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Curriculum Requirements and Subsequent Civic Engagement:

Is there a difference between ‘forced’ and ‘free’ community service?

Abstract: Despite figures showing the growth of mandatory community service programmes there is mixed empirical evidence of their effectiveness. This paper addresses the relationship of mandated community service to one of its purported aims: subsequent volunteerism. It compares current volunteerism among four university student cohorts: those doing no service in secondary school, those volunteering with no requirement, those volunteering both before and after the introduction of a requirement, and those introduced to service through a requirement. The analysis indicates that (1) students who were *introduced* to service through a mandated programme exhibit current levels of engagement no greater than non-volunteers; (2) this relationship stems largely from the different service experiences of our four cohorts and relates to the fact that service satisfaction and duration, as well as background variables account for current levels of civic engagement. The findings suggest that mandatory service programmes might well be failing the very population they seek to target, particularly in weaker, less structured programmes.

Running head: Curriculum Requirements and Subsequent Civic Engagement

Keywords: civic education; civic engagement; youth development; mandated community service

Curriculum Requirements and Subsequent Civic Engagement:

Is there a difference between ‘forced’ and ‘free’ community service?

1. Introduction

Reports of declining levels of civic engagement, particularly among young people, have triggered widespread concern among policymakers, educators and academics (Paxton 1999; Putnam 2000; Spaide 1999) and rekindled interest in exploiting the school system as an agent of socialization (Niemi & Junn 1998; *The Civic Mission of Schools* 2003). One proposal that has gained much currency in recent years is the adoption of secondary school community service requirements of one kind or another. At one point one third of US secondary schools required some form of mandated community service (Keilsmeier et al. 2004) and one third of Canadian secondary school students were participating in a mandatory service programme during 2000 (Hall et al. 2001; Brown et al. 2007) although rates subsequently declined from this height (Spring et al. 2008). In the UK compulsory community service is both rarer (Roker et al. 1999; Roker et al. 2006) and ad hoc, coordinated by organizations such as Community Service Volunteers/Volunteering Matters. In 1999 Kerr noted ‘there is no great tradition of explicit teaching of civic or citizenship education in English schools or of voluntary and community service for young people (Kerr 1999), notwithstanding considerable attention to civic values and citizenship (Advisory Group for Citizenship 1998, Association for Citizenship Teaching 2014). Political parties have routinely called for more comprehensive programmes. Labour pledged before the 2010 election to introduce a 50 hour compulsory community service for under 19s under a new National Youth Service scheme. In 2010 the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government established the National Citizen Service, originally managed by the

Cabinet Office, to facilitate youth engagement. In 2015 the Conservative government proposed that compulsory community service would be tied to unemployment benefit for young people. While there is a strong consensus that performing community service benefits students, there is much less agreement that mandating students to ‘volunteer’ their time produces the same effects. Indeed, sceptics worry that mandating community service may actually be counter-productive. Given the issues at stake, it is important to develop a fuller grasp of how, if at all, mandated service accomplishes its objectives.

This article brings new evidence to bear on the relationship of mandated service to one key objective of such programmes: that of fostering a commitment to civic engagement through volunteering. The evidence is based on a case study of a mandatory community service programme in Canada. When the province of Ontario introduced a secondary school requirement that students complete 40 hours of community service before graduating it also shortened the secondary school programme from five to four years. As a consequence of shortening the programme, a ‘double cohort’ of secondary school students entered university – the first cohort to graduate from secondary school under the new four-year curriculum and with a community service requirement, and the last five-year cohort to graduate without a service requirement. As this ‘double cohort’ prepared to graduate from university, we surveyed a sample of these final year students at two Ontario universities, asking them to recall their experiences with community service in secondary school and ascertaining their current levels of civic engagement, here measured as levels of community service and attitudes to service. Our survey therefore approximates a quasi-experimental design, allowing us to examine the relationship of mandated and non-mandated secondary school community service to one key

aspect of civic engagement – subsequent community service – and to do so after an interval of at least four years. Our design makes two important contributions. First, we distinguish not only between those who volunteered and those who did not, but among the different routes that young people came to volunteer in the first place. This allows us to isolate the putative target population of mandated programmes – those students least likely to get involved without such programmes – and to assess current volunteerism levels of this population against those who did no community service in secondary school. Metz and Youniss (2003, 2005) find such programmes have the greatest impact on those least inclined to be involved, while others suggest little impact (Hart et al. 2007, Planty et al. 2006). Our approach allows us to contribute to this debate. Second, we know from the literature that the effects of service are visible after two years (Metz and Youniss 2003, 2005) but less evident after eight (Planty et al. 2006). The timing of our survey at an intervening point provides additional information about the longevity of service effects.

2. Background

Proponents of mandatory community service programmes build their case around three claims. First, they argue that adolescent experiences tend to shape orientations and patterns of behaviour in adulthood, an assertion strongly supported by empirical evidence (Pancer & Pratt 1999; Raskoff & Sundeen 1999; Planty et al. 2006). Second, they suggest that volunteering in the community helps to develop enduring attitudes and patterns of engagement reflective of responsible citizenship, a claim also supported by considerable research (Primavera 1999; Metz & Youniss 2003; Planty et al. 2006; Hart et al. 2007). Third, advocates claim that it does not matter if service is mandated rather than freely

chosen, as both experiences can produce similar positive effects (Barber 1992; Janoski et al. 1998; Youniss et al. 1997).

