

# **The Defensible Basis of Service and the Youth Civic Service Corps\***

**Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Principles for  
Effective and Strategic Demonstration**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**I. THE YOUTH CIVIC SERVICE CORPS AND THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE** ..... 3

- a. The Use of Community Service in Criminal and Juvenile Justice..... 4
- b. The Historic Human Appeal of Service: The Service Tradition in America..... 7
- c. Not a Hard Sell: Voluntary Service Among Incarcerated Populations..... 8

**II. ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE: A REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SERVICE RESEARCH** ..... 10

- a. Evaluation Studies of Service with Persons under Court and Correctional Supervision ..... 10
  - i. Community Impact ..... 11
    - 1. Acceptance of Service and Participation. .... 11
    - 2. Value and Appreciation of Service Work..... 12
  - ii. System Impact ..... 13
  - iii. Participant Impact..... 15
- b. Evaluation of Service Learning Approaches for College Students ..... 17
  - i. Student Impact ..... 17
  - ii. Community Impact ..... 19
  - iii. Comparing Students and Correctional Populations..... 19
- c. General Population Service Programs ..... 21
  - i. Youth as Resources..... 22
  - ii. YouthBuild, USA ..... 25
  - iii. AmeriCorps ..... 26
  - iv. Jobs Corps..... 27

**III. WHY IT CAN WORK: RESEARCH-BASED THEORIES OF SERVICE IMPACT** ..... 28

- a. The Need for Intervention Theory ..... 29
- b. Community Trust: Earned Redemption Through Service ..... 32
- c. Offender Change: Identity Transformation, Restorying, and the Theory of Generativity..... 34
- d. Community Capacity: Informal Control, Social Support, and Social Capital ..... 37
  - i. Life Course Transitions, Social Bonds, and Service: A Theory of Informal Control and Social Support ..... 37
  - ii. Can Service Build Community? A Theory of Social Capital..... 40

**IV. CONCLUSION: DEPICTING THE DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE INTERVENTION ON ITS HIGHEST PLANE**..... 42

## I. THE YOUTH CIVIC SERVICE CORPS AND THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

*The obvious center of the medical mentality is the focus upon malady, deficiency, disease, and need – the empty half of the glass... The medical system needs the empty half. The healthful community needs the full half. Indeed, every community has been built by the capacities of needy people and the skills of deficient people. No community was ever built by a group of “full”, unneedy, undiseased people. Communities are built in spite of the dilemmas, problems, deficiencies, and diseases of its people... The raw material of community is capacity. The raw material of medicine is deficiency. (John McKnight, 1995, p. 75-76)*

Images of community service are familiar and varied in American criminal justice. One unfortunate, popular image is of work crews in striped prison uniforms building roads while chained together (Amnesty International, 1996; Anderson et al., 2000). Chain gangs tragically conflate cruel and demeaning treatment with service to the community. Thus, community service is often perceived as a “ceremony of degradation” (Garfinkel, 1956), rather than an opportunity for “earned redemption” (Bazemore, 1998). In this paper, we articulate a new and positive vision of community service, hoping to shed this former, negative association, and offer a defensible basis for the widespread incorporation of service into the juvenile justice system. We call for this vision to be realized as a Youth Civic Service Corps (YCSC) and seek widespread support and implementation after a period of systematic evaluation of demonstration projects.

In essence, a YCSC embraces three principles:

1. Community Service is a restorative practice that repairs harm caused by youths under juvenile justice supervision to victims and communities and helps to meet basic community needs.
2. Youths under juvenile justice supervision benefit from participating in community service, enhancing their ability to be law-abiding and productive citizens.
3. Service is a mechanism to rebuild severed prosocial relationships between lawbreakers and community members, and re-establish trust and their positive status in the community.

A Youth Civic Service Corps could encourage participation of persons under supervision in any part of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, diversion programs, community corrections, and correctional facilities. Our primary focus in this paper will be to identify a YCSC model for reentry, but the principles we articulate are by no means limited to this particular population.

Any collective and individual activity by youths currently or formerly under court or correctional supervision that provides service to individuals in need, helps to rebuild

communities, and rebuilds trust in these participants would seem to be defensible on its face. While such activity is generally supported by the public, the somewhat checkered history of community service as a correctional alternative requires that new service initiatives be both empirically and theoretically justified (Pease, 1984; Bazemore and Maloney, 1994; Blagg and Smith, 1989). Following this general introduction, our second and third sections of this paper set out to provide this justification. We conclude the paper with an analysis of how our vision may be implemented, with a focus on the application of both evidence and theory to the design of a Youth Civic Service Corps in the reentry process and a conceptual protocol for evaluation that allows us to learn from demonstration efforts.

#### a. The Use of Community Service in Criminal Justice

Although chain gangs lurk in the American imagination, they have been recently resurrected in Arizona, Alabama, and Florida in the 1990's (Amnesty International, 1996). Traditionally, individuals convicted of a crime were not sentenced to perform *community service*; rather they performed unpaid labor along with other coerced tasks while serving their primary sentence—deprivation of liberty via incarceration or some form of community supervision. The first more positive programmatic use of community service orders was initiated in the municipal courts of California's Alameda County in 1966 for persons convicted of traffic offenses (McDonald 1996). By 1995, 52% of state prisoners were engaged in public works activities (Stephan, 1997) and 26% of adult probationers were required to complete community service as a condition of their sentence (Bonczar, 1997).

Although service to communities by those under criminal justice supervision has become a normative component of sentencing and correctional practice, Michael Tonry argues that, "community service is the most underused intermediate sanction" (1996, p. 121), and that its growth and application has been unsystematic. But if community service is *underutilized*, it is also generally *under-conceptualized* as an intervention capable of meeting real needs and achieving multiple, community, participant, and criminal justice objectives. Community service has too often been an intervention in search of a mission, and has suffered accordingly from attempts to be "all things to all people": a retributive punishment, an alternative to other punishments such as jail and prison, an effective form of treatment, a way of structuring probation supervision, a means of meeting public needs, and a public relations device (Pease, 1982). On the one hand, community service projects have provided great benefits to community members, groups, and to participants, and have generally been positively evaluated. On the other hand, examples of solely punitive, as well as mundane, "make work" performed as community service have led to justifiable criticism and to a general conclusion that service in corrections system has not lived up to its potential. Without a coherent mission, service initiatives remain uncoordinated, unexamined, and without proponents and supporters.

Two philosophical debates cloud the use of service in criminal justice settings. First, some argue that service should be a retributive tool, and focus on making service

both degrading and humiliating (Kahan, 1999). In this way, community service may compete successfully as an alternative punishment because it will effectively communicate moral disapproval of the offending behavior. Alternatively, some argue as we will that service should be restorative, focusing on repairing harm caused by crime, uplifting those who have offended and been victimized alike, and fostering positive relations with the community (Bazemore and Maloney, 1994). Thus, service becomes a vehicle for restoration and reintegration. When coupled with other restorative practices, moral disapproval of criminal behavior need not be communicated by imposing “shameful service,” but through such processes as victim-offender dialogue or community conferencing. Finally, in a restorative frame of reference, for example, the imbalance that needs to be redressed when crime occurs can be best corrected via the currency of repairing the harm done rather than the proportionate infliction of pain (Van Ness and Strong, 1997; Bazemore and Walgrave, 1999; Toews-Shenk and Zehr, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

In a second debate, some argue that the focus on service should be on the benefits it provides to victims and the community, while others argue that the focus should be on how service may rehabilitate offenders (Karp, 2002). We argue in this regard that service is a win-win proposition, beneficial to all constituents, though we recognize that some trade-offs are inherent in implementation. For example, some projects may maximize benefits to community, while others may better serve participants. The best projects do both; at worst, they may serve one better than another, but would undermine neither.

We wish to argue here however for a restorative view of service broader than that implied by the emphasis on repair alone. Such a view would also give high priority to service motivated by other needs and desires of communities and of service participants. For example, participants may want to provide help regardless of their feelings about other requirements imposed upon them by criminal or juvenile justice agencies—including those related to reparative sanctions. Ideally, participants in a reentry portion of the YCSC would have already addressed such obligations while in residential care and might therefore be drawn to participate in the corps by such motivations as generosity, commitment to the common good, or the desire to help younger generations (Maruna, 2001; Maruna et al., 2002; Maruna and LeBel, 2003).

If it is to be meaningful and supported by communities, a YCSC will first need to distance itself from much past community service in criminal justice. At the same time, however, the YCSC can also build on a strong undercurrent of voluntary, community building service that meets real individual and collective needs (Bazemore and Maloney,

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most unfortunate distortions of the meaning and purpose of service in the 1980s was its characterization as a retributive sanction (Pease, 1982; Fogel et al., 1972; McAnany, 1988). As retributivists laid claim to community service as a kind of non-monetary fine payable to the state, courts and service programs were encouraged to give almost singular focus to the uniformity of service orders and their “punitive bite” in order to enhance the validity of the claim that service would provide a fair, but also unpleasant obligation as part of a sentence. In doing so, just deserts oriented advocates of service de-emphasized other values and goals than those associated with community, victim and offender needs in the aftermath of crime.

1994; Karp and Clear, 2000; Pennsylvania Juvenile and Family Court Judges Commission, 1996).

There are in fact many examples of community service projects that not only repair harm and have obvious public benefit but also clearly develop and showcase assets of participants. For example, around the country in the inner cities, small towns, and wilderness areas of some states:

Probation and parole projects in which participants visibly and directly produce things the larger community wants, such as gardens, graffiti-free neighborhoods, less dangerous alleys, habitable housing for the homeless...have also helped build stronger communities, and have carved channels into the labor market for the offenders engaged in them (Dickey and Smith, 1998, p. 35).

Such examples meet the theoretical, empirical and practical requirements for achieving multiple impacts including community building, changing the image of youth under correctional supervision, and meeting other specific needs. Programs that feature model community service include, for example, Cleveland's "Redcoat Brigade" developed by a faith-based group that engages formerly incarcerated persons reentering the community in service to elderly persons and youth in the inner city. Regarding local corrections programs that prioritize community building service, the Deschutes County, Oregon Department of Community Justice engages youth and adults under court supervision in the winter months in cutting and delivering firewood to the elderly and working with community members on a variety of specialized community projects. Recent projects include building a domestic abuse center and shelter and raising funds and helping in the construction of a shelter for the homeless. Regarding corrections systems, Minnesota, through its Sentenced to Service Brigade, has for more than a decade employed community corrections clients, as well as incarcerated persons and parolees in meaningful public works and direct service projects, while the State of Ohio has recently made a commitment to maximize opportunities for incarcerated persons to participate in a range of service projects both within and outside prison walls (Wilkinson, 1998).

For young offenders specifically, Youth as Resources programs have organized youth in detention and correctional facilities to plan, design, and carry out meaningful human service oriented projects including elderly assistance and tutoring younger children. In the California Youth Authority, facilities in Stockton and other locations contract with civic groups and local government leaders to restore parks and playground equipment and maintain baseball and soccer fields. The Youth Build and Habitat for Humanity organizations now frequently partner with residential facilities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and other states to engage incarcerated juvenile offenders in initiatives to build homes for the underprivileged. Community service projects are of course not limited to those involving youth under residential supervision. Indeed, substantially more community service projects are developed for youth under probationary supervision or in diversion programs, and in a growing number of juvenile court jurisdictions, meaningful human services, environmental, and public works projects using young offender work crews are becoming increasingly common (O'Brien, 2003; Bazemore and Karp, forthcoming).

Yet, while there are many other examples of service projects that benefit communities and young offenders alike, meaningful, useful community service remains in most jurisdictions the exception rather than the rule. As a highly adaptable sanction or obligation aimed at repairing harm to the communities impacted by crime and capable of achieving multiple additional goals, one might hope to see meaningful community service agreements as a core feature of most, if not all supervision plans whether at the level of diversion, probation, residential care, or reentry. Unfortunately, in most jurisdictions, it is rare indeed to see such community service implemented systematically as an intervention that engages more than a relative handful of young offenders and their communities. This state of affairs is especially distressing given the longstanding tradition of community service in American history generally, and the growing tradition of creative offender involvement in service specifically.

#### b. The Historic Human Appeal of Service: The Service Tradition in America

The context for the empirical and theoretical case for community service is grounded in part in the American tradition of mutual support and assistance (Barber, 1992; Bellah et al., 2000). Alexis de Toqueville (1835) observed that Americans-- while individualistic at least by European standards-- saw intrinsic value in helping others. A century later, Harvard philosopher William James, in a very difficult period in American history, called on his fellow citizens to take up the call of national service as “the moral equivalent of war.” Echoing this theme, in 1933 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued his own call for action to ease the suffering of thousands of unemployed young men and reclaim the country’s forests and wilderness lands by announcing the formation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (Salmand, 1967).

Since that time, many other writers and philosophers (e.g., Dewey, 1958; Coles, 1993) have pointed to various faith traditions, to the necessity of mutual support in the American wilderness, and other origins of the natural call to service that some believe is part of the American psyche. Service is also clearly grounded in the civil rights movement; Native American movements; Settlement Houses; labor unions; African American traditions and various self-help societies. More recently, social scientists concerned with the decline of “social capital” (Coleman, 1989; Putnam, 2000) note that the disbursement of work, mobility, time pressure, family disruption and suburbanization has led Americans away from networks of collective support and relationships built on mutual trust and cooperation. Nonetheless, many citizens seem to long for a sense of community despite often nostalgic misconceptions of what it is that “community” actually means and supplies to its members (Sampson, 1999). It is also apparent that some communities never completely lost the sense of connectedness and sense of mutual responsibility for others that is also associated with safe, low crime communities (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). In addition, some are seeking to reinvent and/or revitalize those networks of relationships that make up “community” (McKnight et al., 1995; Ferguson and Dickens, 1999). In this context, the call to service has continued to be a strong one. Though the decline in social capital noted by Putnam and others has no doubt limited its naturalistic occurrence, the willingness of Americans to

reach out to others in need can still be witnessed clearly in times of natural disaster—most recently in the local and national outpouring of support for the victims of 9/11.

