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A Functional Approach to Volunteerism: Do Volunteer Motives Predict Task Preference?

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A central premise of the functional approach is that the same behavior may serve different functions for different individuals. More recently, this approach has been used to understand the motives behind volunteering. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether certain volunteer tasks (e.g., reading to the blind, entering data) differentially satisfy certain motives (e.g., expression of values, career building) and whether individuals prefer tasks with benefits aligned with their own preferred volunteer motives. Results suggested that people idiosyncratically differentiate tasks based on the motives they satisfy. Furthermore, when given a choice, individuals prefer tasks with benefits that match their personally relevant motives. Practical implications for volunteer organizations are discussed.

Volunteerism is alive in America. Based on recent statistics, many Americans seem to be answering the "call to volunteer." It is estimated that 89.2 million (47.7%) of American adults volunteered in 1993 (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Abrahams, Crutchfield, & Stevenson, 1996). This includes formal volunteering, which involves specific time commitments to organizations, and informal volunteering, as exemplified by the many emergency workers who volunteered during the World Trade Center tragedy. A more recent estimate of formal volunteering is that 63.8 million (28.8%) of Americans age 16 and over volunteered in 2003 (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2003). In addition to the direct benefits obtained by recipients because of "people helping people," volunteerism provides economic benefits to society. For example, the 15.0 billion hours of formal volunteering have an estimated value of $182 billion (Hodgkinson et al.). As impressive as these statistics are, there is room for improvement, as less than half of American adults are engaging in volunteer activities. This suggests both the practical and theoretical importance of addressing the question, "Why do people volunteer?" One useful social psychological approach to answering this question begins with the premise that volunteering serves different functions for different people.

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FUNCTIONAL STRATEGY

The functional approach in psychology has a history that spans over a century (e.g., Angell, 1907; Dewey, 1896; James, 1890). More recently, the functional strategy has been utilized to understand the motives behind volunteering (see Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1991, 1995, 1999; Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Omoto, Snyder, & Berghuis, 1993; Snyder, 1993; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000; Snyder & Omoto, 1992a, 1992b). Clary and Snyder (1991) defined functional analysis as being "concerned with the reasons and purposes that underlie and generate psychological phenomena—the personal and social needs, plans, goals, and functions being served by people's beliefs and their actions" (p. 123). Accordingly, a main premise of functionalist theorizing is that while different people can perform the same actions, these actions may serve different psychological functions for different individuals. This approach is identified with func-

tional theories of attitudes and persuasion (e.g., Herek, 1987; Katz, 1960; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956; Snyder & DeBono, 1987). According to this perspective, people may have similar attitudes or engage in similar behavior, but these attitudes or behaviors may satisfy different motivational functions.

Volunteering Functions

As the functional approach has been utilized with respect to the functions attitudes may serve, this approach may also help to reveal underlying motivations of volunteering. According to a functional analysis of volunteerism, people engaging in similar acts may have different underlying motivations for doing so. Clary et al. (1998) catalogued the following six functions of volunteerism.

One function that volunteerism may serve is the *values* function. The values function refers to concerns for the welfare of others, and contributions to society. This function has been likened to altruism (e.g., Clary & Miller, 1986), the value-expressive attitude function (Katz, 1960), and the quality of expressiveness (Smith et al., 1956). A study by Anderson and Moore (1978) provided empirical evidence for the values function—over 70% of the respondents endorsed "to help others" as a reason for volunteering.

A second function is the *understanding* function in which volunteerism gives an opportunity to learn, understand, practice, and apply skills and abilities. This function is related to Katz's (1960) knowledge function and Smith et al.'s (1956) object appraisal function. In support of this function, Gidron (1978) found that young volunteers (high school and college students) tended to view their volunteer work as a learning and a self-development experience.

A third function is the *career* function. Volunteerism may serve to increase one's job prospects and enhance one's career. For example, Beale (1984) suggested encouraging students to volunteer as the experiences may serve as "stepping stones" to employment.

