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# Motivation Behind Volunteerism

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**Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Introduction to Volunteerism .....	4 – 9
Chapter 2: Models of Motivation .....	9 – 18
Chapter 3: Gender Differences .....	18 – 21
Chapter 4: Age Differences .....	21 – 26
Chapter 5: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivational Orientations .....	26 – 29
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	29 – 31
References .....	32 – 36

## Chapter I

### Introduction to Volunteerism

*A college student, in addition to his academic and sports commitments, finds time every week to tutor underprivileged children. A businesswoman spends the little free time that she has distributing food at low-income neighborhoods. A medical student, despite his rigorous coursework, volunteers at a hospice. What motivates these people to allocate their time to helping strangers?*

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give” (Winston Churchill). This quote encapsulates the meaning that people derive from helping others. The desire to help appears to be an essential aspect of human nature. One particular type of helping behavior is volunteerism. Every year, millions of people engage in volunteerism, whether it is providing health care in free clinics, companionship in hospices, or tutoring for the illiterate. Numerous organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, and the Big Brothers Big Sisters foundation have come to rely heavily on volunteer service. According to a survey done by the Independent Sector (2010), 61.8 million Americans volunteered for a total of 8 billion hours in 2008. Of the 61.8 million volunteers, 12.9 million were employed by nonprofit organizations (Independent Sector, 2010), accounting for nearly 10 percent of America’s workforce and 5 percent of its GDP. When calculated in dollar terms, volunteer service was estimated to be worth more than 160 billion dollars (Independent Sector, 2010).

Considering the salience of volunteerism on both economic and social terms, volunteerism has been relatively understudied (Johnson, 2007). Most research on motivation has focused on work-related motivation as it is deemed to have a greater impact on the economy and

thus, regarded as more important (Johnson, 2007). While some research concerning work-related motivation is applicable to volunteers, there is an essential difference: volunteers are unpaid workers and thus, are motivated by factors other than monetary compensation. However, in the past fifteen years, there has been a steady proliferation of research studies focusing on volunteer motivation.

### **Purpose, Scope, and Organization**

This paper seeks to review the existing literature on volunteer motivation. Volunteer antecedents include functional motives, role identity, dispositional factors, situational circumstances, and organizational components (Finkelstien, 2009; Mowen & Sujan, 2005; Penner, 2002). According to the role identity theory, a person has multiple identities that are formed through interactions and expectations (Finkelstien, 2009). When an individual identifies and internalizes the role of being a volunteer, he incorporates this role into his self-concept. The higher the degree of identification and internalization, the more the likelihood that the individual will continue to volunteer (Finkelstien, 2009). An organization's reputation and employee culture and dispositional factors, such as personality traits, beliefs, and values, also influence an individual's decision to volunteer (Penner, 2002). However, to ensure sufficient depth, this paper will focus only on one essential volunteer antecedent: an individual's functional motives. Of particular emphasis are the functional motivation theory and a multi-dimensional model of volunteer motivation (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998), which will be used as foundations for this paper. When relevant, practical implications concerning volunteer recruitment and retention will be discussed.

This paper is divided into six chapters. This current chapter focuses on introducing the topic: motivation behind volunteerism. It also provides essential definitions and outlines the

practical implications and importance of the topic. The second chapter discusses the functional motivation theory and the various models that have been used by researchers to explain volunteer motivation. Common functions served by volunteerism and measures used to determine functional motives are described, followed by a discussion of general trends in motives, implications, and flaws in measures. Chapters three and four explore the existing literature on gender differences and age-related differences in motives for volunteerism and potential explanations for these differences. Chapter five examines functional motivation theory within intrinsic and extrinsic motivational contexts. The final chapter concludes the paper by linking together aspects of functional motivation theory and discussing recommendations for practical applications. To proceed, however, it is essential to first define volunteerism.

### **Definition of Volunteerism**

Elementary definitions describe volunteers as those who help others with no expectation of monetary rewards and volunteerism as a type of activity that is intended to improve the well-being of others (Mowen & Sujan, 2005). More comprehensive definitions, however, describe volunteerism as voluntary, ongoing, planned, helping behavior that increases the well-being of strangers, offers no monetary compensation, and typically occurs within an organizational context (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstien, 2009; Penner, 2002). Central to the comprehensive definition of volunteerism are six elements: voluntary action, little to no compensation, longevity, planfulness, nonobligation, and organizational context. Voluntary action and limited compensation are fairly self-explanatory. The next four elements, however, will be elaborated upon further.

**Longevity.** Volunteerism typically involves ongoing and long-term behavior. For example, 50 percent of volunteers report volunteering on an ongoing rather than on a one-time

basis (Independent Sector, 1999). Furthermore, longitudinal studies by Omoto and Snyder (1995) and Penner and Finkelstien (1998) found that once individuals begin to volunteer regularly, a majority of them continue to do so for at least a few years. This suggests that once individuals make a commitment to volunteer, they do so for a significant period of time even if volunteering imposes substantial time sacrifices and opportunity costs.