Debate about the effectiveness of mandatory programmes has centred on two questions associated with this last assertion. Do school environments with a mandated service requirement promote subsequent civic engagement; and, specifically, does mandating service accomplish one of its key objectives of enhancing civic engagement among those unlikely to get involved without such a mandate?

For the first of these questions, available evidence is conflicting. On the one hand, a carefully designed quasi-experimental study by Metz and Youniss (2003) found that students required to complete a service commitment expressed greater likelihood of volunteering in future than a comparison group of 'non-required' students. Similar positive effects of mandated service have been found to persist well after graduation (Hart et al. 2007), and to be comparable to the effects of service performed without a requirement (Planty et al. 2006; Henderson et al. 2007). On the other hand, there are studies for which no such positive effects were found (Niemi et al. 2000; Keeter et al. 2002), and some even suggesting that mandated service actually dampened enthusiasm for future volunteering (Stukas et al. 1999; Helms 2006, 2013; Helms et al. 2009).

The second question in the literature focuses on the effects of mandatory service programmes for the putative target population of such programmes: those in secondary school who are unlikely to choose community service without being required to do so. Much but not all of the extant research on this question suggests that mandated programmes have little impact on this population (Stukas et al. 1999; Padany et al. 2003; Planty et al. 2006; Hart et al. 2007). However, research by Metz & Youniss (2003, 2005) again provides an intriguing counterpoint.

In their tracking of mandated and non-mandated students at a Boston secondary school, they found that the mandated programme had the greatest apparent impact on those less inclined to get involved of their own accord.

Two distinguishing features of the Metz and Youniss design may help to explain its positive findings versus the null findings reported by others. The first of these is the time frame of the research. Metz and Youniss (2003, 2005) assessed programme effects in the short term while participants were still in secondary school and used intention to volunteer as the dependent variable; the null findings reported for most of the other studies were recorded at least several years after students had left secondary school, and used reported past behaviour as the dependent variable. These differences may be important. It may be that exposing students to community service does indeed raise consciousness and cultivate pro-social attitudes, or at least frame such attitudes positively, especially among those whose personal and social circumstances are not conducive to developing such dispositions on their own. However, without continued support, programme effects with this population may be short-lived. The finding by Planty and his colleagues (2006) that positive effects were evident for less inclined students after two years but not after eight is consistent with this account.

A second factor that might explain the different findings is simply the quality of the programmes involved in the different studies. One of the strongest findings in the community service literature is that effects are associated with satisfying and meaningful service placements (Metz et al. 2003; Gallant et al. 2010). Since finding such placements requires time, effort and awareness of opportunities, it follows that the amount of support provided by the programme is likely to be a relevant variable. Of the studies compared here, only that of Metz and Youniss

(2003, 2005) clearly involved a well-structured programme, with placements done under the auspices of an established institution (i.e., school, charity, or religious organization) and with students producing a written reflection addressing the benefits they and service recipients derived from the experience. This is mirrored in the meta-analysis of programmes by Conway et al, which found that greater structure yields greater results (Conway et al. 2009). On the other hand, studies reporting null findings for ‘less inclined’ students were based on diverse programmes of unknown quality (Metz & Youniss 2005; Planty et al. 2007) or, in the case of Ontario, a programme known to have weak structure and weak support (Meinhard et al. 2006, Padanyi et al. 2010; Henderson et al. 2007; Henderson et al. 2014). Previous studies of the Ontario programme have suggested that positive effects are conditional on the service experience being sustained and evaluated positively by students (Henderson et al. 2007), that positive evaluations are tied to individual and community benefits, including altruism, personal fulfilment, personal and career development (Henderson et al. 2014). In addition to the effects on subsequent service, mandated service appears to have a positive effect on the political dimensions of civic engagement (including political involvement and activity) rather than social dimensions, but that these effects are also conditional on duration and the perceived quality of the service experience (Henderson et al. 2012).

3. Hypotheses

In the conclusion to their 2005 paper, Metz and Youniss suggest that ‘the case for or against mandatory service as a means of promoting civic development is still an open question’ (p. 416). Since then, evidence suggests mandatory service programmes can exert such an influence on the timing and nature of volunteering (Helms 2013), that longer term effects are

minimal (Kim and Morgül 2017) but positive findings are equally plentiful (Planty et al. 2006; Hart et al. 2007). We wish to address this ‘open question’ by exploring the conditions under which mandated secondary school service is related to subsequent civic engagement. To explore this we distinguish among those who chose not to volunteer in secondary school, those volunteering without a mandated requirement, those volunteering prior to fulfilling a requirement, and those volunteering only after facing a requirement. We therefore break out a ‘no service’ group, two groups of ‘self-starters’, and a ‘forced service’ group. Distinguishing among types of volunteers allows us to test five hypotheses.

