

Volunteering and Mandatory Community Service:

Choice – Incentive – Coercion – Obligation

A Discussion Paper

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an in-depth exploration of the connection between mandatory community service and volunteering. Mandatory community service is mandatory unpaid (or paid less than the prevailing wage) work undertaken in the community, usually to benefit the community in general or specific members of the community other than those performing the service. It is the compulsory nature of mandatory community services that is of greatest interest here.

There is a remarkably diverse range of other programs and formats through which individuals can become involved in community activities. Mandatory community service in Canada is the focus of this discussion, although brief reference is made to mandatory community service models in other countries.

Some mandatory community service programs, (e.g., workfare, court-mandated community service and mandatory community service in schools) involve significant penalties for those who fail to meet service requirements. Some community service is not strictly mandatory, but entails effective “coercion” to achieve involvement. In still other forms of community service, money or other compelling material incentives are offered to entice participation. Mandatory community service is spreading rapidly, and new forms are evolving continually.

The 2000 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating reported that 8% of Canadian volunteers said that they were required to do so by their school, their employer or as part of the terms of a community service order (Lasby, 2004, p. 10). It is likely that the percentage of Canadians reporting some form of requirement or coercion influencing participation would be much higher if other forms of mandatory community service *and* more — rather than less-coerced forms of engagement were explicitly investigated.

Mandatory community service may be *the* most important new trend in volunteering. It is contended that it will have an impact as great as episodic volunteering has had over the last decade (McCurley and Ellis, 2002b). It may transform how citizens connect and associate, and how we build and sustain community life. Little research has been conducted on mandatory community service in Canada despite its quiet but potentially transforming growth through the taken-for-granted realm of volunteering and community involvement.

As the non-profit sector struggles to meet increasing demands with decreasing resources, volunteerism has become extremely important (Foster and Meinhard, 2000; Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector, 1997). However, expected shifts in the volunteer labour pool raise serious doubts about the ongoing capacity of volunteerism to help fill gaps left by government downloading of services. A disproportionately small segment of the Canadian population is responsible for a disproportionately large portion of volunteer participation (Reed and Selbee, 2001), and the aging of both the “civic core” and the baby boom volunteers, the two generations who have built and sustained the non-profit sector over the last three decades, is expected to seriously erode volunteer capacity in this country over the next decade. The ongoing availability of volunteers cannot be taken for granted.

The current rise in mandatory community service carries a potentially huge impact on the nature and magnitude of the volunteer and unpaid labour force in this country and therefore warrants in-depth research and careful monitoring.

Careless terminology which obscures the distinction between volunteering and mandatory community service creates the potential to influence future volunteering behaviour and cause long-term harm

to volunteerism. At present, no empirical data exist on the potential for mandatory community service programs to alter attitudes and perceptions about community in general, and volunteering in particular. Mandatory and other forms of community service demand immediate attention.

The concepts of volunteering and mandatory community service are introduced and briefly distinguished from one another. A review of the evolving definitions of key terms such as “volunteering,” “volunteer” and “volunteerism” is presented. While no consensus exists about the definition of volunteering, there is wide agreement that work must be unpaid, relatively un-coerced and primarily for the benefit of others to qualify as volunteering.

The relationship between volunteering and mandatory community service is explored in some detail. A wide range of community service forms and programs is plotted along a continuum, and each is briefly profiled. The mandatory forms of community service, by definition, involve compulsion from a source of power outside of the person required to perform the work. Punishment and/or the denial of important rights and/or benefits are the consequence for those who fail to meet service requirements. Of the wide variety of ways that citizens can become engaged in community activities, it is clear that mandatory community service is the furthest of all from volunteering.

How people understand the world is not absolute. Meaning is derived from interaction in the world, and language is one of the most important conveyors of meaning. This is the reason why the prevailing disregard for the fundamental differences between mandatory community service and volunteering, and the associated propensity to use the term “volunteering” in connection with mandatory community service is important. The careless blurring of the distinction between volunteering and mandatory community service may pose a significant risk to the long-term well-being and availability of volunteer resources in Canada.

Little is known about mandatory community service and its potential to influence voluntary behaviour. Key questions and concerns are identified about mandatory community service and other forms of community service, and about their relationship to volunteering. Areas for further exploration and research are suggested.

A lengthy list of references and further readings is provided.

2. INTRODUCTION

This is a preliminary exploration of the connection between mandatory community service and volunteering. Mandatory community service is mandatory unpaid (or paid less than the prevailing wage) work undertaken in the community, usually to benefit the community in general or specific members of the community other than those performing the service. For this discussion, it is the compulsory nature of mandatory community services that is of greatest interest.

Mandatory community service programs differ significantly from one another with respect to target populations, objectives, sponsorship and delivery methods. The longest-standing and best-known mandatory community service programs in Canada are those initiated by governments:

- the criminal justice system (e.g., alternative sentencing programs that require court-ordered community service instead of time in jail)
- the education system (e.g., minimum hours of service in the community as a graduation requirement)
- the social service system (e.g., community service required to receive or top up welfare benefits, disability pensions or forms of transfer payments)

There is a remarkably diverse range of other programs and formats through which individuals can become involved in community activities. Mandatory community service in Canada is the focus of this discussion, although programs in other countries are noted from time to time, both to illustrate how mandatory community service is

evolving, and to point out forms of mandatory community service that might turn up here in Canada at some point in the future.¹

Some mandatory community service programs, like the three already mentioned, involve significant penalties for the people who “choose” not to participate or otherwise fail to meet service requirements. Some forms of community service are not strictly mandatory, but entail effective “coercion” to achieve involvement. In still other forms of community service, money or other compelling material incentives are offered to entice participation. Known forms are continually being adapted for application to new participant populations, and unique forms frequently emerge.

The 2000 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that 8% of Canadian volunteers said that they were required to do so by their school, their employer or as part of the terms of a community service order (Lasby, 2004, p. 10). It is likely that the percentage of Canadians reporting some form of requirement or coercion influencing participation would be much higher if other forms of mandatory community service *and* more — rather than less-coerced forms of engagement were explicitly investigated.

In a series of articles on mandatory community service, McCurley and Ellis (2002b) contend that the rise in mandatory service is *the* most important new trend in volunteering. They predict that its impact on volunteering will be as great as was the shift from long-term to short-term volunteer involvement which is now widely recognized as the single most important shift in volunteering in at least thirty years.

¹ Increasing international interest in volunteerism combined with global communication has led to both a growing body of research and literature on, and an active world-wide sharing of information about, the benefits of volunteering. Governments are increasingly aware of the social and political value of volunteering, and many are actively supporting and cultivating volunteer engagement to address a broad range of social objectives. Research and communication about emerging forms of volunteer involvement is therefore of increasing global interest, and regularly leads to the adoption of programs by other sponsors and governments in often distant locations. For example, the Guardian Angels, a volunteer-based street patrol program originating in New York City arrived in Toronto in the 1980s but did not continue operations on a permanent basis there. The Guardian Angels spread back into Toronto in January 2006. Of this latest incursion, Curtis Sliwa, founder and president of the Guardian Angels, was quoted as saying, “Toronto has a problem that is American-made, American-influenced and has been delivered from America to your doorsteps. Now is the time to put aside this, ‘Well, we live in Canada, you live in America, what works there doesn’t necessarily work here,’ and realize you’ve got to somehow adopt some American solutions that have worked in causing a crime reduction.” (Brautigam, 2006, p. A14). Global Youth Service Day is another example of a form of volunteer involvement originating elsewhere but realizing widespread adoption in Canada.

The defining change of the next decade in volunteer involvement may likely be the predominant growth of what might be called the “Mandated Volunteer,” the individuals whose entrance into volunteering is not by their own choice, but is instead dictated by some outside agency.

In a review of community involvement patterns in the United States and the United Kingdom, McCurley and Ellis (2002b) suggest that almost every governmental benefit program in the future may make community service compulsory for recipients, and they cite a 2000 survey by the U.S. Department of Education that found that 83% of all public high schools in the U.S. already had some form of community service program. There are no comparable national statistics on the incidence of mandatory community service programs in Canada – school-based or otherwise. It is clear, however, from anecdotal evidence and Internet-based searches on the topic that mandatory community service is evolving, spreading and growing more prevalent here in Canada as well as in many other countries. If McCurley and Ellis are correct, it may transform how citizens connect and associate, and how we build and sustain community life.

In sharp contrast to the magnitude and significance of mandatory community service as a social phenomenon, little is actually known about it. Very little research has been conducted on it, particularly in Canada, and despite the fact that it appears to be a subject which engenders passionate and sometimes heated debate, relatively little attention is being paid to its quiet but potentially transforming growth through the taken-for-granted realm of volunteering and community involvement.

As the non-profit sector in general, and the social service, health and education systems in particular, struggle to meet increasing demands with decreasing resources, many organizations are engaged in a desperate daily battle just to survive. In this environment, volunteerism has taken on new meaning.

...the reality is that government funding for social

and cultural services has decreased substantially in the last few years....This has resulted in an attempt by social service organizations to avert cutting services by relying more on volunteers, either for help in providing services, or for fundraising purposes, where possible.

(Foster and Meinhard, 2000, p. 3.)

The report of the Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector, an Ontario government initiative, entitled *Sustaining a Civic Society in Ontario*, identified as early as 1997 that fundamental shifts of government responsibilities in the voluntary sector would lead to a greater reliance on volunteering if previous service levels were to be maintained.

Of great importance is the recognition that the local community is the basis for voluntary action and that a healthy and economically strong community includes a robust voluntary sector. Support for enhancing voluntary action is crucial if we are to not only prevent the collapse of a previously well-developed system but adjust to the “sea change” which is occurring.

The problem with the appeal to volunteerism as the saviour, as the fall-back strategy to save the social, health, education, cultural and sports and recreation infrastructure in Canada, is that volunteering itself appears to be in decline. Reed and Selbee (2001) say it is a common misconception that volunteering is a broadly occurring behaviour in Canada. It is not. In fact, there is a disproportionately small segment of the Canadian population that is responsible for a disproportionately large portion of volunteer participation. The 2004 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating indicates that 77% of all formal volunteer hours (through organizations) was being contributed by only 11% of the Canadian adult population.

At the very point when volunteerism is being looked to as part of the solution to escalating community shortfalls, the frightening reality is just beginning to

dawn on political, community and sector leaders: the ongoing availability of volunteers cannot be taken for granted.

The current rise in mandatory community service carries a potentially huge impact on the nature and magnitude of the volunteer and unpaid labour force in this country, and therefore warrants in-depth research and careful monitoring.

Purpose

This is an exploration of the connection between mandatory community service and volunteering. It is suggested that careless terminology which obscures the distinction between volunteering and mandatory community service creates the potential to influence future volunteering behaviour and cause long-term harm to volunteerism. For that reason, mandatory and other forms of community service demand attention.

To date, research on mandatory community service in Canada has been limited in quantity, depth and scope. Of particular note, virtually no empirical data exist concerning the potential impact of the increasing prevalence of mandatory community service programs on people's attitudes and perceptions about community in general, and volunteering in particular.

It is hoped that this preliminary look at mandatory community service will stimulate attention, dialogue and further research on the topic.

Outline

In the first section of this paper, the concepts of volunteering and mandatory community service are introduced and briefly distinguished from one another. A review of the evolving definitions of key terms such as "volunteering," "volunteer" and "volunteerism" is presented.

Volunteering and mandatory community service are explored in more detail in the second section. It is suggested that these two forms of engagement represent opposite ends of a long and surprisingly complex continuum of volunteering and of community service. A wide range of other types of community service is outlined and each is briefly profiled.

In the third part, the relationship between language, meaning and behaviour is discussed. The prevailing disregard for the fundamental differences between mandatory community service and volunteering and the associated propensity to use the term "volunteering" in connection with mandatory community service are described. It is suggested that the careless blurring of the distinction between volunteering and mandatory community service may pose a significant risk to the long-term well-being and availability of volunteer resources in Canada.

The last section sets out key questions and concerns about mandatory community service and other forms of community service, and about their relationship to volunteering, along with areas for further exploration and research.

A list of references and further readings is provided.

Volunteering and Mandatory Community Service: Choice – Incentive – Coercion – Obligation

Volunteer Canada has produced four documents in this series on mandatory community service:

Exploring the Theme is the first paper in the series. This document is an overview that highlights the central concepts connecting mandatory community service and volunteering.

A Discussion Paper is the second part of the series. This document takes an in-depth look at mandatory community service, the evolving definition of volunteering, and the importance of language to

how citizens understand volunteering and subsequently act – or do not act – toward it. It includes a lengthy reference list.