**Planfulness.** The fourth component suggests that volunteering is a planned rather than spontaneous action. Previous research suggests that prior to volunteering, individuals engage in considerable forethought, weighing its costs and benefits (Davis, Mitchell, Hall, Lothert, Snapp, & Meyer, 1999). Davis et al. (1999) found that individuals were more likely to be willing to volunteer when they anticipated positive emotional responses and satisfaction from the activity. These findings support the idea that volunteerism is, to some degree, a planned action based on rational deliberation of the affect and satisfaction likely to be derived from it. In fact, when deciding whether to volunteer and the amount of involvement, individuals consider not only the costs and benefits associated with volunteerism, but also the extent to which volunteerism fits with their own personal needs. The rational decision-making process that precedes volunteerism, therefore, can be contrasted with the one typically preceding helping behavior in emergency situations (Penner, 2002). Due to the nature of emergency situations, the decision to help is usually made almost instantaneously and without nearly as much conscious deliberation as the decision to volunteer.

**Nonobligation.** Volunteerism excludes helping behavior directed at the care of friends, loved ones, and other intimate others (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). Based on this definition, it can be deduced that recipients of volunteer actions are typically strangers. As such, the volunteer is not motivated to help by an obligation towards intimate others or prior experiences with the

recipients, but by an inherent personal desire to help (Penner, 2002). This type of helping behavior, often referred to as nonobligatory helping, is central to the definition of volunteerism (Omoto & Snyder, 1995).

**Organizational Context.** While there are individuals who engage in voluntary, ongoing, helping behavior towards strangers on their own, volunteerism generally occurs in some type of organizational context (Penner, 2002). In fact, almost 85 percent of volunteers work in an organization (Independent Sector, 1999).

### **Practical Implications**

The topic of volunteer motivation has significant practical implications. As mentioned earlier, volunteerism not only contributes immensely to the country's economy, it also provides essential services such as health care and education to society. Due to the recent economic downturn and resulting budgetary cuts, the role of the government in financing various services is decreasing. Assuming greater responsibility for providing these services are non-profit organizations (Andrews, 1995). Between 2008 and 2009, most non-profit organizations reported employing more volunteers and expected to employ even more in the future (Independent Sector, 2009). Accompanying rapidly increasing demand for the volunteer work force is a persistent decline in supply. In the last decade, the volunteer work force has decreased by almost 25 percent, from 83 million in 2000 to 61.8 million in 2008 (Independent Sector, 2009). The significant contribution of the volunteer work force and the decline of volunteers make the study of volunteer motivation an essential one.

Organizations often have problems attracting and retaining volunteers. Research in volunteer motivation provides better understanding of why individuals volunteer, thus enabling

organizations to improve recruitment efforts and implement measures to decrease turnover rates among volunteers. Researchers have found that the persuasive impact of a recruitment message is greater when it matches an individual's primary motivation (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, & Haugen, 1994). Thus, if volunteer motivations are known, organizations can better attract volunteers by developing persuasive communications that match specific functional motives of individuals or groups. For example, if it is known that volunteers typically volunteer to fulfill career motives, messages should be geared towards emphasizing the career-related benefits of volunteerism. Furthermore, volunteers assigned to tasks that match their motives are more likely to continue volunteering than volunteers assigned to tasks that differ from their motives (Okun, 1994). Thus, research in volunteer motivation has practical implications in the recruitment and sustainment of the volunteer work force.

## **Chapter II:**

### **Models of Motivation**

The set of motives underlying volunteerism is complex and intricate. Numerous models and theories have been used to explain volunteerism. Most models of volunteer motivation assume the truth of the functional motivation theory. Thus, this chapter will introduce the functional motivation theory, followed by the various models of motivation, placing particular emphasis on the multi-dimensional model of motivation, which will be used as a basis for the rest of the paper.

#### **Functional Motivation Theory**

The functional motivation theory was derived from theories concerning attitude and persuasion. Central to the functional motivation theory are two tenets: individuals engage in

purposeful activities to fulfill a certain goal and individuals can perform the same activities to serve different psychological functions (Clary et al., 1998). In other words, different volunteers may engage in volunteer service to fulfill distinct psychological functions or the same volunteers may engage in volunteer service to fulfill distinct psychological functions at different times in their lives. However, all volunteers engage in volunteerism because it fulfills certain psychological functions. The functional approach seeks to determine the reasons and goals that motivate volunteers, thus conceptualizing the volunteer decision in terms of personal motivations (Snyder, 1993).

According to the functional motivation theory, acts of volunteerism that appear identical may represent different underlying motives. These motives, in turn, may symbolize different psychological functions. The theory implies that individuals will begin and continue to volunteer as long as the activity matches and fulfills the individuals' motivational concerns (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Thus, organizations can improve recruitment and retainment efforts by appealing to individuals' psychological functions. Due to its practical implications, the functional motivation theory has been utilized by researchers as a framework for further studies and models on volunteer motivation.

