Does Service Work?

Lessons from the ServiceWorks Program

SERVICEWORKS

Powered by AmeriCorps, the Citi Foundation, and Points of Light

Does Service Work?
Lessons from the ServiceWorks Program

Peter Levine, Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship and Public Service and
Associate Dean for Research at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life

Contents

Executive Summary

Points of Light's ServiceWorks program engages thousands of disadvantaged teenagers and young adults across the United States. The participants, known as "Scholars," participate in a series of about five educational modules designed to enhance their skills for work and higher education. They receive support from AmeriCorps VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America), other adult volunteers, and/or professional program staff and teachers. They conduct community service projects, including a capstone project that they choose and design.

At each site, the program is administered by a local nonprofit that typically offers a range of other services to youth. Programs vary somewhat in their methods of recruitment, settings, and target populations, but all use a similar curriculum for service-learning and leadership-development and the same measurement tools.

ServiceWorks is part of Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress initiative. First launched in 2014, Pathways to Progress aimed to help low-income 16- to 24-year-olds develop the "workplace skills and leadership experience necessary to compete in the 21st century economy." Points of Light received one of the grants as part of the initiative specifically to

create the ServiceWorks program. Its goal was to provide 25,000 low-income youth with "community engagement and volunteer service" opportunities "to develop the skills to prepare for college and careers" (Equal Measure, 2016).

In 2017, I conducted this review, based on my assessment of data and documents provided by Points of Light and interviews with participants and stakeholders. This evaluation has certain limitations, including my dependence on evidence from individuals who had successfully completed the program. (See "How this Evaluation Was Conducted," below.) Despite some methodological limitations, I have reached the following conclusions:

Findings about ServiceWorks as a Program

- ServiceWorks has delivered strong educational programming and community service experiences to highly disadvantaged youth and young adults, at scale.

- The program's design is consistent with previous research that shows that giving disadvantaged youth opportunities to serve their communities also strengthens skills, habits, and dispositions that help them in school, college and careers.

- Numerous former participants report highly concrete benefits, from attending college to obtaining specific jobs. They also describe subtler shifts in their core values and expectations.

- ServiceWorks brings youth and adults from diverse walks of life together to form teams that demonstrate empathy, solidarity, and increased mutual understanding. The adults as well as the youth benefit from these interactions.

- The original model of training modules, "success coaching," and community service has shifted somewhat, with fewer modules now being assigned and some of the one-on-one coaching replaced by group work. The core purposes intended by the original model—including adult mentorship—still seem to be met by the revised offerings in most sites.

- The meetings and events that occur through ServiceWorks feel to many participants like islands of purposive, constructive, and focused work amid chaos and dysfunction that prevails elsewhere in their schools and neighborhoods. Even participants who express relatively positive views of their schools and communities see ServiceWorks as more interactive and compelling than typical high school courses.

Learnings for the Field

SCALE VERSUS DEPTH: Programs that aim to provide compelling positive experiences for young people must weigh the competing goals of reaching many youth and deeply affecting the participants, particularly those who are highly disadvantaged. ServiceWorks sought to reach 25,000 youth over three years with a medium-dosage program (more sustained than a one-time service project, but less intensive than a full-time opportunity lasting months). Although ServiceWorks has found a reasonable balance, this demonstration project reinforces the trade-off between scale and depth. Pushing for large numbers may have shifted at least some ServiceWorks sites toward enrolling not-as-disadvantaged youth or lowering expectations for the Scholars' growth. Focusing resources on fewer youth might produce higher impact and increase the proportion of participants who are particularly disadvantaged.

DEMONSTRATING SKILLS FOR THE LABOR MARKET: Although the evidence collected here shows that ServiceWorks Scholars gain skills, particularly project-management skills, that would help them in the workforce, prospective employers may not recognize these skills, because hiring managers still typically use diplomas and employment history to evaluate applicants. ServiceWorks and similar programs should consider offering reliable certificates or credentials for participants who demonstrate job-relevant skills (and not automatically for those who complete the program). The challenge of connecting youth who have 21st century skills to jobs will require partnerships between youth-serving nonprofits and employers.

INCORPORATING YOUTH INTO DIVERSE, INTERGENERATIONAL TEAMS: At least some ServiceWorks sites bring youth of diverse backgrounds together with adults to collaborate on social issues. Youth contribute distinctive knowledge and talents, as do the VISTA members, unpaid adult volunteers, and program staff and professional educators. The atmosphere is one of mutual respect, shared learning, empathy, and collaboration. Scholars value that atmosphere and find it atypical in their lives. ServiceWorks and similar programs should give explicit attention to creating such climates.

YOUTH VOICE: ServiceWorks encourages Scholars to choose issues and strategies for their service projects. Scholars often identify very difficult issues, discuss these topics with sophistication and nuance, and then struggle to implement service projects that would address the underlying causes that they have identified. Although giving young people choice and voice is important, asking them to plan and implement a whole social change initiative in a short period may produce frustration. Possible solutions include structuring deliberations so that young people are more likely to choose successful projects, connecting youth to ongoing initiatives, or recognizing that they have natural talents and affinities for awareness-raising, media-production, and policy advocacy, and highlighting those activities (along with conventional community service). That would mean viewing programs like ServiceWorks as forms of media-literacy education or Action Civics (a recent movement that emphasizes youth voice in policy) as well as examples of service-learning and workforce education.

The challenge of connecting youth who have 21st century skills to jobs will require partnerships between youth-serving nonprofits and employers.

What ServiceWorks Offers

The Original Theory of Change

ServiceWorks was designed to combine a curriculum composed of volunteer-led training modules, interactions with "success coaches," and hands-on service projects (Equal Measure, 2016). The participating youth, known as "Scholars," would form relationships with adults: program staff, volunteers from the community, and AmeriCorps VISTA members. The adults would help deliver the curriculum, inform and guide the service projects that Scholars chose, and serve as mentors and role-models.

ServiceWorks received funding to make service-learning (service in a community combined with academic instruction and reflection) available to thousands of young people who are overwhelmingly disadvantaged, coming from schools and communities that have low rates of high school graduation and college attendance and high unemployment. The population of concern consisted of "Opportunity Youth" (OY)—young people who are neither in school nor in the workforce—and youth at risk of becoming OY. ServiceWorks aimed to reach these young people through schools, community-based organizations, and other programs.

The intended outcomes included improved educational and job prospects for the disadvantaged youth and learning for the adults. In turn, those outcomes should advance the goal of a society that offers better educational, economic, and civic opportunities for all its youth. A Citi Foundation executive also told me that the grant was designed to be a demonstration project that would encourage other funders to invest in youth civic engagement and generate lessons for these prospective investors.

Put in the form of a Logic Model (Kellogg, 2004), the program's theory of change would look like this:

RESOURCES/INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT
Schools and community-based organizations with access to disadvantaged youth Adult staff, VISTA members, and unpaid volunteers at the sites Curriculum, materials Funds from Citi Foundation	Scholars (youth participants in the program) experience: ■ Educational modules on job skills, leadership, service, etc. ■ Mentoring and coaching ■ Choosing topics for service projects ■ Planning and implementing service projects ■ Reflection and celebration	Community service (e.g., meals served to the homeless, children tutored, educational events or media created for students) Products by the scholars, such as updated résumés or media that they create for the public	For the youth participants: job-relevant skills, knowledge, and connections. Sense of agency and efficacy as citizens and as workers. Membership in empathic and constructive youth groups. For the adults: Rewarding and educational experiences that connect them to disadvantaged youth and the schools and community organizations that serve them. Improved understanding of social issues.	Disadvantaged American youth obtain better jobs and have more positive influence on their communities Other companies, foundations, and government agencies invest in service as a strategy for workforce development. They use "best practices" derived from this demonstration program

THE PARTNERSHIP: ServiceWorks is a partnership with multiple key stakeholders including: Citi Foundation as a funder; Points of Light as the national intermediary organization whose program staff manage numerous ServiceWorks host sites operating out of community based organizations to implement the program; and the Corporation for National and Community Service as a provider of stipended AmeriCorps VISTA members.

