

College Criminal Justice Volunteerism Courses: An Area of Neglect

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism courses are relatively new in college curricula because the need for professionals to promote volunteers has gone largely unrecognized for decades. Instead, volunteers were handled by agency personnel on a common-sense basis with little effort to systematically recruit, train, or reward those who gave of their time. Volunteerism in criminal justice was particularly slow to develop because of resistance due to having volunteers work in some areas, especially in corrections. It is a wonder that volunteerism has done as well as it has in criminal justice. Recently the need to develop professional volunteer coordinators for many areas of service, including criminal justice, is beginning to be recognized.

The primary focus of this study is on volunteerism and the criminal justice system, particularly on the education of Criminal Justice students with respect to the use of volunteers. The Criminal Justice curriculum in many universities does not take full advantage of the volunteer concept,

especially in light of data showing that one of every six persons volunteers his or her services to some organization. In fact, many agencies could not function if volunteers were eliminated.

In a recently completed study by the authors, it was determined that many jails did not use volunteers primarily because jail administrators lacked experience with them. Non-users of volunteers who responded expressed concern about volunteer safety, training, and staff relationships. However, evidence from this study of 74 jails in the United States indicates that jail administrators who had had actual experience with volunteer programs in jails were satisfied with the programs and planned to expand them. The study goes on to say: "Those administrators who had little or no experience with volunteers in jails made significantly less effort to recruit volunteers" (Brown, Unkovic, 1982:1).

The under utilization of volunteers in jails apparently caused some concern to the National Institute of Corrections. Its annual program plan

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for 1979 reserved \$25,000 for a Volunteer Information Center to aid correctional agencies. The purpose of this plan was to provide information concerning volunteerism such as models and methods used in training volunteers, research on rates of volunteer utilization, and the nature of contacts with Criminal Justice agencies (NIC, 1979). In another program, Development of Community Involvement in Jails, \$100,000 was reserved "to assist jails in identifying and mobilizing volunteers and community resources to improve services and programs for inmates" (NIC, 1978). The purpose of this program was to train the staff to use volunteer resources effectively (NIC, 1979).

While these two programs are helpful, some major issues are unresolved and there are still serious questions concerning the relationship between the criminal justice system and the concept of volunteerism. Two major questions were addressed in the study to be described in this article. First, to what extent does the criminal justice system believe in volunteerism or not? Second, if the curricula in Departments of Criminal Justice at the college or university level were examined, to what extent would courses dealing with volunteerism be found? In other words, are Criminal Justice students learning how to work with volunteers in a professional and objective manner?

Many criminal justice administrators cannot appreciate the potential of volunteer services because they have not been instructed via specific courses on how to deal with volunteers. They cannot realize fully the extent to which volunteers can reduce their workload by providing services such as counseling for inmates and families, recreation and exercise, chaplaincy, advocacy, supplementary security, and family support (California, 1978). How do we educate criminal justice administrators concerning volunteers? It would appear that much of this is now done on the job. Sometimes,

however, experience with volunteers comes too late or in an inconsequential way, if at all. Why not institute courses in the curricula of universities that have criminal justice programs with the purpose of teaching students how to work with volunteers? The courses could be integrated into existing academic curricula or set up as special courses.

Most universities have, up to now, had no place in their curricula for volunteerism courses. The VIP organization (Volunteers in Probation, Prevention, Parole and Police, in Royal Oak, Michigan) has begun to change this by organizing professional training programs for volunteers in colleges and universities. Now there are over 50 universities and colleges that teach special classes on volunteerism as an important part of their criminal justice courses (Brown, Unkovic, 1979).

