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Volunteerism Research: A Review Essay

John Wilson[1]

Abstract

I use a volunteer process model to organize a review of recent research on volunteerism, focusing mainly on journal articles reporting survey research results. Scholars from several different disciplines and countries have contributed to a body of work that is becoming more theoretically sophisticated and methodologically rigorous. The first stage of the process model—antecedents of volunteering—continues to attract the most attention but more and more scholars are paying attention to the third stage, the consequences of volunteering, particularly with respect to health benefits. The middle stage—the experience of volunteering—remains somewhat neglected, particularly the influence of the social context of volunteer work on the volunteer's satisfaction and commitment.

Keywords

volunteers, motivations, resources, experiences, consequences

In the last quarter of a century the study of volunteer work has assumed its rightful place at the core of the social sciences, no longer relegated to the status of a peripheral and inconsequential leisure pursuit or dismissed as an oddity in a world largely given over to the pursuit of self-interest. Since the publication of Smith's (1975) initial assessment of the study of "voluntary participation," theories have become more sophisticated, methods more refined, and data more abundant. Articles on volunteering are to be found in an ever-expanding range of scholarly journals.

In this review article I describe the research on volunteerism published since 2008 when Marc Musick and I concluded our work on *Volunteers: A Social Profile*, with the addition of a few studies we overlooked at the time. I do not attempt to give thorough descriptions of every study but focus instead on what I believe to be the most interesting

[1]Duke University, Durham, NC, USA

Corresponding Author:
John Wilson, Department of Sociology, Duke University, Box 90088, Durham, NC 27708, USA
Email: jwils@soc.duke.edu

and promising ideas each contains. In this sense the review is entirely data driven. I only write about what has been written and published. This accounts for the somewhat uneven attention paid to various subjects. I have omitted articles I judged to be unoriginal, substandard in research design or data, or of limited generalizability. No doubt I have also omitted some articles because I am unaware of them. I have also been obliged by space limitations to impose severe constraints on the range of material covered. I focus primarily on studies where the individual is the unit of analysis, with brief forays into studies where ecological analysis is being used to explain the behavior of individuals. The result is a distinct bias in favor of survey research. I do not attempt to cover the voluminous literature on nonprofit organizations, the management and financing of volunteer workers, public policy discussions of the third sector and so on. Finally, I do not delve deeply into theoretical discussions of why people volunteer nor pass judgments on particular perspectives on the topic. Excellent recent reviews and assessments of theories of volunteering can be found in Haski-Leventhal (2009b), Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy (2010), and Snyder and Omoto (2008).

When writing *Volunteers*, Marc Musick and I used a "volunteer process model" to order our material. This is not a theoretical model but simply a logical way to order material. It consists of three stages, beginning with the antecedents of volunteering, followed by the experiences of volunteering and concluding with the consequences of volunteering for the volunteer (Snyder & Omoto, 1992). This review follows the same sequence. However, before turning to antecedents of volunteering it is necessary to take a brief look at recent discussions of definitional and methodological issues.

An excellent extended treatment of definitional issues, illustrated with well-chosen examples, is to be found in Snyder and Omoto (2008, pp. 3-5). They define volunteer work as consisting of "freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time, are engaged in without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations, and that are performed on behalf of causes or individuals who desire assistance." As they carefully note, most of the terms in this definition are imprecise because in the real world whether or not an act qualifies as volunteering is a matter of degree, an argument stated previously by Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth (1996). Particularly troublesome is the attachment of volunteer work to formal organizations, which means that communities or countries where the infrastructure of nongovernmental organizations outside the private sector is poorly developed will by definition have fewer volunteers. One solution is to broaden the definition, as in the first nationally representative survey of volunteering in Mexico, where no mention is made of volunteering being provided to or through an organization: volunteering is defined as unpaid help given to another person not a member of one's family (Verduzco, 2010, p. 49). The disadvantage of this kind of adjustment is that comparisons between countries become difficult.

It is to the credit of scholars working in this specialized field that a wide range of disciplinary approaches can be found and that interdisciplinary research is quite common. Psychological theories tend to emphasize intrapsychic phenomena such as

personality traits, self-concepts, and motivation. Sociological theories focus on individual sociodemographic characteristics such as race, gender, and social class, and ecological variables such as social networks and community characteristics. Economic theories treat volunteerism as a form of unpaid labor, consuming resources and motivated by the promise of rewards. Each set of theories has its own strengths and weaknesses but, in ways that can only be hinted at here, progress is being made in educating scholars how insights from other disciplines can enrich their own work. For example, the psychological study of motivation can be embedded in a sociological framework that explores the origins of motives in social structures or the economic study of rewards and costs of volunteerism can be embedded in a psychological theory that subjective dispositions, such as empathy, condition the rationality of certain behaviors, or in a sociological theory that factors in circles of friends or memberships in formal organizations as moderators of costs and benefits.

In the context of survey research—the main focus of this review—one of the most important methodological issues facing scholars is the accuracy of the reports of volunteer work. Some suspect that rate estimates are too low because people do not recall their true volunteer contributions accurately. To correct for this they recommend prompting the respondent with suggestions about various examples of volunteer work, thus producing more reliable estimates (Cnaan, Jones, Dickin, & Salamon, 2010, p. 8). Others argue that multiple prompts simply increase pressure on the respondent to give positive answers (Wuthnow, 1995, p. 25). Unfortunately, objective measures of volunteer contributions against which to check self-reports are rare. In a study of volunteer firefighters, Carpenter and Meyer (2010, p. 917) were able to compare the volunteers' own reports on their responsiveness to calls with their department's official records: "a large majority (91%) of firefighters substantially over-estimates hours." It is likely this kind of overestimation is quite common.

Aside from positive response bias, estimates of volunteerism are also biased by low survey response rates, as shown in a comparison of data gathered in the United States Current Population Survey (CPS) with those gathered from a subsample of the CPS respondents who also agreed to keep diaries for the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). The CPS-documented volunteer rate of those selected for ATUS participation and who "volunteered" to keep diaries was 35.5% compared to 20% for those who were selected to keep diaries but refused to participate, fairly convincing evidence that people who respond to surveys are more likely to be volunteers. The overall lesson is clear: the lower the response rate in a survey, the higher the *apparent* volunteer rate (Abraham, Helms, & Presser, 2009). With response rates to social surveys declining this is quite a serious problem. A useful summary of these and other survey method issues can be found in Cnaan et al., (2010).

Antecedents

Whether made explicit or not, the search for the antecedents of volunteerism is a search for the causes of volunteerism.

Subjective Dispositions

Subjective disposition is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of concepts (such as personality traits, motives, attitudes, norms, and values) that have one thing in common: they all refer to the way people interpret themselves and the world around them—hence the term "subjective." They are called dispositions because they indicate a level of "readiness" to act in a certain way in response to appropriate stimuli.

In the past, a number of studies have linked personality traits to volunteerism. This continues to be a fruitful line of investigation. The trait most often associated with doing volunteer work is extraversion, followed by agreeableness (Bekkers, 2005; Omoto, Snyder, & Hackett, 2010, p. 1719). It is not yet clear exactly *why* extraverts are more likely to volunteer. One possibility is they are more likely to belong to voluntary associations or other kinds of secondary groups and for this reason are more likely to be recruited for volunteer work (Okun, Pugliese, & Rook, 2007, p. 1474). The theory that personality traits are linked to volunteering through memberships is tested by Atkins, Hart, and Donnelly (2005) in a study of American teenagers. They find that those with a more "resilient" personality (high in emotional regulation, socially skilled, and tending toward positive emotionality) are more likely to volunteer but this is not explained by a higher rate of memberships.

From the research on personality we expect gregarious and extraverted people to be able to handle with greater assurance the awkward social situations in which volunteers often find themselves. It stands to reason, then, that people who suffer from social phobias or chronic but not clinically serious social anxiety would be less inclined to volunteer. This is precisely what Handy and Cnaan (2007) find in their convenience sample of Americans, among whom the 28% who were not volunteering scored higher on the social anxiety scale. Those who did volunteer were more likely to have been persuaded by a friend or acquaintance to get involved if they suffered from social anxiety. This finding is consonant with an older body of research showing that low self-esteem and other negative self-perceptions can inhibit volunteer work.

