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Intersecting Asset-Based Service, Strengths, and Mentoring for Socially Responsible Leadership

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Grounded in a youth leadership and mentoring program, this chapter discusses the value of asset-based community development from the service-learning literature and the concept of generativity from the leadership development literature.

College students are frequently engaged in the community through local mentoring programs, as mentoring youth has become an increasingly popular service-learning pedagogical strategy among many higher-education institutions (Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004; Wells & Grabert, 2004). While many mentoring programs are designed to build resiliency in at-risk youth, mentoring has been identified as an effective practice in leadership development (Day, 2000; Dziczkowski, 2013).

This chapter will discuss the value of asset-based community development from the service-learning literature and the concept of generativity from the leadership development literature. It will then explore the literature on mentoring as a form of community engagement that has particular potential for leadership development. Finally, a mentoring program for youth leadership will be described to elucidate how strengths-based leadership mentoring effectively intersects all of these concepts. The chapter will conclude with a set of recommendations for facilitating leadership development for college students and K–12 students through a community-based mentoring program.

Asset-Based Community Development

The service-learning literature is increasingly calling for community engagement that aligns with the concept of asset-based community development (Donaldson & Daughtery, 2011; Hamerlinck & Plaut, 2014; Lewis, 2004). Traditionally, service initiatives have been focused on identifying the community's needs and deficits in order to organize ways to "help" the community. The assumption of this approach is that the goal of service is to provide something to people in need. In contrast, the goal of asset-based community development is to build the community's own capacity (Kretzmann &McKnight, 1993). Community assets include the strengths and talents of individual community members, the formal and informal associations that gather community members together (social capital), and institutions like schools, houses of faith, community centers, and private businesses (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Asset-based service-learning programs create strong relationships that value the local knowledge that community members have, rather than assuming all expertise comes from the college/university. This focus on building capacity in the community by partnering with community members whose knowledge, talents, and strengths have been acknowledged within the community is also better alignment with the social change goals of service-learning. It is also a better approach to teaching civic leadership than traditional notions of service as "giving to the poor."

Generativity and Leadership Development and the Connection to Mentoring

Generativity refers to "concern in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson, 1950, 1963, p. 267). It is an important concept for leadership development for several reasons, outlined here. First, generativity has been found to be the highest predictor of social responsibility (Rossi, 2001). Generative students, who have a higher concern for establishing and guiding the next generation, are more likely to spend their time and money building a strong family, a strong workplace, and a strong community (Rossi, 2001).

Second, several strands of research indicate a connection between leadership development and generativity. The grounded-theory research that resulted in the leadership identity development (LID) model (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005) described participants as having found opportunities to be generative in later-stages of their leadership development. The LID model describes a six-stage developmental process of coming to integrate the idea of being a leader with one's sense of self (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). The fifth stage in this model, the *generativity* stage, describes students who have integrated leadership into their sense of identity, and are now mentoring other student leaders who are only starting to connect with what being a leader will mean to them. Komives et al. (2006) noted that the participants transitioned out of stage four and emerged into stage five when they began to articulate a passion and a commitment to serving the larger purposes of whatever group or organization with which they were involved. Moreover, the participants demonstrated generativity when they concerned themselves with the continuity of their group or organization, acknowledged a responsibility for developing others, and began coaching and mentoring younger peers. Within stage five, participants demonstrated a deeper commitment to develop interdependence among individuals within the group or organization. Further, the participants viewed leadership as a process as well as a responsibility held by all group members. Subsequent literature on the LID model has recommended that leadership educators create opportunities for students to be

generative, particularly providing experiences mentoring the leadership development of their peers (Komives, Longerbeam, Mainella, Osteen, Owen, & Wagner, 2009).

In alignment with the LID research, generativity scholars McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) noted, "It seems intuitively right that some kinds of highly effective leaders owe their success to their generative capacities and inclinations" (p. 489). This research and others indicates that leadership development programs foster generativity, and therefore the social responsibility outcomes identified above. Students who engage in leadership development programs tend to have an increased commitment to develop the same kinds of skills in others and to serve the common good (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bennis, 1989; Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Lipman-Blumen, 1996).

