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Volunteers of National Youth Service in Israel: A Study on Motivation for Service, Social Attitudes and Volunteers' Satisfaction

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**Center for Social Development
Global Service Institute**



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George Warren Brown School of Social Work

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Translated from original Hebrew text.

Executive Summary

Volunteers of National Youth Service in Israel: A Study on Motivation for Service, Social Attitudes and Volunteers' Satisfaction

National Youth Service (NYS) in Israel allows youth, who are not conscripted into the Israeli Defense Forces, to volunteer for a period of one to two years, in order to perform various civilian duties. In this research, we examined questions regarding motivations for service, social attitudes and satisfaction from service among NYS volunteers in Israel. With the exception of two studies that focused on the monetary benefits of NYS (Nathanson, Gal, Bar-Tura, 2001; Amir, 2001) and a few smaller evaluations on the satisfactions from service (e.g. Harnik, 2001), no comprehensive research has yet been conducted regarding the non-monetary benefits of voluntary service in Israel. We argue that national service has genuine non-monetary benefits for the volunteers as well as for the society. This argument is based on wide-ranging literature that looks upon civic or national service as an educational tool through which social attitudes are shaped (Sherraden & Gal, 1990) and "Bridging" Social Capital is developed (Putnam, 2000.)

We conducted a longitudinal study with approximately 450 national service volunteers. The majority of them were females that volunteered through the *Shlomit* organization. An anonymous questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the service year in 2001 and at the end of the service year in 2002. Following are the major findings: After a year of service, NYS volunteers show an intensification of positive attitudes toward tolerance, volunteering and community involvement, whereas attitudes toward government and democracy show no significant change. In addition, the main source of motivation for service was found to be the volunteers' will to serve the country and help people. Furthermore, most of the volunteers are satisfied from their service and believe that the main contributions of service are to the institutions where they served as well as to their personal and professional growth. Finally, respondents' expectations of service were found to be realistic and the majority of them think that they have materialized their abilities in the framework of service.

These findings are compared to studies conducted on civic service frameworks in the USA and Europe, as well as to other studies conducted in Israel (including youth prior to being drafted to military service, high school students participating in a service-learning program and earlier studies of volunteers in NYS in Israel.)

The encouraging findings of this research should be used in the ongoing public debate about the need to expand the national service into a universal civic service program at the national level.

Chapter 1: Introduction

National Youth Service (NYS) in Israel allows youth, ages 18-22, who are not conscripted into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), to volunteer for a period of one to two years. Since its establishment in 1971, the NYS has been operated by several NGO's, which recruit, train and place approximately 7,000 volunteers a year. The majority of the volunteers are Jewish religious women, but every year the amount of volunteers from different backgrounds increases. Most of the participants serve a period of one year, while 30% continue to serve for an additional year.

The comprehensive draft system to the Israel Defense Force,(IDF) has been in operation since Israel's independence in 1948. Although conscription is theoretically universal, recent studies conducted by the IDF indicate that by the year 2005, less than half of the annual cohort of 18-year-old Israeli citizens, men and women will in fact perform military service. Moreover, military service never encompassed all Israeli youth. Arab youth (both Muslims and Christians), Jewish religious women and Jewish orthodox males were either partially or exclusively exempted from service.

Shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel, the issue of national service for Jewish religious women who were exempted from military service was addressed by the *Knesset* (Israel's Parliament). In 1953, the *Knesset* legislated the Law of National Service (*Sherut Leumi* Law, 1953), which made two-year national service compulsory for those young women who were exempted from military service on religious grounds. However at the time, no particular Ministry was authorized to administer this alternative civic service, and indeed this law was not implemented until October 1971. It was at this time, 17 years after its initial legislation, that the Israel government granted a non-governmental, non-profit organization that was associated with the modern orthodox National Religious Party, the right to serve as the operating agency for voluntary national service (and not compulsory as originally proposed in the legislation).

Over the years several new NGOs were created, mostly for religiously observant young Jewish women. Nowadays there are five NGOs operating National Youth Service: "*Bat Ami – Aminadav*", "*Bat Ami- Alumah Emunah*", "The National Volunteer Association (NVA)", The National Service Unit of the Jerusalem Municipality and "*Shlomit*". Significantly, this last NGO is not exclusively for Jewish religious women or men but actually designed for all citizens who are not conscripted to the military. We chose to focus this research on the volunteers through *Shlomit*, because among its volunteers we find a higher representation of the people that make up the heterogenic and multicultural Israeli society. Furthermore, this heterogeneity allows us to compare the NYS in Israel to other national or civic service around the globe.

Following an appeal to the high court in 2001, a government temporary decision allowed 250 men that were not drafted by the IDF to volunteer and receive full monetary benefits (until 2003).^{P1} About 70 young men have already finished their first year of service; some of them even participated in this research. As we write these lines, around 150 men are volunteering and no decision has been taken yet as far as continuing their possibilities of service past August 2003. The number of Arab young men and women serving in NYS reached a height of approximately 60 in 2000 and dropped significantly since, following the October 2000 uprising. Only a small number of Arab young women are presently volunteering, out of a total potential volunteer population of approximately 8,500.