The tradition of community service also has experienced a more formal and ongoing revitalization in the decade of the 1990s. The great rise in popularity of a range of organized service efforts including AmeriCorps, Habitat for Humanity, Youth as Resources, City Year, conservation corps, service learning programs, and a range of local and more short-term initiatives appear to have tapped into a reservoir of desire among U.S. citizens to assist those in need and to strengthen their communities (Barber, 1992; Bellah, et al., 1994). The call to service seems to be supported by groups and individuals representing a variety of political persuasions, perhaps most clearly united in this support under a resurgence of communitarianism (Etzioni, 1996).

Ultimately, such modern programs also build strongly on the philosophical positions of William James, John Dewey and others who have also popularized a commitment to experiential learning as a primary theory of education (Kolb, 1984; Friere, 1974; 1996). This theory suggests that it is through involvement in serving others, and in the struggle for social justice, that human beings maximize their learning about themselves, about democracy, and about their world. Service in its best sense, as Barber (1992) insists, is less about simply “helping the less fortunate” or “repaying the debt owed to one’s country” and more about civic education and citizenship.

### c. Is Community Service a Hard Sell? Voluntary Service Among Incarcerated Populations

The idea of service as an American tradition is thought of by some, as applicable only to citizens who have experienced little or no contact with the criminal justice system. Many would ask, in addition, how anything in the cultural or spiritual appeal of service could resonate with those who have, in the view of most citizens, taken much *away* from communities rather than serving them. What kind of personal benefit or coercive stimulus would motivate individuals, arguably angry at their fellow citizens and communities for their perceived role in banishing them to prisons, to participate in projects designed to help others? Those who have committed crimes and especially those known to have done so by virtue of conviction and sentencing to correctional supervision, are thought by some to be very different from the general population of citizens in many ways. Among these supposed differences, so this thinking goes, would certainly be a lack of empathy and awareness of others’ needs that would underlie a desire to help their communities and fellow community members.

It is interesting then that the tradition of voluntary service by persons incarcerated and formerly incarcerated seems to turn this stereotype on its head. The record of voluntary service performed by incarcerated persons is indeed one of the most important untold stories of prison life, so impressive that it has caused some criminologists and other observers to rethink theories that view these persons as incapable of change (Maruna, 2001). Service projects are conceived and carried out on a daily basis in the prisons of this country by incarcerated persons and in communities by those formerly

incarcerated. For example, in a partnership program with Habitat for Humanity, incarcerated persons in 75 prisons (working alongside volunteers from the community) built over 250 homes for low-income Americans in 1999 (Ta, 2000; cited in Maruna and LeBel, 2003). As Maruna et al (2002) document, New York State prisoners, for example, have been involved in Toys for Tots campaigns, helping in a recent year to repair a total of 20,229 toys with a total value of \$285,724 (New York State Department of Correctional Services, 2001). Incarcerated persons have also volunteered as fire-fighters in many states, especially in those with large national parks. In fact, one in six of the crewmembers (over 2,000 individuals) fighting fires by hand in the year 2000 was incarcerated or recently paroled. Prisoners in many states have been involved in the crucial work of providing respite care to fellow prisoners dying of AIDS and other illnesses in hospice care within prison settings (e.g. programs at Angola and other prisons).

It can be argued that some of these service efforts by incarcerated persons are either required or motivated by self-interest, such as by a desire to gain “good time” or parole. However, individual narrative accounts suggest the motivation for many is indeed altruistic. Consider the perspective of one individual, interviewed by Howard Zehr (1996, pp.44-45):

Three or four years ago there was a story in a local newspaper about a school that needed volunteers to make Braille for blind students. Through my wife, I submitted a proposal that eventually was approved. I sat down first with a mechanical Braille and learned the Braille language. Later I had a computer. I entered textbooks for school kids. My goal is to make something useful out of my life... A thinking man wants each day to matter. Maybe that's one of the dilemmas. Too many of us think in here. So you face each day, not by saying, “How do I just struggle through?” but “What can I do to make something of this day?”

Perhaps most impressive are the recent examples of inmates who raised money to support 9/11 relief efforts. In the State of New York, for example, incarcerated persons raised \$75,000 from donations from fellow prisoners earning thirty-five cents per day (Ellis, 2003). What such efforts illustrate is a common desire to help others within a population whose own personal and family needs would overwhelm most average Americans. Hence, while meaningful, helpful, community building service may not be the norm in correctional systems, such service is apparently a part of what a number of incarcerated persons *do*, typically without the encouragement of corrections officials. While there is no evidence to suggest that incarcerated persons are *more* inclined toward helping others in need, the record of extensive voluntary efforts by inmates under adverse conditions suggests that for some at least, the motivation for service to others emerges naturally. The lesson to be learned from these examples is that community service, at least service in which participants have some input into the type and targets of the service provided, may not be such a “hard sell” to correctional clients. Indeed, some of the most creative service projects will most likely be those generated by incarcerated persons themselves. The YCSC, if wisely structured can build on what may be a natural tendency to help and serve others that characterizes a significant portion of the incarcerated

population. Even more, the corps could also take advantage of the remarkable creativity in conceptualizing, planning and carrying out projects in the confines of U.S. prisons and detention centers.

## **II. ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE: A REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SERVICE RESEARCH**

*Worse still, we fear that even when something does “work,” it is seen to do so only in the eyes of certain professionals, while outside the system ordinary citizens are left without a role or voice in the criminal justice process. John Braithwaite and Stephen Mugford (1994, pp. 5)*

Where is the evidence that community service is a productive intervention and what is the nature of this evidence? To what extent can existing research provide an empirically defensible basis for the YCSC concept? Despite the strong normative commitment to community service as a valued commodity, for practical and scientific reasons it is necessary to make the case that service is unlikely to result in greater harm, justifies costs, and provides added value compared with other interventions. It is also important to specify the circumstances under which service is most likely to be successful with what many might view as one of the most challenging populations.

In making the empirical case for service, we draw upon and summarize three bodies of research related to the issue of community service of the type envisioned in the YCSC. While not an exhaustive review, general conclusions from each of these literatures provide support for the impact of service work within different practical and theoretical contexts—each of which is relevant to the rationale for and implementation of a YCSC.

### **a. Evaluation Studies of Service with Persons under Criminal Justice Supervision**

The most direct evidence is based on evaluation studies of community service with persons under criminal justice supervision—ranging from those in diversion or community corrections programs, to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons, and to those in programs that serve as an alternative to incarceration.

The “big story” from this research is that no studies indicate that use of community service “makes things worse” either in terms of recidivism, system impact, or community impact. In general, despite the limited scope and at times less than ideal quality of the service provided, evaluations of service in criminal justice have yielded surprisingly positive results, though programs have not done as well in achieving some goals given priority by some researchers and policymakers (e.g., reduction in incarceration).

#### *i. Community Impact*

Two important threshold questions about communities—the extent to which citizens will accept community service by youth under correctional supervision as reasonable alternatives to punitive sanctions and the extent to which citizens may be expected to actively participate in such programs – have been partially addressed in survey research and focus groups conducted at both state and national levels in recent years.

### 1. Acceptance of Service and Participation.

Finding: The public is supportive of community service.

Despite the increasing punitiveness of policymakers in the past decade, both state and national surveys suggest that there is strong public support for community service and other reparative sanctions. Several statewide surveys and focus groups conducted by John Doble and associates and others find that reparative sanctions such as restitution and community service, as well as victim-offender meetings, have been preferred over jail time for nonviolent individuals (Pranis and Umbreit, 1991; Pranis 2003). Indeed, Doble's study--used as the basis for Vermont's reparative probation initiative-- found that Vermont citizens preferred that those convicted of nonviolent offenses receive reparative sanctions from community reparative boards rather than terms of incarceration. In Doble's study of North Carolina public attitudes, 97% of the respondents favored greater use of community service (Doble, 2002). Juvenile justice surveys find widespread citizen support for restorative justice. In a 1992 national survey conducted by the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Youth Policy, restitution and reparative sanctions including community service, along with employment programs, were ranked at the top of citizen preferences for juvenile lawbreakers (Schwartz, Guo, and Kerbs, 1992), while residential treatment and counseling were at the bottom of a list of a dozen options. A recent national study completed by the University of Cincinnati (Moon et al., 2000) also finds restorative sanctions at the top of the list among citizen preferences that also included a variety of rehabilitative options for young offenders.

Currently very little is known about the empirical determinants of community participation in justice processes generally, and in community service specifically. What has been learned from the experience with restorative justice programs seems to challenge the commonly accepted wisdom of an apathetic public (Bazemore and Schiff, 2001). Though they are only case studies, the experience in New Zealand with family participation and victim involvement in family group conferencing has been positive, as has the participation rate of victims, families, and support group members in some other forms of youth conferencing in the United States and elsewhere (Hudson et al., 1996; Morris and Maxwell, 1996; McCold and Wachtel, 1998). Citizen involvement in Vermont's reparative probation program has sustained statewide volunteer boards for almost 10 years (Perry and Gorsych, 1997), and hundreds of citizens in a dozen states have participated in neighborhood youth panels or community accountability boards in a dozen states (Bazemore and Schiff, 2002). While each of these is inclusive of citizen participation in community service, what are not well understood at this time are the predictors of citizen involvement and the correlates of sustained participation.

## 2. Value and Appreciation of Service Work.

Finding: Agencies that host community service work by offenders are highly satisfied with the work completed.

The most direct form of community impact, the perceived value of work provided in the views of service recipients, has not been measured systematically in most studies. Qualitatively, practitioners who have organized visible and helpful service to communities can present numerous testimonials by recipients, as well as civic and business leaders, who themselves often contribute time and monetary or material resources to such efforts (Maloney and Holcomb, 2001).

Quantitatively, some studies have documented impressive numbers of hours completed, homes and shelters built, children and elderly assisted and so on (McGivov, 1992; Schneider, 1991; Wilkinson, 1998). In three New York city boroughs, for example, McDonald (1986) estimated that for fiscal year 1984, participants in the Vera Institute service program provided some 60,000 hours of labor at an estimated dollar value (@ \$4.50 per hour) of as much as \$270,300. In themselves, hours completed may be viewed as a weak if convenient indicator of the value of service projects completed to those served as well as participants in completing the service.

One survey of agencies where Vermont Reparative Probationers were placed indicated high satisfaction with the program. In the program, 65% of the probationers were assigned community service as part of their restorative obligations. Of these, 91% completed the required hours in jobs ranging from direct service to individuals to park clean up, to construction and home repair activities. A total of 94% of the agencies surveyed were satisfied with the quality of the probationers' service, and 100% of the agencies were interested in having more probationers complete service activities with them (Karp, Sprayregen, and Drakulich 2002). McGivov (1992) reports similarly high levels of satisfaction in a study of probationer community service in Scotland. In this study almost all individual and agency beneficiaries felt that the work was completed at a high standard, that it was well supervised, and that they benefited from it. Contact between individual beneficiaries and workers was positive and agencies generally felt well supported by the workers. Many were willing to offer further work placement not only for future offenders but also to those who had completed their orders. In both studies, probationers completed a wide variety of tasks, from relatively menial labor to youth development and care giving. They also operated under varying levels of supervision and engagement with non-probationer staff and volunteers. In other words, satisfaction may be fairly robust, tolerating a wide variety of styles of implementation. In a New Zealand study, Leibrich (1986) also found high levels of satisfaction by agency sponsors and noted that 22% of these agencies reported additional contact with their offender workers after community service hours were completed. In a Canadian juvenile service program, Doob and McFarland (1984) found that juveniles often maintained a relationship with supervising agencies, and a few of these juveniles were hired by their agencies after they had completed their required work hours. Finally, Caputo (1999), in an update evaluation of New York City's Vera Institute community service program

begun in 1979, found strong community agency approval of work provided by program participants (63% very satisfied and 37% satisfied) who would otherwise have received jail sentences. This finding was interesting in light of the fact that some service sites experienced higher than expected rates of absenteeism and worked with a participant group that included many recidivists. Similarly, the Vermont and Scotland studies noted that probationers were not always perfect performers. Agencies did report occasional problems with absenteeism as well as interpersonal conflicts and lack of initiative.

## *ii. System Impact*

Finding: To a limited extent, community service has been used as an alternative to incarceration, but it has by no means significantly reduced the use of incarceration in the United States.

Some have suggested that deployment of meaningful service in correctional settings should be expected to have dramatic, systemic impacts on these agencies (Maloney, et al., 2002). While many forms of change—including shifts in organizational culture and resource allocation might be predicted based on a strategic commitment to service – generally, research on systemic impact has been focused on the extent to which community service is used as an alternative to jail or prison sentences (Pease, 1982; McDonald, 1986; Tonry, 1994).

Only a few studies provide clear evidence of substitution of service for a prison, youth residential placement, or jail sentence. It is more common to find community service as one component of a multi-dimensional sentence, as courts do not generally view service orders as an alternative to imprisonment (McIvor 1992). These studies generally document how service and restitution programs have been used to enable early release of inmates as part of experimental studies (Fogel, et al., 1972; Hudson and Galaway, 1974; Schneider, 1986). Quasi-experimental studies (McDonald, 1986) and some studies from Great Britain (Pease, 1982; McIvor, 1992) have also shown some reductions in the use of incarceration on a larger scale. A Home Office study in 1982 indicated that as many as half of those 30,000 offenders receiving community service sentences for serious crimes would have otherwise been incarcerated (Peace, 1985). More recently, an Israeli study described and evaluated a national experiment that diverted almost half of 907 offenders assigned six month prison sentences to community service (Nirel et al., 1997). A study completed in New York's Suffolk County Jail compared community service participants to a control group of parolees, finding that the community service program saved between 4,199 and 4,461 jail days over a 27 month period. In addition, the program was cost-effective, and was able to return approximately \$230,828 to the community through jail costs saved and community service performed (Brownstein et al., 1984). Finally, a program in Multnomah County, Oregon, reduced crowding in prisons by ordering first offense misdemeanants directly into community service, thereby diverting jail time all together for the 80% of participants who completed the program (Clark 1976).