A fourth function volunteerism may serve is the *social* function in which an individual volunteers due to strong normative or social pressure, or to get along with others in his or her reference group. Conceptually, this function is similar to Smith et al.'s (1956) social adjustive function and Francies (1983) need to respond to the expectations of others (EO). Piliavin, Evans, and Callero (1984) found evidence for the social function in their investigation of motives for donating blood. They found that some individuals donate blood due to external, social motives.

A fifth function served by volunteerism is the *protective* function whereby one volunteers to reduce feelings of guilt about being more fortunate than others, or to escape from one's own problems. This function could be likened to Katz's (1960) ego-defensive function, Smith et al.'s (1956) externalization function, and Francies' (1983) need to express feelings of social responsibility (SR). Schwartz (1970) found support for the protective function in his study of volunteering to be a bone marrow donor. His results showed that individuals had a greater level of commitment to volunteer when the salience of personal responsibility for others was high.

A sixth function is the *esteem* or *enhancement* function in which volunteerism serves to enhance one's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-improvement. Results of studies have found support for the esteem function. For example, volunteers working in mental hospitals showed an increase in self-acceptance as a consequence of their volunteer participation (Holzberg, Gewirtz, & Ebner, 1964; King, Walder, & Pavey, 1970).

A point to emphasize is that the functional approach is a multimotivational perspective. That is, according to this perspective, volunteerism may serve more than one motive for an individual and, also, different motivations may be served within a group of volunteers performing the same activity. More important, in the same individual, different motives may be primarily engaged by different volunteer activities.

This study uses the functional approach to investigate whether certain volunteer tasks (e.g., reading to the blind, entering data) can serve different functions (e.g., expression of values, career building) for different individuals, and whether individuals prefer tasks that match their volunteer motives.

Matching Motivation With Volunteering Benefits

The functional approach implicates the importance of matching volunteer motivations to the benefits that volunteerism provides. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that matching benefits with personal motivations results in positive volunteer outcomes. For example, Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, and Haugen (1994) found persuasive messages to be more persuasive when matched with an individual's personally relevant function. Clary et al. (1998, Study 5) found that volunteers who received benefits that matched their motivations were more satisfied with their volunteer experience. Moreover, Clary et al. (1998, Study 6) found that undergraduate students with matching benefits were more satisfied with their volunteerism experience and had greater intentions to continue volunteering either at the same or different location in both the immediate and long-term future. Thus, it appears that matching motivations with benefits has real consequences—a more positive experience for the volunteer. It should be noted, however, that the aforementioned Clary et al. (1998) studies relied on self-reported benefits rather than matching benefits. The next section discusses the related question of whether individuals choose tasks with benefits that match their personal volunteer motives.

Investigating Tasks and Their Benefits

Oftentimes in a volunteer situation, the individual is presented with multiple tasks and asked to choose a task he or

she wishes to perform. For example, a political campaign volunteer may be asked to choose from a variety of tasks such as stuffing envelopes, phoning voters, or canvassing neighborhoods. Which task will the individual choose? The functional approach suggests that the individual will choose a task with benefits that match his or her volunteer motivation. From this, it would appear that if individuals do choose tasks with benefits that match their motives, then the tasks themselves can be characterized by the particular motives they satisfy. Snyder et al. (2000) suggested this possibility in that

> although it may be possible to identify a core set of functions that underlie volunteerism in general, there very well may also be meaningful variations in the extent to which these core functions can be served by specific volunteer activities. (p. 385)

Evidence suggests that certain activities do provide particular benefits. For example, Clary et al. (1996) conducted a logistic regression on data collected from individuals who had volunteered during the past year. Different combinations of motives were associated with volunteering in different areas. Although this suggests that volunteering in certain areas does satisfy particular motives, more evidence is needed to determine whether certain tasks can be characterized by particular motives. In the aforementioned study, data regarding tasks and benefits were collected after, not before, the volunteer experience. Because of this, the expected a priori motivational functions of each task remain unclear.