Implications for Volunteer Program Management, the third paper, suggests adjustments that may need to be made to best practices in volunteer coordination and to organizational management systems to effectively engage mandatory community service participants.

A fourth paper, *Views and Opinions*, presents some of the current thinking about mandatory community service from the Canadian volunteerism sector. It is based on input elicited through an informal scan of the current experience of volunteer centres and the networks across the country established to support the Canada Volunteerism Initiative.

3. WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? THE EVOLVING DEFINITION

The evolution of the definition of volunteering

While the term “volunteer” might seem self-evident, changing practices and social trends have generated both subtle and substantive challenges to its definition over time. Taken so much for granted, the term is infrequently defined in the growing body of literature (Schugurensky and Mundel, 2005, p. 5), but key transitions in thinking about volunteering can be gleaned from a review of the literature on volunteerism and volunteer program management over the last three decades.

In one of the earliest formal works on volunteering, A. David (1970, p. 15) said,

Being a volunteer only requires a frame of mind – the desire to do something, with no financial reward, for someone else who could not receive that service unless you do it with him or for him.

Just a few years later, Cull and Hardy (1974, p. 5) offered this definition:

Volunteers...are idealistically motivated persons who want to devote some portion of their lives to serving their fellow man. They come not for pay, though some may receive a token amount.

In these early definitions, volunteers were simply well-intentioned people doing work without monetary compensation. The twin dimensions of unpaid and “do-gooder” which featured strongly in these early versions are still the most likely images to come to minds of most people today.

Later in the 1970s, the definition of volunteering was enhanced to include an additional dimension: volunteer work is both unremunerated *and* un-coerced. Consider this 1978 definition from Ellis and Noyes in their first edition of *By the People*:

To volunteer is to choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for

monetary profit, going beyond what is necessary to one's physical well-being. (1978, p. 10)

According to this version, volunteers not only work for no pay, but also, just as importantly, they do so because they *want* to. The two dimensions of pay status and voluntary initiative have remained at the core of all subsequent notions of volunteering and they will surface repeatedly as themes throughout this discussion.

Through the late 1970s, a general consensus seemed to have been reached that volunteer work embodied four key elements:

- un-coerced behaviour
- no monetary remuneration
- for a charitable cause
- in service primarily to others

In 1980, Ivan Scheier, noted expert in volunteerism, added two important refinements in his definition of volunteer work when he inserted the words “relatively un-coerced” and the concept of “work, not play.” Scheier’s definition of volunteering included four key elements:

- *the activity is relatively un-coerced*
 - *the activity is intended to help*
 - *the activity is done without primary or immediate thought of financial gain*
 - *the activity is work, not play*
- (quoted in McCurley and Lynch, 1996, p. 1)

Scheier’s definition of volunteering stood for quite some time as professionals in the fields of volunteerism and volunteer program management began to understand the complexities of volunteer motivation, and recognized the wisdom of Scheier’s leeway in the concept of “coercion.” A range of factors may propel prospective volunteers towards the possibility of doing unpaid work in the community such as:

- a physician might suggest to a patient that getting out and getting actively involved could be helpful in the patient’s journey towards recovery

- a parent or guidance counsellor might suggest to a student that volunteer work would make an attractive entry on the student's college application
- a person's work colleagues might suggest that the employee group take on a community project together

In these illustrations, the initial impetus for the volunteer work originates outside of the prospective volunteer, but still the decision to participate remains with the person him or herself. In Scheier's terms, the resulting work can be seen to be "relatively un-coerced."

The presence of subtle pressure to volunteer is frequently referred to, usually with good humour, by volunteers themselves. Stories of "encouragement" to volunteer are not uncommon as in the following examples:

- friends ask friends to lend a hand or pitch in on a pet project or turn up to help at a special event
- volunteers share their enthusiasm for a "cause" with family members and try to entice involvement wherever possible
- volunteer sport coaches complain good naturedly about their inability to get out of coaching because a replacement can't be found
- parents roll their eyes but still agree to sell what seems like a never-ending series of raffle tickets to raise funds for the next tournament, the next field trip or the year's program

Complexities and blurred distinctions:

The introduction of mandatory community service

Starting with just one program as early as the 1960s but spreading at an increasing pace in the last two decades, a form of involvement called "mandatory community service" has been spreading throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and beyond. Mandatory community service has grown to large proportions in the United States and shows evidence of accelerated growth here in

Canada as well. What is this phenomenon, and what is its connection to volunteering?

Mandatory community service is distinguished from volunteering by one key feature: compulsion. By definition, mandatory community service involves substantial force applied from a source of power outside of the individual performing the service. It takes place not because the participant freely chooses to do the activity, but because he or she is compelled to do so by either the threat of significant penalty or the threat of withdrawal of significant benefit.

Schugurensky and Mundel raise the fundamental question of whether the presence of any degree of coercion is sufficient to disqualify an activity as volunteering.

The coercion factor also calls into question whether we can even consider an activity as a voluntary one if it is not chosen in total freedom. Indeed, historically the concept of volunteer has been negatively associated with coercion. In the past, a volunteer was one who voluntarily offered to serve in the military, in contrast to those who were under obligation to do so, or were part of a regular army of military force (Oxford English Dictionary, 2003). However, a certain degree of coercion is often present in some volunteer activities, sometimes expressed through legal requirements, social and religious mandates, workplace commitments, community expectations and the like. Where to draw the line between 'genuine' and 'coerced' volunteer work is not easy, and the decision probably varies from context to context. (2005, p. 6)

In this paper, four forms of mandatory community service are of greatest interest:

- alternative sentencing
- workfare
- mandatory community service in schools
- stipended community service

The first three are quite literally “mandatory” and stand in stark opposition to any community service that Ivan Scheier might have called “relatively uncoerced.” The fourth form is stipended service which simply means that some form of monetary remuneration is attached to the work. This latter form is not mandatory, but it is clearly not “unpaid.” This discussion focuses on these forms of mandatory community service because of the following reasons:

- they are the most prevalent in North America and are spreading most quickly
- they are most clearly *not* volunteering
- they are most often called “volunteering” or “mandatory volunteering”

The latter is of most concern.

Reconsidering the definition of “volunteering”

In 1996, in direct response to the increasingly frequent confusion of the terms “volunteer,” “volunteer work,” “volunteerism” and “volunteering” with various forms of mandatory and (pseudo-) paid community service, Volunteer Ontario engaged in a consultation process with representatives of the volunteer and labour movements to once again refine the definition of volunteering. They issued jointly with the Ontario Federation of Labour a draft² position paper which included a series of eight principles regarding the role of volunteers and paid workers. It embodied the following definition of volunteering:

Voluntary activity is that which is undertaken

- *by choice*
- *in service to individuals informally or through organizations*
- *without salary or wage*
- *people required to do unpaid mandatory service placements such as community service orders, co-op placements, workfare assignments, etc., are not volunteers.* (Volunteer Ontario, 1996)

Interestingly, the Ontario government’s own Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector, which tabled its report with the Mike Harris government in January 1997, listed the following as number eight in its ten “First Principles of Voluntary Action”:

Voluntary Action is willing and non-salaried.

Volunteering needs to be clearly distinguished from those actions required as part of government or other programs, e.g., community service orders, workfare. (Reimbursement for reasonable expenses may be appropriate.)

The debate heats up

As mandatory community service has expanded in variety and scope, and particularly as mandatory community service has spread through the education system in Canada, the debate about what is and what is not volunteering has heated up in this country.

In a 2002 Volunteer Canada article called “Is Mandatory Volunteering a Contradiction in Terms?” Kelly Crowe scanned some of the current criticisms of mandatory community service programs in Canada. She reported, from an interview with David Welch, Professor of Social Policy at the University of Ottawa, that mandated community service “takes away from the whole spirit of volunteerism.” When people volunteer because they have to, “that cheapens it.”

The question of mandatory community service has been taken up outside of the volunteerism arena as well. Social and community service planners and commentators, and educators, for example, have demonstrated a growing interest in mandatory community service. Stukas and Dunlap (2002) suggested that the critics who say mandatory community service programs are merely thinly disguised attempts by governments to compensate

² The draft position paper was circulated throughout the volunteer and labour communities and went through a series of revisions. A version of the statement was endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Ontario Association of Volunteer Administrators in 1996. That final version embodies, unchanged, the four principles defining volunteering, as outlined above.

for their withdrawal of support for services do not understand how urgent the need may soon be to stimulate community involvement to help community services keep pace with the growing need.

Others see mandatory community service as servitude and equate students performing compulsory service work in the community to “beasts of burden” (Bowden, 1998). Students and parents in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, took the local school board to court, arguing that mandatory community service for high school students imposed the kind of “involuntary servitude” that is forbidden in the United States Constitution.³ (They lost, by the way). Hurd (2004) argues that the principle of “giving back,” which some say is the basis of the national service programs in the United States, “is in utter opposition to the foundations of a free society. At its core, this principle implies that a human being owes a debt to society... merely for being alive and being born.” Ragaini (2003) references the popular theme that mandatory or forced volunteerism is an oxymoron and says,

It is certainly not immoral to volunteer to help someone. But forcing someone to do so is a violation of his or her personal freedom. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Nothing could so completely divest us of our liberty as the establishment of the opinion that the state has a perpetual right to the services of all of its members.”

On voluntary and un-voluntary choices

Choice is unquestionably a defining variable of volunteering. If it does not involve choice, it, de facto, is not volunteering. But will the presence of any measure of choice result in disqualification? Take for example, the concept of “mutual obligation” in Australia, which holds that citizens receiving state financial benefits owe a duty back to the state. Benefits recipients may choose how they will satisfy that obligation, and they have a range of options

including job searches, retraining programs and community service.

Frow (2001) highlights the “free will and without coercion” section of the Australian definition of formal volunteering published by Volunteering Australia. A guiding principle underlying the definition holds that

Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.

In reference to community service, which is one of the “choices” offered to mutual obligation participants in Australia, Frow says,

As a matter of principle, then, there are concerns that where mutual obligation is the driver, volunteering is not being undertaken “without coercion”. The choice is not one made by free will, but results from volunteering being seen as preferable to the other “choices” available in an environment where a choice must be made. In other words, there is an element of compulsion here that defies both the definition and the principle stated above. In order to receive a government allowance, people are being forced to choose, and where the choice is “volunteering”, it is not freely made. Is it then really volunteering at all? Can organisations place such “volunteers” in their services without undermining the concept of volunteering that has come to be accepted in the community sector?

The mutual obligation scheme in Australia⁴ is not unlike the Ontario Works program here in Canada. Here, as well, some would argue that because participants are given a choice among a range of job search and skill-development options (with community service being a form of the latter) then there is sufficient choice to qualify the selection of the community service as volunteer work. Others would agree with Frow that despite the availability of choice among options, the

³ For a discussion of this court case, see the interview with Paul Saunders, President of Citizens Against Mandatory Service. (Sanchez, 1998)

⁴ For more on volunteering and Australia’s mutual obligation policy, see Eardley et al., 2004; Dodson & Pearson, 2004; and Volunteering Australia, 1999.

essential compulsion underlying the program and the three- to six-month loss of benefits penalty for non-compliance (Workfare Watch, 1996) render participation in these kinds of community-based activities as “un-voluntary.”

That mandatory community service can be an extraordinarily effective option in alternative sentencing, re-employment and youth education is not in question. That it is not voluntary or freely chosen without coercion is the only point of interest, and on close examination, that point seems abundantly clear.

When is recognition exploitative?

The other defining variable in volunteering is the absence of pay. All current definitions of volunteering include the notion that it is work undertaken without expectation of financial remuneration. Few would argue that reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while volunteering constitutes financial remuneration, but at what point does recognition transition into pay?

- If young people are given credits towards college tuition in return for community service, is that sufficient financial remuneration to disqualify the community service as volunteer work?
- If full-time volunteers are given a stipend – a financial payment sufficient to allow them to volunteer on a full-time basis, but less than the prevailing minimum wage – is that “financial remuneration,” and is it sufficient to disqualify the work as volunteering?

How big can an incentive to volunteer be before it either becomes “payment” for work performed, or the work itself no longer “fits” the definition of volunteering?

- If tickets to a rock concert can only be obtained by doing at least ten hours of work for a local community agency (A James Gang Endeavour,

n.d.), is that a creative form of volunteer recognition?

- If a child cleans up garbage for 30 hours and receives a new bicycle in return (Morrison, 2004), is that recognition, incentive or pay? If the child were not interested in cleaning up garbage as a form of civic duty without the bicycle as a reward, would the service qualify as volunteer work?