- 1) The demographic profile of the ‘forced service’ group will more closely resemble the ‘no service’ group than the two groups who freely chose to volunteer.

This initial hypothesis tests our supposition that students who were first introduced to community service through the programme were not merely late-comers to community service, but reluctant students akin to Metz’ and Youniss’ ‘less inclined’ cohort (2003, 2005). As such, they constitute the target population for mandatory service programmes. If our supposition is correct, we expect them to differ from ‘no service’ students only with respect to the service requirement they faced.

- 2) The service experience of the ‘forced service’ group will be of inferior quality to the experiences of those who freely chose to volunteer.

Our expectations here derive from the role of structural supports. We know that programmes involving service learning, where classroom learning supplements service experiences, are more likely to lead to higher levels of civic engagement. We expect that the

same will be true of other forms of structural support. Unlike the programme studied by Metz and Youniss, the Ontario service programme is implemented by schools, which in general provide little assistance in finding suitable student placements, provide minimal oversight of the service experience, and no systematic opportunity for student reflection. The lack of these structural supports represented a weakly structured programme and one less likely to assure satisfying and meaningful experiences. This would seem especially relevant for those with no previous service experience. Such ‘forced service’ volunteers might well be expected to adopt a minimalist approach to completing their requirement, which in turn would be reflected in the quality of their service experience.

- 3) Students who perform mandated community service in secondary school will be as likely as non-mandated students to engage in community service in the years following graduation, and will exhibit similarly positive attitudes toward helping in the community.

This hypothesis addresses the argument advanced by critics of mandated programmes that such programmes might poison the well, tainting students’ views of volunteerism and deterring future involvement. While the balance of extant research leads us to expect no such negative effect, debate on the question is still alive, warranting additional testing of the thesis.

- 4) ‘Forced service’ volunteers will exhibit lower levels of subsequent civic engagement than ‘self-starting’ volunteers.
- 5) ‘Forced service’ volunteers will exhibit comparable levels of subsequent civic engagement to those who performed no service in secondary school.

These two hypotheses are consistent with the findings of some studies of this ‘less inclined’ cohort (Hart et al. 2007; Planty et al. 2006; Stukas et al. 1999), but are at odds with those of Metz and Youniss (2003, 2005). As noted above, our differing expectations here reflect our view that the programme we are studying is weakly structured and supported.

- 6) ‘Forced service’ volunteers will not have significantly differently levels of subsequent civic engagement from those volunteering prior to or without a requirement, once we control for duration of service and service satisfaction.

Previous research suggests that community service by itself is not necessarily related to subsequent political engagement, volunteerism or attitudes to service (Henderson et al. 2007); rather the student’s perception that it was satisfying and of some duration are important elements in explaining individual differences in later life. This fifth hypothesis flows from our rationale for the previous set: if secondary school service has weaker effects on less inclined students because, as a group, they are less likely to secure satisfying and sustained placements, controlling for service satisfaction and duration of service should explain away the original difference.

4. Method

4.1 Research Context and Design

Ontario’s reformed secondary school curriculum, made three significant changes to the curriculum: the length of the programme was shortened from five years to four; a compulsory Grade 10 (year II) civics course was introduced; and students were required to complete 40 hours of community service between their entry into Grade 9 and their graduation. The stated aim of the program is to “develop an 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” (Ontario, Ministry of Education 1999a). There were no quantitative goals, such as a twenty percent increase in rates of volunteering, nor did the official documentation suggest that certain groups were likely to benefit from the mandated service more than others. The community service requirement was implemented in most public secondary schools without very much structure. The Policy Programme Memorandum (124a) states that school boards are responsible for administering the program as they wish.¹ Students are expected to find their own placements although some schools have appointed a teacher to assist students in this task, and in a few communities, organizations such as the United Way or Voluntary Action Centre have undertaken to provide placement counselling (Brown et al. 2007). The Ministry of Education requires that eligible placements be with non-profit organizations, that the service be performed without pay for the benefit of the community and that it satisfy the ministry’s ethical standards (Ontario. Ministry of Education, 1999). Typical activities might include helping at a retirement home, assisting with community sports programmes, volunteering for school clubs, or working on a local environment project. Many of the province’s Catholic school boards² and fee-paying

¹ The Policy Programme Memorandum has been altered to allow students to begin their service requirement in the summer before they entered secondary school but the general structure, the responsibility for boards and deliberately loose definitions of service have been retained (Ontario Ministry of Education 2018).

² The province of Ontario funds parallel public and separate Catholic school systems throughout the province. While both adhere to a common basic curriculum, Catholic school boards typically

private schools have community service programmes that pre-date the ministry's new requirement and more closely approximate a service learning experience because, unlike the public school system, service is frequently associated with specific courses in the school's curriculum.

The first cohort under the new curriculum graduated from secondary school alongside the last cohort to graduate under the old 5-year programme which had no service requirement. Therefore, a 'double-cohort' entered university in the autumn of that year, about half of whom had completed a mandatory service requirement and about half of whom had not. As these students approached graduation from their four-year undergraduate degrees our team administered a survey to this population.