No comprehensive research has yet been conducted on national service in Israel ². A cost benefit-analysis that estimates the operation of an overall civic service in Israel, was conducted in 2001 (Nathanson, Gal, Bar- Tura, 2001) by the Israeli Institute for Economical & Social Research together with the Carmel Institute for Social Studies. This research measured the monetary benefits of service as well as the costs it bears on Israel's economy. The conclusion of this analysis was that over time, the monetary costs and the benefits balance out. A somewhat different analysis (Amir, 2001) arrived at different conclusions, nonetheless it explored only the monetary aspects of service. The present research complements the cost- benefit analyses, focusing this time on the non monetary benefits of service.

Around the world there are various forms and natures of civic service, some similar to the National Youth Service in Israel (McBride, Benitez, Sherraden, 2003). We chose to compare our findings to three such frameworks: The USA – AmeriCorps, the German *Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahr* (FSJ) and the Trans-European - European Volunteer Service (EVS). President Clinton established AmeriCorps in 1993, a program that allows American citizens of different ages to volunteer for a period of 12 months to strengthen America's communities through service (Aguirre International, 1997; 1999; 2000). A cost benefit analysis of AmeriCorps showed that for every US\$ 1 spent the country receives US\$ 1.66 in return. The European EVS was set up in 1996 as a transnational volunteer service. EVS offers the young people of Europe the opportunity to volunteer for a period of 6 to 12 months. The program seeks to promote European civic involvement as well as employment opportunities in the European labor market. (SOS – EVS, 1999).

^{P1P} Volunteers in National Service receive the same benefits as enlisted soldiers. The amount of benefits to be received at the end of service is determined by to the number of months completed, the minimum being 12 months. For those who serve over 21 months there are extra benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits)

² A number of smaller and specific evaluations were conducted over the years by the different organizations operating NYS (e.g. Harnik, 2001)

The oldest of these three civic service programs is the German FSJ. This program was established in 1954 as an organization that allows volunteers, aged 17 to 27, to serve for a period of 12 months in different welfare institutions in and outside of Germany. FSJ's main goal is to enhance the social awareness and responsibility amongst its volunteers.^{P3} (Wuestendoerfer & Arnold, 1998). Contrary to the AmeriCorps and the EVS where males and females volunteer in similar proportions, in the FSJ program most of the volunteers are females – akin to the NYS in Israel.

The comparison between these frameworks of service and the NYS in Israel, is based on three different studies (Aguirre International, 1997; 1999; 2000, Wuestendoerfer & Arnold, 1998; SOS – EVS, 1999). Each one of the studies looked into motivations for service, attitudes towards volunteering and community involvement as well as the development of life skills. These studies measured the impact of service on the volunteers' personal growth. Their assumption is that service may have an impact on the volunteers' attitudes and their life skills. Their findings do concur with their assumptions.

As mentioned earlier, contrary to the compulsory military service, the national service in Israel is voluntary. The mere fact that this is a voluntary service as well as the exposure that volunteers may have to people from different socio-economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds may have an impact on attitudes and perceptions of the volunteers. Different studies report about the impact of involvement in community activities on the shaping of youth's civic perceptions. (e.g. Callan, 1997; Hahn, 1998).

National service in Israel, as well as other voluntary frameworks (e.g. youth movements, *Shnat Sherut*- the pre-army service year or *Perach*- university students tutoring and mentoring school age students), is perceived as an educational tool by which social and civic attitudes can be shaped (Sherraden & Gal, 1990). However, no thorough empirical research has been conducted so far to prove this perception. Nevertheless, several studies have been conducted in Israel to examine the motivation to serve in the Israeli army (Gal & Mayseless, 1990) as well as youth attitudes towards national security and military service, including national service (Ezrahi & Gal, 1995; Mayseless, Gal & Fishof, 1989).

These studies indicated a high level of motivation for military service among men prior to being drafted. Among females, motivation for military service was found to be higher for secular than for religious young women. About a third of these women preferred to volunteer

^{P3P} The establishment of the FSJ happened parallel to the establishment of the *Zivildienst* in Germany, which is an alternative to the compulsory military service for men

to national service than to the military service.⁴ Furthermore, it was found that these youth emphasized the personal benefits that service could provide them (such as “self – fulfillment”) rather than their own contribution to society. In the present research we will compare the NYS volunteers’ motivations for service with those for military service. The main source of motivation for service found by a survey conducted by the NYS Unit of the Jerusalem Municipality, is the volunteers’ desire to give to society, to integrate in society and to materialize educational values (Harnik, 2001). These findings indicate different motivations to serve among NYS volunteers than among youth prior to being drafted to military service. In this present research we will examine and explore this issue.

Ichilov (2003) examined the impact of the Israeli nation-wide program *Mechuyavut Yishit* (“*Personal Commitment*”), a high school service-learning program, on the participants’ attitudes. Following a year-long participation in the program, this study showed changes in attitudes towards involvement in community and volunteering (many participants express desire to volunteer more hours than needed for credit), while no changes were reported in attitudes towards government and democracy (e.g. the ability of a citizen to have influence, the level of trust in governmental institutions). These findings strengthen the assumption that National Youth Service has an impact on attitudes towards involvement and volunteering. Regarding the findings where no changes were observed from this service-learning program, it would be interesting to explore this issue in our NYS sample. It could be assumed that a different pattern would be found due to the NYS’s unique characteristics (more intensive, longer commitment and the participant’s age.)

