Civic Engagement Through Mandatory Community Service: Implications of Serious Leisure

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Abstract

This study explores university students' attitudes of social responsibility and participation in volunteering, examining how these are related to prior experiences of mandatory community service in high school. Students' perceptions of the quality of their mandatory community service experience were found to be powerful predictors of their attitudes towards social responsibility, while ongoing volunteering was found to be influenced more significantly by school and community influences, most notably prior volunteer involvement. We conclude that community service experiences, when perceived as being of high quality, may engender ongoing civic engagement. We suggest that aligning mandated community service with serious leisure might increase quality of experience, and provide an avenue to experience the rewards and benefits associated with civic participation.

KEYWORDS: *Volunteering, civic engagement, serious leisure, social responsibility, mandatory community service*

Introduction

Volunteerism has held a long-standing interest for leisure scholars because of its nature as a freely-chosen activity and the parallels between the benefits of volunteering and the leisure goals that people often seek in their leisure time (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997/1998; Henderson, 1981, 1984). Indeed, Stebbins (1992, 2007) has included volunteering as one of three types of meaningful, systematic, and fulfilling activity defined as serious leisure. Much of the research on volunteering as serious leisure has explored the social and personal benefits of

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career volunteering, such as self-actualization, self-enrichment, and the sense of contributing to a group (Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Cuskelly, Harrington, & Stebbins, 2002/2003; Perkins & Benoit, 2004). Beyond its benefits as a leisure activity, volunteering is often discussed in connection to civic engagement because of the opportunities it affords individuals to participate in activities of common interest and to work toward common goals (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Hemingway, 1988, 1996; Putnam, 2000; Rojek, 2002; Van Til, 1988). Ultimately, these opportunities for active community participation are key to democratic citizenship (Hemingway, 1999; Rojek, 2002).

Mandatory community service, such as compelling high school students to perform community service, is in some ways similar to volunteering, and thus raises some significant questions as to whether the personal and social benefits of volunteering extend to community service experiences that have not been freely chosen. On one hand, there is a strong rationale for efforts to engender civic engagement in adolescents. There is some evidence suggesting that when civic engagement is cultivated in adolescents, their participation in civic activities such as volunteering may persist through adulthood (Smith, 1999; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). However, the benefits of volunteering are perhaps only derived because of its inherent nature as a freely-chosen leisure activity, as well as the meaningful nature of the activity itself, and thus may not extend to situations where individuals are mandated to volunteer (Stebbins, 2000). Further, mandating community service may cause resentment, potentially eroding the possible benefits of civic participation (Warburton & Smith, 2003).

While debate continues about the advantages and disadvantages of mandating community service, the practice of compelling adolescents to participate in community service is increasingly common. For example, a recent survey of the American public school system found that 81% of high schools involved students in community service projects in 2004, and that 24% of American public high schools mandate involvement in community service or service learning as a requirement for graduation (Scales & Roehlkepartain, 2004). In Maryland, for example, state policy requires that students complete a minimum of 75 hours of community service prior to high school graduation (Maryland State Department of Education, 2000). In Canada, 35% of high school students performed mandatory community service in 2000 (Hall, McKeown, & Roberts, 2001). In the province of Ontario, a requirement was introduced in high schools in 1999 that students complete 40 hours of community service prior to graduation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). In seeking to understand the relationships between mandatory community service and volunteering, we propose that an important first step is to understand the relationship between the quality of mandatory community service experienced by high school students and subsequent civic engagement. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore university students' attitudes towards social responsibility and their participation in volunteering, examining how these aspects of civic engagement are related to their prior experiences of mandatory community service while in high school. The research questions examined were: (a) to what extent do certain qualities define students' experiences of mandatory community service in high school?; and (b) how does the quality of the mandato-

ry experience in high school relate to current attitudinal and behavioural aspects of civic engagement? By exploring the quality of mandatory community service (e.g., making a difference, enjoyment, relations with others) and its links with attitudes of social responsibility and ongoing volunteering more closely, this study provides an opportunity to reflect on how students' experiences may or may not have included aspects of serious leisure and what this might mean for their later civic engagement.

Literature Review

Defining Civic Engagement

Civically-engaged citizens are characterized by their active involvement and attachment to civil society (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996; Crystal & DeBell, 2002). Other scholars have conceptualized civic engagement as having a behavioral component (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Smith, 1999; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997), an attitudinal component (Riedel, 2002), or both (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002; Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Metz & Youniss, 2005). Civic engagement as a behavior is typically measured as participation in volunteerism or voting (e.g., Hart et al.), while attitudes associated with civic engagement are measured as a sense of civic identity or obligation (e.g., Riedel). In this study, civic engagement is conceptualized as encompassing both a behavioral component, including activities such as volunteering, organizational involvement, and political participation, and an attitudinal component of social responsibility. Accordingly, civic engagement encompasses citizens' sense of concern and obligation to others, which spurs them to act for communal benefit.