From the fact that volunteers are drawn toward activities that will satisfy their motives, it is expected that certain motives are identified with certain tasks. Furthermore, the critical question remains whether people do choose volunteer tasks based on the matching between personal motives and task benefits. Results in the literature indirectly support the prediction that volunteers choose tasks with benefits matching personally relevant motives. For example, Clary et al. (1998, Study 5), using older volunteers at a community hospital as participants, found that those volunteers who perceived greater functionally relevant benefits were more satisfied with their volunteer experience. Sergent and Sedlacek (1990) also found evidence suggesting that volunteers in different organizations have different motivational and personal needs. However, these results, while suggestive, are inconclusive with regard to whether people *initially* choose a particular task with benefits that match their volunteer motivation. When volunteers report their motivations *after* performing the task, it could be that they "discovered" the functional motives after engaging in the task, whereas the motive for initially engaging in the task may have been different. To test whether one's personally relevant motive for volunteering will be a significant predictor of the volunteer task one prefers to perform, this study investigated whether certain tasks are perceived by individuals to satisfy certain volunteer motives *before* engaging in the task, and whether participants select preferred activities on the basis of the match of the expected activity to their personally relevant motive.

METHOD

Overview

This study investigated whether individuals prefer tasks having benefits that match personally relevant functions—that is, which can meet their motivational needs. In the study, participants first completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), an instrument used to assess and measure the functions served by volunteering (Clary et al., 1998). Following the VFI, participants were presented with descriptions of eight volunteer tasks and were asked to rank the tasks in order of preference for engaging in them. Then, participants were presented with descriptions of six volunteer motives as well as descriptions of the tasks. They evaluated the extent to which each task would satisfy each of the six volunteer motives for himself or herself. Participants were also asked to provide demographic information.

Participants

Participants in the study were 112 introductory psychology students (70 men, 42 women) at a large midwest university. The overall mean age of the participants was 19.39 years (SD = 2.31). The mean age of male and female participants was 19.47 years (SD = 2.17) and 19.24 years (SD = 2.55), respectively. The minimum age of participation was 18 years old. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Procedure and Measures

The investigator distributed and reviewed the contents of the packet with the participants and answered all questions. The investigator also told the participants to complete the pages in their order in the packet. This was to ensure that participants ranked task preference before being sensitized to the motive function served by the particular tasks. That is, if tasks have a certain motive structure, and people choose a task because of a match with that motive structure, they should be able to recognize the fit without being alerted to that task's primary motive. This ordering negates a possible demand effect, whereby participants might choose a task to correspond to their prior motive strength responses. In addition, although the participants completed the VFI before ranking task preference, it is highly unlikely that completing the VFI first would create a demand effect as well. The questions on the VFI are presented in random order. It is highly improbable that an individual would derive the six motives being assessed on the measure, as the evidence for them is not directly apparent. There is also indirect evidence from the

social desirability literature that supports that respondents are not completing the VFI in such a way as to make themselves appear more favorably. Previous studies have found no correlations between the volunteer motives and social desirability (e.g., Chapman & Morley, 1999).

The first two pages of the survey packet were the VFI. The VFI lists 30 reasons for volunteering. Individuals respond to each item rated along a 7-point Likert scale based on how important each reason is to him or her. A higher number indicates a motivation of greater importance for that person and thus, motives for volunteering can be ranked based on the scale scores (see previous discussion of the six volunteer functions assessed by the VFI). The next two pages listed the eight volunteer tasks and their respective descriptions. For example, the data entry task was described as follows: "Organizations often have data needing to be entered. Individuals will work alone on this task, which involves entering the data in the computer. This is a great opportunity to become familiar with and use data entry packages such as Excel or QuattroPro." Another task, card making for the elderly, had the following description: "Holidays come and go. Oftentimes, some elderly receive only a few, if any, cards during the holidays. This task involves making holiday cards for residents of nursing homes." The remaining six tasks were reading to the blind, typing fundraising letters, developing a brochure describing their university to incoming students, collating newsletters and stuffing envelopes, creating holiday baskets, and developing "study packets." These particular eight tasks were included in the experiment because they represent typical volunteer tasks performed by college students. The following page asked participants to rank each of the eight volunteer tasks in order of his or her preference with a 1 indicating "most preferred choice" and an 8 indicating "least preferred choice." On the next page were the six volunteer motives (values, career, understanding, social, protective, and esteem) and their respective descriptions (see Volunteer Functions section for similar motive descriptions). Each of the next successive eight pages had a task name and its description on the top followed by six questions, corresponding to the six motives, asking how much the participant disagrees or agrees that the particular volunteer task satisfies the particular motive for him or her. Each agreement rating was made on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*). The eight pages containing the task descriptions and rating scales were randomized. Participants then completed a demographic questionnaire comprised of gender, age, year in school, and ethnicity.

Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis posited that tasks can be characterized by the motives they satisfy. This implies the obverse, that different motives are applicable to different tasks. This was tested in two ways. First, an 8 × 6 omnibus analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the interactive effects of the eight tasks and six motives. An interaction was expected whereby the reported relevance of the six motives differs for the eight tasks. Given the significant omnibus interaction, two sets of one-way ANOVAs were run. A one-way ANOVA was conducted for each task, testing whether that task satisfied some motives more than other motives. In addition, a one-way ANOVA was computed for each motive, telling whether that motive was more effectively satisfied by some tasks more than others. Within the context of significant one-way ANOVAs, follow-up *t* tests were computed to determine which motives are significantly different from one another within each particular task as well as which tasks differ within each motive. Finally a generalizability analysis was run to examine whether there was a consensus among participants regarding the extent to which certain tasks satisfy particular motives or whether participants' perceptions were idiosyncratic with respect to perceived motive satisfaction.

The second hypothesis predicted that an individual would prefer tasks to the extent that they are expected to match his or her motivations. To test Hypothesis 2, an attraction score was first computed for each task using an expectancy-value model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). For each participant, the attraction score for each task was calculated as follows:

$$A_{pt} = \sum_{i=1}^{6} (VFI_{pi} \times R_{pit})$$

where A_{pt} is the attraction score for person p for task t, VFI_{pi} is the VFI score for person p for motive i, and R_{pit} is the rating given by the participant p on how much he/she perceives that task t satisfies motive i. This generated a score that reflected the degree to which the motive structure of a particular task matched the participant's preference for particular motives. The resulting eight attraction scores (one per task) give the expected order of preferences for the tasks—that is, higher scores would follow from a greater matching of task selection and task motive structure. If motive satisfaction is an important component of task preference, then these attractiveness scores should predict the actual rank ordering of task preference. Thus, it was predicted that there would be a significant correlation between the attractiveness and actual rank orderings. A correlation coefficient for each individual was calculated using the set of attraction scores and the set of ranked data. An overall mean correlation coefficient was then calculated across all participants. To test for significance, a one-sample *t* test was used to determine if the mean correlation coefficient was significantly different from zero. Because higher attractiveness scores would be expected to be associated with lower (preferred) rankings, support for Hypothesis 2 would be found in a significant *negative* mean correlation coefficient.

RESULTS

Statistical Tests of Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posited that tasks can be characterized by the different motives they satisfy. To test this hypothesis, an 8 × 6 within-subjects omnibus ANOVA was computed to examine the interactive effects of the eight tasks and six motives. The results show a significant interaction between tasks and motives, $F(35, 3885) = 30.30$, $p < .001$, supporting the prediction that different tasks satisfy different motives.

