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Youth Service in Comparative Perspective

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Youth Service in Comparative Perspective

The papers in this monograph addresses community, national, and international service as different forms of civic service that engage youth. Over the last few decades, this field has been marked by increasing program and policy development, but research has lagged behind—especially research outside of North America and Western Europe. The papers in this monograph address an example of youth service on each continent, providing a snapshot into the global challenge that youth development represents and how service may meet that challenge.

Key words: *youth service, national service, international service, civic engagement & service*

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Introduction

Amanda Moore McBride

Youth by their very nature are at a transition point from childhood to adulthood. What constitutes youth and its respective roles and responsibilities are a basis of social order. Most nations, however, are challenged to prepare youth for adulthood. As nations undergo social, economic, and political change, the norms and the institutions that accommodate youth fluctuate as well (Flanagan et al., 1998). The status of the military paired with the status of the labor market exerts particular influence on the institutional opportunities available to youth (Eberly & Gal, 2007). One such institutional opportunity is civic service or long-term, intensive volunteer schemes that engage youth in productive work while potentially increasing their skills and simultaneously impacting the individuals, organizations, and communities with which they work.

The theme for this monograph is “Youth Volunteer Service in Comparative Perspective.” The publication addresses community, national, and international service as different forms of civic service that engage youth. Over the last few decades, this field has been marked by increasing program and policy development, but research has lagged behind—especially research outside of North America and Western Europe (McBride & Sherraden, 2007). The paper in this monograph address an example of youth service on each continent, providing a snapshot into the global challenge that youth development represents and how service may meet that challenge.

All of the papers address issues related to social welfare—be it the self-efficacy, employability, and civic engagement of the youth, the education and health of the beneficiaries, or the improved infrastructure of communities. Some articles also address the potential downsides of service, including how it may inadequately address labor market downturns or contribute to emigration among nationals. The research draws from interdisciplinary scholarship with implications for policy and practice. As a context for this research, the history and function of civic service is relevant.

Civic Service as an Institution

Civic service can be defined as “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant” (Sherraden, 2001, p. 2). Service programs may be international, national, or local in scope. Particular groups of volunteers may be targeted based on their age, faith, or skills. The majority of service programs are operated by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and even governments that sponsor national or international service programs routinely partner with NGOs (McBride, Benítez, & Danso, 2004). Service-learning programs, as the name suggests, are typically operated by educational institutions at the post-secondary, secondary, and increasingly even at the primary levels, which then partner with NGOs for implementation (Nieves Tapia, 2007; Pritzker & McBride, 2006). Clearly, the civil society sector leads this field.

McBride, Sherraden, Benítez, and Johnson (2004) distinguish service from informal or occasional volunteering. In civic service, volunteers are expected to fill a particular role and service activities are clearly defined. They provide service on an intensive basis and over an extended period, which may

span from two weeks full-time to several days per week for many months or even for several years. Volunteers also engage in a range of activities. In a global assessment across a range of service forms, it was found that, in order of prevalence, volunteers deliver health and human services, engage in educational activities, and promote community development, personal development, and environmental protection (McBride, Benítez, & Sherraden, 2003).

In the last decade, there has been increased policy attention on civic service and youth service in particular (Dionne, Drogosz, & Lintan, 2003; Metz, Stroud, Alessi, Riquelme, & Smith, 2005). Youth service refers to service programs targeted to youth and young adults (less than 30 years of age). It is the most prevalent type of service (McBride et al., 2003), though service programs for older adults are increasing worldwide and are much needed (Leonard & Johansson, 2008; Hinterlong, McBride, Tang, & Danso, 2005). Many youth service programs take a developmental approach. Increasingly, youth service programs and any supporting policies, especially in Europe, are purposely structured to redress access issues. Examples include the European Voluntary Service Scheme, Roma–Gadje Dialogue through Service initiative, and Platform2 in the UK. Inclusion efforts may include purposeful marketing to historically excluded groups, educational credit for service work, or stipends to address issues with living expenses while out of the labor market. There also is a focus on facilitating the development of knowledge and skills through training, supervision, mentoring, and follow-up support.

The Functions and Possible Outcomes of Youth Service

While youth service may largely be a twentieth century phenomenon, youth have long been organized in the interest of the state or community, such as building roads or bridges for kings and defending nation states (Menon, Moore, & Sherraden, 2002; McBride, Brav, Sherraden, & Menon, 2006). Eberly and Gal (2007) trace the history of youth service from its roots in military service, noting how conscription has transitioned in the last 50 years to allow for nonmilitary service options among conscientious objectors or for domestic service functions overall. National youth service programs in Nigeria and Ghana, for example, which were started in the 1970s, served as paramilitary training and a way to channel unemployed youth, thus stifling youth unrest (Obadare, 2007). In the more recent incarnations of youth service, it may accomplish similar ends but the motives are more varied.

Youth service is considered a social and economic development strategy (Johnson, McBride, & Olate, 2007), though different forms may have slightly different functions (McBride, Pritzker, Daftary, & Tang, 2006). Service-learning is very much focused on education and skill development, preparing youth for job readiness and also civic responsibility (Pritzker & McBride, 2006). National service has similar aims but it may have larger policy functions, such as mitigating the effects of high unemployment or providing opportunities for those who do not seek higher education (Perry & Thomson, 2004). International service has similar functions, although it may focus more on cross-group understanding (McBride, Sherraden, & Lough, 2007).

Cross-sectional or basic pre-post test designs are paramount in youth service research, though support has been found for a range of outcomes across the forms, primarily based on research in the Global North. Youth service has been found to enhance employability and civic responsibility for the participants (CNCS, 2007). Service is associated with increased work skills, expanded career options, and advanced educational achievement (Sherraden & Eberly, 1982). Service is also believed

to instill a sense of civic responsibility and citizenship in volunteers (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990; Flanagan et al., 1998; Funk, 1998; Perry & Katula, 2001; Smith, 1999). Outcomes may also include improved mental health and self-esteem, increased social integration, and increased international understanding and cross-cultural competence (Mohan, 1994; Wilson & Musick, 1999). The challenge now is in learning what forms are implemented worldwide and what effects are experienced.

Research on service overall suffers from conceptual, theoretical, and methodological weaknesses (McBride & Sherraden, 2007). It is marked by weak research infrastructure, interdisciplinary dialogue, and research methodology. Furthermore, there is a paucity of rigorous comparative research on the nature of youth service and its impacts. Most comparative studies on the topic have been led by research at the Center for Social Development at Washington University's Brown School (McBride et al., 2004; McBride & Sherraden, 2007; Sherraden & Eberly, 1990; see civic service at <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd>). This monograph takes the international knowledge base a step further, bringing together the latest research on youth service. The research itself remains largely descriptive, which reflects the status of the emerging knowledge worldwide.

Contents of this Monograph

Between 2001 and 2008, CSD operated a Civic Service Research Grants and Fellows Program, with funding from the Ford Foundation. The program supported 20 research fellows worldwide who study civic service across more than 30 countries. A majority of the fellows are self-defined as practitioner-scholars who study youth service. The fellows convened at Washington University between February 27 and March 3, 2007, to present their research. This monograph is a compilation of selected studies. The authors pose exploratory as well as outcome-oriented questions, couching their research within the historical, social, economic, and political status of the countries or regions in which the youth service programs and policies are implemented. The articles are organized thematically, from assessment of the perceptions of youth service in a particular context to the suggested impacts on civic engagement across a variety of service forms to exploration of the impact on community and national level indicators.

Perceptions of youth service

Leila Patel (South Africa) reports on findings from a cross-national survey of civic service and volunteering in five countries in Southern Africa. She investigates the nature and scope of youth service in the region and its potential for contributing to social policy and practice. She finds that youth development, civic service, and other forms of voluntary action are linked, and relevant for national social development. She also finds that distinguishing features of youth service in this part of Africa reflect the region's complex history and current development challenges. **Maud Simonet** (France) draws on in-depth interviews with youth volunteers in two civic service programs: the Unis Cité program in France and City Year in the USA. She assesses how volunteers' varying perceptions and use of volunteer stipends as pocket money or income are indicative of different social functions of civic service as either work or volunteerism. She finds that the socio-economic background of the volunteers in both countries influences how they define the meaning of the compensation and thus, the nature of the service.

Civic service and civic engagement

Drawing on a cross-sectional study that compared German youth who had served in the country's Voluntary Cultural Year program (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr in der Kultur) with those who had not participated, **Gesa Birnkraut** (Germany) investigates the role the program plays in youth civic engagement and their perceptions of cultural institutions. Findings suggest that participating youth are more likely to have volunteered in the past and to pursue other civic service and volunteer opportunities in the future. In addition, participating youth appear to have a better understanding of cultural institutions and the training and career opportunities offered by these institutions.

Through in-depth interviews with former volunteers and focus groups with various stakeholders, **Tserendorjiin Erdechinmeg** (Mongolia), **Tumurbaatariin Bulganzaya** (Mongolia), and **Radnaagiin Gantumur** (Mongolia) explore the impact of Mongolia's National United Nations Volunteers (NUNV) program. They explored the role youth civic service could play in fostering development in "transitional countries" like Mongolia, which are lacking necessary social services as a result of ongoing political upheaval. They suggest that the NUNV program is an effective development tool that may increase the capacity of local government and foster civic engagement in volunteers.

Possible outcomes at the community and national levels

Danielle Varda (United States) investigates the community-level impact of a national youth service program in two communities in Wyoming and one in Montana. Using Social Network Analysis, she finds that two or three nonprofit organizations served by the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps experienced increased social capital as a result of more bridging community ties. Varda concludes that youth civic service can improve the capacity of nonprofit organizations by diversifying the organizations' community networks.

Wale Adebawwi (Nigeria) explores the competing notions of nationalism and global service in the global South through his study of the Technical Aid Corps (TAC), an international youth service program founded by the Nigerian government that provides human development assistance to African and Caribbean countries. Adebawwi's findings suggest that TAC participants develop a global civic ethic even though Nigerians, in general, are not civically engaged. His findings indicate that international civic service may promote a "de-territorialized" form of citizenship as well as encourage civic engagement at the national level.

Alvino Fantini (United States) developed and assessed a construct of intercultural competence (ICC), through his investigation of the impact of international youth service programs on both volunteers and hosts. His study of British and Swiss volunteers who served in Ecuador and their Ecuadorian mentors contributed to an understanding of ICC, revealing the importance of the host language, and the life-altering effects of the service program on all parties.

Conclusion

These papers challenge youth civic service researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to consider a number of development issues as the field continues to evolve. The primary conclusion is that functions and structure matter within the context in which they are implemented. Each author

highlights unique aspects of service programs that may contribute to certain positive outcomes, given historical, cultural, social, political, and economic conditions. However, the field cannot lose sight of the potential negative outcomes of service. Youth service may positively impact youth, but the individuals, organizations, and communities also should benefit to make this strategy ethical and worthwhile. The applied question remains: what sorts of structures are needed across youth service to promote positive outcomes on all sides, while aiding the transition of youth to the responsibilities of adulthood?

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Youth Development, Service, and Volunteering in Five Southern African Countries

Leila Patel

The idea that civic service and development activities are interconnected has emerged from the findings of a cross-national study in five countries on civic service and volunteering in Southern Africa. A youth filter has been used to analyze the data with the view to developing an understanding of the nature and scope of youth involvement in service and volunteering. The study findings show that service and volunteering and youth development are directly linked, are relevant to national development goals, and are integrated into a wide cross-section of development programs. Participation and the agency of young people are also highlighted. Unlike the deficit model that focuses only on social pathology and social treatment, service programs that involve youth acknowledge the importance of meeting the needs of both servers and beneficiaries who are poor and educationally deprived. The study findings provide valuable insight that could inform future policy and program development.

Introduction

An investment in youth in both developed and developing countries has re-emerged as an important international human development issue with far reaching implications for social development policies and strategies in the 21st century (World Bank, 2006). Youth development is a global imperative since young people constitute the largest share of the global population in history. The population of young people in the developing world is increasing and is estimated to be approximately 1.3 billion (World Bank, 2006) with youth making up 40% of the world's population. An investment in young people will realize considerable social, economic, and political benefits to societies undergoing large-scale changes as a result of the globalization process. While globalization presents us with opportunities to solve complex problems related to the achievement of human well-being, it also presents societies with new economic, social, and political risks and demands (Patel, 2005; UNDP, 1999).

Some of the countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) face these global changes in addition to numerous challenges, including civil conflict and instability, mass poverty, increasing youth unemployment, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and weak democratic and administrative institutions. It is widely acknowledged that an investment in young people is an investment in future human capital development, entrepreneurs, parents, active citizens, and leaders in their respective communities and societies. These development challenges and the growing prominence of young people as the focus of social policy internationally has led to a renewed interest and commitment to youth development and volunteering in the African context.

This paper is based on the findings of a five country cross-national research study on civic service and volunteering in the SADC (Patel & Perold, 2007). The study findings suggest that civic service and volunteering in the region is an emerging phenomenon and field of enquiry and that its distinguishing features reflect the complex social, cultural, economic, and political developments regionally and in a changing global context. The social development approach to civic service and

volunteering features strongly in regional initiatives and provides rich insights that could inform future policies and practice (Patel, 2007). A youth filter was used to reanalyze the data in this study. An integrated approach to youth development based on social development principles emerged from the study that could inform future thinking about youth service and volunteering.

Youth in the SADC and African Context

A long tradition of youth development and youth service exists in the African context following independence where youth development and youth service was closely associated with nation building and national development efforts (Patel & Wilson, 2004). While youth service may have had many positive benefits, it has been criticized in the post-independence period for being militaristic and for furthering the political aspirations and interests of ruling elites. In this regard Moleni and Gallagher (2007) point out that the potential of the Malawi Young Pioneers to contribute to socio-economic development after independence was not realized because the program was centralized, highly structured, and militarized in the latter part of President Banda's rule. Herein lies the danger of national youth service programs in many African countries—political alignment with ruling parties that use youth to entrench their power, dispense patronage, and oppress local populations. Other examples of the politicization of youth service include the Zambian National Youth Service which was later disbanded and the National Youth Service of Zimbabwe (NYSZ) which was established in 2001. The role of the NYSZ in promoting support for the ruling party ZANU-PF, is well documented (Shumba, 2003). The NYSZ does not enjoy the support of all Zimbabweans (Kaseke & Dhemba, 2006).

National youth service programs have faced other challenges such as growing bureaucracy, inadequate access because programs were limited to graduates and the professional class, inefficient administrative and management weaknesses, and cutbacks in state funding arising from structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s. These difficulties resulted in the closure of many of the national youth services programs on the continent except for the Nigerian National Youth Service Programme, which has been in existence since the 1960s.

The growing needs and challenges facing young people are re-emerging on the national and regional social development agendas. A recent study indicated that an increasing number of African countries have youth policies and national youth service programs (United Nations Volunteers, 2006). There is also growing support among African governments and international agencies for the creation of an African Youth Corps and for the strengthening of national volunteer structures to promote peace and human development on the continent. Appropriate youth development and volunteering policies and strategies that meet present day development challenges facing young people and that invest in youth are needed.

Regional Socio-economic and Political Context

In 2001, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), made up of 14 countries, had a combined population of 208 million people (SADC, 2003). The five countries that form part of the study, namely Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, are all members of the SADC. Agriculture and minerals play a major role in the regional economy with 70% of people depending on agriculture for food, income, and employment, especially in rural areas where three quarters of the population resides. The region has the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite improved economic performance since the mid-1990s, the overall economic situation remains delicate in some countries due to the under-developed structure of the regional economies (Noyoo & Patel, 2005). South Africa and Botswana are higher-income countries with a Gross National Product per capita that is higher than the regional average, while Malawi and Zambia are classified as low-income countries, and Zambia is classified as a Highly Indebted Poor Country.

There is a high rural urban migration rate in the region due to the movement and displacement of populations caused by economic and social under-development and political conflict. Civil war and political strife coupled with natural disasters have worsened the socio-economic and human development standing of the region as a whole. Although the Human Development Index (HDI) showed an overall improvement between 1995 and 2000 (UNDP, 2000), the human development situation is being reversed in some countries due to the impact of HIV and AIDS. The ongoing political crisis in Zimbabwe since 1997 has impacted negatively on socio-economic development.

Poverty reduction remains one of the key challenges with 70% of the population in the region living below the international poverty line of US \$2 per day, while 40% of the region's population, or 76 million people, live in extreme poverty (SADC, 2003). The poor also include groups such as children, older persons, women, people with disabilities, rural communities, youth, and displaced people. Poor health indicators including high infant, child, and maternal mortality rates exist with high rates of cholera, malaria, and tuberculosis impacting negatively on the health status of the population. All countries in the region have high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates with Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe recording some of the highest rates. Over the next decade, 5-7 million people are expected to die of the disease in their prime years leaving two million orphans and transforming family structures and the demography of the region (Department of International Development, 2002).

The SADC region along with the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa has a predominantly young population which is expected to continue to grow over the next two decades. The changing demography of Sub-Saharan Africa means that more children are surviving into adolescence and more people are living into old age. The demographic dividend which was widely expected to benefit developing countries socially and economically has not been realized in the SADC region and in Sub-Saharan Africa. The projected scenario was that increased child survival would lead to greater numbers of young people entering the labor force which in turn would stimulate economic growth and reduce dependency ratios in developing countries. Blum (2007:237) points out that despite more young people reaching adolescence in Sub-Saharan Africa, the reality is that "youth are poorer, have less education, have more rapid population growth, have higher maternal mortality, have greater HIV prevalence, and have fewer vocational options than anywhere else in the world."

Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa are also more educationally deprived and suffer more deaths from AIDS than elsewhere in the world (Blum, 2007). Some of the reasons for the worsening social and economic situation of young people are firstly that the demand for labor has not kept pace with the growing supply as more young people reach working age. Secondly, as a result of the globalization process, a more skilled labor force is required—a goal that is difficult to meet in light of the high level of educational deprivation of young people. Even though the gender gap has declined, gender inequalities remain to the disadvantage of young women. Although fewer young women marry at an early age in comparison with the past—early marriage is closely associated with lower levels of educational attainment and socio-economic status—other challenges have offset this gain. As the age of marriage is delayed, there is a greater risk of teenage pregnancies and HIV infection. AIDS is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years of age with young people accounting for almost half of all new infections in Sub-Saharan Africa (Summer, Kates & Murphey, 2002). Young women are more vulnerable to HIV infections than men with women being five times more likely to be infected than men. All these rapid changes in the region and in the continent result in significant social disruptions in the lives of young people.

Concepts and Approach to Youth Development and Civic Service

There is no common agreement on the definition of youth. While the United Nations defines youth as being between the ages of 15 and 24 years, the norm in many African countries is to extend the upper age limit of youth to 30 or 35 years (UNV, 2006). Various factors influence the age definition of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa. These include the age at which education is completed, as many young people complete education much later in their lives. Other factors that are pertinent are the age of family formation, rising unemployment, and the economic costs of achieving adult status (Blum, 2007). Poverty, under-development, and high levels of dependency as well as the effects of war and political conflict also have a bearing on the definition of youth.

For the purposes of this paper, youth are considered to be young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Civic service is defined as an “organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to local, national or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary cost to the participant” (McBride et al., 2004:108). The term volunteering is more commonly recognized in the SADC region and is considered to be a subset of civic service. A distinguishing feature of civic service and volunteering in the SADC region is the connection between service and development informed by the social development approach to service (Patel, 2007; Patel & Perold, 2007).

Essentially, social development is concerned with harmonizing economic and social policies and programs. It is a pro-poor approach that promotes people-centered development, human capabilities, social capital, participation, and active citizenship and civic engagement in achieving human development (Midgley, 1995; Patel, 2005). Social development is a rights-based and pluralist approach that focuses on strong government action and partnership between individuals, groups, communities, civil society, donors, development agencies, and the private and public sectors (Patel, 2005). This approach provides a useful framework for the study of civic service in the African context. It also provides a framework for analysis at different levels of intervention—involving a diversity of groups and service areas—for youth development.