We employ here a retrospective design to explore the association of secondary school community service experiences with subsequent volunteerism; respondents were asked to recall their secondary school experiences and to describe their current views and behaviours. While such a design carries with it limitations regarding our capacity to make causal claims from associations, research suggests that recall of events after a period of four to eight years tends to be reasonably accurate and reliable (Slattery & Jacobs 1995).

4.2 Procedure

All fourth year students at two south-western Ontario universities – approximately 6500 students in total – were invited by e-mail in February 2007 to complete an online survey dealing

supplement their curriculum with courses and requirements considered to be consistent with a Catholic education.

with ‘students’ experiences and perspectives in university and secondary school’. The online survey was accessed by students through a website linked to the email, and took about fifteen minutes to complete. It included batteries of questions dealing with students’ current civic engagement, secondary school community service experiences, current social attitudes, as well as socio-demographic and background information. After completion of the survey, respondents were given access to an incentive valued at about \$5 which they could download.

4.3 Sample

Of the approximately 6500 students contacted by email, 835 completed the survey. Of these, 794 were deemed usable for the purposes of this research, yielding an effective response rate of 12.6 per cent of those contacted.³ Almost half (384 or 48.5 per cent) of the respondents

³ Eliminated from the analysis were eight respondents who had not graduated from an Ontario secondary school, seven respondents who were mature students (defined as older than 26 years), and 26 students who indicated they were in the mandated cohort but could not recall doing any service. Since we were unable to determine whether these mandated students were mistaken about a requirement, had forgotten their service experience, had somehow circumvented the requirement, or were simply uncooperative survey respondents, we removed them as well from the analysis. Participants ranged in age between 21 and 26 with a mean age of 22.6 years. While the university populations have a gender mix of about 60 per cent female and 40 per cent male, our participants were disproportionately female at 72 per cent of the sample. Ninety per cent of participating students were born in Canada, 20 per cent reported family incomes of less than \$60,000 annually, and 36 per cent reported family incomes in excess of \$100,000. Participants

indicated that they were mandated to complete service in secondary school and were able to recall service that they had performed. There were 407 non-mandated students, 76.7 per cent of whom recalled volunteering in secondary school.

The low response rate for this internet survey was not surprising, but it does raise questions about how well our sample represents the university graduating class to which we might like to generalize. Research with opt-in internet surveys suggests that they tend to have self-selection biases that are difficult to adjust for by reweighting (Valliant & Dever 2009). As a consequence, they are thought to be more useful for exploring group differences than for estimating absolute frequencies of phenomena (Yeager et al. 2011). Since exploring group differences is our primary task here, we believe the data can yield useful insights. Nevertheless, given that the propensity to volunteer (for surveys) is a bias that may be related to the central concern of this paper – civic volunteerism – we compared our internet sample with a sample of the same university population surveyed two years earlier (when they were in their second year), but surveyed in classroom settings with co-operation rates well above 90 per cent. Because this earlier 2nd year sample of the ‘double cohort’ involved a broad-based sampling of classrooms within the university, its very high response rate would tend to minimize the self-selection bias of greatest concern to us here: that is, bias due to a propensity to volunteer. A comparison of the two samples indicates that the internet sample is not over-represented by civic volunteers,

were drawn proportionately from the two universities (64 per cent from the larger institution and 36 per cent from the smaller one).

relative to our benchmark. The internet sample does over-represent women and, perhaps because women tend to volunteer more than males (Gallant et al. 2010; Planty et al. 2006), it somewhat over-represents students who volunteered a year or more in secondary school. As a consequence, we include these attributes in our multivariate analyses to control for this overrepresentation.

4.4 Measures

Civic Engagement Variables Our dependent variables explore levels of civic engagement. We developed a 4-level ‘current volunteer activity’ that reflects the greatest level of involvement in the past year that the student had in any of the seven volunteer sectors: (a) Nonprofit organization (e.g., humane society, foodbank), (b) Health service sector (e.g., hospital, retirement home), (c) School system (e.g., tutoring, clean-up), (d) Community sports programmes (e.g., coaching, refereeing, organizing), (e) Local community or service club projects (e.g., clean-up, fundraising), (f) Church organization, or (g) Other. Space was provided to indicate a specific ‘other’ organization. The scale has a range of 0-3 where a score of ‘0’ implies no volunteer service in any sector and a score of ‘3’ indicates that the student volunteered regularly for a year or more in one or more of the seven service sectors. The mean score for the sample on this 4-point scale was 1.68 (SD = 1.11). A ‘current attitude toward community helping’ scale was constructed by averaging responses to: ‘Everyone should volunteer some time for the good of the community’; ‘People have a responsibility to help those who are less well off than themselves’; and ‘People who are well off should share their wealth by giving generously to charity’. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements on a 5-point Likert scale (‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’). With a range of

0-4, the mean score for students on this scale was 2.86 (SD=.81). The Cronbach's alpha was an acceptable .75.