Points of Light played the overall operational role, recruiting and selecting host sites, supporting sites in recruiting VISTAs and implementing the program, providing trainings for supervisors and VISTAs, overseeing data collection and reporting, and sharing information and insights across groups.

The largest organization dedicated to volunteer service, Points of Light mobilizes 4 million people every year through more than 250 affiliates. Points of Light launched ServiceWorks as a result of a decision to offer direct programming as a way of enhancing the organization's continuous learning and making a tangible difference in communities across the country.

Points of Light used its national recognition and connections to elevate ServiceWorks and share the model with a larger audience. For instance, the White House disseminated information about ServiceWorks to the 10 cities involved in its national Summer Opportunity Project. As a result, Houston and Los Angeles offered the one-day version of ServiceWorks, known as a Bootcamp, in partnership with the White House and Points of Light. At the beginning of Year 3, the VISTA members involved with ServiceWorks were sworn in by retired General Stanley McChrystal at the Opportunity Nation Summit in New York City and were able to meet other corporate and nonprofit leaders, ring the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange, and lead thousands of volunteers in an effort to pack 500,000 meals for New York's hungry families, elderly and veterans.

In order to make the whole partnership an effective platform for candid discussion and continuous learning, Citi Foundation committed in advance to a three-year grant. Similarly, the Corporation for National and Community Service funds programs in three-year cycles and committed to supporting the VISTAs needed for ServiceWorks as it grew year by year. Through regular meetings of all three entities, the partners have closely monitored performance and adjusted the program design in response to continuous feedback.

The Program as Implemented

ServiceWorks began with 11 partner sites in 10 cities and is now implemented by 21 partner organizations in 14 cities. Thirty sub-grantees have implemented the program at one time during the three years of the program. These organizations include a variety of nonprofits, Points of Light affiliates and volunteer centers, and youth-serving organizations. Sites that enroll ServiceWorks Scholars include, among others, a juvenile detention facility, a community-based program for teen mothers, a full-service community development corporation connected to an important church, and several large urban school systems.

The various partners use somewhat different methods for recruiting Scholars, they reach somewhat different youth populations, and they recruit and deploy volunteers in various ways. Before they began ServiceWorks, some host sites already had service projects and adult volunteers, but they needed to recruit marginalized youth to be Scholars. They often formed relationships with schools or community-based organizations that had access to disadvantaged young people. In contrast, the youth-serving nonprofits that participated in ServiceWorks already reached disadvantaged youth but developed service programs and began to recruit adult volunteers.

The common program elements include interactions with adults and a curriculum of educational modules (originally 10, but now reduced to five) plus three service projects, the last being a capstone project that the Scholars choose and design.

ServiceWorks Scholars meet typical definitions of disadvantaged, marginalized, or underserved young people. According to data assembled by Points of Light in 2015, 81 percent of Scholars described themselves as low-to-moderate income. That year, 71 percent of Scholars reported that their households qualified for or received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Food Stamps, or similar programs or had poor credit scores. Applications in Year 3 indicate that 72 percent of the current Scholars are low-to-moderate income and 70 percent are economically disadvantaged. Although disadvantaged youth can be of any race, it is important to note that a majority of Scholars in Year 3 (51 percent) said they were African-American and 38 percent said they were Latino.

Of those who completed the Year 3 exit survey, the majority were in school (77 percent), and 33 percent said that they are currently working. (These categories may overlap since some students also work.) Many ServiceWorks Scholars are at risk of becoming OY rather than actually being OY today, since OY are defined as not being in either school or work.

The initial proposal envisioned serving 25,000 youth. That has proven to be a "stretch goal" and a source of considerable pressure. About 14,000 total Scholars have been enrolled, with a rapid increase from year to year.

Points of Light innovated during the project by developing two shorter versions of ServiceWorks. About 1,000 of the 14,000 total participants have used an online-only version that offers three modules lasting 15-20 minutes each. After completing a virtual ServiceWorks session, one participant commented: "The best part about this course is [I] got to learn more about myself. I have learned ways I can help my community more, and ways I already do help." The online version has strong potential to be integrated into face-to-face youth programming in many contexts. One adult organizer of a program for girls that emphasizes technology wrote, "We are incredibly happy with the education our students received [from the online modules] and we are looking forward to using this service again."

Points of Light has also developed a concise, face-to-face version of ServiceWorks, called Bootcamps, which consists of several training sessions and a service project during a single day. The Bootcamp model arose directly as result of feedback from Scholars and has been available since January 2015 to Scholars between the ages of 16 and 24. The goals (similar to those of the full program) are to develop workplace skills, expand personal networks, and spark Scholars' interest in becoming involved in the longer ServiceWorks experience or other service projects. A total of 636 Scholars participated in a ServiceWorks Bootcamp in Year 2, and 340 so far in Year 3. Some host sites have run their own Bootcamps in situations when this one-day model

is more practical than the full curriculum. At the national level, Points of Light has operated three single-day Bootcamps (lasting seven hours each) that have engaged an additional total of 156 young adults in Detroit, Houston, and Los Angeles.

This evaluation did not collect original data about the online modules or Bootcamps. Online participants did complete an exit survey and most indicated that they had learned various skills relevant to employment, civic skills (such as identifying community issues and assets), and motivations and confidence to participate in their communities. Sixty-nine percent said they would recommend the online course to a friend, and a majority (58 percent) thought the length of the course was "just right," suggesting that it has a market.

In early program documents, "success coaching" or mentoring was described as a third equally important component of the program, along with the curriculum of training modules and community service. The goal was a one-to-one ratio of committed adult mentors to Scholars. To this day, some Scholars are receiving valuable one-on-one mentoring. One former Scholar told me that his mentor, whom he met through ServiceWorks, was still "like a brother to him." However, the same Scholar observed inconsistent coaching for other youth in his program site. I talked to some site supervisors whose local programs had largely dropped the coaching element of ServiceWorks. But even in those sites, youth interact with VISTA members and paid teachers or other staff. Sites are using supplemental workshops to provide content based on the cohorts' needs and to accomplish some of the original goals of success coaching (such as action planning, setting visions, and writing résumés) in group settings.

Despite these indications of modest changes and divergences from the Logic Model shown above, the model generally reflects the program as implemented in practice. Young people who are at risk of becoming OY receive ServiceWorks' educational modules and conduct community service in partnership with adults.

Research in Support of Service as a Pathway to College and Career

The ServiceWorks model is consistent with substantial evidence from a variety of fields, including experiential learning and theories of social entrepreneurship and social change. Here I focus on two particularly relevant bodies of research: on OY and on economic benefits of service.

The Need to Invest in Opportunity Youth

Opportunity Youth are defined by not being in school or college or the workforce. About 5.5 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 are OY (Opportunity Nation, n.d.). Their circumstances and outcomes are very difficult. Belfield, Levin & Rosen attribute 63 percent of all youth crime to OY and find that OY suffer disproportionately from mental illness and drug abuse. By age 28, only about 1 percent of former OY have attained an associate's or bachelor's degree. Those OY who are considered "chronically" disconnected attain a mean income of just $15,000 by the second half of their 20s (Belfield, Levin & Rosen, 2012).

