YOUTH HELPING AMERICA

Leveling the Path to Participation:
Volunteering and Civic Engagement Among
Youth From Disadvantaged Circumstances

March 2007

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*This brief is the third in the **Youth Helping America Series**, a series of reports based on the 2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey*

YOUTH HELPING AMERICA SERIES

Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering (*November 2005*)

Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement (*March 2006*)

Leveling the Path to Participation: Volunteering and Civic Engagement Among Youth From Disadvantaged Circumstances (*March 2007*)

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The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation provides opportunities for more than two million Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to better understand the attitudes and behaviors of young people in America around volunteering, service-learning, and other forms of community involvement, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and Independent Sector, conducted a national survey, the 2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey (the Youth Volunteering Survey). Between January and March of 2005, 3,178 Americans between the ages of 12 and 18 were asked about their volunteering habits and experiences with school-based service-learning projects, as well as their attitudes and behaviors related to other forms of civic engagement.

In the first two reports in the *Youth Helping America Series*, "Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering" and "Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement," we explored the role of social institutions in engaging youth in volunteering and service-learning.[1] We were also able to show that there was a connection between school-based service and a youth's sense of community and ability to make a difference.

Yet, as the recent research of Robert Putnam and others have shown, there is an increasing class gap in civic attitudes and behaviors—that is, not only has there been an overall decline in civic engagement in America, but this negative trend is amplified among those from economically disadvantaged households.[2] This trend, while troubling, is not surprising, as research on civic engagement has shown that people with greater participatory resources will participate more. As Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady have argued in their model of civic voluntarism, participation in civic life is fostered through a reinforcing cycle, where resources, engagement, and connections to social networks develop throughout an individual's life, feeding into one another and thereby leading to greater civic participation. Addressing the growing gap in civic engagement, therefore, requires a strategic approach to providing the proper resources to those from disadvantaged circumstances, thereby introducing them to the positively reinforcing cycle of civic participation.

> Recent research shows an increasing class gap in civic attitudes and behaviors—not only has there been an overall decline in civic engagement in America, but this negative trend is amplified among those from economically disadvantaged households.

As we demonstrated in "Educating for Active Citizenship," youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have participated in school-based service or service-learning demonstrate greater civic engagement and sense of personal empowerment than those youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have not participated in school-based service or service-learning. The aim of this report is to explore further the attitudes and behaviors of youth from disadvantaged circumstances, particularly around their engagement in volunteering, to inform efforts around enhancing opportunities for these young people to enter into the cycle of civic participation.

Not surprisingly, we find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to have entered the cycle of civic participation, leading to lower rates of volunteering and other forms of civic engagement. We explore the characteristics of youth from disadvantaged circumstances who engage in volunteer activities and compare these characteristics to those of youth from disadvantaged circumstances who do not volunteer, particularly in relation to other forms of civic engagement. Through these analyses, we look to identify the significant connections to civic engagement that volunteer activities have for youth who grow up with economic hardship.

EXECUTIVE SUMMAR Y AND KEY FINDINGS

This report is the third in the *Youth Helping America Series*, a series of reports based on data from the 2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey, a national survey of 3,178 American youth between the ages of 12 and 18. The survey was conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and the nonprofit coalition Independent Sector. The survey collected information on teen volunteering habits, experiences with school-based service-learning, and other forms of civic engagement. This report explores the attitudes and behaviors of youth from disadvantaged circumstances toward volunteering and other forms of civic engagement. Our intention is for this analysis to inform efforts that help these young people enter into the cycle of civic participation.

For the purposes of our analysis, we consider youth to be from disadvantaged circumstances when their family's income is less than or equal to 200 percent of the poverty level, following the 2005 federal poverty guidelines.[4] Based on this formula, we found that 22 percent of all survey respondents were considered disadvantaged. Further analysis of this population shows that they are significantly more likely to be Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino, or born outside of the U.S. They are also less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to do well academically or have one or both parents with at least some college education.

Our findings indicate that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely than those who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances to participate in volunteer activities, 43 percent to 59 percent, respectively. However, further analysis provides greater understanding concerning the circumstances in which youth volunteer:

- When youth from disadvantaged circumstances do volunteer, they demonstrate the same level of commitment as youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances. Thirty-six percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances devote at least 52 hours to volunteer activities, while 39 percent spend a minimum of 12 weeks per year with an organization. This is similar for all other youth volunteers.

- Youth volunteers from disadvantaged circumstances are 18 percent more likely to volunteer with a religious congregation, yet nearly 50 percent less likely to volunteer with a civic-oriented youth organization, such as 4-H or Boy/Girl Scouts, compared with youth volunteers from non-disadvantaged circumstances.

- Regardless of their economic circumstances, youth are most likely to volunteer because they are asked, and when they are asked, a teacher is the most likely person to make the request.

- The most common volunteer activities that youth from disadvantaged circumstances perform include: providing general labor (66 percent), participating in music or art activities (54 percent), collecting or distributing food (54 percent), and fundraising (50 percent).

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely than those youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to be motivated to volunteer in order to gain work experience and to fulfill their religious or spiritual beliefs.

We have maintained throughout the *Youth Helping America Series* that social institutions, such as families, schools, religious congregations, and youth organizations, play a key role in the likelihood that youth will participate in volunteer activities. Yet we find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to encounter the kind of experiences with social institutions that are connected to volunteering. The one exception appears to be attendance at religious services, indicating that religious congregations are a crucial way for these youth to engage in volunteering.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably less likely to report past or current participation in school-based service or service-learning than those youth who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances, 31 percent to 40 percent, respectively.

- While 44 percent of youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances have at least one parent who volunteers, only 27 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances have at least one parent who serves as a volunteer role model.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to participate in youth groups or school clubs, 35 percent to 53 percent, respectively.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are just as likely as those who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances to attend religious services, with 50 percent of all youth reporting that they attend religious services about once a week.

- There is a connection between attendance at religious services and the likelihood that youth from disadvantaged circumstances will volunteer, with volunteers nearly 60 percent more likely than those who do not volunteer to attend religious services about once a week.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

We also find that parents' education is related to the likelihood that youth from disadvantaged circumstances will volunteer. According to our findings, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably more likely to volunteer when at least one parent has some college education. For example, 53 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances with at least one parent who has attended college volunteer, compared to 33 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances with parents who have never attended college.

In addition to these disparities in experiences, we also find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to indicate that they have positive civic attitudes and behaviors.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to say that it is very likely that they will volunteer in the next year, 31 percent to 44 percent, respectively.

- When compared to youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are 25 percent more likely to say that they never discuss politics with their parents or other adults and 9 percent more likely to say that they never discuss politics with their friends.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are 38 percent more likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to report that "you can't be too careful" about other people, 43 percent to 31 percent, respectively.

- The majority of youth today, across the economic spectrum, see at least some likelihood that they will graduate from a four-year college. Yet those from disadvantaged circumstances have less confidence in the likelihood that they will graduate with a bachelor's degree.

However, when youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer, they demonstrate increases in positive social development, particularly in comparison to those youth from disadvantaged circumstances who do not volunteer. When compared to youth from disadvantaged circumstances who do not volunteer:

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances who volunteer are about twice as likely to discuss politics with their parents or other adults, as well as with their friends.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances who volunteer are almost 40 percent more likely to believe that they can make some difference or a great deal of difference in their community, 70 percent to 51 percent, respectively.

- Youth from disadvantaged circumstances who volunteer are almost 50 percent more likely to say that it is very likely that they will graduate from a four-year college, 76 percent to 51 percent, respectively.

In order to explore the similarities and differences between the volunteering habits of youth in general and those of youth from disadvantaged circumstances, we used family income to determine whether a youth respondent is disadvantaged. For the purposes of our analysis, a youth is considered disadvantaged when his or her family income is less than or equal to 200 percent of the poverty level, as established in the 2005 federal poverty guidelines. Based on this formula, we found that 22 percent of all survey respondents were considered to be from disadvantaged circumstances.

While we will define disadvantage in economic terms, we have also considered other demographic characteristics of the youth in our analysis. Our initial analysis, for example, indicates that respondents who are classified as disadvantaged are significantly more likely to be Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino, or born outside the U.S. We also found that these youth are more likely to have lower grades in school, and their parents are less likely to have attended college. [See Table 1.]