Rob Jackson, a staff member at Volunteering England, writes,

Many over here are not comfortable with the proposal that young people who volunteer could get financial credit towards higher education. Volunteering England has an official line that reward cards for volunteers (where they get discounts off services and products in return for volunteering) undermine the concept that volunteers don't gain financially from volunteering.

I see the point here but, extending the argument further, this would mean that, for example, if someone volunteered and in doing so developed skills that helped them get a job that pays £5000 more a year than a job they would have got if they hadn't volunteered, then they have benefited financially from volunteering so what they did can't have been volunteering! The implication then is that if any material benefit is derived from volunteering it isn't volunteering.

(Personal correspondence, November, 2005)

Andy Fryar, author and manager of volunteers from Australia, likes the concert-tickets-in-return-for-community-service program and argues that the definition of volunteering ought to evolve to include such newly emerging forms.

I am no great fan of any definition of volunteering. For me, it always winds up being prohibitive in one aspect or another. Now before

I get lynched, let me make it clear that I do think we should try and define the boundaries in which volunteering can and should operate, however, my frustration continues to stem from the fact that volunteering bodies the world over create hard and fast definitions which then become 'gospel' for the following decade or more.

The reality is that volunteerism is moving and changing at a pace much faster than we are reviewing the way that we define what volunteering actually is, or has become. In brief, I wonder if we are being held back from truly recognising potential new forms of volunteer involvement simply by sticking rigidly to antiquated definitions? (Fryar, 2005)

And thirty years on, the debate continues. While the voluntary sector muddles about in the grey territory between volunteer work and employment, legal action⁵ has been forcing the courts and regulators to craft legal distinctions between volunteers and employees. Extraordinary implications flow from these precedent-setting cases that will push the sector over the near future to sort out with a great deal more precision precisely what does and does not qualify as “volunteer.”

Do we know what volunteering is?

What has been learned over three decades of emerging and evolving forms of community service? Here are a few observations:

- not all actions undertaken voluntarily constitute “volunteer work” or “volunteering”
- the presence of choice among options is insufficient to qualify the resulting action as volunteering
- not all persons who act voluntarily can be considered “volunteers”

- the fact that an act is called “volunteering” or that a person is called a “volunteer” does not make either label accurate
- to be accurately termed “volunteering,” an action must satisfy certain conditions
- likewise, to be a “volunteer,” a person’s actions must meet certain criteria

It is time to take another look at the increasingly numerous and diverse forms of community service and reconsider how citizens understand and act toward volunteering. If McCurley and Ellis were correct in their prediction that mandatory community service will be the most significant transformational factor in the shape of volunteering over the next decade, continuing to ignore this rapidly spreading and continuously mutating phenomenon may turn out to be deeply regrettable in the quite near future.

Rob Jackson’s may be the most critical point of all:

[I]f we don’t discuss new ideas in volunteerism, then volunteerism will leave us behind as it evolves and grows beyond our narrow mindedness into forms that are relevant for people, today and tomorrow. (Personal correspondence, November 2005)

⁵ Recent legal battles in the United States and the U.K. have brought challenges on precisely these questions. In the most notable, people called volunteers performing unpaid work that closely emulated the work of paid staff brought a suit against America Online for back wages (c.f. Margonelli, 1999; Rheingold, 2001; Hu, 1999; Brown, 2000). The United States Department of Labor has recently issued four “opinion letters” providing guidance to employers whose employees volunteer for “extracurricular” activities in addition to performing their regular job duties. These opinion letters explain how these arrangements can be structured under the Fair Labor Standards Act so that the workers are properly classified as “volunteers” and not “employees.” For more on this question, see Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP, 2005.

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Dimensions of volunteer work

While apparently still evolving, all definitions of volunteering are multi-dimensional, and action must meet more than just one criterion to qualify as volunteer work. Cnaan et al. (1996) developed a typology that contains four core variables in the definition of volunteer work: choice, pay, structure and intended beneficiary.

Dimension	Categories
Free Choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Free will (the ability to voluntarily choose) 2. Relatively un-coerced 3. Obligation to volunteer
Remuneration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None at all 2. None expected 3. Expenses reimbursed 4. Stipend/low pay
Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal 2. Informal
Intended Beneficiaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Benefit/help others/strangers 2. Benefit/help friends or relatives 3. Benefit oneself (as well)

(Adapted from Cnaan et al., 1996, p. 371)

The first two dimensions – choice and pay – are of greatest relevance to mandatory community service. The formal/informal dimension has little bearing on this discussion. The final dimension which speaks to the intended beneficiaries of the voluntary action is of only minor interest here in the sense that it speaks, at least in part, to the motivation behind the engagement.

Note that no reference is made to “mandatory,” “required” or “coerced” involvement in the Cnaan et al. typology. The reason for this omission is perhaps obvious: those forms of involvement are not volunteer work.

The dimensions and categories in the Cnaan et al. typology are neither absolute nor mutually exclusive. A person may volunteer both to gain skills and to help others; one may freely choose to volunteer in a program that offers only remuneration for out-of-pocket expenses or one may succumb to the gentle persuasion of a family member and participate in an event for no remuneration of any sort. The typology helps to isolate the dimensions underlying volunteering, but it inaccurately represents the many forms of volunteering as discrete when, in reality, they tend to blend and blur along a multi-dimensional continuum of service.

The continuum of volunteering and community service

A continuum is a continuous whole in which no individual part is fully distinct or distinguishable from adjacent parts. This is precisely the case with the wide array of mandatory and other community service formats. There is significant variation *within* forms of community service as well as *between* forms, and the lines separating forms are indistinct. Consider these examples.

- In a corporate day of service program, an employer offers time off from work for any employee who chooses to participate in a special project in the community. Participation is completely and truly voluntary. No judgement, comment or penalty is attached by the employer to an employee’s decision to not participate. This is a community service option devoid of “strings.”
- A corporate day of service program takes place while employees are attending a work-related conference. The service activity has been planned in advance by the employer, a commitment of a specific number of hours of service from employees has been made by the employer to the community partners, and any employee choosing to not participate in what might very well be called a “volunteer” event will, at minimum, sense disfavor from his or her

employer. Fewer opportunities for advancement may not-so-coincidentally be offered to those employees who chose not to participate.

Both of these programs are called “Corporate Day of Service.” Participants in both would be referred to as volunteers and yet the degree of pressure to participate is significantly different between the two programs. Here is another example of a kind of pressure to serve that happens with great frequency in the voluntary sector.

- A parent who tries to enrol his or her child in a recreation program is told that, due to a shortage of leaders, the program will not operate unless the parent “volunteers” to help with the delivery of the program. The parent has a choice, but clearly understands that the denial of benefit to the child is of great consequence and feels pressure to become a “volunteer” leader in the program.

Contrast that with this variant:

- A parent registering his or her child in a recreation program is offered the opportunity to become a volunteer leader in the program. No pressure is exerted towards and no guilt is generated inside those parents who decline the invitation to participate.

Subtle and not-so-subtle gradations of coercion exist in community service and volunteer activities. A *continuum* of volunteering and community service is used here to illustrate that citizens’ work in the community is manifested in multitudinous forms which differ along one or more dimensions and still overlap and share similar features. The continuum demonstrates, among the broad spectrum of community service and volunteering forms, the relationship between the two forms most central to this discussion: mandatory community service and volunteering.

The continuum of volunteering and community service depicted here includes 26 more-or-less different forms

of community service. It is primarily structured along the dimension of “choice,” although two other dimensions – pay and intended beneficiary – have also influenced the placement of items along its course.

Continuum ranges

Broadly speaking the continuum of volunteering and community service separates into three general ranges.

1. The “Stick” Varieties

Simply stated, those forms of community service which are more- rather than less-coerced appear at the left of the continuum under the heading of “stick,” to represent their compulsory character. They are either compelled from an outside source of power or involve such a significant penalty for non-compliance that they cannot be said to be in any way voluntary. While these forms are typically unpaid, it is their compulsory nature which establishes their terminal placement. Also in the “stick” range is a series of community service forms which may not be said to be strictly mandatory, but involve pressure of sufficient magnitude to remove “freely chosen” from their character.

2. The “Carrot” Varieties

In the middle range of the continuum are forms of community service which are not compelled, per se, or at least not characterized by strong pressure or by the potential loss of valuable benefits, but which offer such direct and significant monetary and/or material rewards to those engaged in them that they are “hard to resist.” The term “incentive-volunteering” is used to describe these community service programs. Note that the majority of rewards of service in this range are extrinsic to the work.

3. The “Altruistic” Varieties

At the right end of the continuum is a range of community service forms that are neither compelled nor compensated in any explicitly financial or material manner: they are free of significant incentives. While

no one would argue that these forms of service offer important benefits to those engaged in them, the rewards are intrinsic to the work and, for the most-part, non-monetary in nature. These forms of service embody at least some measure of service to others. It is the combination of three features – the absence of coercion, the absence of financial motivator *and* the opportunity to help others – which moves these forms of community service into the range of traditional volunteering, ever closer to altruism in the terminal position.

Distinctions and gradations between forms of service

The sometimes subtle variations in degree of compulsion have necessitated subjective generalizations in the placement of elements on the community service continuum. Where any given item is located is therefore of much less consequence than the number and variety of service options across the whole continuum. Four forms of service – pro bono work, employment retraining, stipended service and service-learning – involve such internal variation (e.g., one pro bono program may be much more mandatory than another pro bono program) that each one of them has been placed at more than one point on the continuum.

Most important about the continuum model is the notion of a graded progression from mandatory at one end, through coerced and incentive models, to volunteering and altruism at the other, and in particular, the fact that mandatory community service is at the terminal point of the continuum *furthest* from the “traditional” forms of volunteering which appear at or near the other terminal point of the continuum.

Justin Davis Smith convincingly argues that the continua approach to the portrayal of various forms of volunteering, community service⁶ and civic service is less appropriate when the items in question vary in significant ways from one another.

...definitions can be stretched only so far before they break (or to use the continuum analogy, that the lines can only be extended so far before they disappear into oblivion) and [] while allowing for healthy debate over the nature of free will (some would argue that we are all subject in different ways to pressure to act from family, friends, peers, etc.), volunteering will lose all meaning if it gives up on the voluntary nature of the activity. (2004)

Davis Smith's caution is well-advised. Interestingly, while it might be seen to make the case against the application of a continuum model, which sets out both volunteering and mandatory community service along a single line, at the same time, it reinforces the central point underlying the choice of the continuum as an illustrative tool here: when mandatory community service is viewed in relation to “traditional” volunteering, it becomes obvious how very different the two are and just how inappropriate the widespread practice of confusing one with the other is.

⁶ Civic service, like volunteering, is typically organized voluntary (although some military forms are less so) activity that is either unpaid or paid at well below market value and undertaken, at least in part, for community benefit. The primary difference between the two is that volunteering is undertaken in smaller episodes (although the short shifts measured in hours may take place over a long period of months or even years) while civic service most typically involves a full-time commitment over a significant period of often a year or more. For more on the distinction between volunteering and civic service, see Justin Davis Smith (2004) and any number of the other articles in the same supplementary issue of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, December 2004.

THE CONTINUUM OF VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

“STICK”		“CARROT”		“ALTRUISTIC”	
MOST COERCED	PERCEIVED OBLIGATION	INCENTIVE	COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY		
(Compulsory)	(Denied Benefit)	(Perceived Pressure)	(Reward Too Big To Refuse)	(Significant Reward)	(Altruism)
Mandatory Community Service (Alternative Sentencing) Mandatory Community Service (Truancy) Mandatory Community Service (Schools) Mandatory Community Service (Public Housing) Mandatory Community Service (Rehabilitation/Insurance Benefits) Welfare/Welfare Reform Parents Obligated To Volunteer For Children’s School (public; private; fundraising) Parents Obligated To Volunteer For Children’s Recreation Program (program; fundraising) Corporate Day of Service Parent-Co-op Daycare Prerequisite for College Entrance Pro Bono Legal work Loaned Executive Corporate Volunteer Programs (selected, depending on model) Employee Volunteer (volunteers for employer) Service Club/Membership Association Project Physician/Therapist Referred (physical/emotional) Rent Credits For Service (Price) Voluntourism Volunteer For Bikes					
	Employment Retraining	Stipended Service	Scholarship Qualification Employment Retraining Stipended Service Service-Learning Volunteer “For Self” Volunteer For “Other”		
Service-Learning	Service-Learning				

More on the matter of coercion

The most important variable separating volunteering from other forms of community service is free will and freedom from coercion of any kind. The denial of an important, valuable or desired benefit may be as “coercive” as the exercise of force or the imposition of a penalty by an external source. For example, an offender is told to perform a number of hours of community service as punishment for the crime. The penalty for non-compliance may be a forced jail sentence. That is clearly compulsion by threat of penalty exercised by an external source of power. Compare the offender’s experience with that of a resident in public housing who is told to perform a number of hours of community service or risk losing his or her eligibility for housing benefits.