Unlike the dominant treatment approach to youth issues and problems that is informed by developmental psychology and that emphasizes individual pathology and the deficits of young people, the term “youth development” has emerged as a counterbalance to the treatment approach. Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pitman (2004) describe youth development as referring firstly to a natural process of growth and development of young people in interaction with their environment. It is a period in their lives when they are gaining the competence to lead healthy, satisfying, productive lives and are active citizens who are engaged in civic life. Secondly, youth development refers to a set of principles that are concerned with promoting the inclusion of youth by building on their strengths, and addressing their economic, socio-cultural, and psycho-social needs. Finally, the term youth development is also used to describe practices that translate these ideas into policies and programs to promote the development of young people.

Youth development may also be approached from a social investment perspective, which proposes investing in key life transitions of young people as they progress towards adulthood (World Bank, 2006). These key life transitions require social investments in secondary and post-secondary education, as well as investments in other opportunities that will promote productive employment, healthy lifestyles, the formation of families, and the exercise of citizenship responsibilities. A synthesis of the above ideas informs the concept of youth development in this analysis and constitutes a counterbalance to the dominant treatment approach. The concept will be further elaborated based on the findings of the study.

Methodology

The fieldwork was conducted between 2005 and 2006 with a view to replicating the research objectives of McBride et al.’s (2004) global assessment of civic service. This cross-national study in the SADC aimed to build foundational knowledge and understanding of the nature and scope of service and the contribution that it might make to social development policy, research, and practice regionally.

The research design was of an exploratory and a qualitatively descriptive nature. The five countries selected for the study included Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The countries selected had existing service activities that could be researched as well as the presence of experienced in-country researchers who conducted the research. Forty-six key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from government and non-government organizations and with donors. In addition, 13 focus groups consisting of 108 respondents were held. Finally, 20 formally and informally organized programs were identified and studied in-depth. Field-tested research tools were used to collect the data and respondents were purposively selected based on defined selection criteria.

The data were analyzed for an overall synthesis research report (Patel & Perold, 2007). Reports and transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions from the five countries (Kaseke & Dhembha, 2006; Moleni & Gallagher, 2006; Perold, Carapinha, & Mohamed 2006; Rankopo, Osei-Hwedie, & Moroka, 2006; Wilson & Kalila 2006) were analyzed for the article applying a youth filter. Two key questions were posed: firstly, what is the nature and scope of youth service and volunteering in the respective countries? Second, what are the implications of the above for youth development, civic service, and social development policy and action in the African context?

Findings

Youth are increasingly involved in civic service and volunteering initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa (Patel & Wilson, 2004) and in the SADC, particularly in Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia, where youth involvement in civic service and volunteering was widely documented (Moleni & Gallagher, 2007; Patel, 2007; Perold, Patel, Carapinha, & Mohamed, 2007; Wilson, 2007). The age range of servers varied greatly between 14 and 72 years and differed by program type with older persons being more likely to be involved in home-based care for people affected by HIV and AIDS. Adult women constituted the largest proportion of servers followed by youth, except in South Africa, where the servers in the programs studied were largely young people. The average number of servers per program ranged between 83 in Malawi and 1,596 in South Africa. Voluntary service was more prevalent with the exception of compulsory community service for newly qualified health care professionals in South Africa who are required to perform one year of community service. The majority of servers of all ages who were engaged in voluntary service were poor and disadvantaged and matched the socio-economic status of the beneficiaries. Dual benefits to servers and beneficiaries were strongly emphasized.

While no single motive could be identified that motivates youth to serve, cultural and religious motivations were prevalent as a significant motivator of servers. In South Africa, the desire to contribute to the building of a new democracy and a nation—indicators of citizenship responsibility—featured strongly among young people (Pawlby, 2003). Community and societal benefits motivated most servers; however, individual benefits to the server were also considered important. Due to the high rates of youth unemployment and poverty, many servers—especially youth—were motivated by the opportunity to develop skills and gain work experience, and the likelihood of obtaining gainful employment. In some instances, stipends were paid to servers and, where service was part of a scheme, compensation involved an exchange of in-kind resources.

Three types of service were identified by McBride et al (2002)—namely, youth service (40%), faith-based service (6%), and senior service (2%). More than half of the programs analyzed had no explicit type of service and could not be classified. Of the programs that could be classified, youth service was the most dominant type of service. Service goals were strongly oriented to promoting social and human development; sustainable livelihoods, skills development, and increasing opportunities for employment; community development, infrastructure development, and environmental protection; and civic awareness, engagement, and nation-building. Youth were therefore involved in a wide range of service programs that connected with local needs and were responses to the declining human development situation in their respective countries. Health programs, particularly HIV and AIDS initiatives and social services, were most prevalent, followed by social and community development programs, education, and services for children and youth.

Youth involvement in service in Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia was facilitated by the creation of more open and democratic societies that produced new opportunities for young people to become involved in service. The recent transition to democracy in Malawi provided new opportunities for voluntary initiatives, and locally-based community development and volunteering became the dominant form of service available to young people. A new vibrant civil society led to the creation of local youth clubs as a platform for youth participation in development (Moleni & Gallagher, 2007). Approximately 3,500 youth clubs are involved in community development, social welfare,

literacy, HIV and AIDS education and awareness, civic education, gender-specific issues, and environmental and human rights issues.

South African youth played a leading role in the anti-apartheid struggle, and in the post-apartheid era, policy was adopted to promote youth development, wider socio-economic development, and civic responsibility among young people. Most programs are voluntary and initiated by civil society organizations who work in partnership with local organizations, communities, the private sector, and the government. Compulsory community service for graduates in the health field is a government-led initiative. The programs focus on personally developing youth and fostering civic responsibility. Even more significantly, the programs contribute to national development by promoting participation in health, education, and environmental protection, and by preparing youth for employment through development of skills and work-related competencies. Youth development and youth involvement in development is supported by a wider enabling environment where volunteering is widespread in the society. Estimated to involve 17% of the population, or approximately 8 million people, volunteering in South Africa is not the preserve of the middle-class only (Everatt & Solanki, 2005).

In Zambia, youth, along with other members of the community, served in a wide cross-section of development programs, such as community schools that have emerged in response to the lack of access to education and high rates of school drop-out. They are also participants in the government sponsored Public Welfare Assistance Programs, which rely on 55,060 volunteers to deliver services on a decentralized basis and which foster participation in development, self-help, and partnership with non-governmental and community-based organizations. These examples illustrate how youth development is part of wider social and community development and how the needs of youth are addressed in an integrative way by engaging them in service to their communities, benefitting both recipients and servers.

Youth may be offered incentives including financial compensation, such as stipends or allowances, or non-monetary benefits, such as resources for project implementation (bicycles, fertilizer, and seeds), gifts (T-shirts), skills development, and work experience. Offering financial compensation or non-monetary benefits, however, remains controversial. In the global discourse about service and volunteering, there is a widely held view that incentives undermine the service ethos and create dependency. The argument that service should not be accompanied by incentives, however, does not take account of the socio-economic and political realities of poor countries where young people have limited opportunities to improve their life chances. These realities shape the conceptualization of service in the African context as beneficial for both servers and beneficiaries. This is contrary to the widely held view that service should be solely beneficiary-oriented.

There appears to be a high turnover rate of youth servers because they may be more likely to move on to formal employment or to exploring employment opportunities in and outside their communities. This high turnover is often viewed as evidence of a lack of commitment on the part of youth to volunteer. Further, illiteracy and low levels of education exclude many young people from volunteering and have been cited as a reason why young women in some countries are under-represented among youth volunteers (Moleni & Gallagher, 2007). However, in this study, the overall research findings indicate that young women are more likely to volunteer than young men, with women volunteering in traditional care-giving roles and men engaging in leadership and committee work.

The study findings also support the notion that youth development is concerned with social investment in key life transitions of young people, thereby promoting social inclusion by enhancing their ability to lead healthy, satisfying, productive lives and by encouraging them to be active citizens engaged in civic life and the development of their communities. A related theme that emerged from this perspective of youth development is that youth servers are both targets of change and agents of change in their communities and societies. This idea of youth development is contrary to the treatment approach to youth problems and concerns.

In this regard, Ansel (2003:34) cautions against the uncritical application of the “global model of childhood [and youth] that is based on a Western middle-class ideal, in combination with paradigms from developmental psychology.” The global model of childhood and youth is criticized for individualizing the problems of young people and for neglecting the impact of the contextual realities and challenges facing them in the African context.

Implications for Policy and Action

Rapid social, political, and economic changes experienced in many African countries have had a profound impact on young people. The large youth population globally and in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the associated social disruption experienced by them, has resulted in greater prominence being given to the development needs of young people in the context of national and regional development. While more African governments appear to have youth policies, there is a disconnect between youth policy and youth service (Moleni & Gallagher, 2007), and existing social development policies are underdeveloped. There is, therefore, a need for youth development, service, and volunteering policies that dovetail with other social policies, including social development policies and strategies that are responsive to these changing trends and challenges.

A few key ideas emerged from the study that could provide valuable insights to inform policy and action in SADC and Sub-Saharan Africa. These ideas are first that a youth development perspective—with a focus on social investment in the life transitions of young people and shaped by their societal context—could provide a sound approach to intervention. Second, the idea that youth development, civic service, and volunteering are linked and are relevant to national social development is critical, as it provides for an integrated response where the future of young people and communities are interrelated. Third, participation and agency of young people in service speaks to the importance of promoting active citizenship and a service partnership, in which both servers and beneficiaries are collaborating in their own interest and in the wider interest of their communities and society. Fourth, the limits of idealized western middle class notions of “youth” and of “volunteering” do not coincide with the social, cultural, economic, and political realities in poor African countries where servers and beneficiaries are poor and socially excluded. Youth development and service models need to grapple with the complexity of policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation in developing societies, taking these contextual realities, discourses, and challenges into account. The structuring of incentives and the management and implementation of programs need to be more gender-sensitive and inclusive. Finally, since youth service is re-emerging as an option for African governments to promote peace and human development, it is critical that the pitfalls of the politicization of youth service programs that further the narrow political interest of ruling parties be avoided. The promotion of civic engagement through youth development and service needs to prepare young people to build strong participative plural democracies and contribute to the strengthening of civil society on the continent.

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In between Volunteer Work and Employment: Youth Civic Service in France and in the United States

Maud Simonet

The ambiguity inherent in defining clear boundaries between volunteer work (travail bénévole), service work (travail volontaire), and professional/occupational work (travail salarié) has emerged in both France and the US as a recurrent theme in interviews conducted with youth civic service workers as well as the staff of the organizations they serve (Patel, 2005). This ambiguity is particularly apparent in the variety of ways in which youth from different socio-economic backgrounds experience service. This article explores the tensions between volunteer work, service work, and professional work, drawing on the author's 2005 comparative study. The article will present findings on two civic service programs for youth—City Year (US) and Unis Cité (France)—focusing particularly on the complications socio-economic factors play in defining youth civic service. The article finds that the socio-economic status of the volunteers influences their paths in and out of service as well as their understanding and use of compensation.

Introduction

In France as in the United States, the notions of volunteering and work are defined in opposition to one another. While volunteering—*bénévolat*—commonly refers to a free will activity exempted from remuneration, work—*travail*—implies both institutionalized constraints and remuneration. The development of several large-scale civic service programs for youth in both countries, however, has begun to blur this rigid boundary between work and volunteering (Simonet, 2005). In France as in the United States, Civic service (*volontariat*) is legally defined as neither volunteering nor work. Yet, the ambiguity inherent in defining clear boundaries between volunteer work (*travail bénévole*), service work (*travail volontaire*), and professional/occupational work (*travail salarié*) has emerged in both countries as a recurrent theme in interviews conducted with youth civic service workers as well as the staff of the organizations they serve (Patel, 2005). This ambiguity is particularly apparent in the variety of ways in which youth from different socio-economic backgrounds experience service; while some describe it as super volunteering, others experience it more as poorly compensated employment.

This article explores the tensions between volunteer work, service work, and professional work, drawing on the author's 2005 comparative study of two US programs—City Year and Teach for America—and two French programs—Unis Cité and Association de la Fondation Etudiante pour la Ville (AFEV). The article will present findings on City Year and Unis Cité only, focusing particularly on the complications socio-economic factors play in defining youth civic service.

Context

Everett C. Hughes introduced the symbolic interactionist concept of *career* as a way to study and compare different types of professions. In *Institutional Office and the Person* (1937), Hughes defined the concept of career as a series of status and jobs clearly defined: a typical flow of positions, realizations, responsibilities, and even adventures. But to this “objective dimension” of the career, he

also added a subjective one, defined as “the moving perspective in which the person sees his life as a whole and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions, and the things which happen to him.”

The symbolic interactionist concept of *career* had its scope of analysis extended outside the realm of professional activities when Howard S. Becker, a student of Hughes, used it to study the career of the deviant in his famous work *Outsiders: Studies in Sociology of Deviance* (1963). Others from the symbolic interactionist school have developed a *career approach* to volunteer activities: Robert A. Stebbins in *Amateurs: On the Margin Between Work and Leisure* (1979) and Arlene Kaplan Daniels in *Invisible Careers: Women Civic Leaders from the Volunteer World* (1988). As the titles of these two books suggest, Stebbins’ and Kaplan Daniels’ use of the concept of career stands between Hughes’ traditional one and Becker’s export out of the sociology of work and of profession. Furthermore, both authors have challenged the social frontier by applying the notion of career to volunteer activities between work and non-work.

Along with that specific attention to both the objective and the subjective dimensions of a social practice, the interest of the concept of career, at least as it has been used by symbolic interactionists, resides in enforcing a diachronic, process-oriented analysis of the social practice in both these dimensions. How do people objectively and subjectively enter, evolve, and eventually exit from a social practice are some of the basic questions such an analysis would carry. What the career approach to French and American youth service programs under study captured is that the answer to these basic questions differs significantly depending on the socio-economic background of the program participants.

Methods

This article draws on a comparative study completed by the author in 2005 that examined service activity in the field of education using both a cross-national and a national methodology. To derive meaningful data for comparison at the national level, two service programs were selected in each country: City Year and Teach for America (TFA) in the United States, and Unis Cité and Association de la Fondation Etudiante pour la Ville (AFEV) in France. The two cities where the joint organizations supporting this research are based, New York and Paris, were selected as the local sites to conduct the fieldwork.

The programs were chosen for their visibility in the two studied countries as well as their appropriateness for cross-national research. Only City Year and Unis Cité are considered in this article because the original study (Simonet, 2005) found that socio-economic concerns were particularly salient for this group. In addition, the programs were the most similar to one another in organizational structure, expectations of servers, and approach to remuneration, Unis Cité, the French organization being a cultural transplant of City Year.¹ Both programs are focused on education-related service and expect volunteers to work as teams, while fulfilling a variety of roles (and in the case of Unis Cité, in a variety of settings). Both City Year and Unis Cité members receive remuneration that is meant to allow them to commit themselves full-time to their voluntary service.

¹ In 1992, an American woman who had just received a grant to come to France visited City Year before coming to Paris and decided to implement a youth service organization. She created Unis Cité a year later in Paris with two French women.

City Year volunteers work in a specific school where they develop and lead various activities for the students, including tutoring and mentoring programs, after-school programs, and community service projects. For Unis Cité volunteers, service work is defined by a succession of projects lasting between one week and one month served in nonprofit organizations. The organizations themselves work with various beneficiary populations, including low-income adults, drug addicts in recovery, and immigrants. For every project, team members are asked to fulfil a specific task, which has been negotiated by the team coordinator and the host organization.

Data

In-depth interviews were conducted with current and former participants of the programs. Participants and non participants volunteered to participate in the study, often after being referred by a representative of Unis Cité or City Year. Many subjects who were referred were identified to the researcher as representing something particular about the organization—the *typical* member, a *success story*, diversity. To avoid organizational bias, snow ball sampling was also used.

The core of the research material analysed in this article² consists of 18 interviews with 17³ servers and former servers from Unis Cité and City Year. Among these 17 interviewees, 10 were women and 7 were men, 11 were participants and 6 were former participants in the programs. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24, and former participants from mid 20s to early 30s.

Because the constraints of the research timing did not allow for the implementation of a follow-up study, each server was interviewed only once, but the interviews were conducted at various points in the service program. Approximately one-third of the population was interviewed a few months after entering the program; another third was interviewed at the end of their service commitment; the last third was interviewed after their term of service had ended. The timing of these interviews allowed for a diachronic approach without a follow-up study.

Findings

The dual entry and exit paths

As symbolic interactionists have often stated, when sociologists are interested in the meaning people give to an activity or a social practice, a good question to raise is usually not why but how. When asked how they found out about the program, many interviewees in Unis Cité and City Year mentioned in the description they gave of their first encounter with the service program that they were looking for a *job*.

² The research material consists of 46 interviews, including 31 interviews with servers and former servers from the four studied programs (Simonet, 2005).

³ One server, from City Year, was interviewed twice.

When one Unis Cité member was asked how she had come to the organization, for example, she responded:

By coincidence! As I told you, I always wanted to do something like this so I did some research on the internet, not very advanced though and I saw this ad and I called and we did interviews and it went well. (5)⁴

When the interviewer followed up, asking, “And you were looking for a volontariat in the social field?,” the member clarified that she had been seeking employment:

No! At first I was looking for a job! I was looking for a job at the end of school, just a small job. (5)

If some of the corps members that were looking for a job found the service program on their own in the course of their research, some others were directed towards Unis Cité by social workers, as this member recounts:

At first I went to the mission locale where I live and I went to see a social worker and I told her that I wanted to work in the nonprofit world and she had just received an email from Unis Cité so she gave me their contact and I called. (4)

Similarly, another Unis Cité corps member recounted that her social worker pointed her toward the organization, perhaps in lieu of actual employment:

Until I feel better I have a case worker . . . so he did some research on the web and he found out Unis Cité. He told me, “This is volontariat, you will even be paid and everything, you’ll have the opportunity to do lots of things. This is a big non profit that helps other non profits.” So I went there. (8)

This specific entry mode into the program echoes back, in a less stereotypical way, to the description this former City Year Boston corps members gave of one of the “two categories of people who had the most applicants” in that program’s early years:

There was the category of people who weren’t in school, had dropped out of school. Likely had been, had been in jail, were out of jail, were at home, very broken homes, very difficult home situations People who really were in no situation to get a job even. And their social worker, or their . . . somebody in the juvenile detention system had said, now, here’s a program, this is your last chance. Join this program, wear the uniform, follow the directions, you even get paid a little bit, and if you can stick to this, it will keep you out of jail, and from there, you have a good chance of getting a job . . . because you’ll have something very positive on your resume and staff people will help you and they have good connections. Um, so do a good job, like sort of this is your last chance. Otherwise the rest of your life is probably going to be very negative. And always be in and out of jail. (C)

⁴ In order to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, members of Unis Cité are referred to by a number and members of City Year by a letter.

As she adds, a little later, in the interview:

Honestly, there were people who joined the program because it was a job. It was a very, very low paying job. I think we got a hundred dollars a week. But a hundred dollars a week was better than nothing. (C)

She then described the “other category who had the most applicants,” the one she belonged to, as being “the educated—educated at seventeen, eighteen years old—um, suburban upper middle class, young people raised in a family, in a community that really valued service, from kind of an intellectual perspective and wanted to do this, instead of just read about it.”

In Unis Cité as in City Year, mixing youth from various backgrounds, enforcing “diversity,” has always been a strong program and recruitment policy. Yet, what the analysis of the entry stage into the program points out is that the experience of service differs a lot among these different youths. While youth from privileged backgrounds seem to enter more on the volunteer side of the service program, looking for a way to take a break and do something “*useful for society*” (in France) or “*give back to the community*” (in the US), servers who lack financial resources enter more on the occupational side of the program. They were looking for a job, in the nonprofit sector, the education or the social sector, or just a job, and were referred there by their social worker or a social or justice institution.

