

The Motivation of Men and Women in Volunteering

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"People offer a quality of service that cannot be reproduced by a machine--even in today's world of automation" (Rush, 1965: 212). The role of volunteers is increasing in importance as solutions are sought for the ubiquitous problems that face communities, institutions, organizations, and the whole society. However, volunteers cannot offer a quality of service without being motivated. What motivates volunteers and how will knowing about motivations aid volunteer administrators?

Many theories of motivation exist which explain to some extent the "why" of behavior. These theories are not mutually exclusive but complementary to each other. Most theories suggest that to be motivated in any activity, a person must decide what will be given to the activity, what one expects to receive from the activity, and how great the risk will be. This is the model of the rational person.

Motivations for participation in volunteering may be related to gender differences. Volunteering has generally been studied in a nonsexist manner; however, women are generally the volunteering majority (at least in social services). It may be useful to view some of the characteristics of male and female volunteers in a particular organizational situation to ascertain if any differences or similarities do exist and what this means in providing a motivational

volunteer climate.

The purpose of this study was to compare, in a systematic way, the characteristics and motivations for volunteering expressed by a stratified random sample of male and female volunteers in an organized state 4-H program. The perspective taken is meant neither to be a traditional view of the inherent differences between men and women, nor a feminist view of the evident similarities between men and women.

CONDUCTING THE STUDY

To determine the motivations and characteristics of 4-H volunteers, a questionnaire survey method was used. The study was conducted with 200 randomly selected male and female volunteers in 4-H programs throughout the state of Minnesota during the fall of 1978.

A review of the literature provided a list of possible motivations which volunteers had indicated as being important based on other studies. A list of 27 motivation statements plus other questions regarding characteristics were ultimately developed after a panel of professional 4-H staff members evaluated the instrument for face validity.

The population under study was 4-H volunteers, including local leaders, project leaders, and county committee members. The mailed questionnaire was sent to each identified

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volunteer. Three follow-ups were conducted to attain a response rate of 82%.

The data were coded, keypunched, and processed through the SPSS computer program. Descriptive statistics, analysis of variance with an eta squared statistic, and cross tabulations were used in viewing the comparisons between men and women volunteers. This information cannot be generalized outside of Minnesota or with any other group other than 4-H volunteers, but the results give some indications of the descriptions of volunteerism as it related to gender differences.

RESULTS

The majority of the sample consisted of women. The composition of this sample was due to the predominance of women who are 4-H volunteers. However, in the initial sampling, no attempt was made to survey an equal number of men and women. The stratified random sample was developed from the total volunteers within the state.

The instrument consisted of 27 questions which addressed the specific motivations that persons might have for volunteering. Volunteers were asked to respond on a 7 point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). These questions each addressed one of the general motivations for participation outlined in McClelland and Atkinson's theory of achievement, affiliation, or power (Hampton, 1972). An analysis of variance with an eta squared statistic was calculated to ascertain if there were any significant differences between men and women regarding these motivation statements.

Only five motivational statements resulted in significant statistical differences between men and women volunteers. However, the differences were quite small between the male and female volunteers.

In general, women had stronger agreement with all the statements regarding motivations. Table 1 pro-

vides a listing of the top ten motivation statements and the mean score for males and females. Nine of the top ten motivations were the same for men and women, but the statements were ranked in a different order. The tenth overall motivation was not considered important to men. Men volunteers were in greatest agreement on volunteering because they liked association with youth while women ranked volunteering as most important for being with their children.

In the five statements which showed statistical significance, the differences were in higher scores (more agreement) for women in all but one case. Women placed greater importance on motivations for being with one's children, liking to help people, a way to express caring and concern for others, and preference in working with groups rather than alone. Although very low on the ranking of motivations (26th out of 27), men said they were somewhat more likely to volunteer because they liked the recognition that they received. As was mentioned before, even though these five statements were statistically significant, with the large sample size, the differences in motivations between men and women were not meaningful in an important way.