Two follow-up sets of one-way ANOVAs were computed. In the first set, ANOVAs were computed for each volunteer task to investigate whether different motives are differentially satisfied by each task. For example, volunteering to make cards for the elderly might satisfy the values motive more than the social motive. The results were significant for all of the eight tasks—entering data, making cards for the elderly, developing study packets for students, developing brochure for incoming freshmen, creating holiday baskets, reading to the blind, collating newsletters and stuffing envelopes, and typing fundraising letters, Fs(5, 555) = 52.06, 47.77, 18.02, 16.77, 30.61, 37.28, 7.54, and 8.34, respectively, all ps < .001. A second set of ANOVAs was computed for each volunteer motive to examine whether that motive is better satisfied by some tasks than others. For example, reading to the blind might evoke the values motive more so than data entry. These results were also significant for all six motives—values, career, understanding, social, protective, and esteem—Fs(7, 777) = 63.52, 24.99, 16.69, 19.94, 35.66, and 37.45, respectively, all ps < .001.

Follow-up t tests were computed to determine more specifically which motives were significantly different from one another within each task and which tasks were different within each motive. Refer to Table 1 for the results of the pair-wise comparisons.

Clearly, participants had some agreement regarding the motives satisfied by each task and the tasks that most effectively satisfy each motive. But does this agreement represent a high level of consensus among participants regarding their perceptions of motive satisfaction? Or are these perceptions predominantly idiosyncratic, with the agreement representing a significant but relatively small proportion of the variance in participants' perceptions? To address this question, a generalizability analysis (see Shavelson & Webb, 1991) was run that treated participants as judges and tasks and motives as the targets of judgment. Motive was treated as a random factor because we did not want to assume that the six motives represented in the VFI comprise the exhaustive list of reasons why people volunteer.

Variance was partitioned into seven variance components (see Table 2). Of these, three represent consensus perceptions that are similar across participants (task, motive, and task by motive), and four represent idiosyncratic perceptions that differ across participants (participant, participant by task, participant by motive, and the residual). The results suggest that perceptions of the extent to which each task satisfies each motive is highly idiosyncratic, with only 15.7% of the variance representing consensus among participants and 84.3% of the variance representing idiosyncratic perceptions.

These results extend the domain to which the functional approach to volunteerism can be applied. People differ not only in terms of which volunteer motives they consider most important, but also in the extent to which they perceive that different volunteer tasks will satisfy different motives.

These results also suggest that VFI scores by themselves will provide only limited information regarding task preferences. To test this, a series of eight regression analyses were run in which preference for each task was regressed on the six

TABLE 1
Motive Satisfaction of the Volunteer Tasks

	Motives											
	Values		*Career*		*Understanding*		*Social*		*Protective*		*Esteem*	
Tasks	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Data entry	3.49_{a}^{c}	1.83	5.16	1.88	$4.54^{a,b,c}$	1.70	3.29_{a}^{a}	1.78	$2.88^{a,b}$	1.73	3.41_{a}	1.96
Card making	5.78^{a}	1.43	3.39^{a}	1.88	$4.96_{a}^{d,e}$	1.70	4.53_{b}^{c}	1.89	4.31_{b}^{d}	1.86	5.15_{a}^{b}	1.78
Study packet	4.35_{a}^{b}	1.76	4.24_{a}^{b}	1.89	$4.70^{c,d}$	1.66	3.75_{b}^{b}	1.81	3.21^{c}	1.82	$4.09_{a,b}^{a}$	2.11
Develop brochure	4.04_{b}^{b}	1.69	4.55_{a}^{b}	1.77	$4.43_{a}^{a,b}$	1.60	4.12_{b}	1.77	$3.16^{b,c}$	1.84	3.83_{b}^{a}	1.95
Holiday baskets	5.48	1.57	3.38^{a}	1.93	$4.52_{b}^{b,c}$	1.79	$4.59_{a,b}^{c}$	1.72	4.33_{b}^{d}	1.97	4.89_{a}^{b}	1.91
Reading to the blind	5.87^{a}	1.40	3.65^{a}	1.86	5.09_{a}^{e}	1.79	4.47_{b}^{c}	1.93	4.51_{b}^{d}	1.93	5.18_{a}^{b}	1.85
Collating newsletters	3.43_{a}^{c}	1.75	3.46_{a}^{a}	1.98	3.50_{a}	1.75	$3.34_{a,b}^{a}$	1.81	2.73^{a}	1.63	3.04_{b}	1.90
Typing letters	$4.13_{b,c}^{b}$	1.81	4.25_{c}^{b}	1.71	$4.20_{b,c}^{a}$	1.69	3.70_{a}^{b}	1.81	3.38^{c}	1.77	$3.93_{a,b}^{a}$	1.98