This dual experience of service does not end with the entry into the program. As indicated in interviews with staff and members from Unis Cité and City Year, servers that were fired or left the programs more or less voluntarily mostly come from underprivileged backgrounds. One City Year server noted that “seventeen people got fired, I think.” When pressed to clarify if these servers were fired or had quit, he answered that both modes of exit were represented, noting that these seventeen “got fired or quit.” Significantly, he added, “And I think ten of them were minorities, maybe more, I’m just not sure about that.” (E) A Unis Cité member related a similar story about a server who had left her team:

She left after a month. She did not get along with someone else in the team . . . Though I think money was the big problem. She certainly did not have any from her parents and after one month she felt she was already in debt and that was going to be hard to deal with all that: going to work, not getting along with one person, having money problems on the side . . . after a while the motivation was less strong and finally all this did not look exactly like what she had imagined. (11)

Questions often arose about the role service programs should play in relation to underprivileged members. For this Unis Cité member, the struggles of the less privileged members of the team raised new questions about her own experience of service:

There are some very different people, from a culturally and financially high environment, some middle populations and some who were really in trouble. The two [volunteers] that left—one voluntarily and the other one not—are two persons who really had financial and life problems . . . It seemed like we were working for others, helping others but we were not helping each other in the group. It was pretty weird . . . In fact we have this vision of helping people

in general, but we don't help the guy next to us, the one we see every day. This is harder . . . Much harder! And this got me back on the ground 'cause you realize that we had a false vision of things like saving the world . . . but not the person that is next to you! (5)

A Unis Cité team supervisor related this story about a member who had been asked to leave the program:

In my team, we fired a volontaire, who had left for two weeks, well he had some troubles that kind of pushed him to do so, because he had some troubles with the police, and so on. And he left for two weeks without warning anybody, no news, and then he came back and he said, "I would like to come back here." And finally we said no . . . Even though we are generally more like *second chance*, but this time we said two weeks, this is not possible.

One Unis Cité volontaire who happened to be in that specific team came back to this firing many times, during the interview and even after, during a less formal conversation. Although she believed that her fellow volontaire should not have disappeared for two weeks, she kept repeating "still, he really wanted to come back. I think they should have let him back in."

The meaning of compensation

Unis Cité and City Year members received remuneration to pay for living expenses. The members and organization staff, however, often assigned different meanings to this money, as is clear in their language. This remuneration was variously described by staff and servers as a "stipend," "pay," a "living allowance," a "salary," "living wages," and a "grant".

One Unis Cité member's attempt to classify his compensation reveals the complexity of this ambivalence:

They call it stipends. We should not talk about allowance; we should not talk about salary. Right now we say, "in volontariat, there are no salaries, there are no allowances," you see. Those are stipends, the word to refer to it is stipend. (6)

The difficulty becomes even more pronounced when the compensation, in terms of its amount, is nearly equivalent to a minimum wage salary. As a result of legislation, Unis Cité increased its compensation to volontaires from 380 euros to 573.72 euros. This "subsistence allowance" is legally defined as 50% of the salary corresponding to French civil service pay scale 244. This makes the allowance a little under 50% of the French minimum wage (1286,09 euros bruts in 2004). A Unis Cité coordinator noted how the increased level of compensation complicates the definition of Unis Cité servers as volontaires rather than workers:

When we used to say [the remuneration for volontaires is] 380 euros, it's nothing, but when we say 570 euros, it sounds like a part-time salary . . . it's getting much closer to a salary.

Another complication, as one interviewee pointed out, is that the Unis Cité subsistence allowance was set just above the poverty threshold (557 euros a month for one person in 1999). The poverty threshold is, of course, based on a measure of salary; this corps member's comparison of the

allowance to the poverty threshold is also suggestive of the tendency to think of the allowance as pay. Her comparison also calls into question the division of server and served, especially if the server is relying on the allowance alone for living expenses:

What is weird is that they were giving us 500 and something so that we would be just above the national level [poverty threshold]. . . I mean, I don't want to speak badly, but if we were getting less than that, we would have been part of the people in difficulties . . . we talked about it among the corps members because they were telling us about the poverty line and about the fact that a lot of people were on the margin and this just came to mind! (5)

As this member so pointedly notes, for youth who are not supported by their parents, the decision to serve may require a reduction in standard of living sharp enough to make the server almost as financially vulnerable as the underprivileged populations they serve.

Moreover, the stipend, just above the poverty level if used as income, reveals a troubling inequality among servers: those who are supported by their parents (whether they are still living with them and/or are getting some money from them) and those who are supporting themselves independently. As this Unis Cité member noted:

Some of us were living at home, with our parents. For me it was pocket money but some had to pay for their apartment, they were not seeing their parents anymore, had social difficulties.

This member's comment underlines a vast difference in the perception and use of the living allowance: it is *pay* for those who have nothing else to live on and *pocket money* for those who have other sources of support. Her observation is echoed by a Unis Cité team leader:

Still, it's a bit like pay, I mean they live on it, the volontaires . . . There are also some of them who are living with their parents and are very independent from all this, but the other ones, they live in shelters, have to rent a room, they live on it.

This distinction between those who "live on it" and those who "are very independent from all this" demarcates a group for whom compensation is pocket money from another group for whom compensation is income. It appears that the socio-economic status of the volunteer and, by extension, how the volunteer uses the compensation, play a critical role in determining whether compensation is subjectively understood but also objectively used as pay or not.

Discussion

In between the volunteer and the occupational worker, where does the service worker stand? To a stronger degree than traditional volunteers and like some sub-contracting workers, the service worker is inscribed in a dual matrix of work: that of the site where his more or less temporary mission is performed, but also that of the organization that defines and controls the conditions and the career line of this performance. Unlike the volunteer, his full-time and exclusive involvement gives the service worker access to social and health coverage, but unlike the occupational worker, (s)he is not entitled to regular pay.

If, for the moment, one leaves behind the institutional dimensions of the “service work” and focuses instead on the servers’ experiences and careers, one finds it even more difficult to provide a simple answer to the question “where does the service worker stand?” While one of the Unis Cité volontaires used the word *bénévolat* to talk about her experience in the program before adding “*volontariat, bénévolat*, it’s the same except that we get a stipend for doing it,” some others talked about the “job” and the “pay” and identified the server as being a “worker for the organization”, or an “employee.” If the confusion between the two lexicons were more or less shared by most of the interviewees, the analysis of the service entry and exit paths have pointed out that while the more privileged servers subjectively and objectively experienced their service commitment as a “super volunteering,” many of the less privileged ones experienced it as a “job”, a job they have had to live off of, and a job they might leave for a less ideal, but better-paid one.

Studying “service as work” brought to light a number of issues related to nonprofit workers, professional work, and public labor and, unintentionally, ended up presenting a rather disenchanting portrait of service. Yet a lot of the enthusiasm that youth expressed about their service experience and work has been underrepresented here. On the other hand, there is little doubt that their own voices and views have been emphasized here, more than those of the programs’ leaders or of the institutional representatives of the nonprofit, the educational, or the political worlds. And the servers’ voices carried complexity and sometimes also contradictions. They conveyed interest *and* limitations, feelings of satisfaction *and* exploitation, love for the work *and* exasperation with its conditions. They were conscious of the sacrifice being asked of them as a “citizen worker,” and most of the time they accepted it, but not always. Last but not least, their voices not only reflected the sacrificial dimension of their *own* work, but also pointed out that the sacrifice did not weigh the same for each of them. The servers pointed to the fact that some of them had to live off the “program salary” while some others were using the “stipend” as pocket money, and that taking a year to serve “others” or “the community” was not the same endeavor for everybody. They pointed out that the meaning of sacrifice was not necessarily the same for the privileged server with the will and the ability to do “something good” while testing out a possible vocation, as it was for the underprivileged one hoping to find a meaningful job. In the United States, many servers also expressed their concern that because the “call to sacrifice” only attracts specific categories to service, the program might therefore reinforce some racial stereotypes: e.g. the young black males who dropped out of the program or the “missionary” white middle- or upper-class youth who were serving in poor black and Latino neighbourhoods.

This consciousness of class—and in the United States also race—with regard to the access to and the meaning of service appears to the researcher as one of the strongest lessons the youth involved in the programs under study seem to have learned from their service experience. Diversity, not as an achievement of the program but as a critical and reflexive question that arose for the service worker during the course of his (her) work, may very well be considered as the citizen output of the programs under study.

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The Voluntary Cultural Year in Germany: Views of Youth who Participate and Those who do Not

Gesa Birnkraut

Drawing on a 2004 study (Birnkraut, Hein & Loock, 2004), this article investigates the characteristics of youth who serve in Germany's voluntary cultural year program and what motivates them to serve. In particular, the author investigates the role of social training and the presence of role models in influencing youth's perceptions of civic service and cultural institutions. The article also attempts to ascertain if participation in the program predisposes youth to seek out volunteer and civic opportunities in the future. Results suggest that the voluntary cultural year may have several positive impacts on participating adolescents, including enhancing social and cultural competence, offering insight into cultural institutions, providing exposure to career options in cultural institutions, and supporting a stronger relationship with cultural institutions and their impact on social development.

Introduction

In 2004, German President Johannes Rau argued that culture should be understood as a prerequisite for a healthy society rather than as a luxury. The existence and promotion of culture and civic engagement, he continued, is of utmost importance to assure the growth and identity of society. The voluntary cultural year program (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr in der Kultur or FSJK) anticipated Rau's mandate; since 2001, the civic service program has offered young volunteers access to cultural work and provided a platform to promote volunteering in the arts. The program also appears to promote civic engagement in participating youth. A study of the FSJK program (Birnkraut, Hein & Loock, 2004) found that participating youth established personal definitions of citizenship and volunteerism. In addition, participating youth developed a greater understanding of cultural institutions and their impact on social development.

This article draws on cross-sectional survey (Birnkraut, Hein & Loock, 2004) that investigates the characteristics of youth who served in the FSJK program and explores what motivates them to serve. In particular, the author investigates the role of social training and the presence of role models in influencing youth's perceptions of civic service and cultural institutions. The article also attempts to ascertain if participation in the FSJK program predisposes youth to seek out volunteer and civic opportunities in the future.

Context of the Issue

The creation of the FSJK program was preceded by other significant changes to Germany's civic service program. In response to public discussion, the voluntary year program (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr or FSJ), which had existed since 1964, was gradually expanded. In 1993, to meet growing demand for educational experiences for youth focused on ecological sustainability, the voluntary ecological year (Freiwilliges Ökologisch Jarh or FÖJ) was established (Jakob, 2002). Based on the legal groundwork for this new civic service program, the government also offered the possibility for young men and women to volunteer in another European country for one year. Inspired by this development, the Federal Association for Cultural Youth Education (Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle

Jugendbildung or BKJ) suggested program ideas for a voluntary cultural year to the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth in the early nineties. After their first efforts, the BKJ initiated a model project called *Rein ins Leben!* (Check out life!) in 2001.

In 2002, the government again revised the law for mandatory civic service to allow accredited conscientious objectors to attend the FSJ or FÖJ programs as a legal alternative to mandatory service. As of this writing, only positions for accredited conscientious objectors are still substantially funded by the government, while positions for female volunteers, who do not have to attend a mandatory service, have to be financed by the bearer organizations or the institutions themselves (BMFSFJ, 2004). This circumstance has been a recurring reason for continued public discussion about the gender equality standards in voluntary and mandatory civic service in Germany. Here, equal rights are dependent on the duty to serve in mandatory service.

Throughout the preliminary research phase, guiding theories to conduct the study were hypothesized. One major assumption was that volunteer work is mutually beneficial for both the institution and the volunteer. Thus, a volunteer must never replace a regular employee, but must contribute to the regular flow of work. If incorporated properly, the volunteer will supplement the teamwork of the employees, and both the volunteer and the institution will benefit from the experiences gained. Another assumption was that a program like the FSJK might have a “modeling” effect on the adolescent who is serving, that participation in the program could be the start of a long-term commitment in volunteering that exceeds the program year. A similar study (Eberhard, 2001) found that former participants of the voluntary social year were willing to volunteer more frequently than the average citizen. However, Eberhard concludes that this does not necessarily result from the former participants’ civic consciousness but rather from their feeling of being more enriched by the experience. Mitzscherlich (2003) found that the voluntary political year has supported the politicization of the participating adolescents.

To study the impact of the program on youth’s perceptions of civic society, a critical discussion has to account for the fact that the service year for young men is mandatory rather than voluntary. Although they can choose between different services, their personal motivation is unlikely to be comparable to the young women who serve in the program. Thus, a major question that arises is whether the FSJK has positive effects on civic society in both young men and women. Eberhard (2001) notes that one has to account for the difference that voluntary service (as opposed to mandatory service) makes in support of a growing public social responsibility. She argues that the introduction of mandatory civic service for both young men and women would be counterproductive to the aim of solidarity and sense of community. Instead, education should play the role of socializing youth and offering them possibilities for civic participation. Further, she concludes that a sense of community and civic engagement must grow from personal belief. Building on this work, this article proposes two hypotheses regarding the civic engagement of participating youth (PY). The first hypothesis is that the FSJK program stimulates and enhances social competence and establishes a personal definition of citizenship and volunteerism. The second hypothesis is that the FSJK program orients adolescents about future training and career options.

Methods

This study compared youth who were active in civic service to those who were not. The BKJ provided names and addresses of 468 youth who were currently participating or had recently

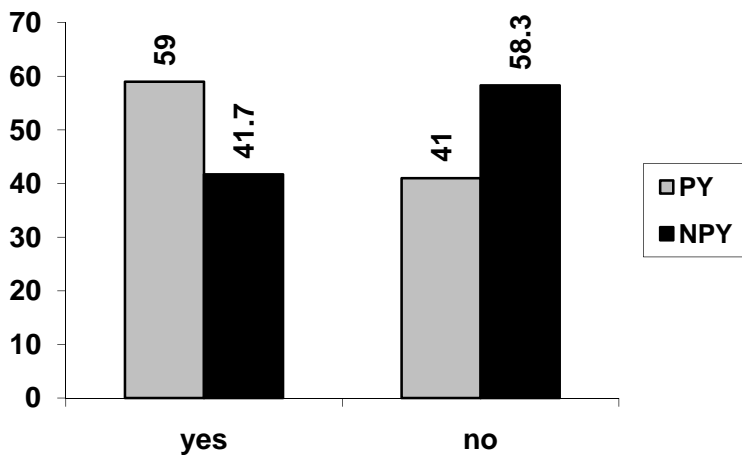
participated in the FSJK program. Surveys were mailed to all 468. The 125 youth who responded to the survey constitute the participating youth (PY) group. The sample of non-participating youth (NPY) group, comprised of youth who had never volunteered or served in the FSJK program, was drawn from school and university populations of six model cities: Dresden, Zwickau, Borna, Mainz, Trier, and Germersheim (see Birnkraut, Hein & Look, 2004 for selection criteria for the model cities). Schools with the largest number of students in each city were selected in order to capture a vast variety of opinions most efficiently. Surveys were administered to the graduating class in traditional high schools, and to multiple levels in vocational schools and universities. A total number of 803 students were surveyed, and 797 surveys were valid. Ages of the NPY group ranged from 15 to 41 years, but 743 (93.2%) were aged 16-27, the targeted age group.

Data was collected by means of a cross-sectional survey individually designed for each group. The survey for the PY included 64 questions; the survey for the NPY included 58 questions. Both the PY and NPY surveys assessed attitude toward culture and elicited demographic data. In addition, the PY survey measured personal opinions of the program, and the NPY survey assessed personal expectations/estimations about the program. The majority of survey responses were based on scales ranging from -2 (*I strongly disagree*) to +2 (*I strongly agree*). Cross tabs were used to indicate frequencies and average values for comparison between PY and NPY. Only a minority of demographic questions and questions on the final motivation to participate in the program were open-ended questions. Both surveys were pre-tested on a group of 40 youth and revised accordingly.

Findings

The youth were asked to provide information about their volunteer role models. The majority of PY (59%) had contact with volunteers in their social surroundings; 41.7% of NPY had no such contact.

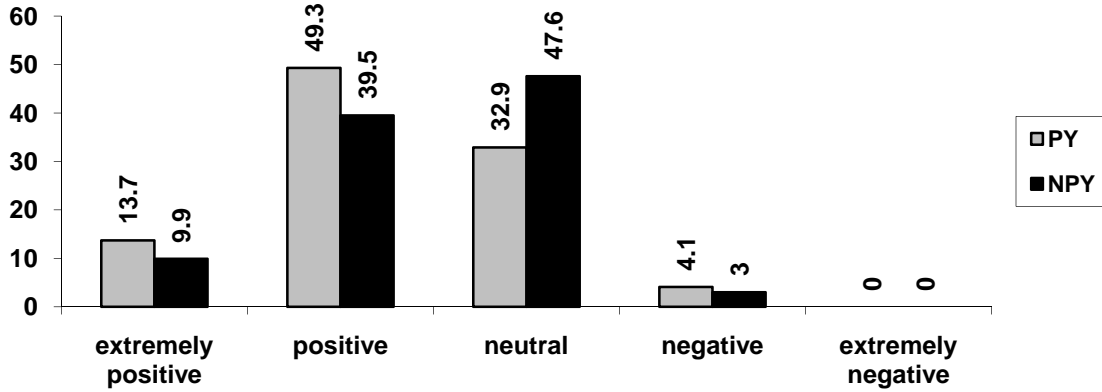
Figure 1. Social contact with volunteers (%)



The influence of these contacts is measurable. The respondents were asked to evaluate the influence of these role models. A large percent of PY (49.3%) assessed the influence as simply positive, while 13.7% assessed it as extremely positive. Only 4.1% of this group claimed that the role models had a negative influence on them. In comparison, 9.9% of the NPY experienced very positive effects from

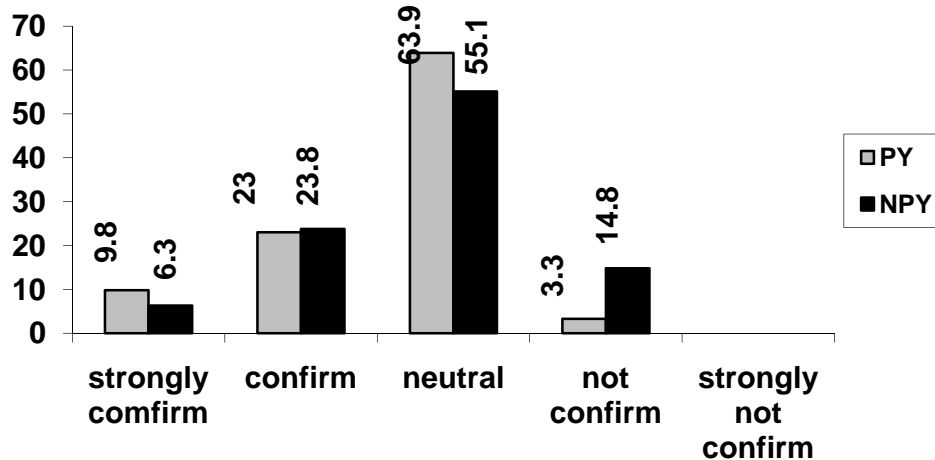
their volunteering contacts, 39.5% assessed the influence to be positive, but the largest percent (47.6%) had a neutral opinion on the question. Only 3% of NPY felt that the influence was negative

Figure 2. Influence of volunteer contacts (%)



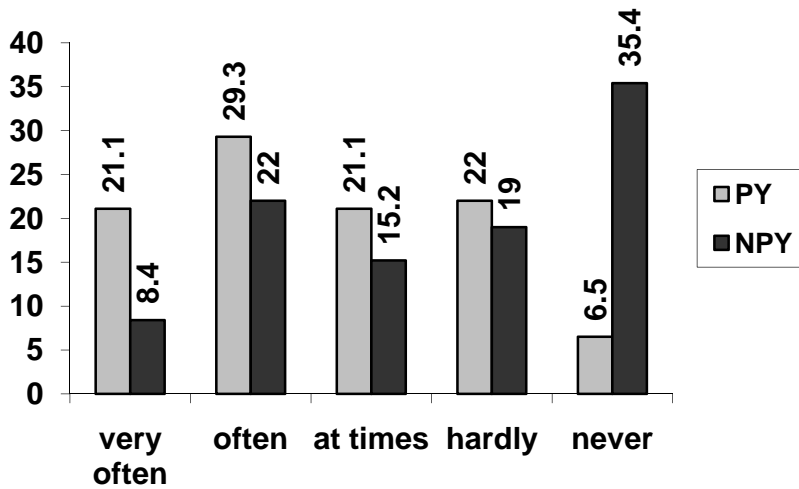
When assessing the impact of close social contacts, the figures show that the influence of good friends does not necessarily decide the willingness to volunteer or engage civically. Around 9.8% of PY and 6.3% of NPY strongly confirmed that their friends were volunteers. Similarly, 23% of PY and 23.8% of NPY confirmed that their friends were volunteers. The difference between the two groups becomes more obvious at the other end of the scale. Only 3.3% of PY said that none of their friends was volunteering.