Our independent variables probe secondary school community service. Students who said that they had volunteered in secondary school were asked to 'indicate which types of organizations you volunteered with during your secondary school years and how regularly. Indicate as many as you can recall.' In responding to this question, participants were presented with a list of the same seven service sectors discussed above and were asked to check the appropriate box (no volunteer service with this type, volunteered once or a couple of times, volunteered regularly for less than a year, volunteered regularly for a year or more) for each.

From students' responses to this question sequence, a 'School service activity' score was derived for each student based on the sector in which the student had volunteered the most. Thus the 'School service activity' scale has a range of 0-3 where a score of '0' implies no volunteer service in any sector and a score of '3' indicates that the student volunteered regularly for a year or more in one or more of the seven service sectors. The mean score for the sample was 2.18 (SD=1.06).

From the same battery, two binary variables were created: an 'any School service' variable coded as '1' if the student had volunteered in any of the sectors in secondary school and '0' if the student had not; and a 'sustained School service' binary variable coded as '1' if the student had volunteered in any sector for a year or more, and '0' if all service activity was for less than a year. We examined engagement by sector across the two time periods. In most cases there is a weak but significant and positive relationship between the sector in which one volunteered in high school and the sector in which one volunteered upon leaving school. The

relationship is strongest, and then only moderate, for volunteering in a religious domain. Of those who volunteered at church regularly for a year or more in high school, twenty seven percent volunteered in the same domain subsequently. The equivalent figure for sports is seventeen percent and for the health sector it is thirteen percent. The figures for cross sector engagement are typically much lower. For example, of those who volunteered regularly at church, only five percent were regularly volunteering in the health sector.

Two additional aspects of the secondary school service experience were measured. If students indicated they had volunteered at all, they were asked to focus on the organization in which they had volunteered the most, and to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with eight assertions (in Likert format) tapping their impressions and assessments of the service experience. These scale items were adapted from the Inventory of Service Experience (ISE) developed by Taylor and Pancer (2007) to measure recalled service satisfaction. Because time constraints precluded our using the entire ISE inventory of 49 items, we selected eight items to reflect the six qualitative dimensions of service. The item wordings were as follows: 'I would volunteer to do this kind of work again if the opportunity presented itself'; 'I became friends with new people through my volunteer activity here'; 'I didn't really get to do anything meaningful/interesting in my volunteer work here'; 'I felt part of the organization I volunteered with'; 'I didn't really learn any new skills through my volunteer experience here'; 'I felt that my volunteer work here helped me to make a difference'; 'My volunteer experience here helped me to clarify my career ambitions'; 'I had a lot of fun volunteering here'. A 'School service satisfaction' scale was computed by directionally

scoring item responses so that a higher score reflected a more positive response, summing responses across the eight items, then converting the scale metric to a 0-1 range. For the sample as a whole the mean scale score was .68 (SD=.20). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for this scale is high at .88.

Finally, a binary 'School mandated service' measure was developed to indicate whether or not the student had been required to perform secondary school community service as a condition for graduation (1= 'yes'). While membership in the 'double cohort' tends to mirror the mandated – non-mandated distinction ($r=.86$), the two are not coterminous because some members of the senior cohort attended Catholic or private schools, some of which had pre-existing community service programmes.

We have devised a plan of analysis that requires us to distinguish among the different types of volunteers. Respondents were asked whether, during their secondary school years, they recalled 'any volunteer work that [they] did – required or otherwise, either in [their] community or in [their] school? By volunteer work, we mean helping others at no pay.' They were also asked: 'when completing secondary school, were you required to volunteer to get your diploma?' Finally, if students indicated that they were mandated to perform community service, they were asked a number of questions designed to discover (a) whether the mandated service was their first introduction to the voluntary sector, (b) at what point in their secondary school career they performed this service, and (c) the duration of their community service (once or twice, regularly for less than a year, regularly for a year or more) and d) whether they continued to volunteer at all once their service requirement was satisfied.

Based on their responses to these recall questions, the sample was segmented initially into four groups. First, we identified two volunteering groups, comprising students who had volunteered in the absence of a requirement ('non-mandated volunteers' 38.1 per cent) and those who volunteered prior to the imposition of a requirement ('self-starters' 34.1 per cent). We also distinguished a 'late-starting' group comprising students who were first introduced to service through the programme ('forced service providers' 12.7 per cent), and 'non-volunteers', who did no volunteering in secondary school (15 per cent).

In addition to these variables, we developed measures for two other secondary school experiential variables that are systematically associated with our service cohorts and are potentially relevant contributors to our dependent measures. We noted that the province introduced a mandatory civics class into the Grade 10 curriculum at the same time that it instituted the community service requirement. Because such a course was adopted in part to encourage civic-mindedness (Ontario. Ministry of Education 1999, 6), and because completion of such a course was mandatory for the junior cohort and only optional for the senior cohort, its completion represents a potentially relevant source of difference between the mandated and non-mandated cohorts. To tap this experience we asked: 'During your years in secondary school, did you complete a civics course – a course dealing with government and politics.' While course completion was strongly related to the mandated-non-mandated variable, the two were not coterminous: 22 per cent of non-mandated students had completed such a course as an option, and 13 per cent of mandated students had not completed such a course because they graduated under the old 5-year curriculum. This allowed us to develop a binary 'civics class' variable (1=completed) which we employ as a control in the multivariate analyses.

