



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

Economics of Education Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/econedurev

Involuntary volunteering: The impact of mandated service in public schools

Sara E. Helms ^{a,b,*}^a School of Business, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1530 3rd Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35294, USA^b Department of Economics (Graduate Studies), 3105 Tydings Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 October 2011

Received in revised form 14 May 2013

Accepted 17 June 2013

JEL classification:

I2

I28

Z13

Keywords:

Educational economics

Economic impact

Service learning

ABSTRACT

In 1992, Maryland became the first—and only—state to require service activity of all public high school graduates. Proponents of mandates note that since individual volunteer activity is correlated over time, mandates will create lifetime volunteers. Prior studies demonstrate differences in the observed characteristics of volunteers and nonvolunteers which could drive the correlation in service over time. Using restricted-access data from the Monitoring the Future project, I find the mandate increased volunteering among eighth-grade students. However, the mandate likely reduced volunteering among twelfth-grade students. In contrast to creating lifelong volunteers, my results suggest that the mandate changed the timing of volunteering.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Growing in popularity over the last fifteen years, community service activities are not only encouraged of middle and high school students, but are a graduation requirement at an increasing number of public high schools (Kleiner & Chapman, 1999). For example, the state of Maryland and the cities of Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, Cincinnati, and Washington, DC, have mandatory service components of their public high school graduation requirements (Andersen & Murphy, 1999). Historically, only private schools required volunteer activity of their students. Since many private schools are sectarian, they

intend to develop in students a concern for others.¹ In recent years, public schools began instituting service requirements.

The debate over such policies spread from the local school board and Parent-Teacher Association meetings to the courts. In two court cases, the Washington, DC-based Institute for Justice helped individual students and their families sue the public school systems imposing service requirements—in New York, the case of *Immediato v. Rye Neck School District* (1996), and in North Carolina, the case of *Herndon v. Chapel Hill-Carrboro City* (1996). In both cases, district courts and the US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that

* Current address: Department of Economics, Finance, and Quantitative Analysis, Brock School of Business, Samford University, 800 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham, AL 35229, USA. Tel.: +1 205 726 4110; fax: +1 205 726 2484.

E-mail address: shelms1@samford.edu.

¹ Dee (2005) examines the impact of private Catholic schooling on civic engagement, to test whether they have a detrimental impact. Since a major goal of public schools is to develop good citizens, it is possible that private, religious schools will not accomplish the indoctrination goal of education as effectively. He finds mixed results; Catholic school students are more likely to vote, yet not to volunteer.

the requirements were not a violation of the ‘involuntary servitude’ amendment of the Constitution, but that they are consistent with the goals associated with educating tomorrow’s citizens (Hall, 1996; Pines, 1996; Saslow, 1994).

Current and proposed programs imposing similar graduation requirements vary in terms of implementation—some require all of the activity to be extracurricular, while others place the emphasis on classroom programs centered on service learning. Regardless of program structure, one goal of these policies is to increase civic involvement and community awareness among the nation’s teenagers. The civic engagement of today’s youth has been studied extensively, particularly following Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000). Many view service requirements as a tool to boost Putnam’s idea of social capital, the idea that “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them—” enable society to be more efficient (p. 19, 21). Furthermore, many proponents argue that mandated service leads to improved educational outcomes. Existing research extensively explores the natural connection between education and social capital, though is often focused on the effect of education on social capital and plagued by the endogeneity of the formation of human capital and social capital (see Huang, van den Brink, & Groot, 2009 for one thorough, quantitative meta-analysis).

This study investigates whether mandatory service impacts a student’s propensity to volunteer. Using restricted-access data from the Monitoring the Future project, I consider the impact of Maryland’s service requirement on the volunteering behavior of public school students in Maryland. The Maryland mandate provides an exogenous change in the factors that influence a student’s decision to allocate time to service activity.

Beginning with the graduating class of 1997, Maryland public school students had to complete locally-designed service programs that included both community service and service-learning activities. Proponents of legislation like the Maryland program note that individual volunteer activity is highly correlated over time and therefore, the hope is that students who volunteer at a young age will become lifetime volunteers. Previous literature demonstrates that the observed characteristics of students who volunteer are very different from those who do not. Therefore, it is possible that unobserved characteristics drive the correlation in service over time and the policy will not increase future service.

Earlier studies show that students who volunteer are generally more successful in school, more involved in extracurricular activities both at school and in the community, more informed about the news and the world, better connected to their families, and engage in fewer risky behaviors (Fiske, 2002; Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins, 2002; Kirby, 2001; Lipscomb, 2007; Niemi & Chapman, 1998). Other studies find that earlier involvement in community service is associated with future involvement; that is, high school students who volunteer grow into adults who volunteer (Planty & Regnier, 2003). It is unclear whether the correlation in volunteer activity over time is because of some underlying characteristic—perhaps compassion or generosity—or because the earlier

volunteering exposed them to the benefits of volunteering. My study may help distinguish between the effect of underlying characteristics of individuals choosing to volunteer, and the effect of the volunteering in and of itself. Because I focus on mandatory service, I am able to avoid a common pitfall of studies on community service—the population now volunteering is not just a group of especially motivated and caring students.

I find that the service mandate in Maryland increased the level of volunteering among eighth-grade students subject to the requirement. In contrast, I find the mandate likely reduced volunteering among twelfth-grade students.

In the sections that follow, I outline previous work and describe this study. In Section 2, I discuss prior work on community service and volunteerism. Section 3 describes the Maryland service requirement. Section 4 outlines the model used, Section 5 describes the data, and Section 6 presents the results. Section 7 discusses the results, acknowledges the limitations of this study, and concludes.

2. Mandated volunteer service

While there are many definitions for ‘service-learning,’ ‘volunteerism’ and ‘community service,’ I will use the definitions from the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.

- Volunteerism is “the performance of formal service to benefit others or one’s community without receiving any external rewards; such programs may or may not involve structured training and reflection.”
- “Community Service is volunteerism that occurs in the community – action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole.”
- “Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.”

(Source: <http://servicelearning.org>, 2006).

For example, community service includes environmental cleanups, building and renovating houses, and working in soup kitchens. Service learning includes writing about the service activity, talking about it in a classroom or group setting, and more.

The profiles of volunteers are consistent across studies. Adult volunteer rates are higher among whites, females, and those with a college education, married and with children, employed full-time, and those who attend religious services at least once a week (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010; Keeter et al., 2002). Among teenagers, volunteering rates are higher among females, those who attend religious services regularly, participate in school organizations, earn high grades, and those from homes where a parent volunteers (Metz & YOUNISS, 2003; Nolin, Chaney, & Chapman, 1997; Planty & Regnier, 2003). Students working part-time also volunteer at higher rates than students who do not work, suggesting that some people are simply more active than others (Nolin et al., 1997).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6840940>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6840940>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)