The University of Alabama, through funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has instituted courses on volunteerism in its curriculum for criminal justice students. "In addition to the introductory college courses and degree concentrations, we felt that specific academic mechanisms for coordinators, staff, and volunteers would meet a real need in the field of criminal justice volunteerism today" (VIP, 1979). Similar programs have been instituted in New York, Tennessee, and Minnesota, using the University of Alabama's program as a model. There is also a program at Arizona State University in which students work as volunteers in a correctional setting. There are other programs offered spottedly across the country but, in general, they lack depth, substance and uniformity that can be incorporated into specially-designed courses on volunteerism in criminal justice.

In a survey of sixteen regional resource centers that, in part, function to promote and coordinate education in and training for volunteerism in criminal justice, the re-

spondents felt that their efforts to date at best had been only slightly to moderately effective (Brown, Unkovic, 1979). Only minimal to moderate progress had been made in training of volunteer administrators or to promote students' skills and interest as volunteer coordinators or advocates for improving volunteerism in criminal justice. Yet, these leaders expressed strong beliefs that volunteerism in criminal justice should continue to be promoted and improved.

What seems to be lacking are well-developed plans, goals and objectives to focus, guide, and coordinate the efforts of those who recognize this need and the benefits that could be derived from effective volunteer training in criminal justice programs. Perhaps the most important obstacle to implementing volunteer courses is the negative attitude that many practitioners have about the use of volunteers in corrections--especially those who have not actually had experience with volunteers in criminal justice (Brown, Unkovic, 1982).

STUDY OF COLLEGE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

In a national study of 155 college and university criminal justice instructors,¹ a series of questions was asked about the extent to which volunteerism was stressed in their curriculum and in their classes. The data, shown in Table 1, indicate that about 30 percent of the instructors gave some attention to volunteerism as one important topic. Only 9.1 percent scheduled a special class on volunteerism leadership. Most instructors give volunteerism very little (50.6 percent) or no (9.7 percent) emphasis.

Instructors who stressed volunteerism in their classes utilized all types of resources, including audio-visual materials. It is noteworthy that instructors who promoted volunteerism were the ones who had had experience themselves as volunteers.

As more students are exposed to volunteerism, it seems likely that they too, will become stronger advocates for volunteerism.

Those instructors who promoted volunteerism indicated that their most utilized resources were guest speakers (see Table 1). Data not shown indicate guest speakers were also considered the most effective resource. Other common resources were the use of reading assignments on volunteerism, assistance from national volunteer programs (e.g., VIP-NETP), audio-visual cassettes and films. Local volunteer coordinators and volunteer personnel in criminal justice fields (e.g., VIP) played important roles in facilitating interest and enlightenment regarding volunteerism. Still three-fourths of the departments made no use of audio-visual materials or resources available from national programs.

Respondents interested in promoting volunteerism included virtually all criminal justice areas as ones in which volunteers could serve useful functions. Interestingly, the potential benefit of volunteers in prisons and correctional institutions was the second most frequent response regarding use of volunteers. Only volunteers in probation and parole was named more often.

Much remains to be done to facilitate volunteerism in corrective areas if volunteerism is to be utilized to its potential. The agencies and organizations who could benefit most from the skills and resources that volunteers bring into the criminal justice setting appear to be the ones most reluctant to initiate volunteer programs. This can change only through coordinated efforts to reach those with misperceptions regarding volunteerism.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from data collected that most students of criminal justice (at least in those schools surveyed) have had very little practical ex-

posure to concepts of volunteerism in the correctional system. The curriculum in most schools of criminal justice do not include adequate instruction for their students concerning the effective use of volunteers, promotion of volunteerism or volunteer training. Most criminal justice programs are not teaching their students how to use the volunteer resources that they have available. This is a sad commentary because so much more could be done to improve conditions of jails through the use of volunteers.

Students in criminal justice programs should become better acquainted with different volunteer training programs. Emphasis on criminal justice volunteerism could be augmented by internship programs. More coordination between correctional personnel and local volunteer coordinators is needed. Volunteer coordinators need to become more familiar with resources available through national criminal justice organizations such as VIP.