Figure 3. Contact with friends who volunteer (%)



Figures indicating personal civic engagement were, perhaps, more telling. The respondents were asked how much they have already volunteered. Figure 4 illustrates the difference between the groups especially in the extreme values (*very often* versus *never*). Around 21.1% of PY and 8.4% of NPY had already volunteered very regularly, whereas 6.5% of PY and 35.4% of NPY claimed to have never volunteered before.

Figure 4. Frequency of personal voluntary involvement (%)



The survey also accounts for how youth learned about the program. The respondents of both groups were asked to choose the most relevant option from a list of six different options: media, school, friends, BKJ, Internet, and the Office for Mandatory Civic Service. They also had the option to fill in other sources in an open answer option. Of 922 respondents, 295 gave valid answers for the given categories. The main sources of information for PY were friends (51%), followed by the Internet (48%), and the media (34%). Similarly, the main sources of information for NPY were friends (59.5%), school (46.6%), and the media (32.8%). Most interestingly, only 10% of PY and 2% of NPY were informed about the existence of the program by the nationwide bearer organization BKJ. In the open answer category, 43 respondents from the PY group and 26 from the NPY group provided answers. Here, 16.3% of PY and 23.1% of NPY stated that they received the information from their responsible employment center or career counselor. Around 27.9% of PY said that they were informed about the program by the institution at which they later served.

The data makes it possible to see a correlation between former volunteering experiences and the willingness to take part in the FSJK program.

Attitudes of PY and NPY

The results show that the general image of civic service and volunteering among youth (44% of PY and 34.1% of NPY) is positive. The majority of PY (52.5%) stated that civic service has a positive image; 35.2% of NPY agreed with this view. Interestingly, 10.7% of PY stated that they have a negative image of civic service. This might result from negative personal experiences during the program year. The majority of PY (64.7%) strongly agreed that volunteering and civic service should receive political support, while 40.8% of NPY simply agreed to the statement.

Figure 5. Adolescent image of volunteering (%)

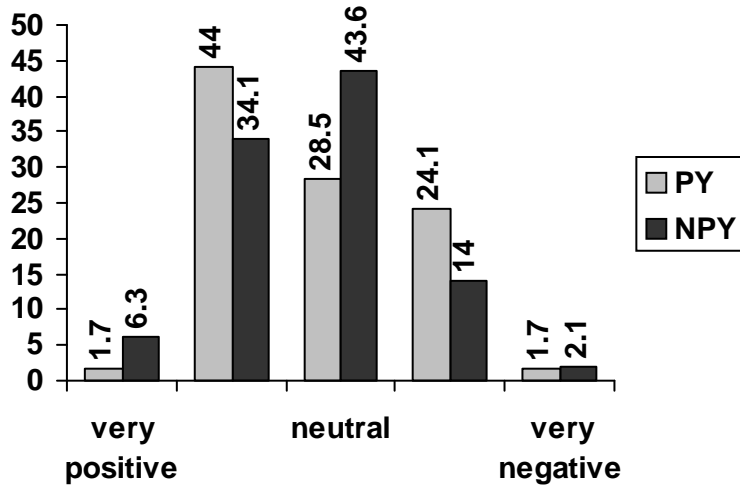
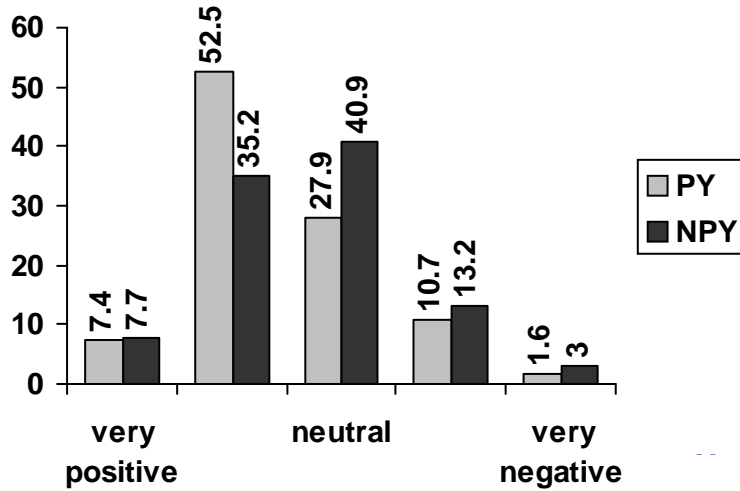


Figure 6. Adolescent image of civic service in percent (%)



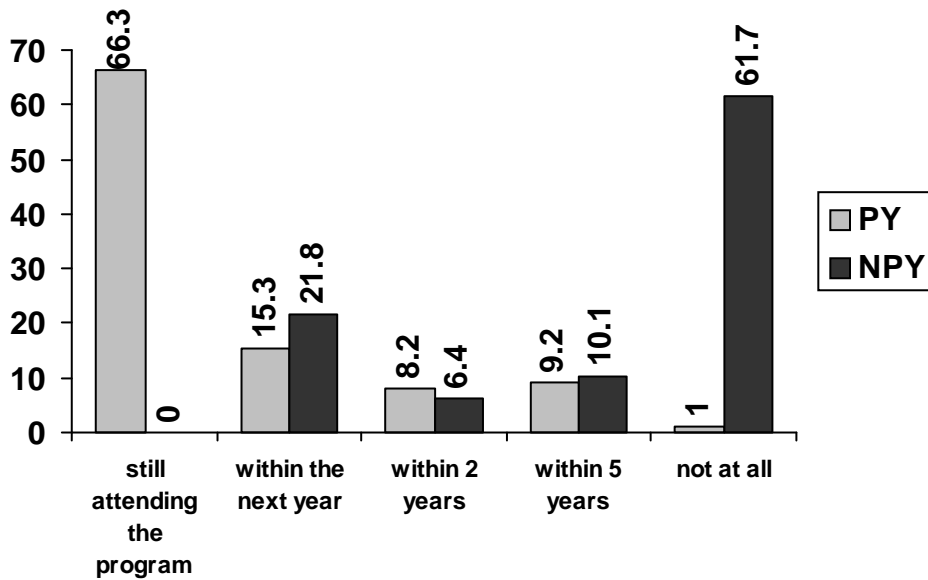
The adolescents were also asked to give their opinions on existing stereotypes about volunteering and civic service. Volunteering was not considered an activity exclusively for senior citizens by 63.2% of PY and 38.1% of NPY. Around 47.2% of PY and 31% of NPY felt that volunteering supported their careers. Volunteering was considered an enjoyable activity by 40.3% of PY and 31.3% of NPY. However, the majority of NPY (51.3%) felt that volunteering was not necessarily enjoyable. When asked if they thought volunteering was a bourgeois activity, 64.2% of PY and 32.6% of NPY strongly disagreed. It is revealing to note that 51.2% of PY confirmed that it was acceptable to them not to receive financial compensation for their voluntary efforts; 33.2% of NPY agreed with this opinion, but an almost equally large rate of 32.5% of the same group thought it was only partially acceptable. Both groups felt that volunteers could be social role models; 38.7% of PY

and 27.7% of NPY strongly agreed with this view. Among the NPY, 35.6% confirmed that volunteers could be social role models, and a slightly larger percentage (36.3%) partly agreed with this statement.

Impact on the attitude towards volunteering

The majority of answers provided by adolescents regarding the program’s impact on their attitude towards volunteering and civic service showed a positive tendency. The program actually had a sustainable impact on the volunteers’ attitude towards civic service and volunteering, and it also influenced their future intentions to provide further voluntary support.

Figure 7. Intentions of the adolescents to volunteer or participate in civic service (%)



Adolescents were asked to assess their change of attitude toward civic service and volunteering as a result of their experiences in the FSJK program. The majority of PY (51.2%) felt that participation in the program improved their stance on civic engagement, and 28.8% felt that program participation had a neutral effect on their attitude. In a more detailed question, the participating youth were asked if their participation had influenced their civic engagement positively or negatively; 27.7% confirmed that the FSJK program had a very positive effect on their civic engagement; 44.5% stated that the program had a positive influence; and 24.4% only partly agreed about the program’s positive influence.

Discussion

The voluntary cultural year appears to have several positive impacts on participating adolescents:

1. It stimulates and enhances social competence, and it establishes a personal definition of citizenship and volunteerism.

2. It offers insight into the organizational work of cultural institutions and provides first working experiences.
3. It orients adolescents about future training and career options.
4. It supports a stronger relation with and understanding of cultural institutions, their operation, and their impact on social development in general. It also supports cultural competence.

Early influence

The assessment of the impact of role models among family members and close friends demonstrates that the existence of volunteers in the direct environment of the adolescent in general has an influence on the adolescent. Also, social and cultural conditioning by parents proves to play an important role in the positive development of cultural interest and civic engagement of youth. The evaluation of the general image of volunteering and civic service also produces mainly positive results, while exemplifying expected differences in the level of positive attitudes between the compared groups. However, one of the main findings of the potential analysis is that the program currently attracts young men and women who are motivated to serve the community anyway. Although this is a very positive development, questions remain about what can be done to make the program attractive to those who have never been exposed to cultural life or civic engagement.

Social training

A major point of interest is the assessment of social training and its influence on the cultural and civic behavior of adolescents. The data give an insight into the correlation between the positive influences of the adolescent's social environment and the willingness to attend a civic service program in the cultural field.

Verification of hypotheses

The FSJK program was hypothesized to stimulate and enhance social competence and establish a personal definition of citizenship and volunteerism for PY. The results of the survey show that the social competence of the youths is stimulated in several ways. There is a tendency to move to bigger cities to participate in the program. Volunteers largely work independently or are responsible for their own projects. Volunteers have positive life experiences during program participation, which may support their personal and social development. Volunteers believe that, as a result of attending the program, they improve their social responsibility, establish a civic consciousness, and are regarded as social role models. Volunteers develop their interest in civic engagement and improve their attitude towards civic service and volunteering throughout the program year. Finally, the FSJK program has a sustainable effect on the volunteer's willingness to volunteer again in the future.

The FSJK program was also hypothesized to orient adolescents about future training and career options. An examination of this hypothesis shows that the program actively orients volunteers about future professions and careers. The survey results illustrate that volunteering and civic service and the FSJK program, in particular, may support professional development. The FSJK program offers limited professional advantages as such, but it provides new professional perspectives by offering insight into cultural employment options.

In summary, the results indicate that the program provides the opportunity to develop social, personal, and professional competencies. It also strengthens the volunteers' bond with culture and establishes a stronger understanding for the conditional framework cultural institutions are operating in. However, these results also demonstrate that the program addresses a target group of young volunteers who are already interested in civic engagement and cultural matters. As such, it is not reaching out to adolescents who do not have a personal access to culture or are not motivated to serve the community.

Major Implications and Recommendations

Among the main recommendations suggested by this research is the suggestion to approach new adolescent target groups and strengthen the program's appeal for those young citizens who have never volunteered or been exposed to cultural and arts organizations. Another major result illustrates the importance of stronger mass communication strategies for the program to support its public perception and name recognition. By improving public perception, institutions might start utilizing volunteers and civic servers actively and thereby contribute to the development of a stronger civic society. Thus, these recommendations aim to support the public efforts to implement and grow structures for a stronger civic society as well as for an optimized promotion of cultural matters and their social importance. Although some of the program implication and the structural and political recommendations might apply more specifically to Germany, it is hoped that they may still serve as examples for similar civic service programs in other countries.

Distribution of information

The research results illustrate that most of the participating youth received the information about the existence of the FSJK program on the Internet. With regards to the target group the program year is addressing, it might be useful to put an even stronger emphasis on the online promotion of the program.

Social and cultural conditioning

Cultural and social engagement of adolescents is dependent on their educative conditioning. The influence of family members and friends and other role models plays an important role. These active encounters with cultural events and these early experiences of contributing to the community appear to be crucial experiences in the conditioning of youth. This early conditioning has to be supported politically. Civic education and the stimulation of cultural interest start at home, but they have to be supported in schools, youth centres, and in all places where children and adolescents socialize and receive training.

New target groups

The average adolescent taking part in the program was female and held an *Abitur* certificate (grammar school exam). Further, most of the participating youth were already interested in cultural matters and/or were motivated to take part due to earlier positive experiences with civic engagement. However, this profile does not resemble the average German school graduate and might miss the appropriate target group. The average youth not taking part in the program held an intermediate school certificate, was not taken along to cultural events by his/her parents as often as

youth from the participating group, and had no strong positive experiences with volunteering. Moreover, an important insight might be that the average adolescent does not even know about the program's existence. The question is whether the program might not be better designed for those adolescents who do not have access to culture or personal experiences with civic engagement to initiate and establish cultural and voluntary engagement on a broader basis.

Political support

Political support is the most important factor for successful lobbying in this field. It is of utmost importance for institutions to be supported by political authorities with recommendations, references, or simple name-dropping. If, in the long-run, the FSJK program wants to be established successfully, the bearer organizations have to receive stronger and more public support from responsible political authorities. It is this political support that will draw the media's interest and thus the public's attention to the program.

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The Civic Service and Development in Transitional Countries: The National United Nations Volunteer Program in Mongolia

Tserendorjiin Erdenechimeg

Tumurbaatarin Bulganazaya

Radnaagiin Gantumur

During a period of significant social, economic, and political transition in Mongolia, the nation's government launched the National United Nations Volunteers Program with the support of the United Nations Development Fund. The study investigated the potential of this youth civic service program to serve as a policy and development tool for Mongolia. In-depth interviews were conducted with 28 former volunteers and 24 focus groups were conducted with various stakeholders. Communities experienced increased access to resources, gained knowledge of democratic processes, and benefited from the increased capacity of local government and the increased effectiveness of host programs. Changes in participants, including development of a more altruistic outlook, heightened pro-social attitudes, and increased involvement in volunteering and civil society groups also benefited society. The study concludes that civic service programs may be effective development tools for transitional countries.

Introduction

Civic service, or organized attempts by citizens to voluntarily make contributions to society, is emerging globally as a new institution (McBride, Benitez & Sherraden et al, 2003). Civic service programs have generally proved themselves to be cost-effective strategies to deal with multiple problems simultaneously. Programs achieve skills development, provide opportunities to gain work experience, encourage personal growth, and create employment and career opportunities for participating individuals, while at the same time building institutions, communities, and nations (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990). In its ability to achieve multiple goals in a cost-effective way, the concept of civic service is particularly important in developing or transitional countries, which are struggling to mobilize their human and financial resources to pursue their multiple developmental goals with limited resources.

In its transition to a liberal political-economic system, Mongolia has experienced serious social problems due to drastic cuts in the financing of social programs. In 1996, as part of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) Regional Poverty Alleviation Programme, the National United Nations Volunteer (NUNV) Program—a civic service program with an emphasis on youth service—was launched. This article examines the effects of the NUNV program on the civic participation of the servers, and on the development of local communities and civil society in Mongolia. It is hoped that better understanding of the effects of youth service programs in a transitional country like Mongolia will contribute to a broader knowledge of civic service as a policy option for developing and transitional countries.

Context of the Issue

A large body of literature provides evidence regarding the effects of service programs on youth participants. Yates and Youniss (1996) suggest that service has a positive impact on participants by developing their skills, disciplines, identity, and sense of civic responsibility. They have also used empirical data (Yates & Youniss, 1999) to present portraits of contemporary youth constructing their civic identities around the globe. Other studies suggest that service can increase participants' behavior of "helping others or feeling responsibility for others" (Torney-Purta, Amadeo & Richardson, 2003:13). Zimmerman's theory of empowerment (2001) posits that service helps participants to gain a sense of empowerment, i.e., a sense of personal competence, and that this empowerment, when combined with a critical understanding of the social environment, allows participants to become active contributors to their communities. Service programs also increase awareness of societal problems among youth, and provide them with the opportunity to try to alleviate these problems, which in turn could help them to form closer connections with community organizations and other individuals, particularly of their own generation (Yates & Youniss, 1999). Through these effects, service programs contribute to community development, civil society development, and citizenship development.

Limited research exists on the effects of youth service programs on transitional countries. Preliminary findings suggest, however, that service is equally useful in developing civic engagement in these countries. One source (Flanagan et al., 1999) describes a study that includes some "transitional societies" such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Russia, and argues that engagement in the voluntary sector connects youth to the broader polity, allowing them to develop an understanding of themselves as civic actors. With this understanding, youth develop social responsibility and become capable of addressing the problems of their polity. Flanagan's study concludes that even compulsory volunteering during communism has increased participants' pro-social attitudes (Flanagan, 1999).

Building on Flanagan's work, and seeking to contribute research to an under-studied aspect of civic service, this study of the NUNV program will investigate the following broad questions: (a) What are the main effects of such programs on their servers in terms of increasing their civic participation?; (b) What are the roles of the NUNV program in the development of local communities and civil society in Mongolia?

Methodology

Established in 1996, the NUNV program drew on the area's most available local resource: unemployed Mongolians who had received advanced training in the former Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe. Soon after, a second NUNV program, Youth Skills Development, was implemented with the support of the UNDP and United Nations Volunteers (UNV). This program aimed to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases through an education campaign focused on vulnerable and at-risk groups. After the successful completion of the first year of these two NUNV pilot programs, the UNV sponsored additional volunteers to serve in projects operated independently by NGOs, including a human rights project, the Decentralization and Democracy Support project, and the Bio-diversity Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Options in Eastern Mongolia project. This study examined all of these UNV programs.

Methods

In-depth interviews were conducted with former volunteers to gain information on their development of skills, confidence, and civic engagement. Interviews were conducted, on average, 30.7 months after the contract term had been completed. Only the findings related to civic engagement are discussed here. (See Erdenechimeg, Bulganzaya, & Gantumur, 2005 for complete findings.) To measure the effects of the programs on the local community, focus groups were held with various stakeholder groups such as beneficiaries, local NGO representatives, volunteer supervisors, and government officials.

Data collection & sampling procedures

A “snowball” sampling method was used to select volunteers. In total, 28 volunteers were interviewed, including 21 women and 7 men. They represented five different programs and fourteen different *aimags* or provinces, and had served an average of 30.7 months, which was slightly longer than the overall NUNV average of 21.27 months. This difference might be related to the snowball sampling method, because volunteers who served for longer might have been better known to others. The volunteers’ age at the time of interview ranged between 29 and 55. This indicated that volunteers were approximately 23-50 years of age when they began the program, and 25-49 when they finished. In Mongolia, where 70% of the population is under the age of 35 and unemployment is high, the definition of youth has expanded to include age groups that might be considered “middle-aged” in other cultural contexts. With a mean age of 38 at the time of interview, the volunteers in the sample were considered “youth.”

Focus groups were selected through purposive sampling of particular cities. Focus group cities were selected purposefully to have various programs and geographical representations of the communities. Twenty four community focus groups were organized at twelve different locations and a total of 148 people participated. Most stakeholder groups were fairly equally represented with government officials comprising 13.5%, NUNV supervisors 15.2%, NGO representatives 16.3%, and representatives from other collaborating agencies 13.5%. Program beneficiaries were slightly overrepresented at 32.6% and volunteers were slightly underrepresented at 8.6%.