### **Various Models of Motivation**

Numerous models of motivation have been used to categorize and explain volunteer motivation. While some models are more widely used than others, all of them will be introduced. This section will outline several of such theories, beginning with unidimensional models, followed by two-dimensional models, three-dimensional models, and lastly, multi-dimensional models.

**Unidimensional models.** The unidimensional model of motivation suggests that there exists only one category of volunteer motivation. In other words, volunteer motives can be lumped together into one category. Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) identified 28 different motives, such as religion, reputation, and passing time from existing literature and administered a survey to 285 volunteers from 40 different non-profit organizations using these 28 motives. They found that these motives formed a unidimensional scale, implying that volunteers are motivated by overlapping motives – motives that are both altruistic and egoistic. Thus, volunteers are motivated not by categories of motives but by one category, which consists of a combination of motives. Unfortunately, Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's findings have not been sufficiently replicated and the unidimensional model of motivation remains one of the least utilized models.

**Two-dimensional models.** Two-dimensional models, on the other hand, distinguish between two different categories of volunteer motives. Two possible categories are egoistic and altruistic motives (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). Egoistic motives are related to the attainment of tangible rewards such as career-related benefits. Individuals motivated by egoistic motives engage in volunteer service for the amelioration of their own welfare. In contrast, individuals motivated by altruistic motives engage in volunteerism with the purpose of augmenting the welfare of others. Two other possible categories are extrinsic and intrinsic motives. Intrinsically motivated behaviors are inherently satisfying and the individual engages in the activity because of the inherent satisfaction (Finkelstien, 2009). Activities that are extrinsically motivated, however, are performed because of the external outcome that it yields.

**Three-dimensional models.** In three-dimensional models, motivations are divided into altruistic motives, material motives, and social motives. While researchers have debated over the specific labels attached to these categories, they have largely agreed on the existence of three

categories and the contents of these categories as explanations for volunteer motivation.

Altruistic motives emphasize the importance of concern for others while material motives are derived from the desire for material rewards (Monga, 2006). Social motives, on the other hand, appeal to social interactions as motivating factors.

**Multi-dimensional models.** Multi-dimensional models posit the existence of multiple categories of motives. One such model was put forth by Clary et al. (1998), which assumes the truth of the functional motivation theory and identifies six distinct motivational factors. Their model best conceptualizes the intricate set of motives underlying volunteer motivation and has become one of the most widely accepted model in the field. Since the development of Clary et al.'s (1998) model, numerous other researchers have also assumed the truth of the functional motivation theory and built upon their model. While other models, such as that of Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991), have been criticized for empirical and theoretical flaws, the functional approach and Clary et al.'s multi-dimensional model continue to gain momentum through its methodological rigor and theoretical competence. Due to the widespread acceptance and salience of Clary et al.'s (1998) model, their model will be further elaborated and used as basis for the rest of this paper.

***Common functions served by volunteerism: The VFI.*** Clary et al. (1998) suggested that there were six general psychological functions served by volunteerism. In a series of six studies, Clary et al. (1998) developed, verified, and refined the *Volunteer Functions Inventory* (VFI). Clary et al. (1998) developed the VFI from a conceptual analysis of the common psychological and social functions. In the first and second studies, Clary et al. (1998) administered the VFI to volunteers from several organizations and a large sample of university students respectively. They found that each of the six VFI motives possessed internal consistency and was sufficiently

distinct from each other. In the third study, Clary et al. (1998) established the temporal stability of the VFI by having their sample of 65 university students complete the survey twice over a one-month interval. The last three studies will be discussed later in the paper as they relate to organizational implications.

The VFI represents the most extensive and sound set of scales for determining volunteer motives (Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998). Due to its quality and ease of use, it has become one of the most frequently used self-report instrument (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). It consists of 30 items, five items for each of the six functions, and employs a seven-point rating scale that ranges from one (Not at all important or not accurate) to seven (Extremely important or accurate) (Clary et al., 1998). The VFI is used to ascertain the six general functions that may underlie an individual's motivation to volunteer: the values function, the understanding function, the social function, the career function, the protective function, and the enhancement function.