These statistics are dire, and the definition is posed in terms of deficits: a *lack* of education and jobs leading to *poor* outcomes. However, OY leaders advocate for the "opportunity" label for their own group, in contrast to words like "disadvantaged" or "disconnected," because it "reflects the twin facts that we are seeking opportunity and that we offer a major opportunity to our nation if it will invest in us and our peers" (Opportunity Youth United, n.d.). Indeed, as the next section shows, when OY receive opportunities to serve their communities, they can shift from a trajectory of distress and burden on society to one of success and contribution to society.

Unless organizations make specific commitments to engage OY in civic work and leadership, these young people are unlikely to experience positive opportunities. Between 2008 and 2010, my colleagues and I conducted 20 focus groups with urban young adults who had never attended college. These youth told us that institutions did not *want* them to engage and that there were few role models of engaged citizens in their communities. Many thought that they had skills that they could contribute but they lacked opportunities to use their skills. Many reported that they had helped individuals in their own families and neighborhoods, but they did not think of those activities when we asked them about making change in their communities. Many were highly aware of political and social issues but saw no way to affect them (Godsay, Kawashima-Ginsberg, Kiesa, and Levine, 2012).

On the other hand, when we interviewed graduates of the YouthBuild program, which combines community service, leadership, and GED preparation for OY, many reported that being called to serve and lead and feeling a sense of investment had put them on a trajectory to personal success and contribution (CIRCLE, 2012).

Opportunity Youth are defined by not being in school or college or the workforce.

21st Century Employment Requires Skills That Service Can Teach

Community service and service-learning programs enhance skills, knowledge, and networks that are valuable in the workplace. Previous research finds that volunteers who are unemployed are 27 percent more likely to have a paid job one year later than those who are unemployed but do not volunteer (Spera, Ghertner, Nerino, & DiTommaso, 2015). That effect is relatively strong for people who might otherwise be disadvantaged in the labor market, such as individuals without college experience and those who live in rural areas.

Day & Devlin (1998) find that volunteering increases individuals' earnings. National service participation has been found to boost "basic work skills, including gathering and analyzing information, motivating coworkers, and managing time" (Abt Associates, 2007). Employers say they value service as preparation for work. In a survey of human resource executives, the respondents said that volunteerism provides benefits to their organizations and skills-based volunteering can increase a job candidate's chances to be hired (Deloitte, 2013).

Participants in service programs often report that they have gained advantage in the labor market. For example, 86 percent of participants in Youth Corps said they had gained "skills for getting a better job/career," 83 percent said their service helped them explore "future job/education interests," and 91 percent thought it would "look good on [their] résumé" (Price et al, 2011).

Teenagers who participate in community service have much better educational outcomes than their peers who don't participate, and that effect applies even when the service is required (Dávila & Mora, 2007; Anderson-Butcher, Newsome, & Ferrari, 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Young people—particularly at-risk youth—who are enrolled in certain service-related programs see substantial improvements in academic and economic outcomes (CIRCLE, 2012; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Millenky, Bloom, Muller-Ravett, & Broadus, 2011). Celio and colleagues (2011) combined 62 studies of service-learning involving 11,837 students into a meta-analysis. Employment and job skills had been too rarely measured to be included in this study, but the authors found that service-learning had positive effects on attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, many partnerships that are successfully using the Jobs for America's Graduates model to "help youth complete high school, build skills and obtain jobs and careers… incorporate service-learning projects, volunteerism, fundraising and job shadowing for participants" (personal communication, March 2017).

Some explanations of the link between volunteer service and job success cite "soft skills," a concept that has become highly influential and prominent in recent decades. Considerable evidence shows that success in the labor market and in the workplace depends more on workers' ability to understand one another, form relationships, collaborate, persist in the face of adversity, and act accountably than with any specific "hard skills" (from algebra to welding) that they may acquire in school or training programs. In turn, service and service-learning are promising ways to develop these soft skills.

The phrase "soft skills" has been criticized for being vague and for implying that the skills in question are cognitively easy. Calkins (2015) writes:

> *Collaboration? Persistence? Self-management? Grit? Are these really traits that don't require any form of cognition? One of our [Next Generation Learning*

Challenge] grantees describes the grit he sees in his middle school students who have to plot their walking route to school with care, lest they get shot. That's Cognition with a capital C. And would it seem appropriate to call these students' courage, tenacity, resilience, and decision-making ability "soft"?

Calkins advocates the word "agency" as an alternative to "soft skills" (see also Larson & Angus, 2011). Another popular term is "21st century skills" (Hobson, 2016). In an overview of the Pathways to Progress Portfolio, Equal Measure (2016) discusses "power skills," mentioning "time management" and "self-efficacy."

The evidence collected in this evaluation suggests that *project management* may be the most accurate way to describe some of the most valuable advanced skills that Scholars learn in service-learning programs like ServiceWorks. The Scholars' service projects are complex. Several youth and adults typically provide service to multiple recipients. Scholars must not only coordinate numerous people but also think about locations, scheduling, materials, and resources. All these practical aspects of their project must come together so that it occurs on time and with positive results. In my interviews, several participants seemed deeply satisfied by their own newfound ability to manage projects in teams. Two staffers and an adult volunteer also named project management as a valuable skill taught by the program.

Reed Larson, a distinguished psychologist, uses the word "initiative" for a set of skills that are needed for project management, including long-range planning, strategic thinking, and deliberation about both means and ends (all highly cognitive achievements, but ones that require thinking and working together). He finds that most school assignments do not teach initiative because they are given to individuals to complete quickly and with tight control. However, when teenagers are encouraged to define and address significant public problems together by managing their own projects, many of them rise well to the challenge (Larson, 2000).

A related literature concerns "people skills." For Borghans et al (2006), this phrase means a preference for work that requires contact with people and a "preference for working for the presumed good of people." They find that employees who have "people skills" have gained market value rapidly in Britain, Germany and the United States since 1970 as work has changed to be less regimented and more interpersonal. They also find that levels of sociability among young people predict their acquisition of people skills and their wages in adulthood.

Whether called "agency," "initiative," "soft skills," or "people skills," the capacities and dispositions that are valuable in service and service-learning are also prized in the workforce. It therefore makes theoretical sense to invest in service-learning as a way to enhance young people's employment prospects.

Whether called "agency," "initiative," "soft skills," or "people skills," the capacities and dispositions that are valuable in service and service-learning are also prized in the workforce.

The ServiceWorks Experience

MOTIVATIONS: Scholars whom I interviewed cited a mix of motivations for enrolling in ServiceWorks. Some were required to complete hours of service for graduation, and ServiceWorks offered a way to do that. However, one former Scholar who faced a service requirement insisted that meeting the mandate was not her motive and that she had done more than the necessary hours. She said that she wanted a "wake up call" because "other people have more challenging lives that I have." She and several of her peers mentioned a desire to "give back" through service. Some Scholars are OY who are seeking pathways to jobs.

TRAINING SESSIONS: Scholars typically participate in five modules. Interviewees and coaches recalled such topics as public speaking, time-management, and mock interviews. At least in practice, the selected modules vary from site to site, often in response to distinctive needs. For example, learning to complete college financial aid applications is an appropriate lesson in a site where many Scholars are applying or might apply to college, but mock job interviews are more relevant in sites for non-college-bound young adults.

