Movement's Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins*, Seth Pollack (1999) provided a brief review of how higher education institutions viewed their service missions, a process "fraught with conflict over the social function of teaching and research" (p. 12), expressed through the contested terms of service, education, and democracy. "The crux of the debate is whether education should provide students with skills and knowledge-base necessary to fit into existing social structure; or prepare them to engage in social transformation" (pp. 12–13). Pollack proposed a triangular model that linked these three terms to emphasize that the struggles over their
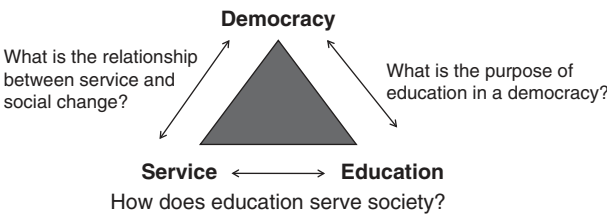
Figure I.1: *Origins of service learning.*

definition do not occur in isolation. They mutually influence and are influenced by each other, and their interplay expresses three fundamental policy debates, as shown in Figure I.1.

Pollack noted that "these debates represent the spectrum of issues that service learning programs encounter as they attempt to educate students about and in response to suffering and injustice in the world. In analyzing our pioneers' motivations for entering into what became service learning, we found that they fit into these same patterns. Some were more focused on educational questions; others on issues of social justice; and still others were most interested in preparing students for effective, democratic engagement." (See Pollack, 1999, for the classification and names of the pioneers along the three axes.)

While much can be said about this early pioneer group, a final key point is that in its early days service learning was dangerous work. This would be hard for current practitioners to believe given the proliferation of the field and its evolution into a broader movement for civic and community engagement. Nevertheless we discovered in our inquiry that a great majority of these pioneers had their programs shut down or their jobs terminated, or both, because they did service learning.[2] They described their professional lives as often lonely and embattled, as they may have been the only staff person on their campus committed to this work, which was not understood or respected by most faculty and administrators and for which they had to scramble for institutional support and survival.

What gave these pioneers strength to sustain their work in the face of these challenges? They unanimously reported that the national collegial networks with which they associated were crucial. These included the National Commission on Service Learning (NCSL), which administered the University Year for Action in the 1970s; the Society for Field Experience Education (SFEE) and the National Center for Public Service Internships (NCPSL), both of which started in the 1970s and later joined together to become what is known now as the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE); and eventually Campus Compact, especially in the 1990s with its emphasis on integrating service with academic study. They valued these networks for the collaborative, supportive collegiality they provided. For example, one pioneer stated, "In this field we are more concerned with 'how' theories rather than 'what' theories, and because we were all trying to figure out how to do it, no one was afraid to give it away ... we kept asking questions." Another added,

"It felt like solidarity to me … even if I was pretty isolated on my own campus. When we got together at the conference, I felt like I had a home, like I had allies. It would renew me, so I could go back to the battle field on my campus" (Stanton, 1996, pp. 20–21).

These networks also encouraged and published numerous seminal articles and books valued by the pioneers and still used today, such as Robert Sigmon's *Three Principles of Service-Learning* (1979) and Jane Kendall's two-volume edited resource books, *Combining Service and Learning* (1990). Sigmon's *Three Principles* is arguably the foundational document of the field of service learning and shaped the larger *Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning: A Wingspread Special Report* a decade later (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989). Kendall's two-volume set was the first compendium of published material on service learning and really is the precursor of this *Handbook.*

Framers

Perhaps any new field suffers from the challenge of evolving language that is adequate to express its deepest values and principles. Service learning certainly has from its inception. One manifestation of this is the fact that when Jane Kendall published the NSEE resource books in 1990 she found 147 different published definitions of the term. Surely scores more have been put forward since then.

The earliest definition of service learning – the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth – can be found in a publication of the Southern Regional Education Board (1969). In establishing their "Manpower for Development" program at the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies, Bill Ramsay and Bob Sigmon were concerned with developing learning opportunities for students who were integrally connected to community development. Ramsay described how they came up with the term "service learning":

> We were trying to find a phrase that would describe the program, and we tried all kinds of things – experiential learning, experience learning, work learning, action learning, all these different things. We decided to call it service-learning, because service implied a value consideration that none of the other words that we came up with did … It was more of an attitude, more of an approach to be of service … You could have experience with the Mafia and it would be tremendous learning perhaps, but it's not the kind of thing we were talking about. We were looking for something with a value connotation … It had to be real service, not academic, not made up, not superficial, not tangential, but real.
> (Stanton, 1996, p. 67)

Ramsay and Sigmon's work began from a community base at Oak Ridge. They sought to utilize campus resources, especially students, to develop Oak Ridge residents' employability at the laboratory.