*Values.* The values function enables individuals to express deeply held values such as altruism and humanitarianism (Clary et al., 1998). Volunteers motivated by the values function engage in service because of the desire to help those less fortunate than themselves. Two example items that best encapsulate the values function are "I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself" and "I feel it is important to help others" (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

*Understanding.* A second function served by volunteerism is the understanding function, which involves the desire to learn new skills and to utilize knowledge or abilities that might otherwise go unused (Clary et al., 1998). Volunteers motivated by the understanding function also seek to explore their own strengths and expand their understanding of the cause, other volunteers, and the organization. Example items for the understanding function measures the

degree to which volunteers agree with volunteering as a means to “learn things through direct, hands on experience and “to learn more about the cause” (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

*Social.* According to the social function, volunteers engage in unpaid helping behavior as a means to increase social interactions, strengthen existing relationships, and to gain others’ approval. For example, individuals may volunteer to meet new people and make new friends or to be with their friends. If their friends or significant others regard volunteer work as respected, individuals may also engage in volunteer service in an attempt to appear favorably. Example items measuring social function from the VFI state reasons such as “my friends volunteer” or “others with whom I am close place a high value on community service” (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

*Career.* A fourth function served by volunteerism relates to the desire to gain career-related experiences and to increase job prospects. Volunteers motivated by the career function regard volunteer service as a means to help their career. To measure an individual’s career motivation, the VFI contains items such as “volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work” and “volunteering allows me to explore different career options” (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

*Protective.* The protective function serves to defend the ego by reducing negative affect associated with guilt for being more fortunate than others or loneliness. Individuals motivated by the protective function view volunteer service as a means to “work through [their] own personal problems” and “a good escape” (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

*Enhancement.* The final function, enhancement, increases positive affect by providing a means to self-development and growth. Volunteers motivated by the enhancement function

engage in volunteer service to make themselves feel more important and needed. The VFI contains items such as “volunteering increases my self-esteem” and “volunteering makes me feel better about myself” to measure a volunteer’s enhancement motivation (Clary et al., 1998, p. 1520).

**General trends.** While some research studies have departed from the norm, numerous studies have yielded results that illuminate a general trend in volunteer motivations. Values, understanding, and enhancement are the three functions that appear to be the most salient motivators (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Chapman & Morley, 1999; Clary et al., 1998; Planalp & Trost, 2009). Using a middle-aged sample, Clary et al. (1998) found that participants ranked values as the most important motive, followed by the understanding function, and esteem function. After administering the VFI to a sample of 128 volunteers from a non-profit organization in Arizona, Allison et al. (2002) replicated the results of Clary and his colleagues. These findings were also replicated in studies involving volunteers from an AIDS organization (Omoto & Snyder, 1995) and human services agencies (Okun & Schultz, 2003). Rokach and Wanklyn (2009) surveyed 21 volunteers from the Hospital for Sick Children in Canada and yielded results that departed from the general trend. While they also found that values and understanding were the top two motives, they discovered that career, instead of esteem, was the third most important motive. A possible explanation for this is the large proportion of students in their sample as students may be more inclined than retirees to volunteer to fulfill career functions. In general, the protective function rarely ranks as an important motivator (Allison et al., 2002; Chapman & Morley, 1999; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). Thus, the literature seems to indicate the salience of values, understanding, and esteem as salient volunteer motivators. In

contrast, social, enhancement, and protective seem to be less important motivators, with the protective function ranking as the least important in most studies.

*Practical implications of the VFI.* The development of the VFI has two important practical implications: it can aid in recruitment efforts and decrease turnover rates. First, it allows organizations to find out potential volunteers' functional motivations and can thus aid in recruitment efforts. Before developing the VFI, Clary et al. (1994) examined whether messages that matched an individual's motivation had a more persuasive impact than messages that were irrelevant to an individual's motivation. 170 college students were given questionnaires to determine their underlying motivations and then asked to watch a video message promoting a type of volunteer activity. A few video messages were created, each appealing to a different function. Results illustrated how messages that matched with an individual's motivation were more persuasive than mismatched messages. Students who saw a message that appealed to their personal motivations were more likely to view the message as influential and indicated greater intentions to volunteer in the future. Thus, this suggests that promotional campaigns to recruit volunteers would be more successful if their messages matched potential volunteers' motivational functions. After the creation of the VFI, Clary et al. (1998) sought to replicate their earlier findings on the persuasive power of matching messages with volunteer motivations. In the fourth of their six-series study, Clary and his colleagues created six promotional brochures for a volunteer fair, each brochure corresponding to a particular function in the VFI (Clary et al., 1998). 59 students participating in the study completed the VFI and ranked each of the six brochures according to their persuasiveness in motivating the students to volunteer. Clary et al. (1998) found that brochures that matched a student's motivation were ranked as more effective than mismatched brochures. Therefore, the key to successful promotional campaigns is

identifying the specific motivation of potential volunteers and creating messages that match these motivations. Organizations could utilize the VFI to ascertain the motivations of potential volunteers and, based on their results, strategically create promotional campaigns that focus on appealing to these motivations.

In addition to improving recruitment efforts, the VFI also provides organizations with the means to determine the functional motivations of their existing volunteers and can thus decrease turnover rates by matching tasks performed to volunteers' motivational orientations. In the last two of their six-series studies, Clary et al. (1998) surveyed volunteers to investigate the relation between matching volunteer roles with their functional motives and volunteer satisfaction. Findings demonstrate that volunteers who performed roles that matched their functional motives were more satisfied with volunteer service and reported a greater likelihood of sustaining their service. Thus, to reduce volunteer turnover rates, organizations should utilize the VFI to determine the motivations of their volunteers and attempt to match the type of roles they fill with their personal motivations.