A basic concept that can help us understand the implications of the exposure to heterogenic populations on the change of attitudes is the concept of social capital. How much social capital one has can be defined as the number and strength of social relations that an individual or household can call upon (Putnam, 2000). Two main types of social capital can be distinguished: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. While bonding social capital relates to strong ties with family members, neighbors and friends that share similar demographic characteristics, bridging social capital relates to ties between heterogenic populations, i.e., people from different religions, nationalities, and geographical backgrounds.

Putnam (2000) claims that both types of social capital can be found in different institutions: the bonding social capital will be found in institutions such as private clubs and ethnic-based associations, while bridging social capital might be found in movements such as the civil rights movement of civic service programs. Thus, in organizations where there is exposure

⁴ Young women can be exempted from compulsory military service on religious grounds.

to heterogenic populations the Social Capital formed will be of the bridging type. In the framework of National Youth Service, some but not all of the volunteers are exposed to varied populations. In the present research, we shall explore whether the volunteers that were exposed to varied populations during their service do show a change in attitudes towards these populations. This could suggest what type of social capital NYS in Israel develops.

An additional possible impact that any volunteer service, e.g. National Youth Service, could have on its participants is the volunteers' sense of self-efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy was developed by Bandura at the end of the 70's (Bandura, 1977, 1986.) He defined self-efficacy as the individual's belief on his/her ability to successfully perform the needed task in order to achieve the expected outcome. This self-perceived sense of the individual is shaped by behaviors that gradually develop during the ongoing learning process, while the individual gathers information regarding his/her ability to perform in different situations. This concept is empirically tied to expressions of leadership and to situations where individuals are in charged of others (Smith & Forti, 1998). Hence, we can assume that the individual's exposure to experiences and situation where he/ she helps others could enhance a sense of self - efficacy.

The main limitation of this study is the lack of a control group. We believe that only a comparison to a matched group (by age, background information and so forth) whose participants did not take part in a year of service, could allow us to speak in terms of the impact of service. To find such a matched group would be very difficult, given that the vast majority of the group bearing similar characteristics to our research population is already participating in some kind of service (e.g. army service, service-year or pre-army year.)

In summary, the present research has a number of goals. First, we shall examine possible changes in NYS volunteers' attitudes at the end of a year of service. The research will focus on attitudes towards tolerance, involvement and volunteering, and government and democracy. Furthermore, we shall examine the sense of self-efficacy of volunteers at the beginning and at the end of their service. Our findings will be compared to studies conducted on civic service frameworks around the world. Finally, we will assess the volunteers' satisfaction from service, their perception of the benefit of service and their expectations of service.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Sample

The present research is a combination of a longitudinal and a cross-sectional study, that was conducted during the years 2000 – 2002. It conducted in two phases: The initial phase (during 2001) included 464 volunteers and the second phase (during 2002) included 440 volunteers. Following is a description of both samples:

Table 1: Description of the sample: First and second phase

		Phase 1	Phase 2
	Number of respondents (N)	464	440
	Number and % of respondents to both questionnaires	--	87 %20
Distribution by NGO	Bat Ami - Emunah & Alumah	%1.8	%0.7
	Agudah	%1.6	%0.5
	Shlomit	%92.3	%96.9
	Jerusalem Municipality Unit	%4.3	%1.9
Gender *	Male	--	%7.4
	Female	--	92.6%
Religion *	Christian	--	%1.4
	Jewish	--	%93.5
	Muslim	--	%2.6
	Druze	--	%0.2
	In process of conversion	--	%2.2
Level of religious observance	Secular	%30.2	%43.8
	Traditional	%57.7	%49
	Religious	%10.7	%6
	Orthodox	%1.4	%1.2
Economic status	Under National Average	%14	%19.8
	On National Average **	%69.2	%60.7
	Over National Average	%16.8	%19.5
Matriculation	No Matriculation	--	7%
	Partial Matriculation	--	25%
	Full Matriculation	--	68%
Area in which parents reside	North	%37.2	%25.7
	Central	%41.4	%39.3
	South	%18	%23.6
	West Bank and Gaza	%3.4	%2.5
Stage in service	Beginning of year 1	%78.3	--
	End of year 1 (final)	%1.4	%51.6
	End of year 1 (continuing)	%19.6	%28.4
	End of year 2	%0.7	%20

* These questions were only asked in phase 2 ** average monthly gross household income US\$ 3300

As we can conclude from Table 1, the majority of the respondents (92%) in our sample came from *Shlomit*. We can also observe that the sample is composed mainly of women⁶ (92.6%) and Jews (93.5%). Regarding the level of religious observance, about half (49-58%) of the respondents define themselves as traditional, 30- 40% as secular, 10 % as religious and 1% as orthodox. In phase 1, most of the respondents were at the beginning of their first year of service (78%), while in phase 2 most of the respondents were at the end of their first year of service.