Although there is some evidence to show that service programs can reduce the use of incarceration, there has been relatively little demand for such application of service in the U.S. in the past two decades. However, we should note that in 2000, 51% of the U.S. prison population was incarcerated for nonviolent offenses (Harrison and Beck 2002). We believe the public may readily accept community correctional alternatives to incarceration for this enormous pool of offenders. Over 600,000 inmates were released in 2000 (Hughes et al., 2001), suggesting another large pool for which such approaches may be considered. The general success of these earlier experiments in providing a partial alternative to confinement with little evidence of risk to the public (see recidivism discussion below) provides a sound basis for new experimentation with service as a confinement alternative at various levels.

### *iii. Participant Impact*

Finding: Agencies and correctional volunteers believe that service work positively benefits offenders; *no studies* indicate that service work *increases* recidivism, and a few report recidivism reductions.

Though community service is thought to have a number of potential effects on participants under criminal justice supervision (Bazemore and Maloney, 1994), most studies have focused almost exclusively on recidivism. With a few exceptions noted below, evaluations that have examined intermediate impacts such as improvements in self-concept or other outcomes have focused on juvenile offender populations (e.g., Schneider, 1991; Doob et al., 1982). Of note, because of its relationship to recidivism and to completion of restitution and community service orders is Schneider's finding that juveniles in restitution programs who completed reparative orders showed significant differences in feelings of connection to their communities. Specifically, as she put it, young offenders completing reparative obligations were more likely to experience a "sense of citizenship," or civic identity, than those who did not (Schneider, 1991). This variable in turn served as an intermediate outcome linked to the observed reduction in recidivism (Schneider, 1991). Similarly, an evaluation of the Community Service Order program in Ontario, Canada, discovered that juvenile offenders and their parents responded favorably to community service work because of the feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction that accompanied such work (Doob and MacFarlane, 1984). In addition, this and other studies have found that offenders who take part in community service as part of their sentences have more positive attitudes in regard to the fairness and value of their sentences and toward the criminal justice system as a whole (Thorvaldson, 1978). In Karp et al.'s (2002) evaluation of Reparative Probation, 92% of service agency representatives believed the work was somewhat (57%) or highly (35%) beneficial to the offender, and in Karp and Bazemore's (2003) survey of Vermont volunteers, 88% of respondents believed that community service facilitated the probationers' reintegration process. However, we know of no studies that provide pre-test/post-test results to objectively analyze service impacts.

In general, studies comparing community service participation with alternative sentences document some reduction in recidivism, or at worst, *no increase* in recidivism. Pease (1982), for example, reports that early studies in the UK were inconclusive regarding reductions in re-offending, while McDonald's (1986) report on the Vera Institute's studies indicates no significant reduction in recidivism when community service orders were compared to short jail sentences. McDonald concludes however, that it cannot be said based on the high re-offense rates of the control group receiving jail sentences that locking up the community service participants would have produced a significant decrease in re-offending or in any clear way enhanced public safety.

In a more recent study of a new cohort of Vera project participants, Caputo (1999) reports that the program has maintained the rate of recidivism reported by McDonald in the earlier study (about 25%). This rate was achieved despite the fact that the more recent findings were based on a population of higher risk participants (with on average,

10 prior offenses and including a greater number of offenders with prior felonies, 69 percent). Moreover, of the participants rearrested, the more recent study found that the vast majority had committed misdemeanor offenses such as petty larceny and all but three of the 33 recidivists were arrested for lower level felony offenses (burglary, possession of stolen property). Because the program does not have resources to monitor participants beyond the time they are involved in service, this relatively low re-offense rate may be due to the fact that, as noted above, service experiences in the more recent study appear to have been more constructive and less punitive (in the view of both participants and community members)<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the finding that the program is maintaining relatively high completion rates (74%) despite serving a more high risk population, bodes well for future concerns with public safety given the strong correlation reported in other studies between completion of reparative sanctions and recidivism (Schneider and Schneider, 1984).

Another important recent study of recidivism for community service participants under correctional supervision was based on the previously mentioned Israeli experiment using service as an alternative to short-term sentences (Nirel et al., 1997). In this study researchers documented significantly lower rates of recidivism for the community service group (the incarcerated group re-offended at a rate 1.7 times higher than the service group). In a similar study in Switzerland in which approximately half of a group of convicted offenders who would have received short-term prison sentences of up to 14 days were randomly assigned to an experimental group that participated in community service, researchers found higher rates of re-arrest for the incarcerated group (Killias and Aebi, 2000). Another study which examined recidivism rates found that even though the members of the community service group had originally been incarcerated for more violent crimes than the parole group, the recidivism rate for the community service group was only 29% in comparison to 50% of the parole group (Jengeleski and Richwine, 1987).

While finding general reductions in recidivism for service participants overall, McIvor (1992) also found that reductions for participants in the Scottish community service program was related to participant satisfaction with the service assignments. This finding suggests, as many have hypothesized (e.g., Bazemore and Maloney, 1994), that the positive impact of service may depend in part upon the meaning attached to it by participants. Finally, it is important to note that a number of recidivism studies with juvenile offender populations of varying degrees of chronicity and seriousness report similar positive results in cohorts that also may have completed restitution and/or participated in other reparative activity (Schneider, 1986; 1991; Butts and Snyder, 1990; Walgrave and Guedens, 1997). Perhaps the most important recent research in terms of its relevance for community service initiatives is Wilkinson's study of incarcerated men and women released from Ohio prisons during the last three months of 1994. Using comparison groups of individuals who had not performed community service (N=4,102) with a smaller group that had completed community service in the year prior to release (N=384), Wilkinson reported significant differences in recidivism in favor of the

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<sup>2</sup> 86% of participants reported benefits from their assigned work and 73% reported that the sanction was fair and just.

community service participants. While not an experimental study, these differences persisted when a variety of variables related to recidivism—including prior incarcerations, commitment offense, race, educational attainment, and so on—were controlled statistically using logistic regression. Similar to McLivor’s emphasis on quality of the service experience, Wilkinson suggests that quality of service projects based on restorative justice principles (a recent priority of the DOC in the years just prior to the study), in addition to a departmental emphasis on the rehabilitative value of service assignments, was in part responsible for these positive findings.

In summary, while the research literature on community service with correctional populations is relatively positive, especially regarding concerns about recidivism and community support, the fit of community service within criminal and juvenile justice systems as something other than a marginal add-on remains problematic. Regarding the empirical evidence, much remains to be learned about the quality dimensions of service, about how specific service efforts—and service participants – are actually perceived by community members, and about how correctional participants view service. Though there is some evidence that service “works” in terms of its influence on several outcomes, we know relatively little about the theory behind service’s apparent positive impact, and there have been no studies of carefully designed service on its “highest plane” (Bazemore and Maloney, 1994).

#### b. Evaluation of Service Learning Approaches for College Students

In the 1990’s service-learning became a priority at many colleges and universities. As programs developed, along with it came a new body of research examining the effectiveness of both service-learning and undergraduate community service (Eyler et al. 2001). Service-learning may be defined as student community service work conducted in concert with academic coursework and learning. This is typically distinguished from service work performed by students that is independent of coursework, such as when students perform this work voluntarily, as part of a general requirement, or mandated through disciplinary or judicial processes. In service-learning, community service is tied thematically to the course, and opportunity is created to critically reflect on the service work. It may therefore be akin to the laboratory component of a chemistry class.

We reviewed the research as it pertains to the following categories: (a) impact on students including personal, social, academic, and career outcomes; and (b) impact on communities including satisfaction and usefulness of service. At the end of this section, we draw conclusions about how these findings may be generalized to correctional populations.

##### *i. Student Impact*

Service-learning has a positive effect on *academic outcomes*, including cognitive development, critical thinking and problem-solving, GPA, degree completion, and graduate school attendance (Astin and Sax, 1998). Service-learning has been

demonstrated to improve *personal development* and *interpersonal skills*, including a sense of personal efficacy, personal identity, spiritual growth, moral development, the ability to work well with others, leadership, and communication skills. In a study by Boss (1994), two sections of a course were compared. In one section, students participated in service-learning while the other offered alternative, traditional academic assignments. Students were given the Defining Issues Test (DIT) at the beginning and end of the semester. The DIT is a widely-used, empirically-validated test of moral development based on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. While students did not differ in final course grades between the two sections, service-learning students achieved significantly higher gains in moral development than the control group. In another study by Osborne et al. (1998), students taking a pharmacy course were similarly divided between service-learning and control groups. In this case, students were tested using a variety of psychological scales, including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Cognitive Complexity Scale (examining the complexity of subjects' explanations for others' behavior), the Texas Social Behavior Inventory (a measure of social competency), the Spontaneous Self-Concept measure (personal identity), the Self-Perception Scale (perceived ability to work with others and open-mindedness), and the Remote Associations Test (creative thinking). In five of the six scales (with the exception of the Self-Esteem Scale), service-learning students showed significant gains both in relation to their pre-test scores and in comparison to the control group. In a third study conducted by Juhn et al. (1999), nursing students involved in a service project with middle school students and teachers were compared with nursing students not involved in the service program. Pre-test/post-test data revealed that service-learning students rated their ability to communicate with students and parents significantly higher than non-service students. They also showed increased skills in, comfort with, and knowledge of working in the community.

Service-learning has a positive effective on *social responsibility*, including citizenship skills, commitment to service, long-term volunteering, and selection of service-related careers. For example, in a study by Markus et al. (1993) researchers compared students in two service-learning sections of an American politics course with students in six other sections of the same course who wrote longer papers instead of participating in service. The students were unaware of their placement in treatment or control groups. At the end of the semester, service-learning students attached significantly increased importance to equal opportunity, volunteering, and finding a helping career. These changes did not occur with the control group.

It is clear that student participation in community service may have long-term benefits to them and to their communities. Indeed, a study by Astin et al. (1999) examined the long-term implications of student volunteerism. 12,376 students from 209 academic institutions were surveyed at three points: their freshmen year, four and nine years later. Those who volunteered in college were more likely to be doing so nine years later than those who did not volunteer. They also had higher degree aspirations and achievements, felt better prepared for work in the "real" world, more frequently socialized with diverse people, helped others in difficulty, and were more likely to think they had a meaningful life philosophy.

## *ii. Community Impact*

Service-learning provides useful service in communities. In thousands of service-learning courses across the country, students contribute to the community in a variety of ways. These range from in-depth interpersonal care, such as tutoring children, caring for the elderly, and working with at-risk youth, to physical labor, such as environmental clean-up or building houses for Habitat for Humanity, to technical assistance, such as developing websites for nonprofit agencies or testing water quality. Extensive research indicates that student service is both beneficial to the community and that sponsoring community agencies are satisfied with students' work (Eyler et al. 2001).

Ferrari and Worrall (2000) asked thirty community agency supervisors to complete service evaluations for 109 student volunteers. Several themes emerged from their analysis. Students were helpful to the agency, sensitive to clients' needs, and friendly to staff and clients. Their relationships with clients were empathetic and appropriate, and the students were interested and committed to their work. While agencies generally report high satisfaction levels, it is not always the case that students perform to the highest possible standards. For example, Vernon and Ward (1999) surveyed and interviewed 95 directors of community service agencies. This group was overwhelmingly positive about the students, but when problems occurred they discovered that they were due to student inconsistency, lack of preparation, and their need for training. In 1998, the Rand Corporation conducted an extensive evaluation of the Corporation for National Service Learning and Serve America Higher Education Program, which included 930 colleges and universities, 847 community organizations, and 3,492 students (Gray et al. 1998). In this study, 90% of community organizations indicated that the benefits of working with the student volunteers outweighed the costs.

## *iii. Comparing Students and Correctional Populations*

We conclude this section by examining the relevance of the positive findings about service-learning to populations currently or formerly under correctional supervision. If we know that college volunteering is beneficial to students, what can we generalize to those under correctional supervision? Some key differences must be considered between these groups and the way in which they conduct community service. First, service-learning must be distinguished from traditional community service because it explicitly includes academic learning as part of the initiative. We wonder, then, if the benefits associated with service-learning accrue because of this combination rather than from service alone. For example, is the impact of engaging in service a function of the activity, or from the activity and the opportunity to reflect on this activity in a systematic fashion through course work? One study by Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) examines this question. Using survey data of 22,236 students from 177 academic institutions, they compare outcomes for students involved in service-learning (30%), community service (47%), and those involved in neither (23%). One finding was abundantly clear. Participation in either service-learning or community service conferred significant benefits over non-participation. Both increased students' commitment to activism, racial

understanding, and sense that they can be effective in the world. Service learning had a greater impact than community service on academic outcomes such as GPA and improvement in writing skills and critical thinking. It also had a greater impact on students' intentions to pursue service-related careers. On the other hand, *community service has a greater impact than service learning on leadership development and growth in interpersonal skills*, a finding that may merit special consideration with populations under criminal or juvenile justice supervision. We conclude that service-learning does confer several benefits over and above those of service alone, but also believe that it may be possible to incorporate beneficial elements of service-learning in the development of offender service programs. For example, community service participants may be asked to regularly write essays reflecting on how the service activities are affecting them.

Second, unfortunately, the numerous studies of college volunteering and service-learning do not examine differences in the student populations engaged in these activities. However, McNamara (2002) examined the effect of community service participation for disengaged high school youth, an at-risk population that may have some commonalities with offender populations. In this study, ninth grade students from six high schools were selected to participate in a service project using a variety of criteria for "disengagement", all having to do with social rejection by conventional peers. A non-service comparison group of similarly disengaged youth was identified. Service youth showed benefits after the project as compared to non-service youth. These included less tardiness, fewer absences, and higher grade point average. Moreover, both self and teacher evaluations of the service students showed improvements over the course of the project in social and academic competence; particularly noteworthy was a decline in the frequency and severity of disciplinary actions. Finally, the service students also showed a significant gain in self-reported positive peer associations. This study hints at the potential benefits of service with delinquent youth and populations under criminal justice supervision.