Scholars felt that these lessons were different from high school courses in two main respects. The topics were more applied and job-related than their high school courses, and the formats were more interactive. One alumna told me that she had attended a college prep high school that she regarded as excellent, but she still thought that the ServiceWorks training modules were more interactive than her classes had been. A different interviewee recalled mock interviews conducted by VISTAs and said, "That was really helpful!" She thought the interview practice had prepared her get a fast-food service job later.

Survey data collected from VISTAs and my interviews of former Scholars offer somewhat discrepant assessments of the curriculum. The Scholars were uniformly enthusiastic; the VISTAs tended to be critical. In Year 2, VISTAs reported that the curriculum should be changed to be more "participatory" and "dynamic." One VISTA wrote in an open-ended exit survey, "the activities are not engaging. I actually am in the age range of 16 to 24 years, and I can vouch that I would not like the activities." One explanation for the discrepancy could be that the sample of Scholar interviewees was biased in favor of those who were enthusiastic. A

different explanation is that the modules *as actually implemented* are often more dynamic than they seem on paper because adult leaders customize them for their Scholars. For example, the same VISTA who said that she would not like the assigned activities also wrote, "Our site added a lot of TEDTalks to spark discussions, and we tried to come up with activities to get the scholars up and moving."

Some Scholars felt that the lessons were rushed, but the number of modules has been cut from ten to five since some of my interviewees completed ServiceWorks. One supporting reason to cut that number was evidence in survey data that Scholars did not gain more (from pre-test to post-test) if they had taken more modules. Spending more time on fewer modules may be at least as effective. Year 1 data also suggested which modules were most related to gains in measured outcomes, and the less effective modules were chosen to be dropped.

SERVICE PROJECTS: Typically, scholars complete three service projects, the last of which is a "capstone" that is chosen, designed, and implemented collectively by the Scholars. The other projects may be one-time events chosen by program staff or VISTAs. In survey data, Scholars identify the capstone project as the best and most important aspect of the program.

Several examples described to me involved feeding homeless people. In one case, the Scholars chose (by a narrow vote) to serve homeless veterans. An interviewee deplored the government's poor treatment of veterans, whom he called "heroes." While serving food to these homeless men, the Scholars also talked to them, which was "actually kind of sad," revealing some "real tough stories." In a different case, students were disappointed

by the small number of homeless people who appeared at the service site, but they drove around the neighborhood until they had distributed all the food to people who needed it. The interviewee emphasized that because it was her neighborhood, she knew where needy people were.

Other examples involved educating younger children in elementary schools. One Scholar said that the children's attention spans weren't what she and her peers had expected, so the lesson didn't go well. However, she said, "We learned a lot about talking to little kids."

In one case, Scholars in a high-crime urban neighborhood spent three weeks discussing various issues before choosing homicide and then struggled to decide what to do about it. An adult volunteer involved with the project—a middle-class white woman who had grown up in Europe—thought "How am I going to prevent gun violence with a bunch of kids?" She asked what they wanted to do and got answers that didn't seem to be solutions, such as planting trees. She looked up gun violence online and read that school shooters are often socially isolated. She suggested that the group address loneliness and a lack of empathy as a root cause of violence. At a different point in the interview, she said that when a former gang-member came to talk to the Scholars, it became clear that several of the Scholars were currently members of gangs, which raises some doubts about whether loneliness is the cause of gun violence in their community. Still, the Scholars accepted her guidance, and the anti-homicide project morphed into distributing wristbands about smiling, plus a school assembly against violence, with videos and speakers. The video that the Scholars made for this assembly made an effective case that gun violence is a scourge in their community and blamed public policy for it.

I asked a former Scholar who had been in this group whether his peers were satisfied with having addressed gun violence with wristbands and an assembly. He said, "Everybody was OK with it. I think we made a change." He said that a wristband reminding people to smile could "light up their day." He thought the Scholars' message sensitized a lot of people. "We're in [city name withheld], right? People actually know people who have died. They're proud that somebody came out and talked about it. They could open up." The adult volunteer definitely felt that the students felt heard and had a sense of accomplishment.

Scholars incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility chose to build Lego toys, sew stuff bears, and write and perform rap songs for hospitalized young children, prompted by one Scholar's recollection of his own lonely experience in a hospital. These were appropriate service projects for this group, because they are not permitted to leave the facility, and it was authentically based in their experience. A staff member said, "We're really cracking the code on empathy."

One site supervisor observed that Scholars who are high school students may be more ready to address the political context and social determinants of social problems than OY are, because OY face more immediate challenges in their own lives.

A different supervisor reported that students enjoy the planned service projects more than the final capstone, because the former are better planned. However, she also thought that they learned more from the capstones—despite their discomfort.

In 2016, the question arose in several sites whether to address issues of racial profiling and allegations of violence by police. One group considered that option but chose instead to work on animal rights, with a focus on dog fighting. In another city, the girls favored working on police issues but the boys "said 'no way'!" according to a staffer who observed their deliberations. Still, at least two groups were able to organize productive encounters with police as their service projects.

I also heard about projects that involved clothing drives, community gardens, health screenings, murals, and a range of other activities.

COACHING: As noted earlier, the original vision of intense "success coaching" with a one-to-one coach-to-Scholar ratio has not proven possible.

Several Scholars did describe valuable interactions with their coaches. One said that she had been back in touch with a coach recently for a recommendation. Another gave partial credit to her mentor for getting her on track to community college, which she now attends. "I did [college] to get her off my back," she said, with some humor but probably also some seriousness. The coaches I interviewed felt that they had taught and modeled ways of acting that are expected in the workplace. Mutual respect, accountability, putting cell phones away, and making eye contact were mentioned.

My staff interviewees acknowledged that the quality of adult volunteers varies, but some volunteers are "incredible." In one case, an extraordinarily accomplished diplomat, an African-American woman originally from the same neighborhood as the Scholars she advised, was able to share her insights and inspirational story with them. That was "magical," according to a staff member who observed the session.

However, some Scholars did not recall having been coached. That is consistent with the Points of Light survey data, which show that 55 percent of Scholars reported no coaching. One interviewee who was pleased with his own coach thought that training for coaches should be more consistent, a view echoed by one of the adult volunteers I interviewed. She had formerly received training as a life coach, and she observed a fellow coach telling the Scholars about the bad things he had done in his youth, which she regarded as poor practice. ("It's not about *you.*") One interviewee simply said that he'd tried once to call his coach, but the man was "very busy," and he didn't try again.

In one ServiceWorks site, recruiting adults had proven too difficult and the site had turned to Big Brothers/Big Sisters, which already provided "success coaches" to all the students in the high schools where they worked. In another site, the supervisor was skeptical that middle-class adults would be appropriate mentors for her highly disconnected young adult Scholars unless they first received specialized training. Both of these informants believed that occasional interactions lacked value and that adult volunteers were unlikely to commit to sufficient time. One site supervisor acknowledged that if she could design the program, it would not involve recruiting adults as volunteers. She did see potential in recruiting current college students who had been disconnected youth to share their experiences. Likewise, one VISTA wrote in an open-ended exit survey, "youth that we reach out to are 17-18 years old and do not want to talk to a random adult to help them with their goals. The youth often saw the relationship as forced and unnatural so they did not respond to volunteer efforts." But in the same survey, a VISTA at a different site said that the mentoring was "the best portion of our program."