The statements regarding motivations could each be grouped into one of three general motivations: the need for achievement or the capacity for taking pride in accomplishment; the need for affiliation or the concern for relationships with others; and the need for power or the desire to have influence over others. When these three needs were compared between male and female volunteers, there was no difference between the power and achievement needs of men and women, but there was a statistically significant difference for the affiliation need. Although the difference between men and women was not great, there was evidence that volunteering met affiliation

Table 1
 Ranking of Top Ten Means¹
 Regarding Motivation Statements
 N = 164

Statement	Women Mean	Men Mean	Overall Mean
*I am a 4-H volunteer because I want to be with my child(ren) in the 4-H program.	5.91	5.28	5.82
*I am a volunteer because I like helping people.	5.88	5.16	5.75
I am a 4-H volunteer because I like associating with youth.	5.74	5.40	5.69
I am a 4-H volunteer because I want to have influence on how young people learn and grow.	5.31	5.28	5.32
I volunteer in 4-H because it is a way to improve my community.	5.34	5.36	5.32
*I am a 4-H volunteer because it is a way I can express my caring and concern for others.	5.34	4.84	5.25
Volunteering in 4-H gives me a chance to meet other volunteers.	5.24	4.92	5.20
I am a 4-H volunteer because I want to learn new things.	5.23	4.84	5.17
*As a 4-H volunteer, I prefer to work with groups of people rather than alone.	5.21	4.44	5.09
I am a 4-H volunteer because I want to teach and lead others.	5.10	4.92	5.08

¹Based on a 7 point Likert scale with 7 = very strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree.

*Statistically significant at .05

needs to a greater extent in women than in men.

Other analyses were used to view other differences in characteristics between male and female volunteers. A significant difference existed between males and females regarding their altruistic or self reasons for volunteering. Men were more likely to be altruistic than were women.

There were no statistically significant differences between males and females regarding the number of years they had been volunteers, the hours per week which were volunteered, the spouse's involvement in 4-H, past membership of the volunteer in 4-H, residence, and educational level. Some differences existed between men and women in regard to age--women who volunteered were generally an average of three years older. Family income was also different between men and women volunteers. The family income of women volunteers tended to be somewhat higher than for men volunteers. However, this difference was not great.

Volunteers were asked to respond to several questions regarding their attitudes about volunteering. In describing volunteering for themselves, men and women had similar agreement regarding these statements: volunteering is fun, is interesting, is refreshing, is engaged in for its own sake, releases energy, leads to other worthwhile interests, leads to cooperation, makes my life meaningful, provides an opportunity to relax, and is its own great reward. However, analysis of variance indicated there was a statistically significant difference between men and women regarding two statements: 1) women described volunteering as providing for interaction with others more often than did men; and 2) women described volunteering as maintaining one's personal growth more often than did men.

The last two questions asked were in regard to satisfaction with volunteering and how long the volunteer

would continue to volunteer for the 4-H organization. Although both men and women were satisfied with their volunteering, women were significantly more satisfied, with a great difference between the responses of the two genders. However, when volunteers were asked to indicate how long (in years) they would continue to volunteer, men stated they would volunteer significantly longer than women.

CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that little difference was found between the motivations and characteristics of men and women who volunteer in 4-H programs. This may be no great surprise to most persons, but it does point out the need for similar kinds of recruitment, supervision, training, and recognition for volunteers whether they are men or women. There do appear to be differences in the kinds of affiliation needs and some indication that women are more satisfied than men with the kinds of experiences associated with volunteering. However, these differences probably do not warrant any unique techniques for recruitment, supervision, training or the rewarding of male and female volunteers. When basic motivational theories are applied to volunteerism, gender (sex) differences do not become evident in light of important, basic human needs.

The evidence of similarities in motivations and characteristics between male and female 4-H volunteers supports the need to look at the characteristics and basic needs of volunteers in a broad light. As a result of this study and other similar studies, one major conclusion can be drawn: men and women have similar motivations and volunteer attitudes, even though women tend to volunteer more often.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although gender differences ac-

counted for little difference between the motivations of men and women, other broad conclusions can be drawn about motivations.

Some recommendations which volunteer administrators may wish to consider include:

1. People do not volunteer without certain kinds of expectations. The expectations provide a motivational climate. As a volunteer coordinator recruits and orients volunteers he or she must be aware of the kinds of expectations which will motivate particular individuals.

2. Volunteer programs must be coordinated with the volunteers always in mind. Working with volunteers includes a careful match of the volunteer's skills with the organization's tasks.

3. Volunteers' motivations may change over time, depending on the situation. The volunteer administrator must be aware of the changes and seek to find new ways to motivate volunteers.

4. In general, volunteers tend to have high affiliation needs. People volunteer because they like to be with people or at least feel they are doing something for the good of others. Volunteer opportunities should be developed which can nurture these motivational needs.

No simple answer exists regarding how to motivate people or how to motivate volunteers. What motivates one person may not motivate another. Psychologists have studied motivation for many years and have developed a number of theories. In volunteer service, we have just begun to find applications of motivation theory which can be used in the field. It is doubtful that we will ever find the answer of how to motivate volunteers. By understanding how volunteers (both men and women) are motivated, volunteer administrators can better help volunteers enhance their quality of service in the human service organization.

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