- The offender experiences the threat of imprisonment.
- The public housing resident experiences the threat of homelessness.

The difference is arguably nil. Both participants feel compelled to perform the community service as prescribed, and while the offender may be said to have *no* choice about going to jail for failure to participate in court-ordered community service, the threat of homelessness is *as close* to “having no choice but to comply” as most would ever want to come. Arguing that the tenant always has the option to choose homelessness is ludicrous. The threat of not graduating from high school will feel to many students as disastrous as the potential loss of insurance benefits to a person in rehabilitation who is told to perform community service as a work-hardening strategy.⁷

The threat of losing a valued benefit can be as compelling as the threat of a penalty. This is the basis upon which decisions have been made to place community service forms in the mandatory range.

More on the matter of pay

A second, and arguably equally important, defining dimension of volunteering is that it is undertaken without expectation of monetary return to the person engaged in it. Simply put, volunteering is unpaid work.

There are multiple varieties of community service which return monetary benefits and/or other material benefits of significant monetary value to those doing the service. For example, stipended community service programs all return some form of monetary payment to their participants well beyond what might be thought of as enabling funds (reimbursement for volunteers’ out-of-pocket expenses). In addition, many of the stipended programs also offer other material benefits such as the accumulation of credits towards college tuition, interest free/reduced/deferred loans and relocation allowances.

Stipended community service programs do not satisfy the definition of volunteering any more than the mandatory forms do, but they are not explored here in any depth because they have little or no relevance to the concept of “mandatory.” They are mentioned only in the context of additional illustrations of community service that, like mandatory service, are mistakenly called volunteering.

Forms of community service

While it is almost certain that variations of community service have been overlooked and that new forms will emerge over the near future, 26 variants of community service are on the community service continuum. They range more-or-less in order from the most compulsory (least voluntary) on the left to the most voluntary (least coerced, least stimulated by material reward) on the right. Each entry is described below giving greater attention to the mandatory and coerced varieties.

⁷ Work hardening is a rehabilitation technique that assists employees who have been injured or disabled to gradually readjust to the demands of a job. The employee practices job-related tasks in a modified environment at reduced levels (e.g., slower, lighter) suited to their individual capacity. Volunteer involvement is an ideal work-hardening opportunity because it can offer a wide range of choice, less stress, more flexibility, shortened hours and freedom from the pressures of efficiency and profit-making which typify the marketplace.

1. Mandatory community service - alternative sentencing

More than 25 years ago, the criminal justice system in Canada developed alternative sentencing options for people convicted of minor offences. Offenders are sentenced to unpaid labour in the community as an alternative punishment to paying fines or serving time in jail. Imposed by the courts, this form of mandatory community service is arguably the furthest from “voluntary” since it is court-mandated and carries a clear and unavoidable penalty for non-compliance, up to and including a jail sentence. That community service would come to be understood as a form of punishment has received very little attention.

Participants on mandatory community service orders from the court system, which are sometimes called “community service restitution,” “court-mandated,” “court-appointed,” “court-referred” or “community sentencing,” are typically coordinated by managers of volunteers through non-profit volunteer programs or by those who typically coordinate the efforts of volunteers (sometimes volunteers themselves) in organizations such as sport leagues, faith communities, arts associations, self-help groups, etc. where there is no designated, professional manager of volunteers. In some settings, only specific placements are developed or designated as suitable for persons referred through the courts. In other settings, mandatory community service workers are fully integrated alongside existing volunteers where they work with little or no distinction. Offenders are sometimes given a degree of choice about what kind of work in what kind of agency they will serve. In a small number of cases, judges sentence offenders to serve in a non-profit organization of the judge’s choosing, with disregard for the organization’s interest or willingness to accept the offender.

Hours of service must be closely monitored and documented by the placement agency and reported directly or through a referral agent to the courts. Further penalties including fines and/or jail time are levied for failure to comply.

The principles underpinning mandatory community service sentencing are multiple. Originally initiated for the most minor of offences, such as failure to pay traffic fines for which the traditional punishment of incarceration seemed excessive, a sentence “served in the community” was cheaper, more befitting the lesser seriousness of the offence, and at least on the surface seemed to generate the additional “public good” of “free labour” for the community. Over time these programs have become widespread throughout North America and have also, over time, been applied to offences of increasing severity.⁸

Interesting variants on this “community service as punishment” theme have begun to spring up outside of the criminal justice system. For example, the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, has instituted a Community Service Program, administered by the Office of Judicial Affairs/Student Advocacy. They describe the program this way:

Community Service is a disciplinary sanction which requires a student to perform unpaid work of benefit to the University community. Community Service provides an opportunity for the offender to contribute positively to his/her community. The tasks support and supplement services existing on campus.

(University at Buffalo - The State University of New York, 2005)

⁸ Advertising executive Paul Coffin was sentenced to a conditional sentence of two years less a day, to be served in the community, for defrauding Canadian taxpayers of more than \$1.5 million. Coffin pleaded guilty to 15 fraud charges related to over-billing the federal government for an ad campaign. Coffin must obey a 9 p.m. curfew – but only on weeknights – and give lessons on business ethics as his community service penalty. In a parallel example, Curtis Eugene Prysock of Dunwoody, Georgia, who was convicted of assisting another felon in a \$16 million church-related mortgage fraud scheme, was sentenced to two years and nine months in federal prison, ordered to pay \$292,054 in restitution and to perform 150 hours of community service, and ordered to serve three years of supervised release (United States Attorney’s Office, Northern District of Georgia, 2002). A man who ran down and killed a woman with his supercharged Corvette received an 18-month conditional sentence that includes a 12-month, 24-hour house arrest, five-year driving prohibition, and 120 of “community service.” (“House Arrest,” 2006) Examples such as this last one can be seen in newspapers across Canada nearly every week of the year.

Extension to juvenile offenders

Court-mandated community service has now been extended into the juvenile justice system. Alternately called “juvenile community service” and “juvenile court placements,” this form of punishment for young offenders emulates its adult version. In Canada, new legislation – the Youth Criminal Justice Act – has brought a change in approach to juvenile offenders: it is designed to prevent crime rather than to rehabilitate errant teenagers and to hold such youths accountable for their actions with proportionate and meaningful consequences. An integral objective of the new legislation is to remove less serious conduct from the courts and to deal with it “in the community” (Baer, 2005). Community service orders for juvenile offenders are important ingredients in the justice system’s search for constructive alternatives to imprisonment.

The message of community-service-as-punishment is of concern, but worse is the wide scale tendency to confuse it with volunteering. Consider this program description of the Teen Court in Duncanville, Texas:

A youth referred to Teen Court appears before a jury of peers, consisting of volunteers from local secondary schools and returning youth who were previously defendants. Evidence from Duncanville and many other cities indicates that young people do stay out of trouble following a Teen Court appearance, and the program saves hundreds of thousands of dollars of community expense. Depending on the teen’s offense, mandated volunteer assignments can range from 8 to 64 hours per offense.

(City of Duncanville, n.d.)

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, breach of curfew can land a youth in trouble with the law.

Staying out late and getting caught will cost a \$25 dollar fine for the first offense, \$50 for the

second, and \$75 dollars and a warrant for the third. Kids who can’t pay the fine can work it off by doing community service. (Voorhees, 2005)

In the same way that community service as punishment for adult offenders has spread beyond the justice system to, for example, the university campus setting, community service as punishment for youthful offenders has spread beyond the juvenile justice system as well. Community service is a consequence for “inappropriate behaviour” listed alongside other forms of punishment such as expulsion, reprimands and exclusion in the discipline policy of Alexandra Junior High School in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

(Alexandra Junior High School, n.d.)

Calling any of this court-mandated community service “volunteering” not only obscures the true essence of these initiatives, but also has the potential to do a disservice to volunteering. One cannot help but wonder what meaning is conveyed to the general population when community work is clearly, unquestioningly and repeatedly used as punishment.

2. Mandatory community service - truancy

In a relatively new development, community service hours as an alternate form of punishment in the criminal justice system have spread into the education system. A “sentence” of community service is now being used in some school jurisdictions as the punishment for truancy. In an interesting twist, non-compliance with the terms of the sentence can bring further punishment for the young student and/or for his or her *parents*.

The Office of Education in Butte County California lists the performance of 20 to 40 hours of community service as a punishment for truancy right along with other possible punishments such as being made a Ward of the Court, probation, fine or suspension of driver’s licence for one year.

(Butte County Office of Education, n.d.)

In Thurston County, Washington, a truancy program variant can require the student and/or the parents of the truant student to provide community service if they are found in contempt of court for non-compliance with a court order related to the truancy.

The completion of community service hours is listed alongside other potential punishments, including fines, placing the child in detention and submitting to Electronic Home Monitoring.

(Thurston County, n.d.)

In Callam County, Washington, community service is one of the optional punishments for students and/or their parents.

Students and parents who willfully violate the court order and continue to have unexcused absences will be summoned back to court for a “contempt hearing”. When a student or parent is held in contempt, the court may impose coercive sanctions to correct the student’s attendance issues. The court may order a student to write a report, do community service, or spend time in juvenile detention. The court may require a parent to do community service or even be issued fines for \$25.00 per each day of their child’s truancy.

(Callam County, Washington, n.d.)

Mistakenly called volunteer work, this form of court-mandated community service as a sentence for truancy sends a very clear message about work in the community: it is so distasteful that it constitutes punishment for truancy. The likelihood of engendering a lifelong commitment to volunteering in the young “offenders” is probably slim, which is unfortunate since at-risk youth volunteering in a positive, enjoyable and/or rewarding community environment could be one of the most effective antidotes to truancy, crime, and a host of other risky behaviours.

In another variant, parents may be forced into service for the school as a penalty for their children’s problem

behaviour. In addition to requiring parents to sign a contract to provide ten hours of service per year for every child they have enrolled, parents at Pennington and Porter public schools in Prince William County, Virginia, are required by contract to provide other services to the school such as data entry and “spring beautification” when their children get into trouble. The parents’ service is called “volunteer” work.

(Samuels, 2004)

3. Mandatory community service - schools

Community service connected to education is increasingly prevalent across North America and beyond. In its “mandatory community service” format, students are forced to perform unpaid community service work with penalties, including denial of graduation.

The Ontario government introduced mandatory community service in its high schools in 1999. The program requires students to perform 40 hours of community service work during their four-year program. Failure to do so will prevent graduation. The school-based model of mandatory community service has been adopted in several other provinces across the country although the number of required hours and program structure varies.⁹

Two aspects of mandatory community service in the education system deserve note here. First, mandatory community service must be distinguished from service-learning. Second, the likelihood of generating long-term or life-long volunteering from a compulsory introduction of young people to the concept is unclear and requires further examination.

On the distinction between mandatory service and service-learning

On the surface, school-based mandatory community service looks very similar to service-learning. They both involve young people doing work in the community to

⁹ British Columbia and the Yukon both require 30 hours of community service; the Northwest Territories and Nunavut require 25 hours. Newfoundland is expected to expand its current 30-hour pilot project to a province-wide initiative in 2006.

satisfy school requirements. But the differences between the two models are extremely important

Service-learning uses work experience in the community to enhance learning. Service-learning is well integrated into the curriculum, and community experience is brought back into the classroom to be reflected upon and placed into context. Consider the following definition of service-learning.

Service learning is a teaching method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content. Through reflective activities, students enhance their understanding of course content, general knowledge, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness and commitment to the community.

(San Jose University Centre for Service Learning, n.d.)

In contrast, school-based mandatory community service programs emphasize service and involve little or no classroom reflection or curriculum support for the experiences. Community placements tend to be left to the students to locate rather than being identified with care or deliberation by the school. Mandatory community service programs tend to be characterized by little or no planning, no teacher training and little or no building of community support.

Nan Hawthorne (2002) explains the distinction between “mandatory community service” and “service-learning” this way:

Service learning by definition concentrates on supplementing and enhancing academic studies with ‘real-world’ experiences, similar to internships or practica. The programs tend to be well-thought-out and developed and are linked to specific disciplines within the curricula of a school. Service learning may be mandated, but mandatory

community service programs in general are less or not at all paired with a course of study.