The service learning pioneers had a social change education agenda as well. Jane Kendall, perhaps in an early expression of what Mitchell (2008) terms "critical service-learning," noted that "a good service-learning program helps participants see their [service] questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy – rather than in the context of charity" (1990, p. 20). It should help students consider the broader social structures that present the problems students respond to as volunteers. For example, service learning should not just enable students to volunteer in soup kitchens. It should also ask them to reflect on why people are hungry.

Whether focused on community impact or student development, service learning pioneers agreed that service experience alone would not yield substantial help for communities or civic consciousness in students (Couto, 1982). They called for structured opportunities for critical reflection on service experience, so students would "better understand the causes of social injustice . . . [and] take actions to eliminate the causes" (Baker, 1983).

Service learning advocates differentiated their practice from volunteer service in an additional way: questioning the nature of the service act itself and evoking the concept of reciprocity between server and served. Such an exchange "avoids the traditionally paternalistic, one-way approach to service in which one group or person has resources which they share 'charitably' . . . with a person or group that lacks resources" (Kendall, 1990, p. 22). In service learning the needs of the community, rather than of the academy, should determine the nature of the service provided. This view was summarized by a slogan often used at Stanford in the early days, "I serve you in order that I may learn from you. You accept my service in order that you may teach me" (Stanton, 1992).

To ensure that service promoted substantive learning, service learning pioneers sought to connect students' experience to reflection and analysis in the curriculum (Duley, 1981). They saw service learning – when it combined action with critical reflection and conceptualization and abstract experimentation with analyses – as a practice that stood very much within the liberal arts tradition (Stanton, 1990). For these pioneers, community service and academic excellence were "not competitive demands to be balanced through discipline and personal sacrifice, but rather . . . interdependent dimensions of good intellectual work" (Wagner, 1986, p. 17).

Service learning thus developed a values-oriented, character-development philosophy of experiential learning that was integrated with its activist orientation to society:

> Rather than a discrete [program] type, service-learning appears to be an approach to experiential learning, an expression of values – service to others, community development and empowerment, reciprocal learning – which determines the purpose, nature and process of social and educational exchange between learners and the people they serve, and between experiential education programs and the community organizations with which they work. (Stanton, 1990)

There was growing recognition among service learning's pioneers that the use of cognitive skills developed in liberal arts education must be stressed in public service in order for these programs to meet the developmental and civic literacy goals they held for students, *and* in order for the service provided by students to have real impact in the community.

In recent years engagement advocates have called for a third dimension to service learning, sometimes called "civic learning."[3] The California State University campus at Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has been a pioneer with this concept, defining civic learning as "student preparation for community or public involvement in a diverse, democratic society" (Pollack, 1999) Their service learning institute works to see that this curricular agenda – democratic citizenship learning, political learning, public leadership learning, inter- and intrapersonal learning, diversity learning/cultural versatility, and social justice learning – is central to CSUMB's service learning curriculum required of all students.

However, by the mid-1990s some service learning advocates, still frustrated with the slow acceptance of this active pedagogy within the academic main-stream, began to ask whether service learning had a future (Zlotkowski, 1995). They called for a concerted effort to connect service and study, building service learning into the disciplines. The American Association for Higher Education then published over a ten-year period (1997–2006) a widely circulated series of books examining service learning's applications within many of them. However, critics of this and other "adaptive" strategies to embed service learning within the existing academic structures asked whether a consequence of doing so would be to deemphasize service learning's interdisciplinary, transformative potential (Stanton, 1998).

Another key effort to legitimize service learning was to show through research that it indeed produces valid learning (Eyler and Giles, 1999). This began in 1991 with a Wingspread conference to develop a research agenda for combining service and learning (Giles, Honnet, & Migliore, 1991). It is beyond the scope of this introduction, but one element of the history and framing of service learning is the twenty-plus-year-long effort to produce research that showed its legitimacy in the academy by producing valid learning, and not just service or what some early critics called "feel good" experiences for students (Cress, Burack, Giles, et al., 2010; Giles & Eyler, 2013).