It is intuitively plausible that empathic people, those who are adept at putting themselves in the shoes of others, are more likely to become volunteers. Using General Social Survey (GSS) data, Einolf (2008) showed that empathic concern (e.g. "I often have tender, concerned feeling for people less fortunate than me") is positively associated with volunteering, but a later study using the same data indicated that empathy had only an indirect influence on volunteering. In this case, Wilhelm and Bekkers (2010, p. 17) added to the empathy model a variable called "principle of care," describing the moral position that one should help those in need. This principle totally mediated the effect of empathy on volunteering: empathy "works" only if it invokes a feeling of obligation. This is an interesting indication that emotion alone is insufficient to motivate volunteerism.

The feeling of solidarity has been somewhat neglected in volunteerism studies, but it plays an important motivating role, especially in cases of volunteering for political organizations or in response to crises. After the World Trade Center attacks, the

strongest predictors of whether a person volunteered to help victims were as follows: living within 10 miles of the World Trade Center; knowing a victim; experiencing sorrow (but not anger); feeling personal responsibility for aiding others and having volunteered prior to the event (Beyerlein & Sikkink, 2008, p. 196). In Mexico, volunteer work is usually referred to as act of solidarity because it is seen as a way of acting for the benefit of others or doing something for someone else that "presupposes the existence of a community to which one has specific duties" (Butcher, 2010, p. 18). Solidarity as a disposition to volunteer might indeed be more common in traditional societies but, generally speaking, when solidarity is the trigger for helping others it casts a slightly different light on the activity. It becomes less a matter of providing utility to others and more a way of expressing a desire to connect with others. The strength of the feeling of solidarity is likely to be affected by the size and structure of the group to which one belongs or aspires to belong: the larger the group, the less likely are people to be attached to it or feel responsible for its welfare. Thus a study of volunteers for credit unions in Northern Ireland found that it was in the smaller establishments that volunteers were most likely to feeling a responsibility to donate their time (Ward & McKillop, 2011).

The desire to express or strengthen a sense of personal identity also furnishes a disposition to volunteer when this activity is appropriate. Indeed, for some people, being a "helper" is their most salient identity and naturally leads to their involvement in volunteer work (Matsuba, Hart, & Atkins, 2007). Volunteering can also be a way to deal with identity problems. For example, people who are unable to find work because of age, disability, or ill health, can escape the stigma attached to these statuses by performing volunteer work (Baines & Hardill, 2008, p. 313). For Canadian women on welfare volunteer work is a way to fight the stigma of being "undeserving" and "parasitic" (Fuller, Kershaw, & Pulkingham, 2008).

Identity theory is probably better at explaining commitment to volunteering than why people take up volunteering in the first place. For example, young Spanish volunteers who identify strongly with the volunteer role are more likely to express an intention to volunteer in the future (Marta & Pozzi, 2008). Another Spanish study found that role identity as a volunteer helped predict volunteer service duration (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007). But a recent article has questioned whether there really is a single volunteer role identity, given the diverse mix of volunteer activities. In interviews with a small group of Finnish volunteers, Gronlund (2010) discerned five different role identities: (a) the influencer—fighting injustice and wanting to make the world a better place, an activist, a nonconformist, serious, values driven; (b) the helper—benevolent, compassionate, bringing comfort, understanding; (c) faith-based—bearing witness, a calling, expressing religiosity; (d) community—value of communality, loyalty, solidarity, generativity; (e) success—occupying positions of trust, leadership, being a good citizen, paying back, taking responsibility, using talents.

Attachment theory, which predicts that only when people feel reasonably secure themselves will they invest time and energy in dealing with others' needs

and sufferings (Bowlby, 1969), has been used rarely in volunteer research. This is unfortunate because it makes sense to believe people are more likely to reach out to others if they are self-confident and self-assured. According to the theory, a person's position on the attachment avoidance dimension indicates the extent to which he or she distrusts another's goodwill and strives to maintain independence and self-reliance. People who avoid attachment are unlikely recruits to volunteerism. In one study Dutch undergraduates were given a battery of questions to measure the strength of their attachment anxiety and avoidance. Attachment avoidance was significantly associated with lower participation in volunteer activities (Erez, Mikulincer, van Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 2008).

Many psychologists use motivational theories to explain volunteering. The best known of these adopts the functionalist viewpoint that reasons, purposes, needs, goals, plans, and motivations impel actions. The Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) identifies a finite set of motives that volunteer work can help satisfy. A description of these motives and a review of recent research using them can be found in Mannino, Snyder, and Omoto (2011). The VFI continues to prove its usefulness in volunteer research. A recent study found that, after 3 months of volunteering, only the values motive was related to time donated but after 12 months the understanding and enhancement motives were the strongest predictors, suggesting that people take up volunteering for value-driven reasons but the amount of their contribution has more to do with self-related motivations (Finkelstein, 2008, p. 1355). In her clever study Finkelstein (2008) for the first time combines the insights of both role identity theory and motivational theory. The strongest role identity was shown by volunteers motivated by understanding and enhancement needs. Another interesting topic of research is to find out why individuals vary in how important they rate particular motives for volunteering. In a study (limited to undergraduate students) Finkelstein (2010) found that those who expressed support for the value of collectivism were more likely to rate values and social motives highly. Collectivists were no more likely to volunteer than individualists but their reasons for doing so were different. Motivation can also be linked to the way in which people volunteer. A study of college students in 12 countries found that those who were motivated by career considerations (a popular but not the most often cited motivation) were more likely to engage in "episodic" than regular volunteer work (Handy et al., 2010).

The VFI has been criticized on a number of grounds (Shye, 2010). Overall, the scheme can be faulted for being eclectic with no clear theoretical basis for the functions or their overall number; the functions cannot be shown to be exhaustive or exclusive; and they are not all at the same level of generality. And learning that a person volunteers because she wants to help others begs the question of why she wants to help others in the first place. The way people reply to motives questions in surveys is also subject to desirability bias. Presenting respondents with a list of likely motives is likely to suggest reasons for volunteering that had not occurred to the respondent before. Asking people to identify the most important of the motives or to rate motives on a scale of importance obscures the fact that motivations can vary in their salience from one situation to another.

Economists assume that people are motivated by self-interest in rewards, either in the form of utilitarian goods such as business contacts and skills (as in the "investment" model) or psychological rewards (as in the "consumption" model). Although it goes against the grain of thinking of volunteer work as altruistic, it is undeniable that in many cases people volunteer for an activity only if it is in their interest to do so. In an ingenious comparison between households with multiple children in several different schools and households with multiple children in the same school, Gee (2010) found that having children in the same school (i.e., having more at stake) raised the propensity to volunteer for the school by 13 percentage points. Interests can also explain when people are most likely to accept an invitation to volunteer. If it comes from a social superior the cost of refusal is higher and the chance of acceptance goes up (Bekkers, 2010). An inventive test of the consumption model concerns volunteer firefighters. Those most responsive to emergency calls were found to have purchased a vanity plate displaying their status as firefighters. Being seen to do good works was obviously valuable to them (Carpenter & Meyer, 2010). Volunteering to make friends or social contacts also fits the consumption model. Prouteau and Wolf (2008) found that volunteers have more friends than nonvolunteers. This was not a result of self-selection into volunteering: the number of friends had no effect on volunteering. Because economists assume that people are more likely to volunteer if their opportunity costs are low, they logically assume also that if people are provided with incentives to volunteer (such as coverage of expenses) they volunteer more time. An alternative view is that incentives drive out intrinsic motivations. An Italian study finds that volunteers who do not have much intrinsic motivation to volunteer contribute more time if they are given economic incentives but they contribute less time if they are given economic incentives when they have strong intrinsic motivations (Fiorello, 2011).

Any discussion of subjective dispositions must touch on the subject of religion: religious beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments are a fertile source of volunteer motivations. The influence of religion in all its forms, most potent in the United States, has been the focus of many studies of volunteerism, as reported in *Volunteers* and subsequent publications. First, we see continued attention to the way in which early religious experiences socialize people into adult volunteer roles. Youth religious involvement has a positive effect on adult community participation even when adult religious involvement is controlled. Indeed, while education is the strongest predictor of community participation, religious involvement during one's youth is a stronger predictor of adult volunteering than gender, marital status, or nativity (Perks & Haan, 2011, p. 117). Parents' religiosity is partially accountable for *how* their children get engaged in the community. American adolescents whose parents are volunteers are more likely to engage in both volunteer work and social activism, whereas youths whose parents are religious are more likely to be steered away from social activism into volunteering exclusively (Caputo, 2009). Second, the search goes on for better ways to measure religion for the purposes of tracing its influence on volunteerism. For example, teenagers were asked in a recent longitudinal study, "If you were unsure of what was right or wrong in a particular situation how would you decide what to do?"