Third, we want to know if the benefits of service-learning and community service diminish if either students or offenders are engaged in service involuntarily, either as a curricular requirement or a court-order. With regard to students, this has been a controversial issue with some arguing that mandatory volunteering is an oxymoron and likely to undermine the volunteers' commitment and sense of social responsibility. In other words, if students are forced to do community service, will this "coercion" undermine that interest in service and their intentions of doing service in the future? Others, such as Benjamin Barber (1991), argue that service is something that must be learned and participants realize its value only after they experience it. Furthermore, if service is always only voluntary, then the population of participants will be a selective group who already has socially responsible commitments, and those who do not have those commitments will avoid the learning opportunity. Barber likens this to solving literacy problems by mass distributions of books about the value of reading. Those who will read the books don't need them, and those who need the books can't read them.

We found one study that addressed the question of mandatory service for students. Stukas and Snyder (1999) examined the attitudes of students who participated in mandatory service as a requirement for completion of a course. Not surprisingly,

students who felt coerced by the assignment were less likely than others to want to volunteer in the future. Thus, predisposition to service does seem to matter with regard to future volunteering intentions. Offenders, for example, who feel coerced into service, may resent it. On the other hand, if offenders see the service as an opportunity, perhaps to do good—or even to serve their own interests, such as by reducing a sentence, the service is likely to increase their volunteer commitments.

### c. General Population Service Programs

The new tradition of service in the U.S. (Coles, 1992; Barber and Battistoni, 1993; Starr and Curry, 1992; Maruna et al., 2002) has been represented on a national level in the past decade by a variety of citizen “service corps” and broad-based service projects. The third body of literature reviewed here is based on accounts of service with general populations rather than criminal justice or student populations. These programs typically, but not exclusively, seek participation from young people, often disadvantaged youth, but are not restricted to matriculated students or youthful offenders. Studies of these initiatives include evaluations and descriptive accounts of the experience of a range of established national programs that feature voluntary service as a primary intervention, including Youth as Resources, YouthBuild, USA, City Year and AmeriCorps. In addition, Job Corps may operate on theoretical principles that mesh with service programs although they do not incorporate a service requirement *per se*. Although we feature these four initiatives, they are a part of a much larger set of federally and locally-funded programs, designed by government, non-profit community organizations, and faith-based organizations.

A key descriptive finding about these interventions is that they appear to have gained widespread political support and are generally popular with communities. Although they may include few persons currently or formerly under juvenile or criminal justice supervision, these programs provide good general models for several reasons: (1) participation in these programs is voluntary; (2) punitive and unfocused work is avoided; and (3) by nature and design, the programs seek to maximize their impact on important community needs while strengthening participant connection to others and to “the common good.”

While there are many descriptive accounts of these programs, relatively few of these track subsequent at-risk behavior or involvement in offending, and only a handful of program models have been the target of rigorous impact evaluations. For some of these programs, we summarize overall operational features, program goals and impacts based on one or more evaluations and/or program summaries of accomplishments where independent evaluations have not been conducted.

We know of only one study that clearly shows how the volunteer service experience reduces the likelihood of offending. An important study by Christopher Uggen and Jennifer Janikula (1999) documents a strong and robust empirical connection between involvement in voluntary, uncompensated service to the community in adolescence and early adulthood and future crime. While we cannot conclude from this

study whether or not the voluntary nature of this service made a difference in the impact on subsequent crimes in the absence of a comparison that was paid to work, this finding is an important one in its implications for expectations of a sustained preventative effect of meaningful group work on a general population of participants. Though service has a cumulative impact over time (i.e., the more involvement, the less likely there is involvement in crime), the impact of service in young adulthood appears most important. While the study finds relationships between five general categories of volunteer service activity and future crime (including religious, secular-civic, informal neighboring, private business, and partisan-political), “secular-civic” service had the strongest impact—and is also most relevant to criminal justice policy. Like some other researchers, Uggen and Janikula suggest that it is the role service plays in shaping one’s public identity through civic engagement that makes the difference, and as noted earlier, this finding is also consistent with evidence that community service and restitution improves the civic self-image and behavior of persons under juvenile and criminal justice supervision (Nirel et al., 1997; Schneider, 1990; Butts and Snyder, 1991).

*i. Youth as Resources*

The following summary of this program is based upon information provided in *Reconnecting Youth and Community: Youth as Resources in Juvenile Corrections* (Center for Youth As Resources, 2000). Youth as Resources (YAR) programs ask youth to take responsibility and attempt to connect them to community life in dynamic ways. The program allows young people to “identify a community problem about which they are concerned, design a project to address the need, and then take the lead with caring adult supporters in working on the solution” (v). The small national organization, part of the larger National Council on Crime Prevention, helps to identify and leverage local funds, works to reallocate institutional dollars, and provides grants for youth-planned, youth-led volunteer community service projects in partnerships with local funders. YAR also provides training and technical assistance to local agencies involved in youth development initiatives.

The program has focused much of its work on detention and residential treatment facilities where young people have been committed for a variety of crimes including serious offenses. YAR seeks to change the mission and organizational climate of the facilities to one that is strength-based while demonstrating that young people, including those that have committed serious crimes, can be resources in their communities. While evaluation has been mostly process oriented, YAR claims to have achieved the following multiple outcomes from several mostly inner city projects that have deployed incarcerated and formerly incarcerated juveniles in meaningful, youth-led service projects. The commitment to youth participation and “youth led” projects is operationalized through local decision making boards for all projects, which include both young people and adults.

YAR has noted its effectiveness in four areas: facilities, staff, youth, and community. Regarding facilities, YAR claims to have improved the character and climate of the facilities, helped to establish positive relationships between the facilities and the

communities, incorporated service as a sustained and integral part of operations, developed community partnerships, and brought resources into the facility.

For staff, YAR has offered a new treatment strategy by providing a new means of working with young people guided by youth development principles. It has improved staff morale by offering opportunities for youth/adult interaction that is not based in typical disciplinarian, counselor, or teacher roles; instead allowing them to work together on prosocial activities, and fostering new appreciation for each other's strengths and relationships on mutual respect. Morale has also been enhanced by staff's positive sense of contribution to the community and their experience of fewer disciplinary problems.

For youth, YAR teaches responsibility and caring, offers them something more to think about beyond themselves, increases their desire to be involved in community life and volunteer again, provides a sense of accountability and citizenship, improves life skills such as planning, problem solving, goal setting, and teamwork skills. In general, YAR fosters a sense of pride and acceptance, a capacity to care, the ability to partner with and relate to adults, and hope for the future by giving direction and purpose.

For the wider community, YAR helps to provide important services by youth, who often bring new energy and ideas. New programs and services enhance the quality of life, nursing home residents enjoy on-going companionship, parks are renovated, and new gardens are planted with produce donated to families in homeless shelters. Such tangible results help dissipate community fear and reluctance to interact with incarcerated youth and highlight the positive potential of youth.

What can we learn from the YAR program? First, it is a good example of partnership between criminal justice and community service organizations. By examining YAR, we can anticipate potential challenges and find workable solutions more quickly. Second, we see the importance of gaining support throughout the institution. Third, YAR expanded gradually, carefully developing internal structures of support in each facility. Thus, voluntary support from staff and integration into institutional life was encouraged. Gradual expansion also allowed oversight on security issues as youth volunteered in the community. Of the projects undertaken, they were designed to address a broad scope of community needs. Initially, community organizations familiar with goals of institutions were identified as potential recipients of services. Projects encouraged meaningful service activities, both on and off campus. Adults helped youth develop short-term projects with specific, achievable goals and staff prepared youth for service experience.

Finally, the YAR program provides insight into some of the potential challenges facing service initiatives. First, staff need to be given time in the regular schedules to develop and implement service efforts. Second, security staff is required to accompany youth off campus and youth with serious behavioral issues are steered toward on-campus activities until their behavior changes. Thus, clearly addressing risk management is a core ingredient to service initiatives. With regard to staff development, on-going training is necessary, with an emphasis on how to engage youth as leaders to model youth/adult partnerships. Finally, as youth left the project, time was allotted to train their peers to take

over their volunteer responsibilities. Ongoing turnover is an inevitable part of any service program, but attention to the transition will prevent inconsistent service delivery.

*ii. YouthBuild, USA*

The following summary of this program is based upon information provided in the *YouthBuild, U.S.A.* website (YouthBuild, U.S.A., 2003). Founded in 1988 by Dorothy Stoneman, YouthBuild, USA assists organizations in planning or operating YouthBuild programs in their communities through the provision of how-to manuals, newsletters, national trainings and workshops for both program staff and participants, and direct on-site assistance from experienced program advisors. Members of the YouthBuild USA Affiliated Network may apply for pass-through grants received from national funders, and for support from a loan fund that provides short-term credit. YouthBuild programs are small supportive “mini-communities” that are operated by independent, community-based organizations.

YouthBuild programs focus on community service and community building. This is reflected in its mission statement:

Mission: “To unleash the intelligence and positive energy of low-income young people to rebuild their communities and their lives. To help build a movement toward a more just society in which respect, love, responsibility, and cooperation are the dominant unifying values, and sufficient opportunities are available for all people in all communities to fulfill their own potential and contribute to the well-being of others.”

Purpose: “To unleash the positive energy of unemployed young adults to rebuild their communities and their own lives with a commitment to work, education, responsibility, and family.”

The program enlists unemployed young people, from ages 16 to 24, to build affordable housing for homeless and low-income families in their respective communities. Participants’ time is divided evenly between the construction site and the classroom. It is in the classroom that participants may earn their GEDs or high school diplomas, prepare for college or jobs, and learn to become community leaders. The average cost per participant in the program is about \$20,000 per year (including stipends), which is less than the amount spent for prisons, boot camps, and the military, as examples. The program further offers unemployed and out-of-school young adults job training, education, counseling, leadership development and skills through projects involving the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing in their communities.

YouthBuild, USA has identified benefits for both participants and communities. The program offers men and women extraordinary opportunity to “attain the education, job skills, inspiration, and financial wherewithal to take responsibility for their children and to become community-minded, socially responsible taxpayers”. For example, over 60 percent of the youth complete the program, and 86 percent of graduates go on to college or jobs averaging \$7.61 per hour. Many of these jobs are in construction and directly

related to the skills developed in the program. Typically, participants in the program build low-income housing, which are owned and managed by community-based organizations. Thus, participants are directly involved in community building and service to the poor.

YouthBuild, USA emphasizes job training and leadership development. The combination of coursework and practical service prepares young people for the working world in diverse ways. Weekly classes build sound work habits and decision-making skills; teach time management, career planning, and how to handle job interviews. While at the site, participants receive close supervision and training in construction skills from qualified instructors who are often union journeymen. These skills qualify them for apprenticeships or entry-level positions in construction. Some youth participate in paid internships offering higher levels of training and many of them go on to college. Many also qualify for AmeriCorps college scholarships through their service.

Leadership development: is interwoven into all aspects of YouthBuild, USA. Trainees are taught to recognize their innate knowledge and abilities. Under guidance of staff, trainees are more willing to take on responsibility, overcome obstacles, and grow as leaders. Through workshops and retreats, trainees learn decision-making, group facilitation, public speaking, and negotiating skills, and then use these skills as they design and participate in community improvement projects. Participants learn to advocate for issues that concern them and their communities, even testifying before Congress and in their states judicial houses. Young people also share in the governance of their own program through an elected policy committee and participate actively in community affairs through other committees, learning the values and the life-long commitment needed by effective and ethical community leaders.

### *iii. AmeriCorps*

The following summary of this program is based upon information provided in *Making a Difference: Impact of AmeriCorps\* State/National Direct of Members and Communities 1994-95 and 1995-96* (Aguirre International, 1999). AmeriCorps is part of the federally funded Corporation for National Service. Since 1994, over 250,000 volunteers have provided a wide range of community service activities through multiple sponsoring agencies. AmeriCorps volunteers, known as “members,” are involved in strengthening America’s communities through service. Full time members receive a stipend and an educational award for college, graduate school, or to pay college loans.

AmeriCorps has been evaluated with a focus on eight study areas, four of which were community impact domains (level of service provided, beneficiary impacts, institutional impacts, and community strengthening), and four of which were participant/member impact areas (life skills, civic responsibility, educational attainment, and educational opportunity). We summarize some of the key findings below beginning with community impacts.

Although, the evaluators had difficulty measuring the full impact of AmeriCorps programs, examining a sample of eight programs between 1995 and 1996, they estimated that over 9 million people saw benefits, with over 5.5 million receiving direct services. Surveys of beneficiaries indicate high levels of satisfaction. Their communities saw improved services and infrastructure, including built or renovated community buildings and public spaces, support to community organizations, and new resources in both funds and volunteer recruitment. The evaluators estimated that for every dollar spent on the program, a community return of \$1.66 was realized in direct service and member benefits, suggesting that AmeriCorps “achieved a positive return on the national investment” (ix). Local institutions saw more collaboration and partnership, enabling them to pool resources, share organizational insight, and provide communities with more cohesive and comprehensive services. “The impact of AmeriCorps in terms of mobilizing communities and infusing hope into depressed communities cannot be understated. Member enthusiasm galvanized communities worn down by their own problems. Members recruited locally became aware of the problems in their own community and the need for action, while developing skills that would enable them to move forward. AmeriCorps organization of community projects sparked community interest and participation” (vi).

Effects on members were categorized according to life skills, civic responsibility, and educational attainment and opportunity. Life skills included five functional areas: communication skills, interpersonal skills, analytical problem-solving, understanding organizational systems, and information technology. Compared to a control group, members achieved greater gains in each area, and three-quarters of members attained substantial gains in life skills (except in information technology). Civic responsibility was characterized as “becoming aware of local, state, and national issues; becoming involved in community issues; and collaborating to mitigate community problems and address community needs... includes a desire to continue community service beyond their AmeriCorps experience” (vii). At the end of their terms, 99% of members reported plans to continue some form of community service in the future (even though only 56% reported involvement prior to serving). Their experience reinforced members’ interest in community service and increased members’ awareness of civic affairs and community issues. Moreover, without AmeriCorps, many low-income members simply would not have been able to perform service in their communities. Finally, with regard to education, AmeriCorps increased both educational opportunity and attainment for the majority of its members. Although forty percent were enrolled in educational programs while completing their AmeriCorps service, evaluators also found that members with educational levels of high school or below were, at least in part, overwhelmed by the exigencies of their own lives and roles, and these members needed more direct and continuous support and guidance.