Another potentially relevant difference between cohorts is the proportion of Catholic and private school graduates in each group. Catholic and private schools in Ontario were more likely to have instituted community service programmes independent of and prior to the province's requirement; as a consequence these students represent a greater proportion of the mandated cohort relative to the non-mandated cohort (36 per cent vs 17 per cent). Because there is some evidence to indicate qualitative differences in the way the public and non-public boards administer their respective programmes (Brown et al 2007), we include that variable as one of our controls (0=public board, 1=Catholic or private board).

We know from the literature that background variables relate to civic engagement. We therefore developed measures for the four most salient background variables: gender (Gallant et al. 2010; Planty et al. 2006), religious observance (Crystal & DeBell 2002; Pancer & Pratt 1999; Caputo 2009), secondary school activity level (Smith 1999; Flanagan et al. 2015) and parental civic involvement (Pancer & Pratt, 1999; Bekkers, 2007). Gender was measured as a binary variable (1= 'female'). To tap religious observance, respondents were asked 'how often do you attend religious services?' The four response alternatives – 'never', 'a few times a year', 'A few times a month', 'once a week or more' – were arrayed along a 0-1 metric (1= 'once a week or more'). Secondary school activity level was based on each student's response to the question 'during secondary school, how involved were you in school activities – not very much, moderately or heavily?' These response alternatives were arrayed along a 0-1 metric (1= heavily). Respondents were asked to indicate whether their mother and father were involved in each of seven volunteer sectors. A parental civic involvement index was constructed by summing the number of sector

involvements for each parent and converting the score to a 0-1 metric (1= both parents involved in all 7 sectors).

5. Results

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Our first two hypotheses focus on the distinctiveness of ‘forced service’ volunteers vis-à-vis ‘self-starting’ volunteers. We posit that the demographic profile of the ‘forced service’ group should more closely resemble the ‘no service’ group than either of the two ‘self-starting’ groups, and that the group’s secondary school service experience should also be different from that of the ‘self-starting’ groups. Table 1 addresses these expectations.

[Table 1 about here]

Table 1(a) profiles the four service groups on several predisposing background attributes. The ‘no service’ cohort has a greater proportion of males, and exhibits lower levels of religious observance, parental civic involvement and secondary school social activity. Important for our purposes, however, is that students in the ‘forced service’ group tend to resemble the ‘no service’ group much more than they do the two ‘self-starting’ cohorts. Indeed, except for the disproportion of males in the ‘no service’ group, those who were ‘forced service’ providers are statistically indistinguishable from ‘no service’ students on these predisposing factors. On this basis we can conclude that hypothesis 1 is supported.

Our second hypothesis states that the ‘forced service’ group will have service experiences of inferior quality to the ‘self-starting’ groups. Table 1(b) shows that the service completed by ‘forced service’ providers was starkly different from that of the two other groups. The service was more likely to be shorter in duration, to be limited to the 40-hour requirement, to have been

delayed to the last year of secondary school, and to be recalled as less satisfying. All of these differences were statistically significant, reinforcing the view that this target group comprises not merely late-comers to the community service world, but reluctant or less inclined students who were mobilized by the mandatory programme to contribute their time. On this basis we can conclude that hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3, 4 and 5: These three hypotheses address possible differences in subsequent civic engagement associated with different secondary school service experiences. As a preliminary test of these hypotheses, we present in Table 2 bivariate relationships between our four-group typology and three indices of subsequent engagement: attitudes to helping others, a subsequent volunteering activity scale and length of subsequent community service.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 2 provides tentative support for our third hypothesis positing no difference in subsequent engagement between mandated and non-mandated volunteers. The profiles of the civic engagement of the two most comparable service groups – the ‘self-starting’ groups – are almost identical. Indeed the only significant difference between the two is in their attitude toward helping others, and in that case, the mandated group exhibits the more positive attitude.

Our fourth hypothesis holds that the ‘forced service’ volunteers should evidence weaker subsequent civic engagement than the ‘self-starting’ groups. Table 2 shows a clear distinction between those who freely chose to volunteer and both ‘late-starting’ groups. In particular, the ‘forced service’ volunteers exhibit significantly lower levels of civic engagement across all indicators relative to those who were ‘self-starting’.

Hypothesis 5 posits that the ‘forced service’ volunteers should resemble those who did ‘no service’ in secondary school in terms of their subsequent civic engagement. Again, the table provides tentative support for this hypothesis: the differences between the two groups are modest and statistically insignificant across all three indicators.