Finally, research on mentoring indicates a connection to both leadership development and generativity. The positive link between mentoring and leadership development is well established (Posner & Brodsky, 1992; Ryan, 1994; Seitz & Pepitone, 1996). Interestingly, the link between mentoring and generativity is demonstrated to exist on both sides of the mentoring relationship: *being mentored relates to leadership development and efficacy, and being a mentor adds to leadership capacity*. Youth who are mentored demonstrate significantly higher generativity than their peers (Peterson & Stewart, 1996). Likewise, college student leaders who mentor revealed a significantly higher level of generativity when compared against their peers (Barnes, 2014; Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, & Dlugosh, in press). Considering the linkage between mentoring and generativity and, therefore, social responsibility (Barnes, 2014; Hastings et al., in press), the strengths-based leadership mentoring described here serves as an important tool for leadership educators in their pursuit to develop socially responsible leaders.

The Research Behind Youth Mentoring and Leadership Development

The concept of mentoring originated in Homer's *Odyssey* (1967) when Odysseus implored his wise and loyal friend, Mentor, to bring Telemachus (Odysseus' son) under his care and tutelage during Odysseus'

voyage departure. While the field of mentoring research took a while to catch up to the Eighth Century BCE epic Greek poem, seminal authors in the 1970s and the 1980s ranging from Chickering (1969) to Vaillant (1977) to Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Klein, and McKee (1978) to Kram (1985) all documented and posited a positive relationship between mentorship and success. The vast array of mentoring research since the 1970s, however, has not rallied around a single definition. Common threads among myriad definitions of mentoring include the following: (a) each mentoring relationship is unique, (b) mentoring involves acquiring new knowledge in some form or fashion, (c) mentoring is a process (as opposed to an event), (d) a mentoring relationship is reciprocal (even if not symmetrical), and (e) a mentoring relationship is dynamic, constantly changing over time (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010). A study using data from the Multiinstitutional Study of Leadership examined two types of mentor relationships: mentorship for personal development and mentorship for leadership empowerment (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012).

One of many reasons that mentoring is a good fit for service-learning programs is the emphasis on building trusting relationships that are sustained over time. Typically mentoring is considered a relationship in which a more experienced person and a less experienced protégé mutually benefit (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Noe, 1991). A mentoring relationship is a shared experienced between two individuals, is both active and intentional, and is focused on the protégé's needs and strengths (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). The purpose of the relationship is to develop the protégé's ability to acquire knowledge, skills, and self-confidence in hopes of becoming a better student, employee, or organizational leader (Burke, 1984; Fagan &Walter, 1982). In the specific case of youth, the purpose of mentoring relationships is to prevent at-risk behaviors, develop individual competencies in order to promote positive adjustment, and facilitate integration and involvement in the community (Keller, 2010).

For the protégé, the outcomes of the mentoring relationship are higher credibility levels, greater confidence, greater strengths awareness, and human resource skill development (Barnett, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1990; Reiche, 1986, as cited in Moerer, 2005). Specific to youth, Blinn-Pike's (2010) meta-analytic review identified three

positive youth protégé outcomes commonly surfaced from well-validated studies: (1) attitude toward school and violence, (2) some academic outcomes (such as grades), and (3) parental relationships. For the mentor, the outcomes of the relationship include increased pride and satisfaction, sharpened competencies, and greater confidence (Bass, 1990; Newby & Corner, 1997). Mentoring benefits common to both mentor and protégé include: (a) reduced stress and anxiety, (b) improved self-esteem, (c) increased professional skills, (d) increased insight, and (e) greater awareness of alternative approaches (Dziczkowski, 2013).

Mentoring is considered an important tool for developing leaders (Day, 2000; Dzickzkowski, 2013; Scott, 1992). For example, Day (2000) cited a 1999 survey study of 350 companies involved in leadership development, which revealed mentoring programs as one of the most successful initiatives in the pursuit of leadership development. In Gallup's survey of over 10 million employees and supervisors, mentoring is considered one of 12 most influential practices in sustaining workplace excellence. In particular, the survey item "someone at work encourages my development" surfaced as a statistically significant factor in determining employee engagement (Wagner & Harter, 2006).Wagner and Harter (2006) asserted that personal interaction is necessary in order to adequately address the factor of "someone at work encourages my development." They articulated this notion: " . . . ['someone at work encourages my development'] requires a higher degree of personal investment by the counselor in the education of his charge" (p. 81). Despite the many documented benefits of mentoring, how can mentors be purposeful in developing the protégé's knowledge, skills, and self-confidence in their role as tutor, sponsor, motivator, role model, and coach?