#### *iv. Jobs Corps*

The following summary of this program is based upon information provided in *Does Job Corps Work? Summary of the National Job Corps Study* (Mathematica Policy Research, 2001) (see also *National Job Corps Study: The Impacts of Job Corps on*

*Participants' Employment and Related Outcomes*, Mathematica Policy Research, 2001). Since its inception in 1964, Job Corps has been a central aspect of Federal efforts to provide job-related training for disadvantaged youth. This intensive training program has sought to improve the economic self-sufficiency of disadvantaged youths. Participants range in age between 16 and 24, though most enter the program with a high school diploma. The primary goal of this comprehensive life-skills and employability effort (involving academic education, living skills, and health education) is to help youths become more responsible, employable, and productive citizens. Job Corps serves over 60,000 new participants each year, providing intensive education, training and support services in a residential setting.

Job Corps was the focus of a national evaluation in 1994 and 1995 involving random assignment of a sample of all eligible applicants to Job Corps programs. The evaluation included site visits to 23 centers and produced the following general findings.

Compared with alternative placements (other programs available to students in their communities), Job Corp programs were found to exceed performance of control placements on four main sets of outcomes: deliver more comprehensive and consistent services; make meaningful differences in participants' educational attainment and earnings; deliver significant gains across most groups of students and in various types of settings; and demonstrate cost-effectiveness by having the value of benefits from the program exceed its costs.

Despite high costs (\$1 billion per year), Job Corps also was successful in achieving outcomes related to youth "becoming more responsible citizens." These included: reducing the number of participants on public assistance; reducing arrest and conviction rates, as well as time spent incarcerated; reducing the number of crimes committed against program participants. The program produced modest or no impacts on a variety of other outcomes (e.g., illegal drug use, fertility, college attendance and completion, independent living, mobility and use of child care).

In summary, there is apparently much to be learned from the various experiences with community service programs, service learning programs, and the various work and service "corps" experiences with what are generally non-offender populations. Strong impact evaluations of these programs are, however, with the exceptions noted above, few in number.

### **III. WHY IT CAN WORK: RESEARCH-BASED THEORIES OF SERVICE IMPACT**

*Caring for each other is the most basic form of civic participation. We learn to care in families, and we enlarge our communities of concern as we mature. Caring is the essential democratic act, the prerequisite to voting, joining associations...and all the ways we sustain democracy. Dorothy Stoneman*

What is it about community service that might promote reintegration, assist and support those harmed by crime, encourage communities to change their view of formerly incarcerated persons, and ultimately rebuild communities? What kinds of service in what context should be most effective in producing these various outcomes?

Though the literature cited above makes a strong, practical and empirical case for service by formerly incarcerated persons reentering their communities, much more needs to be learned about the proposed intervention. Moreover, there are few if any documented examples and no evaluations of the type of theory-based, community-building service programs envisioned in the proposed initiative with reentry populations.

The previous section indicates that service work can be beneficial to community residents, including those with criminal records. In this section, we explain *why* a YOUTH CIVIC SERVICE CORPS should be effective, and merits a national *demonstration*. Indeed, such a demonstration, with rigorous evaluation attached, could provide further evidence of the conditions under which such an approach is likely to work, how and why it works, and what problems need to be overcome to ensure success. Such a strategic and closely monitored demonstration would be especially important to reveal what components of the experience seem most related to success in achieving some of the more lofty community building and image change objectives of the YCSC, as well as effectiveness in achieving the most practical, cost-related goals such as decreases in technical violations and reductions in re-offending.

#### a. The Need for Intervention Theory

A policy or program intervention of any kind can be viewed as a *hypothesis or proposition* about the future. The future hoped for at the beginning of an intervention such as the YCSC is the achievement of one or more goals and outcomes—hopefully agreed upon in advance. The hypotheses or propositions about how these goals are to be achieved, like the goals and objectives, should be clearly stated. We have made the case that the community service intervention is grounded in research that suggests that such interventions are likely to work to achieve specific goals. Yet, the impact of practices designed to prevent crime, reduce recidivism, or ameliorate the impact of criminal behavior is always uncertain. And, assuming basic ethical standards are met, there is no right or wrong about an intervention program—though there will always be value-based justifications for wanting to implement a specific program. The case for evaluation and closely monitored demonstration is based on the reality that in any given implementation the program or policy will improve outcomes compared with alternatives, it will change nothing, or will make matters worse.

Prior to intervention, we try to maximize success by first ruling out intervention strategies that have repeatedly demonstrated to fail or to perform less well than others under conditions relevant to the current application. Then success is maximized by replicating programs with strong empirical support. But because such high performing programs are still relatively rare for criminal justice interventions with certain populations—and because specifications are often not relevant to the context in which

the replication will occur (e.g., the program may have been found to be successful with Caucasian Canadian incarcerated adults when our target group is juvenile offenders of mixed ethnicity in a community-based program)—implementers are usually wise to replicate *theoretical principles* rather than prescriptive program models. In addition, certain interventions remain relatively untested; community service, especially in its more theoretically persuasive form with formerly incarcerated populations, is one such intervention. The commitment to evaluation and demonstration should also mean that where there are disagreements about the nature of service to be provided, the structure of service crews, issues such as use of stipend schemes, and so on, that we attempt wherever possible to empirically test the effectiveness of different strategies or models and of various configurations of approaches.

An intervention is also often more, and less, than meets the eye. That is, the activity almost always means something to participants and observers over and above the physical and mental activity that is apparent in the process. Unfortunately, the intervention theory of change we think is at work may not be operational if the intervention is perceived by the recipient or target group in a different way than program implementers and staff think it is perceived, or if the intervention does not actually operationalize the theory. Take employment programs for example. As suggested previously, life course researchers have concluded on the basis of a number of studies that employment for adult lawbreakers including those who have been incarcerated is one major determinant of desistance from crime and reducing the incidence of adult criminality (e.g., Sampson and Laub, 1993). This is so for a variety of reasons other than the obviously important one of offering a means to provide for oneself and one's family. It is argued that employment has other important practical and theoretical meanings than to promote a crime-free way of life: it provides a pro-social identity, is a source of commitment to conventional action, is a means of supporting and maintaining family life, and serves as a context for informal social control—all factors found to be independently related to crime and desistance in many research studies.

For adolescents, on the other hand, employment, especially beyond a minimal number of hours per week, appears to be associated with both initial delinquency and an escalation in involvement in youth crime (Moon et al., 2002). While some have concluded from this that work is bad for young people, others argue that it is not work itself that is the culprit but the fact that work for adolescents has a different meaning. Rather than provide for a pro-social identity, commitment, and informal control, youth employment may detract from time spent on school work and involvement in pro-social activities in school that arguably *do* provide these elements. *And* youth work is associated with school failure and isolation—among the strongest predictors of delinquency and adult crime. While youth jobs could be “designed” to provide similar positive connections to those that reduce crime in adults (Pearl and Reisman, 1969; Bazemore, 1991), this may be rare. Typical youth work, such as fast-food or most retail jobs, do not provide much opportunity to develop conventional commitments to pro-social adults (in fact, supervisors in fast food restaurants are often other juveniles), or meaningful skills (though they have been shown to provide money for drug use) (Moon et al., 2002). The point to be made is that the intervention in question for a specific target

group may not operationalize the theory that it seems to for another target group, though the theory of intervention remains valid.

In the case of the community service, therefore, we must articulate the theory, or theories, of intervention that define how the service will affect YCSC participants as well as community members. Such a theory should guide practice to make sure that what appears on the surface to be “positive community service work” is consistent with core principles. The theory should (a) identify the problem addressed by the service, (b) explain why the intervention will ameliorate the problem, and (c) link the intervention to positive outcomes for participants, communities, and other stakeholders (Weiss, 1997).

Intervention theory helps us to define what “best practice” is for a given intervention and helps us to “know it when we see it” so that we can on an ongoing basis gauge the integrity of the intervention (Weiss, 1997). Regardless of the name of the community service program or even the content of the service, we cannot know what it means to participants and community stakeholders unless we have a standard for determining whether the process is likely to lead an intermediate result (e.g., bonding to pro-social community members), and if it is related empirically to the ultimate outcome (e.g., desistance from crime). In the next three sections, we outline what appear to be the most logical candidates among a number of possible intervention theories that specify the link between the performance of service, intermediate impacts, and long-term impacts on communities and corps participants.

There are of course many theories that might potentially inform a YCSC model. Uggen and Janikula (1999), for example, discuss several relevant theoretical traditions in criminology that emphasize informal social control. In their view, control theory (Hirschi, 1969), differential association, social learning, and the various versions of what they label “reintegrative” theories (e.g., Braithwaite, 1989; 2002) may each provide support for the role of meaningful community service in promoting successful reentry. We propose three general theoretical approaches as most relevant and applicable to implementation of the YCSC. The perspectives outlined below address how community service can affect positive outcomes in three areas: community trust, participant change, and community capacity.

#### b. Community Trust: Earned Redemption Through Service

Though intervention in the reentry context has generally been offender-focused—emphasizing risk management along with some services—a crucial element in reentry is the willingness of the community to endorse the youth’s return. We argue that a necessary condition for community acceptance is “earned redemption” (Maloney, 1998; Bazemore, 1998). Exchange theorists argue that reciprocity is a trait virtually “hardwired” into the human psyche (Gouldner, 1960; Molm and Cook, 1995). Reciprocity in daily life is a core assumption of social interaction. When someone does something nice for us—for example, invites us to dinner—we will thank them, and in all likelihood attempt to “reciprocate” by asking them to dinner at a later date. This “I owe you one” logic applies as well when someone harms us in some way; we, at minimum,

expect an apology, and will most likely want something else—compensation for our losses. When this something else is not offered, our attitude toward that person is at best one of distrust, and whatever relationship we might have had or thought about developing with that person in the future is challenged by the failure to reciprocate.

Juveniles under correctional supervision, and especially those who have been incarcerated, are perceived as having done harm that would require significant effort to ameliorate. The norm of reciprocity dictates that they repair damage caused and restore trust that has been broken. “Trust” in this sense may be viewed as a commodity that is stolen from community members when a crime occurs—and this trust goes beyond individual victims of crime to include others (families of offenders). Thus, serving a sentence does not suffice despite the misnomer that it “pays a debt to society.” Doing time does nothing to address the harm caused to others by these persons and the need to restore the trust that others had in them. The exchange theory of “earned redemption” addresses the need to restore balance by addressing the community and victim side of the reentry equation. Individual victims and various communities are viewed as entities that must be *acted upon* by the offender who “gives back” as an important step on the road to reacceptance (Maruna, 2001).

According to this theory, community acceptance will require a concrete demonstration that the individual acknowledges harm caused and is doing something to make things right. It is a positive affirmation of responsibility for harm and of capacity and willingness to make amends in a way that, when visible to the community, can be a fundamental step in public image change from liability to resource or asset. As Maruna et al. (2002, p.20) observe, “the reciprocal implications of the strengths narrative—that one needs to ‘do something to get something,’ (Toch, 1994, p.71)—make it intuitively appealing.” In a recent study, one focus group participant (i.e., Dennis Maloney) argued that disregard for the breakdown in reciprocity is a central flaw in contemporary criminal justice practice.

Let me put it this way, if the public knew that when you commit some wrongdoing, you’re held accountable in constructive ways and you’ve got to earn your way back through these kinds of good works, ... (Probation) wouldn’t be in the rut we’re in right now with the public. (Dickey and Smith, 1998, p. 36)

The contemporary criminal justice debate has been trapped by a simplistic focus on either punishment or rehabilitation. Yet, neither has effectively explained why lawbreakers “go straight.” As Maruna (2001, p.28) observes, “even the most extreme partisans on either side of the punishment-rehabilitation debate do not suggest that either state rehabilitation or punishment can account for most ex-offenders desisting in any consistent way.” Potentially, the factors embedded in service work are more important than previously realized—and provide an alternative perspective on desistance.

From a human capital perspective, one might theorize that demonstrating *competency* and *trustworthiness* is also crucial to community reacceptance. While this demonstration could compliment the process of earned redemption, the human capital

perspective emphasizes the value of service work based on its ability to allow persons under correctional supervision to actively practice vital skills and responsible behavior that may lead to the more instrumental goal of securing regular employment.

Community service that allows for earned redemption through reparation of harm and restored trust will therefore have certain characteristics. These are reflected in the propositions and practice principles below.

*Proposition 1:* Community service that is visible, voluntary, viewed as “giving back” what was taken from victims and communities, and linked to the harm of one’s crime or crimes will be more likely to change the image of the formerly incarcerated person as someone who honors obligations and has earned his or her way back into the “good graces” of the community.

*Practice Principles:* Based on the theory of earned redemption and the relevant research cited above, the following principles should be considered as guidelines to ensure the integrity of practice aimed at maximizing community reacceptance of YCSC participants:

1. Community members and individuals who have been victimized should have maximum input into the selection of the service project through participation in a restorative reentry conference or other non-adversarial restorative decision-making process.
2. Service should be voluntary on the part of the participant, rather than required by a court or criminal justice agency. This may be achieved by always offering an alternative sanction to the offender or by ensuring their active participation in the decision-making process.
3. Service should be visible to communities of concern.
4. Service aimed at addressing victim needs should, whenever possible, assist the victim directly, be based on input from the victim, or address the needs of other victims in the community.
5. Offenders, victims, and community members should have the opportunity to collectively reflect on the link between the criminal harm and the service conducted, as well as on the value of the service to the personal growth of the offender after it has been performed.

*Proposition 2:* Service that is visible and valuable to individuals and communities and allows the participant to practice and demonstrate competency, reliability and creativity will change the image of the person under court or correctional supervision from liability to asset.

*Practice Principles:* Service aimed at demonstrating competency and trustworthiness could be performed on a voluntary or court-ordered basis with the same impact. Unlike service to achieve earned redemption, service to achieve human capital objectives could be performed for pay or stipend, or as a volunteer for altruistic reasons.