TABLE 1: Selected Demographic Characteristics of Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances (DAC) and Non-Disadvantaged Circumstances (NDAC)[5]

Characteristic	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Black or African-American	22%	10%	13%
Hispanic or Latino	31%	12%	16%
Born outside of the United States	12%	6%	7%
Speaks a language other than English at home	22%	6%	9%
Grade point average of B- or lower	32%	21%	24%
At least one parent has attended college	43%	80%	72%

Characteristics presented in this table include only those variables where the difference between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth is found to be statistically significant at the .05 level or lower. A table of the full demographic findings is located in the Appendix 1.

A LOOK AT VOLUNTEERING

As we reported in the first report in the *Youth Helping America Series*, "Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering," the majority of American youth (55 percent) between the ages of 12 and 18 contributed at least some time to volunteering in the previous twelve months. [See the Appendix for the volunteer questions used in the Youth Volunteering Survey.] This translates into an estimated 15.5 million teens, contributing over 1.3 billion hours in service to organizations, such as religious congregations, schools, and youth leadership organizations.[6]

MAJOR FINDING: Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to participate in volunteer activities, 43 percent to 59 percent, respectively.

A look at the volunteering rate among youth from disadvantaged circumstances indicates that they are significantly less likely to volunteer than those youth who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances, 43 percent to 59 percent, respectively. [See Charts 1.1 and 1.2.] This difference may be attributed to several possible factors. For example, youth from disadvantaged circumstances may be less likely to encounter volunteer opportunities, may be more likely to have other responsibilities that occupy their time, or may not live in an environment that encourages volunteering. While it is difficult to isolate why an individual does not volunteer, we will consider a variety of characteristics for volunteers and non-volunteers, as well as youth from disadvantaged circumstances and those who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances, in order to better understand the circumstances which are connected to this lower volunteering rate.

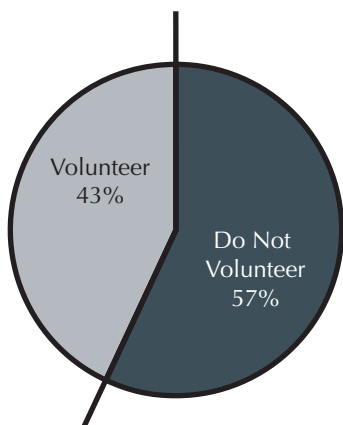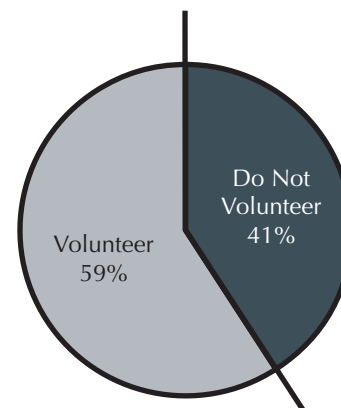**CHART 1.1:** Volunteering Among Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances (DAC)

Volunteer
43%

Do Not
Volunteer
57%

CHART 1.2: Volunteering Among Youth from Non-Disadvantaged Circumstances (NDAC)

Do Not
Volunteer
41%

Volunteer
59%

Further exploration of volunteering among youth from disadvantaged circumstances provides some interesting insights into volunteering among this population. Most notably, despite the fact that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to volunteer, we find that when they do volunteer, they demonstrate the same levels of volunteer intensity as youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances. We find no significant difference between the total hours per year that youth devote to volunteering, with 38 percent of all youth volunteers devoting at least 52 hours a year to volunteer activities.

MAJOR FINDING: When youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer, they demonstrate the same level of commitment as youth volunteers who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances, with 38 percent serving at least 12 weeks of the year.

When we look at the volunteer commitment of youth, or at the number of weeks per year that teens serve with their primary volunteer organization, we find no significant differences in the level of volunteer commitment for youth from disadvantaged circumstances. These youth are just as likely to serve as regular volunteers for an organization, with 38 percent serving with an organization for at least 12 weeks out of the year. [See Chart 2.]

Volunteer commitment is measured by the number of weeks per year that a respondent served with their primary organization.

Regular volunteers: Youth who reported volunteering with an organization for at least 12 weeks in the previous 12 months

Occasional volunteers: Youth who reported volunteering with an organization for three to 11 weeks in the previous 12 months

Episodic volunteers: Youth who reported volunteering with an organization for fewer than three weeks in the previous 12 months

Non-volunteers: Youth who reported that they had not volunteered with an organization in the previous 12 months

CHART 2: Level of Commitment for Youth Volunteers by Economic Status
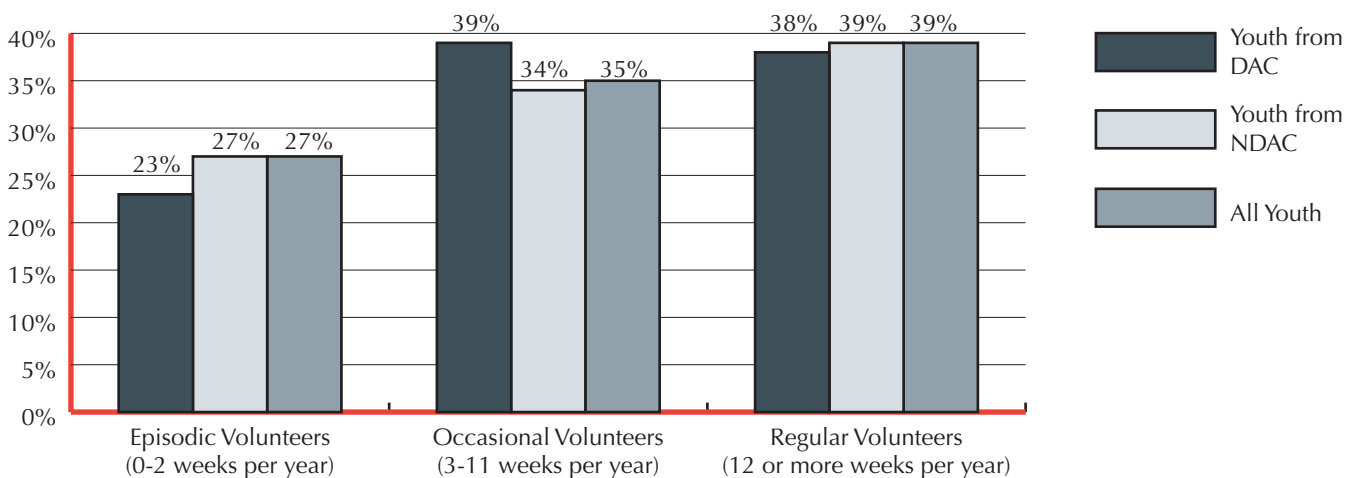
WHERE YOUTH VOLUNTEER

An analysis of the data collected by the Youth Volunteering Survey shows that youth volunteers, in general, are most likely to serve with one of four different types of organizations: 1) religious congregations, such as churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples; 2) schools, including school clubs; 3) youth leadership organizations, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and 4-H; and 4) social service organizations, such as the Salvation Army and Habitat for Humanity. According to the survey, 73 percent of youth volunteers from disadvantaged circumstances reported that one of these four organizations is the main organization with which they volunteer. [See Table 2.]

MAJOR FINDING: Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to volunteer with religious congregations, and less likely to volunteer with youth civic or leadership organizations, when compared to youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances.

When we look more specifically at youth from disadvantaged circumstances, we find two statistically significant differences in the organizations with which they volunteer. First, even as religious congregations are the most common volunteer choice among youth in general, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are even more likely to volunteer with these organizations. At the same time, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are about half as likely to volunteer with a youth organization, one of the key social institutions that connect youth to their community and provide sites for positive youth development. We also see that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to volunteer through their school or school clubs; however, perhaps due to sample sizes, this difference was not found to be statistically significant.