Findings

Expanding the definition of volunteerism

Volunteers and community focus groups both reported that the public understanding of volunteerism had been weak when the program began. Volunteers were understood as “voluntary performers,” “political party activists,” or “one who can do anything for anybody.” Therefore, in some cases, volunteers were required to do things outside of their realm of responsibility, which hindered their performance at the beginning of the program implementation.

Volunteers’ perception of what constitutes volunteer work changed as a result of their service. Prior to the program, five volunteers identified themselves as being involved in volunteer work, which they described as distributing humanitarian aid from international organizations. After completing their service, former volunteers categorized the following activities as volunteer work: being active in one or more NGOs while maintaining full-time work; organizing free training programs, especially

for an NGO; participating in fund-raising campaigns or clothing drives; working additional hours in the workplace on activities that go beyond their work responsibilities; and initiating or running new citizens' groups or saving and credit cooperatives, especially in the early stages when these institutions were not financially stable.

Increased volunteering among former volunteers

The highest reported impact of the program on the volunteers in terms of societal effect was their increased involvement in volunteer activities. Although 23 volunteers (82%) reported that they had never been involved in any volunteer work before the program, at the time of interview, all of the former NUNV volunteers (100%) said that they were somehow involved in volunteer work currently.

In terms of time they reportedly spent on volunteering, eight volunteers (28.5%) said that on average they spent more than 16 hours per month volunteering. Others could not say the exact amount of time they spent because it did not happen according to a schedule. In this regard, our findings support other literature on volunteerism which provides evidence that volunteer experience reinforces volunteer behavior.

Increased involvement of the volunteers in civil society groups and NGOs

Almost 60% of volunteers said that besides having full time jobs, they were involved in different NGO activities. Many of them have initiated an NGO or have worked on the boards of local NGOs in addition to their job responsibilities. Some of them were active members of other interest groups, such as saving and credit cooperatives, because until recently in Mongolia these were considered to be interest groups and not business entities. Volunteers said that their involvement in NGO activities came about as they saw more potential for NGOs to make contributions towards development and change in their society. As one volunteer noted:

I came to understand that if they have the right ideas, NGOs can mobilize more people than the government organizations can do, and they can make a greater contribution to the state and the nation.

In addition, volunteers worked with local and grassroots NGOs to build their capacity in caring for community needs and promoting an atmosphere of trust and solidarity. In the beginning of the country's transition, NGOs were just emerging in Mongolia and had not yet established their financial and human resources. With volunteer support, these emerging NGOs have built their human capacity by involving their staff in activities that volunteers organized within their programs. These included organizing "visits to the income generation projects for a study tour," "sharing information on different opportunities for involvement," and conducting training programs on community mobilization and group facilitation. It is also possible that volunteers became role models for NGO personnel through providing them hands-on experiences and observations of what volunteers were doing, as this volunteer's comment suggests:

In my *aimag*, NGOs were just emerging and so their activities were not regular. They did not know what they should be doing. We worked with them to [get them going] in the right direction.

Heightened pro-social attitudes and tolerance towards different population groups

Volunteers worked with a diverse population, which reportedly changed their attitudes towards different vulnerable and disadvantaged people. However, their exposure to different populations varied according to their program responsibilities, and increased tolerance appeared to be associated with greater exposure to vulnerable populations. Forty percent of volunteers said that their interactions with beneficiaries changed their attitudes towards disadvantaged groups, as indicated in this volunteer's comment:

I think that I changed my attitude towards vulnerable, disadvantaged and at-risk people. Before, it was very negative . . . Now I communicate with people without discriminating against them.

Increased altruistic behavior

Volunteers (43.2%) said that they had more willingness to help others and to become more involved in activities that help others. They explained this behavior change as a result of their civic service experience:

Being a volunteer stimulates motivation to serve others. Working for people's well-being without expecting any profit from it will bring satisfaction, a sense of achievement, and personal fulfillment. It really motivates and activates people.

Increased community access to resources

Eighteen volunteers (64.3%) reported that the community benefited from the activities of volunteers through increased knowledge about and skills needed for democracy and market economy such as project and proposal development, working in groups, applying for loans, participating in community projects, etc. A focus group of supervisors of former NUNV volunteers pointed out the transformation in attitude and behavior that they believed was influenced by the NUNV volunteers' work:

Those four years after the transition were the most difficult years, both in terms of the economic and social environment. Now it is a completely different situation. At that time, when the transition to a market economy was just beginning, both government and citizens had not yet become adapted to the new environment . . . in this kind of circumstance, they helped people to approach the NPAP & local government, and enlightened them on how they should act in a democratic society and how to fulfill the needs of the citizens of the society. It was a timely program.

A focus group of beneficiaries also attributed the development of capacity within communities to the NUNV program:

We had a willingness to do things. But we had no economic resources and nothing to put forward as [collateral] if we wanted a high interest loan. There is a saying that says, "Do not give fish, but teach how to catch fish." Volunteers helped us by teaching us how to catch fish. We are very grateful for that.

Increased knowledge of democracy

The volunteers reported that the program had promoted community members' knowledge about democratic principles and had encouraged their involvement in democratic processes. The program's emphasis on involving community members in discussions and planning seemed to be key to this result. As one volunteer noted, "we identified community needs with the active involvement of the community and implemented projects to solve these problems." Along similar lines, another volunteer reported that "because local citizens had opportunities to discuss their situation with authorities, attendance at the *bag* meetings has increased. Thus, the *bag* development plan became more realistic." Ability to participate in discussions was also affected. A volunteer commented that "local citizen's involvement in local decision making has improved as a result of the NUNV program."

Increased effectiveness of host programs & governmental programs

Another possible impact of the NUNV program on the community was the volunteers' contribution to their host programs. Volunteers and community groups both reported that host project implementation improved after volunteers began to work on a full-time basis. The volunteers, who were not associated with political ideology and were accepted by community members as peers, were able to fulfill their program responsibilities more effectively than host program staff. For similar reasons, volunteers could also typically reach target groups better than officials from the local government.

The National Poverty Alleviation Program (NPAP) is a particularly good example of the way relationships established by the volunteers may have improved program goals. In this program, volunteers worked on community awareness raising and providing on-going support to vulnerable groups of poor citizens. They did an initial assessment of needs, facilitated group formation, assisted with the loan application process, and provided on-going support about utilizing the loans. Because volunteers had the advantage of being "near to the people" and worked very closely with the community and disadvantaged people, NPAP reported that "the loan repayment rate for the NPAP has improved drastically." NGO supervisors noted the importance of the relationships established by volunteers:

It is difficult to measure the volunteers' contribution to society by tangible outcomes like erecting a new building. Because it has more important outcomes, such as reaching out to the poor and marginalized people and encouraging them to develop an active lifestyle.

Increased capacity of local governments

In most of the host programs, local governments were responsible for the implementation of the program. At the beginning of the transition, local governments had limited knowledge of democratic principles and lacked both skills and funds. As a result, they were not able to reach out to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In these difficult years of the country's transition, volunteers served as liaisons between members of the community and the local government. As one volunteer noted, "during that time, nobody would go to the people and listen to their ideas. . . . But we listened to them and reported their ideas and needs to the local government." Volunteers also helped the local

government to carry out their tasks effectively. Government officials commented on the help they had received from volunteers:

Due to the transition to a market economy, local governments seriously lacked funds. In these kinds of circumstances, volunteers came here and taught us about fund-raising and proposal writing. At that time, we had no idea what it was. For a certain period after that, we were the only ones who wrote proposals. We still use this skill and it is one of the things that remained from the volunteers.

Conclusion

The NUNV program has undoubtedly contributed to the personal development of volunteers and to the society as a whole. Moreover, some changes at the personal level appear to have made societal contributions. For example, volunteers reported that they often developed pro-social attitudes such as helping others (43.2%), involvement in volunteer activities (100%), and involvement in civil society and NGO activities (60%). These findings support theories that those with a sense of personal competence, a desire to take action, and a critical understanding of the social environment can become participants in the lives of their communities (Zimmerman, 2001). These findings also support previous research that has found that individuals who participate in service programs typically develop a civic consciousness, and thus become more active citizens (Perry & Thomson, 2004).

The NUNV Program helped to build “bonding social capital” in the local community by building relationships with similar groups, such as by collaborating with local NGOs or establishing saving and credit cooperatives. It also might have contributed to building “bridging capital” between the poor and non-poor by changing attitudes of 40% of volunteers towards vulnerable groups, and increasing their altruistic behavior (43.2%).

The NUNV program has introduced a more positive image of volunteers in Mongolia, and thus may have brought about a resurgence of interest in volunteerism as a means to shape a new socio-economic environment for the nation. After their service, volunteers, in addition to being active themselves, report that they look for ways to promote volunteerism, encourage other to participate in volunteer and community activities, and care about volunteers’ reputation. Thus, the program may have contributed to the development of a core group of people who are committed to promoting volunteerism with the aim of improving the social, economic, and political conditions of their communities.

The NUNV program also has contributed to host program implementation and effectiveness through increased outreach and awareness raising activities conducted by volunteers. The program’s success suggests that sometimes volunteers can be more effective than government officials or project staff at reaching out to marginalized groups of people, and effectively implementing awareness-raising and community mobilization activities.

Civic service is an effective strategy to reach multiple goals simultaneously. And thus it is an important strategy to consider for countries like Mongolia that are struggling to develop their limited resources. Civic service is a particularly important strategy to consider for youth policy in countries like Mongolia where young people make up such a large portion of the nation’s population. Civic

service has the potential to develop the country's most valuable resource, its youth, at the same time as helping to prevent many of the problems that could emerge in the future as a result of today's disengagement.

Implications for policy, programs and future research

Youth policy should promote youth civic attitudes and personal development by providing opportunities to serve. There is an increasing need to incorporate the interests of young people into the social development efforts in Mongolia. The Mongolian Government has adopted a National Youth Development Policy (1998-2005), which outlines government actions in a variety of areas, including youth education, employment, leisure activities, family and health, social and cultural integration of youth in rural areas, youth and the environment, and youth and international youth movements. The international literature on youth policy emphasizes that when youth policies are integrated with youth service policies, they have a much greater effect and possibility of affecting real change (Angel, 2003). If youth service and service learning programs are implemented in Mongolia, it could go a long way towards reaching many objectives that are outlined in the national youth development policy, particularly, in development of youth "civil society skills, critical thinking skills, healthy lifestyle skills . . . and volunteer skills" (Carlson & Dan, 1998). It could be a cost-effective strategy to develop youth as the country's most valuable resources.

Civic service opportunities should be used as action-learning tools in higher education. Higher education is highly valued among youth in Mongolia. However, because academia rarely utilizes on-the-ground practice, the universities typically produce graduates who are not able to carry out real-life tasks, thus adding to the overall problem of unemployment. In other words, as Coleman observed in America in the 1970s (Eberly & Sherraden, 1990), today's Mongolian youth are "education rich and action poor." It is also clear that a higher education diploma alone cannot guarantee employment in a competitive labor market. According to a survey conducted by the Technical University of Mongolia among their graduates, the main reason for unemployment of their graduates was their lack of basic interpersonal communication skills (SOURCE). The current educational system may not have the ability to prepare young people to be active citizens. Service opportunities as an effective skill-building strategy could become a key strategy for improving students' action skills and communication skills.

Every year, hundreds of students are placed for field practicum. However, there is almost no opportunity to do their practicum in local provinces where 70% of the population lives. If these opportunities are made available through service programs, they are likely to have a profound effect on the students' skills and attitude development. These opportunities will also benefit local communities because students bring with them new perspectives, fresh information, and networking. "Learning in action" has an important implication in this case because it is known to contribute to the building of life skills and the development of the "right" attitude towards different groups. Education, if combined with the generation of positive attitudes towards work and life, may be the most important factor in youth engagement in our society (UNDP, 1996:4). It might even increase the number of students who go to rural provinces to work after their graduation because they will develop connections with the community and, most importantly, their attitude and prejudice against rural communities will change.

Service should be a strategy for reducing rural-to-urban migration by providing opportunities for local people to be active participants in the development of their home communities. Civic service has the potential to act as a labor

force placement policy that aims to reduce the migration of people from rural to urban areas by creating opportunities for rural people to earn income and build their capacity while working in their local communities. In rural areas, the problem of unemployment is high given the lack of professionals who are interested and capable of working in rural areas. Moreover, young people often move to urban areas in search of employment and education opportunities. If service programs could provide opportunities for local citizens who are committed to their communities to serve and learn, they would most likely help slow this migration to the capital city and, consequently, also reduce urban-rural disparities.

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The Community-level Impacts of National Youth Service: Assessing Bridging Social Capital

Danielle M. Vogenbeck Varda

This paper contributes to the effort to add rigor to the study of national youth service by introducing Social Network Analysis as a tool to assess the effect of national service programs at the community-level. Specifically, the research question addressed is: What are the community-level impacts of the work accomplished by national youth service volunteers? The findings show that the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps can increase social capital by diversifying bridging community network ties. Looking beyond direct service and the effect on the volunteer, this study suggests implications for a community-level assessment of policy and project design and implementation.

Introduction

The concept of young men and women volunteering to serve their country is a steadfast theme in the history of American culture (Perry, 2004). National youth service in America has become a term used less in reference to military service and more as a social phenomenon that serves the nation's needs by providing volunteers to address and alleviate social problems and gaps in service for the underserved. Some suggest that research on national youth service lacks rigor (Hodgkinson, 2004; Perry & Katula 2001). Hodgkinson (2004:191S) notes that "other than the psychological impacts of service on the server, there is little other serious available research on the impact of different types of civic or citizen service on communities or nations." Sherraden (2001:19) concludes that a knowledge gap exists due to a "fuzziness of the concept, lack of theoretical specificity, and insufficient empirical evidence on impacts."

This paper contributes to the effort to add rigor to the study of national youth service by introducing Social Network Analysis as a tool to assess the effect of national service programs at the community-level. Specifically, the research question addressed is: *What are the community-level impacts of the work accomplished by national youth service volunteers?* Looking beyond the direct service to clients served and the effect on the volunteer, a community-level assessment of national youth service work can inform policy and program design, implementation, and analysis.

A brief explanation of national youth service in America

National youth service has consistently been an important issue in American public policy (McBride et al., 2003). The United States boasts the most institutionalized civic service infrastructure. The establishment of the first federal bureau of national service, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in 1993, indicated that national youth service is achieving greater legitimacy in the US. President Clinton envisioned that national youth service would not only meet the unmet needs of this country, but also bring people of all backgrounds together, providing a panacea to the "fragmentation and polarization that threaten the country" (Waldman, 1995:24). Other advocates claim that partnerships between nonprofits and national youth service programs "will foster civic responsibility, and strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people" (CNCS, 2002b). It is this hope that communities will work cooperatively among the public, private, and

nonprofit sectors to improve the well-being of its citizens that underlies the increased interest in national youth service.

The empirical focus of this paper is the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), an AmeriCorps national youth service program. The NCCC is a ten-month, full-time community service program for men and women aged 18-24. After a six-week training period, teams of 10-12 corps members are sent to communities beset by environmental, educational, public safety, or human needs problems. They work on projects jointly designed by the NCCC and sponsoring community organizations. The sponsoring organizations provide room and board to corps members for the duration of the project.

The changes to the community social networks of these sponsoring communities are of particular interest. Once a sponsor is notified that a team will be serving within its community, that community must position itself to support the NCCC team, not only by providing room and board but also by developing a community network that will ensure the project's success. For this research, the emergent community network is used to measure the effects of the NCCC intervention on these nonprofit sponsoring communities, operationalized as social capital outcomes. This paper focuses particularly on the community-level interrelations within the nonprofit community. Community networks are perceived as tools for helping to build and sustain democratic, civic cultures (Prell, 2003), linking the assumption that stronger, more diverse community networks improve the level of social capital within communities. By thinking about national youth service impacts as a benefit to a community, rather than to individual clients, there is potential to shift dialogue and research, and to develop programs and training that affect community-level improvement.

National youth service as a catalyst to build community networks

Networks of community organizations working for a common purpose are thought to increase community capacity to meet social needs (Monge, Fulk, Kalman, Flanagan, Parnassa & Rumsey, 1998; Parker & Selsky, 2004). Blau and Rabrenovic (1991:328) found that in the nonprofit sector “interorganizational linkages are more important than bureaucratic hierarchies for controlling and coordinating work”:

linkages are used to integrate programs within a community, coordinate client services, obtain resources, and deal with governmental agencies . . . organizations in the nonprofit sector have more complex links than those in the profit-making sector.

Relationships that involve the exchange of resources and knowledge among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are the norm and certainly the latest trend in successful social service models (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999; Isett & Provan, 2005; Kapucu, 2005; Mandell, 2001; Monge et al., 1998; Westley & Vredenburg, 1997). A stated goal of the CNCS reflects the focus on engaging community networks to improve social capital. One section of the mission statement of the CNCS reads: “The Corporation will foster civic responsibility, strengthen the ties that bind us together as a people, and provide educational opportunity for those who promise to serve” (CNCS, 2002). However, it is unclear how engaging youth as national service volunteers achieves this goal. Evaluations of these programs most often identify the effects on the volunteers or the impact on the community in terms of direct service outcomes. Before we can claim that national youth service can also bring

communities together and increase community-level social capital, the impact of service beyond direct impact must be measured.

Community networks as social capital

The theory behind community networks as social capital is eloquently explained by Granovetter (1973) through his *strength of weak ties* theory. This theory asserts that we benefit by increasing the number of weak ties in our “networks,” with the assumption that weak ties are connections to others that can increase diverse opportunities for idea formation, resource exchange, and access to hard-to-reach populations, or “bridging social capital.” Although it is common to surround ourselves with strong ties that include people very similar to us in beliefs, values, and access to resources, it is through weak ties that we begin to diversify our networks and create avenues for accessing more varied resources. Identifying potential partners with different missions but similar target populations is one strategy to develop new weak ties that will benefit a network. Therefore, a nonprofit that forms relationships with organizations that have access to resources that they do not will benefit from this increased access to resources.

However, it is important not to assume that more connections to others alone results in an increase in social capital. Large collaborative networks require resources to develop and nurture relationships with others; however, this approach can quickly use up scarce resources and burn out even the most enthusiastic network member. The challenge of this concept is articulated by the “Law of N-Squared,” that is, as network ties increase in number, they run the risk of overwhelming the ability of its members to actively participate in the network (Krackhardt, 1994).

Another network theory, the structural holes theory (Burt, 1992), explains the way community networks might interact to balance the goals of creating more bridges without jeopardizing efficiency. Structural holes are indicators of non-redundancy between two contacts. The basic premise behind the theory is that redundant ties in a network decrease the effectiveness and efficiency of that network. Purposeful selection of network partners that span multiple subgroups, in contrast, can reduce overall redundancy and increase efficiency. This theory is useful to community networks as a strategy for managing a limited relationship budget.

A strategy based on increasing diversity (weak ties) while actively working to reduce redundancy (choosing partners that provide links to many different subgroups) can lead to improved levels of bridging social capital in a network. An approach such as this, coupled with strategic evaluation of potential network members’ ability to share resources and contribute to overall cohesion, can lead to measures of connectivity that inform better ways of collaborating.

These theories are operationalized in this research to evaluate the impact of the NCCC program on community networks. Used as measures of bridging social capital, we assess change to the network over time based on change to the number of weak ties and structural holes. Bridging social capital is improved when more weak ties exist in the network, coupled with lower levels of redundancy. The logic of this is that many weak ties increase diversity and access to community resources, while lower levels of redundancy ensure effective and efficient use of scarce resources. It is hoped that the combined outcome will result in higher levels of bridging social capital.