The questionnaires were anonymous. Some of the respondents participated in both phases. In order to identify them for statistical purposes, we compared several items in the questionnaire: date of birth, number of siblings and location of father's birthplace. We identified 71 subjects (20%) who showed full correlation on these items in both questionnaires. In order to validate that these are indeed the same subjects, we conducted a sample check. The review of the characteristics of these respondents shows that they are similar to the characteristics of the whole sample (gender, economic status, area in which parents reside).

2.2 Research Instruments

In order to examine the research questions, a questionnaire was developed by the authors, which included queries about respondents' attitudes towards tolerance, voluntarism and civic engagement; community, government and democracy. Further questions dealing with sense of self-efficacy, motivation for volunteering, as well as questions related to placement of service and background information (e.g. socio-economic) were also included. On the first phase, a first version of the questionnaire was administered (called T1, see appendix 1) and on the second phase a second version (called T2, see appendix 2) was administered.

Both versions included identical questions about the volunteer's attitudes, similar questions regarding motivation for service, as well as questions to determine the socio-economic and background characteristics of the volunteers. In the second questionnaire, questions were added regarding the volunteers' satisfaction from different aspects of their service; as well as questions about the volunteers' expectations from service and about their self-perceived impact of service on the community and on themselves.

2.3 Research procedure

During the year 2000, a pilot research was conducted which included 218 volunteers. The purpose of this pilot was to test the research instruments and procedure. The actual research was launched in July – September 2001, when the first questionnaire was administered. The second questionnaire was administered during the months of May through July 2002.

In both phases, the questionnaires were administered to the volunteers over a period of a few weeks, typically on occasions of regional conventions that were held around the country. In nearly every occasion, the Carmel Institute's research staff administered the questionnaires. In the few occasions that this was not possible, NYS program staff administered the questionnaires.

2.4 Data Analysis

We divided the data into three segments: motivation for service, social attitudes of the volunteers and volunteer's satisfaction with the service experience.

1. Motivation for Service

The findings of phase 1 and 2 are presented by descriptive statistical indicators (means and standard deviations). Several t-tests were conducted to examine differences between different sub-groups by background variables.

Among the respondents of phase 2, we also examined the key motives of those volunteers who decided to continue for a second year of service.

2. Social Attitudes

In order to compare the respondents' attitudes from phase 1 to phase 2, we created four social-related indices, plus one index related to one's sense of self-efficacy. In addition to describing the attitude distributions in each phase, we also examined the significant differences between the two phases, using t-tests. A parallel test was conducted on the 71 respondents who filled out both questionnaires. Furthermore, we checked whether and to what extent the volunteers perceived changes in their attitudes by analyzing items appearing only in the second questionnaire (questions 51-55).

3. Satisfaction from Service

The issue of satisfaction was only tested in the second questionnaire, through seven items. These findings are described using means and standard deviations. The seven items were united into a single index, thus enabling comparisons between volunteers assigned to different placements, between volunteers referred to by different agents and between religious and secular volunteers.

The second questionnaire also comprised a series of questions regarding respondents' expectations of service and their perceptions of the impact of their service. We examine the distribution of these variables and their relation to the individuals' expectations using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Chapter 3: Findings

3.1 Motivation for Service

In both phases of the study the respondents were asked what their principal motives for joining National Service were. Questions regarding motivation are similar in both phases, but not identical. On phase 2 we added an additional question for those respondents who had decided to continue on a second year of service. Through this question we tried to ascertain the main motives for this decision.

Question 33 on phase 1 and question 29 on phase 2 were used to seek information about motives for service. These questions asked the respondents to rank the importance of different motives [On a scale from 1 ('not important') to 5 ('extremely important')]. Table 2 summarizes the means and standard deviations of the distributions.

Table 2: Motivations for Service, ranked by importance (1-5), in phase 1 and 2

Motivations	Phase 1 Mean (Standard Deviation)	Phase 2 Mean (Standard Deviation)
Questions appearing in both phases:		
The responsibility as a citizen to serve the country	4.44 (0.90)	4.35 (0.98)
The opportunity to help people	4.67 (0.94)	4.39 (0.89)
An opportunity to gain knowledge and professional experience	4.36 (0.90)	4.31 (1.01)
An opportunity to collect monetary benefits	3.60 (1.29)	3.60 (1.38)
The responsibility to give, based on religious belief	2.98 (1.30)	2.57 (1.35)
Questions appearing only in phase 2:		
An opportunity to help people in distress	-	4.34 (0.90)
An opportunity to widen one's horizons	-	4.33 (0.89)
An opportunity to live independently outside of home	-	3.11 (1.56)
Because it is expected of me to serve	-	2.53 (1.44)

As can be seen from Table 2, the main motives for service are; "The opportunity to help people," "responsibility as a citizen to serve the country" as well as "an opportunity to gain

knowledge and professional experience.” Of a lesser importance are motivations such as: “religious belief,” “an opportunity to collect monetary benefits” and “it is expected of me.”