They are then given four "moral schemas" from which to choose: do what would make you feel happy (expressive individualist); do what would help you get ahead (utilitarian individualist); follow the advice of a teacher, parent, or other adult you respect (relational); and do what you think God or scripture tells you is right (theistic). Those who chose the theistic schema were more likely to volunteer subsequently regardless of their level of volunteering before they answered the questions (Vaisey, 2009). Another way to measure religiosity is to look at spirituality, defined as frequency of contact with a larger world outside one's self, as in a feeling of deep inner peace or harmony. It would seem that these dimensions of religiosity, being less public, would have less influence on volunteerism but Einolf (2011a) detected a positive association between spirituality and volunteering, quite independent of other measures of religion. [The relationship was slightly stronger for those who were not members of congregations.] Another approach to measuring the influence of religion is to see what role religious beliefs and ideas play in "narratives" of life stories and whether these life stories have any connection with volunteerism. In 1995, a subsample of MIDUS respondents answered questions on how they interpreted morality, whether their religious beliefs had changed over time, and how important religion was to their sense of self. Einolf (2011b) coded these narratives into six themes: considering religion a central part of their sense of identity, having a religious definition of morality, equating religion with helping others, feeling that God has a mission for their lives, being inspired by Jesus's sacrifice or example, and reporting a major change or gradual increase of religious faith over time. Four of the six themes were positively related to helping others.

Human Resources

The term human resources is used to describe the individual "assets" that enable people to volunteer or condition their interest in doing volunteer work. It is because they determine access to resources and help define interests that "master statuses," such as class, race, and gender, are of such interest to volunteer scholars. For example, in the United States, women do more volunteer work than men (despite the fact that men have "a slight advantage in resources and social capital") because women "possess a large advantage in prosocial motivation" (Einolf, 2010, p. 16). People frequently cite lack of resources, such as free time, as a reason for not volunteering (Sundeen, Raskoff, et al., 2007). Resources are part of the vocabulary people use to justify not volunteering: they will say they do not know enough about the issues or the work required or that they would not be welcome because of their lack of resources (Sundeen et al., 2007, p. 295).

Gender. Survey research shows that men and women volunteer at different rates, for different hours and in different domains (*Volunteers* pp. 171-196). The question of different domains is particularly intriguing because it steps beyond the issue of "more or less" to ask whether men and women volunteer for the same kinds of activities. Eagly's (2009, p. 649) authoritative review of psychological research on this topic shows that "the size and direction of sex differences in prosocial behavior depends in part on

whether a behavior requires mainly agentic attributes associated with men or communal attributes associated with women." Regrettably, survey-based research on gender differences does not do a very good job of showing *how* this gendered division of labor is achieved and ethnographic studies are needed. An example is drawn from the world of youth sports, which is heavily reliant on volunteer labor and has only recently opened up for females. Most coaches are males, whereas women are assigned the role of "team moms," working behind the scenes making telephone calls, organizing weekly snack schedules and team parties. The selection of men into coaching positions and women into "backup roles" draws on assumptions about the interests and capabilities of women in sports and their "natural" proclivity for nurturing roles based on their position in the family (Messner & Bozada-Dea, 2009). The same gendered division of labor appears in a study of a small rural community in Iowa that uses volunteers to help promote and run tourist attractions. The mostly female volunteers described "their volunteer experience as something that they 'just do' because it is their nature as women to 'fuss' and 'help'" (Petrzelka & Mannon, 2006, p. 244). Men who manage to overcome their identities as hardened and non-caring by helping out with a breast cancer awareness campaign are often held up as special heroes whereas women's contribution is more taken for granted (Blackstone, 2009).

Race. The influence of race on volunteering in the United States is documented in *Volunteers*, but the exact pattern of association varies from study to study depending on the nature of the sample, the measure of volunteerism, and the types of controls used in analytical models, and this variation is reflected in more recent studies. Foster-Bey (2008), using data from the U.S. Current Population Survey, finds that Whites are more likely to volunteer than African Americans even after adjustments for social class, with Hispanics and Asians less likely to volunteer than either group. Rotolo, Wilson and Hughes (2010), using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, also find that Whites are more likely to volunteer than either Blacks or members of other racial/ethnic groups. Taniguchi (2011), using data from the American Time Use Survey (a subsample of the CPS) finds no net race effect on volunteering. Given the high levels of racial segregation and inequality in the United States it is questionable whether these race effects generalize to other countries. Whereas the inclusion of racial identifiers is routine in surveys of the U.S. population they are often missing from European studies (Erlinghagen, 2010; Groenou & van Tilburg, 2010; Hank, 2011) the implication being that racial/ethnic identities are insignificant in this domain. In the United Kingdom, Whites and Black African residents have very similar volunteer rates (Rochester 2006). Multivariate analyses suggest no racial differences in propensity to volunteer (Laurence, 2009).

Immigration status. It is widely believed that volunteer data from members of minority groups are underreported, not only because marginal populations are less likely to be reached by social surveys but also because their "volunteer work" is less likely to be channeled through formal organizations (Boyle & Sawyer, 2010). To some unknown degree, lower rates are due to prejudice and discrimination—people being discouraged from volunteering—but self-selection also plays a role—people

opting out of volunteering. But there is an additional reason for race or ethnic differences in volunteerism. Many minority group members are recent arrivals in the country and find the idea of doing volunteer work for strangers "inappropriate" (Sundeen et al., 2007, p. 248). Citizens who were born in the United States have higher rates of volunteering than either foreign-born citizens or noncitizens (Foster-Bey, 2008; Lopez & Marcello, 2008; Sundeen et al., 2007, p. 265). In Canada, immigrants are less likely to volunteer than the native born despite the fact that the immigrants are more religious (Kazemipur, 2011) although the difference diminishes with length of residence in the community (Lasby, 2011). In the Netherlands, recent immigrants have lower secular volunteer rates but higher religious volunteer rates (Carabain & Bekkers, 2011)

Given that members of minority groups volunteer at a lower rate do they nevertheless fit the profile of the typical volunteer? Volunteers among Chinese and Filipino immigrants look quite similar to native-born volunteers, but Asian Indians are different in that they are not more likely to volunteer if they are more educated (Sundeen et al., 2007, p. 261). These differences are intriguing, but much more research is needed on this topic because the pattern of association is so complex. Thus age of entry to the United States has a negative effect on volunteering, but only for Whites and Hispanics; citizenship has a positive effect, but only for Asians; generation has a positive effect but only for Whites and Hispanics; being married with children has a positive effect on all groups but Asians; full-time employment has a negative effect on all groups but Blacks; women volunteer more in all groups except Asians; and age has a negative effect for Whites but a positive one for Hispanics (Sundeen, Garcia, & Raskoff, 2009).

Cultural and socioeconomic barriers channel the volunteer work of recent immigrants mainly into helping members of their own group (Ecklund 2005). A study of Asian immigrants to the United States found quite high rates of volunteerism but most of the effort was on behalf of ethnic organizations targeting other Asian Americans. The more language was seen as a barrier to communication, the more likely was the volunteer effort to be directed inward; the more education the immigrant had received in the United States, the more the volunteer effort was directed at mainstream organizations (Lee & Moon, 2011). Religious institutions play a pivotal role in mobilizing volunteer work among recent immigrants. More than half the immigrants in a Canadian survey joined a religious congregation within 6 months of arriving in the country. Most were worshipping with members of the same ethnic group. Although younger members were more likely to cite work-related motivations for volunteering, most indicated reciprocity reasons ("it is my turn to help"), expressing the communal or "extended family" nature of the volunteer work in which they engaged (Handy & Greenspan, 2009, p. 957).

Education. Educational achievement is perhaps the most important "asset" as far as volunteering is concerned, at least in advanced industrial societies (Huang, van den Brink, & Groot, 2009). This is partly due to the fact that more highly educated people belong to more organizations but also to the fact that educated people have broader

horizons, as measured by attention to current affairs, higher levels of cognitive competence, and higher status jobs (Gesthuizen & Scheepers, 2010; Gesthuizen, van der Meer, & Scheepers, 2008). Most studies assume that the effect of education is uniform across social groups, but Brand (2010) shows that college completion has a greater influence on volunteering among students who, by dint of their social background, are least likely to complete college. [In addition, there is a growing body of research, which cannot be described here, looking into the possibility that the effect of education on individual volunteering is conditional on the distribution of educational qualifications in the population at large (Campbell, 2009; Gesthuizen & Scheepers, 2010).]