When I asked former Scholars about mentoring and coaching, many referred to their interactions with adults while they were working in groups on the training modules or service projects. Although that kind of interaction is not literally what was envisioned under the heading of "success coaching," small-group work can be an effective form of mentoring. A site supervisor who thought that recruiting adequate numbers of success coaches was a "struggle" said that even communicating with an adult by email or text message can be useful and can partially substitute for face-to-face mentoring.

In sum, adult mentoring remains a distinctive and valuable aspect of ServiceWorks even if it is often delivered in groups.

THE COMMUNITY OF PEERS: **Several interviewees said that they especially valued the community of peers that formed through ServiceWorks.** A consistent theme was the growing sense of empathy and unity during the course of the service program. At first, the Scholars weren't coherent at all, one adult told me, but they became a functioning team. "A real give-and-take community— that was what was built," one Scholar said.

Commonly, the team consists of students from one school or community-based organization plus a small number of VISTAs, staff, and/or unpaid volunteers. However, ServiceWorks can draw together people from more diverse backgrounds than that. At one site, the Scholars include current participants from a YouthBuild GED program, current high school students from a college prep charter school, and young adults involved with the YMCA. In the same program, the adult volunteers include people who otherwise perform office work at the host nonprofit organization, members of an Asian-American church located in a different part of the city, and college student resident advisors who conduct service. The confluence of these six or more sources of people could produce powerful new social ties.

THE OVERALL CLIMATE OF THE PROGRAM: **Youth learn not just from specific experiences and interventions but also from the climates in which they spend time.** Several of my interviewees described the atmosphere of a ServiceWorks session as strikingly different from its environment: an island of positive collaboration in a sea of chaos. A Scholar who had formerly dropped out of high school and enrolled in ServiceWorks through a community-based organization told me that ServiceWorks was "totally different" from high school. "School is always the adults' way," she said. "They don't really care

what the kids say." In contrast, her ServiceWorks leader "really responded" to the Scholars' expressed needs for teaching modules and topics. Her generalization about public school teachers may not be objectively valid, but her subjective opinion is important. She felt that ServiceWorks "puts you on the right path, not just career-wise but also in your mind, emotionally." When I asked her at the end of the interview whether there was anything she wanted to add, she said, "I *enjoyed* it."

The Coach Handbook for ServiceWorks informs volunteers that "ServiceWorks provides a real world classroom for young adults who have become disconnected from school or work." One site supervisor told me that in badly stressed schools and communities, ServiceWorks allows youth to achieve success and offers them a sense of reciprocity: "Yes, the community owes you something, but you owe something, too." That stance implies that the young people are treated as assets to the community with an ability to contribute, not as risks to the community who need to be supervised and remediated. This shift is consistent with the large literature on Positive Youth Development as an approach to enhancing the prospects of young adults (e.g, Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2007). A site supervisor who particularly focuses on OY told me that many of her Scholars "had never been involved in something like this before, where they were seen as leaders." In exit survey data collected in Year 3, 70 percent of Scholars reported that they had come to "feel more supported by the community."

Creating conditions in which diverse youth and adults can demonstrate authentic mutual respect and collaborate effectively is one of the most impressive aspects of ServiceWorks.

Youth learn not just from specific experiences and interventions but also from the climates in which they spend time.

Effects on Participants

This section combines evidence collected by Points of Light in surveys plus my own interviews to support conclusions about the impact of ServiceWorks on the Scholars and participating adults. Methodological limitations and qualifications (such as the lack of a control group and my dependence on data from individuals who had completed the program and were willing to offer feedback) are discussed in greater detail in the Appendix.

Effects on Scholars

CHANGES IN SKILLS: **Points of Light analyzed pre-test/post-test survey data for 354 Scholars in nine sites.** The domains tested were "community leadership," "project planning," "employment & education attitudes," and "strength-based network[s]." Changes from pre- to post-test were positive and significant for all the domains. Not only did mean scores increase, but 84 percent of individuals scored higher on at least one domain at the beginning than at the end. Of particular interest, the number of connections to people and associations reported by each Scholar rose by an average of 54 percent from pre-test to post-test, reflecting a substantial increase in their social capital.

Many of these survey items asked Scholars' to report their own confidence that they could do various things, from making a difference in their community to solving problems in their own lives. The results should be interpreted as evidence of confidence or self-efficacy as much as actual skills, but confidence is valuable.

IMPACT ON EFFICACY: **Some Scholars clearly gained efficacy, or a sense they could be effective in community work.** "When I figured out I could help, that's when I gave my best" said a former Scholar who learned through his team's service project (a skit for younger kids) that he was a "very good actor" and is now an arts major in college. This was an "undiscovered skill," he said. He added that he was already headed to college, but ServiceWorks came "just in time" to help him choose a course of study. He also reported that he gained "drive" to work hard and at length on tasks like video-editing once he found an appreciative audience.

For a sample of 262 Scholars in Year 2 who provided both pre-test and post-test data, the average level of efficacy rose slightly. (The survey item asked each Scholar to say whether he or she was "confident that I can help make a difference in the community.") However, the changes in the mean disguise significant variation among Scholars. As this graph shows, about one-quarter of the Scholars increased their efficacy during the course of the program, just over one-fifth saw their efficacy fall, and slightly over half reported no change.

CHANGE IN EFFICACY FROM PRE-TEST TO POST-TEST
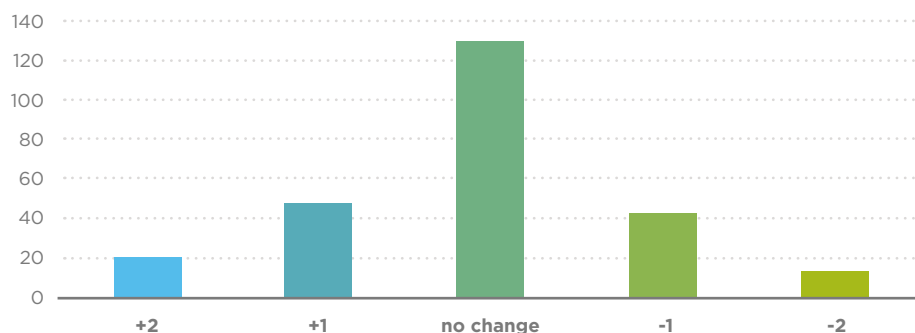
My interviewees all defended their actual service projects as effective. However, the in-house analysts of the Points of Light survey data write, "Participating in service tends to reduce the scores on community outcomes; we believe this might be related to exposure to the magnitude of community problems, which may negatively impact perceived efficacy." Several previous studies have explored a frequent tendency for disadvantaged young adults to lose efficacy as a result of service or civic engagement experiences. Their initial optimism that they can be effective fades in the face of obdurate social problems, and they draw negative conclusions when they settle for projects that do not achieve substantial social change (Rubin, 2007; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Fehrman & Schutz, 2011).

EFFECTS ON CAREER AND COLLEGE:

A ServiceWorks site supervisor said that disconnected youth often do not understand the steps necessary to reach their career goals. That means that explicit instruction about career pathways can be valuable. Sixty-two percent of Scholars who completed the exit survey in Year 3 said that ServiceWorks had "opened up job or career opportunities" for them personally, and 84 percent said they had "learned to find ways to achieve [their] goals."

Some interviewees described concrete impacts on their career trajectories, from obtaining a fast food job as a result of a mock interview to selecting a different major. One interviewee who is now in community college said that "definitely wasn't the plan" when she started ServiceWorks, having previously dropped out of high school and then received a GED. She thought that ServiceWorks had "definitely helped" to get her "on track." One young woman said her goal was to be a lawyer and she didn't find the ServiceWorks experience relevant to that goal, but most saw it as relevant.