1. The activity should bring service participants together with community members (especially business persons and other potential employers) and the service activity and its outcome should be visible and known throughout the community;
2. The service program should involve participants and community members in planning and executing projects.
3. The service program should celebrate accomplishments and provide for community recognition.
4. Service projects should involve multiple tasks and maximize opportunities to demonstrate a variety of skills.
5. According to the research on service learning cited above, this experiential effect on participants may also be enhanced by combining it with classroom learning, building in time for reflection about the value of the work, skills, and competencies participants are developing.

c. Offender Change: Identity Transformation, Restorying, and the Theory of Generativity

*It is easier to act one's way into better thinking than think one's way into better acting.* Charles See (1996)

While theories of exchange such as earned redemption and human capital perspectives may help to account for a change in the service corps participant's *public* image, they may not explain how person's currently or formerly under correctional supervision may undergo a change in *self-image*. Although we see earned redemption as perhaps, the central component to community acceptance, it not sufficient alone. Concurrently, persons under criminal or juvenile justice supervision need to demonstrate competencies that will allow them to succeed in conventional living, and convey to victims and community members that they do not possess a "deviant identity"—that they embrace the values and standards of the community and will strive to be upstanding and productive citizens.

Not only are skills needed to ensure successful reintegration, but recent evidence and theorizing points to the importance of a transformation of identities from deviant to prosocial self-images (Maruna, 2001). This research focuses on the importance of how the development of identities as law abiding citizens are shaped in a similar way to identities as those of deviants—in social interaction with others (Erikson, 1964; Lofland 1969).

All individuals define themselves, in part, by how they imagine others see them. Individuals take on various identities, presenting them to others in everyday situations, and gauge the social reaction. Sometimes behavior and self-presentation will result in a deviant label—such as criminal offender. But, such labels are only removed through prosocial behavior and presentation of positive identities. The corresponding positive social reaction then solidifies a new, prosocial conception of self. In doing so, stigmatized individuals undergo what Maruna (2001) calls a cognitive "restoring," or reinterpretation of one's past in a way that allows this past life to become a useful part of one's current identity.

Maruna's (2001) study of formerly incarcerated persons in the UK finds that it is this construction of a new identity as a person with something to contribute that distinguishes those who "go straight" from those who do not. Most relevant is that a key aspect of the new identity is taking on the role of helping others through service.

Maruna (2001) utilizes Erik Erikson's theory of "generativity" to account for differences in identity transformation between desisting and non-desisting former prisoners. Essentially, the theory—and Maruna's research—suggests that the critical variable is "a (broader) concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring, and generating benefits for others" (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1998, cited in Maruna, 2001, p.99). In other words, concern for others and the community includes the core idea of helping others as a way of ensuring one's own recovery and one's identity as a person who "makes good" by *doing good*. Such a process is also incorporated into well-known recovery programs such as the 12-Step model (Trice and Roman, 1970). As one incarcerated person in Maruna's sample who later made a successful transition to community life described his experience helping the less fortunate:

. . . since I've been here I've made three big playhouses, like eight-foot wide... the first one we made, we donated it to the children's home. We took so much out of the community, [but] now we're putting something back in (2001, p.122).

While such atonement may be directed to the community as a whole, other members of the sample described their service activities as directed to family, specific community groups, their victims, or organizations that support crime victims (e.g., domestic abuse shelters, victim advocacy centers).

In Uggen et al.'s (2003) sample of inmates, while some expressed skepticism or distaste for the idea of "giving back" to the community that cast them out, others described meaningful service experiences that are consistent with generativity theory. Such experiences may lead to some change in self-image and behavior regardless of the community response, as the following account from an inmate involved in making blankets for a shelter for abused children suggests:

I'm doing it for kids I'll never see and they'll never see me. But that makes me feel so good that I'm doing something here that's not about me. You know that's not selfish. . . . And it is so fulfilling for them and that's just a small example of the same thing on the outside. If you start filling yourself up. It's the same principle of sponsorship in AA and NA. You start helping other people who have less time than you clean and sober, *you stay well, too*. Because there's a connection there and there's people relying on you. (Prisoner, age 49) (quoted in Uggen et al., 2003, p.4, *emphasis added*)

While the psychological process of forging a new identity through a "restoring process" may occur independently of service work, interactionist researchers suggest that

identity change may be facilitated by amends making activity—especially when the work enables the person to empathize with others in need or to understand how their actions are contribute to the public good (Batson, 1994; Schneider, 1991; Bazemore and Erbe, 2003). To the extent that service provides a vehicle to repair harm to the community, it is a step toward achieving graceful earned redemption. Whether in the concrete or symbolic sense, such action may redress the imbalance felt by community members and groups toward persons who have harmed community members. When such actions change the *public image* of the person under correctional supervision, they may promote reconciliation that preserves dignity in ways that are generally not possible through participation in treatment or punishment. By changing the community’s view of the service participant, such activity may also promote sustainable reentry when it leads to social support for the participant, including access to positive roles in work, civic and family life.

Overall, this body of research provides the basis for a dynamic, strength-based, *experiential* model of identity change. This model views productive activity in new, meaningful civic roles as fundamental to both cognitive change in those who have been involved in criminal activity or other harmful behavior, *and* change in community attitudes about such individuals. The theoretical logic of this model is based on the assumption that lawbreakers move toward desistance from crime when they are able to practice or “try out” new identities in pro-social roles (Uggen et al., 2003). Moreover, as they “act their way into better thinking,” they demonstrate both competency and trustworthiness in view of, and in interaction with, other community members who in turn form a new impression of them in this new pro-social role (Trice and Roman, 1970).

*Proposition 3:* Community service activity that is clearly directed toward meeting the needs of the less fortunate or young people will be more likely to change the role and self image of the former offender.

*Practice Principles:*

1. Service of this type should place participants in situations where their impact on disadvantaged groups is direct and visible;
2. Such work should be performed generally on a voluntary basis rather than ordered or assigned.
3. Reflection time should be devoted to the choice of service regarding participant-specific interests in providing assistance to specific populations and to processing the service experience with participants as a means of making the connection between the service and the participant’s cognitive and emotional experiences in response to work that provides direct assistance to other individuals.
4. Service work should be rewarding to participants; it should not be painful or humiliating.

d. Community Capacity: Informal Control, Social Support, and Social Capital

In addition to community acceptance and offender change, a third general area that must be considered is the capacity of the community to assist those returning to the community. In this section, we examine how a service initiative can build community capacity in three crucial ways: (1) enhancing the ability of the community to supervise ex-offenders and intervene if risky behaviors emerge; (2) increase social support by building relationships to role models and offering concrete opportunities for housing, employment, etc.; and (3) strengthen the social capital of the community by reinforcing community institutions and networks and providing a pool of volunteers capable of addressing community needs.

*i. Life Course Transitions, Social Bonds, and Service: A Theory of Informal Control and Social Support*

Drawing on the work of sociologist Robert Sampson and his colleagues (Sampson and Laub, 1992; 1993; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997), we believe that successful reintegration cannot simply be a function of the attitude or behavior of ex-offenders, or even to the criminal justice system, e.g., a parole agency. Reintegration is predicated on community capacity. Although criminologists such as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that criminal propensity is unlikely to change over time, life course studies challenge this view. This research demonstrates that the vast majority of lawbreakers desist from criminal behavior at a relatively young age (Elliott, 1994; Sampson and Laub, 1993), and more importantly emphasizes the dynamic nature of commitment to offending vs. conventional behavior throughout the life course (Piquero, et al., 2002; Warr, 1998).

In general, life course theories view involvement in crime as a temporary rather than permanent state (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Piquero et al., 2002). This research is, however, generally consistent in its findings about the factors that lead to desistance. Notably, this research has confirmed the vital role of informal social controls associated with the formation of families and marital bonds, stable employment, civic engagement, and other factors that create a “social bond” to conventional community that provides a stake in conformity and thereby promotes a law-abiding lifestyle (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Elliott, 1994; Piquero, et al., 2002).

Life course researchers argue that transitions to new roles and relationships in family, work, and community and civic life provide sources of informal control, commitments to conventional lines of action, and sources of support that make involvement in crime less attractive even for formerly chronic and violent offenders (Sampson and Laub, 1992; Elliot, 1994). To the extent that community service work provides these same connections and controls and/or reinforces or provides pathways to other commitments (e.g., to family, work, faith communities), the life course perspective would predict that this experience might alter pathways to criminal careers in the transition to early adulthood (Uggen and Janikula, 1999). By extension, it might also promote successful adjustment and a greater likelihood of desistance for youths returning from residential facilities and those on probation or in community supervision programs.

The related “strengths-based” concept of “resiliency” is also relevant here, as is a large body of research that documents great adaptability and transitions to successful pro-social adult roles under adverse circumstances (Werner, 1999; Werner and Smith, 1992; Rutter, 1996; Saleeby, 2002). Specifically, this research demonstrates that most individuals in high risk circumstances as adolescents, including those involved in offending and other destructive behavior, eventually “get better.” Focusing on the transition to adulthood, this research demonstrates that, all other things being equal, successful transitions are a result of meaningful, caring, ongoing relationships with one or more pro-social adults (e.g., a parent, a teacher). Such relationships may, of course, be established later in life, perhaps in the reentry context. Of most relevance to the role of service, Werner and Smith (1992) in their study of resiliency in the life course in populations of high risk youth found that “acts of required helpfulness” (p. 205), such as caring for younger siblings or managing a household when a parent was incapacitated were associated with positive developmental outcomes. They conclude that programmatic approaches that provide opportunities to “give back to one’s community” have also led to positive outcomes in diverse, “high risk” populations (see also Melichor, 1998).

Based on this research we would predict that community service would influence successful desistance when it in some way provides for informal social control or in fact leads to new connections in the community that provide such control and a bond to conventional groups. Service may also provide a context for training and create connections and networks that lead to employment opportunities. Uggen and Janikula’s (1999) research suggests for example that while voluntary service by adolescents is independently and negatively related to future crime, it is also positively related to employment, family formation, and other indicators of stability. In addition, service may also create the opportunity for mentoring and apprenticeships, which provide social support for participants. Such mentors may also provide guardianship and/or support for sober and straight living and avoidance of criminogenic environments, as well as advocacy that may protect the participant from being targeted or harassed by criminal justice authorities.

Community matters, and low crime communities are those in which community members “do *not* mind their own business” (Braithwaite, 1989). The primary findings in the growing body of research on community “collective efficacy” indicate that crime is lower to the extent that neighborhood adults and community groups feel empowered to intervene in response to troublesome behavior by neighborhood members, particularly children (Braithwaite, 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997). Informal social control is strengthened when community members intervene in each other’s lives. Beyond informal social control, it is important to take account of the role community plays in “social support” (Cullen, 1994), and the assistance provided for youth and families who are impacted by crime. The provision of informal social support is particularly powerful, especially when this is exercised through “natural helpers” (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001).

For better or for worse, juvenile offenders returning from correctional placement will impact their communities. They will almost inevitably influence community members, and this impact can manifest itself both positively or negatively. We conceive a reciprocal relationship between released offenders and the community in which young people formerly under correctional supervision enhance community welfare through service, while the community provides support and supervision, strengthening social ties and facilitating successful reintegration. It should be noted that communities, according to the collective efficacy research and other studies of informal social control, differ in the capacity of their families and community groups to mobilize informal social control in the form of guardianship, as well as to provide the necessary social support to make community members successful (Sampson, 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997).

*Proposition 4:* Community service activity that provides for guardianship, mentoring, advocacy, and social support will be more likely to sustain support for law-abiding behavior and sustainable reintegration.

*Practice Principles:*

1. Service of this type should not be isolated in an “offender-only crew” but include collaborations with other community members whenever possible.
2. The greater the variety of service volunteers involved the better.
3. Community members should be encouraged to participate in service and to act as advocates for core members when appropriate.
4. Reflection time might be devoted to values and norms of conduct as these relate to the service role as a means of reinforcing the positive work and relational behavior in the service context.

*ii. Can Service Build Community? A Theory of Social Capital*

*Community building... is more an orientation than a technique, more a mission than a program, more an outlook than an activity. It catalyzes a process of change grounded in local life and priorities and addresses the developmental needs of individuals, families and organizations within the neighborhood. A community's own strengths are seen as central.* Lisbeth Schorr (1997: 361-362)

If “community building” means adding to the quality of life in communities as a common good, then work that allows for repair and redemption, changes in individual and public identities of those under court or correctional supervision, provides assistance to those in need, builds or repairs physical structures, or improves the natural environment, would appear to fit the definition of “community building service.” While we would not disagree with this view and would hope that *all* service efforts contribute to the common good, we suggest that “community building” service may aspire to a qualitatively different level of impact. Specifically, *community building service* includes those projects that seek to impact the capacity of community entities for self-sufficiency and self-governance. We would broadly define “collective efficacy” to include the

production of safe, peaceful, living environments in which members are capable of resolving most conflicts, socializing neighborhood children, mobilizing government and other resources when needed, and promoting democratic participation in community life.

The highest level of service that might be achieved in a YCSC would therefore be service in which youth in reentry or other court or correctional programs work side by side in key leadership roles with other community members to plan and execute tasks that build collective efficacy. Such tasks might include: building safer parks and redesigning other neighborhood common areas to reduce fear and victimization; teaching conflict resolution and peacemaking skills in schools (including restorative conferencing) as alternatives to suspension and other forms of discipline; mediating interracial conflicts; planning and implementing voter registration drives; building domestic violence “safe houses”; organizing support groups for victims and perpetrators of family violence; mentoring and providing positive guardianship for youth at risk; promoting and participating as volunteers in informal neighborhood restorative processes as a response to neighborhood youth crime; leading anti-drug initiatives; facilitating community discussion groups about drug sales, gun sales, or police profiling and harassment in the community; and organizing and participating in victim support groups through churches and other community groups.

There is nothing particularly new about these ideas and some may seem to differ only in subtle ways from work involved in projects that fit well with other theoretical models of service discussed previously. What is different, however, is the vision of improving local capacity to take care of community members and community problems and for developing a better quality of life. What is also new is service that may invite or spark *community dialogue* about shared norms and values, about mutual responsibility for socialization of young people and social control, and about the value of persons—who have the experience of both harming the community through participation in crime and the experience of being harmed by the criminal justice system—helping others to avoid this harming and being harmed. What is also new is the goal of building new relationships and networks of trust and support, most notably led by community coalitions that include persons once viewed as part of the *problem* now being viewed as a necessary part of a solution in producing peace, justice and a better quality of life in these communities.