It would certainly benefit students, staff and volunteers if criminal justice programs instituted in their curriculum one or more courses focusing on the volunteer concept. Prisoners, their families and correctional personnel could benefit. National volunteer associations could give greater emphasis to motivating and training volunteer coordinators to reach out to key personnel in correctional settings. This emphasis could eventually result in an overall upgrading of the criminal justice system.

Those who have been involved in the volunteerism movement can attest to the continuously changing factors--local and federal--that facilitate or constrain volunteerism efforts. Today budget costs in many programs have resulted in an even greater need for volunteers in order to accomplish many of the objectives of agencies. Yet inflation has caused many to "moonlight" that otherwise might wish to participate as volun-

teers. On the other hand, the birth and growth of organized volunteer coordination programs has been nothing short of spectacular. The professional direction and coordination by these professional volunteer leaders is a key factor in motivating correction personnel as well as college criminal justice personnel to promote volunteerism.

What about tomorrow? No doubt current approaches will continue and progress will be made in tried and proven areas of volunteer recruitment, training, coordinating, etc. In addition to those standard practices, how could the volunteerism movement capitalize on the Reagan Administration's proposal to further cut federal funds? Surely the vast numbers of problems people have are not going to go away simply because funds are reduced. In fact, with less paid personnel, most agencies and organizations are going to need to increase their reliance on volunteers.

The proposed "work fare" approach to welfare may contain the nucleus of an idea to greatly assist those agencies, including corrections organizations, who will have to depend even more on volunteers to serve their clients' needs. How? Perhaps the leadership from national and regional volunteer movements could help to shape work fare, or a similar program, so that those welfare recipients who will continue to receive funds will have a choice of (1) working for their welfare funds in business, government or special programs, or (2) serve a specified number of hours as volunteers in various agencies.

"Workfare" has great potential as a source of volunteers. The need for volunteers in all areas has increased rapidly because major welfare cutbacks, Federal and State, have increased the needs of countless citizens and, at the same time, caused reductions in agency staffs to assist those in need. The number of people who enter the criminal justice system has increased greatly. These indi-

viduals and their families have urgent needs that often go unrecognized.

"Workfare" provides an opportunity to utilize the time, energy, and talents of many welfare recipients as a condition for their continuing to receive public assistance. Certainly "volunteers" from this source would need to be adequately trained and supervised. The costs of not utilizing these welfare recipients and often untapped and unrecognized talents is great. Further, the pride and sense of helping others that would come to these "volunteers" is reason enough to involve them in volunteer programs. Volunteers in some criminal justice areas, especially corrections, have been greatly underutilized, to some extent because volunteers in this area have not been easy to recruit. Workfare could be invaluable as a vast source of "manpower" to assist agencies whose staffs are being severely overloaded.

If such a policy could be implemented, a vast source of volunteers would become available. Volunteer coordinators would likely find themselves in the middle of an exciting and challenging way of helping people who need help to help themselves and others. At the same time, there is the possibility of giving those receiving welfare more help, education, and training that could lead to their becoming more independent. (Most data show that welfare recipients do not want to continue in that status, despite the general public's misperceptions about this.)

What other innovative approaches can be envisioned to take advantage of the changing times rather than be constrained by what can often appear to be a disastrous turn of events? This is a challenge for the volunteerism of tomorrow.

FOOTNOTES

¹The list of 178 schools that were

sent questionnaires was provided by the Director of "Volunteers in Probation" (VIP), Judge Keith Leenhouts, and Dr. Robert Sigler, at the University of Alabama. These were schools with whom these men had had at least some communication regarding interest in volunteerism in criminal justice. The 155 college and university instructors that responded were located throughout the nation.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1

Results of answers given by 144-150 respondents to the following question:

Please indicate the extent to which you use each of the following resources as a classroom tool when you approach the subject of volunteerism in Criminal Justice.

