



Rediscovering Voluntary Action: The Beat of a Different Drum

Colin Rochester

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In recent years, volunteering and voluntary organizations have come to play an increasingly important role in British society. But this recognition has come at the cost of losing sight of the distinctive characteristics of voluntary action and its claims to independence of thought and action. Drawing on 45 years' experience of working in and researching the sector, Colin Rochester shows how conventional wisdom about how voluntary action is understood and undertaken ignores a variety of important activities which have contributed so much to our quality of life and living conditions. He revisits the history of voluntary action; identifies the forces that have created modern misunderstandings and misrepresentations; explores the role of voluntary action and the forms it takes; and argues that the reality of voluntary activity is very different from the picture painted by contemporary researchers and practitioners. In a final chapter Rochester spells out the implications of his vision for research and practice.

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