Here is how the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse describes service-learning:

Service-learning is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of students engaged in service, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled. Service-learning provides structured time for thoughtful planning of the service project and guided reflection by participants on the service experience. Overall, the most important feature of effective service-learning programs is that both learning and service are emphasised.

(National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, n.d.b.)

Fey (2002) encapsulates the distinction between service-learning and mandatory community service this way:

A good service-learning program has three components: preparation, action, and reflection. Community service, technically, consists only of action.

The model introduced in Ontario was quite clearly of the mandatory community service variety. Linda Nicolson, a spokesperson for the Ontario Ministry of Education, stated that the program was introduced to get young people involved and to help produce better citizens. (Skinner, 2001) Since its introduction, the design of the Ontario program has raised concerns. “It ticks off those students who had no intent of volunteering before, who will act out in defiance of being told what to do and say they’re not going to volunteer, possibly putting their graduation prospects at risk” was how Anne-Marie McGillis, principal of student services at the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board described the backlash potential

(quoted in Skinner, 2001).

Mary Foster and Agnes Meinhard from the Faculty of Business at Ryerson University conducted a survey of community-based learning in Toronto schools *before* the Ontario initiative was launched. Their first finding was that the structure of the program, how it was planned and delivered, appeared to be a more important determining factor of social development and commitment to community than whether the program was mandatory. (Foster and Meinhard, 2000, p. 17) Many subsequent studies of school-based community service programs have replicated this finding (c.f., McLellan and Youniss, publication pending; Stukas and Dunlap, 2002).

The second recommendation from the Foster and Meinhard research was to pay careful attention to the role of community placement organizations in placement development and support. It is the placement organization that determines whether the students' experiences will be meaningful and whether the on-site supervision is supportive and effective. In this regard, the study's authors expressed early concern about the failure of the Ministry of Education to engage in a dialogue with the voluntary sector regarding program design and implementation (2000, p. 17). This finding, too, has been supported in subsequent research (c.f., Stukas and Dunlap, 2002; Education Commission of the United States, 1999; Loupe, 2002; Ellis et al., 1998; Shaw, n.d.)

The third finding from the Ryerson study was that community-based service programs would be most effective only if opportunities were provided in the classroom for students to share their experiences and to integrate their community experience with formal learning activities (Foster and Meinhard, 1999, p. 13). Again, most of the literature on school-based community service, and certainly the entire service-learning movement emphasizes this critical feature of successful programs.

Unfortunately, none of these three structural elements were integrated into the Ontario program.

A recent and soon-to-be-released study of the impact of the Ontario program on subsequent volunteering behaviour points to the value of that early work by Foster and Meinhard. Brown et al. (publication pending) have found that simply putting in time in the community was insufficient to influence students'

subsequent civic engagement. The community placement must be a positive experience for the student over a sustained period with one organization. Strong support in the school from actively engaged teachers and guidance counsellors seemed to make the community experience more positive, while difficulty in securing placements or lax administration of the program diminished the experience for students. In a finding that proves the obvious, the nature of the placement itself was also correlated with the extent to which students' experience was positive. Meaningful work that was not emotionally overwhelming emerged as an important influence on subsequent volunteering behaviour. Clearly the placement process and the role of the placement organization are both pivotal to success, and the authors point to ongoing problems in this regard in the Ontario model. Perhaps the most important finding of this new research, in light of other Canadian school-based programs requiring even fewer than Ontario's 40-hour requirement, is that longer term involvement seems to be a more significant determinant of subsequent civic engagement, *regardless* of whether the actual experience was particularly positive. This research finding verifies empirically what managers of volunteers have been saying all along about the inadequacies of a short-term requirement: how meaningful can the placement be, particularly when screening, orientation and training time reduces the already small number of hours served.

Does mandatory community service produce subsequent civic engagement?

Mandatory community service programs, by definition, place a strong emphasis on community service and on the goal of developing long-term volunteering behaviour by introducing young people to community involvement early in their lives. Does it achieve that end? The short answer is, "We're not certain."

A quick scan of the research literature on mandatory community service reveals a pervasive absence of agreement on this point. A good deal of research on service-learning confirms that well-designed, well-delivered programs generate positive *educational* outcomes, but the jury is still out on the efficacy of engendering *civic engagement* through mandatory community service programs which typically lack curriculum support, careful placement development and deliberately crafted, mutually beneficial relationships

with community partners. In a new review of research variables, McLelland and Youniss (publication pending) draw the following conclusion:

For any study that has shown positive effects of [community] service on participating students, another study can be cited that has shown either no effect, or even, negative results.

What does seem clear from the research is that the distinction between mandatory community service and service-learning programs is more than one of semantics. Without the features that distinguish service-learning from mandatory community service, the latter seems far less likely to generate intended outcomes. There are important lessons in the research literature that point to how programs ought to be developed and structured, and program structure is the only variable that seems to consistently influence success. Service-learning, integrated into the education system, is primarily education through service. In contrast, mandatory community service in the education system must seem to many students as compulsory and punitive as its alternative sentencing cousins. Definitely not volunteering.

4. Mandatory community service - public housing

A new variant of compulsory service in exchange for benefits arises from a federal law in the United States which requires residents in public housing to perform community service work or risk eviction. The United States Congress enacted a law in 1998, the Quality Housing and Work Responsibilities Act, which included a community service requirement. It was suspended for a period but came back into effect January 1, 2004, and public housing authorities are beginning to enforce it. The law requires recipients of public housing support (except certain categories of tenants who are exempt) to perform eight hours of community service each month or risk termination of their leases. What qualifies as community service? The Office of Public Policy & Client Advocacy (2004) answers that question this way:

Community Service is almost any form of service to the community, performed at any time and at any location within the city. Some activities include tenant patrol...parent associations, food banks, volunteer ambulance services, Boy and

Girl Scouts, and many other volunteer activities.

The South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Centre (2004) defines it this way:

Volunteer work that benefits the public, not employment or political activity.

The *New York Times* reported in April 2004 that New York City was just starting to enforce the federal legislation and finding mixed response. Some people in earlier programs in other U.S. cities had moved into the program with little resistance and some had “turned their volunteer commitments into full-time jobs.” While a representative of the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development reported few complaints from the early programs, people receiving their notices in New York “say they resent being told that they have to volunteer...” and one person “said that the community service connoted ‘jail’.”

(Chen, 2004)

Joe Lamport canvassed community opinion shortly after the program was reintroduced in New York City. He quotes Ethel Velez who lives in a public housing development and is president of the development’s tenant’s association and director of a citywide alliance of public housing residents:

“Slavery’s back,” she said. “When folks are financially strapped, it shouldn’t be something that’s held against them.”

“When I think of public service, the language itself is insulting,” she said. “Mandatory volunteer community service? It’s demoralizing. And at the end is eviction if you don’t do it. So then you make someone homeless.”

(Quoted in Lamport, 2004)

5. Mandatory community service — rehabilitation/ insurance benefits

This form of community service work has been in existence in Canada for at least three decades and possibly longer. It is an individually tailored rehabilitation and work-hardening option employed by some private insurance firms and rehabilitation services through which patients receiving insurance benefits because of a disability or injury are

“encouraged” to perform community service work as part of their rehabilitation plan. Patients fear that a failure to comply with a recommended course of rehabilitation or treatment plan may result in a loss of insurance benefits. Whether this happens with any frequency, if at all, is not certain, but the sense by recipients that benefits may be at risk serves to compel compliance. This is a form of mandatory community service about which little is formally known. It appears in this discussion only because Volunteer Centres and community agencies report fielding requests from insurance companies and rehabilitation services for suitable placements for patients. Its dimensions, nature, and prevalence are unknown.

6. Workfare/welfare reform

The term “workfare” is used to capture a range of programs through which people receiving welfare benefits or other kinds of government transfer payments are sometimes required to participate in community service activities. Similar programs in Australia fall under the general banner of “Mutual Obligation,” while the terms “Welfare Reform” and “Welfare-To-Work” are used in U.S. equivalents. Workfare-mandated community service is identified as an optional source of experience and training for people who have been unable to find paid work and who are receiving welfare assistance. In some jurisdictions, community service may be compulsory, and in others it is one of a range of options from which recipients are made to choose. Typically, continued receipt of benefits is conditional on satisfactory fulfilment of the chosen option(s). Penalties for non-compliance involve decreased benefits, up to and including complete denial of benefits, which represents a devastating loss to people who are already living very close to the margin. The potential loss of welfare benefits, in effect, removes any meaningful “choice” the program may have intended to embody.

In Canada, Ontario, New Brunswick, Quebec and Alberta have all developed workfare options as part of their social assistance programs, with varying degrees

of success. While the political and values base of workfare are matters of ongoing debate, the merits of workfare as an approach to social assistance are not of interest here.¹⁰ That workfare is implemented in the community, often called community service and mis-labelled as volunteering does place workfare squarely in the centre of this discussion. Laura Barreiro, Volunteer Developer at St. Christopher House in Toronto, makes this precise point in an online interview about workfare as “mandatory volunteering.”

People on social assistance (welfare) are supposed to do unpaid “community placements” (workfare) in agencies. Whatever you think about “workfare,” it’s an unfortunate side effect that this unpaid work is commonly referred to as “volunteering.” The individual really is not contributing their time and skill of their own free will.

(St. Christopher House, 2002)

Workfare is one of the programs most often referred to as “mandatory volunteering” as in the following examples:

A number of investigators examine the whole question of “mandatory volunteering” or workfare ...
(Dow, 2002)

Mandatory volunteer programs through Workfare, Community Service Order and school mandated community work have created a new category of volunteers sometimes called “voluntolds.”
(Volunteer Canada, no date)

In many places, the community participation aspect of workfare programs is referred to as volunteering. This illustration is taken from a description of the Ontario Works program on the Web site of the city of Sudbury, Ontario,:

Community Participation allows a Participant to volunteer with non-profit and public organizations.

¹⁰ For more on workfare, the bibliography prepared on the topic by Workfare Watch (n.d.) is a good place to start.

Volunteering allows development of skills, experience and an opportunity to establish contacts within the community. Participants who choose to complete a Community Participation placement can volunteer up to 70 hours per month, up to six months.

(City of Greater Sudbury, 2005)

The Web site of the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville describes their Ontario Works program in the following way:

Current Community Placements

Since its commencement, the Ontario Works program in the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville has supported hundreds of community agencies with short term projects and ongoing volunteer placements.

(United Counties of Leeds & Grenville, 2003)

And in this last example from the many available, the Social Assistance department of York Region titles its Web site description of the Ontario Works community participation program “Volunteering” and begins with this introduction:

Volunteering for community agencies allows Social Assistance participants who have been out of the workforce for a while, or whose work experience is limited, to gain network contacts, and to gain new skills, recent experience, and recent references for their résumé. Non-profit organizations, community organizations, and public agencies offer most volunteer opportunities. York Region Ontario Works participants gain valuable work experience and the organization gains a volunteer to help them contribute to the community.

(York Region, no date)

It has been suggested that workfare schemes threaten the very principles of voluntarism because

they are so often confused with volunteer work. Workfare Watch, a joint project of the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto and the Ontario Social Safety Network, claims that workfare violates the first principle of volunteering – choice – because it is, by definition, not freely chosen.

Volunteers make a choice to dedicate some of their time to helping build their community in some way. Both the individual volunteer and the community benefit by voluntary action. Volunteers themselves are enriched through their efforts and contribution to the community, and often gain new skills and valuable contacts which improve their employment opportunities. Volunteer work has complemented public and community services. Workfare participants, on the other hand, face sanctions when they refuse to “volunteer.”

...Confusing workfare and voluntarism could devalue volunteer activity and create a negative image of voluntarism, both in the public and among other volunteers. Many genuine volunteers may not want to be confused with those who are required to take on community work.

(Workfare Watch, 1998)

Moving to the right from the variants of community service in the mandatory zone, the continuum includes forms of community service that involve a measure of coercion that falls short of “mandatory.”

7. Parents obliged to “volunteer” for children’s school (public; private; fundraising)

In this first form of community involvement outside of the mandatory range, parents feel pressure to provide unpaid services connected with their children’s education. With deep cuts in education spending, resources are occasionally unavailable for essential items such as textbooks. In addition to the selling of chocolates and nuts and innumerable

other fundraising items to support “extra’s” such as school trips and after-hours activities, fundraising schemes for non-dispensable items have become much more frequent. While not compulsory, many parents undoubtedly feel considerable pressure to participate and do so with reluctance. Parents have not sought out such opportunities on their own initiative and participate largely because their own children will either benefit directly or be denied a benefit if the initiative is unsuccessful.