Debating the Impacts of Mandated Service for Adolescents

There is some evidence that civic engagement during adolescence is linked to continued involvement through adulthood (Balsano, 2005; Smith, 1999; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). Youniss, McLellan and Yates suggest that involvement in civic activities helps to cultivate a civic identity leading to continued involvement. They further suggest that activities that serve to develop a civic identity, such as volunteering, counter the trend toward unfettered individualism that scholars such as Arai and Pedlar (2003), Bellah et al. (1996) and Putnam (2000) suggest threatens social cohesion. While Youniss, McLellan, and Yates do not distinguish between mandated and non-mandated service requirements, some research suggests that this may be an important distinction.

In Canada, the United States, and Australia, some researchers have found that mandated community service inspires civic engagement (Hart et al., 2007; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007; Metz & Youniss, 2003, 2005). For example, a study of Ontario university students compared a cohort of students required to perform mandatory community service to a cohort that did not, in terms of their attitudes toward volunteering and civic engagement a few months after high school graduation (Henderson et al.). The authors found that while the cohort required to perform community service had a higher participation rate in community service activities, both cohorts of students exhibited similarly posi-

tive attitudes toward both civic engagement and volunteering. Metz and Youniss (2005) note in particular the benefits of mandated community service for students who are less inclined to serve – defined in this case as students who had no volunteer experience prior to beginning their mandated service, and who delayed beginning their service until their final year before graduation. In their study, these less-inclined students, once compelled to become involved in community service, experienced firsthand the benefits of doing so, and were likely to stay involved and report intentions to continue civic involvement into adulthood. While more-inclined adolescents similarly reported intentions to continue their involvement, they were likely to do so regardless of whether they had been required to perform community service. Thus, Metz and Youniss suggest that required service can engender adolescents to ongoing citizen engagement and may be a particularly powerful method of doing so for students who have no previous volunteer experience. They write:

> …for students who might otherwise not do service, the requirement had a positive impact, suggesting that the requirement operates as a form of recruitment that affords these students a novel opportunity to experience themselves as responsible civic actors (p. 431).

In contrast, other scholars assert that participants' resentment of mandated "volunteerism" leads to erosion of their civic attitudes and behaviors (Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999; Warburton & Smith, 2003). Warburton and Smith studied Australian adults and high school students mandated to perform community service through governmental mutual obligation or active citizenship policies. Their results suggest that compelling individuals to engage in community service may result in resentment and lack of motivation to volunteer when not obligated to do so. More specifically, their research indicates that mandated community service, predicated as it is by lack of choice and agency, impedes development of the behaviors and attitudes that comprise civic engagement. In addition, Warburton and Smith suggest that community service that is mandated may be less fulfilling because participants in these programs do not feel that they experience personal or social benefits from their involvement. In other words, the requirement to volunteer is likely to be the primary reason for becoming involved, from both the perspectives of participants and organizers, and thus the other benefits of involvement in community service may not be recognized or celebrated by either group.

Mixed research findings about the success of community service programs in engendering civic engagement may be due to factors beyond the voluntary or non-voluntary nature of community service programs (McLellan & Youniss, 2003; Riedel, 2002), and in particular, the quality of the experience. For example, some community service programs are highly structured and may include opportunities for reflecting on the service experiences or to align service experiences with a relevant curriculum, while others give students responsibility for arranging their service participation with little involvement by the school or feedback from the student. Both McLellan and Youniss and Riedel suggest that these contexts may be powerful factors influencing the quality of the community service experience. Further, Taylor and Pancer (2007) suggest that the quality of one's volunteer or

service experience may influence the individual's desire to continue volunteering. To explore this assertion, they developed an Inventory of Service Experience (ISE) to assess the quality of experience and its link to continued voluntary service. In their assessment tool, quality of experience is assessed by examining the support provided by the organization where community service is performed, as well as from family and friends. In addition, quality of experience is linked to the impacts of five types of possible outcomes of community service activities: formation of positive social relationships, feelings that service has made a difference, acquisition of new skills, exposure to career possibilities, and enjoyment. Based on their findings from a sample of Canadian university students engaged in service-learning, Taylor and Pancer concluded that quality of experience is closely linked to continued volunteering. They wrote, "…the kind of experiences one has while serving in the community may play a critical role in determining the impact that community service will have on the individual" (p. 338).

The important role of quality of experience and its influence on continued volunteering is also evident within studies that focus on those who have freely chosen to volunteer (e.g., Arai, 1996, 2000; Arai & Pedlar, 1997). In the works by Arai and Pedlar, the quality of volunteers' experience is linked to being involved in activities that are meaningful to them, having some degree of ownership through involvement in governance and decision-making, and feeling the organization is able to maintain focus on its mission. It is notable that many of these traits characterizing high-quality experiences, such as the sense of contribution to a group, enjoyment, and forming social relationships, are also identified as durable benefits in Stebbins' extensive work related to serious leisure (1982, 1992, 2001, 2007), and on volunteering more specifically (1996). Thus, individuals whose volunteering can be characterized as serious leisure may have particular potential to have the types of experiences that can be linked to continued civic engagement. This idea is explored further later in the discussion.

