

**Global Service Institute
Center for Social Development
George Warren Brown School of Social Work
Washington University in St. Louis**

**A Summary of
Civic Service: Impacts and Inquiry
An International Symposium
September 24-26, 2003**

**Held in conjunction with
GSI's Research Fellows Meeting
September 23-24, 2003
and
The Washington University Sesquicentennial
2003-2004**

The Global Service Institute (GSI) is a research initiative of the Center for Social Development (CSD) at Washington University in St. Louis. Through GSI, CSD supports the development of a global research agenda on civic service and the exchange of information via a Web-based information network. Civic service can be considered a form of long-term, intensive volunteering including, for example, national and international service programs. To advance a global research agenda on civic service, CSD develops foundational information, conducts innovative research, builds capacity for research worldwide, and convenes scholars.

Assessment of the knowledge base and interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars is essential, if the knowledge base for service is to be strengthened so that it can better inform policy and practice. To this end, the second international research forum on civic service was held September 24-26, 2003, on the Washington University campus in St. Louis, Missouri.

The theme of the symposium was "*Civic Service: Impacts and Inquiry.*" The goals of the symposium were to assess and critique the state of knowledge, focusing on service impacts; facilitate interdisciplinary exchange and dialogue and establish a stronger international network for service research; and develop a scholarly agenda, including key questions to be addressed and promising theoretical and methodological approaches.

Over 60 individuals from 28 countries attended. Scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and funders were present. Twelve papers were presented on civic service impacts and theories, and discussion of each paper was facilitated among all attendees.

Victor Arredondo, Ph.D., President of the Universidad Veracruzana in Veracruz, Mexico, delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he proposed an innovative policy idea: university-based community service as a way to reduce foreign debt. His speech was based in part on his chapter in *Service Enquiry* [<http://www.service-enquiry.org.za/>].

This symposium builds on GSI's first international research conference, "*Toward a Global Research Agenda on Civic Service*," which was convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina on September 3, 2002. The purpose of GSI's first conference was to document the cultural, social, political, and economic issues that affect the development, implementation, and assessment of civic service around the world.

A special issue of the journal *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* will be published from the Buenos Aires conference papers in early 2004. This issue will provide a global perspective on the status of civic service. The symposium papers will serve as a companion to the special issue by addressing service impacts and lines of inquiry that move scholarship forward. The symposium papers will be available on the GSI and CSD websites in early 2004 with publication following.

Following are brief summaries of the authors' paper presentations. Please visit <http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd/gsi> for more information about the authors and updates regarding the availability and publication of the papers.

Contextual papers. To establish a context for the discussion of civic service impacts and inquiry, Amanda Moore McBride, Ph.D., research director of CSD, presented a conceptualization of civic service that may span nations and cultures and which is amenable to operationalization. She then discussed the findings of CSD's global assessment, which tested this conceptualization, identifying 210 programs across 57 nations. Dr. McBride also presented results of a systematic research review, and identified limitations of current knowledge and directions for the field.

Don Eberly, honorary president of the International Association for National Youth Service, and Reuven Gal, Ph.D., chairman of the Carmel Institute for Social Studies in Israel, presented a paper describing the roots and evolution of civic service from military service. The paper focused on European countries, identifying a trend and likely path for the expansion of voluntary national and international service.

Professor Amitai Etzioni of George Washington University and founder of the communitarian movement then concluded the introductory section of the symposium. Professor Etzioni discussed his impressions of the possibilities and limitations of civic service, highlighting findings discussed in the symposium papers. He concluded that this was the best scholarship on civic service ever assembled, and suggested that a pressing question to consider in future scholarship is civic service's relationship to a "good society." How might service inculcate a sense of morality, encouraging peace and understanding?

Service impacts and inquiry. Ebenezer Obadare, GSI research fellow and doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics, began the presentation of papers addressing service impacts and theories. He presented his research on the Nigerian National Service Scheme. He described how political regime and status of democracy may mediate the development and effects of national service. Obadare encouraged a critical stance toward the assessment of service effects.

Professors James Perry and Ann Marie Thomson, Ph.D., of Indiana University presented a summary of their meta-review of over 100 research studies on national and community service in United States. They determined that the possible effects of service are wide-ranging, but that the methods of most studies do not allow definitive assessments of impact. They suggested that rigorous research is needed, which addresses direct and unanticipated effects as well as mediating factors, e.g., organizational effectiveness, cultural issues, etc.