Most of the former Scholars I interviewed are now enrolled in community colleges or four-year colleges, although one is waiting for financial assistance before being able to attend. Their success could be a result of the program, and indeed, two Scholar alumnae whom I interviewed cited ServiceWorks as a reason they are now in college. However, two other interviewees thought they had been on the path to graduation already, and both described upbringings that were relatively supportive. Still, program staff felt that Scholars like the latter two were positive outliers. Any school- or community-based program aimed generally at disadvantaged youth will naturally include some college-bound youth unless they are intentionally screened out, which would seem unwise and unfair.

GROWING VOICE: At least three different interviewees described themselves as shy before ServiceWorks and said that they had "opened up" as a result of being encouraged to express their views in a friendly group of peers and an informal setting.
One interviewee said that was her original motivation for participating; she wanted to "push herself out of her comfort zone" by learning to speak up. Another interviewee, who was already outspoken prior to the program, said he observed his peers become more confident in speaking; he is now a friend of a young woman who had started off too shy to speak to strangers. Some participants noted that they learned public speaking skills or realized they were talented at communication.

VARIATION BY SITE: The survey data reveal substantially different patterns at the various sites.
Differences in the magnitude of change would be expected, not only as a result of varying program quality but also because the contexts and participants vary greatly. Of more interest is a possible tradeoff that results from focusing on different outcomes in a limited amount of time. The Miami site, described as having a "singular focus on workforce development" achieved the largest gains on employment and education attitudes but saw barely any change on community leadership. The Chicago site saw minor negative change on employment and education attitudes but the second-most growth in community leadership. Given limited hours, it may be necessary to choose a focus in order to see substantial growth.

All former Scholar interviewees said that they would do the program again and would recommend it to younger peers. One person has actually recruited his brother, who is enrolled now.

Effects on Adults

VISTA MEMBERS: One category of adults consists of VISTAs. A national staff person told me that originally, employing VISTAs was seen as a practical and cost-effective way to "get the job done." But VISTAs are mostly young adults themselves, and some are former OY or otherwise disadvantaged. Some need significant help with personal financial management and literacy, especially given their low stipends.

Participating VISTAs have the opportunity to recruit and train volunteers to implement training and coaching sessions, form peer-like bonds with Scholars to help them make progress on program activities, plan and participate in service projects, collect and report program data, attend professional development workshops/webinars, and play other roles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that VISTAs learn somewhat similar skills (including networking, communication, and teamwork) as the Scholars do. In an open-ended exit survey, several VISTAs cited their own growth in confidence in public speaking, project management, and leadership. A site supervisor told me that even the VISTAs who happen to serve in the same communities where they grew up learn "how to operate in unfamiliar settings." A current VISTA working with ServiceWorks has blogged that her service in a juvenile detention facility not only taught her "important character lessons, but also changed my life trajectory" (Cohn, 2017).

In addition, VISTAs use this experience to develop relationships and make connections for the future. At least one VISTA had recently graduated from YouthBuild and is now an effective advocate for that program. Following their ServiceWorks term, a few other VISTAs have joined their host site as a full-time staff member, or decided to pursue a career in nonprofit or education, as a result of their ServiceWorks experience.

According to a survey of site supervisors conducted by Points of Light, many VISTAs have needed their own training in "email etiquette, professional phone communication ... self regulation, time management, and professionalism, so that [they] were able to appropriately pass these topics and skills along to the Scholars they served." Several staff told me that working with VISTAs was quite challenging due to the range of motivations and skills. One even thought that it was the hardest part of the

whole ServiceWorks program. She felt that her first cohort of VISTAs was not ready to represent her organization and that she had spent half her time on basic professional development. Her second cohort was stronger, but in part because it started larger and she lost the least qualified VISTAs to attrition. In a survey conducted by Points of Light, the VISTAs rated the training they received as moderately good and somewhat useful.

On one hand, evidence shows that VISTAs are not ready to lead youth to the degree that may have been anticipated. On the other hand, they learn a great deal themselves during their ServiceWorks experience.

OTHER ADULTS: Another category of adults consists of volunteers who want to serve youth or to gain experience with mentoring or life coaching. My interviews suggest that they learn a great deal from talking with low-income urban youth about social problems in their communities.

This is a substantial group. As of March 2017, the volunteers involved in Year 3 of the program included 435 long-term trainers, success coaches, and supplemental workshop facilitators, plus 1,951 volunteers who helped with one or more service project. Some of these volunteers are also paid staff of the local partner organizations whose regular jobs do not include direct work with youth. Like the unpaid volunteers, these staffers receive opportunities through ServiceWorks that are not part of their job descriptions, which they value as a way to keep connected to the grassroots.

One former volunteer said that working in the high school "was a reality check" and "an eye-opener." She recounted the sight of metal detectors and the general chaos she perceived in the school. For instance, her Scholar group was not allowed to use the auditorium for the assembly they had planned because it was considered too dangerous to convene large numbers of students in one room. "This is not the life I have been living," she told me. She also reported having achieved considerable empathy with her Scholars group by sharing some of her struggles as a mother, and they had responded by expressing gratitude for their own parents. Increased understanding and empathy by middle-class volunteers would be an important impact, if it happens frequently.

The Scale and Depth of the Program

In the real world, all programs have finite resources and must choose how many people to recruit and how much attention to devote to each person. Scale and depth trade off. The evidence from ServiceWorks suggests some reasons to adjust the balance.

My informants expressed various views of the numerical recruitment target: 25,000 youth over three years. Some program staff believe that the target remains achievable given the available resources, and that any reduction in the scale would mean leaving out some youth who could be served. Reaching 25,000 youth still seems manageable, one staff person told me, once you think of it broken down by site. These informants also believe that setting a "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" drives creative innovation. Success would be attractive to other potential investors.

However, others believe that the numerical target has proven to be unrealistic and that the pressure downward on sites has been unhelpful. One site that normally works with out-of-school young adults who definitely qualify as OY told me that they had begun offering high school versions of ServiceWorks in order to meet their recruitment targets, which represented a diversion from their mission of serving street youth. A different site said that recruitment had been straightforward because they work in high schools but acknowledged that their youth are not as disadvantaged as some. Another staffer feared that driving the numerical targets risked distorting the work. It's not about how many youth can "check the box," she said, or being able to list 25,000 individuals who have completed five modules and three service projects. That can "cause us to lose sight of what it truly means."

As it is implemented today, I would describe ServiceWorks as a medium-dosage program. Some youth development programs, like YouthBuild and Job Corps, require many hundreds of hours of work and provide salaries, meals, or other "wrap-around" benefits to the participants. The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe ProgramYouth includes a 20-week residential phase (Millenky, Bloom, Muller-Ravett & Broadus, 2011). Youth organizing programs often engage the same young people in advocacy campaigns for a few hours per week over several years. At the opposite extreme, many service experiences are one-time events lasting a few hours.

As a medium-dosage program, ServiceWorks does offer its participants a considerable amount of time and attention. However, the time squeeze is evident. One staffer told me that youth often engage in "rich conversations" about issues in their community, but then the deadline looms to complete an actual service project. "When you have to knock it out on one Saturday," she said, the service project can look inadequate to the students' own understanding of the issue. For instance, she mentioned a rich discussion about food insecurity, food policy, and related topics. "Handing out boxed lunches" on one service day didn't match that discussion.