***Flaws in the VFI and alternative measures.*** While the VFI represents an exceedingly useful tool, it is not without its flaws. Its use of a Likert-rating scale limits volunteer responses. A potential alternative is the use of an open-ended probe, which allows organizations to identify functional motives among potential volunteers that are not included in the VFI. In addition to using the VFI, Allison et al. (2002) used an open-ended probe, interviewing 195 volunteers from a non-profit organization called Make A Difference. Their survey asked respondents to list their motivations for engaging in volunteer work. Findings demonstrate the existence of three additional motives: religiosity, enjoyment, and team building. Another study by Rokach and Wanklyn (2009) also used open-ended probes and supported the existence of the enjoyment

motive, but not religiosity and team building. Volunteers in their sample indicated viewing volunteerism as a means to “have fun and enjoy themselves” (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009, p. 19). However, Allison et al. (2002) found that while the VFI predicted frequency of volunteering, the open-ended probes did not. This may have resulted from their study’s low response rate and the homogeneity of their sample. In general, volunteer recruiters would be wise to use both the VFI and open-probes to assess volunteer motives.

### **Chapter III: Gender Differences**

While studies have shown general trends in volunteer motivation, there appears to be some important gender differences. These gender differences have substantial practical implications. For example, recruitment messages could be tailored to males or females, according to which functional motives appear to be most salient to each gender. This chapter seeks to examine these gender differences and possible explanations for these differences.

#### **Differences**

Demographic statistics demonstrate that a majority of the volunteer work force is composed of women and highly educated individuals (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). In general, women seem to be more inclined to engage in volunteerism. In several studies concerning gender differences in volunteer motivation, researchers have found that women score higher on most, if not all, functions than men (Chapman & Morley, 1999; Fletcher & Major, 2004). Chapman and Morley (1999) administered the VFI to a sample of 85 college students and found that women rated each motive higher than men, implying that they are more motivated to volunteer than men. Fletcher and Major (2004) replicated these results with a sample of 51 medical students. While

these researchers found that women and men rated the motives in the same relative order, with values, understanding, and enhancement appearing as the most salient motivating factors, women rated each of the six motivators higher than men, again suggesting that women are more inclined to volunteer than men (Fletcher & Major, 2004).

On the contrary, several researchers have found that men tend to favor instrumental motivators, such as the career function, while women tend to favor concern-related motivators, such as values (Prentice & Carlsmith, 2000; Switzer, Switzer, Stukas, & Baker, 1999). After surveying 40 medical students in a Maternal Care Program, Switzer et al. (1999) found that female medical students rated the values function and the enhancement function significantly higher than male medical students. These researchers also found that male medical students rated the career function higher than female students, even though the difference lacked statistical significance (Switzer et al., 1999). Despite the higher rating of the career function by men than by women, the relative order of functions were similar to other studies. The values, understanding, and enhancement functions were the most important motivators (Switzer et al., 1999).

Findings suggest that while men may rate the career function higher than women, both genders are still most motivated by the values, understanding, and enhancement functions. Thus, messages aimed at recruiting volunteers need not be tailored to the specific gender of the population. Messages targeting both women and men should focus on emphasizing the opportunities to express altruistic values, to learn new skills, and to engage in self-development through volunteerism.

### **Explaining Gender Differences: The Social Role Theory of Helping**

In attempting to rationalize the different motivating factors between male and female volunteers, Switzer et al. (1999) utilized the social role theory of helping. According to the social role theory of helping, males and females are, from early stages in life, socialized to help in different ways (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Men are socialized into heroic and chivalrous roles while females are socialized into nurturing and caring roles. Therefore, the theory posits that their helping behavior would mirror their respective roles.

The social role theory of helping has two important implications. If women are more inclined to volunteer due to being socialized into nurturing roles from young, one would expect women to be more involved in long-term helping behavior such as volunteerism while men would be more involved in short-term helping behavior, which are excluded from the definition of volunteerism. The second implication of the theory is that women would rank higher in concern-related motives, such as the values function, while men would rank higher in short-term, instrumental motives, such as the career function.

While the social role theory has extensive support pertaining to its two most significant implications, it does not hold true for certain populations. The first assertion that women are expected to be more involved in long-term helping behavior is proven true by examining the typical demographic statistics of volunteers: women outnumber men in the volunteer work force. The second implication is also supported by numerous studies. For example, researchers have found that in a sample of medical students, women rated most motives higher than men did (Fletcher & Major, 2004; Switzer et al., 1999). These findings imply that even in a profession that emphasizes helping behavior, such as medicine, women are more motivated to help, or volunteer, than men. However, these findings do not hold true in certain populations. A study by Penner and Finkelstein (1998) demonstrated that in a population of AIDS volunteers, men scored

higher in altruistic functions than did women, suggesting that women are more altruistic than men. In general, however, the social role theory of helping provides a useful framework for analyzing the gender differences in volunteer motivation.