Some private schools require parents to participate in school-initiated projects. These forms of engagement could be considered compulsory in the sense that penalties can be imposed if parents refuse involvement. Perhaps more accurately considered contractual obligations, these kinds of required services are mentioned as part of this discussion only because they are often mis-labelled “volunteering.”
(c.f., Samuels, 2004).

8. *Parents obliged to “volunteer” for children’s recreation program (program; fundraising)*

This form of community involvement typically arises when a community-based recreation activity, minor sports league or leadership program is short of volunteers and parents are pressured to “pitch in” when they enrol their own children. In some cases the pressure is more direct. Parents *must* participate or the activity will not be available. The potential loss of benefit to the child is compelling enough for the parent to concede and more-or-less reluctantly agree to take a turn as a leader. Pressure may also be applied to parents of enrolled children to support the activity by participating in fundraising activities, including sales and the organizing of special events.

The surface scan of mandatory community service conducted through Canadian Volunteer Centres and CVI networks¹¹ turned up a new variation on this old theme of parents feeling pressure to help in their children’s community and recreation activities. A local baseball association demanded a \$50 “volunteer fee”

which was refundable only if the parent assisted the coaches. Coaches were not given any guidelines on how to effectively track which parents were helping and which were not. Some parents chose not to register their children after all and felt “bullied” into this so-called “volunteer fee.”

9. *Corporate day of service*

Through a corporate day of service, a company donates the labour of its employees to an event, activity or project in the community. Many corporate days of service are completely voluntary and free of pressure or coercion. However, in some cases, participation may be called voluntary, but employees understand that penalties or loss of future opportunities tend to befall a disproportionate number of employees who choose not to participate. The pressure can be subtle or overt, large or small. Where the employee feels compelled to participate to avoid reprisal, the activity is obviously more mandatory than not.

In some projects, employees do their community work during regular work hours and receive their regular pay. This, in strict terms, disqualifies the work as “volunteer work,” even in cases where participation by employees is truly voluntary and no penalty is imposed on anyone who chooses not to participate. This particular form of community engagement demonstrates that both choice *and* the absence of remuneration need to be in play for activity to qualify as volunteer work. That organizations, individuals and communities (along with the employer and possibly the employee) benefit from such projects is not in question and companies that donate human resources to the community at their own expense are to be commended for their contributions. Still, such programs are perhaps more appropriately considered to be in the domain of philanthropy than volunteering.

10. *Parent-co-op daycare*

Parent co-operative daycare centres work on the basis of keeping costs down through the part-time participation of parents in the care of the children.

¹¹ See Views and Opinions, the fourth paper in this series

This is most accurately understood as a contractual arrangement in which unpaid service is offered in lieu of a portion of the enrolment fee. As with other forms, it appears here only because these parents are often referred to as “volunteers.”

At this point on the continuum a transition is made from community service that takes place because of external coercion and/or to avoid reprisal and/or to prevent the loss of an important benefit to work in the community that pays off in rich rewards to the participant.

11. Prerequisite for college entrance

Competition for acceptance into college programs can be fierce. It is not uncommon for colleges to consider the previous volunteer experience of applicants as a criterion in the selection process. With good reason, colleges view prior volunteer experience as an asset, e.g., demonstration of initiative, an indicator of strong motivation and, depending on the relevance of the volunteer work to the course of study being pursued, evidence that the applicant has a realistic sense of what the career involves. Colleges are typically forthcoming about the importance of volunteering as a selection criterion, and students understand the advantage of volunteer experience on applications. An absence of volunteering experience is sometimes an automatic disqualifier. There is nothing coercive at play here. The student’s decision to volunteer is not completely free from external pressure, but is more so than variants to the left of this point on the continuum; the uppermost beneficiary of the community involvement may be the student, though, in fairness, certainly not always or exclusively.

12. Pro bono legal work

Lawyers and law students offer unpaid legal services in the community, often to people who cannot afford to pay for representation. Without a doubt, many attorneys volunteer of their own accord. In other cases, pro bono work is undertaken because it is a formal requirement of students in law school

(c.f., Florida International University College of Law, n.d.; William S. Boyd School of Law, 2005), which clearly makes this variant mandatory, or it is “strongly encouraged” by the law firm that employs the attorneys which makes the service indistinguishable from the more coercive of the corporate “volunteer” programs. Pro bono legal work is placed at multiple points along the continuum to reflect the varying degree of compulsion embodied in this form of community service.

13. Loaned executives

The “loaned executive” program involves an employer “lending” the services of one or more of its employees, often professional or white collar workers, to non-profit organizations or charitable causes in the community. The length of term varies from a few hours to a few months, but in any case, the employee continues to receive his or her salary (and associated benefits) as per usual. There may be a degree of coercion involved when employees are “strongly encouraged” to participate in these programs. Where “strongly encouraged” translates into a clear directive from one’s superior, the community service is far from voluntary, but in any event, the continued receipt of one’s salary is surely sufficient to disqualify this kind of service as “volunteer work.” Nonetheless, this form of community service is regularly referred to as volunteering (c.f., United Way of Abilene, 2004; Elswick, 2004) and therefore earns an entry on the community service continuum.

14. Corporate volunteer programs (selected, depending on model)

Employer-supported volunteer programs are ever more prevalent and diverse. Representative of corporate social responsibility, these programs benefit communities, organizations and service recipients. They can also be of great benefit to employees and the corporate sponsors. In some corporate programs, employees are completely free to participate or not. In some corporate programs employees give service without receiving their

regular pay for the hours served. When both of these features coincide, the programs can be said to generate volunteer work in the traditional sense of the term. In contrast, some programs offer salaries or other employment-related benefits to participating employees. And in some programs, participation may not feel completely voluntary. Hence, it can be said that employer-supported “volunteer” programs run along a continuum of their own (Volunteer Canada, 2001, p. 7). Only a subset satisfies all of the core criteria of volunteer work (unpaid, relatively un-coerced and primarily for the benefit of someone other than the person performing the service), although the work is typically referred to as volunteer work and the participants are more often than not called volunteers.

Interesting variations of employer-supported volunteering are springing up in the community. As just one example, the Minneapolis Police Department Police Activities League (PAL), which is an “employee association” rather than an employer, sponsors a community involvement program through which PAL members are “strongly encouraged” to “volunteer” in the community. Members who complete eight hours of “volunteer service” are eligible to attend PAL’s Big Blast event. The community service must be documented on a special form and sent to PAL to verify participation. (Minneapolis Police Department, no date)

It is certain that the corporate service model continues to evolve. These programs, together, represent an important resource in the non-profit sector, but not all of them involve “volunteer work.”

15. Employee volunteers (at place of employment)

In some non-profit and public service (government) settings, employees “volunteer” above and beyond what is expected of them in their paid capacity. This is a tricky form of unpaid service as it may indeed be offered completely willingly by the employee, free of any coercion, pressure or fear of reprisal or lost opportunity. Or an employee may understand an unwritten workplace code by which those who go above and beyond, in the guise of “volunteering,” are not-so-coincidentally the very employees who receive

higher bonuses, more perks, better hours, more overtime when requested, faster and further advancement, and so on. The Department of Labor in the United States has recently issued a directive to help distinguish “true” volunteers from employees in these situations (c.f., Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, 2005).

16. Service club/membership association project

It is generally understood that membership activities in service clubs and many other civic and community associations, while important to the creation of social capital, are primarily undertaken to benefit their members and therefore are not volunteering, per se. However, a great many service clubs and membership associations initiate community projects themselves or in partnership with other non-profit organizations. This latter activity more closely approximates volunteering since it is unpaid and undertaken primarily for the benefit of others and/or the community in general. Because club members may feel pressure or obligation to participate in community activities to support their own association as well as to support the goal of the project, some feel a sense of reluctance or even resentment connected with their involvement. Others of course will participate in these kinds of volunteer projects with great pleasure and without any sense of coercion whatsoever.

17. Physician/therapist referred (physical/emotional)

A wide range of medical professionals have long recognized the therapeutic value of community participation to physical, psycho-social and emotional rehabilitation. Patients are often encouraged to become involved in volunteer activities in the community. Sometimes they do so willingly and only need the suggestion and perhaps a bit of encouragement to make the connections. Some participants do so with greater reluctance, while others will follow through only with a good deal of encouragement or coercion. While the community undoubtedly benefits from the engagement of these volunteers, the motivation, at least initially, is primarily to generate benefits back to the person doing the work. Is that meaningfully different from the volunteer

who volunteers to make friends or to get that great feeling that doing good for others generates?

18. Rent credits for service

Here is another novel program community service program. In this case an external source – a consortium of philanthropic entities in San Diego, California, called Price Charities – encourages residents in their funded housing projects to perform community service work in return for rent credits.

The project is described as follows:

*The purpose of the project is “to instill a greater sense of community in City Heights by encouraging residents to **volunteer** with local nonprofits and to take part in neighborhood projects.” [Emphasis added] Objectives include enabling busy working families to participate by creating a program that includes volunteer opportunities outside of traditional working hours while providing meaningful and quantifiable community service that makes an impact in City Heights.*

Any member of the family, over the age of 14, residing in a property financed under the Price Charities Home Loan Program or renting a Village Townhome, may contribute to the family’s community service hours. Participants are credited \$12/hour for participating in qualifying community service activities in City Heights.

(Price Charities, no date)

Is this volunteering? Or is it work in exchange for a pseudo-monetary reward? Do the participants participate to benefit others? What does it convey to the participants about volunteer work? The rent reduction is certain to represent a very big incentive. How many tenants would participate without the rent credit?

19. Voluntourism

Doing good while on vacation is a new but quickly growing component of the tourism industry. Called voluntourism this form of involvement clearly combines self-centred and potentially altruistic motives.

The formal definition of voluntourism from the company by the same name is this:

A seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best traditional elements of travel — arts, culture, geography, and history — in that destination.

(Voluntourism, 2005)

This is not only one of the fastest growing areas of volunteering,¹² but according to the National Tour Association, it is also one of the fastest growing travel segments in the world (Schensul, 2005). There has as yet been little formal research on this interesting new trend. Clearly there is a very attractive incentive embedded in this form of community service.

20. Volunteer for bikes

This is an odd type of program, perhaps not widespread but perfectly illustrating the confusion about what is and what is not volunteering. Called “Earn-a-bike,” the program began in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1977 and has spread to more than 70 regions throughout the province. The program places children from 9 to 12 years of age from social agencies in “volunteer” placements where they perform a range of service work such as picking up garbage at landmarks and at fire and police stations. They are required to perform a minimum of 30 hours of work to receive a new bicycle at the end. In an article about the program in the summer of 2004, entitled “Kids do volunteer work to earn new bicycles,” the program was described as follows:

¹² A Google search on December 16, 2005, turned up 818 hits.

The 80 kids...aren't just doing this hard work out of the goodness of their hearts. They're doing it to earn a new bicycle – a shiny Raleigh Avenger – that comes with a pair of gloves, a helmet and a Tim Hortons T-shirt and baseball cap.

"These are kids who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity and maybe wouldn't think about volunteering, but once they start, it really gets into their blood," said Duane Dahl, assistant director of the Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club.

Many years the kids complete more than two times the work they're supposed to complete and continue volunteering for years after.

(Morrison, 2004)

Is this volunteering? Or is it work in exchange for a non-monetary reward? Do the participants participate to benefit others? What does it convey to the young participants about volunteer work? Whatever the answers to these questions, it is clear that the bikes represent a very big incentive, and one wonders whether the program would work at all without them. And what are young children learning about what volunteering means when they participate in programs of this nature?

21. Scholarship qualification

Many colleges and universities make participation in community service activities an eligibility criterion for receipt of various scholarships. For example, the H. Graham Walker Awards at Ryerson University in Toronto makes this one of five eligibility criteria:

- *Demonstrated involvement in extracurricular activities in high school or involved in community or volunteer work.*

(Ryerson University, no date)

22. Employment-related skill development and retraining

Unpaid work in the community can be an excellent way to develop skills that are directly transferable to the world of paid work. Sometimes this involvement is stimulated by employment counsellors, outplacement agents, or guidance counsellors; other times it will be initiated by the person seeking the experience. The incentive here is non-monetary, although enhanced employment-related skills may very well pay off in better career choices and higher salaries over one's work life. The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating notes three work-skills-related motivations for volunteering among the seven most frequently identified in the survey: use skills or experience (81%); explore own strengths (57%); and improve job opportunities (23%).