Although there is great promise in a networking approach as a way to increase social capital in a community, we should be careful not to assume that all communities are alike, nor that they are appropriately pre-disposed to respond to interventions designed to improve community networks. It is more realistic to assume that some communities may already have healthy networks that need little improvement. In such a situation, we may be misguided in attempting to measure success by looking for changes to the network; a network model that differs from the one introduced here might be more appropriate for measuring change. Although this research utilizes the weak ties/structural hole approach, other conditions for network explanations are kept in mind.

Methods

Most research on social capital has utilized a micro-level approach, focusing on individual behaviors, such as voting behavior and membership affiliation (Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; SCI, 1998; Stone, 2001). A social capital construct, however, requires the evaluation of these behaviors in the context of multi-person interrelationships. If social capital is a cumulative measure, it is one best measured by evaluating *inter*-group relationships rather than skills individuals possess (Huntoon, 2001; Putnam, 1995a; Stone, 2001; White, 2002). This suggests a *community-level assessment* of social capital, as opposed to the *micro-level* behavioral approach most commonly illustrated in social capital literature. Recent work has focused on social networks as a proxy to social capital and whether social networks are an indicator of social capital (Lin, 1999, 2001). Social networks are sets of individuals or groups who are connected to one another through socially meaningful relationships (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988). When studying social capital at the *community-level*, it is necessary to develop measures that account for the aggregate level of social capital, derived from the way that people interact within the community. Measuring individual characteristics fails to explain how the interactions between people increase social capital at the community level.

For this paper, bridging social capital is defined structurally as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1997:249). Stone (2001:6) points out that conceptualizing “social relations as networks enables us to identify the structure of social relations (e.g., whether people know one another, and what the nature of their relationship is) as well as their content (e.g., flows of goods and services between people, as well as norms governing such exchanges).”

Study population

Evaluation of three community networks that hosted AmeriCorps NCCC teams occurred within a one year time frame. These three communities were chosen from a convenience sample. Working with the CNCS, a list of potential communities was developed. Only communities in the central region of the US that had not previously hosted a NCCC team were considered. Additionally, projects chosen had anticipated start dates of at least six months away. A list of seven potential communities was compiled, four agreed to participate, but only three were assigned a NCCC team. The three sponsoring communities selected for this study were a Montana nonprofit that runs a “noxious weed removal program” (MT), a Wyoming Youth Camp that provides education about environmental protection (WY1), and a Wyoming Boys & Girls Club that provides an after-school program for youth (WY2).

The intervention

The intervention was the collaboration between the NCCC and three sponsoring communities.⁵ Each was shaped by requirements negotiated between the NCCC program and the sponsoring organization. Requirements in these cases stipulated that the sponsoring organization provide housing, food, service-learning opportunities, and community recognition to the volunteers. Interviews conducted during pilot testing of the data collection instrument suggested that these requirements strongly encouraged the sponsoring organization to reach out to others within the community for help prior to the arrival of the NCCC teams. For this reason, the intervention period is considered the six months prior to a team arriving and the six months following completion of the project.

Data collection

A mixed-method approach including in-depth structured interviews and survey administration was applied to gain data on the nonprofits and their collaborations with other organizations to support their program work. The data was used to analyze network structure prior to collaborating with the NCCC program and then again after the collaboration ended. In these comparisons, social capital is considered the measured outcome. Social network analysis was used to analyze the data.

Interviews were first conducted with the staff and volunteers working at each of the three nonprofits selected in the study to identify organizational structure, historical accounts of progress, staff turnover, board member information, accomplishments, budgeting issues, operating procedures, programming, and partnerships already in place. To document existing community networks—partnerships and collaborations between the nonprofit and their supporting community—staff from each nonprofit were asked to complete a network survey. The survey asked respondents to identify partners they interacted with regarding the work that the NCCC team would complete. This list was considered the initial “network boundary”—the set of organizations that are considered network members for the purpose of analysis. Respondents were asked a series of fourteen “relational” questions about the network members identified in the first part of the survey. These responses provided information about the frequency, quality, and type of interactions within the community, including resource exchange, client referrals, and knowledge exchange.

The same survey was mailed to all network members identified by the sponsoring organization to verify the reciprocity of ties between members. The response rate was 91%. Although each of these partners mentioned their own set of partners, the analysis was conducted on what we termed the “core networks”—the sponsoring nonprofit and their direct network partners (see Table 1).

⁵ Sponsoring communities include the nonprofit that hosts an NCCC team and their network partners.

Table 1. Size of Nonprofit Community Networks (N= cell number)

	Complete Network		Core Network	
	Pre (N=)	Post (N=)	Pre (N=)	Post (N=)
Wyoming1	85	86	15	15
Wyoming2	83	93	11	15
Montana	106	122	10	13

Survey administration was repeated six months after the intervention with all members of the core network; the response rate was 86%. Change related to the intervention was captured through questions that emphasized responses regarding change “as a direct result of the NCCC partnership,” allowing us to attribute change to the intervention.

Measures & analysis

The data derived from the interviews and surveys were analyzed using Social Network Analysis (SNA), a methodology used when gathering and analyzing data that explain how people connect to one another. This method elucidated the structural makeup of collaborative relationships (Scott, 1991; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). A software tool, UCINET (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman, 2002), was used in the analysis.

Weak ties were identified by frequency (how often organizations interacted) and intensity (how many different types of interactions the organizations have with one another). A cut-point (the mean score) was used to distinguish strong ties from weak ties.⁶ Using UCINET, the “constraint” score was calculated as an indicator of redundancy. Constraint is a measure of the extent to which an organization has ties to organizations that have ties to one another. Low constraint means that more structural holes exist and therefore, less redundancy exists. The formation of a new weak tie often creates a “bridge” to a new group of partners (the exception is a new tie developed within the same subgroup as other weak ties). A smaller number of ties connecting all subgroups, in turn, is often associated with a lower constraint score.

In addition to strength of ties and structural holes, other network statistics operationalized in the analysis provide a contextual understanding of the findings. These include measures of density and transitivity. In network studies, social capital is often operationalized merely as density; that is, the more connections that are present, the more social capital that exists. The density statistic used here, in contrast, measures the general degree of inter-connectedness of a network based on the ratio of observed links among nodes to the total number of possible links. Higher density is considered an overall indicator of cohesion and interaction within a network and is often associated with greater awareness of others and faster rates of diffusion within a community. Here, density is only used to

⁶ None of the ties that were measured as strong ties became weak ties post-intervention. All new weak ties were new ties to the whole network.

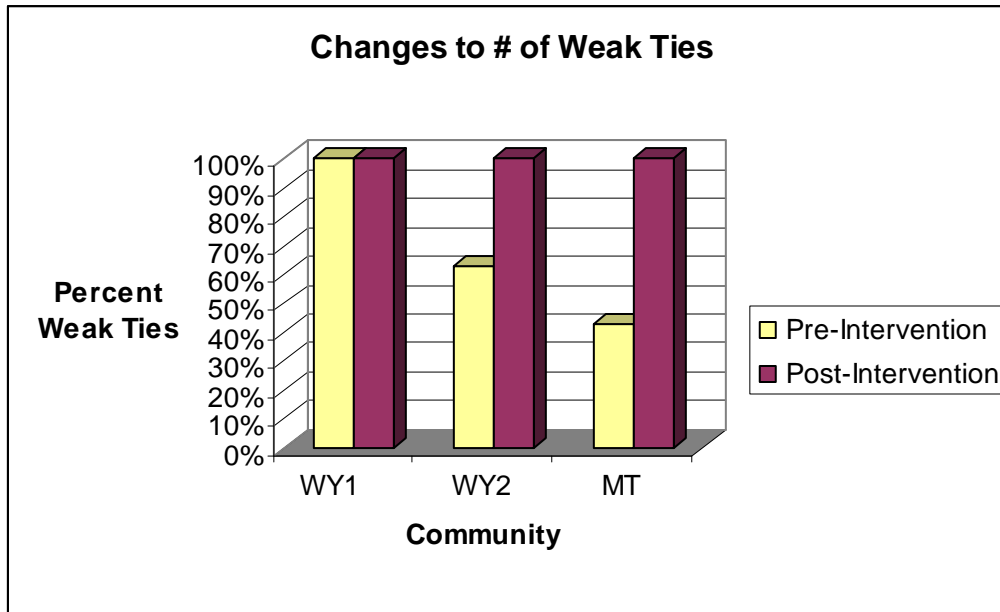
help understand the context of the network changes because, as Burt (1992:17) notes, “increasing network size without considering diversity can cripple a network in significant ways.” Transitivity is a measure of the ability of the network to share and exchange resources, obtained by determining the number of “transitive triples” in the network. A transitive triple exists when three sets of partners are completely connected (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Findings

Weak ties

Although WY1 reported the largest number of core network members pre-intervention, the network saw very little change overall. It did not report the addition of *any* new network ties to its core network that could be attributed to the NCCC intervention, a possible result of their geographically isolating location and the systematic way by which they had already strategized to create their network. In contrast, both WY2 and MT increased the number of weak ties within their networks post-intervention. The new weak ties to the WY2 network included two media organizations, one university, and one nonprofit that is a shelter for families in need. The new weak ties to the MT network included two government organizations and one food bank. Although the number of new weak ties is small for each community, the percentage of change in both WY2 and MT is impressive. WY2 increased its number of weak ties by 30% and MT by 60%. Figure 1 illustrates these changes.

Figure 1

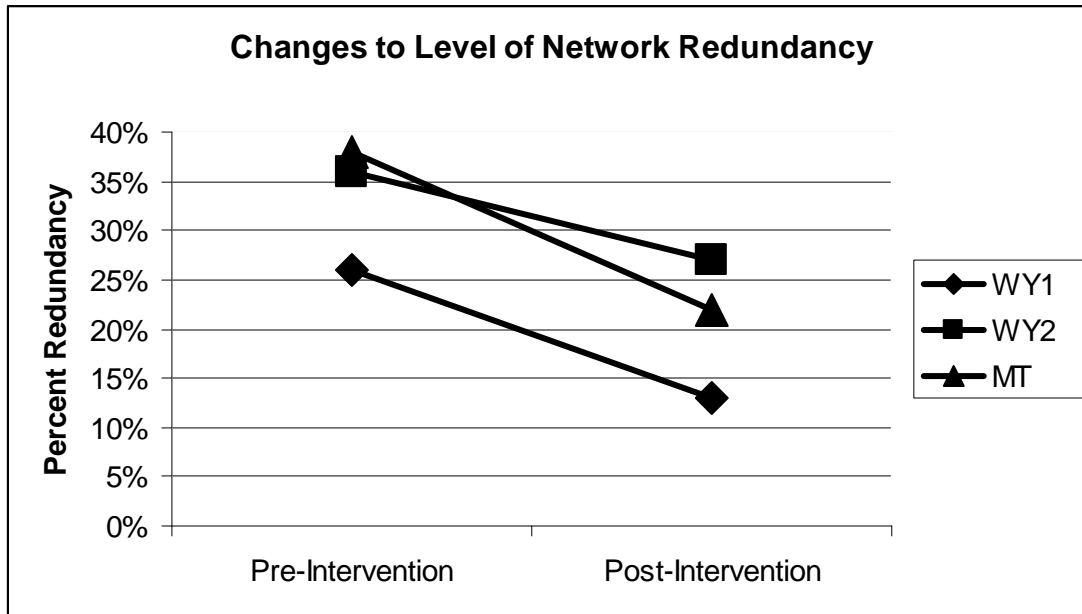


Redundancy

In all three cases, redundancy decreased within the networks, as indicated by lower constraint scores. Although none of the organizations reported the loss of any ties, their overall redundancy scores decreased because of the increase in number of total available partnerships. In other words, as expected according to Granovetter’s assumptions, with the increase of weak ties, the number of

bridges increased, creating connections to more available subgroups of potential partners and creating more structural holes which Burt has found to increase social capital. None of the newly established network ties in any community were to an existing subgroup of partners. If that had been the case, then the constraint score would have risen, increasing redundancy. Figure 2 illustrates these changes pre- and post-intervention.

Figure 2



Density & transitivity

As Table 2 shows, density and transitivity pre-intervention were highest in the MT and WY2 communities by more than half in both cases. MT has relatively high percentages of both density and transitivity, which indicates a more cohesive network than those with lower scores. Generally, information is assumed to flow better in networks with high density and transitivity statistics.

Table 2. Density/Transitivity Scores

Program	Network Density (Pre-Intervention)	Network Transitivity (Pre-Intervention)
Wyoming Youth Camp (WY1)	21%	24%
Wyoming Boys & Girls Club (WY2)	53%	58%
Montana Weed Removal Program (MT)	63%	73%

Discussion

The summation of changes is illustrated in Figure 3. Here, the shaded cells highlight instances when social capital has increased, based on the theoretical assumptions of the strength of weak ties and structural holes theories. The next step is to identify the characteristics of the intervention that enabled this change. One important factor appears to be the requirements that the NCCC imposes on the sponsoring organization. When a nonprofit sponsors a NCCC team, they must establish many connections to house the volunteers, provide enough work for 6-8 weeks, engage them in other community service activities, provide community recognition and integration, and assist with service learning opportunities. These types of activities are, for the most part, tangential to the direct mission of the organization and require the organization to draw on new resources; interestingly, the new ties that are formed as a result indirectly build the organization’s capacity. Therefore, the sponsoring nonprofits’ community-level bridging social capital improves their resource base because they establish new connections with partners that are heterogeneous to themselves. The noxious weed program’s new connection to the food bank, for example, provides it with a means of feeding other long-term volunteers in the future. The benefits of these new, diverse resources have the greatest return when a lasting relationship forms that includes continued sharing of resources towards a collective interest and eventually, sharing of program work. One of the most significant effects of the NCCC partnership is that it encourages (and requires) that nonprofits reach out to those in their community that are not their obvious partners. Each of these new connections has the potential to increase the variety of resources available to the network by diversifying the network.

In this study, the overall benefits to the community networks are evident in the diversity of their new weak ties. For example, the MT network added two new government agencies to their network. The Executive Director of the sponsoring nonprofit reported in a pre-intervention interview that she had learned about the NCCC program through another sponsor who hosted a team in a prior year and ran short of work. After putting the team to work on her own projects, she reported that the other sponsor and she had developed ongoing program work after the NCCC team left the community. She stated as a goal pre-intervention to “connect with potential partners for program development.” When asked how her new connections to the government agencies would benefit her organization, she was hopeful that the collaboration would promote the creation of new programs.

In a second example, WY2 added two media organizations and one nonprofit that advocated for families in need. In interviews, the WY2 sponsoring nonprofit stated as a goal that they hoped to

improve their visibility in the community. In follow-up interviews, they agreed that hosting the NCCC gave them a new angle to attract media attention. Their partnership with the NCCC provided a story that the local media outlets were interested in. These interactions added a diverse set of relationships to their network, one that they “hope can grow to bring more attention” to the nonprofit.

The absence of new weak ties in the WY1 network may appear as a failure within this model. However, this raises an important question regarding whether this model is an appropriate way to access improvements to social capital for all communities. While WY1 did not indicate any new network connections, the respondents initially indicated the highest number of partners within their core network, compared to WY2 and MT. Given WY1’s isolation in a wilderness area and the methodical way by which they selected partner organizations to get involved in the camp, it became evident that they did not view increasing weak ties as an appropriate goal for their nonprofit. In fact, the Executive Director emphasized the many long-standing partnerships and the success of them. He stated that “networking” was not important to his nonprofit community network, unless an existing client organization exited the community (and, thus, opened a spot for a new client to attend the camp). Therefore, it was not surprising that there was no change to weak ties.⁷

The density and transitivity of each community is also included in Figure 3. Unlike most studies that apply a network approach to social capital questions, not only are these network statistics reported, but they are used as a way to contextually understand the other two measures of social capital. MT has the highest density (63.33%) and transitivity (73.38%) scores pre-intervention. WY2 also shows relatively high scores (52.73 and 57.76%) compared to WY1’s lower scores (21.43 and 23.72%). These scores might suggest that networks with higher density and transitivity scores pre-intervention best foster new ties which, in turn, lead to an increase in weak ties, bridges, and structural holes. This suggests that those networks that actively engage their network partners pre-intervention might be more likely to engage new partners during the intervention. However, once again, the WY1 network stands out as an example of a community whose purposeful and careful partner selection shapes its overall network cohesion by design.

⁷ One new tie was reported in the follow-up survey; however, this new tie was not attributed to the NCCC intervention.

Figure 3. Summation of change

	Weak Ties	Redundancy
WY1 Network (Low Density/ Low Transitivity)	0.0%	-13%
WY2 Network (High Density/ High Transitivity)	60%	-2%
MT Network (High Density/ High Transitivity)	130%	-9%

Implications

The differences in the network configurations pre-intervention between WY1 and WY2/MT raise an important consideration for taking a network approach to assessing community-based outcomes. In short, these cases indicate that bridging social capital has only been re-conformed, i.e. not created out of whole cloth. Of utmost importance is the ability to evaluate the configuration and goals of a community network prior to imposing such measure of success. In cases where the network has been strategically configured (WY1 for example), then perhaps the partnership with NCCC is not meant to increase the network in the ways purported in this model, but is an improvement to the social capital of the community in other ways. However, such purposeful community networking is hardly a reality. A network approach such as the one introduced here may be a way to improve strategic thinking both for the national service program and the nonprofit communities where it works.

If it takes a healthy network to improve social capital, how can social capital be improved in places where networks are not as healthy? This is a topic that is of considerable concern to the possible impacts of national service programs. Future research is needed on other similar policies to more definitively answer these questions. In the meantime, to ensure that they can make the greatest impact at the individual and community levels, national youth service leaders can develop strategies to select communities to work with that include consideration of their network characteristics. Taking a closer look at how communities are interconnected pre-intervention is one way to assess the possibility of success.

There is a great deal of value, though, in the finding that national youth service programs *can* play a role in bridging members of a community and increasing community-levels of social capital. An important aspect of this finding is the benefit it can bring to the way in which national youth service

programs are structured, and volunteers are trained. If a sponsor or volunteer has a sense of the larger community network and the possible improvements at the community-level, they may engage differently in the work they do. Perhaps the sponsor will be more mindful of the possible strategic connections s/he might make when designing future national youth service opportunities. Volunteers, on the other hand, might go about their work differently. By thinking in terms of bridging communities, they may be able to make a stronger impact on the community that could in turn remain sustainable for long-lasting improvements to social capital over time.

As an assessment tool, social network analysis allows us to better explore the impact at the community-level. Using this or other community-level assessments of the impact of national youth service can demonstrate effects in a more holistic sense. Although this research was limited to three community networks, the measures presented here can provide guidance for future study of community networks and the impact of national service broadly.

Further Research

Future research on this topic falls into several areas. The first is the need to take a closer look at how the diversification of a network improves its capacity to fulfill its stated mission. Although new links to organizations such as media demonstrate an obvious advantage, the benefits of new connections to an organization like a food bank are less obvious. An in-depth look at how resources are distributed in a community network and how the diversification of resources affects outcomes would benefit the study of community-level social capital. A second area is the need to further the understanding of how certain pre-conditions for networking improve overall network outcomes. In other words, if networks statistics such as density and transitivity are used as independent variables, with strength of ties and redundancy as dependent variables, regression models may be able to help us better understand these types of community-level impacts on a large scale,⁸ adding rigor to assessments of impact.

Future research should also consider the tertiary effects of national youth service. Besides tutoring children, building homes, protecting the environment, and performing other forms of direct community service, what are the additional impacts to a community? This study demonstrates that nonprofit sponsors looked outside their areas of familiarity as a requirement of hosting a NCCC team, leading to new connections that can potentially increase the overall capacity of the organization and further improve the community's level of social capital. National youth service programs around the world may be making similar impacts. Attention to the study of these impacts could have lasting implications for the future of national youth service.

⁸ This type of analysis was not used in this study because of the small sample size.