These findings suggest that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to participate in religious congregations, but less likely to engage in youth civic and leadership organizations.[7] It is unclear, however, whether these youth make an active choice in this direction or are responding to the opportunities that are made available to them. We do know from other research on youth from disadvantaged circumstances that religious organizations have been vital in actively engaging this population.[8]

TABLE 2: Volunteering Rates at the Four Most Common Types of Organizations[A]

Main Organizations for Teen Volunteers	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Religious congregation	39% *	33% *	34%
School or school club	21%	17%	18%
Youth civic/leadership organization	7% *	12% *	11%
Social or community service group	11%	9%	10%

[A] A table of the full organization findings is located in Appendix 2.
* The difference between disadvantaged youth and non-disadvantaged youth is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

Despite the differences in where they volunteer, there appears to be little to no difference in *how* youth come to volunteer with a given organization, comparing youth from disadvantaged circumstances with those from non-disadvantaged circumstances. [See Chart 3.] Youth in general are most likely to engage in volunteer activities with an organization because they were asked by someone, with 43 percent of all youth volunteers reporting that they had been asked. Among youth who volunteer because they were asked, 27 percent were asked by their teacher, making teachers the most common people who ask youth to volunteer. Other people likely to ask youth to volunteer include parents, adults from a place of worship, and individuals from within the organization where the youth volunteers.

MAJOR FINDING: Regardless of their economic circumstances, youth are most likely to volunteer because they are asked. When they are asked, a teacher is the most likely person to make the request.

CHART 3: Paths Youth Take to Volunteer Involvement (Percentages include volunteers only.)
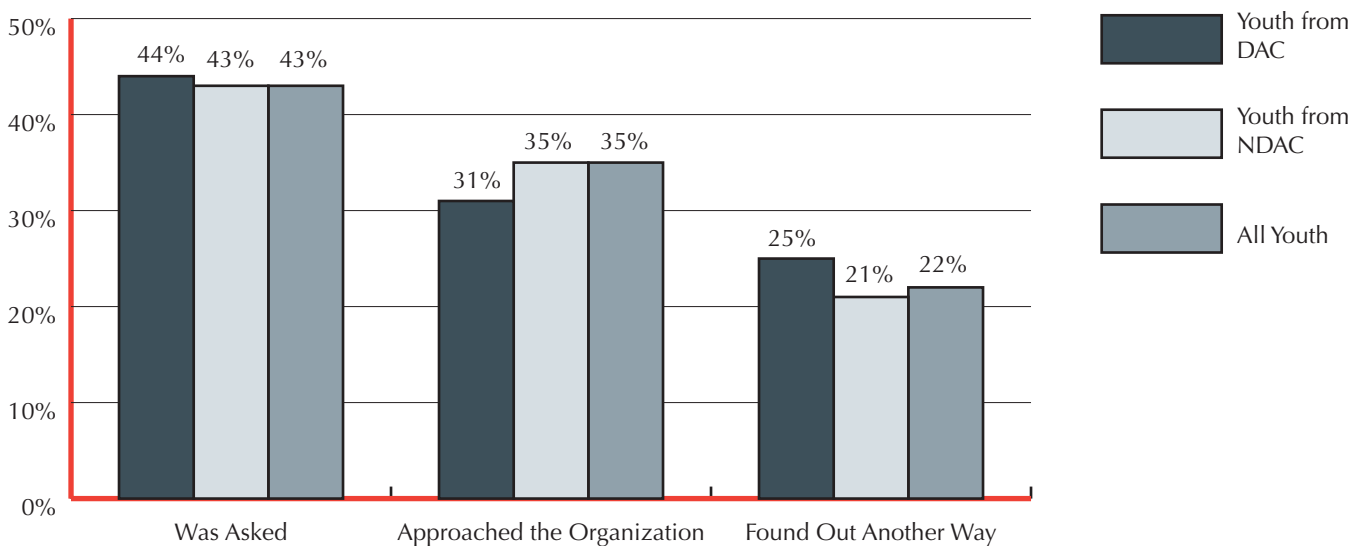
Similarly, we find almost no significant differences in the types of volunteer activities that youth perform with a given organization when we compare youth from disadvantaged circumstances with those from non-disadvantaged circumstances. The typical youth from either population performs four different types of volunteer activities for the organization. The most common activities performed by youth from disadvantaged circumstances include providing general labor (66 percent), participating in music or art activities (54 percent), collecting or distributing food (54 percent), and fundraising (50 percent). [A table with the full findings for volunteer activities is located in the Appendix.]

MOTIVATIONS

For the survey, youth indicated the level of importance that several different motivations had in their decision to volunteer. These motivations included desires to help others, contribute to a cause, gain experience, fulfill religious beliefs, meet new people, and emulate someone they admire. As with youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances, youth from disadvantaged circumstances cited the importance of helping others as the most common motivation. Yet we also found that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to say that each of these motivations is very important to them, a finding that suggests that youth from disadvantaged circumstances find greater benefit from the opportunity to volunteer because they experience fewer outlets for engagement in their communities.

MAJOR FINDING: Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to be motivated to volunteer to gain work experience or to fulfill their religious or spiritual beliefs.

In addition, we found two statistically significant differences in the motivations of youth from disadvantaged circumstances. These youth are more likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to say that they volunteer in order to gain school or work experience and that their religious beliefs lead them to volunteer. [See Table 3.] The fact that they are more likely to be motivated by a desire for school or work experience would indicate that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are in greater need of academic and career resources than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances. The greater likelihood that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are motivated by religious beliefs corresponds with our earlier finding that they are more likely to volunteer through a religious congregation.

TABLE 3: Motivations Among Youth Volunteers From Disadvantaged Circumstances

Motivation for Volunteering	Percent of Youth from DAC Reporting Motivation Is Very Important	Percentage Difference with Youth from NDAC
It is important to help others	87%	+ 4%
I wanted to contribute to a cause that is important to me	61%	+ 5%
To gain experience for school and/or work	55% *	+ 15%
My religious or spiritual beliefs	48% *	+ 12%
Meet new people and/or visit new places	41%	+ 3%
A person I admire thought it was important	37%	+ 5%

* The difference between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and youth who are not from disadvantaged circumstances is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

Thus far, we have seen some notable differences between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and those from non-disadvantaged circumstances. Now we would like to explore whether there are notable differences within the population of youth from disadvantaged circumstances. In looking for differences within this population, we conducted an analysis of whether gender, race, academic achievement, and parental education have a relationship to the volunteering rate among youth from disadvantaged circumstances.

When we looked for differences within volunteering rates by several demographic characteristics within the population of youth from disadvantaged circumstances, we found patterns similar to those for youth in general. For example, we find a significant relationship between the likelihood of volunteering and gender. As with youth in general, girls from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely to volunteer than are boys from the same population. However, while we found that girls are more likely to be regular volunteers among youth in general, we did not see significant differences in volunteer commitment between boys and girls from disadvantaged circumstances.

Academic achievement, measured through a teen's grade point average, was seen to have a significant relationship to volunteering for youth in general, and we found that for youth from disadvantaged circumstances, it is only the extremes of academic achievement that have a strong correlation with the likelihood of volunteering. Those youth from disadvantaged circumstances who report a GPA of A or A+ are considerably more likely to volunteer than those who report a GPA of C or lower—71 percent to 31 percent, respectively.

Finally, we have posited that parental education, in addition to parental income, may be an important factor in understanding the volunteering behavior among youth from disadvantaged circumstances. While we know from analysis of the Current Population Survey's Supplement on Volunteering that the higher the level of education, the greater the likelihood that adults will volunteer, we also know from our "Building Active Citizens" brief that family volunteering plays an important role in the volunteering habits of youth. Indeed, we find that parental education adds to our understanding of the likelihood of volunteering among youth even when we control for family income. That is, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably more likely to volunteer when at least one parent has some college education. [See Table 4.]