#### **Chapter IV: Age Differences**

Another important demographic divide in volunteer motivation is age. Young individuals appear to be principally motivated by different factors from older individuals. This chapter will investigate the age differences in volunteer motivation and potential explanations for these differences.

#### **Differences**

Numerous researchers have demonstrated that older volunteers tend to be motivated principally by altruistic motives, otherwise known as the values function (Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005; Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Okun, 1994; Okun et al., 1998; Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000). Younger volunteers, although also strongly motivated by altruistic motives, often ranked the career, social, and understanding functions higher than do older volunteers (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Finkelstein et al., 2005; Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Omoto et al., 2000; Planalp & Trost, 2009; Roessler, Carter, Campbell, & MacLeod, 1999). These results have been widely replicated both in studies utilizing volunteers from hospices and volunteers from other non-profit organizations.

Studies investigating age differences in volunteer motivation often use a sample of hospice volunteers as volunteering at a hospice provides various opportunities for individuals to develop social bonds. Hospice volunteers are also typically composed of older adults, who are

usually underrepresented in other volunteer organizations. Planalp and Trost (2009) used a sample of 351 hospice volunteers to investigate age differences in volunteer motivation. A majority of the sample was well-educated women over the age of 50 with relatively high household incomes. These researchers found although volunteers were most strongly motivated by the values function, younger volunteers tended to be more highly motivated by the career function than older volunteers (Planalp & Trost, 2009). Another study using a sample of 144 hospice volunteers with average age of 50 found that older volunteers were more likely to be retired and to be motivated principally by the values function (Omoto et al., 2000). Younger volunteers, on the other hand, tended to have greater social motivation (Omoto et al., 2000). Roessler et al. (1999) found that although younger volunteers were strongly motivated by the understanding and career functions, they engaged in volunteerism mainly because of a desire to help others, implying that people harbor mixed motivations. Yet another study involving hospice volunteers deduced that the values function was high and the career function was low in a sample that consisted mainly of older adults (Finkelstein et al., 2005). These researchers used a sample of 277 hospice volunteers, of which 41 percent was over the age of 65 (Finkelstein et al., 2005). Not only did they find that the values function was the most salient and the career function was least important, they also found that the career function correlated negatively with age. (Finkelstein et al., 2005). These findings imply that as individuals become older, the career function becomes a decreasingly important motivator for volunteering.

Similar findings are replicated in studies concerning volunteers in other organizations. Okun (1994) used the Marriott Seniors Volunteerism Study to analyze the effect of motives on frequency of volunteering by older adults and found that older adults reported being more motivated by the values function than by the understanding or protective functions. Another

study by Okun and Schultz (2003) involved administering the VFI to a sample of 523 volunteers from the Habitat for Humanity. These researchers found that the career and understanding functions decreased with age, replicating the results of previous researchers (Okun & Schultz, 2003). Frisch and Gerrard (1981) administered a 13-item questionnaire to a sample of 455 Red Cross volunteers with a mean age of 50 years. These researchers found that the leading motive for both younger and older volunteers alike was the values function (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). When compared to older volunteers, however, younger volunteers ranked self-serving motives, such as the career and social functions, higher (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). Older volunteers, on the other hand, placed a greater emphasis on the values function (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). This particular study was unique in the sense that researchers compared older volunteers' responses to questions concerning current motives and to retrospective questions concerning youth motives (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981). In general, older volunteers reported the values function to be more salient to their adult service than to their service as youths (Frisch & Gerrard, 1981).

### **Explaining Age Differences: The Socioemotional Selectivity Theory**

Several theories have been put forth by researchers to explain age differences in volunteer motivation, the most prominent of which is the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory. People of different ages are faced with various challenges and concerns. Volunteerism is a means for individuals to address some of these concerns (Omoto et al., 2000). As people become older, their concerns change and they come to ascribe different meanings to their roles as volunteers. These meanings, in turn, affect their principal motivations to volunteer. The Socioemotional Selectivity Theory seeks to explain the tendency for older volunteers to be motivated by the values function and the tendency for younger volunteers to be motivated more by the social, career, and understanding functions.

Central to the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory is the notion that the perception of time plays an essential role in an individual's actions (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990; Fung, Carstensen, & Lang, 2001). When an individual views time as open-ended, goals that involve acquiring knowledge and experience are emphasized. However, when an individual views time as limited, goals that involve emotional gratification are prioritized (Carstensen et al., 1999). In such instances, individuals shift their focus to the present, leading to an adjustment of their goals. The theory further suggests that as individuals become older, they are more aware that time is limited. Since goals directly influence motivations and older people are more concerned with emotionally gratifying goals while younger people are more focused on knowledge-related goals, these differences result in varying volunteer motivations between younger and older volunteers.