There is every indication that the selection effect of education is getting stronger in the United States. Between 1991 and 2005 U.S. high school seniors with plans to attend 4-year colleges showed a much steeper increase in volunteerism than seniors with plans to attend community colleges or no college at all. Although the rate of community service rose for all youth, the rate for those with 4-year college aspirations increased considerably more than the rates for those with other post–high school plans, thus increasing the class divide in volunteerism (Syvertsen, Wray-Lake, Flanagan, Osgood, & Briddell, 2011).

Work. Jobs are a prime determinant of social status, they call for or develop skills, and they cultivate attitudes that can "spill over" into leisure time activities. They can also limit time available for other pursuits. Each of these dimensions deserves continued attention from researchers interested in volunteerism.

Part-time workers are more likely to volunteer than either full-time employees or people who are not in the labor force (Einolf, 2010). Counterintuitively, among full-time workers, volunteer hours *increase* as paid work hours increase. One possible explanation (assuming that the association between long hours and professional and managerial occupations is ruled out) has to do with how workers are compensated. Full-time workers paid on an hourly basis are predisposed to assess how they spend their time in terms of the monetary returns from their choices. The more salient the economic value of time, the less of it will people give away. Time diary data confirm that hourly status is negatively related to volunteering regardless of the actual number of hours worked for pay. Significantly, being paid on an hourly basis affects only time spent volunteering, not time spent on other nonwork activities, such as sports or caring for family members (Devoe & Pfeffer, 2007, p. 783).

The nature of one's job has a "spillover effect" into the rest of one's life, as a number of studies looking at whether volunteers tend to have more rewarding jobs have shown. Recent research suggests that this effect is moderated by a number of factors. For example, the positive effect on volunteering of being a supervisor, having autonomy on the job, and having a skill-demanding job is stronger for women than men. The reasons are not clear, but women in superior jobs may feel a stronger need than men to validate their position or to use volunteer work to enhance their skills or expand their social connections (Marshall & Taniguchi, 2011).

Economic recessions inevitably raise questions about the relation between labor force participation and volunteering. Doing volunteer work can help prepare for

reentry into the labor force, as reflected in the following quotation from an unemployed British man:

> When the employer's said, "well what have you been doing?" and I said "I haven't been just sitting at home, I've been volunteering for various organizations, I've been using the skills and the knowledge that I've got, to help them." (Nichols & Ralston, 2011, p. 906)

This study found that volunteering could function in a number of ways with respect to employment: for some it was a way to prepare for reentry after redundancy, for some it was a means of gaining skills or contacts to help locate and secure better jobs, for some it was a replacement for a job lost to retirement, and for some it was a way of obtaining work satisfactions not provided by paid employment.

Time devoted to unpaid work other than volunteering does not seem to be an obstacle to volunteering: in fact, hours spent providing informal help, doing household chores, and taking care of children are correlated *positively* with volunteering (Einolf, 2010). More precise data on how other commitments constrain or enable volunteer work can be found in the American Time Use survey, which asks about activities during the preceding 24 hours. These data show that only 7.5% of diarists had volunteered the previous day. Time spent on market work and housework reduced the time devoted to volunteer work (but not time spent caring for family members), whereas time spent on educational and religious activities, with friends, and providing help informally were all positively related (Taniguchi, 2011). Similar Time Use data in the United Kingdom found only 3% having volunteered the previous day. Time spent on volunteering was negatively related to time spent on paid work, studying, and family care (Egerton & Mullan, 2008). Data on volunteering among older populations in several European countries shows positive associations with time spent on providing help informally and caring for family members suggesting, in the minds of the authors of the study, a general propensity to be active among selected groups of the elderly (Hank & Stuck, 2008).

Income. Volunteering is a contribution of one's time and it is not obvious that income would have much effect on it. However, most studies have found that low-income earners volunteer less, probably because they belong to fewer voluntary organizations (*Volunteers*, p. 129). More recently, Pho (2008, p. 233) has confirmed that low- to medium-wage earners are less likely to volunteer although Lee and Brudney (2010) report that the effect of income is not linear, volunteering being most popular among middle-income households. The deterrent effect of low income is indirectly confirmed by the finding that stipends work especially well as an incentive to volunteer among low-wage earners (McBride, Gonzales, Morrow-Howell, & McCrary, 2011)..

Income can influence how people allocate their altruistic impulses between time and money. It might be thought that as their income rises and their time becomes more valuable people would substitute money for time. But in the United States more favorable tax treatment of monetary donations does not cause people to switch away from

volunteering to contributing money (Feldman, 2010, p. 129). In fact, donations of both time and money increase. One study found that the relation between time and money contributions varied depending on labor market status. When people are not working giving money and time are unrelated but when they are employed (and presumably earning more money) they are positively related (Apinunmahakul et al., 2009). In neither case does the giving of money substitute for volunteering and nor does an increase in money supply alter this fact.

Life Course

The life course perspective assumes that current behaviors and attitudes have their roots in the past but that they change across the life course with a certain level of predictability.

Early Life

Family of origin. The roots of prosocial behavior are embedded in the family of origin (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). When parents volunteer they are acting as role models for their children (Caputo, 2009). Parents can also encourage volunteer work by creating the right emotional climate in the home. Young adult volunteers are more likely than those who are not volunteering to remember having been close to their parents as teenagers, receiving love, warmth, and caring from them, being satisfied with their relationship to them, and feeling that their parents understood and paid attention to them (Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2009, p. 167).

Families of origin also shape future volunteer work in more material ways. Brown and Lichter (2006) looked at the effect of a disadvantaged childhood on early adult volunteerism, anticipating that poverty, family instability, lack of parental supervision or warmth, weak parent–child attachments, and the absence of volunteer parental role models would all mitigate taking up volunteer work in adulthood. Young adults who spent their childhood in poverty were indeed less likely to volunteer but growing up disadvantaged was not to blame. Rather, a disadvantaged childhood had deleterious effects on life chances (e.g., dropping out of school or unwed childbearing) which in turn lowered the chances of volunteering in adulthood.

Schooling. The positive effect of years of schooling has already been mentioned, but further study is needed of how the type and context of schooling affect volunteering. Students who attended private schools are more likely to volunteer after graduation—unless the school is Catholic. The difference is largely attributable to more parental involvement in private than public schools and the fact that students attending private schools are more likely to have volunteered while in school (Dill, 2009). Young adults are also more likely to volunteer if they attended a school where they believed that teachers cared about them; were close to other students; felt part of the school; were happy and safe at school; and thought teachers treated students fairly (Duke et al., 2009).

Extracurricular activities. Schools, especially in the United States, are an organizational basis for all kinds of extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and student

government. Young adults are more likely to volunteer if they attended a school hosting many clubs and associations and if they personally belonged to school-affiliated clubs such as the National Honor Society, service clubs, drama clubs, and the Student Council. Adult volunteers were more likely to have participated as high school students in extracurricular activity that demanded considerable time and commitment and focused on social service, politics, or public performance (McFarland & Thomas, 2006).

Mandatory volunteering. More and more high schools in the United States are mandating volunteer work as a requirement for graduation, which has aroused scholarly interest in the effects of this mandate on volunteering in adulthood. Colleges are also increasing the number of courses that require service learning. The percentage of U.S. college students who reported that community service was required by their study program increased from 7% in 1996 to 19% in 2008 (Griffith, 2011, p. 8). Most studies have concluded that mandatory programs improve attitudes toward volunteer work and encourage later volunteering (Bowman et al., 2010; Griffith, 2010; Hart, Matsuba, & Atkin, 2008; Henderson, Brown, Pancer, & Ellis-Hale, 2007).