Mentoring as an Investment Relationship

One way to articulate the way that mentoring values parallel those in the service-learning field, such as reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships that focus on building capacity, is the framing of mentoring as an *investment relationship*. William E. Hall, one of the recognized fathers of positive psychology, offered the idea of investment

relationships in his 1965 unpublished manuscript, "The Great Experiment." During Hall's early research, he partnered with fellow positive psychology pioneer, Donald Clifton, to identify students who demonstrated success in positively influencing others. In their research of these students, Hall and Clifton recognized that all student respondents discussed "difference makers" in their lives. These authors concluded that strong, positive relationships with "difference makers" impact a person's ability to discover and develop individual talents (Hall, ca. 1965).

Hall (ca. 1965) defined relationship as the response one makes to the existence of another person and proffered that *investment* relationships, as compared to other types of relationships, are a purposeful effort to achieve higher self-realization of the greatest resource—the human resource. Hall described three levels of relationships: (1) exploratory (this would include early responses made to a person being met for the first time), (2) work-a-day (these are the relationships formed between those who meet together on a daily basis), and (3) investment (these are relationships that have the power to change people's lives). Investment relationships are somewhat analogous to what occurs in the banking business. An investment in another person yields dividends for the investor. Hall (ca. 1965) asserted that lasting, significant differences in human beings can only become a reality when one person invests time in another person on an individual basis. Further, he posited that this is only possible if the investor's "human relations capital" is equal to or greater than the needs of the investee. Hall argued that concern for others, no matter how sincere, does not by itself guarantee favorable development.

Moving from "work-a-day" relationships (which perhaps could be considered forced mentoring) to investment relationships involves the mentor intentionally identifying talents in the investee, creating opportunities to develop those talents, and ultimately preparing the investee to become an investor, which creates a ripple effect. In addition, reflection upon the growth, development, and outcomes of the investment relationship are critical for the mentor (Hall, ca. 1965).

Remaining curious about the importance of difference makers and investment relationships, Hall and Clifton worked with local philanthropists to provide an opportunity for these students with "high human relations capital" to be paired in one-to-one relationships with

local K–12 student leaders. Their goal was to establish several investment relationships and study the outcomes of such relationships. This became the birthplace for what is now the Nebraska Human Resources Institute (NHRI). Grounded in the ideals of positive psychology that champion investing in talent rather than treating pathologies (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), Hall and Clifton devised a unique strengths-based leadership mentoring program characterized by one high-performing leader purposefully developing the talents of another individual with leadership promise.

The NHRI Program: Designing a Mentoring Program That Fosters Leadership Development

The NHRI at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln is a well-established model of strengths-based leadership mentoring in preparing socially responsible leaders, with over 60 years of experience in leadership development and mentoring research (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2015). NHRI identifies and selects outstanding college student leaders and pairs them in one-to-one relationships with outstanding K–12 student leaders. The objective for the college students is to identify leadership talents within their mentees, develop their leadership capacities, and direct their developed leadership toward positive reinvestment in others.

Selection. Deliberate, thorough, and strengths-based selection is one hallmark of NHRI and should be credited for NHRI's 60-plus years of success. Considering the demands of an investment relationship, it is critical for college students who are selected to take the mentoring commitment very seriously. In NHRI, University of Nebraska–Lincoln college students (called "counselors") are selected on the basis of demonstrating significant "human relations capital"—a capacity to positively influence the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others. This selection philosophy is the result of Hall and Clifton's early work at the NHRI which revealed a series of common talent themes related to human relations capital, such as sense of mission, empathy, and listening. Hall and Clifton built a selection assessment around the human relations capital themes, which is still used for selection purposes today.