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International Service and Civic Nationalism in Nigeria and the Gambia

Wale Adebani

Contemporary theorists of civic republicanism emphasize the role of ethics and concern for the common good shared by fellow citizens. It is not clear, however, how citizenship should be defined in a global context. Established by the Nigerian government in 1987, the Technical Aid Corps (TAC) is a youth service program that provides human development assistance to African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries. TAC participants display qualities of citizenship, such as concern for others, when serving in other countries, although, the literature suggests that Nigerians are not active citizens in their own country. This study examines how the TAC program engenders civic virtue in Nigerian youth and considers its potential to promote active citizenship in Nigeria. Findings suggest that the TAC program promotes civic engagement and de-territorializes the ethical goodness prized by proponents of civic republicanism. TAC volunteers appear to establish a global form of citizenship, unlimited by national boundaries.

Introduction & Program Overview

The Nigerian Government established the Technical Aids Corps (TAC) Program in 1987 as an innovative means of providing aid to African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) even as Nigeria faced its own economic crisis. Rather than providing direct financial assistance to ACP countries, which would be used to employ technicians from Europe or Asia, the TAC program allowed Nigeria to use that same money to employ young Nigerian professionals to travel to those countries to work. Although not signed into law until 1993, the TAC program has been in operation for 20 years.

After two decades of operation, the program is in need of a scholarly evaluation to assess its success and to widen the scope of scholarly literature on service. The TAC program remains an unusual international service program not only because of its unique mandate to provide support to other countries and to its own country's professionals, but also because it is based in the global South. Very little scholarship on civic service programs in the South exists, and an examination of the TAC program is likely to pose interesting questions for students of international civic service. The TAC program is also particularly relevant to scholarship because it is a transnational program. Where there is scholarly attention on service programs in Africa at all, the gaze is often focused on national (i.e., domestic) civic service programs.

This study investigates the relationship between civic service and citizenship in the context of the TAC program. Key questions include (a) What factors encourage participation in the TAC program? (b) To what degree has participation in the TAC program encouraged and deepened civic nationalism among Nigerian youths? This study will attempt to answer these questions by seeking the opinion of the volunteers on the overall purpose of the program, their motivations for participation, the meaning and implications of their experience, their evaluation of the effects of the service on them, and the impact on the host community. The research is guided by the hypothesis that by serving their country in foreign lands, the participants' sense of patriotism will be enhanced as they become more responsible citizens

The TAC Program

The establishment of the TAC program signalled a significant change in Nigeria's approach to the administration of foreign aid. As a government document explains, the TAC program "was seen as a more durable and visible form of aid as opposed to outright cash donation, which left no remarkable landmark beyond the easily forgettable impact of the moment" (Directorate of TAC, 2004:15). A Nigerian government official adds that the country was reconceptualizing assistance: "Nigeria also realized that the modern approach to assistance is people-oriented programs; programs that will impact the people of the recipient countries." In addition, the TAC program was established to serve as a "practical demonstration of South-South Cooperation." Administered through a semi-independent agency of the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the program was specifically designed to serve Nigeria's national interests as a component of the nation's foreign policy (Directorate of TAC, 2004:15):

It [TAC] was conceptualised as a complement to Nigeria's traditional diplomacy. The program identified the use of Nigeria's abundant pool of well-trained human resources as a foreign policy instrument and recognized its enormous potential in enhancing cooperation, understanding and development amongst countries and peoples with a common background and shared aspirations.

In sum, the goals of the program were ambitious and multi-pronged: to establish a reliable and measurable form of aid, to strengthen diplomatic relationships with ACP countries, to improve Nigeria's image, and to support her young professionals during an economically troubled time.

The program has been extremely popular with Nigerian professionals. In the past nineteen years, thousands have participated, with Nigeria spending billions of dollars to finance the program. In the last few years, the number of applicants to the program has hovered around 150,000 despite the low odds of acceptance: less than 4,000 applicants are invited for an interview, and only about half of this number are selected to serve. The volunteers are made up of journalists, medical doctors, nurses, and other paramedics, as well as lawyers, teachers, engineers, lecturers, and university administrators. Volunteers generally work in the recipient countries in the health, education, legal, and public sectors. The Nigerian government pays them a \$700 monthly allowance and N10,000 (less than \$100) paid into their local account during their two-year deployment.

The interest in the program, in turn, has allowed its scope of service to be broadened. Although the TAC program provided assistance to only 12 countries at its inception in 1987, it served 33 countries between 2004 and 2006.

Context of the Issue

Scholarship on civic service is a growing field (see McBride, Benítez & Danso, 2003; McBride et al., 2003). However, few rigorous studies have been conducted on international service, even though it is the most prevalent form of service worldwide. In addition, the existing studies predominantly address US-sponsored service programs (McBride et al., 2003). There is a paucity of literature on international service in the global South. In fact, international service programs such as the TAC have been overlooked in the literature. The TAC was not included, for instance, in the global

assessment of civic service by McBride et al. (2003). This study seeks to contribute research about international service based in the global South.

Conceptions of Citizenship

From the Augustinian idea of the City of God to Kant's vision of "perpetual peace" to Goethe's idea of world society, the notion of "citizen of the world" has long been part of the utopian vision of citizenship (Isin & Turner, 2002:8). The contemporary revival of "cosmopolitan idealism" or "transnational moral obligation" is deeply linked to classical ideas of virtue in the international context (See Dagger, 2002; Linklater, 2002; Sassen, 2002). Classical studies of international society were concerned with the right relationship between duties to fellow citizens and duties to the human race (Linklater, 2002). Some philosophers who have promoted the Kantian idea of cosmopolitan citizenship have emphasized the importance of "ensur[ing] that the sense of moral community is not confined to co-nationals but embraces the species as a whole" (Linklater, 2002:320). Similarly, contemporary theorists of civic republicanism emphasize the role of ethical goodness, specifically, civic virtue, and a concern for the common good shared by fellow citizens (Honohan, 2002:11). However, this *territorialized* ethical goodness—the idea that "a determinate community" is necessary for the exercise of civic virtues—seems to clash with the "cosmopolitan ideal" of a "universal community of humankind" (Linklater, 2002:321). The international context for service poses a challenge to traditional notions of citizenship; a new conception might link de-territorialized forms of citizenship to appropriate kinds of global community (Delanty, 1998:33). In this context, expanding the notion of civic republicanism beyond the nation-state holds a theoretical attraction for understanding the interface of civic nationalism and international service.

International volunteer service is founded on the notion that duty to humankind is more fundamental than duties to fellow citizens and/or nation. (Linklater, 2002). This position recalls larger debates that reveal a "clear tension between those who think that citizenship is linked with strong attachments to an existing political community—and the desire to make personal sacrifices for its welfare—and those who believe that citizenship includes efforts to transform national political communities until their behaviour is powerfully influenced by the Stoic-Christian belief in the unity of mankind" (Linklater, 2002:323). However, it can be argued that citizenship need not be constructed as an either/or or a greater than/less than. Rather, citizenship can be seen as a continuum based on a stoic conception of belonging to a bounded political community *and* to a wider moral community that includes all humankind (Linklater, 2002).

Although very attractive, the notion of civic nationalism that is implicit in portrayals of international service as the expression of an individual's rational and voluntary will can be problematic, particularly in instances where there is great dissonance between this notion and the socio-economic and political conditions that predispose people towards international service.

This question of citizenship and international service is a particularly salient one for Nigeria. Although citizenship is formally recognized by the country's constitution, scholars attest that few practice its rights and duties. This paradox is described by Taiwo (2000): "there are no citizens *in* Nigeria . . . only . . . citizens *of* Nigeria" (p. 19, emphasis mine). It is possible that constitutional constraints contribute to this "anaemic conception" (Taiwo, 2000:19) of citizenship, but Taiwo believes that the problem stems from an inadequate understanding of what citizenship is. He argues that "there is no concept of a common citizenship of the sort that would give weight and meaning

to the constitutional stipulations” (2000:99). Yet the TAC program’s success suggests that Nigerians possess the altruistic motivation implicit in most definitions of citizenship (Adebanwi, 2005).

Theory conceives citizenship, like the civic order itself, as an ethical institution, with the citizen as an ethical being. Therefore, “civic consciousness” is characterized by “the voluntary and spontaneous acceptance of the principle of duty” (Selbourne 1994:99-100), and acceptance of obligation to others becomes a reflection of citizen status. This study hypothesizes that volunteering through the TAC program develops civic consciousness in participants, and thus, allows them to develop a conception of citizenship. A key question guiding this research is what constitutes the general significance of the TAC program for the volunteers. It is assumed that what the volunteers regard as the significance of the program would not only reflect their position on the relationship between citizenship and service, but also, in some ways, affect their understanding of their roles in that context. Despite the dissonance that exists in Nigeria about citizenship, service appears to be strongly linked to civic consciousness in TAC participants.

Methodology

Methods

The data for this research was predominantly gathered through a close-ended questionnaire that was distributed to serving volunteers (SVs) in The Gambia and to ex-volunteers (EVs) who have returned to Nigeria after their service. The questionnaire asked volunteers to rank various lists of options on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being highest. Each ranking in the scale was assigned a point-based score according to the following system: rank 1 = 10 points; rank 2 = 9 points; rank 3 = 8 points; etc. Point values were totaled for each category. In some cases, these values were then translated into percentages. Any number presented in the findings that is not specifically designated as a percentage should be regarded as a total of point values.

Sample

A snowball sampling method was used in The Gambia to locate SVs and in Nigeria to locate EVs. Purposive selection was then completed for each group to ensure that categories of sex, ethnicity, profession, rank, and age were appropriately represented. Although many EVs and SVs were over 30 years of age at the time of the study, it was culturally appropriate to designate them as “youth”; the economic conditions in the country have increased dependency in the population, and as a result, the category of “youth” has expanded to include a wider range of ages.

A sample of 50 SVs and 40 EVs was chosen. Questionnaires were distributed; 39 of the SVs and 20 of the EVs returned correctly filled questionnaires.

Research site

The Gambia was chosen as the research site because its need for technical aid is apparent and critical. Because of its high need, it has received the highest number of TAC volunteers biennially to date. Indeed, The Gambia has received more volunteers than any other recipient country since the program started in 1987.

Limitations

The volunteers were asked in the questionnaire to rank their responses from what they regarded as the most significant to what they regarded as the least significant. One possible limitation of the study is that some of the options were related or mutually reinforcing; this aspect of the questionnaire was deliberate—a goal was to capture volunteers’ conception of the program along different but related lines—but it is possible that this created a bias toward positive responses.

Findings

Significance of the TAC program

When asked to choose what they believed was the most significant basis for the creation of the TAC program, both SVs and EVs ranked the following reasons in this order: *assistance to needy developing countries* (477), *promotion of Nigeria’s national interests* (348), *public service to fellow human beings* (319), *promotion of human solidarity and understanding* (316), *promotion of international peace* (311), and *civic duty* (178).

Beyond the general conception of the significance of the TAC, the SVs were specifically requested to rank what they regarded as the significance of the program for the host country. The SVs overwhelmingly chose *crucial assistance from a sister African country* (348). Other responses were ranked as follows: *promotion of human solidarity and understanding* (251), *promotion of international peace* (215), *cultural exchange* (205), *promotion of Nigeria’s image and interest* (201), and *none of the above* (20).

Motivation for international civic service

Beyond what is regarded as the significance of international civic service by the volunteers, the study also investigated the motivation of SVs and EVs for volunteering. Received ideas are based on the assumption that “higher” and selfless ideals such as patriotism, civic-mindedness, and concern for humanity influence participation in international service, thus overlooking or understating other predisposing factors such as sense of adventure, unemployment, or even emigration and civic deficit. This research probed the relevance of these other “negative” or not altogether altruistic influences in the context of the debates in the literature on certain historical and cultural determinants of volunteering within different nations and cultures.

Regarding their own motivation, SVs and EVs ranked *assistance to needy people in other countries* first (423), followed by *public service to fellow human beings* (340), and *civic duty* (329). The first two responses were consistent with responses given on the general significance of the TAC program. *Civic duty*, however, was rated highly in relation to personal motivation (329) although it was cited less frequently in volunteer’s estimation of the general significance of TAC (178). Interestingly enough, other factors, not necessarily noble, were also significant, such as *adventure* (301), *better wages/more income* (182), *emigration/temporary escape* (148), and *unemployment* (80).

Service and human solidarity

The questionnaire asked SVs and EVs to evaluate the TAC program’s ability to promote human solidarity and understanding across national boundaries. Both groups unanimously affirmed the program’s effectiveness in this area: 61% marked *strongly agree* and 39% marked *agree*. Therefore, it

can be argued that a global civic ethic is a critical part of the volunteers' perception of the program goals.

Effects of service

The questionnaire also asked SVs and EVs about their perception of the personal impact of international civic service, particularly on the development of "civic virtues." These civic virtues were defined to include leadership qualities, patriotism, selflessness, sacrifice, civility, trust, capacity for human solidarity and understanding, among others. The response to the question, "Did international service encourage development of civic virtues?" was generally positive with 50% choosing *agree*, 41% choosing *strongly agree*, and 9% choosing *don't know*. The strong rate of agreement is very important because these were the essential virtues that the program was primarily designed to promote or enhance.

The questionnaire also asked SVs and EVs what specific negative effects they had experienced as a result of participating in the TAC program. *Uncomfortable personal experience(s)* (234) and *intense home sickness* (212) were ranked first and second by the volunteers as the most negative effects of service. Other common responses included *hostility they have experienced from the host communities and/or the hostility they have felt towards the host communities as a result of the latter* (170), *career break* (163), *economic hardship* (138), and *health problem(s)* (94). However, a significant proportion of the volunteers (190) answered *none of the above* to this question. It is not clear if these volunteers did not experience negative effects, or if they experienced effects not noted in the questionnaire.

Service program: Objectives

SVs and EVs were asked, based on their experiences, if they thought that TAC had achieved its aims generally, beyond succeeding in enhancing or promoting the volunteers' civic virtues. The combined response of SVs and EVs was generally positive, with 38% choosing *agree* and 26% *strongly agree*. However, the results were somewhat uneven with 8% choosing *disagree*, 5% *strongly disagree*, and 23% *don't know*. The results for the SVs alone were much more positive, with 68% choosing *strongly agree*, 21% choosing *agree*, and only a minority indicating *disagree* (3%) and *don't know* (8%). The significant level of ambivalence found in the combined sample warrants further investigation.

Service impact, efficacy and continuation

SVs assessed the efficacy of the program in The Gambia positively; 54% indicated *high impact*, 38% indicated *some impact*, 5% indicated *low impact*, and 3% indicated *don't know*. It may be noteworthy that no volunteer chose *no impact*.

Against the backdrop of the efficacy and the impact of the program, the volunteers were asked if they thought that the program should be continued. Every single volunteer surveyed wanted the program to continue, although with various levels of enthusiasm. While 74% indicated *strongly agree*, 26% indicated only *agree*.

Most of the volunteers think that the program should continue because of *Nigeria's image* (155), *the needs of the recipient countries* (127), *the civic virtues that the program enhances* (110), *employment opportunities for participants* (103), and *human solidarity* (97).

Conclusion: Citizenship and Civic Service—A Nexus

The data from this research suggests that a majority of the volunteers hold the view that the service program is one from which they have greatly benefited in terms of enhancing their civic virtues. Their view is firmly based on the services rendered and sacrifices they made. In this context, the negative effects and consequences of service, for most of the volunteers, are outweighed by the positive effects and the contributions they make to the societies, organizations, and the lives of the citizens of the countries in which they serve.

However, their sense of duty to the human race may also have helped to enhance their notion of what they owe to their country of origin. In this way, it can be argued that through their experiences, TAC volunteers have found a balance between duties to fellow citizens and duties to the human race (Linklater, 2002:320). In the specifically Kantian sense of cosmopolitan citizenship, the TAC volunteers have come to accept that “the sense of moral community is not confined to co-nationals but embraces the species as a whole” (Linklater, 2002:320).

Against the tradition of civic republicanism which emphasizes the role of ethical goodness, specifically, civic virtue, and concern for common good shared by fellow citizens (Honohan, 2002:11), the TAC volunteers, through their service, de-territorialize this civic virtue, linking it with the appropriate form of common humanity (Delanty, 1998:33), even while also enhancing their conception of their duties as citizens of a specific country—Nigeria.

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Assessing Intercultural Competence in International Youth Service

Alvino E. Fantini

This research, conducted by the Federation of The Experiment in International Living, served as a pilot project for an extended future global study. This initial study explored a construct of intercultural competence (ICC), developed an instrument for its measurement and assessment, and investigated the impact of international youth service programs on both volunteers and hosts. Using questionnaires and interviews to generate quantitative and qualitative data, the project addressed seven assertions regarding outcomes upon volunteers. Focus groups included British and Swiss participants plus their Ecuadorian mentors, ensuring etic-emic perspectives while measuring effects on both volunteers and host nationals. Data supported the initial assertions including, among others, the current conceptualization of the ICC construct, the importance of the host language, and life-altering consequences on all parties. Aside from implications for future service projects, the results contribute important knowledge to the field of intercultural education regarding the identification, development, assessment, and impact on those involved.

Overview

Over many years, international service has probably always existed in one form or another; however, its significance has recently increased due to geo-political developments. Today, volunteer youth service is an increasingly important and widely recognized endeavor, not only for its contributions to those in need but also for its role in furthering the development of young people. To become a *contributing* citizen necessarily involves performing service for others; to become a *global* citizen necessarily requires intercultural experience. Hence, youth service in intercultural contexts serves important dual purposes.

The Federation Experiment in International Living (FEIL), a non-profit organization founded in 1932, is one of the oldest international, intercultural educational institutions in the world today. Through its member units—all autonomous national entities—the FEIL constitutes an important worldwide network. Over three quarters of a century, several hundred thousand individuals have participated in education, service, and development activities through their combined efforts. From the beginning, FEIL's collective mission has been: “to build world peace, one person at a time” through programs that include orientation, language training, host family homestays, and a thematic focus or service project.

This study investigates the impact of FEIL, particularly the specific changes that individual servers experience and the factors responsible for these changes. Seven assertions are posited in this pilot project, to be further explored in a follow-on study. This paper seeks to define and conceptualize the nature of intercultural competence, including the identification of attributes for success in cross-

cultural encounters, degrees of competence attained, effects of the experience on participant careers and life choices and, finally, participant contributions to others. In the end, a more reliable instrument is also produced to assess intercultural development during and beyond volunteer sojourns.

Context of the Issue

The initial challenge was to formulate the basic concepts on which the entire project was based: What exactly is “intercultural competence”? What is the best way to measure and monitor it? Our starting point was an earlier notion of “communicative competence” (CC), a term advanced over 30 years ago in language education and well described in the literature. CC₁ comprises various abilities developed early in life that form one’s native language-culture system. Those entering additional language-culture systems at any time thereafter potentially develop a second competence (CC₂), or even additional ones (CC₃, CC₄, etc.). But once one’s initial competence (reflecting and affecting one’s view of the world) is fairly well established by around puberty, it becomes increasingly difficult to see things later in any other way; hence, the power of intercultural sojourns in providing a chance to see things “anew.”

To transcend one’s native CC₁ (and worldview) and enter into an alternative system to any degree, however, requires developing *intercultural* communicative competence (ICC). But as this occurs, one also needs to *reconfigure* one’s original worldview (or better put, *transcend* and *transform* it). Developing ICC, then, entails more than just acquiring new abilities that allow one to function in more than one system (CC₁ and CC₂); it also entails developing new and unique perspectives that arise from the interaction of two (or more) systems. Indeed, ICC is the linchpin of developing bilingual-bicultural (or multilingual-multicultural) perspectives, perspectives that are unimaginable to monolingual-monocultural members of individual systems (See also Fantini, 2005:11-12).

ICC, however, constitutes only one of various terms found in the literature to connote what transpires during intercultural encounters; others include: cross-cultural awareness, global competitive intelligence, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, international competence, and so forth. And even those interculturalists who employ the term ICC do not necessarily refer to the *same* complex of abilities. Most, in fact, allude only to limited aspects of a far more comprehensive phenomenon. This lack of a unifying concept has resulted in many different instruments measuring varied outcomes (see also Fantini, 2005:87-94).