The Socioemotional Selectivity Theory provides an explanation for the prominence of the values function in older volunteers and the importance of social, career, and understanding functions in younger volunteers. Since older volunteers are more concerned with emotionally gratifying goals, it follows that they are highly motivated by altruism and concern for others (Fung et al., 2001). Younger volunteers, who are more focused on knowledge-related goals such as education and occupational achievements, are motivated more strongly by the career and understanding functions than older volunteers. Perhaps less intuitive is the salience of the social function in younger volunteers. If older volunteers are highly motivated by emotionally gratifying goals, one would expect them to be highly motivated by the social function. However, older volunteers tend to prefer smaller social networks that are more intimate because interactions with more intimate counterparts often afford higher emotional gratification (Carstensen et al., 1999). Younger volunteers, on the other hand, who place an emphasis on the

future and broadening their experiences, tend to have bigger social networks that are less intimate.

The Socioemotional Selectivity Theory has extensive support from various researchers. Carstensen et al. (1999) found that older people have smaller, but more intimate, social networks. These researchers also found that while contact with acquaintances decreased, contact with intimate others remained stable or increased over time (Carstensen et al., 1999). Another study sought to test the hypothesis that older people's social networks contain less acquaintances, which provides support for the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, in populations of African Americans and European Americans (Fung et al., 2001). In both ethnic groups, researchers found that older people reported having numerous intimate social partners but few acquaintances in their social networks (Fung et al., 2001). These findings suggest that older people become more selective in their investments in social relationships due to their perception of time as limited, thus supporting the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory as an explanation for differences in volunteer motivation. Fredrickson and Carstensen (1990) provide further support for the theory by surveying 280 residents in San Francisco and Los Angeles by telephone. Proceeding under the assumption that older people focus on finding meaning in existing intimate relationships instead of creating new ones, which explains older volunteers' low emphasis on the social function, Fredrickson and Carstensen (1990) found that older people chose familiar social partners more often than do younger people. Even in cases where young people anticipate interaction with new individuals to produce a negative affect, their interest in novelty and experience still leads them to choose to interact with new social partners.

Although several studies have yielded contrary results, there are several explanations for these exceptions. Okun and Schultz (2003) found that older volunteers ranked the social function

higher than did younger volunteers. In this case, Okun and Schultz (2003) suggest that younger volunteers did not have as strong social motivations due to their existing investments in their family and occupational social networks. Perhaps the fear of facing retirement and relocation leads older volunteers to replenish their social networks by means of volunteerism (Okun & Schultz, 2003).

## **Chapter V:**

### **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivational Orientations**

This chapter seeks to examine the functional motivation theory and the six functions suggested by Clary et al. (1998) in the context of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations. After a brief definition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations, this chapter will consider the relations between motivational orientations and functional motives. Finally, it will discuss the implications of motivational orientations on recruiting and sustaining volunteers.

#### **Functional Motives in the Context of Motivational Orientations**

Intrinsically motivated behavior involves engaging in an activity for the satisfaction, or enjoyment inherent in performing the activity (Finkelstien, 2009). On the contrary, extrinsic motivation involves performing an activity to obtain a separable outcome (Finkelstien, 2009). An individual motivated by extrinsic motivators engages in an activity because it contains instrumental, instead of intrinsic, value (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations play an essential role in volunteerism. An individual's motivational orientation may provide an indication of the functional motives that are most salient to them (Finkelstien, 2009). Finkelstien (2009) categorized the six functions into internal and external motives, with the values, understanding, social, enhancement, and

protective functions constituting the internal motives and the career function being the only external motive. Finkelstien (2009) administered the VFI to 287 undergraduates in a university in southeastern United States to determine their most salient functions. To establish the students' motivational orientation, Finkelstien (2009) used the Work Preference Inventory. Finkelstien (2009) found that higher intrinsic motivational orientation correlated significantly with the five internal motives for helping while extrinsic motivational orientation correlated significantly with the external motive for helping, otherwise known as the career function.

### **Practical Implications of Motivational Orientations**

There are several practical implications of possessing knowledge of potential volunteers' motivational orientations. Since functional motives correlated with motivational orientations, recruiters may choose to use either the VFI or the WPI or both to determine potential volunteers' motivational orientations. Knowing volunteers' motivational orientations are useful in determining potential rewards and structure of non-profit organizations.

Strategies that best fit intrinsically oriented individuals de-emphasize tangible rewards and emphasize intrinsic rewards. Deci (1972) found that in a population of intrinsically motivated individuals, external rewards such as money, awards, and prizes tend to decrease intrinsic motivation. Verbal reinforcements, on the other hand, increase intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1972). Another study by Deci, Ryan, and Koestner (1999), a meta-analysis of 128 experiments exploring the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation, yielded similar results. These researchers found that tangible rewards had a significant negative effect on intrinsic motivation while verbal rewards had a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). These findings suggest that intrinsic motivation may be reduced by rewards

that depend on task, rather than performance. In the context of volunteerism, individuals may prefer praise when deserved rather than monetary rewards based on completion of tasks. On the contrary, extrinsically oriented individuals are not affected by extrinsic rewards or intrinsic rewards such as verbal reinforcements. The defining factor in extrinsically motivated individuals is the possibility of achieving external goals such as career advancement and stronger social ties (Deci et al., 1999).