Other Factors Influencing Civic Engagement

Complicating debate about the impacts of policies mandating community service in high schools on future civic participation are the many other factors that can influence adolescents' perceptions and experiences of civic engagement. In particular, religiosity, parents' volunteer activities, and students' extracurricular involvement have been linked to volunteerism and social responsibility of high school students and young adults (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Metz & Youniss, 2003, 2005; Smith, 1999). For example, Smith described extracurricular involvement as akin to voluntary involvement, "[l]ike voluntary associations in the adult world, extracurricular activities provide young people the opportunity to interact and connect with a group of individuals in the pursuit of common goals" (p. 555). Smith's longitudinal research with students during and after completing high school reveals that extracurricular involvement, religious participation, and close familial connections were all significant predictors of civic participation (measured as volunteer or community service work and voting) in young adulthood. She suggests that these activities serve to socialize youth to social capital, thus facilitating ongoing commitment to civic activity. Similarly, Crystal and DeBell's

research in the American public school system with students in grades 6, 8, and 10 suggested that religious participation led to increases in both behavioral (community service) and attitudinal (social responsibility and citizenship) dimensions of civic engagement. They suggested that religious valuation is a form of social capital, and that religious involvement is often accompanied by a focus on cooperative action and a sense that one should contribute to solving communal problems. Most recently, in his Dutch study of parents and children, Bekkers (2007) found evidence to support intergenerational transmission of volunteering from parents to children, persisting into adulthood. He asserted that parents who volunteer provide a model for voluntary behavior, facilitate opportunities for their children to volunteer, and introduce and involve their children in community life, thus stimulating civic engagement in them.

Mandated Service, Volunteering and Serious Leisure

The qualities that characterize both volunteering and positive mandated community service experiences are very similar. Included among the benefits of mandated community service, Taylor and Pancer (2007) identified experiences of enjoyment, the feeling of making a difference, and the formation of new social relationships. These outcomes align well with the durable personal and social benefits of serious leisure, such as personal enrichment and sense of connectedness (Stebbins, 1996, 2007). Indeed, Stebbins (2007) defines serious leisure as:

> the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience (p. 5).

Stebbins (1982) originally coined the term serious leisure to refer to a specific group of leisure pursuits, including career volunteering. Serious leisure is characterized by the following qualities: adoption of a unique ethos of common attitudes, values and practices; the occasional need to persevere; the need for specialized knowledge, training or skill; the ability to follow a leisure career in the endeavor; the experience of personal and social rewards; and strong identification with the pursuit. Because of the highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling nature of these activities, Stebbins (1992) suggests that the rewarding experiences enjoyed by career volunteers constitute a significant reward, and that the experience of these intrinsic rewards is consistent with a leisure experience. Thus, serious leisure and civic participation are linked through the enriching experiences enjoyed by volunteers, and as noted earlier, these types of high-quality experiences may lead to ongoing civic engagement. In addition, career volunteering, as a form of serious leisure, often nurtures development of common attitudes and values associated with social responsibility (Stebbins, 1996). Finally, both volunteering and serious leisure are, by definition, uncoerced and satisfying activities (Stebbins, 2000).

A key distinction between mandated community service and volunteering is the freely-chosen nature of the latter activity compared to the compulsory nature of the former. Despite the historical alignment of volunteerism with leisure, obligation is often present to some degree within volunteerism. In the context of

career volunteerism as serious leisure, Stebbins (2007) notes that the feelings of obligation that accompany serious leisure pursuits are typically related to the high levels of commitment characteristic of serious leisure participation, which lead to its many rewards. Stebbins (2000) writes, "leisure activities occasionally or frequently have an obligatory side that some participants nonetheless experience as part of leisure, but that other participants experience as offensive, chiefly because it effectively robs the activities of the essential quality of leisure choice" (p. 152). When civic participation is mandated, the obligatory aspect may overshadow the experience of civic participation as leisure. However, this is not always the case. For example, a study of museum volunteers – including college students required to "volunteer" as part of their educational programs – found that volunteering was most commonly an enjoyable and leisure-like experience even for those who were obligated to participate (Holmes, 2006). Indeed, whether a volunteer activity is classified as leisure varies depending on the point of view of the individual (Parker, 1992; Stebbins, 1996). Ultimately, whether individuals perceive their ongoing involvement in a service activity as obligatory or not, the qualities of their experience and the rewards it provides will play an important part.

The current study focuses on undergraduate students enrolled at a major Ontario university who were required to perform mandatory community service while in high school. Of particular interest in this study are these university students' attitudes towards social responsibility and their current participation in volunteering, and how these aspects of civic engagement may be linked to their experiences of mandatory community service while in high school.

Methods

In the province of Ontario, Canada, a requirement was introduced in high schools in 1999 that students must complete 40 hours of community service prior to graduation. The document *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999) describes the purpose of community involvement activities as, "to encourage students to develop awareness and understanding of civic responsibility and of the role they can play and the contributions they can make in supporting and strengthening their communities" (p. 9). Students' community service activities must be performed without remuneration or course credit, and may encompass a broad range of activities in business, not-for-profit, public, and informal settings. Local school boards are responsible for defining admissible community service activities in their jurisdictions.