In both questionnaires, we asked the respondents to indicate out of the list, their most important single motive. The results were similar in both phases: 40% of the respondents chose as the most important motivation “the responsibility to serve the country,” 30% chose “to help people” and 20% chose “opportunity to gain knowledge and professional experience.”

In order to examine whether there are significant differences in the levels of motivation of respondents coming from different backgrounds, we conducted several additional tests. First, we examined whether there was a difference in the ranking of the motive “an opportunity to collect monetary benefits” between respondents who come from different economical backgrounds. Findings show that on phase 1 there are no significant differences between these respondents ($t=1.56$), on the second phase there is a small difference, but only at the 0.1 significance level ($t=1.74$). Secondly, we examined whether there was a difference in the ranking of the motive “the responsibility to give, based on religious belief” between secular and religiously observant respondents. Not surprisingly, we found here a significant difference on phase 1 as well as on phase 2: The religiously observant ranked this motive higher ($t=2.84$; $t=8.20$, respectively).

As mentioned earlier, in the second questionnaire we asked those respondents who decided to continue for a second year of service, what was the most important motivation for their decision: 45% of them indicated that the key motive was “to serve the country;” 32% remarked that the most important motive for the decision was to “collect the same benefits as demobilized soldiers”⁴; and 16% indicated “the service is a stepping stone to professional advancement.”

3.2 Social attitudes of the volunteers

Part I of the questionnaires (see appendix 1 and 2), contains 21 sentences that represent different attitudes towards tolerance, voluntarism, democracy and community, as well as two sentences that express a sense of self-efficacy of the individual. We created an index for each of the above attitudes by combining the means of the relevant items. Each index can receive values ranging from 1(low level) to 5 (high level). Following are the findings obtained by comparing phases 1 and 2.

⁴ Only at the end of 24 months of service, the amount of benefits equals the amount received by a demobilized soldier.

Table 3: Overall comparisons between attitudes on phase 1 and phase 2.

Attitudes – Subjects	Phase 1 Mean (Standard Deviation)	Phase 2 Mean (Standard Deviation)	t-score (Standard error)
Attitudes toward community Questions: 4,10 # cases	3.30 (0.65) 439	3.48 (0.75) 427	3.76 ** (0.04)
Volunteering and involvement Questions: 2,5,9,11,13,14 # cases	3.89 (0.66) 463	4.46 (0.52) 433	13.9 ** (0.04)
Tolerance Questions: 2,5,9,11,13,14 # cases	3.77 (0.68) 410	3.88 (0.69) 377	2.29 * (0.05)
Attitudes toward government and democracy Questions: 1,3 # cases	4.14 (0.43) 426	4.18 (0.42) 386	1.14 (0.03)
Sense of self efficacy Questions: 6,8 # cases	4.15 (0.51) 452	4.17 (0.56) 423	0.05 (0.04)

**significant P<0.01

*significant P<0.05

Table 3 illustrates that all of the attitudes: in both phases are generally positive (around 4.0). Examining the index values obtained in phase 1, we find the highest values in the sense of self-efficacy and in attitudes towards government and democracy, and volunteering and involvement. In phase 2, as well, these three indices stand out, but this time in a somewhat different order; the leading index here is that of attitudes towards volunteering and involvement.

Comparisons between the two phases (T1 and T2) reveal significant differences in the attitudes related to tolerance, volunteering and involvement and in attitudes towards communities. These attitudes are stronger in the second phase than in the first phase. However, no significant differences were found regarding the attitudes towards government and democracy and the sense of self-efficacy between the both phases. It should be pointed out that both these indices reached very high levels already at phase 1. Hence, the possibility of improvement on phase 2 is rather limited. This finding could reflect a self-selection process of those youth who chose to volunteer for national service in the first place. A characteristic of a potential volunteer is apparently a highly developed democratic attitude and a strong sense of self efficacy.

The above analysis was conducted on a data file that included the overall sample, in both phases. In order to further verify the above-mentioned findings, we performed a parallel analysis on the smaller sample - those respondents who participated in both phases (N=71). Table 4 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 4: Comparisons between attitudes on phase 1 and phase 2 on the sample of respondents to both questionnaires. (N=71)

Attitudes	Phase 1 Mean (Standard Deviation)	Phase 2 Mean (Standard Deviation)	t-score (Standard error)
Volunteering and involvement Questions: 2,5,9,11,13,14	2.09 (0.65)	4.13 (0.73)	17.67 ** (0.13)
Tolerance Questions: 2,5,9,11,13,14	3.53 (0.57)	4.05 (0.67)	5.79 ** (0.09)
Attitudes toward community Questions: 4,10	3.25 (0.67)	3.46 (0.70)	2.76 ** (0.08)
Attitudes towards government and democracy Questions: 1,3	4.21 (0.44)	4.22 (0.40)	0.31 (0.04)
Sense of self efficacy Questions: 6,8	4.11 (0.53)	4.11 (0.52)	0.07 (0.07)

**significant P<0.01
*significant P<0.05

This Table reveals very similar results to those in Table 3: here again, respondents show no significant change between phase 1 and 2 in attitudes towards democracy and government and in their sense of self-efficacy, while they do show significant change in attitudes of tolerance, involvement and towards community. These results strengthen the results found in the overall sample. The fact that these are repeated measures obtained from the same sample of respondents allows us to speculate about the potential effect of NYS. Thus, the year of service apparently had an impact on the participants' attitudes in becoming more tolerant, more involved and more connected to the community.