TABLE 4: Volunteering Rates Among Volunteers From Disadvantaged Circumstances Based on Parents' Education

Parents' Education (average)**	Percent of Youth from DAC Who Volunteer	Percent of Youth from DAC Who Do Not Volunteer
Less than a high school diploma	36% *	64% *
High school diploma or GED	34% *	67% *
Some college education	54% *	46% *
College graduate or higher	65% *	35% *

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between volunteers and non-volunteers is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

** Education level based on an average of both parents in the household, unless the youth lives in a single-parent household. Higher education is determined by an average of more than 12 years of formal schooling.
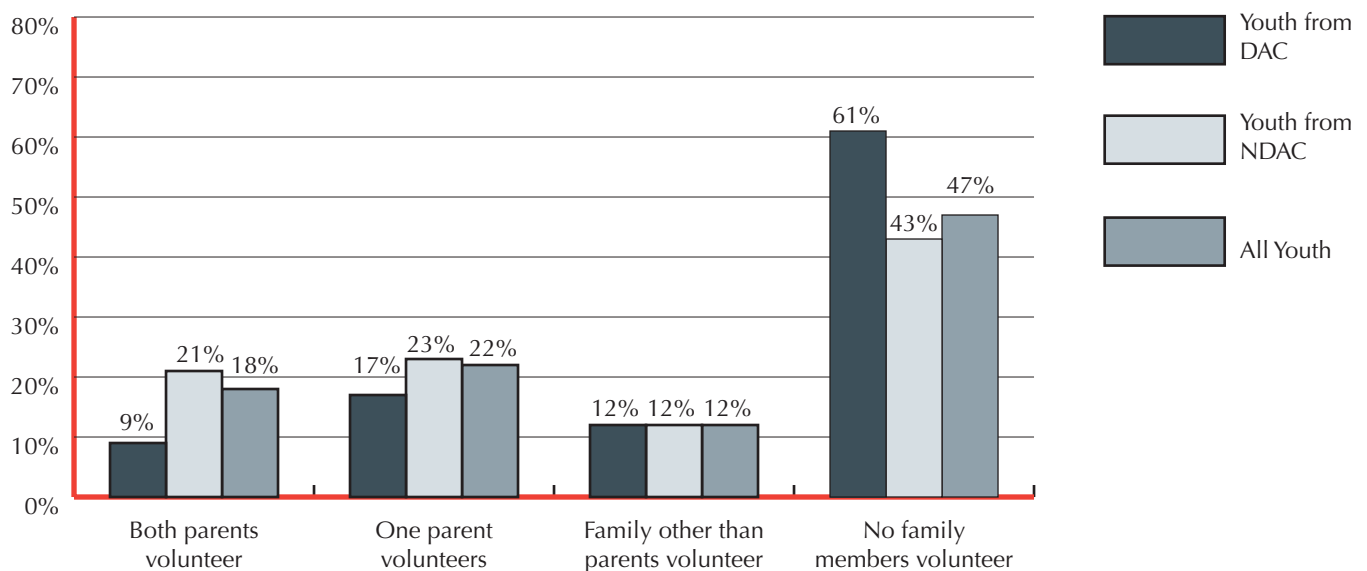
Through our *Youth Helping America Series*, we have maintained that volunteering is a learned social behavior, and our analysis has indicated that there is a crucial relationship between social institutions and the volunteering behavior of America's teens. Our intention in the second section of this report is to consider the role of social institutions in the lives of youth from disadvantaged circumstances and to see if these social institutions may help to explain the differences we see in the first section of the report. Indeed, research with youth from distressed communities has indicated that these young people wish that they had more opportunities to engage with organizations and interact with adult role models who will challenge them to do better.[9] Therefore, we will explore what types of connections youth from disadvantaged circumstances have with those social institutions that are most involved in youth development: family, religious congregations, youth organizations, and schools.

MAJOR FINDING: The experiences of family volunteering, school-based service (or service-learning), involvement with youth groups, and attendance at religious services are shown to be positively correlated with the likelihood that youth will volunteer; yet, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to have these experiences, with the exception of attendance at religious services.

We know from our analysis in "Building Active Citizens" that youth involvement with family, school, and religious congregations is correlated with the likelihood that youth will volunteer. For example, youth who come from families where at least one parent volunteers are almost twice as likely to volunteer as youth with no family members who volunteer. Youth with family who volunteer are also nearly three times more likely to make a regular commitment to volunteering. However, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to have parental volunteer role models. [See Chart 4.]

CHART 4: Family Volunteering Activities (Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Legend:
- Youth from DAC
- Youth from NDAC
- All Youth

Category	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Both parents volunteer	9%	21%	18%
One parent volunteers	17%	23%	22%
Family other than parents volunteer	12%	12%	12%
No family members volunteer	61%	43%	47%

Likewise, youth who report participating in school-based service or service-learning activities more than a year ago are 23 percent more likely than youth who have never participated in school-based service activities to have volunteered through an organization in the past 12 months. Yet youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably less likely to report past or current experiences with school-based service or service-learning than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances (31 percent to 40 percent, respectively).[10] [See Charts 5.1 and 5.2.]

CHART 5.1: Participation in School-Based and Service-Learning Among Youth from DAC
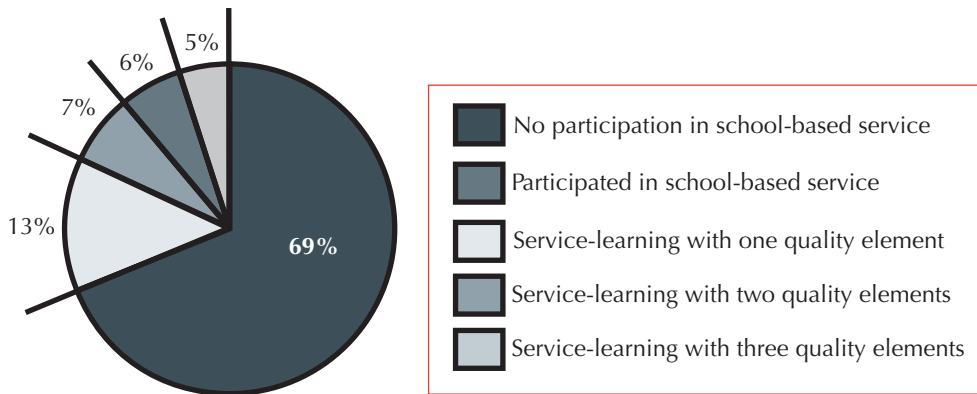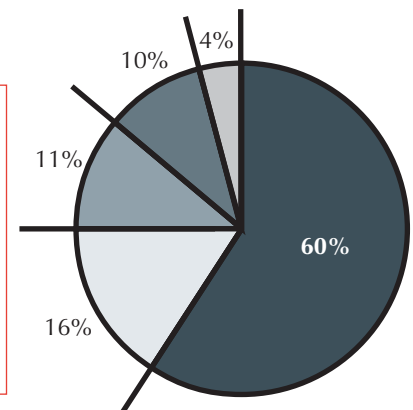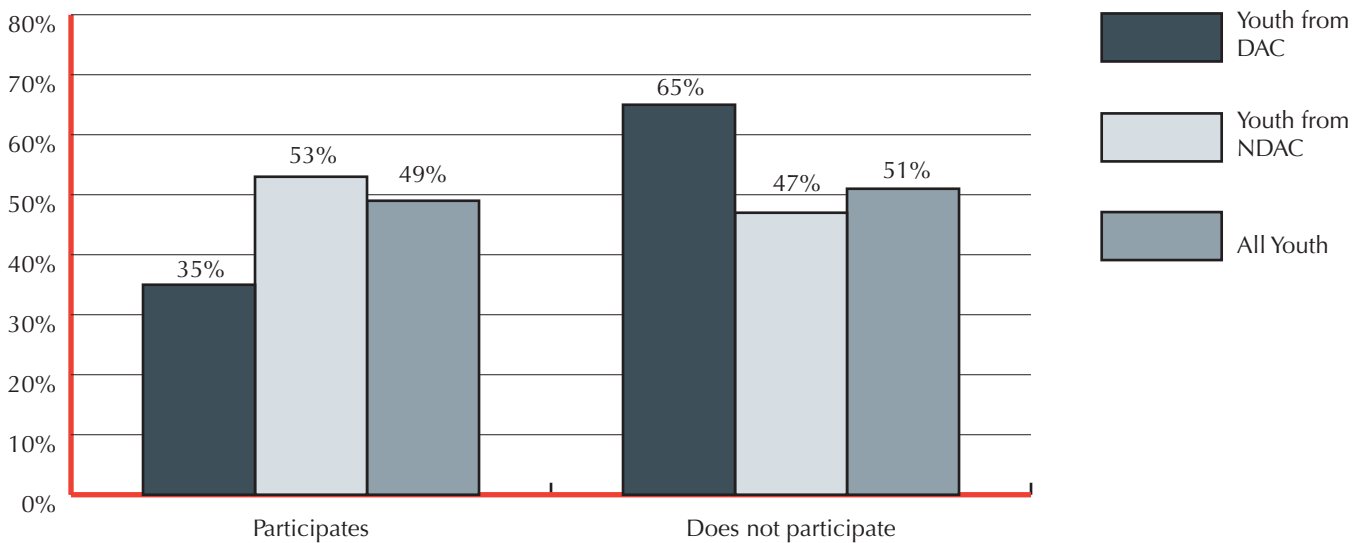(Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

CHART 5.2: Participation in School-Based and Service-Learning Among Youth from NDAC
(Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

5%
6%
7%
13%
69%

- No participation in school-based service
- Participated in school-based service
- Service-learning with one quality element
- Service-learning with two quality elements
- Service-learning with three quality elements

4%
10%
11%
16%
60%

NOTE: Participation in school-based service and service-learning is distinct from volunteering through a school or school club; participation in school-based service and service-learning is limited to those activities that take place as part of a class and under the guidance of a teacher; it often includes one or more of the following quality elements: formal reflection on the service, participation in planning the service activity, and service that lasts for an extended duration.