Note. Means within a row that share a subscript denote motives that do not differ significantly within the task (where significance is defined as $p < .01$). For example, the means 3.29, 3.41, and 3.49 for the social, esteem, and values motives, respectively, do not significantly differ for the data entry task as is indicated by their common subscript "a." Means within a column that share a superscript denote tasks that do not differ significantly in their satisfaction of the corresponding motive (where significance is defined as $p < .01$). For example, the mean of 3.49 for data entry and 5.78 for card making differ significantly in satisfying the values motive as they do not share a superscript. A modified Bonferroni adjustment was used to account for alpha inflation (see Keppel, 1991).

TABLE 2
Generalizability Analysis of Participants' Perceptions of Motives Satisfied by Volunteer Tasks

Source	*Variance Component*	*Percentage of Total Variance*
Participant	1.02	26.6
Task	0.21	5.5
Motive	0.10	2.6
Participant by task	0.62	16.1
Participant by motive	0.50	13.0
Task by motive	0.29	7.6
Residual	1.10	28.6

volunteer motives. Only two of the six volunteer motives were significant predictors (the values function was a significant predictor for reading to the blind, card making, and data entry, and the career function was a significant predictor for typing letters and developing brochures), and three of the tasks (collating newsletters, creating holiday baskets, and study packets) had no significant predictors. The results of these regressions combined with the high proportion of idiosyncratic variance found in the generalizability analysis suggest that accurate prediction of task preference requires not only knowledge of a person's important volunteer functions but also knowledge of the extent to which the person perceives that different volunteer tasks satisfy those important functions—a contention tested in the analysis of Hypothesis 2.

Statistical Tests of Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis predicted that an individual would prefer tasks to the degree that the tasks are expected to match his or her motivations. To test this hypothesis, an attraction score for each volunteer task was computed for each participant. This attraction score reflected the degree to which the motive structure of a particular task matched the participant's preference for particular motives. The eight attraction scores, giving the expected order of preference, were then compared to the actual ranking of preference for the tasks. A correlation coefficient between the attraction scores and rankings was calculated for each individual from which an overall mean correlation coefficient was calculated across all participants.[1] Support for the hypothesis would be seen in a negative correlation, as a high attraction score is associated with a high preferred ranking as indicated by a low number (e.g., a ranking of 1 indicates the task of highest preference). The result of a one-sample *t* test showed the overall mean correlation coefficient to be significantly different from zero ($M = -.48$, $SD = .39$), $t(104) = -12.49$, $p < .001$. This result demonstrates that, indeed, individuals prefer volunteer tasks that are expected to match their volunteer motivations. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

In summary, the results indicate that the volunteer tasks satisfy the motives differentially and that particular tasks evoke different motives. Moreover, the results show that individuals prefer activities that best satisfy their volunteer motives.

[1]The analyses described used scores from the VFI as well as data from the ranking of the tasks. One participant failed to answer question 9 on the VFI. It was replaced with the mean ($M = 3.21$) for that item. In addition, the ranked data from seven participants was unusable as multiple tasks were given the same ranking. Consequently, analyses using the ranking of task preference did not include these data.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether individuals choose volunteering tasks that have personally relevant benefits, a prediction posited by functional theorizing. While past results are suggestive, they were unclear as to whether one's personally relevant motives for volunteering would be a significant predictor of the task one prefers to perform. Thus, this study investigated whether individuals do perceive that certain tasks satisfy certain motives even before the individuals engage in the task and whether the alignment of tasks and motives is related to task preference.

Volunteer Tasks and Motive Satisfaction: Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posited that tasks can be characterized by the different motives they satisfy. The results supported the prediction; it appears that people do differentiate tasks based on the volunteer motives they satisfy, a result in agreement with previous theorizing (e.g., Snyder et al., 2000). These results suggest that not all tasks are equal and that a task can be classified in terms of the motive(s) it does or does not satisfy.