Midlife. According to theories of the life course, stable patterns of volunteering take hold once individuals have settled into adult roles such as steady jobs, marriage, and parenting "that build up their stake in community affairs" (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, p. 160). There are clear patterns of variation in volunteering across the life course, with a well-known peak in middle age. Such variations could be due to either the aging process or cohort effects: separating them can be difficult. Two cohorts of Dutch people aged between 55 and 69, one born between 1928 and 1937 and the other born between 1938 and 1947, were followed for 6 years. The younger cohort had a higher rate of volunteering (45% compared to 38%). In both cohorts the 60 years of age and under group increased volunteering over the 6 years while the volunteer rate for the 65 and above group declined. In other words, cohort differences existed in all age groups and age differences existed in all cohorts (Suanet, van Groenou, & Braam, 2009). The pattern might well be very different in other countries.

In midlife, choosing to do volunteer work has a lot to do with the way in which family and work roles are combined. Relationships between family members are important. Smith (2010) sorted 95 husband–wife pairs into households where neither volunteered, both volunteered, and one spouse volunteered. The households where neither spouse volunteered were clearly different: the husband was poorly educated, the wife gave a low estimate of her power in the relationship, satisfaction with the marriage was low, and at least one of the spouses was not in the labor force. Because many of the socioeconomic and religious factors that might account for low volunteer rates were controlled, the study suggests that more traditional, unequal marriages have a deterrent effect on the likelihood of either of the spouses volunteering.

Later Life. Gerontologists have become so convinced that volunteer work is a "good fit" for the elderly it now "forms part of the positive psychology of aging" (Gottlieb & Gillespie, 2008, p. 404). This does not mean, however, that people flock to volunteer

organizations when they retire. Cross-sectional data from Denmark, Germany, Greece, and the Unites States show that volunteer time actually decreases from age 50 to age 74 (a period of life associated with the transition to retirement) and then slightly increases again (Komp, van Tilburg, & van Groenou, 2011). Taking up volunteering because one has retired seems to be rare. Volunteering is much more likely to occur after retirement if the person has a history of volunteering before retirement (Morrow-Howell, 2010, p. 3). Eight in 10 Americans who were volunteering before they retired continue to volunteer after retirement (Zedlewski, 2007). These findings support the "continuity theory" of aging whereby people largely continue in their old age habits acquired when younger. German panel data show that the transition to retirement does not affect the likelihood of starting or ending volunteer work (Erlinghagen, 2010). Thus, whereas it is often suggested that volunteer work can "fill in" for the loss of the work role when people retire, the data do not really support this idea. Griffin and Hesketh (2008) surveyed current employees of, and retirees from, three work organizations. Employees were more likely to plan to volunteer when they retired if they liked their current job and it kept them occupied, suggesting that people who like to "keep busy" are more likely to volunteer when they leave their job. There is also evidence from another study that retirees who choose volunteer work are more likely to have been encouraged to leave the labor force. This suggests that choice is important: those who were forced out of paid work were more likely to search for a substitute in volunteer work (Kaskie, Imhof, Cavanaugh, & Culp, 2008).

Numerous studies have shown that the meaning of volunteer work changes over the life course. For example, in later life generative concerns become more salient. In interviews, older Australian environmental volunteers spoke most often of a need to improve the environment for future generations, a desire to volunteer as part of the maturation process, and a wish to work with the young and pass on to them their knowledge of the environment (Warburton & Gooch, 2007).

Social Context

Few would deny that people's behavior is influenced by their social context, but this notion has taken a back seat to the idea that individual characteristics explain volunteer work. In recent years, however, more and more attention has been paid to what might be broadly characterized as ecological effects on volunteerism. Units of analysis range from the micro-level of a person's social networks to the macro-level of countries.

Social networks. A person's social ties to others make a difference to volunteering because, when people are socially integrated, when they have social ties to a wide range of heterogeneous others, they are not only more likely to hear about volunteer opportunities or meet other volunteers but also to believe that other people will share their volunteer impulse, that they will not be left in the lurch by others shirking their responsibilities (Lee & Brudney, 2010, p. 518). We continue to learn more about the role of social networks in volunteerism. First, the influence of social resources on

volunteerism depends on the nature of the task at hand. For example, having social ties to people already volunteering is a stronger inducement to volunteer if the work demands heavy commitment, involves some risk, and requires collective effort (such as being a member of a emergency preparedness and disaster relief team) than in cases where the volunteer work is more sporadic and less demanding (Rotolo & Berg, 2010). Second, large, heterogeneous social networks do not unfailingly lead to more volunteering. Much depends on the nature of the social ties in the network. For those who are asked to volunteer by another person "bonding" social ties (e.g., with family) are most important but "bridging" social ties (e.g., with other club members) are most important when the volunteer takes the initiative to contact the volunteer organization (Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2010).

Schools. In the United States, high schools and colleges foster habits of volunteerism later in life, independent of the credentials people obtain through their years of schooling. Regardless of their academic performance, students who attend a school that has a program of extracurricular activities are more likely to volunteer. Students who feel involved in the life of the school and enjoy attending it are more likely to be engaged in extracurricular activities. A recent study using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health traces the influence of social integration in the school on subsequent volunteering in early adulthood (18-26). Not only were students more likely to volunteer later, if they responded positively to the statement "I feel like I am part of this school," but also they were more likely to volunteer if a high proportion of their *friends* said they felt socially integrated (Settle, Bond, & Levitt, 2011).

Neighborhood. Given the localism of most volunteer work, it is natural to suppose that the condition of the immediate neighborhood will affect volunteer choices. For example, one reason why disadvantaged youth are not inclined to volunteer is that they depend on community-based organizations and these organizations need adult volunteers to run them. Disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to have high child-to-adult ratios making it difficult to muster enough volunteers to organize and mentor young volunteers (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Another example of the influence of the immediate locality is that people are more likely to volunteer if they feel a bond with their neighbors. Homeowners tend to be more attached to their neighborhood, as are long-term residents. They are also more likely to volunteer than renters, regardless of the value of their home or how long they have lived in the neighborhood (Rotolo, Wilson, & Hughes, 2010). An Australian study found that people who feel good about their neighborhood - its resources, the level of involvement of its residents and so forth - were more likely to volunteer (Mellor et al., 2009).

Cities, states, and regions. At the city level, the most interesting line of research has to do with the theory that social diversity has a negative effect on the rate of volunteering because it undermines social trust. Putnam (2007), using Social Benchmark Survey data on 41 U.S. communities ranging from small towns to large metropolitan areas, finds that ethnically diverse areas have lower volunteer rates. This pattern is also found in the Netherlands (Tolsma, van der Meer, & Gesthuizan, 2009). At the state level volunteerism is more widespread where the population is homogeneous both

racially and economically (Lipford & Yandle, 2009) although the effect is confined to secular volunteering (Rotolo & Wilson, 2011). Institutional theory suggests that volunteerism will be more common where there is an infrastructure of support for it. Rotolo and Wilson (2011) find that states that have more nonprofits and congregations per capita have higher rates of volunteering. And in Switzerland, the volunteer rate is higher in cantons where direct democracy is practiced (e.g., referendums are allowed) than in cantons where the democratic system is more representative (Stadelmann-Steffens & Freitag, 2010).

Countries. The problems associated with measuring, comparing, and explaining volunteer rates across countries are described in *Volunteers* (pp. 343-369) and Salamon (2010). As noted earlier, some variation between countries is due to how informal helping is treated in the measurement of volunteering. The rates reported by some countries might well be inflated by the failure to exclude this kind of help. But a recent study found that European countries that are low in volunteering are also low in providing informal care (Plagnol & Huppert, 2010) suggesting that using a broader definition of volunteering might not create bias. And even when informal helping is included in the definition of volunteer work, as it was in a 2003 South Korean survey, the volunteer rate is still lower than the formal volunteer rate in the United States. For example, in 2003 the Korean rate of volunteering from those 65 and above was 5.6%, compared to 23.7% in the United States (Kim, Kang, Lee, & Lee, 2007).