Volunteerism Resources Used In Criminal Justice Classes	Not Used	Minimal Use	Moderate Use	Often Used	Extensive Use
Slides, filmstrips, and/or transparencies on volunteerism.	76.4	14.2	7.4	1.4	0.7
Films (movies) on volunteerism.	67.6	17.6	6.3	2.7	1.4
<u>Audio</u> (only) cassettes on volunteerism.	86.3	11.0	2.1	0.7	—
<u>Audio-Visual</u> cassettes on volunteerism.	78.5	10.4	5.6	3.5	2.1
Assignments for students to read journal articles and/or reports on volunteerism.	37.6	28.9	20.1	12.1	1.3
Assignment of texts or other books on volunteerism.	59.5	23.1	8.8	6.8	1.4
Use of model guidelines for an introductory course in volunteerism on recruiting, training and program management.	73.3	11.0	11.6	2.1	2.1
Use of guest speakers to promote interest in volunteerism.	25.7	22.3	29.7	15.5	6.8
Assistance from a University Student Volunteer Program.	76.6	9.6	7.5	3.4	2.7
Assistance from a Community Based Volunteer Program.	38.1	24.5	16.3	13.6	7.5
Assistance from a National Volunteer Program (e.g. workshops, materials, etc.)	72.9	16.0	2.1	5.6	3.5

APPENDIX
TABLE 2
INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG MAJOR VARIABLES* IN STUDY OF
VOLUNTEERISM IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLASSES

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
A. Attention to volunteerism in CJ classes	--	.66	.38	.39	.29	.47	.43	.36	.26
B. Extent that resource tools and techniques were used	.66	--	.67*	.37	.25	.54	.36	.35	.40
C. Use of national volunteer program resources	.38	.67	--	.23	.29	.54	.21	.32	.31
D. Perception of effectiveness of resources	.39	.37	.23	--	.79	.27	.26	.42	.32
E. Perception of effectiveness of national volunteer program resources	.29	.25	.29	.79	--	.21	.19	.36	.39
F. Extent of use of resources from VIP	.47	.54	.54	.27	.21	--	.37	.45	.51
G. Extent of respondents' volunteer experiences	.43	.36	.21	.26	.19	.37	--	.24	.37
H. Extent that respondents feel that volunteerism should be promoted	.36	.35	.32	.42	.36	.45	.24	--	.46
I. Effectiveness of VIP resources according to current VIP users	.26	.40	.31	.32	.39	.51	.37	.46	--

*Kendall's Tau ordinal bivariate associations (See Nie et al., 1975)

All associations are "significant" at P .05.

The relationships are based on 125 or more responses.

The data in Table 2 show the correlations among some selected question items in the questionnaires completed by the criminal justice instructors. As a means of helping readers less familiar with interpreting correlation data, an example is shown below that shows the findings from the first column of data (i.e., reading down column "A").

Instructors who gave more "attention to volunteerism in CJ classes" (Col. "A") were more likely to have:

	Strength of Relationship Tau*
a. Used more resource tools and techniques;	.66
b. Made use of national volunteer resources;	.38
c. Perceived that the resources they used were effective;	.39
d. Perceived that national volunteer resources they used were effective;	.29
e. Used more resources from VIP;	.47
f. Been more active as volunteer workers;	.43
g. The opinion that volunteerism should be promoted; and	.36
h. The opinion that VIP resources they used were more effective.	.26

Other columns of correlations can be "read" in a similar matter.

In sum, the data in Table 2 support the usefulness of volunteerism as a part of criminal justice curriculum. Those instructors who use volunteer resources as aids in their classes, and/or who have had more volunteer experience are significantly stronger advocates of volunteerism in criminal justice than those who have not had these actual experiences.

* Kendall's Tau correlations have a range of zero to plus or minus 1.00. The higher the "Tau" the more strongly the two variables are related. In social data, "Tau's" from .01 to .20 are considered weak; .21 to .40 are moderate; .41 to .60 are fairly strong relations; and over .60 are exceptionally strong.