While youth volunteers are more than twice as likely to be involved in youth groups as those teens who do not volunteer, we again see that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably less likely to participate in youth groups and school clubs. [See Chart 6.]
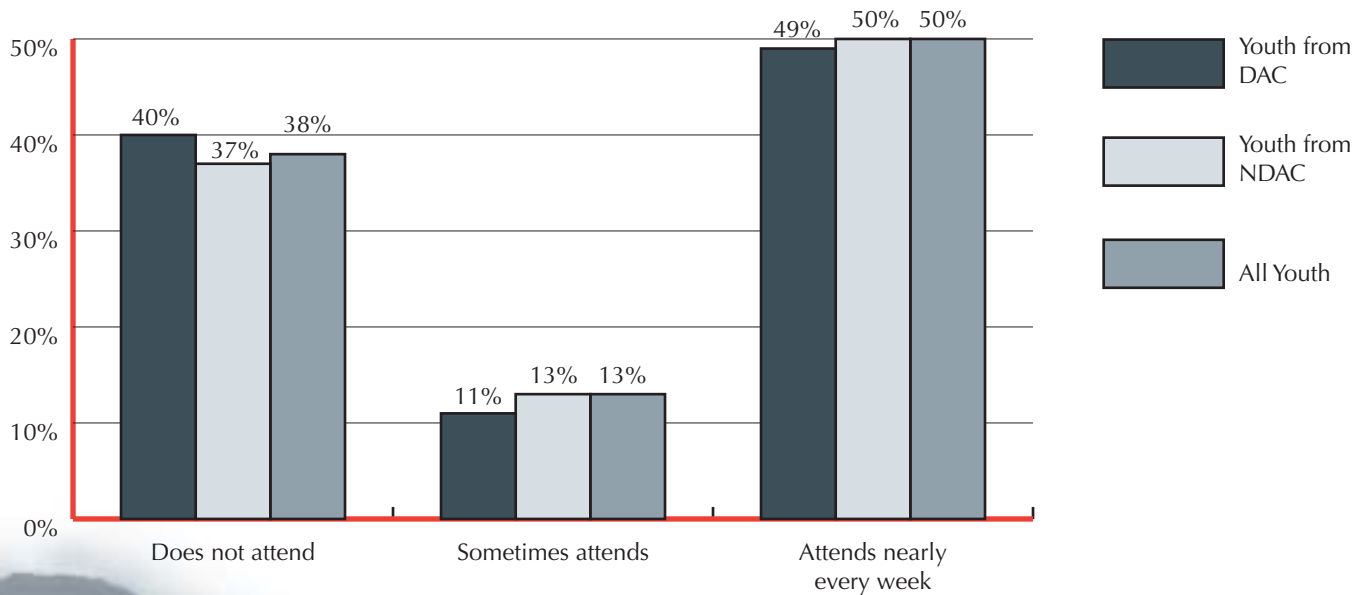
CHART 6: Participation in Youth Groups and School Clubs (Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Legend:
- Youth from DAC
- Youth from NDAC
- All Youth

Participates: 35%, 53%, 49%
Does not participate: 65%, 47%, 51%

While youth from disadvantaged circumstances may be less likely to encounter connections to volunteering through school or family, our study indicates that they are as likely as other youth to attend religious services, and thereby to have the potential to connect to volunteering through this religious involvement. [See Chart 7.] For example, we know from our previous analysis, in "Building Active Citizens," that youth who regularly attend religious services are nearly twice as likely to be regular volunteers as those who do not attend religious service.

CHART 7: Attendance at Religious Services (Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Category	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Does not attend	40%	37%	38%
Sometimes attends	11%	13%	13%
Attends nearly every week	49%	50%	50%

In fact, we find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances who volunteer are significantly more likely to regularly attend religious service than those who do not volunteer. [See Chart 8.] This finding, together with the earlier findings that these youth are significantly more likely to volunteer with religious congregations and significantly more likely to report that religious beliefs are a very important motivation for their volunteering activities, provides convincing evidence that religion and religious organizations play a greater role in the volunteering habits of youth from disadvantaged circumstances than in those of youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances. At the same time, our findings suggest that other institutions, such as schools and youth organizations, might not be connecting as frequently with youth from disadvantaged circumstances or providing them with the same opportunities as youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances.

CHART 8: Attendance at Religious Services Among Youth From Disadvantaged Circumstances

Legend:
- ■ Volunteers
- □ Non-volunteers

Category	Volunteers	Non-volunteers
Does not attend	29%	47%
Sometimes attends	8%	13%
Attends nearly every week	63%	40%
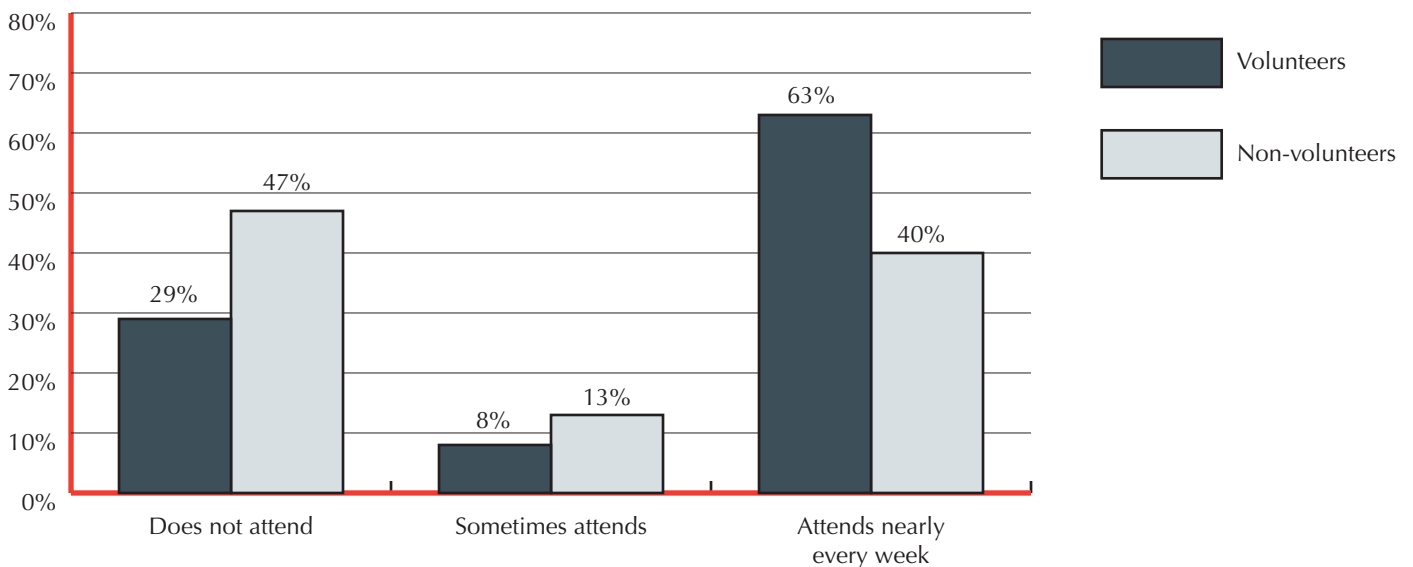
While these findings are not able to conclusively explain why youth volunteer or what impact volunteering has on those youth who do volunteer, there is a case to be made that engagement in volunteer activities and other forms of civic engagement requires access to community resources, which are not evenly distributed across different economic strata. The findings that we have presented thus far indicate that youth from disadvantaged circumstances tend to encounter these resources less frequently than do other youth.