Sample

The study was limited to just those undergraduate university students who had been required to perform community service while students at Ontario high schools. The sample was comprised of undergraduate students at a major university in southwestern Ontario who were enrolled in classes from a variety of disciplines including health sciences, arts, social sciences, engineering, mathematics, and natural sciences during the summer and fall semesters of 2007. Individuals who were qualified to participate were asked to voluntarily complete a self-ad-

ministered questionnaire during class time. A total of 865 students in 13 different classes comprised the survey population.

The questionnaire included four sections focusing on: aspects of the students' experience of mandatory community service in high school and the quality of this experience; their volunteer activity since leaving high school; their current attitudes towards social responsibility; and other factors that may influence their civic engagement, such as their religiosity and parents' volunteer activity, as well as some basic demographic indicators.

Measures

To measure the perceived quality of students' mandatory community service experience, a scale was adapted from the Inventory of Service Experience (ISE) developed by Taylor and Pancer (2007). The modified, 17-item scale was comprised of three subscales pertaining to dimensions of the quality of volunteer experience: (1) *making a difference* (6 items), (2) *relations with others* (5 items), and (3) *enjoyment* (6 items). Sample scale items corresponding to the above dimensions include: "I felt my participation helped to make a difference", "I became friends with people I met", and "The organizations I volunteered with had a fun atmosphere", respectively. In each case, survey participants assessed each item using a 5-point, Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Taylor and Pancer reported that the three subscales had reliabilities of .91, .75, and .91, respectively, and overall, the reliability of the scale was .91.

Attitudes towards civic engagement were measured using the personal and social responsibility scale (PSRS) developed by Conrad and Hedin (1981). The scale was abbreviated and the wording modified to fit the context of this study. Further, to establish consistency with the other scaled questions in the survey, the response options in the scale were altered from a structured alternative format to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The 14-item scale envisions socially responsible behavior as being comprised of four dimensions: (1) *social welfare*, based on 4 items, is the degree to which one feels concern for societal problems; (2) *duty*, based on 4 items, is one's sense of obligation to contribute to an amelioration of these issues; (3) *competence*, based on 3 items, is allowing one to act upon one's sense of responsibility; and (4) a sense of *efficacy*, based on 3 items, is assuring one that their actions can provoke change. Sample items from each dimension of the modified PSRS include: "I am interested in doing something about problems in the community", "I feel bad when I let down people who depend on me", "I am good at helping people", and "I feel I would be able to help solve problems in the community", respectively. The PSRS has often been used in studies exploring social responsibility in youth and adolescents (e.g., Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000; Taylor, LoSciuto, Fox, Hilbert, & Sonkowsky, 1999). The scale is characterized as having high construct validity, and the reliability of the original PSRS scale in a study involving seventh graders was .83 (Conrad & Hedin, 1981).

An index of ongoing voluntary activity was created by summing responses on two four-point scales describing students' frequency of volunteer activity: (a) immediately after completing their mandatory community service requirements

and (b) currently (i.e., within the 12 months preceding the survey). A weighting factor was applied to frequency of current volunteering based on the number of years since completing the mandatory community service to privilege longer commitments to continued volunteering. The index ranges from 0 (representing no volunteer activity subsequent to completing mandatory community service) to a potential high score of 32, representing more than 15 hours per month of volunteer activity both immediately following completion of mandatory community service as well as the maximum number of years afterwards.

Information about other factors suggested in the literature that may influence students' propensity to volunteer and/or their attitudes of social responsibility were also gathered. First, the students were asked to indicate whether or not each of their parents were involved in volunteer activity (where 0="no" and 1="yes") to assess if their engagement had a role modeling effect. To capture a sense of the students' religiosity, an index was created by summing their responses to two 5-point scales describing: (a) their frequency of attendance at religious services from "never" (value=1) to "once a week or more" (value=5), and (b) the perceived importance they placed on religion from "not at all important" (value=1) to "very important" (value=5). Similarly, the students' participation in high school extra-curricular activities was measured using an index created by summing responses on three 5-point scales based on students' reported frequency of participation (from 1="never" to 5="daily") in each of school sports, student government, and school clubs and organizations. For those students who had volunteer experience prior to beginning their mandated service, a simple binary variable was created where those students with no prior volunteer experience were coded "0" and those who did have prior experience were coded "1". Finally, the students were asked to describe the length of time it took to accumulate their minimum 40 hours of mandatory community service by reporting when it began and when it was completed, and the total number of different organizations with which they worked.