A number of theories have been developed to explain cross-national differences in volunteering. "Democratization Theory" assumes that volunteering flourishes in democracies. It has been invoked to explain why volunteer rates in former Soviet countries, where democratization has barely begun, are the lowest in Europe (Voicu & Voicu, 2009). "Welfare State Theory" assumes that "government spending on the public good will 'crowd out' private donation of time or money" (Carpenter & Myers, 2010, p. 912). Critics of the theory argue that welfare expenditures actually encourage volunteerism by providing poorer people with more resources. Hank (2011) found a positive relation between social spending as a percentage of the country's GDP and the volunteer rate of older citizens (50+). One thing is sure: welfare state expenditures do not affect all kinds of volunteering in the same way: they have their strongest impact on volunteerism in connection with social services. An analysis of World Values Survey (WVS) data from 23 OECD countries found a "fairly strong negative correlation between welfare state expenditures and social volunteering" but they had no effect on nonsocial volunteering. (Stadelman-Steffen, 2011, p. 142). "Social Origins Theory" argues that volunteer rates are affected by regime differences, ranging from a "Liberal" model that places reliance on private initiatives and nonprofit organizations to the "Traditional" model where premodern forms of helping survive and the nonprofit sector is small. A recent test of this theory looked at college students in 13 countries who were asked about their charitable behavior. The percentage reporting neither giving money nor volunteer time varied from 21.4% in "Liberal" societies to 36.8% in "Traditional" societies. As predicted by the theory, "Statist" (Korea, Japan) and "Traditional" countries (China, India) reported higher rates of neither giving nor

volunteering than the other types of society, namely, "Liberal" (United States, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Canada), "Social Democratic" (Finland), and "Corporatist" (Belgium, Netherlands, Israel; Kang et al., 2011).

In *Volunteers* (pp. 363-368) some attempt was made to see if the profile of the volunteer was similar in different countries. This line of research continues. Poor health has the same negative effect on volunteering in Denmark, Germany, Greece, and the Unites States (Komp et al., 2011). Church attendance is positively related to volunteering in 87% of the 145 countries covered in the Gallup World Polls (2005-2009; Smith & Stark, 2009) and the effect seems to be about the same regardless of country. In the Netherlands, a more secular society than the United States, church attendance is nevertheless positively related to both religious and secular volunteer work, as it is in the United States, although private indicators of religion, such as prayer, have no effect (Tienen, Scheepers, Reitsma, & Schilderman, 2011). A study of South Koreans 65 and older found that the predictors of volunteering were remarkably similar to those found in the United States, namely, education, good health, religious affiliation, and home-ownership (Kim et al., 2007). An analysis of WVS data shows that having extensive social networks, being religious, more highly educated, and earning more money encourages volunteerism in all European countries (Voicu & Voicu, 2009). Education and religiosity are the best predictors of volunteering in Israel, as they are in most other countries (Shye, 2010, p. 193) but, as noted earlier, the positive effect of education might be attenuated in countries with high average levels of educational achievement (Gesthuizen et al., 2008). In Japan, the pattern of volunteering behavior is "fairly comparable to the one found in the United States" (Taniguchi, 2010, p. 175). In Mexico, volunteering is slightly more common in rural than urban areas, among the middle aged, among those with a religious affiliation and members of voluntary associations. In these respects the pattern is similar to many other countries. But there are no gender effects on volunteering and neither education nor income makes any difference (Verduzco, 2010, p. 40). Finally, a highly original theory suggests that the influence of gender on volunteering might vary depending on how much power women have. Women comprise a larger proportion of the volunteer labor force in countries where they enjoy more political and economic power. The implication is clear: the pattern of volunteering found in most traditional countries in which men are more likely to do volunteer work might well have less to do with their resources (e.g., their superior education) than with the level of empowerment of women in the society as a whole (Themudo, 2009).

Trends in Volunteering

Meaningful analyses of trends in volunteering require data gathered over several decades, and they are scarce. An annual survey of high school seniors in the United States shows an upward trend between 1974 and 2005. Until 1990, the percentage of high school seniors who participated in community service at least once per month remained stable at around 23%, but participation rose steadily thereafter, from 21% in

1990 to 34% by 2005. This trend is no doubt driven by mandated community service in high schools and students' interest in "padding" college applications (Syvertsen et al., 2011). These data, combined with information on teen employment, show that more and more teenagers are opting not to work for pay while in high school but perform volunteer work instead, particularly if they come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, suggesting that their parents have decided that volunteering is a better "credential" for college entry (Porterfield & Winkler, 2007).

The popularity, or acceptability, of volunteer work increases with modernization. For example, in most Asian societies notions of filial piety sustain norms requiring that elders are to be honored, obeyed, and cared for by their families. Asian elders are expected to spend their time with their families in recognition of this support, and undertake defined cultural roles such as caring for grandchildren, or educating them in sociocultural norms and rituals. But modernization increases the number of older people who are living alone outside the family structure and who depend on less traditional forms of social support. One result is an increase in volunteering (Warburton & Winterton, 2010, p. 1053). Modernization also influences who does what kind of volunteer role. For example, the Iranian government's efforts to improve health care rely heavily on volunteer contributions from women. Islamic culture discourages women from entering the paid labor force but is open to the idea that women can participate outside the home in service delivery programs as long as their husbands approve. For the women volunteers their work is a new source of status in the community—although younger and better educated women look askance on this new role, proclaiming "Only a fool will go and work for nothing" (Hoodfar, 2010, p. 498).

Modernization brings new forms of volunteerism. In the United States and other advanced industrial societies more episodic forms of volunteering, short in duration and shorn of commitment, are now preferred. This new pattern is illustrated in a study of volunteers at an animal shelter who were unwilling to make long-term commitments and insisted on more flexibility in their work schedules (Taylor, Mallinson, & Bloch, 2008, p. 407). Hustinx (2010a, p. 3) links this trend to individualization: "In contrast to traditional volunteering as a primary expression of strong and durable group memberships, volunteers today increasingly prefer individual, project-based assignments, frequently shift between organizations, and hence only develop weak organizational attachments."

As social circumstances change, as the structure of volunteer is reshaped, the profile of the typical volunteer could also change. Different people would move into the volunteer labor force and people traditionally associated with the role drop out. One possibility has been suggested earlier: as the overall level of education in a society rises the "value" of educational credentials for volunteering declines. Conversely, as the number of regular churchgoers in society declines, the "value" of church attendance for volunteering rises because fewer people are left to do the work the church requires (Ingen & Dekker, 2010). Trend analysis includes projections about the future state of volunteering. In an ingenious analysis, Einolf (2009) uses MIDUS data to predict the state of volunteering in 2015. He estimates that the Baby Boomer cohort

(born 1946 to 1955) will volunteer in slightly larger numbers and for slightly more hours than the "silent" cohort (born 1936 to 1945), thereby sustaining the increase in volunteering among the elderly that has occurred during the past several decades.

The Volunteer Experience

What is it like to be a volunteer? What can be said about the relationship between volunteer, client, professional staff, and other volunteers? What kinds of organizational matters influence the recruitment, training, motivation, and commitment of volunteers? These and other questions are typical of the research done under the heading of the volunteer experience. Being a volunteer transforms people's perceptions of themselves, their emotions, and their knowledge of the world around them (Haski-Leventhal & Bar-Gal, 2008, p. 96).

The principal function of the volunteer role is to inspire effort and commitment while at the same time limiting compassion. The way people perform as volunteers is determined not only by what they have been taught to think about the role but also by how they think it should relate to other roles, such as other volunteers, clients, and paid staff. Although they are primarily interested in helping people, volunteers must adjust to bureaucratic limitations on their emotional and personal involvement in their work. For example, hospitals impose formal limits on volunteers' knowledge of patients' medical condition and treatment (Mellow, 2007). Likewise, hospice volunteers are warned that too much concern for patients can have negative consequences and urged to remain detached (Fox, 2006). Many volunteers overestimate their effect on clients and must learn to temper their idealism (Wuthnow, 1995, p. 56). For example, young Israeli volunteers struggled to come to terms with the limits on their effectiveness imposed by inadequate organizational resources and recalcitrance from their young clients, who were living on the streets. Certain emotional displays, such as hugging, were declared off-limits (Haski-Leventhal & Bar-Gal, 2008).

Volunteers welcome the autonomy that is part of the role, but lack of work structure can be stressful. In a study of Swiss volunteers serving in a health care setting, work processes were poorly structured, job descriptions were unclear, procedures and daily routines were informal and ad hoc. Unattractive support duties were shared in the interest of fairness rather than being assigned on the basis of capabilities and the result was low morale (Kreutzer & Jager, 2010). Volunteers at an animal shelter were not put off by but welcomed a highly routinized labor process in which detailed instructions were clearly given. They became irritated when newcomers violated the rules (Taylor et al., 2008, p. 405).

It is widely understood that volunteers and staff are not only codependent but also have conflicting interests. Swiss volunteers firmly believed that the nonprofit organization for which they were working belonged to *them*; they did most of the work; and their time was more valuable because they were giving it for nothing. They resented the money being spent on professional staff. For their part, the staff felt demeaned by the assumption that the only qualification for doing the work was the desire to help.