Furthermore, the generalizability analysis suggests that a substantial portion of participants' perceptions of the extent to which different tasks satisfy different volunteer motives is idiosyncratic. In other words, people differ in terms of which volunteer motives are the most important to them and also differ in their perceptions of which tasks will best satisfy their personally relevant motives. However, it should be acknowledged that task descriptions were brief, thus allowing for greater interpretation by participants. In real life, a greater depth of information would be provided, which may lead to fewer idiosyncrasies in participants' perceptions of the task.

Task-Motive Alignment and Task Preference: Hypothesis 2

According to the functional approach, volunteerism may serve more than one motive for an individual and likewise, more than one motivation may be served within a group of volunteers who are performing the same activity. Past re-

search has found that people do differ on their motives for volunteering (e.g., Omoto & Snyder, 1990).

People can differ on their primary motives for volunteering; it appears that tasks also differ in their instrumentality for these motives. Indeed, confirmation of Hypothesis 1 showed that different tasks are perceived to satisfy motives differently. In building on this finding, it was hypothesized that individuals prefer tasks that are expected to satisfy their most important volunteer motives. Results supported this prediction; a significant correlation was found between task attractiveness and task preference as indicated by a mean correlation coefficient that significantly differed from zero. These findings suggest that individuals choose tasks which best satisfy their personal motives.

These results offer new support for functional theorizing by demonstrating that individuals prefer tasks with benefits that match their important motives. The data suggest that volunteers do not randomly select tasks but base a substantial portion of their task selection on motive satisfaction. People seem to be aware of why they want to volunteer and act accordingly to get their needs met. Thus, these results suggest that individuals may have more positive volunteer experiences when allowed to choose volunteer tasks that will meet their motives. This is in line with past studies (e.g., Clary et al., 1998), which have found that volunteers who performed tasks that met their motives did report more positive volunteer experiences and intended to continue volunteering in the future.

It would be informative for future studies to examine these hypotheses in samples of volunteers and to relate volunteers' VFI scores to their task selections as well as their task preferences. There are two reasons to expect convergent results. First, given recent estimates that over one fourth of Americans age 16 and over formally volunteer (BLS, 2003), this sample likely contains a large subsample of volunteers. Second, when examining the attitudes and behavior literature, one finds that the relationship between attitudes and behavior is strong with respect to long-term behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974). One chief characteristic of volunteerism is that it is sustained, long-term behavior.

Practical Implications

These results also have direct implications for volunteer organizations. As noted previously, this study demonstrated that it may be possible to some extent to classify tasks according to the motives they satisfy. If an organization makes available an array of tasks that satisfy varying functions, it would be able to recruit from a larger pool of individuals. Volunteer recruits would be better able to find tasks with benefits that match their personal motives resulting in higher satisfaction and commitment to their volunteer experience.

Findings also suggest that, where possible, more latitude should be given to volunteers in choosing specific tasks. As shown here, people prefer tasks they think will satisfy motives important to them. Thus, letting volunteers perform tasks with benefits that match their primary motives should result in a positive volunteer experience, an outcome favorable to all involved.

Sometimes, however, such flexibility is not possible; organizations may have a limited number of activities available for volunteers. In such instances, it is suggested volunteers be given the VFI or similar instrument to determine which motive functions are salient to the volunteer. Surveys similar to those used in this study, tailored to that particular organization, would assess volunteers' perceptions of the benefits of the prescribed tasks. The aspects of a task that would match the volunteer's motive may not always be immediately evident. Where realistic, such motivationally relevant benefits could be identified for volunteers. Or, if the targeted tasks do not address the salient motives of volunteers, some attention can be given to incorporating those benefits into the task if not initially present. The investment of a relatively small amount of time and effort at the beginning of the volunteer process could return many dividends in terms of the satisfaction and commitment of the eventual volunteers.

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