3.2.1 Attitudes towards the “other”

An additional analysis was conducted on the overall sample, using a number of questions asked only in phase 2. In these questions (51-55), the respondents were asked about their self-perceived changes in attitudes towards the “other”: people of a different religion, from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds and people having different political opinions. In general, the respondents did not report a significant change in their attitudes toward ‘others’, following a year of service. However, when we looked at the reports of only those respondents who actually served with people coming from different ethnic/ religious/ socio-economic status/political backgrounds, significant changes were found: Respondents

who actually worked with people from different backgrounds, reported a significant change in their attitudes towards the “other” ($t=6.58.$), in comparison to those who were not exposed to people from different backgrounds during their year of service.

Thus, the findings show that while a higher level of tolerance was reported, in general, by the respondents, only those volunteers who experienced working with people of other backgrounds became aware of the change that occurred in their perceptions.

3.3 Volunteer’s satisfaction from service

3.3.1 Satisfaction from Service

In the second questionnaire we have included seven questions (numbers 73 through 79) about the level of satisfaction from different aspects of service. [The scale goes from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).] The distribution of these seven variables of satisfaction on the overall sample shows that the level of satisfaction is very high. The mean is around 4.

Table 5 summarizes these findings:

Table 5: levels of satisfaction of the overall sample in the second phase

Questions (73 – 79)	Mean (Standard Deviation)	N number of respondents
To what extent are you satisfied with your friends at work	4.32 (0.94)	404
To what extent are you satisfied with the advisor of the organization through which you serve?	4.27 (1.05)	403
To what extent are you satisfied with the organization through which you serve? (e.g. Bat Ami, Shlomit , etc.)	4.17 (1.02)	404
To what extent are you satisfied with your job?	4.08 (1.09)	400
To what extent are you satisfied with the hosting organization where you worked most of the time (e.g. school, hospital, etc.)	4.05 (1.09)	400
To what extent are you satisfied with your general service?	4.05 (0.98)	406
To what extent are you satisfied with the supervisors at your hosting organization?	3.85 (1.28)	403

The highest level of satisfaction comes from friends at work (4.32), while the lowest comes from supervisors at work (3.85). We need to point out, that besides the level of satisfaction from supervisors at work, all other questions received an average higher than 4.

We created a general index of satisfaction from service out of these seven questions. For this index we conducted a reliability test of internal consistency ($\alpha=0.79$). The average obtained for this index for the overall sample is 4.12 with a S.D. of 0.71. An examination of the index percentages obtained indicates that 65% of all the respondents claim that they are satisfied or very satisfied from service.

As previously mentioned, the majority of the respondents (97%) in our sample were from the *Shlomit* organization. Volunteers through this organization have a different profile than volunteers through other organizations; they are mostly secular or traditional Jews and serve in a wide variety of placements. In order to obtain a better representation of the issue of satisfaction from service, we conducted the following tests only on the respondents that volunteered through *Shlomit*.

The mean of the general level of satisfaction of the volunteers through Shlomit is 4.14 (S.D. 0.70). We checked the levels of satisfaction in the different places of service. The distribution of the variable “place of service” indicates that most of the volunteers in this sample were placed in health (55%), education (22%) and welfare (11%) related institutions. The other volunteers worked in small percentages in different institutions (courts, immigrant absorption institutions, police, rescue, etc.)

Table 6 displays the volunteers’ mean level of satisfaction at their different hosting organizations:

Table 6: Differences on volunteers’ mean level of satisfaction (satisfaction index) at their different hosting organizations

Placement	Mean (Standard Deviation)	N Number of cases
Youth Counselor	4.71 (0.34)	8
Other	4.30 (0.55)	25
Education	4.18 (0.63)	84
Total	4.14 (0.70)	368
Health	4.13 (0.70)	194
Fire and Rescue	4.10 (0.82)	3
Welfare	4.02 (0.77)	43
Immigrant absorption	3.75 (0.34)	4
Courts	3.43 (1.08)	7

Table 6 indicates the highest levels of satisfaction were among volunteers serving in training roles as counselors, while relative lower levels of satisfaction were found among volunteers serving in the court system. However these two groups are comparatively negligible in size. No significant findings were found when checking for correlations between the levels of

satisfaction and the degree of religious observance as well as the levels of satisfaction as a function of the agent that referred them to service.

3.3.2 Benefit of Service as perceived by volunteers

In the second questionnaire we asked the respondents what was, in their opinion, the main benefit of service (questions 38-44 and 49-50). The results show that 86% of the respondents agree with the sentence that service benefited mainly the hosting organizations; 70% of the respondents claim that the main benefit goes to society or the community; and 54% of the respondents agree with the sentence that they themselves benefited most from service. As far as the personal benefit of service is concerned, 76% of the respondents think that the service contributed mainly to their occupational experience; 66% claim that service made them want to pursue higher education; 67% believe that the service offered them an advantage in the labor market; and 46% are considering to work in a field similar to the field in which they had served.