More recently, Seth Pollack and others have identified a drift away from service learning's original community impact and social justice concerns, perhaps caused in part by the emphasis to embed this pedagogy within the curriculum. For example, Pollack locates this drift in service learning concepts articulated over four decades of related federal legislation, from its first appearance in the *Domestic Volunteer Service Act* (PL 93-113) in 1973, where the purpose was

> . . . "to strengthen and supplement efforts to eliminate poverty and poverty-related human social and environmental problems" . . . to the *National Service*

> *Act* of 1990 where it has been transformed from an anti-poverty program to an educational "method ... to enhance what is taught in school" (p. 165) ... Taken together, the impact of these forces has resulted in a twisted, appropriated institutionalization process, ... "pedagogification" ... the cultural reworking of an epistemologically transformative educational practice into a teaching method, stripping the initiative of its transformative content while emphasizing its utility as a tool for mastering the traditional knowledge base."
> (Pollack, 2015, p. 167)

In the last decade many institutions have chosen to reframe their service learning as "community-engaged learning," "civic engagement," or "community engagement."[4] These terms provide a broader umbrella for experiential learning in the community through volunteerism, research, advocacy, and other means, with service learning being one pedagogical strand. For example, Stanford's Haas Center for Public Service has articulated "Pathways to Public Service" (2015) as central to its mission, which includes activism, community-engaged scholarship, direct service, philanthropy, policy/politics, and social entrepreneurship. Critics of this new terminology and broader umbrella ask whether they refocus service learning too much on student development with a consequential erosion of commitment to collaborative, community-responsive action with community partners.

Future

This all too cursory examination of service learning's founders and evolving, contested frameworks admittedly omits important individuals and conversations that have animated this field over its fifty or so years. For that we apologize. However, we hope our brief survey at least draws attention to our belief that one finds a way forward through understanding of and reflection on the past. In this vein perhaps a way to think forward is to go twenty years back in time to the recommendations for future development of the field articulated by the service learning "pioneers" at Wingspread in 1995. In considering the present and future for service learning, they recommended increased

- attention to clarification and debate of varied purposes and definitions that exist in service learning. This is needed both to strengthen the field and to more effectively connect it with related efforts to reform postsecondary education.

In our view this is still greatly needed, especially with the new, broader language and concepts that have evolved through and around the field. They also recommend

- attention toward strengthening service learning practice. We need to know much more about which pedagogical strategies most effectively combine service experience, critical reflection, and subject matter knowledge in ways

that increase learners' knowledge, learning skills, impact in communities, and democratic commitment to social justice.

Improving practice requires much more robust, "thick" description and analysis of the specific phenomena of service learning practices – both pedagogical and programmatic – and how they correlate in concrete ways with specific outcomes. "While practices and outcomes are obviously interconnected, we need to know much more than we do now about what makes the components of service learning pedagogy effective – for students, community partners, faculty, and institutions" (Stanton, 2000, p. 120). In addition, they recommend increased

- focus on the role of community partners and their knowledge in service learning practice, policy making, and advocacy.

While the scope and depth of service learning research has advanced tremendously since 1995, there remains still too little attention to the role and contributions of community partners. As noted in our "framers" survey above, if anything there may have been an erosion of attention to community partners since 1995. This should be reversed. Their voices need to be present and heard on our campuses, at our meetings, and in our research. Another recommendation is to increase

- efforts to make the service learning "community" more inclusive and representative of society as a whole.

There is no question that the students participating in service learning currently are far more diverse than those in 1995 simply because student bodies at most institutions have become far more diverse. While we know of no precise demographic figures for the service learning practice and research communities, our observation from attendance at recent meetings indicates that the diversity of these communities lags that of the students and is of as much concern now as in 1995. Is anyone looking at this seriously? Perhaps it is time to organize groups to consider substantively what the state of affairs is and what appropriate actions might be taken to enable our field to better reflect the populations we serve both on and off campus. Finally, they recommend increased

- understanding of and debate upon the relationship between the varied outcomes sought through and practices contained in service learning and efforts to institutionalize it within mainstream postsecondary education.

In 1998 Stanton observed,

> What was once a marginal, almost invisible, "radical" practice has proliferated widely. A new generation of practitioners has expanded the number and variety of service-learning courses and programs across all sectors of postsecondary education, as well as at the K–12 level. Service-learning pedagogy is advocated by students, faculty, presidents of colleges and universities, and even by the

President of the United States. Given service-learning's early, embattled history, the field's pioneers and other observers might reasonably wonder about these developments. What accounts for this change? Has postsecondary education been transformed so that service-learning can thrive? Or, has service-learning adapted its social change agenda in order to survive and expand within conservative institutions?
(Stanton, 1998, p. 9)

This nagging question that animated the 1995 pioneers' conference remains just as relevant to us and just as deserving of debate, perhaps more so now, especially across the multiple generations of colleagues now engaged in the work. We hope this *Handbook* plays a catalytic role in stimulating such debates and that our short piece is a fitting introduction to that process.[5]

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