(Lasby, 2004, p. 10)

23. Stipended service

Participants in a growing number of government-sponsored community service programs receive what is commonly called a "stipend." By far most prevalent in the United States, these programs involve extensive service including full-time work given over months at a time. A "living wage" or "living allowance" is offered to participants to enable extensive engagement. Additional rewards such as low-/no-interest loans and college tuition credits are available in some programs. The total financial return can be significant.¹³ Does the monetary return disqualify it as volunteer work? Many, if not most, would argue yes. The Corporation for National Community Service in the United States which is the government agency that administers a wide range of stipended programs uses the term "community service" to describe the work and "members" to describe the workers, although the Corporation repeatedly refers to its participants as "volunteers" throughout its Web site

(c.f. Corporation for National & Community Service, no date [b], and no date [c]).

¹³ UAB's Civitan AmeriCorps Community Service Program provides a monthly living stipend of \$775 and an education award of \$4,725 at the end of their service year for a total of \$14,025 (gross income). In addition, health care benefits and child care benefits are available (University of Alabama at Birmingham, no date).

Just like mandatory community service, stipended community service is an evolving form of community service work that is neither paid work in the traditional sense nor traditional volunteering. They are, without question, valuable programs that provide important benefits to participants and accomplish much-needed work in communities. But the work is *not* volunteer work and the participants are *not* volunteers. Ellis (September 1998) asks the fundamental questions while reinforcing the theme that underlies the whole of this discourse on mandatory and less-than-fully-voluntary community participation:

But despite the enthusiastic participation by tens of thousands of citizens, is this volunteerism? When does a living allowance become a stipend, and when is that considered simply a low-income wage? The debate continues, but as it does, a corps of willing and energetic men and women of all ages provide services they would be unlikely or unable to offer without the modest expense sums.

In contrast to the many domestic stipended service programs in the United States, there are many stipended service programs world-wide that offer overseas positions, and several of these are based in Canada.¹⁴ Typically called “civic service,” (Davis Smith, 2004) most such programs offer travel allowances and reimbursement for overseas living expenses, while some offer financial remuneration to permit full-time service that can range over months or even years. Participants are often called volunteers although some may receive not only reimbursement for travel and overseas living expenses, but also a salary of, in one case, up to \$4,000U.S. per month (c.f., Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2006). Participants – and even those paid a handsome stipend – are persistently called volunteers.

24. Service-learning

This form of community service, now widely prevalent in the United States, is distinguished from mandatory community service programs in schools by its emphasis on learning through service, supported by classroom curriculum and reflection. In some programs, participation is optional, while in others students have some choice about what placement and/or what type of work they will pursue. Service-learning is located at multiple points on the continuum reflecting the fact that program details vary. Those without the supported-learning focus and availability of choice more closely resemble servitude.¹⁵ There is a great deal of literature on service-learning: an ever-growing body of research on its effectiveness as an approach to education and, of particular relevance to this discussion, on its effectiveness in stimulating ongoing or future volunteering behaviour through the introduction of young people to the concept and the experience of working in the community (c.f., Brown, et al., 2005; CIRCLE Centre for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003; Clary, Snyder, and Stukas, 1998; Covitt, 2002; Dyck, 2005; Helms, no date; Jones and Hill, 2003; Melchior and Bailis, 2002; Merrill, 1997; Raskoff and Sundeen 1998; Raskoff and Sundeen, 1999; Smith, 1999; Stevick and Addleman, 1995; Stukas, Snyder, and Clary, 1999).

25. Volunteer “for self”

It is likely that the motivation of most volunteers combines self-centred and other-directed dimensions. This point on the continuum reflects those millions of acts of volunteering that are not compelled, not undertaken out of fear of reprisal, not initiated because a valuable reward will result, and for which at least some consideration of the potential to help others is at play. The intrinsic rewards of volunteering are many and diverse, including, for example, the opportunity to make

¹⁴ For descriptions of a broad range of examples, see the Web site of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, http://www.destineducation.ca/directory/workc_e.htm

¹⁵ For more on the distinction between mandatory community service and service-learning, see the discussion on mandatory community service (schools) above (number 3 on the continuum).

business contacts, learn about a new community, learn new skills, explore strengths, meet new friends, add entries to a resumé, or check out a potential career shift.

Schugurensky and Mundel call these volunteers “semi-altruistic”:

Unlike the fully altruistic type, the semi-altruistic volunteers combine in different ways a desire to help others with an interest for helping themselves and their communities.

(2005, p. 7)

26. Volunteer “for other”

If there is such a thing as altruism, this is where it would be located on the continuum. This is perhaps the mythical form of volunteering that probably exists more in the realm of idealism than in practice, though that may be the cynic’s view. Street (1994, p. 2) suggests that altruism is usually only one of a complex pool of motivations that lead people to volunteer. The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating found 95% of all volunteers identify belief in the cause of the organization for which they volunteer as a motivating factor. Interestingly, however, “helping others,” which always topped the informally compiled lists of volunteer motivations two or more decades ago, and which was the most frequently given reason for volunteering in the 1987 Canadian Labour and Household Survey (Duchesne, 1989, p. 33), did not make the 2000 National Survey list. Does this represent a decline in altruism, a historical over-estimation of its significance, a flaw in current survey methods, or a complexity of motivation that defies current measurement capacity?

The relationship of mandatory community service to volunteering

Community involvement comes in all shapes and sizes. It is compulsory at one end of the continuum and selfless at the other. It takes place through a

remarkable variety of programs and sponsors in the public, the non-profit and the private sectors. Variation exists both *between* and *within* forms of community involvement, and programs are continually evolving. Taken all together, community involvement represents a vast and indispensable resource to the development of community and the provision of human services. Some of it is voluntary. Some of it is not. Some participants are volunteers, others are not. The “traditional” notion of volunteering as unpaid and selfless is but a small terminus on a long continuum of service that extends all the way through semi-altruistic and incentive volunteering and, through somewhat coerced behaviour, crosses an important line at some point along the way into coerced and mandatory service.

Mandatory community service is quite simply not volunteering. Most importantly, *it is the opposite of volunteering* in all of its manifestations. While a range of other forms of community service may be said to be volunteering, there can be no question that the mandatory varieties that, by definition, involve forced servitude, severe penalties, or the loss of the necessities of life such as housing and money for food, are not volunteering. It should be abundantly clear that the confusion of the term and practice of mandatory community service with the term and practice of volunteering is absurd, and yet that is precisely what happens, pervasively, repeatedly. In the minds of the public, there is no clear understanding of the distinctions, and Merrill (1999) suggests the confusion extends to the profession of volunteer program management as well:

While there are similarities between volunteerism, service-learning, and service, it is important to recognize that each is unique....We believe the continuing efforts to lump all forms of citizen engagement under a single generic term such as “service” confuses the public and the profession.

5. RESENTMENT BY ASSOCIATION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE, MEANING AND BEHAVIOUR

Why terminology is important: The social construction of meaning

Much of what is taken for granted about the world is not absolute. Social phenomena are created, institutionalized and made into tradition by humans, based in large part on how they perceive the world rather than on how the world might actually be.

In constructing meaning in situations, individuals do not necessarily perceive the world as it actually is.

(McNamee and Faulkner, 2001)

People come to understand the world by living in the world, interacting with it and with each other, and by building up understanding and meaning on an ongoing basis. Meaning is socially constructed rather than absolute. One person sees candy and another person sees potential cavities. One person sees a youth fleeing from the police and another person sees the police and the youth both in pursuit of a purse-snatcher. How people understand the world is a dynamic process that changes with new experiences that add new information, reflect actual changes or challenge old ways of perceiving. World views shape attitudes, values, relationships and behaviours.

The role of language in the construction of meaning

It has long been acknowledged that language is one of the most important vehicles through which people derive and construct meaning. At an everyday level, the “spin” influences perception, interpretation, and understanding. Marketers and retailers understand this principle very well. Chocolate described in terms of its fat content and its negative affect on health will, at minimum, produce guilt associated with consumption of chocolate, if not an actual reduction in chocolate

consumption. Chocolate described in connection with the health benefits of flavonoids leads one to at least feel less guilty about eating chocolate and might even lead to increased chocolate consumption.

In simple terms, choice of language influences what people see and how people understand. For example, former Canadian Member of Parliament, Sheila Copps, was quick to inform fellow MP John Crosbie that she was “nobody’s baby” because she instantly knew Crosbie’s remark was a put down packed with derision. Consider how the choice of words in these dyads conveys distinct meaning:

She drove her car into her driveway.

She drove her 2006 Rolls-Royce into her driveway.

The childless couple...

The childfree couple...

Words can convey significantly different meanings, up to and including polar extremes. And the meaning conveyed by words can be simple, or it can be remarkably complex. Words not only generate meaning, but they can embody values, generate judgements and stimulate a suitcase full of emotions. Crazy, deviant and stupid are loaded terms. Dementia, attention deficit disorder and dyslexia are substitute terms that convey very different meanings. Meanings can and do change in ways that lead us to see and experience our world differently and to respond differently.¹⁶

On the changing meaning of the term “volunteering”

Mandatory service, by definition, eliminates the freedom of choice that is the essence of what we understand volunteering to be.¹⁷ The Community Services Council, Newfoundland and Labrador (2003), articulates the potential consequences of “compulsory volunteering”:

¹⁶ Appreciation is extended to Dr. Dorothy Pawluch, Associate Professor of Sociology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, for her generous assistance in the construction of this section. (Personal correspondence, December 2005)

¹⁷ To repeat, many mandatory community service programs are good programs. They engage people in socially useful work that can be rewarding and that furthers the common good. That this work might not satisfy a strict definition of volunteerism renders it no less important to society; the workers are of no lesser integrity; and the benefits to the community and members of the community are of no less value.

Opponents of mandatory volunteering say when you take away the element of choice and make “volunteering” compulsory, you take away the very meaning of volunteering. They propose that when you no longer freely give of yourself, you are not experiencing the same level of passion and commitment that motivates the thousands of volunteers who maintain the [voluntary, community-based] sector. Their concern is that forcing young people to volunteer actually devalues the experience for all involved.

In most settings, applying the “volunteerism” label to any of these mandatory community service initiatives would go virtually unnoticed and almost certainly unchallenged. But in a discussion of volunteering, such distinctions are all-important, not just for the sake of accuracy and certainly not to merely defend the value-laden or “purist” nature of a traditional form of community engagement. The choice of terms is important because language conveys meaning and when one thing is consistently, pervasively and repeatedly called something else, it takes on new meaning. And that may be precisely what is happening to volunteerism.

Volunteer or else

The longest running mandatory community service program has been the source of the longest running concern about inappropriate labelling. In fact, the terminology associated with court-mandated community service has been a matter of active public debate from as early as 1992 when Byron and Ehrlich objected to the term “community service” being used to describe a state-imposed punishment. They proposed the alternative “compensatory service” so that this form of alternative sentencing would not be confused with community service that Byron has since defined as “the external evidence of an inner ethic of civic responsibility.”

(Byron, 2002)

While it is difficult to imagine a form of community service further from “voluntary,” the terms “volunteer,” “voluntary” and “volunteering” have been connected with court-ordered service for decades, and this practice has been the subject of discussion within the volunteering community for over two decades. The nature and tenor of the debate has long since passed the light-hearted note that “mandatory volunteering” is an oxymoron. Individual managers of volunteers and their associations and Volunteer Centres and their networks have expressed concern about this practice over many years, and yet the practice prevails, even among those very kinds of bodies that caution against mis-labelling. Here are just a few excerpts from thousands of program descriptions that make the same mistake.

From a program description of community service orders posted by an Ontario organization that delivers this program for the justice system:

A Community Service Order (C.S.O.) is a community based sentencing option utilized by the courts, whereby an offender is mandated to perform a determined number of hours of community service at a non-profit organization.... It is a program that involves volunteer hours fulfilled by an offender at an established non-profit organization. It allows those individuals who have committed minor offences to remain in the community rather than go to jail.
(John Howard Society of Niagara, no date)

This illustration is from a Web article on a community service order program in Peterborough, Ontario:

Clients are ordered to perform volunteer hours by a judge.

(Benns, 2003)

Here is a non-profit organization in the United States in which mandatory community service workers from both the criminal justice system and the education system are all called volunteers:

Some of our volunteers are participating in student community service programs, employee volunteer programs and alternative sentencing programs.

(Catholic Charities of The Archdiocese of Washington, no date)

In the United States, many Volunteer Centres are now affiliated with the Points of Light Foundation through the Volunteer Center National Network. Over 45% of the Volunteer Centers in the National Network offer some type of court-referral program (Points of Light Foundation, 2002). The Network's own literature repeatedly uses the word "volunteer" to describe participants in these mandatory programs.