Nicole Fleischer, deputy director of the Carmel Institute for Social Studies in Israel, along with Reuven Gal, Ph.D., presented a paper on social capital. They used examples from research conducted with national service participants in Israel, describing how service may affect social capital development. They discussed the potential and challenges for a universal national youth service scheme in Israel.

Professor Maria Nieves Tapia, director of the Latin American Center for Service-Learning (CLAYSS) in Argentina, presented a conceptualization of service-learning based on its myriad forms in Latin America. She described the status and possible effects of service-learning in primary, secondary, and university-based environments. She suggested that more emphasis may be placed on the effects of the service-learning projects for the people and communities that are served than on the servers.

On the second day, Professor Margaret Sherraden, University of Missouri in St. Louis, and Carlos Benitez, data and communications coordinator at CSD, addressed transnational service. They presented a conceptualization of transnational service and proposed various operational differences in programmatic forms worldwide. In support of this framework, they described research on the North American Community Service Project.

Professor Nancy Morrow-Howell, Washington University in St. Louis, and Fengyan Tang, research associate at CSD, highlighted the global potential for elder service from an institutional theoretical perspective and drew comparisons between the forms and effects of youth service and elder service. They proposed that elder service may be more flexible in form, and that elders may be motivated less by what they could gain from service and more by what they can contribute based on their knowledge and skills.

Angela Ellis, Ph.D., GSI research fellow and research staff at the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) in the United Kingdom, presented on behalf of IVR Director, Justin Davis Smith, Ph.D. She discussed the conceptual and operational nuances of civic service as well as its range of possible effects, positing that it may not represent a form of volunteering but instead may be a distinct phenomenon and intervention. She shared the status of their development of an “audit toolkit,” which will identify research methods and include instruments to assist programs in evaluating service effects.

Professor Judith Torney-Purta, University of Maryland, presented on a comparative study of civic education conducted through the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement. She highlighted positive relationships between the co-occurrence of civic education and volunteering and a range of civic indicators and behaviors. Across nations, the

findings suggest that education and service may be mutually reinforcing of civic engagement, which could argue for the role of service in human and social development.

Professor Ronald Pitner, Washington University in St. Louis, applied concepts and theories from social psychology to civic service programs, which bring individuals from different groups together. He focused on ethno-national differences, but highlights that any group difference may be applicable. He described that, when individuals from different groups work on a project or task together, the project may represent a super-ordinate goal. The super-ordinate goal may help them to transcend their differences, emphasizing their similarities, thus, service may increase tolerance.

Professor Masayuki Deguchi, National Museum of Ethnology and the Graduate University for Advanced Studies in Japan, concluded the paper presentations with a proposition that the development of civic service as a field of inquiry may represent a lingua-political issue. He argued that the translation of “civic service” as a concept has historical, political, and cultural connotations, which may or may not reflect the contemporary form of service practiced in that nation or culture. He used Japan as a contextual example, describing historical and current terms and forms of service.

Status and directions. Professor Michael Sherraden, Director of CSD, served as the symposium’s rapporteur. He emphasized that civic service may be a promising programmatic approach, but that the knowledge base is in its “early childhood.” He highlighted the basic challenges in defining service terminology and programmatic forms. He stated that civic service is not a single intervention but a complex phenomenon, which requires specification for testing effects; what about service has the given effect, e.g., intensity of the role, training and qualifications of the server, the organizational context, etc.? He also suggested that more research is needed about service forms across nations and cultures by scholars from given regions, as the status of civic service programs and policies worldwide is largely unknown.

Professor Sherraden summarized that the potential effects of civic service are wide-ranging, covering a universe of stakeholders and possibilities. He also encouraged a more skeptical stance and attention to possible negative effects. He noted that the focus of existing research is on the servers and that there is largely a lack of attention to the served. In terms of future scholarship, he recommended a focus on the “best bets,” in terms of what may be the most productive, long-term strategies and effects. Looking to the future, he suggested that program innovation in elder service and inclusion-based models may be emerging directions. Possible effects to focus on could include career and civic effects on the servers, tolerance and peace-building effects, and infrastructure development and economic effects.

Professor Sherraden stressed the need for theoretically-based research, lest the body of knowledge remain descriptive lacking deductive propositions to guide program and policy development. He concluded by stressing that more scholars, venues for information exchange and dialogue, and resources are necessary to further build the global knowledge base on civic service.

Notes

Papers are being revised for publication. CSD will announce their availability. For more information about the GSI Small Research Grants Program and the Research Fellows Program, which was held in conjunction with the symposium, please visit <http://gwweb.wustl.edu/csd/gsi>. For more information about GSI, civic service, or the symposium, please contact gsi@gwmail.wustl.edu.