A focus on resources, however, is just one perspective on volunteering. From another perspective, we find questions related to identity and disposition. For example, two youth presented with the same opportunity may not respond in a similar manner. Also, youth involvement with various social institutions, such as school, family, and religious organizations, does more than simply provide opportunities; these relationships also constitute the environment in which youth come to develop their own identities.

Thus, while some researchers have focused on the availability of resources for understanding patterns of youth civic engagement, others have utilized the developmental model of Erik Erikson, which holds that identity development is the primary developmental task during adolescence.[11] According to the Eriksonian model, identity development has two aspects: individual and social. While research on youth development tends to focus on individual identity, social identity is also important, because it is shaped by an individual's sense of agency in collaborative efforts to make a difference in one's community and the world. During adolescence, the formation of social identity is connected to the development of an individual's social, political, and moral beliefs. In this model, as used by James Youniss, Miranda Yates, and others, volunteering is identified as playing a key role in aiding the positive development of social identity.

> Adolescence is the time when individuals develop their identity, both individual and social. Volunteering can play a key role in the formation of a person's social identity, which is shaped by one's sense of agency in collaborative efforts to make a difference in the community and the world.

With an interest in addressing the development of social identity, particularly among those youth who come from disadvantaged circumstances, we will consider the civic attitudes and behaviors of youth and the relationship of these attitudes and behaviors to volunteering. In this final section, we ask whether youth from disadvantaged circumstances are also less likely to be civically engaged in areas other than volunteering, whether volunteering is correlated with positive civic attitudes and behaviors among youth from disadvantaged circumstances, and whether disparities in civic engagement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth decrease when both groups engage in volunteer activities. In order to construct a broader view of social identity, we use the indicators in the chart below as examples of other forms of civic attitudes and behaviors.

INDICATORS FOR CIVIC ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- Attitude toward volunteering in the future

- Attitude toward voting in the future

- Discussion of politics with parents or other adults

- Discussion of politics with friends

- Likelihood of obtaining a bachelor's degree

- Belief in personal ability to make a difference in one's community

- Trust toward people in general

- A sense of optimism for the future of the country

Since we have already indicated that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely to volunteer, it is not surprising to find that they are also less likely to say that they will volunteer in the next year. In fact, we find that youth who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances are 28 percent more likely than youth from disadvantaged circumstances to say that it is very likely that they will volunteer in the next year. [See Table 5.]

MAJOR FINDING: Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to discuss politics with friends and parents or other adults, to plan to volunteer in the future, and to vote once they are eligible.

When we consider political attitudes and behaviors, we find that youth in general report a strong interest in participating in the political sphere by exercising their right to vote. The vast majority of youth, 77 percent, say that it is very likely that they will vote once they are eligible. While the majority of youth from disadvantaged circumstances also say that it is very likely that they will vote once they are eligible, we do see that they are also almost three times as likely as youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to say that it is not at all likely or very unlikely that they will vote. [See Table 5.]

While it might be encouraging to find that the vast majority of youth express an inclination to vote once they are eligible, previous research also indicates that survey respondents may be pressured to provide socially acceptable responses in regard to their voting attitudes and behaviors. This research has shown that the percentage of Americans who say that they intend to vote or did vote regularly exceeds the

TABLE 5: Comparison of Volunteering and Political Attitudes and Behaviors Among Youth
(Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Civic Indicator	Response	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Likelihood of volunteering in the next year **	Not at all or not very likely	25% *	17% *	20%
	Somewhat likely	44%	38%	39%
	Very likely	31% *	44% *	41%
Likelihood of voting once eligible**	Not at all or not very likely	16% *	6% *	8%
	Somewhat likely	20%	14%	16%
	Very likely	64% *	80% *	77%
Discuss politics with parent or other adult	Not at all	71% *	57% *	60%
	1 or 2 days a week	20% *	29% *	27%
	3 days or more a week	9% *	14% *	13%
Discuss politics with friends	Not at all	66% *	60% *	61%
	1 or 2 days a week	26%	25%	25%
	3 days or more a week	8% *	15% *	13%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and youth who are not is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

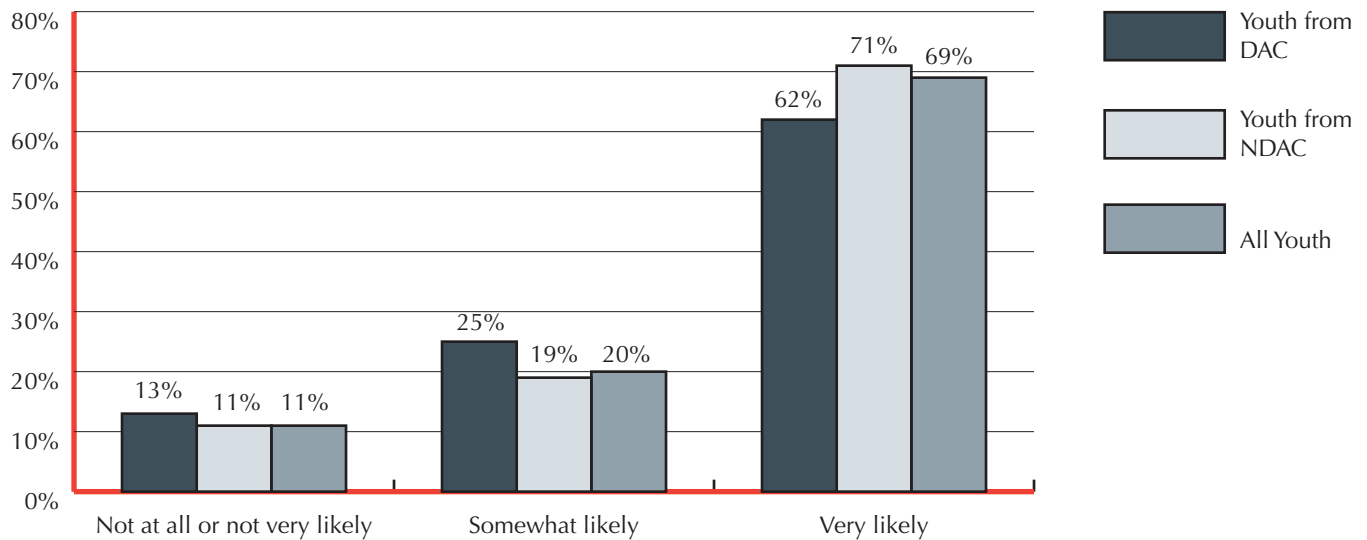** Only asked of respondents between ages 16 and 18.

percentage of the population who actually do vote in elections.[12] Indeed, our own finding that the vast majority of youth express an inclination to vote once they are eligible is tempered by the additional finding that the majority of youth do not spend any time discussing politics with their friends or families. Notably, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are considerably less likely to discuss politics with their parents or other adults, or with friends. [See Table 5.]

COLLEGE ASPIRATIONS

Youth today face an even greater need than earlier generations to earn a higher education degree in order to obtain a job that will provide them with financial security, and the majority of respondents to the *Youth Volunteering Survey* report that it is at least somewhat likely that they will graduate from a four-year college. Yet we find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are more likely to have doubts as to the likelihood that they will achieve such aspirations. [See Chart 9.]

CHART 9: Self-Reported Likelihood of Graduating from a Four-Year College
(Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Legend:
- Youth from DAC
- Youth from NDAC
- All Youth

	Not at all or not very likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Youth from DAC	13%	25%	62%
Youth from NDAC	11%	19%	71%
All Youth	11%	20%	69%

The *Youth Volunteering Survey* concluded with a series of attitudinal questions intended to measure youth empowerment, trust, and optimism. In including these questions, we were looking to test this hypothesis: When youth volunteer, they have an enhanced connection to their communities and interactions with individuals outside of their normal social circle. This increased involvement with others, along with the ability to work on issues that are meaningful, would, in turn, be connected to higher levels of trust, optimism, and sense of empowerment. However, we are unable to say whether a greater sense of empowerment leads one to volunteer, or volunteering leads one to a greater sense of empowerment. Yet we maintain the position that, in practical terms, it is crucial to provide youth, particularly those who come from disadvantaged circumstances, with the opportunities and encouragement to engage in their communities and enhance their sense of empowerment.