Some communities, particularly black, urban ghettos, have been severely affected both by crime and by the disproportionate loss of young men through incarceration, followed by the return of those persons with little assistance or support. Rose and Clear (1998) argue that this revolving door undermines the stability of families and community institutions. Alternatively, when those returning from correctional experiences are consistently involved with others in supportive local groups and coalitions (e.g. Cleveland’s Prison Ministries Coalition), in community building service, community organization may be enhanced.

To the extent that volunteer work produces a public good, it benefits participants and non-participants alike (Coleman, 1990). The crime-reductive potential of

volunteer work is therefore even greater in the aggregate than in the sum of the individual effects [on participants]. (Uggen and Janikula, 1999, p. 356).

Service initiatives might also enhance collective efficacy by encouraging community members and groups to participate along with ex-offenders. In doing so, these communities may increase their own skills in promoting pro-social behavior and reinforcing behavioral norms while also lending support to returning formerly incarcerated persons. While young offenders will no doubt need assistance from the communities they return to, through service they may also demonstrate their leadership skills and serve as positive examples to young people.

Community service to build community would be grounded then in a clear vision about the capacity of citizens to mobilize to improve community life and in doing so increase their own level of competency as citizens. The proposition and principles for practice below summarize the assumptions behind and guidelines for such service.

*Proposition 5:* Community service activity that seeks to build community will be based on a vision of collective learning and skill building for the future that promotes community ownership and leadership in resolving problems and developing solutions.

*Practice Principles:*

1. Service projects to build community should be selected and designed to achieve collective benefits for the community.
2. Service projects to build community should be strategic and based on discussions about collective skills to be developed from such service.
3. Service to build community would engage community leadership and maximize participation of “out” groups as well as “in” groups.
4. Service to build community would be explicitly focused on social justice issues while not neglecting the needs of individuals and families harmed by crime and the need for collaboration and partnerships.
5. Service to build community should have as its goals: strengthening or building new relationships, strengthening or building networks, and strengthening or building collective capacity for informal social control, social support and socialization of community members
6. Reflection time for community building service is of the utmost importance in encouraging participants to share feelings and learning’s, make revisions in strategies, reinforce collective resolve, discuss civic and social justice implications of their work, and develop advocacy strategies.

In summary, several research-based theories provide the basis for specific intervention theories that suggest different ways in which community service of the type envisioned in the YCSC may impact community, offenders, victims and others who will be instrumental in achieving program goals. Each intervention theory makes somewhat different, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, assumptions about the nature and focus of service most likely to provide intermediate outcomes that lead to long term

goals, most importantly, successful reentry and measurable strengthening of community capacity.

As we begin to assess implementation of YCSC service projects, we first pay attention to the integrity of the service intervention as a principle-based collective enterprise likely to impact offender, victim and community in a way that maximizes achievement of these long-term goals. In the final section of this document, we suggest several dimensions of service as a template for assessing this intervention integrity.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION: DEPICTING THE DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE INTERVENTION ON ITS HIGHEST PLANE**

A premise of this paper is that it is possible to design service for maximum general and specific impact on communities, corps participants, victims and other stakeholders. Indeed, the primary goal of the YCSC would seem to be to maximize the benefits of service for these core stakeholders, while avoiding demeaning, stigmatizing, punitive aspects of service work.

A summary proposition about how to do this is depicted in Figure 1. This model suggests that, all other things being equal, the extent of stakeholder involvement in project selection, design, and the activity itself (see horizontal axis) is a primary factor in increasing the collective benefit or impact of the activity (see vertical axis). The figure also suggests that as the *nature* of participation changes qualitatively from providing input to actual participation, impact is increased.

This general theoretical logic is not new. It is indeed central to both procedural justice (Tyler, 1996) and restorative justice models (Van Ness and Strong, 1997) and is also a tenet of democratic decision-making (Barber, 1992; Braithwaite, 2002). Essentially, citizens denied opportunities for meaningful participation become apathetic. They may then become suspicious, then distrustful and/or cynical, and finally oppositional and/or defiant. Because these negative feelings do not develop naturally, the theory suggests that when juvenile or criminal justice processes proactively involve citizens and community groups in meaningful ways, we should anticipate an increased sense of support also linked to an enhanced sense of community. This support comes from involvement, investment, and ownership in the justice process, and from a sense of personal responsibility for its success. Such commitment makes it difficult to criticize without becoming part of the solution, and investment creates a sense of personal responsibility for the well-being of the community that neutralizes apathy and cynicism.

In addition to participation, the *nature of the service focus* is also presumed to be critical to achieving specific kinds of impact. As the vertical bars in the figure suggest, there is an implied hierarchy of community service projects. According to this theoretical model, the best projects are multidimensional efforts that accomplish multiple objectives. The tallest bar on the far right of the chart would be an example of a project or set of projects that met needs and accomplished goals that could be said to: build community; provide direct assistance to individual community members in need (e.g., the elderly,

homeless persons, youth at risk); demonstrate a general benefit to the community as a whole; allow the person currently or formerly under correctional supervision to demonstrate accountability or make amends through repairing harm to the community; and to provide for some structuring of participants' time that might otherwise be spent in places or around persons that provide a criminogenic influence.

Aside from punitive service (depicted below the horizontal axis to indicate its likely negative impact), all forms of service in each figure are presumed to be of some value. The least important of these values in the proposed hierarchy is service intended *only* to incapacitate participants; while any service project can be structured to occupy the offender's time, the least public value and stakeholder impact would be gained from service that only accomplished this temporary risk management goal (such projects will also be the most difficult for participants and the public to distinguish from those with an explicitly punitive intent). As the next bar suggests, there is a greater public value and community/stakeholder impact associated with repairing the harm of one's crime through service which could at the same time also provide for the guardianship effect offered in the first category. But greater value still would be provided in service that also is designed to achieve some noticeable community level impact (e.g., a community beautification effort). Even more public value and community/stakeholder impact can be gained from service that also assists individuals in need (e.g., providing firewood for the elderly or assistance with shopping). More still is gained from those projects that in doing so, also build *community capacity* and increase both individual and collective skills at maintaining peaceful, safe, just and productive communities (e.g., a project in which participants work with other community members to build a homeless shelter or resolve a collective problem such as truancy or racial tension around police/community relations).

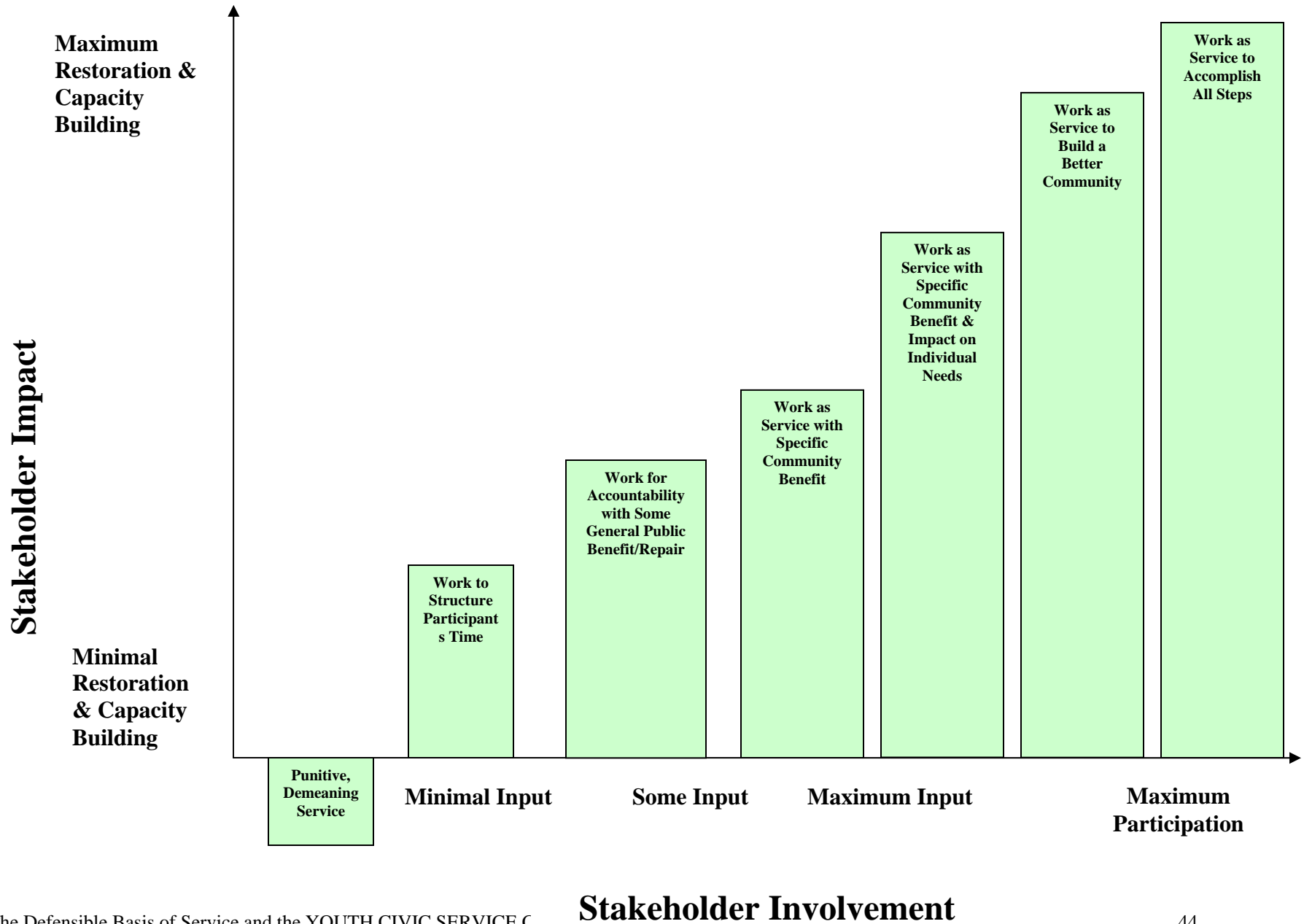
This hierarchy (with the probable exception of the first vertical bar) implies differences in the level of planning and execution rather than any necessary value-based ranking of priorities between say, providing a general community benefit vs. projects that meet the needs of the elderly. Because the ultimate collective and empirical benefit of a given project is an empirical question of impact, and because communities are likely to differ in their most pressing needs and should have maximum input into project selection, a final assumption is that the best of all projects might have clear community building impact but also accomplish other goals depicted in the other bars.

Figures 2-4 provide a more specific illustration of the proposed relationship between the level and type of participation of *each of the three stakeholders* in justice interventions—community, the community service participant, and victims—and the possible range of impact on that stakeholder. Each of these figures makes the same assumption as Figure 1 regarding the relationship between stakeholder involvement and impact/outcome, but in addition suggests a unique benefit for each stakeholder (as described in each vertical bar) provided by each level of service. This is meant to suggest that there is likely to be general benefit for all stakeholders at each level, but also that different specific benefits unique to each stakeholder can be attained by designing service projects with specific needs of each stakeholder in mind and, most importantly, by attention to maximizing participation and input of each. We have also specified the

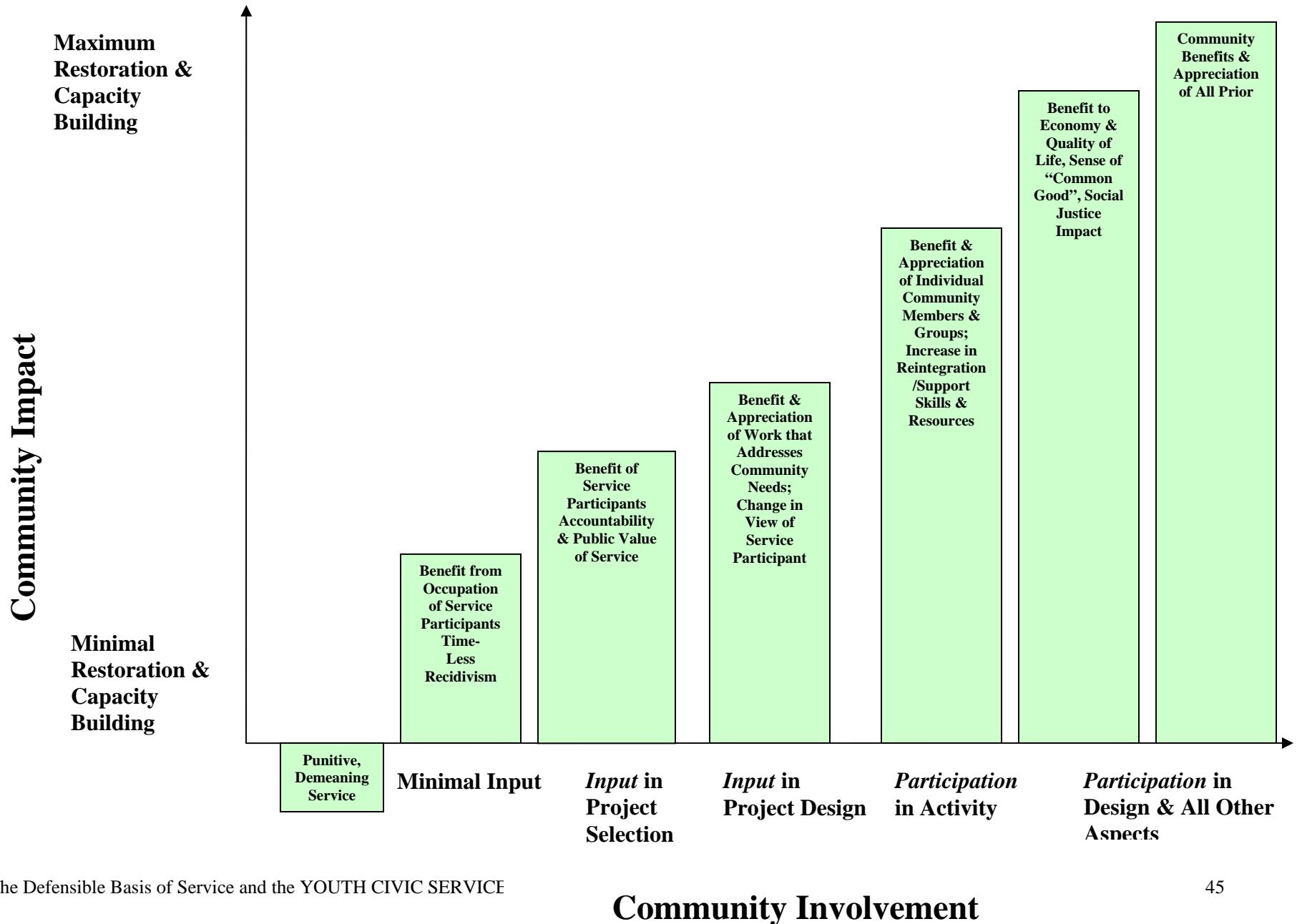
nature of input and participation to a greater degree in the continuum of involvement dimension shown on the horizontal axis.