And whereas volunteers rather enjoyed the opportunity to take turns at different jobs the staff preferred a more structured environment (Kreutzer & Jager, 2010).

Volunteer dynamics. Volunteer dynamics refers to the process whereby people move in and out of particular volunteer assignments or the volunteer labor force as a whole. An American study found that the chances of quitting over an 8-year period were highest among volunteers who had little education, little prior experience of volunteering, been divorced or widowed, been depressed or moved recently. They were less likely to quit if they were religious or married to a spouse who was also a volunteer (Butricia, Johnson, & Zedlewski, 2009). A similar study found that the odds of quitting over a 10-year span were highest among older, less well-educated, less religious, less generative, and less socially connected volunteers (Choi & Chou, 2010). And a panel study of Americans aged 50 to 80 whose entry into and out of the volunteer labor force was followed across five time points between 2000 and 2009 found very little movement: only about 14% of older Americans took up volunteering across this span of time although a larger percentage (34.3%) dropped out (although they might have resumed volunteering later in the decade). Just over half (54%) of those who were volunteering increased the number of hours they donated. Age had no effect on the likelihood of quitting, which was more influenced by poor health, obligations to care for a parent or spouse, not attending church, and having little experience working as a volunteer (McNamara & Gonzales, 2011).

Whether or not people quit a particular volunteer assignment has something to do with their own individual characteristics (e.g., getting a new job) but it is also influenced by organizational matters, particularly those that have an immediate impact on the volunteer. This is why the organization of the local branch is more important than the structure of the organization as a whole (Hustinx & Handy, 2009). One study of older volunteers found that, of the nine factors that predicted turnover, seven were related to either the volunteers' experience of volunteering or a characteristic of the program. Only two (higher income and better mental health) were individual attributes (Tang, Morrow-Howell, & Choi, 2010, p. 870). Volunteers show more loyalty if they have role flexibility (as in the ability to alter work schedules), adequate supervision, good training (especially where direct client services are involved), incentives (including stipends and expenses), and social recognition (e.g., awards) (Tang et al., 2009).

Volunteer dynamics are inevitably associated with satisfaction, given the volitional nature of formal helping and the fact that extrinsic rewards are rarely used as incentives. And yet the role of satisfaction in volunteer dynamics is poorly understood (*Volunteers*, pp. 447-452). Boezman and Ellemers (2009, p. 897) compared a sample of volunteers with a matching sample of paid staff working in the same organizations doing roughly the same jobs. Among volunteers, satisfaction with job (and in turn intention to remain as volunteers) rose when their needs for relatedness and autonomy were met. In the case of paid workers only meeting autonomy needs increased job satisfaction. Cnaan and Cascio (1999) found that management practices (e.g., reinforcement, ways of contact, selection, training, and supervision of volunteers) helped explain variability in volunteer satisfaction, commitment, and continuance.

Despite these findings, the opinion has been expressed that situational variables are too often ignored in satisfaction research (Moreno-Jiminez et al., 2010, p. 1800). A survey conducted in Israel found that overall satisfaction with volunteer assignments was positively related to level of professional supervision and negatively related to the degree of ambiguity about tasks and emotional pressure. Satisfaction with rewards was positively related to empowerment, level of support from family, level of professional supervision, and level of appreciation. Burnout was more likely among volunteers who felt they were wasting their time and less likely among those who felt appreciated (Kulik, 2007). A study of Canadian volunteers found that performing clearly defined roles with specific responsibilities enhanced satisfaction (Souza & Dhami, 2008) and a study of volunteers at a hospital center attributed lack of satisfaction to insufficient support from other volunteers and hospital staff and inadequate training and preparation (Skoglund, 2006).

One of the key insights of motivation researchers is that volunteers are more satisfied if their assignments match their reasons for volunteering, as illustrated in a recent study of hospice volunteers (Finkelstein, 2008). In another study, Spanish volunteers were more likely to show signs of burnout if they were motivated by extrinsic rewards (Moreno-Jiminez et al., 2010). Having the right motivation can mitigate the stressful effects of volunteer work. Japanese volunteers were less likely to describe their work as burdensome if they were highly motivated (Murayama, Taguchi, & Murashima, 2010). In a recent study of more than a thousand volunteers from more than 80 organizations, Stukas, Worth, Clary, and Snyder (2009) use a new index to measure the number of "matches" (between motives and "affordances"). The index predicted both satisfaction and positive emotion about volunteer activities. The results suggest that it is not enough to relying on motives alone to predict satisfaction: we also need to know what the volunteers are doing. A study of former Red Cross volunteers found that quitting was most frequently motivated by personal problems, such as competing demands from one's job or family responsibilities: when organizational issues were mentioned they had to do with a mismatch between the volunteer's interests and assignments or lack of support and supervision (Hustinx, 2010b).

Common sense suggests that dissatisfied volunteers are most likely to quit and the research bears this out. A study of volunteers at a rape crisis center found that satisfied workers were the least likely to say they were thinking of quitting (Hellman & House, 2006). Among Spanish volunteers intention to remain was positively influenced by the level of social integration into the organization; as measured by having good relationships with other members of the organization, receiving support from staff and other volunteers, positively evaluating the job they performed and valuing the training. These are all factors known to improve satisfaction (Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009). In an online survey, volunteers in California were asked about their satisfaction with various aspects of the volunteer experience (e.g., effectiveness, empowerment, support). Those who were satisfied with the support they received were more likely to express an intention to volunteer in the future although no other measure of satisfaction was related to intention (Garner & Garner, 2010).

The Consequences of Volunteering

Social scientists have long been interested in the possibility that helping others is beneficial to the helper because it provides an answer to the question as to why many people, although they are expected to act in their self-interest, routinely engage in social behaviors that put the welfare of others first. This section describes recent research on the benefits of volunteering for the volunteer.

Mental health and illness. Mental health and illness are not polar opposites of each other, but it seems clear that volunteering both enhances mental health and alleviates or protects against symptoms of mental illnesses such as depression. As far as depression is concerned, although one recent study found no association (Fujirawa & Kawachi, 2008), most research has confirmed that volunteers report fewer depression symptoms (Hong & Morrow-Howell, 2010) although a number of studies have detected beneficial effects only for subgroups of the population: the elderly in the case of Kim and Pai (2010), and women in the case of Cho and Bonham (2007) and Sugihara et al. (2008).

"Before and after" studies in the United Kingdom (O'Brien, Townsend, & Ebden, 2010) and the United States (Yuen et al., 2008) confirm that a spell of doing volunteer work can improve mental health although careful longitudinal analysis is needed to see if volunteering has any really long-term effects. A study of graduates of one Catholic college in the United States found that volunteer work predicted well-being (e.g., purpose in life) 13 years later, but only because it predicted volunteering later (Bowman et al., 2010, p. 25). No recent studies have asked if subgroups of the population benefit especially from being volunteers, but in an interesting survey of welfare recipients Cohen (2009) shows that those who do volunteer work feel more "empowered" (e.g., self-efficacy) as a result. The same idea that some groups benefit more than others guides the study of *how* people get involved in volunteer work: those who had been recruited by social workers enjoyed more mental health benefits than those who had been invited by friends. Perhaps the social workers were better at matching individuals to suitable tasks (Cheung & Kwan, 2006).

One reason why volunteers enjoy better mental health is that their psychological resources are augmented, as when, for example, helping others boosts their self-esteem (Fraser, Clayton, Sickler, & Taylor, 2009, p. 363). Another reason is that volunteering buffers against stress. A time diary study asked German and Swiss subjects whether doing volunteer work helped people recover from daily stressors to test the hypothesis that "switching off" from work during leisure time helps deal with work-induced stress. Time spent volunteering did not help people detach themselves from their job psychologically but it did enhance mastery experiences (e.g., "Tonight I learned new things") and mastery is one component of subjective well-being (Mojza, Lorenz, Sonnentag, & Binnewies, 2010). A more conventional American study of the buffering effect of volunteering asked whether volunteering would help people deal with spousal bereavement. The results were positive: although people tend to report more depression symptoms as they age, widows who took up volunteering after their spouse's death showed a slower rate of increase (Li, 2007).