MAJOR FINDING: Youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to trust others.

When we consider the attitudes of youth toward their communities and the nation, we found that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly less likely than those from non-disadvantaged circumstances to report that they trust others, with youth from disadvantaged circumstances 38 percent more likely to say that "you can't be too careful." [See Table 6.]

TABLE 6: Comparison of Civic Attitudes Among Youth by Economic Circumstances
(Percentages include volunteers and non-volunteers.)

Civic Indicator	Response	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Personal belief in one's ability to make a difference in one's community	A little, almost none or no difference at all	41%	39%	40%
	Some difference	49%	48%	48%
	A great deal of difference	10%	13%	12%
Belief that people can be trusted	People can be trusted	41% *	53% *	50%
	You can't be too careful	43% *	31% *	34%
	Depends	16%	16%	16%
Sense of optimism for the future of the country	Generally positive	40%	44%	43%
	Uncertain	44%	42%	43%
	Generally negative	17%	14%	15%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and youth who are not is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

WHEN YOUTH VOLUNTEER

These findings indicate that youth from disadvantaged circumstances have lower expectations for themselves, their neighbors, and their country at a critical time in the development of their identity. Given these findings, we were interested in whether there are any significant differences in civic engagement for the 43 percent of youth from disadvantaged circumstances who do volunteer. As we stated previously, our intention is not to establish that volunteer activities are the cause of increased civic engagement, but to see if there are connections between volunteering and other civic attitudes and behaviors. Our findings indicate that, indeed, there are some connections.

MAJOR FINDING: When youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer, they are also significantly more likely to be active in political discussions with adults and friends, to feel more confident that they will graduate from a four-year college, and to believe that they can make a personal difference in the community.

When youth from disadvantaged circumstances engage in volunteer activities, we find significant differences in the likelihood that they will volunteer in the next year, discuss politics with their parents or other adults, discuss politics with their friends, believe that they can make some difference in their community, and say that it is very likely that they will graduate from a four-year college. We find no significant differences in their level of trust and future voting behavior, and, interestingly, we find that those youth from disadvantaged circumstances who volunteer are less likely to be optimistic about the future of the country, a finding that may be a result of their awareness of the complexity of social and political issues.[13] [See Table 7.]

TABLE 7: Comparison of Civic Attitudes and Behaviors Among Youth From Disadvantaged Circumstances by Involvement in Volunteer Activities

Civic Attitude or Behavior	Response	Volunteers	Non-volunteers
Likelihood of volunteering in the next year	Not at all likely	2% *	17% *
	Not very likely	11%	16%
	Somewhat likely	34% *	52% *
	Very likely	52% *	15% *
Likelihood of voting once eligible	Not at all likely	10%	9%
	Not very likely	6%	7%
	Somewhat likely	14%	25%
	Very likely	70%	59%
Discuss politics with parents of other adult	Not at all	58% *	81% *
	1 or 2 days a week	25% *	16% *
	3 or more days a week	17% *	4% *
Discuss politics with friends	Not at all	52% *	75% *
	1 or 2 days a week	35% *	19% *
	3 or more days a week	13% *	6% *
Personal belief in one's ability to make a difference in one's community	No difference at all	2% *	9% *
	Almost no difference	5% *	10% *
	A little difference	23% *	31% *
	Some difference	59% *	42% *
	A great deal of difference	11%	9%
Sense of optimism for the future of the country	Generally negative	19%	15%
	Uncertain	47%	41%
	Generally positive	34% *	43% *
Likelihood of graduating from a four-year college	Not at all likely	0% *	9% *
	Not very likely	7%	9%
	Somewhat likely	18% *	31% *
	Very likely	76% *	51% *
Belief that people can be trusted	You can't be too careful	41%	45%
	Depends	14%	18%
	People can be trusted	45%	38%
	Neither	0%	0%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between volunteers and non-volunteers is statistically significant at the .10 level or lower. NOTE: due to small sample sizes, a relaxed standard is used for statistical significance in the above analysis (p = 0.10 instead of p = 0.05).

We noted earlier in the report that there was a strong correlation between youth volunteering and parental education level. Given the relationships that we find between volunteering and other forms of civic engagement, we were also curious to see if parental education is also related to these other forms of civic engagement. When compared to youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have at least one parent who has attended college, we find that youth from disadvantaged circumstances whose parents have a high school degree or less are less likely to discuss politics with their parents or other adults (23 percent to 38 percent). Youth from disadvantaged circumstances whose parents have a high school degree or less are also significantly more likely to say that it is very unlikely or not at all likely that they will graduate from a four-year college (20 percent to 2 percent) and that it is not at all likely that they will vote once they are eligible (13 percent to 4 percent).[14]

Notably, we did not find a significant relationship between parental education and the personal belief that youth can make a difference in their communities, as we did for volunteering, indicating that the belief in a youth's ability to make a difference is cultivated through personal experiences. However, we found the opposite case when it comes to optimism for the future of the country. While we had seen a negative relationship for youth from disadvantaged circumstances between volunteering and optimism for the future of the country, we find a positive correlation between parent's education and a sense of optimism for the future of the country—that is, youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have at least one parent who has attended college are significantly more likely to feel positive about the future of the country than youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have parents who have not attended college (44 percent to 36 percent). Youth from disadvantaged circumstances who have at least one parent who attend college are also significantly less likely to feel negative about the future of the country—13 percent to 20 percent.

Given the disparities we have seen between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and those who are not, we were interested in discovering whether the level of disparity for our civic engagement indicators might be lower for youth who serve in their communities as volunteers. Our intention is not to suggest that volunteering might be able to "erase" the complex circumstances that lead to these disparities but to test whether involvement in volunteer activities might be connected to other positive youth developments.

MAJOR FINDING: Disparities between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and those who are from non-disadvantaged circumstances, in relation to trust, discussions of politics, and the belief in graduating from a four-year college, decrease when youth volunteer.

In fact, we do find that some of the disparities between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and those who are not, which were presented earlier in the report, decrease when youth volunteer. This decrease in the civic class gap occurs for youths' attitudes toward volunteering in the future, their level of trust, the likelihood that they will discuss politics with their parents or other adults, and their belief in their ability to attain a four-year college degree. Nevertheless, for a majority of the civic indicators that we used for this study, we see that the gap between youth from disadvantaged circumstances and others lessens when youth from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer. These findings indicate that volunteering may help youth from disadvantaged circumstances to gain an increased understanding of their world and provide them with meaningful connections to adults that may help them to develop the sense of agency necessary to construct a better world.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this report indicate that, indeed, there is a significant civic class gap among American youth today. Not only are youth from disadvantaged circumstances less likely to participate in volunteer activities, they are less likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward their ability to make a difference in their community, their optimism about the future of the country, and their trust of others. In addition, they are less likely to engage actively in discussing political issues.

Perhaps most troubling are the findings that these youth are less likely to be involved in activities that provide them with opportunities to engage with positive adult role models. While youth from disadvantaged circumstances are as likely as those from non-disadvantaged circumstances to attend religious services, they are less likely to be involved with classroom-based service activities and less likely to be engaged with adult community members. The fact that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to volunteer with a religious congregation suggests that their connections to religious congregations are an important mechanism for engaging them in their community. It also suggests that other social institutions could do more to engage youth from disadvantaged circumstances. We have seen that when youth from disadvantaged circumstances are engaged in volunteer activities, they demonstrate the same level of commitment as do those from non-disadvantaged circumstances, and that they demonstrate higher levels of civic engagement than those youth from disadvantaged circumstances who do not volunteer.

While these findings are not able to assert that volunteering is the cause of increases in positive youth attitudes and behaviors, it suggests that introducing youth from disadvantaged circumstances to volunteer opportunities may provide an entry point to civic participation and positive youth development. In particular, we suggest that further attention be given to the ways in which religious congregations successfully engage youth from disadvantaged circumstances, while exploring opportunities for other institutions to increase their capacity to engage these youth in activities that might bring them into the cycle of civic participation and help them in constructing a positive social identity.

VOLUNTEERING QUESTIONS IN THE YOUTH VOLUNTEERING SURVEY

The Definition of Volunteering: Volunteer activities are things you do for others for which you are not paid, except perhaps for expenses. I only want you to include volunteer activities that you did for an organization or place of worship, even if you only did them once in awhile.