The point of these illustrations is to demonstrate how widespread the practice of indistinct terminology actually is and to illustrate that, even among those organizations for which volunteering is the central mission, the distinction between mandatory service and volunteering is frequently blurred. The association of mandatory with voluntary allows the two quite distinct concepts to run together.

Court-mandated community service is not the only form of mandatory community service that is frequently confused with volunteering. The same thing happens with mandatory community service in schools.

Another mandatory program that has popular appeal on the surface is the requirement for students to perform community service as part of the new high school curriculum. Too bad the same thing is also meted out as sentences to offenders young and old. Isn't the point of volunteering – which thousands of young people do – to give willingly of your self?

(Daley, no date)

Workfare is also called volunteering, over and over again. For example, Community Information Toronto

(2005) describes the Community Participation element of the Ontario Works program as follows:

This is the element of Ontario Works commonly known as workfare. It involves volunteering with non-profit organizations to obtain skills and experience.

By association

If mandatory community service programs are widely and persistently linked to such terms as voluntary, volunteer work and volunteers, then, by association, things previously known as "voluntary" may take on some of the connotations of the mandatory programs. The same language is used in the media, and headlines are clearly reflecting the evolving perception *and* form of volunteering. Consider just a few examples:

- *Students warned to volunteer – or miss graduation.* (Prokaska, 2003)
- *Kids do volunteer work for new bicycles.* (Morrison, 2004)
- *Firefighters take heat for 'two-hatting' – Unions want to charge nine of their members who volunteer for Lincoln's fire department.* (Kewley, 2004)
- *Rockland emergency volunteers could get tuition help.* (Erwin, 2005)
- *[PricewaterhouseCoopers] encourages its 4,400 staff to volunteer by giving them a day off work.* ([PricewaterhouseCoopers] encourages, 2005)
- *Kids with a cause – Some schools in Canada force students to volunteer. Even then, it turns out to be good for them.* (Gulli, 2005)
- *Wage Law Snags Volunteer Projects.* (Benfell, 2004)
- *No good volunteer deed goes unpunished by state. How a grant became a public works project.* (Coale, 2004)

- *Canadian fraud convict gets community service.* (2005).
- *In public housing it's work, volunteer or leave.* (Chen, 2004)

The potential consequence of evolving forms of community service and blurred distinctions between compulsory or “paid” engagement and truly voluntary involvement is that volunteering, which has traditionally been unpaid work undertaken free from coercion, will, over time, increasingly be confused with forms of community service that are neither unpaid nor free from coercion.

Volunteer motivation influenced by perception

How we *perceive* a situation alters our response, including our inclination to act on explicit requests for assistance. By extension, the manner in which volunteering is perceived will alter how people choose to interpret, understand and react to requests for “volunteer” assistance.

The equation of “pure” volunteers with mandatory community service workers is “that it may send a negative message to those people who freely choose to give their time if they are equated with offenders, welfare recipients, or students. Not to mention the “volunteering is punishment” implications!

(Ellis and McCurley, 2002a)

Here is the key point. Because volunteering is, by definition, unpaid work, it takes place largely because people *want* to do it. If people do not want to volunteer, they, for the most part, do not. If the general perception of volunteering (as something people like to do and want to do and have done for decades free from coercion) mutates into something less appealing, less honourable (e.g., “punishment”), less intrinsically

rewarding (e.g., must be forced or rewarded to get done), the danger is that volunteering will become particularly unappealing and people will, quite simply, stop doing it. One wonders if the emergence of ever-increasing variations of incentive-volunteering is already an indicator that citizens cannot be enticed to volunteer (at least in sufficient numbers to meet current need) without the offer of significant monetary and material rewards.

A serious decline in volunteering would be the equivalent of turning the electricity off in our communities. The energy that fuels everything we know as community life would dry up. The potential consequences for our society, our culture and our community life as we know it are dire.

Community leaders and organizations concerned with the well-being, advancement, promotion and/or nature of volunteering (and the plethora of its by-products, including social capital, civic engagement, democracy, community development, human service delivery mechanisms and so on) must, of necessity, concern themselves with mandatory community service and its potential to affect the future shape and well-being of volunteering

6. QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Introduction

The purpose of this paper has been to explore the connection between mandatory community service and volunteering along with some of the implications for future volunteering behaviour.

On a continuum of community service, mandatory community service is located at the extreme furthest terminus from “traditional” volunteering. Among a wide range of forms, mandatory community service is as far from volunteering as it is possible to be.

That mandatory community service is not volunteering has not seemed to have deterred a wide range of sources, including many who are leaders in, and advocates for, volunteering, from *calling* it volunteering.

The compulsory nature of mandatory community service makes it distasteful and even repulsive to some, and it may generate resentment among those who are forced to participate in it, as well as among the population in general. There is evidence that some forms of mandatory community service may be somewhat successful in leading some participants into volunteering who might not have found their way there on their own. At the same time, there appears to be a strong and widespread concern that forcing people into community service both breaches the values embodied by volunteering and turns a good number of people away from volunteering forever.

While there is growing research on the impact on volunteering behaviour of some forms of mandatory community service, most notably that on mandatory community service in the education system (and its service-learning cousin), the findings to date are contradictory and inconclusive. Very little research has been done on the array of other kinds of mandatory community service programs and formats – at least from the perspective

of their impact on volunteering behaviour and public perceptions about volunteering. We simply do not know, for example, what the impact will be of court-mandated service, workfare and other mandatory service requirements on the likelihood of their participants to voluntarily engage in community activities in the future. Nor do we have any sense of what the use of community service as punishment will be on traditional volunteers and traditional volunteering.

No research has addressed the question of shifts in public perception of volunteering as truly voluntary, as compulsory, or as an activity done in exchange for money or other valuable and/or material rewards.

In short, very little is known for certain about this already prevalent, evermore quickly spreading, and continually evolving phenomenon.

The importance of volunteering to society, community, community life, social capital and a wide variety of other valuable social and personal constructs up to and possibly including the basis of democracy itself, makes urgent the need to immediately undertake a great deal of research on mandatory community service and its potential impact.

A range of questions has been raised by this exploratory discussion. It is certain that many other critical questions and areas for further research beg for immediate attention. Here are some of the questions that arise.

Impact on public perceptions of volunteering and volunteering behaviour

Socially constructed meaning and values change slowly over time. The evolution of ideas and public attitudes may be imperceptible while in transition and become apparent only after significant change has taken place. Intervention after the change may be too late.

- Is it possible that the public perception of volunteering may be undergoing such an evolution?
- Is volunteering being damaged?
- Might a transition in the meaning of volunteering into something that must be either compelled or rewarded in material terms have an impact on the deeply embedded Canadian tradition of community involvement?
- What would our communities look like if all community service needed to be either compelled or remunerated?
- Does it matter if workers are compelled or paid lower than the prevailing wage as long as the work gets done?
- What kind of research would help us to understand if volunteering is being altered by its association with compulsory forms of community service?

What is at stake?

Does volunteer participation mean more to a community/society than just getting the work done? For example, what is the relationship of volunteering to the following:

- social capital
- civic participation
- civil society
- democracy
- culture
- associations

The contribution of volunteering to these other social benefits begs the question, what is the value of volunteering? There is no satisfactory answer to this question, and both conceptual and research methods to identify and quantify the value of volunteering have been clumsy at best and misleading at worst. (Graff, 2005)

- What would possibly be the impact of the loss of volunteering?

- What would community life look like without all minor sports coaches and recreation activity leaders (as just one small illustration among tens of thousands of others)?
- Is volunteering seen as sufficiently valuable in Canada to warrant investment in understanding its evolution and ensuring its long-term viability?

A remarkable array of community service has been briefly profiled in this scan and the portrayal of community service along the continuum begins to suggest how vast and diverse the spectrum of community service actually is. The pace at which new variants are emerging and mutating makes the omission of models, programs and manifestations from this discussion a certainty. It is safe to venture that this review has just scratched the surface of what is not *known* about volunteering and unpaid community service.

Without doubt, mandatory community service and other forms of incentive involvement have come to occupy an enormously important place in the non-profit sector. Together, all of these forms of unpaid, incentive and stipended engagement represent a significant proportion of the human resources invested in community and human service delivery.

- What would the impact be if the sector were to lose all of the mandatory and incentive-based community service workers from the special events and fundraising campaigns that currently support everything from children's sports tournaments to school textbooks, from research into the treatment and cure of most human diseases to the purchase of high tech medical equipment and the preservation of the environment?

The well-being of volunteerism

Just as the voluntary sector in Canada has received more attention in recent years, so too does volunteering merit specialized consideration and support. Based on the elusive truth that the voluntary sector and volunteering are not synonymous,

- How can those who know about the special value, dynamics and challenges of the latter find their way to the policy table if the ongoing availability and viability of volunteering in this country is to be ensured?
- Is there an effective but as yet elusive way to convey to governments, funders and planners both the importance of volunteering and the ease with which it can be damaged?
- Is there some way to ensure consultation with those who actually understand volunteering (and not just those who understand the voluntary sector) when community service programs are being planned?

The questions raised here in relation to this single dimension of community involvement and the associated potential shifting in the nature of voluntary action are but one small piece in an increasingly urgent and complex policy dialogue.

The broader view: Learning from international experience

Volunteering is not universally naturally occurring. There are many countries in the world where volunteering has not naturally appeared, and in many of these countries, governments are actively studying volunteering and attempting to stimulate its development. It is clear from efforts in central Europe and Asia, for example, that volunteering can be “manufactured.”

- Is it possible that the spirit or ethos of volunteering can just as easily be damaged, discouraged and or altered beyond recognition?
- Can Canada learn from international experience?
- If so, then careful study of the global shifts and developments in volunteering must be undertaken, and findings integrated into Canadian policy and program initiatives.

Volunteering in Canada is distinct from volunteering elsewhere. It shares features in common with its manifestations elsewhere, but it is, like Canadian culture, unique to Canada. Mandatory community service is growing and evolving differently in Canada, and while much can be learned from the successes and failures elsewhere, it is critical that research and monitoring take place on volunteering here. Understanding is enhanced through reference to a wider context, but foreign experience is not a substitute for Canadian research on uniquely Canadian forms of volunteering.

Conversely, models of volunteering and community service spread. Community service program ideas pioneered in one locale are adopted elsewhere with increasing speed, thanks in large part to global communication and increasing interest in volunteering worldwide. Careful scrutiny of mandatory and other forms of community service around the world will help to inform the advisability of the adoption or rejection of foreign models here.

Canadian opportunities to get it right

Mandatory community service in schools is a relatively new phenomenon in Canada. Preliminary research suggests that existing programs could achieve greater success through structural modification. Extensive research on service-learning suggests that the service-learning model is much more effective than mandatory community service. An important opportunity clearly exists to influence how young people understand and appreciate the non-profit sector, voluntary participation in the community, and the larger issues of civic participation. Done right, volunteering can be supported by service-learning initiatives. Done poorly, mandatory community service in schools holds the potential to do a great deal of damage to the Canadian ethos of community involvement.

The role of government

Volunteering has traditionally been a bottom-up phenomenon, shifting and evolving over time, reflecting the interests and commitments of citizens to one another and to collective well-being.

- If volunteerism, by definition, arises out of the un-coerced willingness and motivation of the individual, how might government stimulate, promote and safeguard the active involvement of its citizens while still both respecting and protecting the fundamental essence of volunteering as freely chosen acts of individuals?
- How might government promote this foundational aspect of civil society?
- Are there potential hazards associated with the use of volunteering to meet needs that have traditionally been in the government domain, such as criminal justice and education?
- Will legislative or regulatory intervention help or hinder?

Since the bulk of mandatory community service arises from government programs (e.g., justice, welfare, education) dialogue with government ministries or departments should be opened.

- Clarification of the potential impact of mandatory service on volunteering, and by extension, on the sector is critical.
- A review of mandatory service program design and terminology would be a profitable beginning point.
- Ongoing consultation with the non-profit sector is critical when mandatory community service programs are developed and evaluated, and in particular, consultations would be particularly effective if the expertise of managers of volunteers were tapped concerning the impact that the

engagement of mandatory community service participants may have on existing volunteer involvement and volunteer coordination systems.

The labour injected into the voluntary sector through mandatory community service programs is clearly important to the sector's capacity to meet rising needs with fewer resources. Little is known about the associated costs to the sector of engaging various types of mandatory community service participants. Research on the costs and benefits of each program would help to ensure that the sector and program sponsors both maximize the returns of community service initiatives.

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