Results

Of the potential 865 actually students present in the 13 classes selected and who qualified, a total of 654 students participated in the study, representing a response rate of approximately 76%. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 27 years (MEAN=19.51, SD=1.19) and over half of the participants were female (54.0%). As indicated in Table 1, mandatory community service was concentrated in the first few years of high school for the students involved in this study. More than half of the students (55.8%) began their mandatory community service before the end of grade 9, and by the end of grade 11, almost two-thirds (64.4%) had completed their requisite 40 hours. Most often, their service was provided to two or more organizations (79.0%). Just over half of the participants (52.8%) had volunteered prior to their mandatory community service experience, and a similar percentage (56.1%) continued to volunteer immediately afterwards.

The Inventory of Service Experience scale, used to examine the quality of students' mandatory community service experiences, had high internal reliability (α=.93) as did each of its dimensions, enjoyment, relations with others, and making a difference (see Table 2). On average, the students perceived the quality of

Table 1: Characteristics of Students' Mandatory Community Service

Characteristic Attribute	n	Pct.
When mandatory community service *began*		
Before end of grade 9	360	55.8
Before end of grade 10	148	22.9
Before end of grade 11	91	14.1
Before end of grade 12	46	7.1
When mandatory community service *ended*		
Before end of grade 9	82	12.7
Before end of grade 10	159	24.7
Before end of grade 11	174	27.0
Before end of grade 12	230	35.7
Number of different organizations		
One	133	21.0
Two	190	30.0
Three	155	24.4
Four or more	156	24.6

all aspects of their mandatory community service fairly positively, especially relations with others and enjoyment, with their sense of making a difference (M=3.50, SD=.73) falling only slightly below the other two dimensions. All three aspects were highly interrelated (r>.68, p<.001) indicating that if the quality of one aspect was experienced positively, so too were the others.

Turning to the students' attitude towards their civic responsibility as reflected in the dimensions of the Personal and Social Responsibility Scale, the scale showed good internal consistency overall (α=.78) as well as for each of their feelings of duty and social welfare (see Table 2). With only three items comprising the other two dimensions – efficacy and competence – calculating reliability measures was not applicable. The sense of duty that the students felt towards their civic responsibility was rated much higher on average (M=4.28, SD=.52) than other aspects of their mandatory community service, but in each case, there was general consensus in their opinions as evidenced by the comparatively lower variances in their responses.

After completing the minimum required hours of mandatory community service, over half of the students (56.1%) continued their civic participation by volunteering, and over half (54.0%) were currently volunteering (i.e., in the year prior to their participation in the study) (see Table 3). Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of the students who did not continue to volunteer immediately following their mandatory community service in high school were also among those who were not currently volunteering now that they were enrolled in university. Similarly, those who continued to volunteer during high school, principally were among those who were still volunteering currently (α^2=167.545, p<.001).

Table 2: Summary Description of Students' Mandatory Community Service Experience and Their Sense of Personal and Social Responsibility

Experience and Civic Engagement Dimension[a]	n	Mean[b]	SD	α[c]
Quality of Experience (ISE)				
Relations with others (5)	645	3.78	.65	.81
Enjoyment (6)	647	3.72	.76	.89
Making a difference (6)	646	3.50	.73	.85
Overall scale	**647**	**3.66**	**.65**	**.93**
Civic Responsibility (PSR Scale)				
Duty (4)	641	4.28	.52	.72
Social welfare (4)	641	3.83	.60	.75
Efficacy (3)	635	3.64	.61	NA
Competency (3)	638	3.61	.59	NA
Overall scale	**641**	**3.84**	**.41**	**.78**

[a] Number of items comprising scale shown in parentheses

[b] Items in scales measured along 5-point Likert scale where 1="strongly disagree" and 5="strongly agree"

[c] Cronbach's alpha (α)

Table 3: Volunteer Activity by Students Since Completing Mandatory Community Service

Ongoing Volunteer Activity	n	Pct.
Continued volunteer activity after completing mandatory community service		
Did not volunteer	282	43.9
Volunteered less than 1 hour/month	36	5.6
Volunteered 1 to 4 hours/month	110	17.1
Volunteered 5 to 15 hours/month	161	25.0
Volunteered over 15 hours/month	54	8.4
Currently engaged in volunteer activity (within previous 12 months)		
Did not volunteer	296	46.0
Volunteered less than 1 hour/month	46	7.1
Volunteered 1 to 4 hours/month	119	18.5
Volunteered 5 to 15 hours/month	127	19.7
Volunteered over 15 hours/month	56	8.7

Overall, quality of experience of mandatory community service was positively related with both overall attitude towards social responsibility (r=.457, p<.001) and the index of ongoing volunteering (r=.278, p<.001). It appears, then, that the higher the perceived quality of the mandatory community service experience, the stronger the attitude toward social responsibility and the greater the commitment to subsequent volunteer engagement. Hence, as we might expect, holding socially responsible attitudes and engaging in ongoing volunteering were also significantly related (r=.189, p<.001); however, the relatively lower correlation suggests that these attitudinal and behavioral aspects of civic engagement are linked to the quality of the mandatory community service experience in different ways. The perceived quality of the mandatory volunteering experience also differed depending on whether or not the students had volunteered prior to their community service. Those who had volunteered before beginning their mandatory community service perceived the quality of their community service experiences as significantly higher (M=3.83, SD=.57) than those students for whom mandatory community service was their first introduction to community service (M=3.47, SD=.68) (t=-7.249, p<.001). In addition, the students with prior volunteer experience rated their overall sense of personal and social responsibility significantly higher (M=3.87, SD=.42) than those without prior experience (M=3.80, SD=.40) (t=-2.351, p=.019).