Tables 1-5 provide suggested general logic models that include the overall goal of the community service intervention at each level of influence ranging from the incapacitation-only level depicted in the shortest vertical bar to the community building bar. The suggested model for each level includes: the primary goal associated with service at this level; an example of a service intervention; a primary theory or theories of intervention that logically accounts for impact; a proposition about the connection between the service and the outcome; and a general statement about how to gauge the integrity of an intervention aimed at achieving the specified outcome (in other words, “how do we know it when we see it”).

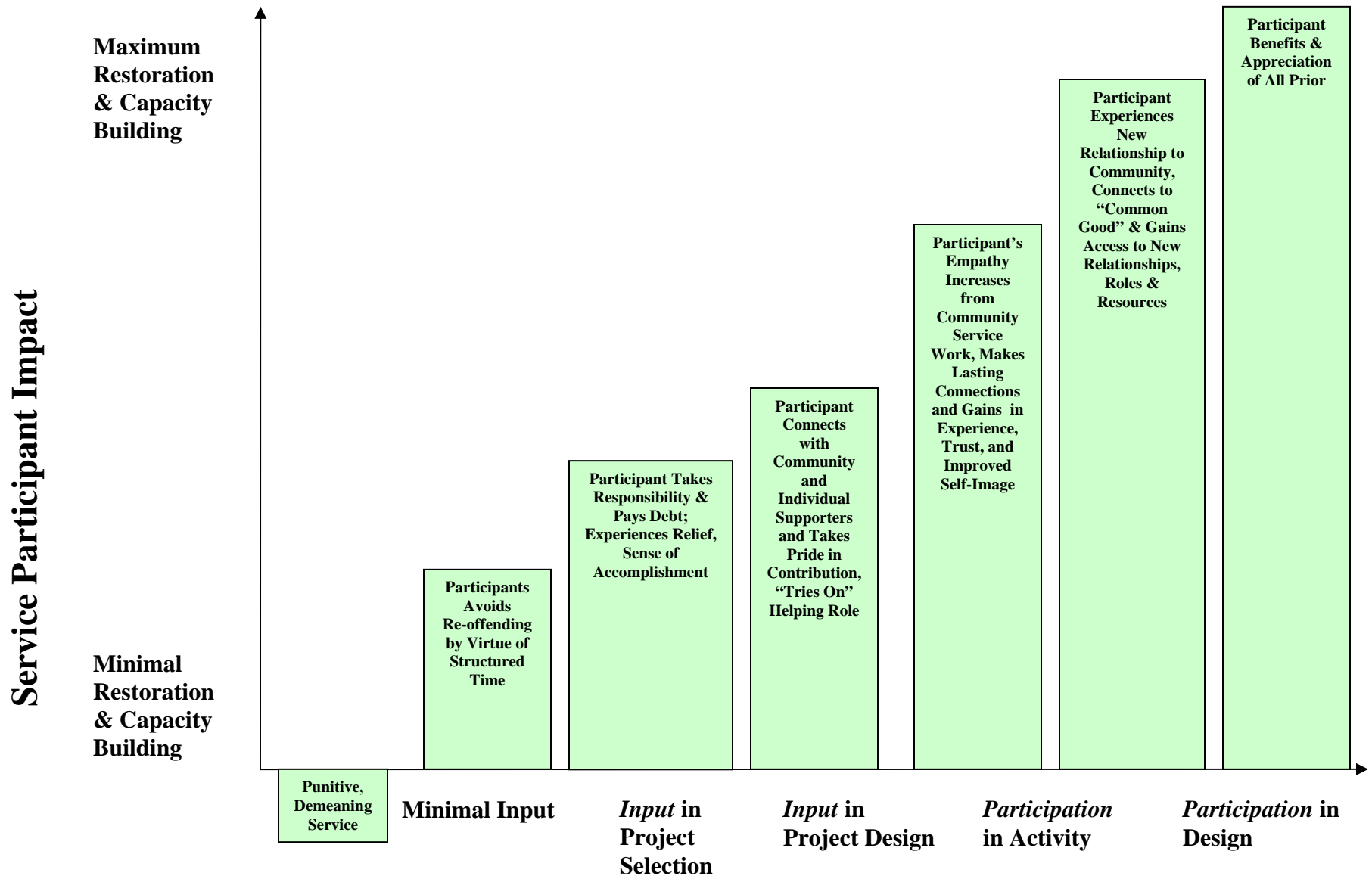
# *Community Work Service on its Highest Plane: Some Dimensions of “Doing Good”*



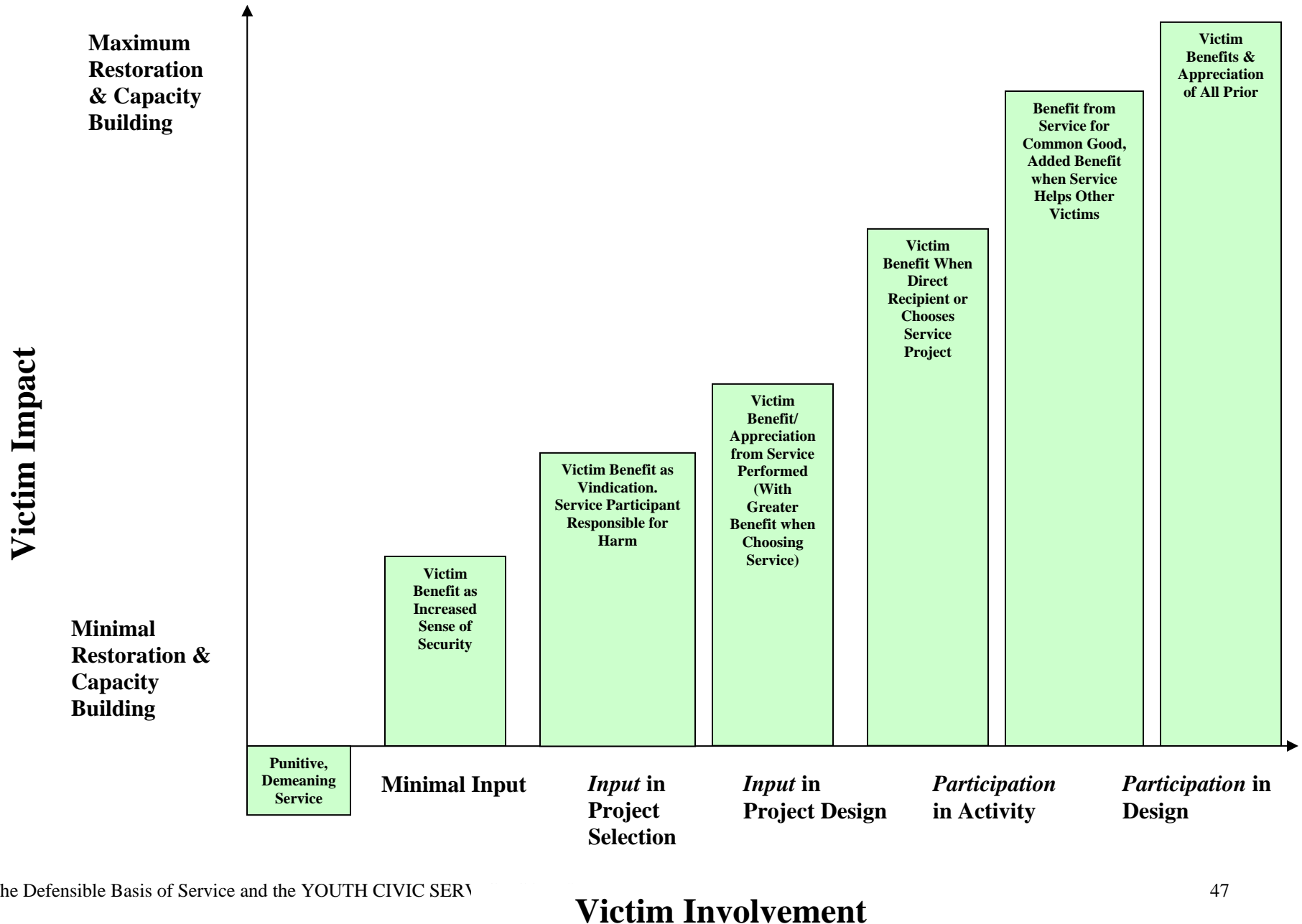
# Community Work Service on its Highest Plane: Some Dimensions of Community Impact & Nature of Involvement



# Community Work Service on its Highest Plane: Some Dimensions of Service Participant Impact



# Community Work Service on its Highest Plane: Some Dimensions of Victim Impact



**Table One:**

<i>Level One</i>	
<b>Goal</b>	Incapacitation: Involve participants in law-abiding activity during free time; minimize time and energy for criminal activity and association
<b>Examples</b>	Service projects with minimal or unclear public or community value or connection to the harm of the crime committed designed to occupy the persons under supervision time (e.g., washing police cars, individual “make work” at service sites)
<b>Theory</b>	“An idle mind...”
<b>Proposition</b>	Keeping the participant busy reduces recidivism
<b>Gauging Integrity of Intervention</b>	Extent to which time programmed in otherwise free and unsupervised; service activity is not harmful or demeaning

**Table Two:**

<i>Level Two</i>	
<b>Goal</b>	Provide service to accomplish accountability and reparation to the community most impacted by the lawbreaker’s action; removing their debt/obligation; not focused on punishment. (Inclusive of goals in level one)
<b>Examples</b>	Repairing “broken windows” or other property damaged by the crime; crime repair crews; service to impacted businesses, schools or other community entity damaged by one’s offense; work may have other public benefit, and is ideally carried out in the community affected by the participants crime
<b>Theory</b>	Exchange Theory: Reciprocity and Earned Redemption
<b>Proposition</b>	Service connected to the crime and harm caused to individuals and community provides sense of justice/reciprocity and “balance” to the community, vindication to victim and sense of relief and accomplishment to participant
<b>Gauging Integrity of Intervention</b>	Dimensions include the extent to which service has real or important symbolic connection made in participant and community mind of connection of reparative obligation to the harm caused by this lawbreaker. What input did victim, lawbreaker and relevant community have into the nature of the service performed? Minimal participant skill building, minimal public recognition

**Table Three:**

<i>Level Three</i>	
<b>Goal</b>	Service should make general public contribution and address real community needs; connect participant with law-abiding citizens and civic or service groups; provide for some skill building and public recognition of work; participant role change; change in community view of lawbreaker; victim appreciation of service and input into selection. (Inclusive of previous goals)
<b>Examples</b>	Conservation, beautification and public works projects; community gardens; assist with public events; voter registration assistance
<b>Theory</b>	Common good and civic connection
<b>Proposition</b>	Service connected to public and community needs builds sense of accomplishment and self-worth in participants; provides for initial connection with law-abiding citizens and groups; citizens with knowledge of this work begin to view lawbreaker as asset vs. liability; victims with input into project selection experience benefit of service
<b>Gauging Integrity of Intervention</b>	Service addresses real community needs with recognizable public value; community has role in determining the nature of the service and may participate in planning and the activity itself; public visibility; skill building; processing service

**Table Four:**

<i>Level Four</i>	
<b>Goal</b>	Service should address individual needs of underprivileged and disadvantaged groups whenever possible allowing direct face-to-face contact between participant and individuals and groups being served. (Inclusive of previous goals)
<b>Examples</b>	Firewood delivery and assistance to the elderly; mentoring and tutoring youth and disabled populations; food bank assistance; transportation assistance; service to individual victims (e.g., offender crime repair crews) or groups of victims (e.g., service provided to domestic abuse shelters)
<b>Theory</b>	“Helper Principle” Empathy for others puts lawbreaker disadvantage and difficulties in broader context
<b>Proposition</b>	By helping those in need, participant makes improvement in his/her skills; makes connections; improves social skills; gains empathy. Victim benefits directly from personal service, and in some cases, victims’ groups benefit; community gains skills in providing support and assistance and in reintegrative capacity
<b>Gauging Integrity of Intervention</b>	Service maximizes opportunity for face-to-face assistance to disadvantaged; community and victims have input into the nature of service provided and opportunities to participate in accomplishing and/or planning the service with lawbreakers; participants process and discuss service as a positive experience and work alongside other community members

**Table Five:**

<i>Level Five</i>	
<b>Goal</b>	To improve overall quality of community life; build social capital for promoting peaceful conflict resolution and “self-policing”; enhance community economic productivity (e.g., improve business climate); achieve social justice goals; participants gain access to new long-term relationships and new roles. (Inclusive of previous goals)
<b>Examples</b>	Habitat for Humanity; school improvement, neighborhood construction projects; fundraising efforts; peacemaking and racial tolerance initiatives; offenders as mediators/facilitators
<b>Theory</b>	Collective efficacy; social capital; civic justice
<b>Proposition</b>	Service with broad collective impact creates “added value” that connects lawbreaker to a broader community and ongoing supports; assists with victim healing and provides opportunities for victims to contribute
<b>Gauging Integrity of Intervention</b>	To what extent is the service creating added value; what is the collective impact; what opportunities are provided for long term relationships for lawbreaker and victim; are community members practicing and learning new reintegration skills?