The Two Volunteering Questions: Since January 1st of last year, have you done any volunteering activities through or for an organization?

Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities that they do for a community as part of a club, school, or church as volunteer activities. Since January 1st of last year, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?

1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents to the 2005 Youth Volunteering Survey

Variable	Category	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Race	None selected	15% *	5% *	7%
	White or Caucasian	52% *	75% *	70%
	Black or African American	22% *	10% *	13%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	2%	1%	1%
	Asian	3%	3%	3%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%
	More than one category chosen	5%	4%	5%
Ethnicity	Latino	31% *	12% *	16%
	Non-Latino	69% *	88% *	84%
Gender	Male	50%	50%	50%
	Female	50%	50%	50%
Grade-point average	A or A+	13% *	22% *	20%
	A- or B+	28%	32%	31%
	B	27%	25%	25%
	B- or C+	16% *	11% *	12%
	C or lower	16% *	10% *	12%
Country of birth	United States	88%	94%	93%
	Other	12% *	6% *	7%
Language spoken at home	English	79% *	94% *	90%
	Spanish	18% *	3% *	6%
	Other	4%	3%	3%
Parents' level of education**	Less than a high school diploma	34% *	8% *	14%
	High school graduate	27% *	14% *	17%
	Some college	33% *	45% *	42%
	College graduate	7% *	33% *	28%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between disadvantaged youth and non-disadvantaged youth is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

** Education level based on an average of both parents in the household, unless the youth lives in a single-parent household.

APPENDIX

2. Main Organizations Where Youth Volunteer

Organization Type	Youth from DAC	Youth from NDAC	All Youth
Religious congregation	39% *	33% *	34%
School or school club	21%	17%	18%
Youth civic/leadership organization	7% *	12% *	11%
Social or community service group	11%	9%	10%
Hospital, nursing home, health education	6%	7%	7%
Sports or recreation group	3%	5%	5%
Educational group (non-sports based)	3%	3%	3%
Environmental or animal care organization	3%	3%	3%
Cultural or arts organization	1% *	3% *	3%
Public safety organization	3%	3%	3%
Some other type	3%	1%	2%
Labor union, business or professional organization	1%	1%	1%
Political party or advocacy group	0%	1%	1%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between disadvantaged youth and non-disadvantaged youth is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

3. Activities that Youth Volunteers Perform at Their Main Organization

Volunteer Activity	Youth Volunteers from DAC	Youth Volunteers from NDAC	All Youth Volunteers
Provide physical or general labor	66%	61%	62%
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	54%	49%	50%
Fundraise or sell items to make money	50%	50%	50%
Participate in music, arts, etc.	54%	50%	50%
Provide info, serve as usher or greeter	38%	44%	43%
Collect, etc., goods other than food	46%	42%	43%
Serve as tutor, mentor, or coach	41%	38%	38%
Provide general office services	26%	26%	26%
Provide companionship at hospitals, etc.	25%	26%	26%
Provide transportation for people	36% *	22% *	24%
Do any other activity	11% *	17% *	16%
Provide fire/EMS protective services	7% *	3% *	3%

Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100 percent.

* The difference between disadvantaged youth and non-disadvantaged youth is statistically significant at the .05 level or lower.

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METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF UNIVERSE AND SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

The universe of the 2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey consisted of about 10,000 households selected from expired Current Population Survey (CPS) housing units.[1] The sample units for the Youth Volunteering Survey were selected from households with at least one person aged 12-18. The goal was to have a final completed interview sample of at least 3,000 persons age 12-18 interviewed with one person per household selected using a randomized selection function.

Two weeks prior to the beginning of the interview period, an advance letter was sent to the households selected from the CPS. This letter gave a brief description of the survey and provided a Census Bureau 1-800 telephone number that could be used to opt teens out of the interview. The remaining households were then contacted by telephone, and if the respondent did not receive the letter, it was read to them, providing another opportunity to refuse the interview. A teen, if present, was then selected for the detailed interview. Again, we asked permission to speak to the teen.

EFFORTS TO MAXIMIZE RESPONSE

The detailed interview with the sampled teen was also conducted over the phone. Interviewers worked out of one of the Census Bureau's three centralized telephone facilities. The Census Bureau telephone center staff performed standard procedures to keep the non-interview rate as low as possible. If necessary, up to 10 attempts were made to get a completed interview. Calls took place after 3 p.m. local time with at least two call attempts on weekends.

RESPONSE RATE AND BIAS

According to the Census, the overall response rate for the survey was 44 percent. Census obtained a 45 percent response for the screener and a 97 percent response for the detailed interview, making the overall rate (45% times 97%) 44 percent. Due to the response rate, Census investigated the possibility of systematic differences between the interviewed and non-interviewed universes. It examined several CPS demographic characteristics of the two universes to determine if a bias may exist. It looked at the family income, size of household, urban/rural location, and the race, ethnicity, sex, education, marital status, and employment status of the head of household. It did not find a statistical difference between the attributes of the two universes.

WEIGHT ESTIMATION

The final weight for each case is the product of the inverse of the selection probability (accounting for selection to the CPS and selection into the volunteer survey), a weight adjustment to account for non-interviews, a first-stage weighting factor to reduce the variance due to the selection on non-self-representing primary sampling units (PSUs), and a second-stage weighting factor to bring sample estimates into agreement with independent population controls by age, race, and sex.

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[1]The original samples for the CPS surveys were selected from 1990 decennial census files with coverage in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For information about the methodology used for the Current Population Survey, visit www.bls.census.gov/cps.

[1] The initial report in the Youth Helping America Series, "Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering," focused on an analysis of the connections between youth volunteering and the social institutions of family, religious organizations, and schools. The second report, "Engaging for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement," looked at the connections between participation in service-learning and school-based service and the likelihood that youth report other forms of civic engagement. The reports can be downloaded at www.nationalservice.gov.

[2] Research conducted by the Saguaro Center at Harvard University has suggested this growing civic class gap; see Sander (2005). While these findings have not been published, the authors have had personal communication with the researchers on these findings. For other research on this class gap, see Winter (2003).

[3] See, for example, Verba et al (1995) and Winter (2003).

[4] Family income is derived from data collected through primary survey of the Current Population Survey, from which the population for the Youth Volunteering Survey was drawn. For more information on the 2005 federal poverty guidelines, see the Department of Health and Human Services' website at: http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/05poverty.shtml. Federal poverty guidelines take into account family size in determining economic status.

[5] For all charts and tables in this report, youth from disadvantaged circumstances is abbreviated as "Youth from DAC" and youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances is abbreviated as "Youth from NDAC."

[6] Religious congregations are defined as an assembly of persons for religious worship or teaching and include those assemblies that occur in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions. Religious organizations include, in addition to religious congregations, organizations with a religious mission.

[7] While we do not have information on overall involvement in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, we do know that youth from disadvantaged circumstances are less likely than youth from non-disadvantaged circumstances to report volunteering for the Scouts.

[8] For further research on the involvement of religious organizations in engaging youth from disadvantaged circumstances, see Verba, et al (1995) and Kerestes *et al.* (2004).

[9] For research on the perspectives and needs of youth from distressed communities, see Fogel (2004) and Zeldin & Topitzes (2002).

[10] Information on participation in school-based service activities was collected separately from volunteering activities with or through an organization. Data presented on school-based service is based on responses to the following question: "Have you ever performed community service as part of a school activity or requirement?" For more information on our findings on school-based service and service-learning, see the second report in the Youth Helping America Series, "Engaging for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement."

[11] For further discussion of the Eriksonian model and social identity, see Yates and Youniss (1996).

[12] For more information on the over-reporting of voting behavior, see Belli *et al* (2001) and Silver *et al* (1986).

[13] Research on the potential "negative impacts" of volunteering and service on youth indicate that, when youth are not given the proper skills for processing what they learn through their experiences or the opportunity to reflect upon and discuss those experiences, they may find themselves discouraged or dissatisfied. See, for example, Billig *et al* (2005).

[14] The same holds true for youth from non-disadvantaged households, where parental education was positively correlated with the likelihood of volunteering, discussing politics with parent or other adults, discussing politics with friends, levels of trust, and the likelihood of graduating from a four-year college.

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