Factors Predicting Civic Engagement

In order to understand the combined effect of these various factors on civic engagement, two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess the contribution that each, especially the perceived quality of the mandatory community service, had on ongoing voluntary participation and attitude towards civic engagement. In each case, *personal* factors such as demographics and those associated with the immediate influence of the participants' home and family (e.g., parental voluntary involvement, religiosity) were entered into the model first, followed by *external* factors associated with the participants' school and community (e.g., extracurricular activity in high school, prior volunteering). Finally, the participants' perception of the overall quality of their mandatory community service was entered last to determine if it explained a significant proportion of civic engagement above and beyond the other factors (see Tables 4 and 5). Of note, among external factors considered for inclusion, one was the amount of time passed since the participants had completed their mandatory community service programs. As more time passed, there could be diminishing effects on civic engagement. Interestingly, the number of years that had passed since the students completed their mandatory community service was *positively* related to current volunteering and attitude toward civic responsibility. However, in both instances, the relationship was primarily attributable to whether or not the participant reported any volunteering experience prior to mandatory community service, and once it was taken into account, the time passed since completing the mandatory community service was unrelated to civic engagement. Hence, prior volunteer experience was selected for the regression models – it was judged to be the more important explanatory factor.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Ongoing Volunteering

Dimension Factor	R² change	Total R²	F change	β	p
1. Home/demographics	.069	.069	12.288		<.001
Female[a]				.131	.001
Mother volunteered[a]				.045	.406
Father volunteered[a]				-.018	.741
Religiosity				.086	.026
2. School/community	.111	.180	23.206		<.001
Extracurricular activities				.175	<.001
Prior volunteering[a]				.219	<.001
3. Quality of experience	.009	.189	27.273		<.001
Quality of experience				.114	.005

[a] binary variables

Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Attitude Towards Civic Responsibility

Dimension Factor	R² change	Total R²	F change	β	p
1. Home/demographics	.024	.024	4.769		.001
Female[a]				-.012	.750
Mother volunteered[a]				.001	.979
Father volunteered[a]				-.060	.257
Religiosity				.049	.186
2. School/community	.054	.078	9.719		<.001
Extracurricular activities				.164	<.001
Prior volunteering[a]				-.079	.038
3. Quality of experience	.151	.229	27.129		<.001
Quality of experience				. 427	<.001

[a] binary variables

For ongoing volunteering after completing mandatory community service, the home/demographic factors together accounted for a significant amount of variation (6.9%), but only gender (being female) (β=.131, p=.001) and religiosity (β=.086, p=.026) were significantly related to ongoing volunteering (see Table 4). Surprisingly, parental participation in volunteering had no effect on the students' ongoing volunteering despite the role modeling that their parents provided. School/community factors accounted for an additional 11.1% of the variation with both extracurricular participation (β=.175, p<.001) and especially prior volunteering (β=.219, p<.001) being significant predictors of ongoing volunteering. After controlling for home and community-related factors, an additional 0.9% (p<.001) of the variance in ongoing volunteering was explained by the quality of experience of students' mandatory community service experience, but was a less important factor (β=.114, p=.005) than either of the school/community factors.

When the influence of these same factors on attitude towards civic responsibility is considered, it is quite different from their influence on ongoing volunteering. In this case, while the combined effect of home and demographic factors predicted a significant amount of the variance (2.4%) in attitudes towards civic responsibility, no single factor (i.e., gender, having parents who volunteer, or religiosity) was significant (see Table 5). With respect to the school and community factors, which accounted for an additional 5.4% of the variance, extracurricular involvement (β=.164, p<.001) and prior volunteering (β=-.079, p=.038) were both significantly related to the students' attitudes of social responsibility. The negative beta value describing the influence of prior volunteering on social responsibility suggests that prior volunteer experience before beginning mandatory community service is associated with weaker attitudes of social responsibility. After controlling for these home and community-related factors, a further 15.1% (p<.001) of the variance in attitudes towards social responsibility was explained by the perceived quality of students' mandatory community service experience, which showed to be, by far, the most important factor in explaining the students' attitudes (β=.427, p<.001).

It is evident that the students' perception of the quality of their mandatory community service experience is an extremely powerful predictor of their attitudes towards social responsibility. In contrast, ongoing volunteering is heavily influenced by a greater range of factors, with school and community factors having the most pronounced effects. Also worthy of note is the very different influence of volunteer experience prior to mandated community service on ongoing volunteering and the subsequent development of socially-responsible attitudes. With respect to ongoing volunteering, a history of volunteerism prior to performing mandatory community service is a significant predictor of ongoing volunteering, while such a history is much less strongly related to attitudes towards civic responsibility. Some possible reasons for this are suggested in the discussion.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research questions explored in this study focused on the relationship between the quality of experience students had during their mandated service performed in high school and their subsequent civic engagement. While previous re-

search notes the importance of factors such as religiosity (Crystal & DeBell, 2002; Smith, 1999), having parents who volunteer (Bekkers, 2007), and extracurricular involvement (Smith, 1999; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997), the influence of quality of experience on civic engagement remains significant even after accounting for these factors. This finding suggests that for all students, opportunities for high-quality community service experiences provide powerful opportunities for fostering civic engagement.