Table 2 provides prima facie support for our contentions, but we know (from Table 1a) that there are socio-demographic differences between the ‘late-starting’ and ‘self-starting’ groups. Because these background differences are themselves important predictors of future civic engagement, it is useful to re-examine these group-related associations with statistical controls. Model 1 of Table 3 reports multiple regression analyses retesting hypotheses 4 and 5 with controls for six background variables.⁴

[Table 3 about here]

We are primarily interested in the impact of different service experiences. The data in Model 1 of Table 3 suggest that the cohort differences in current volunteerism observed in Table

⁴ As a preliminary step to these analyses we ran correlations among our study measures. All of the secondary school community service variables except the one distinguishing mandated from non-mandated service were positively and significantly related to the two outcome measures of current volunteerism. The correlations in all but three cases are low, which attests to the genuine independence of our measures. The exceptions ($r > .5$) are as follows: current volunteer activity with service duration (.81); secondary school service with any service (.77), and service duration of one year or more with service activity (.85). Full results are available from the authors.

2 are not due solely to differences in the personal and background profiles of these groups. Even controlling for background variables the patterns we discover in the bivariate analysis remain: the ‘no service’ group is not significantly different from the ‘forced service provider’ group in terms of volunteering ‘in the past twelve months’, nor does its attitude toward community helping differ. On the other hand, both of the ‘self-starting’ cohorts – those who volunteered in secondary school without a mandate or before undertaking a mandate – are more likely to have volunteered in the last year than the ‘forced service providers’. As well, mandated students with prior volunteering experience exhibit a more positive attitude toward community helping. The background variables perform largely as the literature would lead us to expect. Females and those with greater levels of religious observance are more likely to have positive outcomes across these dependent variables. Parental involvement and school activity levels affect the amount of current volunteer activity but not as much attitudes toward volunteering.

Hypothesis 6. Our last hypothesis posits no difference in subsequent volunteerism between ‘forced service providers’ and those ‘mandated with prior volunteering’ when School service satisfaction and service duration are controlled. Model 2 of Table 3 reports the results of these regressions. It can be seen from the table that, when service satisfaction and service duration are controlled, the significant coefficients for the ‘self-starting’ cohorts from Model 1 are no longer significant with this model.⁵

⁵ We also ran Model 1 without the ‘no service’ cohort to facilitate a like-for-like comparison between models 1 and 2. The results are the same for our variables of interest. The mandated with prior service cohort is significant at the .1 level but this is no longer significant

6. Discussion and Conclusions

While mandated secondary school community service programmes have proliferated in recent decades (Kleiner & Chapman 1999; Skinner & Chapman 1999; Spring et al. 2008), the effectiveness of such initiatives is still in some dispute. Current debate centres on two concerns: first, that mandating service in secondary school may taint the whole enterprise of community service for these adolescents; second, that service motivated externally by a graduation requirement may not produce the same positive effects associated with service freely given. Since students who apparently need this external motivation are the target population for mandated programmes, an absence of positive relationship would call into question the rationale for mounting such programmes.

Our findings support the general thesis that performing community service in secondary school is related to the likelihood of performing service in subsequent years. However, consistent with previous studies of the Ontario student population conducted one year (Henderson et al. 2007) and two years (Henderson et al. 2012) after their graduation, the present study, conducted four years out, found that service in secondary school was not by itself enough to predict subsequent volunteering. In previous studies only service recalled as satisfying and/or

when we control for the quality and duration of high school service. This is true for both the models of current volunteer activity and current attitudes toward community service. The demographic and background variables perform in a similar way across Models 1 and 2 regardless of whether we exclude the 'no service cohort in Model 1 or not.

of some duration (a year or more) was associated with a greater likelihood of future volunteering. In the present study, students' current attitudes toward community helping were also related to a satisfying secondary school service placement, although not to service duration. Importantly, our study found that students required to perform service in secondary school volunteered at the same rate during 'the past twelve months' as those not subject to a requirement. Hence, our findings are consistent with those who have found no adverse effects associated with mandating service (Hart et al. 2007, Henderson et al. 2007; Metz & Youniss 2003, Planty et al. 2006).

Perhaps the most important contribution of our study concerns the record of subsequent volunteerism among mandated students who were first mobilized by the programme. On both of our current volunteerism measures, this less inclined cohort did not differ significantly from a comparison cohort of students who had no service requirement and did no service in secondary school. If it is a major objective of a mandated community service programme to 'jump-start' civic involvement for those not otherwise inclined to get involved, our study provides little empirical support for it doing so, at least for this sample of university-bound graduates of Ontario's programme. Simply stated, then, the programme seems to have done no harm, but neither does it seem to have accomplished its objective of promoting volunteerism among students who need such a programme to get involved.

The origin of this problem may be readily at hand. As we have noted above, one of the sturdiest findings in the literature on the effectiveness of secondary school community service programmes is the importance of satisfying and meaningful placements for participants (Root 1997; Reinders & Youniss 2006; Gallant et al. 2010; Helms 2013; Pancer 2015). While many students have the motivation and personal support network to seek out such placements on their

own, those deficient in either or both of these resources will require a programme structured to facilitate the placement process. Reviewers of the Ontario programme have consistently remarked on its weakness in this regard (Brown et al. 2007; Meinhard et al. 2006; Padanyi et al. 2010). As a consequence, it would not be surprising if reluctant or less inclined secondary school participants in the programme adopted a minimalist approach to completing their requirement, rarely experienced a satisfactory placement, and showed little evidence of having benefited from the experience.