Motivational orientations also have implications on the policy of mandatory volunteerism. At present, mandatory volunteerism is a common occurrence in most schools. While seemingly beneficial, mandatory volunteerism may have the harmful consequence of reducing individuals' intrinsic motivation to volunteer, thus reducing the potential volunteer work force. Stukas, Snyder, and Clary (1999) investigated the effects of mandatory volunteerism on future intentions to volunteer and found that subjecting college students to mandatory volunteerism reduced their intentions to volunteer in the future. On the contrary, students who perceived having less external pressure on volunteering reported having stronger intentions to volunteer in the future. Similar effects were replicated in a population of blood donors. Callero, Howard, and Piliavin (1987) found that the role-person merger is strongest when social norms are weak. Role-person merger occurs when an individual perceives a certain role, such as volunteering, as an essential aspect of the self. Stronger role-person mergers correlate with more volunteerism acts, in this case blood donation, in the future. Individuals who perceived social norms, or external factors, as high, exhibited lower role-person mergers and thus, lower intentions of donating blood in the future. In other words, when individuals perceived higher external pressure on performing a volunteer activity, they were less inclined to perform the

activity. Thus, organizations should prevent mandatory volunteerism as it tends to decrease intrinsic motivation and future intentions to volunteer.

## **Chapter VI:**

### **Conclusion**

This paper sought to investigate volunteer motivations, age differences, gender differences, and motivational orientations, with a particular focus on the functional motivation theory. A review of this paper seems to indicate certain implications for recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Using Clary et al.'s (1998) model of six functional motives, a substantial body of research has shown that volunteers are primarily motivated by the desire to help those less fortunate than themselves and to express altruistic values (Allison et al., 2002; Chapman & Morley, 1999; Clary et al., 1998; Planalp & Trost, 2009). Although there are differences in functional motives among different genders and age groups, individuals commonly report the values function as the most salient motivating factor. For example, females tend to rank all six motives higher than males, suggesting that females are more inclined to volunteer than men (Chapman & Morley, 1999; Fletcher & Major, 2004). On the contrary, some researchers have found that males tend to rank the career function higher than females (Prentice & Carlsmith, 2000; Switzer et al., 1999). However, even in such cases, males reported being most motivated by the values function. The differences between age groups exhibit a similar pattern. While younger volunteers ranked the career, social, and understanding functions higher than do older volunteers, they still regarded the values function as the primary motivating factor (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Finkelstein et al., 2005; Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Omoto et al., 2000; Planalp &

Trost, 2009; Roessler et al., 1999). Thus, both younger and older volunteers alike consider the values function as the most prominent motivator.

The most ideal situation would permit volunteer recruiters to administer the VFI to potential volunteers to assess their functional motives, thus allowing to tailor recruitment messages to fit each individual. However, due to resource and time constraints, a more general approach needs to be implemented. According to existing research, the most beneficial strategy would be to create recruitment messages that emphasize the values, understanding, and enhancement functions, which represent the top three most important motivators in a majority of the general population. Regardless of the population of potential volunteers, recruitment messages should express the opportunities afforded by volunteering to express altruistic values and humanitarian concern, to learn new skills and knowledge, and to engage in self-development and growth.

Furthermore, research suggests that individuals continue to volunteer to the extent that the activity fulfills the individuals' functional motives (Finkelstien, 2009; Mowen & Sujan, 2005). Taking this into consideration, organizations would be wise to match their volunteers' functional motives to the activities that they are asked to perform. In order to do so, organizations may administer the VFI to their existing volunteer work force every few months and matching the most salient motives to the type of work each individual does. For example, volunteers who indicate that their primary motivator is the social function should be assigned tasks that involve interacting with people instead of administrative work.

In addition, motivational orientation should be taken into account when rewarding existing volunteers. While counterintuitive, intrinsically motivated volunteers should not be

rewarded by extrinsic rewards, such as monetary compensation or awards, as these rewards often reduce their intrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated volunteers, on the other hand, can be motivated to volunteer further by extrinsic rewards such as career advancement. To prevent further deterioration of the volunteer work force, organizations should seek to prevent mandatory volunteerism in schools and universities as these policies tend to decrease future intentions to volunteer.

With the currently increasing demand for and declining number of volunteers, it is imperative that organizations invest time and resources into broadening their knowledge of recruiting and retaining volunteers. Although time consuming, organizations should focus on volunteer satisfaction to ensure future intentions to volunteer. While useful studies have provided the useful and necessary ways in which the volunteer work force can be increased and maintained, there is still a need for further research to expand the knowledge base on volunteer motivations.

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