The Points of Light survey data suggest that participants gain more community leadership, project planning skills, attitudes relevant to employment and education, and network ties if they receive more rather than less than the average dosage, although the differences are not very large. Scholars who received 15.75 hours or more of total programming saw by far the greatest changes from pre-test to post-test. Those who received 13.25 hours or less actually saw a small decline in employment and education attitudes, although that result may not be meaningful given the small sample size. Reducing the number of participants might allow the length and intensity of the experience for each Scholar to be greater and/or allow sites to direct their resources to the most underserved youth.

Major Learnings from the Program

ServiceWorks' Accomplishments

The evidence collected for this evaluation suggests that many participants who complete ServiceWorks see significant gains in confidence and skills (including professionalism, interpersonal skills, and project management) that are relevant for college and careers. They form new and valuable relationships with peers and adults: if not on a one-to-one basis, then at least in small groups.

They report substantial voice and agency in choosing topics for service and planning and implementing projects. Their projects vary in ambition and impact, but most are credible public service efforts. An initially long and demanding set of training modules has been streamlined, and program sites have adjusted to not being able to recruit enough adult volunteers for one-on-one mentoring by adding supplemental workshops, corporate coach days, and small group sessions. Perhaps more important than any specific training, service project, or relationship is an overall climate that favors youth voice, demands accountability, and treats youth as assets. Adults also report learning from their experiences as mentors, and the VISTAs' learning needs and outcomes resemble those of the Scholars.

ServiceWorks' Challenges

At least one of the former Scholars I interviewed thought that nothing should be changed; ServiceWorks was ideal as she experienced it. But every program should be open to change, and this evaluation suggests some areas for improvement.

TRACKING ATTRITION: I would suggest that the program find ways to track attrition rates and focus attention on sites where many youth do not complete the program. Only a fairly small proportion of Scholars complete the exit survey. I am convinced that is because of a low response rate, not because most Scholars drop out of the program. Nevertheless, the program needs to know how many Scholars fail to complete, and why. Relatedly, ServiceWorks should consider developing consistent requirements that must be met to graduate from the program.

IMPROVING ADULTS' PREPARATION: Program staff acknowledge that training for volunteers and VISTAs probably needs to be strengthened and made more consistent.

Learnings for the Field

The following points are less recommendations for improvements in ServiceWorks than issues for the whole field of youth development to consider. They emerge from the experience of this large demonstration project.

ADJUSTING THE BALANCE BETWEEN YOUTH VOICE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT: As noted earlier, disadvantaged youth are likely to choose highly challenging issues to address, such as homicide or police violence. They may then struggle to identify activities that they can design and conduct within the span of the program that will make a significant difference. A national staffer told me that this challenge is more prevalent in school sites than in community-based organizations that offer other service projects that youth can plug into.

One solution may be careful and extensive reflection after the service that allows the Scholars to explore their authentic feelings about what they accomplished and consider next steps. We do not have evidence at this point to know whether such reflection is effective.

Another solution is to guide Scholars toward manageable topics. However, that response conflicts with giving youth maximum voice and choice. A site supervisor I interviewed said her program gives the Scholars "some topics to go off of, but ultimately it's their choice."

A third approach is to encourage each group of Scholars to build on previous Scholars' work, because efforts sustained over time have a greater chance of changing communities. That approach would also limit youth voice somewhat, but Scholars would mainly be constrained by previous decisions also made by youth. A site supervisor told me there is a "certain comfort in knowing that you can repeat something and build on it," but "it's always important to encourage creativity." A national staffer echoed this "balance between 'What do the kids want?' and what's already shaking in the community." This is a genuine trade-off.

Another aspect of youth voice is participants' influence on the ServiceWorks program as a whole. Points of Light has been diligent about collecting data from participants, including open-ended opinion questions. Site supervisors appear attuned to feedback from their Scholars. However, it is not clear that youth really have a role in assessing and modifying the program. A Citi Foundation executive reflected that "youth should be at the center," and it's important never to "lose the youth voice." She wondered whether the partnership of the Citi Foundation, Points of Light, and AmeriCorps should have done more to include youth voice in its deliberations.

INCORPORATING POLICY ADVOCACY:
In the anti-homicide project described earlier, the students identified public policies as a cause of the problem, but their service project addressed students' empathy, not policy. A Scholar alumna from a different site told me that she wished ServiceWorks would create opportunities to meet members of the city council.

These examples raise the general question of whether and how Scholars can analyze and address policy and policymakers, whether in government or in the private sector. A recent movement—although it draws on precedents going back to the early 1900s—is Action Civics (Gingold, 2013). In typical Action Civics programs, as in ServiceWorks, students discuss social problems, choose a problem to address with their own efforts, implement their plan, and reflect. Action Civics thus overlaps in practice with service-learning. But Action Civics proposes that youth should develop identities as citizens

(people who have rights and powers in relation to institutions) not as volunteers or servers. Since ServiceWorks Scholars understand the relevance of policy, it may be worth drawing on some of the experiences of Action Civics.

FOCUSING ON COMMUNICATIONS: **Many Scholars' service projects involved elements of communications or awareness-raising: Scholars organized or produced school assemblies, videos, murals, and forums for invited speakers.** A national staff member estimated that communications was an aspect of about half of all the capstone projects nationwide. Perhaps the most consistent form of growth noted in my interviews with Scholars was increased confidence in speaking publicly.

Since youth have considerable power as communicators, and since effective communication requires skills that are highly relevant to the 21st century workplace, it may be worth focusing more attention on communications. ServiceWorks could be connected to the burgeoning fields of youth media production and media literacy, which now emphasize social media as well as traditional modes of communication.

CAPTURING VALUE FOR THE LABOR MARKET:
Both previous research on service as preparation for the 21st century workforce and the evidence collected for this evaluation suggest that Scholars are learning concrete skills that have value in the labor market.

However, prospective employers may not recognize that Scholar alumni have these skills. Employers still use educational credentials and previous jobs as the main indicators of qualifications. If a disadvantaged young adult demonstrates exceptional communications skills in ServiceWorks, this will not be evident on a résumé unless employers come to believe that completing ServiceWorks reliably produces such outcomes for all participants. A solution is to develop rigorous, portable signifiers of specific skills—"badges" or "microcredentials"— and award them to youth who demonstrate capacity (Sullivan, 2013). This solution would require ongoing partnerships between youth-serving NGOs, such as Points of Light, and major employers in the for-profit and public sectors.

Conclusion

ServiceWorks is one of the largest and most robust efforts in the United States today to shift the basic way we treat disadvantaged youth. A deficit model remains prevalent, in which low-income youth, youth from poorly resourced schools and communities, and urban youth of color are treated as "at risk" of harming themselves or society. They are often separated from adult society in schools or prisons, and offered a mix of surveillance, discipline, and remedial education aimed at getting them through the transition to adulthood without crises. Whether or not this approach to adolescence was acceptable at a time when most young people could find employment in farms and factories, it is clearly failing today. The large body of research on Opportunity Youth, on the 21st century labor market, and on youth development suggest that the deficit model is misguided. Young people should be treated as assets who can contribute distinctive value to society, especially when they are integrated into their communities and encouraged to work together with adults to improve the world. This is how ServiceWorks relates to tens of thousands of disadvantaged American young people, mostly urban youth of color. Consistent with the research, ServiceWorks helps a considerable number of these young people to exercise voice and agency, to serve their communities, and to put themselves on better trajectories. It is a model that should be sustained, strengthened, and imitated.