Volunteers tend to feel better about themselves because they have more friends although this benefit might well depend on their motivation. Degli Antoni (2009) found that Italian volunteers who expressed the "values" motivation for volunteering also reported having gained new and supportive relationships while those who said they volunteered to be useful to others, for social recognition, or to make new friends reported no increase. However, when asked how *many* new friends they had gained since they began volunteering the best predictor was the extrinsic motivation of meeting new people. This suggests that, while extrinsically motivated volunteering might increase the size of one's networks, only intrinsic motivation improves their quality. Motivations also play a role in a study of college students: those who volunteered for intrinsic reasons felt better than those who volunteered for extrinsic reasons, such as a desire to please others (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

A more holistic line of research focuses on the way in which particular combinations of roles affect mental health. Choi and Bohman (2007) create a variable in which volunteer and paid work combinations are used as dummy variables: people who were just volunteering, just working, and both working and volunteering showed fewer depression symptoms than those who were doing neither. A similar approach is used by Sugihara et al. (2008), who contrast the depression symptoms of late middle age Japanese some of whom are working only, some of whom are volunteering only, some of whom combine the roles, and some of whom are doing neither and by Hao (2008) who finds that only the *combination* of volunteer and work roles yields health benefits. More research is now being conducted on this topic in other countries, with quite similar results (Haski-Leventhal, 2009a; Schwingel, Niti, Tang, & Ng, 2009).

A final line of research in this area that has been hardly pursued at all focuses on the context in which volunteers work. This is quite similar to the research on satisfaction. To know if people benefit from their volunteer work it is necessary to study the characteristics of the volunteer experience; the quality of social interaction, the meaning attributed to the work, the support and guidance of staff and other volunteers are all important (Morrow-Howell, 2010, p. 4). A British study showed that the more appreciated volunteers felt, the more satisfied they were with their lives in general (McMunn, Nazroo, Wahrendorf, Breeze, & Zaninotto, 2009).

It is important to note that volunteering does not always have mental health benefits. Curvilinear relations, whereby excessive levels of commitment have negative effects, are quite common (Windsor, Anstey, & Rodgers, 2008). In any case, simply counting how many hours people donate might not be the best way to measure the impact of volunteering. An Australian study found that elderly women who had volunteered continuously over a 9-year period were in better mental health than more sporadic volunteers (Parkinson, Warburton, Sibbritt, & Byles, 2010). And some studies have found that volunteering can undermine mental health. Ironson (2007, p. 74) reports that depression is "one of the common effects associated with HIV caregiving." This is probably a specific instance of a more general situation where the volunteer suffers from "empathic over-arousal" (Hoffman, 2008), which might also explain why people who volunteer in disaster settings, such as earthquakes, terrorist bombings, or aviation disasters, also suffer emotionally (Thormar et al., 2010).

Physical Health

The relation between volunteering and physical health has received less attention in recent research although there is a well-established connection between volunteering and lower levels of morbidity and mortality. An excellent longitudinal study by Burr, Tavares, and Mutchler (2011) found that people who volunteer one hundred hours a year or more were less likely to be hypertensive. Another panel study found that volunteering enhanced self-rated physical health and decreased functional dependency among Americans aged 60 or more although it had no effect on chronic health conditions (Tang, 2009). Continuing the research on mortality, which has generally found positive effects of volunteering on longevity, an analysis of the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study data, drawing on the Volunteer Functions Inventory for motivation measurements, found that the reasons why people volunteer can make a difference to life span: respondents who volunteered for other-oriented reasons experienced reduced mortality risk relative to nonvolunteers, but respondents who volunteered for more self-oriented reasons had a risk of mortality similar to nonvolunteers (Konrath, Fuhrel-Forbis, Lou, & Brown, 2011).

Socioeconomic Benefits

In countries such as Canada and the United States it is now widely believed that volunteering can increase one's chances of obtaining a higher education degree and, in consequence, a better job. As noted earlier, this belief is probably responsible for the recent increase in volunteering among high school and college-age students. And volunteering for career-related motives certainly is more common in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, where the educational credentialing system is highly sophisticated than it is in less-developed countries such as India and China (Handy et al. 2010).

Despite these suggestions that people volunteer to aid their job and promotion prospects, few researchers have investigated this topic in recent years. A Dutch study found that people who are volunteering when they enter the labor market for the first time get higher status jobs although volunteer status has a negative effect on income for first job. However, there are no additional payoffs in terms of status and earnings over and above mere membership in a voluntary association (Ruiter & de Graff, 2008). An Austrian study, however, did find positive wage effects from volunteering (Hackl, Halla, & Pruckner, 2007).

Conclusion

It is testimony to the productivity of scholars in the area of volunteer research that it would take a small monograph to summarize and assess the results of their work adequately. This brief review has highlighted only the key ideas embedded in the numerous publications surveyed and has limited itself largely to social survey data.

The antecedents of volunteerism continue to attract the curiosity of most scholars because the decision to give one's time away remains a puzzle to social scientists. "While no one wonders why someone may assume gainful employment, many ask why one would volunteer" (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 11). Among the consequences of volunteering, it is health benefits, chiefly mental, that have attracted the most attention. Gerontologists are responsible for much of this research because volunteering is believed to contribute to "successful aging." Although political and economic benefits of doing volunteer work have been documented in the past, neither has attracted as much attention as health, perhaps because the connection is somewhat less obvious. The middle stage of the process model—the experience of volunteering—has received far less scrutiny. Practical considerations, including a desire to understand how to motivate and keep volunteers, has driven much of the research on volunteer dynamics, but more needs to be learned about the volunteer experience itself, including how volunteers relate to clients, paid staff, and other volunteers. By necessity, much of this research is ethnographic and review essays such as this, focusing on journal articles publishing the results mainly of social surveys, will underreport it.

What about the future? First, we are likely to see research on volunteerism stretch disciplinary boundaries, from biology to culture. From biological studies of adults we learn that there are genetic influences on prosocial behavior (Knafo & Israel, 2008) and one recent study indicates this includes volunteerism (Son & Wilson, 2010). At the other end of the spectrum is it is likely that volunteerism is influenced by hard-to-measure cultural understandings (e.g., collectivism-individualism, traditionalism-modernism) and these need to be researched more assiduously. Second, more research will uncover ecological effects, using units of analysis as varied as social networks and countries. But ecological research must be guided by ecological theories: exactly why might social context make any difference to volunteering, in addition to individual characteristics? For example, we know that homeowners are more interested in volunteering but why would living in a community of homeowners have an incremental effect? What are the psychological mechanisms? Do community characteristics such as this affect people's expectations and levels of social trust? (Lee & Brudney, 2010). Third, research should pay more attention to organizational context. As already noted, although most of the research on the volunteer experience and the consequences of volunteering has focused on the individual characteristics of the volunteer, the most likely determinants of volunteer satisfaction, commitment and loyalty, are to be found in the organization of the volunteer experience. Fourth, as longitudinal survey data accumulate, it becomes necessary to move beyond the repeated association of variables to begin answering questions as to why those variables are related to each other. For example, we know that education is positively related to volunteering—but why? What are the mediating factors? Fifth, the research on race, ethnicity, and immigration is almost keeping pace with the changing nature of the population, at least in countries such as Canada and the United States, but given projections of increasingly diverse populations in these and other countries it is important to maintain this focus and, if necessary, design specific surveys to make sure emerging groups are adequately

represented. Finally, changing forms of volunteer work, such as online volunteering and the emergence of "more episodic, non-committal, and self-oriented types of participation" (Hustinx, 2010b, p. 236), need to receive adequate attention to ensure that social changes do not render the social science picture of volunteerism outdated. New kinds of "hybrid" organizations are emerging. They differ from traditional associations in using the needy themselves as volunteers, often for therapeutic purposes, in having to accommodate the interests of multiple constituencies, in being more inclusive and socially diverse, and in needing to be sensitive to policy debates and political maneuvering. Eliasoph (2009, 2011) has documented in detail how these developments are affecting the meaning and practice of volunteer work. These new forms are bringing new challenges to volunteer administration and supervision—how to create opportunities for volunteer work that appeal to the emerging desire for community service as a tool for self-realization and discovery, how to manage higher rates of turnover without seeing them as failures of discipline and motivation, how to handle people who either by choice or organizational dictate participate on a sporadic basis.

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Bio

John Wilson is professor of sociology emeritus at Duke University, the author of a number of articles on volunteering and, with Marc Musick, the author of *Volunteers: A Social Profile* (Indiana University Press).