We found that community service experiences, when perceived as being of high quality, may engender both a sense of civic responsibility, captured here in the attitudes toward social responsibility, and an ongoing desire to contribute through participation in volunteering. This finding is consistent with other scholars' assertions that youth civic participation through organizational membership or volunteering leads to civic engagement in adults (Hart et al., 2007; Henderson et al., 2007; Metz & Youniss, 2005; Smith, 1999; Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1997), although an important distinction is made here between attitudes and behavior related to civic participation. While the results suggest that high quality community service experiences are related to both participation in volunteering and attitudes of civic responsibility, the effects of community service experience on these two facets of civic engagement are markedly different, with the perceived quality of the experience more strongly linked to holding socially responsible attitudes than to ongoing volunteering. While other research has found a strong relationship between required service at the high school level and ongoing volunteering (e.g., Hart et al., 2007), in this study the relationship between mandatory community service and ongoing volunteering is less pronounced. While the quality of the experience is clearly important, so are other factors, most notably prior volunteering.

Mandated community service experiences, even those of high quality, have a notably greater influence on attitudes than behavior. Research suggests that behavioral change, which requires considerable time and energy, typically occurs after contemplation and preparation for such change (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). With this in mind, perhaps mandated service programs are not of a sufficient duration to provoke behavioral change, although they may influence attitudes. However, mandated community service programs may cultivate consciousness-raising and self re-evaluation, which have been identified as some of the antecedent processes of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984). This may explain why factors relevant over the longer term, such as religiosity and prior volunteering, had a stronger influence on ongoing volunteering than on development of attitudes of social responsibility. Social psychologists have further noted that behavior is influenced by many factors, including one's attitudes and previous behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Driver, 1992). According to Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, behavior is shaped by attitudes as well as social pressure and behavioral control. It is perhaps notable that students involved in this study were university undergraduates, which is for many a tumultuous time that may involve moving away from one's home community and/or living independently for the first time. Thus, although many students do volunteer while in university, many other students may not volunteer at this time of transition even though they may

think positively about volunteering and intend to volunteer in the future. The factors affecting university students' reported levels of volunteer activity may indeed be more complex than those influencing their attitudes of social responsibility, and may partially account for the different relationships between each of these facets of civic engagement and quality of experience.

While all of the students involved in the study were required to perform community service, the obligated nature of that mandated service may have been felt more profoundly by some students. For example, the results of the regression analysis revealed that students who volunteered prior to beginning their mandatory community service had lower levels of social responsibility than those with no previous civic participation. Perhaps, for these students, the experience of being compelled to perform community service may have dampened their sense of social responsibility, since mandated service is performed not from a sense of duty (one of the dimensions of the SPRS), but rather from obligation. Similarly, we noted in an earlier comparison that students who had never volunteered prior to beginning their community service experience tended to have lower quality of experiences than students who had previous volunteered. Again these students may have been particularly conscious of the mandated nature of their community service and this may have influenced their quality of experience. These explanations would be consistent with Warburton and Smith (2003), who found that mandating community service results in resentment as well as experiences that are less fulfilling than those available to true volunteers. As Stebbins (2000) suggests, obligatory aspects of mandated community service may overshadow students' experiences of community service as leisure, and thus may have an impact on the quality of their experience.

In contrast to the findings of this study, Metz and Youniss (2005) suggest that students less inclined to volunteer are those who most benefit from mandated community service programs. In their study, these students reported considerable gains in terms of intentions to be civically involved in the future, while students who had voluntarily or readily engaged in community service were likely to report intentions to continue their civic behaviors whether they participated in a mandatory community service program or not. However, it is worthy to note that their study measured civic engagement through intentions to vote and be involved civically once they had graduated from high school. This type of measure, focused as it is on potential future behavior, may more closely align with the attitudinal rather than the behavioral dimension of civic engagement. If this is true, then the results of the current study align rather well with those of Metz and Youniss, as both suggest that mandated community service programs are closely linked to the development of attitudes related to civic engagement, regardless of students' previous civic participation.

We cannot say whether positive experiences in mandatory community service programs engender civic engagement, or whether higher levels of civic engagement held by students are more likely to lead to positive community service experiences. However, it is evident that a strong link exists between the perceived quality of community service experience and ongoing civic engagement. Building on this finding, we might explore what factors cause some students to experience

community service more positively than others. This study found no relationship between logistical factors of the community service experience, such as its duration or the number of organizations between which the required service was divided. Are there perhaps less tangible ways in which students' approach to community service facilitated more positive experiences?