Our data support this conclusion. The ‘forced service providers’ in our study were much less likely to score above the median regarding satisfaction with the service experience in secondary school (22 percent vs about 58 percent for those who volunteered before being mandated to do so and 62 percent for non-mandated volunteers), much less likely to volunteer beyond their requirement (55 percent vs 88 percent for those with prior volunteering experience), and much less likely to volunteer for a year or more with a placement (38 percent vs about 66 percent for the other two service cohorts). However, when these differences are statistically controlled, cohort differences in current volunteering and current attitude toward community helping are no longer significant. This might suggest that a well-structured programme that facilitates appropriate service placements could have unique positive effects on its target population, but the current model in Ontario may be so laissez faire that those placements are few and far between, and those positive effects, at least at the cohort level, are not apparent.

Several additional study findings warrant mention. Table 2 (above) revealed that students in the ‘mandated with prior volunteering’ cohort exhibited a more positive attitude toward volunteering than non-mandated volunteers. Given that the two cohorts are remarkably

similar in most other respects, this is an unanticipated and intriguing finding. In seeking an explanation, it would appear that we can eliminate the mandatory secondary school civics course that was introduced at the same time as the service requirement because there was no relationship between completion of the course and either measure of current volunteerism (Table 3). A second possibility is that the mandatory programme enhanced a sense of civic obligation for participating students. That is, students may have been reacting to the perception that society apparently deems community service to be of sufficient importance to justify mandating it. If so, the difference we have observed may reflect a difference in the social desirability of specific item responses, or it could reflect a more internalized view. We are unable to explore these possibilities further with our data, but in either case, it suggests a possible dividend of such programmes that warrants investigation.

Also intriguing from this research were the dogs that didn't bark. We had anticipated that both type of secondary school, and other efforts to jump start civic engagement might have had an impact. We suspected that the type of secondary school from which students graduated – Catholic or private rather than public – would be positively related to subsequent volunteerism. Such school boards tend to invest more resources in their community service initiatives and are more likely to integrate their programmes into the school curriculum (Padanyi et al. 2010). In fact, we found no relationship between school type and subsequent volunteering. And while students from these non-public schools tended to be more positive in their attitude toward community helping, that zero order relationship did not survive controls for other background variables. Our data do not allow us to explore this issue further.

While we believe the findings reported here contribute usefully to the ongoing debate about mandatory community service programmes, there are four limitations of the research that should be borne in mind. Perhaps the most obvious of these follows from previous discussions: if it is satisfying and meaningful placements in secondary school that are related to subsequent volunteerism, the relationship of any specific programme to subsequent volunteerism will be affected by its capacity to facilitate such placements for participants. While our findings may describe typical experiences with the Ontario programme, they might well weaken for programmes providing greater consistency in support to participants.

Second, our data on current and past volunteerism were gathered at one point in time, as much as eight years after students' relevant secondary school experiences. Retrospective designs can yield useful insights about the relationship of secondary school experience to current attitudes and behaviour, but the causal sequence associated with these relationships cannot be established with such designs. Needed are more longitudinal research designs that track students from secondary school through young adulthood.

Third, ours is a study of secondary school students who proceeded to university. University-bound graduates have a greater propensity to volunteer in secondary school (when not mandated to do so) than non-university-bound graduates (Egerton 2002).⁶ Although it is more

⁶ A separate analysis of Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) data (Cycles 2, 3 and 4) provides support for this supposition. Using later cycles of the panel to identify eventual educational paths (i.e., university-bound vs non-university-bound), the analysis compared volunteering rates reported in earlier cycles while respondents were in secondary school. It showed substantial and

difficult to track the non-university-bound cohort after graduation, there is a need to do so before generalizing our findings to their numbers.

Fourth, we have observed that, for the programme's target population, the relationship between programme participation and subsequent volunteerism appears to have been negligible, in that volunteerism levels for such students were similar to the cohort which did no service at all in secondary school. However, because we observed these groups only once four years after completing secondary school⁴, there is a possibility that the programme had positive effects, but that socializing effects associated with the intervening university years eliminated the difference between the 'no service' and 'forced service provider' cohorts in terms of engagement. Our retrospective design does not allow us to check for such possibilities.

Although our findings suggest that Ontario's mandatory community service programme is unrelated to subsequent volunteerism for those who most need it, our conclusion is not that development of such programmes is a mistake. Consistent with other researchers in the field, we have found that students who volunteer in secondary school are more likely to volunteer in later years, and that is especially so if the secondary school experiences are viewed as satisfying and meaningful by students. Our analysis suggests that mandatory community service programmes do not dampen students' enthusiasm for further volunteering, but to be effective, they must

statistically significant differences between the secondary school volunteering rates of university-bound and non-university-bound respondents.

ensure that the service performed engages students. For the hard-to-reach students we have called ‘forced service providers’, that is the challenge.

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