



Working Paper Series # 3

Running Head: MANDATORY COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mandated community service in high school and subsequent civic engagement:

The case of the “double cohort” in Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

In 1999, the Ontario provincial government introduced into its high school curriculum a requirement that students complete forty hours of volunteer community service before graduation. At the same time, the high school curriculum was shortened from five years to four. Consequently, the 2003 graduating class of Ontario high school students contained two cohorts, the first of the 4-year cohorts that was compelled to complete a mandated community service requirement, and the last of the 5-year cohorts that was not. Using a quasi-experimental design, we surveyed 1768 first-year university students in terms of their perceptions and attitudes about the nature and amount of previous volunteering, attitudes towards community service, current service involvement and other measures of civic and political engagement. Comparisons of the two cohorts indicate that, while there were discernible differences between the two cohorts in terms of their past record of community service, there were no differences in current attitudes and civic engagement that might plausibly be attributed to participation in the mandatory service program. Results are discussed with relation to the current debate concerning the impact of mandatory volunteering policies on intrinsic motivation to volunteer.