Freshmen students who are interested in the program or who are nominated by current students in the program, faculty, staff, or alumni attend an orientation to learn more about the program, then are invited to engage in an hour-long interview to assess their human relations capital talent. Students whose interview results indicate strong human relations capital are paired in one-to-one relationships with K–12 students in Lincoln Public Schools who have also been identified as high potential leaders. At any given point in time, NHRI works with approximately 180 college student leaders and 180 K–12 student leaders.

While many youth mentoring programs identify "at-risk youth," this approach has the potential to focus the program on the needs and deficits of the youth in question, rather than on their assets, talents, and potential. In keeping with the asset-based community development approach advocated by the service-learning field, the youth in NHRI programs are considered to be contributors to the community and its capacity-building efforts. The K–12 student leaders (called "junior counselors") are also selected for the program on the basis of demonstrating high human relations capital, as evaluated by school principals, teachers, and guidance counselors. NHRI staff reach out to local school administrators and teachers to evaluate their students' leadership talents in areas such as building positive relationships, inclusiveness, diversity appreciation, encouraging improved classroom performance, and behavior in other students, and so forth. Once student leaders are identified, school administrators contact parents to inform them of their child's selection. NHRI staff then set up orientation sessions with selected students and their families to introduce them to the program and the student's counselor.

Operations. College students ("counselors") are typically selected for the program as second semester freshmen and are paired with K–12 student leaders ("junior counselors") based on common interests. Each pair meets weekly for three years. The objective for the counselors is to identify leadership talents within their junior counselors, develop their leadership capacities, and direct their developed leadership toward positive reinvestment in others. Some of the college students will enroll in a course that runs concurrently with their mentoring role.

In accordance with Keller's (2010) observation that effective mentors create a meaningful relationship with their mentees as well as facilitate positive development, counselors are encouraged to spend the first 6 to 8 weeks purely focusing on building a friendship with their junior counselors. This "friendship phase" may involve discovering common interests and meeting family members and friends. Once counselors feel that a solid friendship (and more importantly, a trust foundation) has been established, then counselors are encouraged to more actively pursue leadership development with their junior counselors.

The counselors' first leadership development task is to identify leadership talents within their junior counselors. Counselors are encouraged to attend their junior counselors' extracurricular activities, eat lunch with them at school, and participate in family events in order to accurately observe and identify unique leadership talents. The second task is to develop the junior counselors' identified leadership capacities by creating "stimulus situations." For example, if a counselor recognizes that the junior counselor has high rapport drive, that counselor might challenge the junior counselor to evaluate the difference in response when calling others by name versus just saying "hello." Upon reflection the following week, the counselor will help the junior counselor to recognize that when rapport drive is used deliberately to call someone by name, that person ultimately feels important. The junior counselor is then encouraged to use rapport drive deliberately every day as a vehicle for helping others to feel recognized and important. The ultimate goal is for the junior counselors to become most effective at making a difference in the lives of others. The counselors invest in their junior counselors with the intention of preparing junior counselors to turn and invest in others, creating a capacity-building "ripple effect" (Hall, ca. 1965). See Figure 7.1.

Reflection. Based on the age or school of their junior counselors, counselors are grouped in "projects." For example, all college student leaders working with 10th-through 12th-grade student leaders are in *Teenage Project*. These projects meet weekly for an hour to discuss the progress of their relationships with their junior counselors. This reflection piece is designed to help each counselor study the development and outcomes of investment relationships. Weekly project
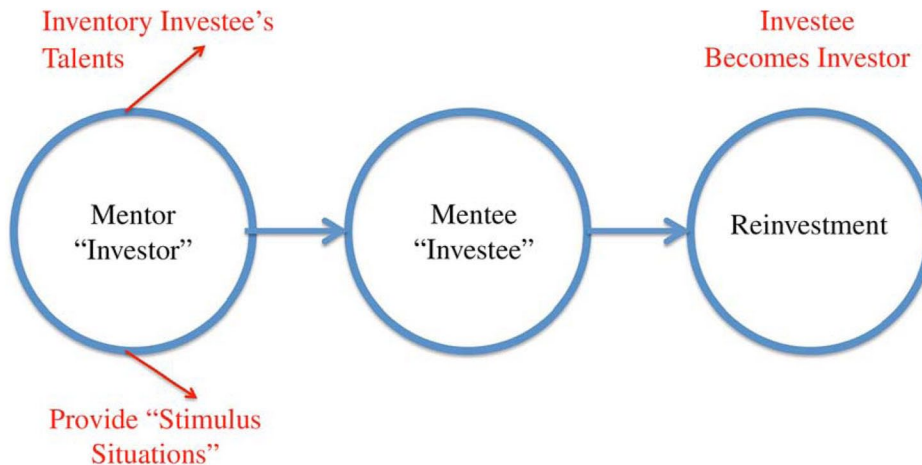
Figure 7.1. Investment Relationship Model *Source:* Adapted from Dodge (1986).