To establish a comprehensive notion of ICC, over 100 intercultural publications were reviewed, ascertaining areas of convergence and divergence. Findings were compared with notions informed by our own extensive academic and empirical fieldwork. The resultant construct formed the basis for the survey questionnaire used in this study. Our brief definition of intercultural competence is a complex of abilities needed to perform *effectively* and *appropriately* when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Both the notions “effective” and “appropriate” are important because together they ensure dual “etic” and “emic” perspectives— i.e., that of self and that of others—fundamental to intercultural work (see also Berry, 1980; Earley & Mosakowski, 1995). In addition, ICC has various components:

- acquired characteristics (i.e., tolerance, patience, open-mindedness, etc.)
- three areas or domains (i.e., relationships, communication, and collaboration)
- four dimensions (i.e., knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness)
- host language proficiency
- developmental levels of the individual

This study incorporated all of these areas, stressing the often-ignored language component so intertwined with other aspects of second competence development. Although most agree that language and culture are interrelated, interculturalists tend to overlook host language proficiency while language educators tend to overlook other ICC abilities. This study avoided this artificial dichotomy.

The fields of service, cross-cultural education, intercultural communication, and outcomes assessment, have all produced much important research. One Canadian study (Kealey, 1990), for example, was especially helpful in ascertaining intercultural outcomes on technical advisors in overseas situations. Other researchers investigated study abroad programs and service projects, the area most closely related to this project. While useful insights were drawn from these studies, this pilot remains distinctive because of its holistic characterization of intercultural competence. Moreover, whereas much research has been done in English and about North Americans, this project looked at multiple nationalities, used multiple languages, and employed both quantitative and qualitative data.

Project Description and Research Issues

The project

This project focused on one offering of FEIL – Volunteers in International Partnerships (VIP), service programs in education, health, human service, and development. VIP volunteers are matched with projects according to their skills, interests, talents, and desired length of service. With 23 sending and 14 receiving countries working with indigenous NGOs and local organizations, VIP exerts a major impact on communities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, and Turkey. Of these, one receiving country, Ecuador, and two sending countries, Great Britain and Switzerland, participated in this initial study.

The participants

Great Britain began sending volunteers to Ecuador in 2001 and had 18 alumni in 2005; Switzerland began sending volunteers in 1998 and had 76 (German-speaking) alumni. In addition to these alumni, five volunteers (1 British and 4 Swiss) currently in Ecuador and their counterpart host mentors, were also contacted to learn about program impact. In Great Britain, responses were returned from 100% of all alumni who *received* survey forms. The difference between the number anticipated and actual responses was due entirely to faulty addresses. In Switzerland, the percentage of responses was less, given the unfortunate loss of a research assistant during the project. In the

end, 28 alumni, five volunteers, and four mentors returned forms; and six alumni, two volunteers, and four mentors were interviewed.

Methods

Research design

Items on our initial instrument were arranged hierarchically into scales representing a coherent universe of content to reflect increasingly deeper involvement. These scales were intended to produce reliable measures of constructs with relatively few items per scale. Although the instrument was lengthy and posed a challenge for respondents, we decided to incorporate all items in the IPP, anticipating an eventual item analysis to identify the most reliable items to create a shorter form in the follow-on project.

The finalized questionnaire was then translated by research assistants (RAs) into German, Spanish, and adapted to British English. Translated forms were converted back (“back-translation”) into American English to ensure accuracy, corrected as needed, and final versions were distributed. To enhance reliability, we considered it essential that respondents complete the form in their native tongues. Select respondents were then interviewed to obtain additional information.

Data collection methods

RAs initially tabulated quantitative data gathered from returned questionnaires and interviews in their respective languages and translated results into English. Forms were coded to protect respondent identities and results were entered into an SPSS-readable data-base (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). RAs also compiled and translated qualitative summaries. These were treated first as groups by country and category of participants (alumni, volunteers, mentors) to permit comparisons by nationality, and subsequently compiled for analysis as composite international samples. Points of divergence across groups suggested “particularist” aspects (i.e., pertaining to a single group), while points of convergence suggested potentially “universalist” aspects (i.e., applying widely across groups).

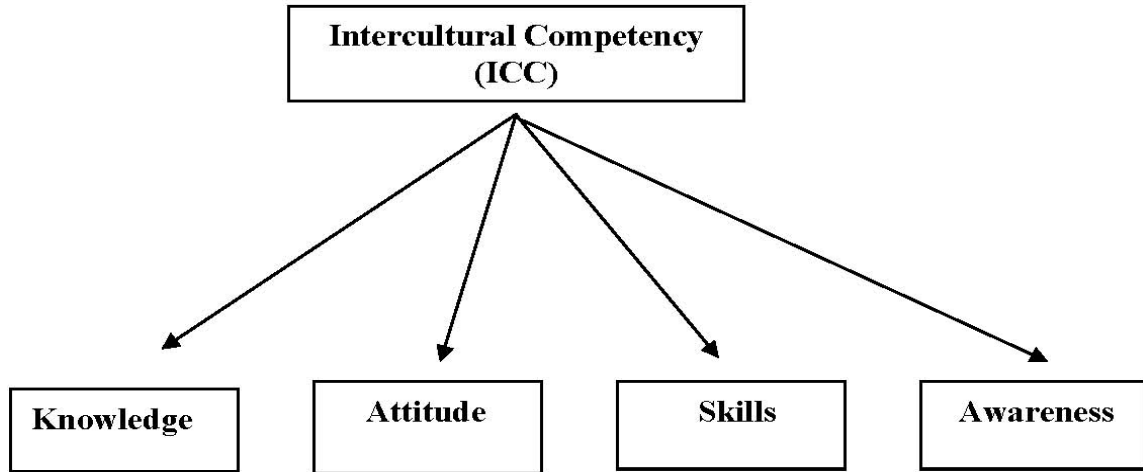
Sampling and analytical procedures

Twenty-eight alumni (British and Swiss combined) returned questionnaire and consent forms and six interviews were conducted. During analysis, characteristics about respondents were also compiled by nationality groups. Differences emerged primarily with regard to their previous language and intercultural experiences. Swiss volunteers were all trilingual before going to Ecuador and learned Spanish with relative ease, while British volunteers were decidedly monolingual and struggled with their second tongue. All participants in both groups, however, were between ages 18-27, excepting one older alumna. All claimed a positive experience despite challenges, and 26 maintained contact with hosts after returning home. Similar characteristics applied as well to volunteers currently in Ecuador.

Analytical options applied to alumni were: 1) the T-test (see also Agresti & Finlay, 1997:2); 2) one-way ANOVA (see also Levin, 1999); and 3) factor analysis (see also Kim & Muller, 1978). As mentioned earlier, the instrumentation used in this study was based on a strong set of theoretical arguments regarding the nature of intercultural competence. This study, however, empirically tested

the concepts embodied in the instrument through each of its four sub-components (*viz.*, knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness) and the multiple items within each sub-component (see Figure 1). Select analyses were applied to evaluate the instrument and others to interpret data generated by the instrument: reliability analysis, factor analysis, descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analysis of variance.

Figure 1. Intercultural competency and components



Findings

Quantitative findings

Quantitative data was used to examine and assess the efficacy and validity of the test instrument regarding its ability to measure and monitor ICC. In general, Alpha scores (*i.e.*, the measure of reliability) of 6.0 or above for any item are considered good scores. A reliability analysis completed for scores measured at the beginning and end of service were well above 6.0, substantiating the reliability of the ICC concept used throughout the study. A principal component analysis of all factor loadings measured were also 0.6 or above, further supporting strong associations with the underlying construct. A composite analysis showing the results of additional principal component analysis was required to assess if the four components do indeed load onto the single construct defined as “intercultural competence.” All factor loadings were very strong, indicating strong associations with the defined construct

Figure 2. Contrastive mean ICC scores at beginning and end of service

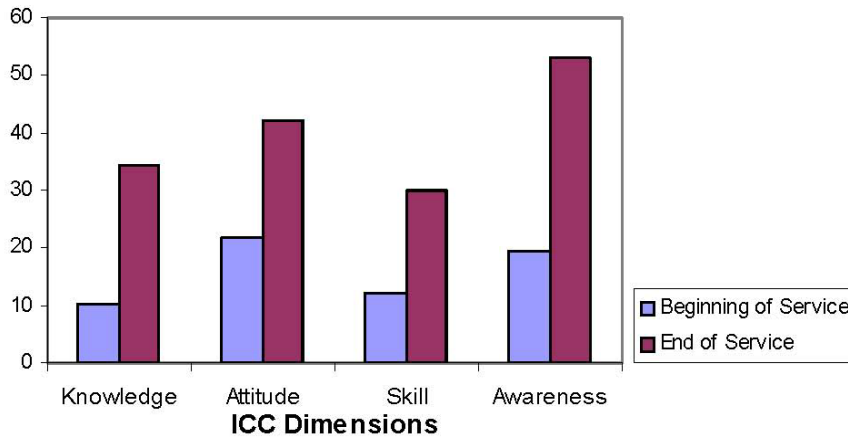
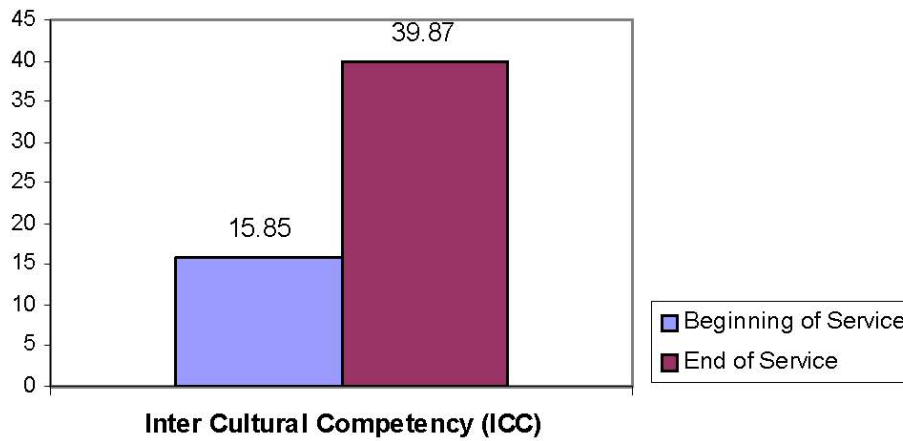


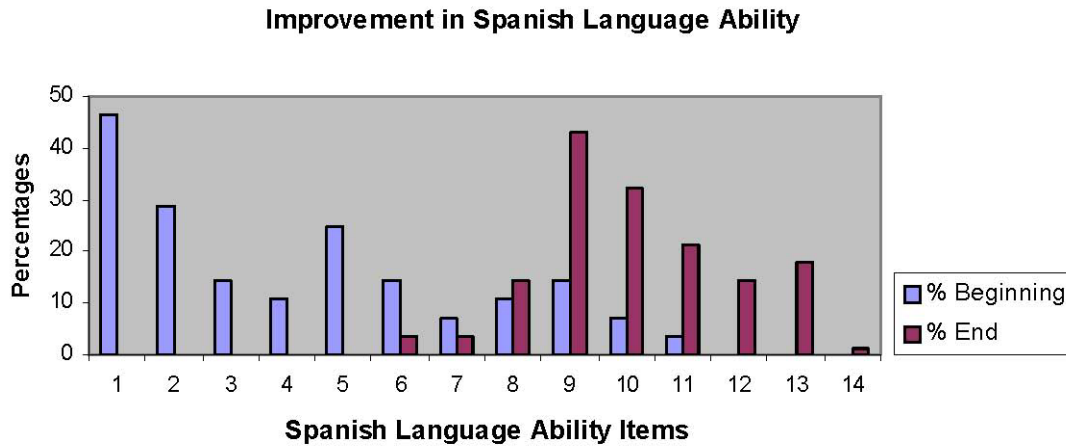
Figure 3. Contrastive mean intercultural competency scores at beginning and end of service



Other quantitative data measured the efficacy and validity of assumptions made about ICC at the beginning and end of service. In a comparison of descriptive statistics for intercultural competency and its components, subjects showed overall improvement in ICC development, further supported by improvements reflected in each individual sub-component. Similarly, a comparison of alumni IC competency at the beginning and end of service suggested that alumni improved in overall ICC development and in its individual components at the end of their service experience. In addition, the effect of exposure to a new culture accounted for 74.4% variation in the knowledge component. Similarly, 52.7% of the variation in ICC was associated with intercultural exposure.

A calculation of change in Spanish language proficiency levels at the beginning and end of service was also calculated. Most alumni claimed “no ability” (46.4%) or “not functional” in spoken Spanish (28.6%) in the beginning. At the service end, however, most respondents reported significant improvement, ranging from “satisfying social and work needs” to “sufficient accuracy.”

Figure 4: Improvement in Spanish language ability



Qualitative findings

Qualitative analysis was based on data obtained from both surveys and interviews, and at program beginning and end. The discussion below focuses only on how their combined comments inform assertions at the center of the research effort. (For a more detailed discussion, see Fantini, 2005).

ICC is a complex of abilities. All attributes commonly cited in the literature such as tolerance, flexibility, patience, sense of humor, appreciation of differences, suspension of judgment, adaptability, curiosity, open-mindedness, motivation, self-reliance, empathy, clear sense of self, perceptive, and tolerance for ambiguity, were confirmed as relevant and important to the intercultural experience by all sub-groups. Volunteers all indicated progress and development in each attribute during their stay; no reversal was indicated in any area. Respondents also cited qualities not on the original list: awareness, understanding, knowledge, acceptance, stamina, sense of realism, and host language ability. Comments in open-ended responses and interviews also affirmed growth and development: “I developed and got to know myself better”; “I have new perspectives on issues important in Ecuadorian culture”; “I learned communication means not only to speak but also to listen and watch differences without being judgmental.” Given these responses, it is surprising that intercultural publications seldom mention host language proficiency as a criterion for IC success. Clearly, the significance of language to their experience did not go unnoticed by alumni and volunteers.

Learning the host language affects ICC development. By the end of their sojourn, all indicated an ability to communicate in the host tongue, including those who began with “no Spanish at all.” Aside from proficiency, alumni also gave significant testimonies describing how knowledge of the host tongue affected their adjustment such as “language is key to everything,” “learning Spanish opened up a whole new world of opportunities and experiences,” and “[it was] impossible to immerse myself in the local culture without being able to speak.” Their grasp of the relevance and importance of speaking the host tongue is eloquent and insightful, even from those initially unsophisticated with foreign languages, derived not from linguistic study but from their own direct field experiences. They not only stated why knowledge of the host language was important but they also spoke to the limitations imposed without it. Aside from practical aspects of speaking Spanish, the volunteers’ language ability drew admiration, further enhancing how hosts viewed them.

Intercultural experiences are life altering. Participants' comments indicated that they found the IC experience transformative. One volunteer described her IC sojourn as "one of the most important experiences of my life" and another attested that "the whole experience has given me so much more confidence in my own abilities." Another volunteer commented on the role of the challenging aspects of the program in shaping his experience: "above all, I learned a lot of new things about myself. In the beginning, I thought that I could adapt completely to a totally different way of life and get used to living that way. With time, I had to admit that it isn't so easy." These and other comments suggest that the IC sojourn was indeed both powerful and provocative, affecting them and their lives in many ways and on many levels – in behavior, personality, abilities, and characteristics.

Participant choices during the sojourn produce certain intercultural consequences. Participants expressed varying levels of motivation and interest before arriving in Ecuador, and most indicated even higher levels after arrival, with motivation continuing to increase throughout and at program end. One might expect civic programs to attract volunteers who are highly motivated. One might also expect that these attitudes helped sustain them through admittedly difficult times (culture bumps). Indeed their motivation may be characterized as *integrative* more than *instrumental*. In the former type, volunteers desire more than mere acceptance; they seek to emulate their hosts and strive toward higher degrees of bilingualism and biculturalism than might be attained by others within the same time frame. Integrative motivation does more than sustain them through difficult and challenging moments; they derive pleasure from "becoming" like their hosts and part of the new society and culture. The result is a satisfying, rewarding, and enriching experience in which positive aspects outweigh the negative and volunteers move beyond the -etic into an -emic posture.

Successful intercultural respondents of this type seek to perpetuate and extend their experience long after the program ends and they have returned home. Such sentiments are reflected through their words and actions: e.g., after re-entry, 26 of 28 alumni described their experience as positive, 16 continued study of a foreign language, 8 developed new intercultural friendships, 9 worked in related fields, 24 continued to use their intercultural abilities, and 27 maintained ongoing contact with hosts in various ways—by letter or email (19), phone conversations (12), exchanging gifts (6), return visits (4), and receiving hosts in their own country (2).

Some alumni lean toward specific life choices, life partners, life styles, values and jobs as a result of this experience. It was evident that alumni adopted a particular life "orientation" based on their Ecuadorian experience. Six alumni, for example, planned to return and work in South America, 17 reported that their volunteer experience had influenced or confirmed a career goal, and 5 planned to engage in mentoring or coaching of foreigners in their home countries, or mentioned an interest in diversity work. Interestingly, not one person suggested retreat or withdrawal from intercultural contact, whereas all indicated a desire to expand further upon what was already experienced.

Alumni often engage in activities that impact on others. It is apparent that alumni are having an impact on others, especially in fields like teaching, counseling, health, social work, development, and service. Although the numbers are not startling, several indicated multiplier effects with 2, 2, 8, 9, 15+ and 50+ persons, totaling 86+ persons, presumably benefiting from abilities alumni developed during their service experience. Since several other respondents did not indicate the number of persons they worked with, so there is no way of calculating their additional efforts.

Discussion

Findings reinforce the anecdotal evidence accumulated over three-quarters of a century. While learning about others, participants definitely also learn much about themselves. Because the nature of intercultural encounters is always provocative, it stimulates deep introspection and reflection in each participant. Rarely does one conclude with more stereotypes or intolerant attitudes; and, learning about others provides a new vantage point for learning about oneself. Alumni typically remark: “I learned so much about Ecuador, but you know what? I learned even more about myself.” Looking out is looking in. Understanding and changes of perspective occur for most; and, as a result, they are deeply changed. Participants not only know more, *they know differently*. Intercultural experiences normally constitute the most profound educational experience of their entire lives. And changed participants return to live their lives differently, affecting still others in the process. In so doing, they move in the direction of the institutional vision and mission. This initial research effort has helped to substantiate that all of this is so.

Implications

Aside from *content* findings of the research, insights were also gleaned about *process* aspects of conducting international research. These “lessons learned” will be useful in conducting our follow-on international research project and possibly to other researchers as well. They include:

1. Challenges of collaborative international research on several levels—administratively, cross-culturally, and linguistically.
2. Challenges of working through untrained, non-professional research assistants abroad and the importance of providing clear guidelines and procedures to ensure their efforts produce reliable results.
3. The need to ensure that participating units have updated alumni files with current contact information (especially email, where possible).
4. The challenges, benefits, and necessity of working through local languages (and the native tongues of the research subjects involved) and ensuring that surveys and other documents are properly translated.
5. The intercultural challenge of designing questionnaires for respondents from a variety of cultural backgrounds who are inexperienced with surveys or who hold differing attitudes about participating in them.
6. The importance of conducting item analysis to reduce lengthy questionnaires into the briefest possible instrument, yet one that will yield desired results.
7. The importance of follow-on interviews toward producing a rich corpus of data.
8. The value of combining -etic and -emic perspectives with attention to both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain more complete and valid cross-cultural results.

9. In the end, the importance of using/applying the areas and items identified in the survey towards designing and implementing quality cross-cultural orientation processes for program participants.
10. Helping other organizations to understand and to use implications and applications from research to enhance program promotion, selection, program design and implementation, and assessment of outcomes (and that this differs from marketing research).
11. The significance of academic research toward establishing organizational visibility and reputation as reliable and competent providers of important intercultural experiences.

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