The following table illustrates the answers received by the respondents when asked to indicated the main benefits of service for them (question 49):

Table 7: Perceived main personal benefits from service - phase 2.

The benefit	Percentages
Acquiring life experience	69%
Personal growth	13%
Acquiring a profession	11%
Other: independence, acquiring friends, getting monetary benefits.	7%

Table 7 reveals that most of the respondents (69%) indicate that they have acquired life experience through service; 13% of them indicate personal growth as the main achievement; 11% think that the main benefit is in acquiring a profession. The rest of the respondents (7%) indicate other benefits, such as independence, acquiring friends or getting monetary benefits.

In a similar question (number 50) we mapped out the main perceived benefits of service for society/ community. The findings show that 38% of the respondents believe that the main contribution of service is attributed to the volunteers' devotion; 27% understand the main benefit to be a monetary saving for the state; and 24% see the main benefit to be the improvement of public services. An additional test (Chi Square) revealed that the respondents serving in health related institutions, attribute more importance to the savings of public funds as a result of their service, in comparison to their counterparts working in the educational or welfare fields. Conversely, the volunteers serving in the educational and welfare fields give more importance to the quality of service, namely the dedication of the volunteers.

3.3.3. Volunteers' expectations of service

The second questionnaire included 4 questions (45-48.), inquiring about the volunteers' expectations of service. An examination of the distribution of the answers to these questions, reveals that a significant majority (71%) of the respondents think that their expectations of service were realistic. Furthermore, 64% of the respondents believe that they have made use of their personal potential during service. Indeed, the correlation between the expectations from service and the satisfaction from service was found to be significant and positive ($r=.43$).

In short, respondents in general agree that the hosting institutions, the society (or community) and mainly they themselves benefited from national service. For the majority of our respondents, the service caused them to want to pursue higher education and offered them an advantage in the labor market. Additionally, the respondents' expectations of service were found realistic in general and the majority feels that within the framework of service they have materialized their abilities.

Chapter 4: Discussion

In this chapter we summarize the key findings of this research and we compare these findings with other relevant studies conducted in Israel and abroad. The findings will be presented in the same order as they previously appeared.

Most of the respondents said that the main motivations for service are connected to their will to serve the country and to help people, while only a relatively small percentage of respondents indicated as their main reason for service the opportunity to gain professional knowledge, the wish to collect monetary benefits or religious motives. These findings are congruent with the findings of a survey conducted recently in the Jerusalem Municipality Unit for National Service (Harnik, 2001). Not surprisingly, the religious motive for service was more dominant among the (Jerusalem) religious respondents than among our (mostly secular) respondents. Comparing these findings with the ones from a research about motivation to serve in the Israeli army (Gal and Mayseless, 1990), reveals a different pattern: The young conscripts, prior to being drafted, emphasize personal motives (e.g. personal fulfillment), rather than social motives as is the case with our NYS volunteers. One possible explanation for these differences derives from the difference in frameworks: while military service is mandatory, national service in Israel is voluntary and therefore there is a possible positive pre-selection factor for those choosing to volunteer. Furthermore, there is, most possibly, a gender factor, as well: as previously mentioned, most of the participants in NYS (as well as in this research), are women. It is possible that the social motive is stronger among women than it is with men, within the same age group.

We conducted an additional comparison, this time with different civic service programs around the world. As mentioned in the introduction, we focused on three programs: the U.S. AmeriCorps, the European Volunteer Service (EVS) and the German *Freiwilligen Sozialen Jahr* (FSJ). By examining the evaluation reports of these three organizations, we can observe differences in the motivation for service: While in the American and German service programs, as well as the Israeli service, one of the main motivations is to help others and to provide help and service to communities, for the EVS volunteer, the leading motivations are personal rather than social: gaining professional experience and advantage in entering the workforce. This difference can be interpreted in light of the differences in the objectives of these organizations: one of the EVS' main goals is the social and occupational integration of the volunteers at the end of their service. The EVS volunteers rank as their main benefit the leverage in entering the workforce while a considerable percentage of them were unemployed before beginning service.

Our results regarding the respondents' social attitudes indicate that most of the NYS volunteers show positive attitudes for tolerance, for volunteering, for community involvement

and for democracy, already prior to service. These attitudes were strengthened after one year of service, whereas attitudes towards government and democracy showed no change. These findings are congruent with those found in a recent study (Ichilov, 2003) that examined the impact of the Israeli nation-wide program *Mechuyavut Yishit* ("Personal Commitment", a high school service-learning program) on the participants' attitudes. Ichilov's research, similar to the present research, shows changes in attitudes towards involvement and volunteering following a year-long participation in the program, while no changes are reported in attitudes towards government and democracy.

The present study demonstrates that while service itself can develop more tolerant attitudes towards the "other", only a day-to-day exposure and actually working with people from different backgrounds can emphasize this process and bring it up to the conscious level.

These findings are consistent with Putnam's (2000) claim regarding the development of bridging social capital in organizations where there is exposure to heterogeneous populations. The type of social capital being developed was not the focus of this study and further research is obviously needed to explore this subject in depth. Nevertheless, these findings do strengthen the importance of exposure of all of the volunteers to heterogeneous populations outside of their own communities.