meetings are also a time for counselors to receive advice and guidance regarding how to be most effective in mentoring their junior counselors. Each project also conducts monthly retreats with their junior counselors to examine positive psychology concepts. The counselors typically prepare a curriculum for the retreat (i.e., the importance of active listening in leadership), or the entire project engages in a community reinvestment project.

Training. Counselors are also given the opportunity to take a training course in interpersonal skills for leadership during one semester of their NHRI experience (commonly referred to as the "NHRI Class"). The course objectives center on self-understanding, understanding others, and investing in others. Counselors who take the course engage in scholarly discourse related to positive psychology principles such as empathy, active listening, investment relationships, strengths, and self-concept, among others. Utilizing service-learning pedagogy (Furco & Billig, 2001), course participants write each week about their reactions to course concepts and how those concepts apply in their relationships with others. Furthermore, their relationship with their junior counselor serves as the active service experience of the course. Course participants keep a weekly diary of their experiences with their junior counselors and create a final project that analyzes and evaluates the application of course concepts in their mentoring relationship.

In sum, college student leaders engage in the following four activities during their NHRI tenure in accordance with best practices in youth mentoring (Miller, 2010): (1) weekly meetings with their junior counselor, (2) weekly project meetings (college students only), (3) monthly retreats (both counselors and junior counselors), and (4) the NHRI Class.

Recommendations

Considering the predictive linkage between generativity and social responsibility (Rossi, 2001), higher education institutions would be prudent to deliberately cultivate generativity among their student populations. Community-based youth mentoring programs are perhaps one vehicle to consider. Colleges and universities that could successfully cultivate and document higher generativity among their students could make a compelling argument to business and industry for hiring their graduates. This could impact career placement success rates and ultimately help their institutions garner a competitive advantage.

While mentoring is an important tool for developing leaders (Day, 2000; Dzickzkowski, 2013; Scott, 1992), strengths-based leadership mentoring is a way to model the asset-based community development approach, preparing college student leaders to think beyond traditional notions of service to the community so they might continue to consider how to *invest* in the next generation of leaders and exercise their leadership in a generative way.

Building a successful strengths-based leadership mentoring program within not only a university community, but also its surrounding community requires deliberate thought and effort in the following four areas: (1) selection, (2) operations, (3) reflection, and (4) training. College and K–12 student selection for a strengths-based leadership mentoring program needs to involve rigorous procedures designed to assess human relations talent and positive influential promise. To prepare college students to move from mentoring to investing, day-to-day programmatic expectations need to include regular, weekly meetings between the college and K–12 students, weekly meetings among college student mentors, and bimonthly

opportunities for groups of mentors and mentees to meet and for mentors to actively train their mentees in leadership development concepts. Furthermore, college students should be expected to work with the same student consistently over the course of several years in order to adequately provide an opportunity to invest in their mentees. Weekly meetings among college student mentors need to include an active reflection component, where each college student is given the opportunity to share success and frustration and to receive guidance and support from peers and program staff. Last, every incoming college mentor should receive training in interpersonal skills for leadership and investment relationship principles. These aforementioned selection, operation, reflection, and training recommendations will allow a university community to meaningfully connect with its surrounding community by mobilizing the institution's diverse resources toward building leadership capacity among community youth while at the same time preparing its own future graduates to become socially responsible leaders.

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