The literature review noted the alignment between the benefits often associated with volunteering and the rewards of serious leisure. We suggest that the quality of mandatory community service experience might be related to approaching civic participation—including mandatory service as well as volunteering—as serious leisure. This assertion finds some support in the results of this study. For example, students who approached civic participation in a career-like manner (through ongoing volunteering before and/or after their mandated participation) perceived their experiences as of higher quality than those whose involvement was more sporadic. Similarly, those students who reported high quality service experiences in terms of enjoyment, relations with others, and making a difference, are experiencing personal and social rewards that are also associated with serious leisure. If there is a link between quality of experience and serious leisure, then perhaps quality of community service experience may be addressed by fostering experiences of mandated community service *as* serious leisure. Holmes (2006) suggests that mandated experiences are not necessarily incompatible with serious leisure. Indeed, many of the museum volunteers involved in her research regarded their mandatory service involvement as a rewarding and enjoyable form of leisure consistent with aspects of serious leisure. In seeking to improve quality of experience for those mandated to perform mandatory community service, we might draw on research about what constitutes a rewarding and enjoyable experience in the volunteer sphere—factors such as involvement in activities and causes that are personally meaningful and opportunities to participate in organizational decision-making and other forms of governance (Arai, 1996; Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Arai, 2000; Glover, 2004). In aligning mandatory community service experiences with serious leisure, our aim is that these experiences may cultivate commitment to volunteer organizations and ideals, rather than feelings of duty to perform community service. Within serious leisure, commitment is characterized by attachment, reward and flexibility—all aspects that make ongoing participation attractive (Stebbins, 1992, 2007).

Implications for Practice and Policy

If we are interested in facilitating civic engagement then we need to consider some broader issues in addition to those policies that mandate community service. This study suggests some practical implications for those who design, facilitate, or set policy related to mandated community service programs for high school students. These implications stem from the finding that it is the nature of students' experiences, not merely their participation in community service, which leads to ongoing civic engagement. Thus, policy related to mandatory community service programs should include guidelines and allocate resources to create meaningful experiences for students engaged in mandatory service. Improving the quality of students' experience, particularly for those with no previous volunteer experience,

may stimulate ongoing civic participation and social responsibility. If we consider that aligning mandated community service with serious leisure might increase quality of experience, the question becomes: How can we embed serious leisure experiences within the context of mandated community service? Indeed, as Rojek (2002) has suggested, "serious leisure is an underdeveloped asset in social policy" (p. 25). Accordingly, perhaps mandated community service programs could be designed in ways that would facilitate experiences that parallel the benefits of serious leisure. For example, paralleling the social rewards of serious leisure, community service experiences may be designed in ways that offer students the opportunity to contribute to the development of a group and experience a sense of group accomplishment. The personal rewards of serious leisure, such as self-expression and personal enrichment (cherished experiences), offer similar potential to enhance the quality of experience for students engaged in mandatory service. Previous research (e.g., Arai, 1996; Arai & Pedlar, 1997; Glover, 2004) indicated that involving volunteers in visioning (i.e., creating ownership in the endeavor) and decision-making was essential to their experiences of benefits and their engagement as career volunteers.

Suggesting that voluntary organizations provide these rich experiences for adolescents presupposes that they have the resources to do so. However, voluntary sector organizations typically have very limited human and financial resources. Many of these organizations are currently grappling with the downloading of social services traditionally provided by government, along with increasingly unstable and volatile funding coupled with cumbersome accountability requirements (Richmond & Shields, 2004; Scott, 2003; White, 2003). Further, providing the necessary human resources to accommodate adolescent volunteers and provide them with high-quality experiences is extremely challenging, particularly considering that 45% of voluntary organizations reported in 2003 that they had no paid staff and thus rely exclusively on volunteers (Hall et al., 2004). Thus, if we consider high-quality community service experiences to be important in nurturing ongoing volunteerism and attitudes of social responsibility, the voluntary sector must be provided with adequate resources to enable such experiences.

Future Research

The findings suggest important avenues for future research. In this study, serious leisure theory did not inform survey design, so there is an opportunity to explore more explicitly how embedding aspects of serious leisure within community service may foster civic engagement. Further, a longitudinal study exploring students' mandatory community service experiences in detail, along with their civic engagement, would further understanding of the influence of the quality of experience on civic participation and social responsibility. In particular, such a study would permit examination of how students' attitudes of social responsibility are influenced by mandated community service, and how strong attitudes of social responsibility influence perceptions or experiences of mandatory community service. A longitudinal study design would also minimize the potential for reliability issues associated with students' ability to recall their experiences.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of designing and facilitating high quality experiences for students mandated to perform community service if we wish to foster social responsibility and ongoing civic engagement. Serious leisure may provide an avenue for students to experience the rewards and benefits associated with civic participation. At the same time, understanding the potential for mandated service to stimulate civic engagement would be furthered by an exploration of the nature of students' mandated community service experiences, and particularly how the obligatory aspects change the experience.

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