The influence of service on the volunteer's social attitudes was examined also within service frameworks in the U.S. and Europe. In these evaluations, volunteers were asked, at the end of their service, about their perceptions and attitudes. AmeriCorps volunteers (called 'members') stated that service enhanced their awareness about issues related to community and to citizenship. Moreover, most members expressed their desire to continue to volunteer after the end of their service term (Aguirre International, 1997; 1999.) The majority of volunteers at the European Volunteers Service said that the service period made them more tolerant and enhanced their social awareness. Furthermore, most of the EVS respondents stated that the service strengthened their European identity (SOS-EVS, 1999). Volunteers at the German FSJ reported that the service enhanced their tolerance and also their moral and social awareness. Nearly half of the respondents expressed their will to continue to volunteer in the future (Wuestenndoerfer & Arnold, 1998).

Finally, we would like to summarize the findings regarding volunteer's satisfaction with the service experience, the volunteer's perception of the benefits of service and their expectations of service. The findings of the present research clearly indicate that most of the volunteers are satisfied with their service experience (65%). A similar percentage (66%) was found in the survey conducted by the Unit for National Service at the Jerusalem Municipality (Harnik, 2001.) However, no significant differences were found in the levels of satisfaction between volunteers serving in different fields (health, education, welfare). Furthermore, we did not find

significant differences between the volunteer's levels of satisfaction as a function of the agent that referred them to service.

In the eyes of the majority of respondents, the main contribution of service was to their personal and professional experience. In their opinion, service triggered the yearning to pursue further education and gave them leverage in entering the workforce. An examination of the respondents' perceptions of the benefits of service, uncovers that a considerable group of respondents feels that volunteering itself and the offering of a wholehearted service, significantly benefits society. Nonetheless, a certain amount of them emphasize the economical benefit to the country's institutions; vis-à-vis savings and improvements of the public service. Furthermore, respondent's expectations of service were realistic and the majority of them think that they materialized their abilities in the framework of service.

We examined the findings of the evaluations of the three previously mentioned service programs (AmeriCorps, FSJ and EVS), regarding volunteer's satisfaction from service, their perception of the benefits of service and their expectations of service. This examination showed very high levels of satisfaction from service (90%). In comparison, the levels of satisfaction reported in this current research are lower (65%). Although the different studies mentioned, formulate these questions somewhat differently and do not have identical scales, causing therefore the comparison to be limited, we think that these results are suggestive of a significant difference that conveys us the need for further comparative research. AmeriCorps members and EVS volunteers stress the benefit of service of gaining life skills, i.e. interpersonal and communication skills as well as a better organizational understanding. As mentioned earlier, EVS volunteers expect that service will assist them in the labor market, and indeed 50% of the graduates express that service did help them integrate into the work place. In comparison, only 11% of the Israeli NYS volunteers emphasized acquiring a profession; whereas the majority (69%) emphasized acquiring life experience.

Chapter 5. Consequences of this research in Israel

This research is the first of its kind to evaluate the non-monetary benefits of National Youth Service in Israel as well as the changes and developments that occur among the volunteers. The encouraging findings of this research could be used as a convincing *raison d'être* in the ongoing public debate about the need to expand civic service. To begin with, the relatively high levels of satisfaction from service, as expressed by the volunteers at the end of their service (or at the end of their first year of service) demonstrates the potential attraction and challenge in joining a civic service for those Israeli youth who were not drafted to the military.

Secondly, the findings indicating the elevation of openness and tolerance among the graduates of the NYS illuminates the great potential embedded in civic service frameworks to strengthen these attitudes. The Israeli society is comprised of diverse ethnic and religious sectors that co-exist in continuous tension. A universal civic service program at the national level could significantly diminish the polarization and reduce the tensions between these sectors. Subsequently, the possible influence that national service has on strengthening communities and on voluntary orientations of its graduates, bears high importance in Israeli society. In times when voluntary frameworks and non-governmental organizations play such important roles (in deprived areas or in institutionally - neglected fields), there is critical significance to the intensification of these orientations and to the consequent strengthening of the Third Sector.

The findings of the present research shed light on the advantages and the drawbacks of the process of national service. As an example, the differential data concerning the volunteer's levels of satisfaction from the various aspects of their service, as well as satisfaction levels regarding the different frameworks of service, could turn into a useful tool for the administration of these operating organizations, to improve the design and content of service. A consequence to such an improvement, could be a higher satisfaction from service and hence, a more effective service.

We have been careful not to talk about the impact of service. This caution emanates from the main methodological limitation of this research – the lack of a control group. Only a comparison to a matched group (by age, background information and so forth) whose participants did not participate in a year of service, could justify (or refute) a statement of this sort. Indeed, from a research point of view, the most needed action at the moment, is to continue the efforts of evaluating civic service frameworks, both by including a control group as well as by including additional NYS operating organizations (Bat Ami, NIVS, etc) into the research. From this point of view, the present research can be looked upon as a pilot study that suggests possibilities and offers the tools for further research.

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