Appendix: How this Evaluation Was Conducted

In order to write this report, I reviewed extensive documentation provided by Points of Light, including the Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress document produced by Equal Measure (2016), which explained the rationale for the portfolio of grants that included ServiceWorks; Points of Light's own evaluation plan, curricular materials and background documents for adults; and quantitative data analyzed for the program (mainly 354 scholars' matched survey responses from before and after their ServiceWorks experiences, 753 additional exit surveys from Year 3, and survey data and open-ended written responses from site supervisors and from VISTA members). I received a written comment from one peer organization, the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

I also conducted in-depth interviews with recent scholars, program staff at the local and national level, volunteers, and a Citi executive: 15 interviews in total. The interview protocol was approved by the Tufts University Human Subject Review Board.

The interviewees were suggested to me by Points of Light staff. Because the interview sample is relatively small and not randomly selected, I have generalized from these interviews with caution. I presume that my sample may be biased toward individuals who have engaged deeply and successfully with the program. I also depended on information about individuals who had completed the program. I do not have access to reliable attrition data, but in a survey of VISTAs conducted for Points of Light, just 28 percent rated themselves as very capable at "Scholar retention," which suggests some attrition among the Scholars.

Nevertheless, my informants cited a range of positive outcomes that seem persuasive, at least for their own cases and surely for others as well. These outcomes are also consistent with the positive changes in the survey data. I perceived that interviewees' comments—not only about their own experiences, but also about what they observed happening to other people at their sites—were insightful and candid. I have triangulated their insights with the quantitative data provided to me by Points of Light to reach conclusions.

Finally, several participants eagerly directed me to their products, which took the form of videos and music, and I reviewed those.

This report is does not describe results of a randomized experimental impact evaluation study, which would be valuable but expensive. Instead, it is an independent, descriptive review of the program that adds qualitative data to survey data collected by program staff and situates the findings in a larger body of scholarship on service and Opportunity Youth.

References

Abt Associates, Jastrzab, JoAnn et al. 2004 (updated 2007) Serving country and community: a longitudinal study of service in AmeriCorps. Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service

Anderson-Butcher, Dawn., Newsome, W. Sean, & Ferrari, Theresa M. 2003. Participation in Boys & Girls Clubs and relationships to youth outcomes. *Journal of community psychology* 31(1), 39-55.

Belfield, Clive R., Levin, Henry M. & Rosen, Rachel. 2012.The economic value of Opportunity Youth. Corporation for National and Community Service in association with Civic Enterprises and with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Benson, Peter L., Scales, Peter C., Hamilton, Stephen F. and Sesma, Arturo. 2007. Positive Youth Development: theory, research, and applications. Handbook of Child Psychology. I:16.

Borghans, Lex, Ter Weel, Bas, and Weinberg, Bruce A. 2006 People people: Social capital and the labor-market outcomes of underrepresented groups. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006.No. w11985.

Calkins, Andy. 2015. It's time to trash the terms "non-cogs" and "soft skills." Next Gen Learning Blog, March 18 http://nextgenlearning.org/blog/

Celio, Christine l. Durlak, Joseph, & Dymnicki, Allison. 2011. A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of experiential education* 34(2), 164 – 181

CIRCLE (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement). 2012. Pathways into Leadership: A study of YouthBuild Graduates. Retrieved from http://civicyouth.org/released-today-at-the-white-house-circle-study-shows-youthbuild-builds-leaders/

Cohn, Lisa. 2017. 3 Life lessons I learned by volunteering. St. Louis United Way Blog, via http://www.stl.unitedway.org/2017/03/lessons-learned-volunteering-2/

Dávila, Alberto, and Mora, Marie T.. 2007. Civic engagement and high school academic progress: an analysis using NELS data." CIRCLE working paper 52, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Tufts University, Medford, MA. http://civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP52Mora.pdf.

Day, Kathleen M., & Devlin, Rose Anne 1998. The payoff to work without pay: volunteer work as an investment in human capital. *The Canadian journal of economics*, 31(5), 1179-1191.

Deloitte. 2013. Executive summary: 2013 Deloitte volunteer IMPACT survey. Retrieved from: http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/us-citizenship-2013-impact-survey-skills-based-volunteerism.pdf.

Equal Measure. 2016. Pathways to Progress: the portfolio and the field of youth economic opportunity. Philadelphia, PA.

Fehrman, Darwyn & Schutz, Aaron. 2011. Beyond the Catch-22 of school-based social action programs: toward a more pragmatic approach for dealing with power. *Democracy and Education*, 19(1), Article 3. http://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol19/iss1/3

Flanagan, Constance, & Levine, Peter. 2010. Civic engagement and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of children,* 20(1), 159-179.

Fredericks, Jennifer. A., & Eccles, Jacquelynne. S. (2006). Is extracurricular participation associated with beneficial outcomes? current and longitudinal relations. *Developmental psychology,* 42(4), 698-713.

Gingold, Jessica. 2013. Building an Evidence-Based Practice of Action Civics: The current state of assessments and recommendation for the future (CIRCLE Working Paper No. 78). Retrieved from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) website: http://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/WP_78_Gingold.pdf

Godsay, Surbhi, Kawashima-GInsberg, Kei, Kiesa, Abby & Levine, Peter. 2012. That's not democracy: how out-of-school youth engage in civic life and what stands in their way. Retrieved from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) website: http://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CIRCLE_ThatsNotDemocracy_WebFinal.pdf

Hobson, Matt with Goldin, Nicole. 2016. Advancing a 21st century skills agenda for today's youth. The World Bank Jobs and Development Blog. via https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/advancing-21st-century-skills-agenda-todays-youth

Kahne, Joel, & Westheimer, Joseph. 2006. The limits of political efficacy: educating citizens for a democratic society. *PS: Political Science* &a Politics, 39(2), 289-296.

Kellogg (W.K. Kellogg Foundation). 2004. Logic Model development guide via https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2007/07/spark-theory-of-change

Larson, Reed W. 2000. Toward a psychology of Positive Youth Development. *American psychologist* 55(1), 17-83.

Larson, Reed. W., & Angus, Rachel M. 2011. Adolescents' development of skills for agency in youth programs: Learning to think strategically. *Child development,* 82(1), 277-294.

Millenky, M., Bloom, D., Muller-Ravett, S., & Broadus, J. (2011). Staying the course: Three year results of the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Evaluation. New York, NY: MDRC.

Opportunity Nation. No date. Youth disconnection. Retrieved from: https://opportunitynation.org/disconnected-youth/

Opportunity Youth United. No date. Our vision, mission and impact. Retrieved from: https://oyunited.org/about/vision

Price, Cristofer, Williams, Julie, Simpson, Laura, Jastrzab, JoAnn, and Markovitz, Carrie. 2011. .National Evaluation of Youth Corps: Findings at Follow-up. Retrieved from the Corporation for National & Community Service: https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/nat_eval_youthcorps_impactreport.pdf

Rubin, Beth. 2007. "There's Still Not Justice": Youth Civic Identity Development Amid Distinct School and Community Contexts. Teachers College Record Volume 109, Number 2, February 2007, pp. 449–481

Spera, Christopher, Ghertner, Robin., Nerino, Anthony, & DiTommaso, Adrienne (2015). Out of work? Volunteers have higher odds of getting back to work. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 44(5), 886-907.

Sullivan, Felicia. 2013. New and alternative assessments, digital badges, and civics: an overview of emerging themes and promising directions. CIRCLE Working Paper #77. Retrieved from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) website: http://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WP_77_Sullivan_Final.pdf

SERVICEWORKS

AmeriCorps · Citi Foundation · Citi · POINTS OF LIGHT