

## **MOTIVATIONS OF LONG TERM VOLUNTEERS: HUMAN SERVICES Vs EVENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A topic that has received a great deal of attention in recent years is the key role that volunteers play in the operations of many organisations. It is now well recognised that volunteers are a valuable resource for human services organisations as well as for organisations running festivals and events. To date much of the literature on volunteer motivations has centred on the human services sector, however, it is not known if the motivations identified in this sector can be transferred to other sectors, or if it is applicable to both infrequent and long term volunteers. Building on earlier research by Slaughter (2002), this paper compares the motivations of long term volunteers in human services with the motivations of long term volunteers at events, to determine if there are identifiable differences between the two sectors. Once this is established, the motivations of long term volunteers at events are investigated. The benefits of retaining volunteers are increasingly being recognised and a crucial component of volunteer retention is to understand why an individual is motivated to volunteer. Identification of specific motives enables managers to better match volunteers with tasks that will more appropriately fulfil their motivations for volunteering, thereby encouraging greater levels of satisfaction and ultimately continued involvement.

Keywords: long-term volunteers; volunteer motivation; volunteer retention

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the western world volunteering is a popular leisure time activity. A study of 22 nations in 1998 found that on average 28% of the population participated in voluntary work (Salamon & Anheier, 1998). Similarly, 32% of the Australian population aged 18 years and over volunteered during 2000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 highlighted the role of volunteers throughout

society. Volunteers play a vital role in the success of many organisations and as a result the challenge becomes one of recruiting, training and retaining the ‘right’ volunteers.

Recruiting and training volunteers can be an expensive exercise, for example the average cost per volunteer at the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000 was AUD \$700 per head (Hollway, 2002:59). Although this figure varies depending on the extent of resources needed, the cost of recruiting and training volunteers encourages organisations to recruit people who will volunteer for a long period of time (Kovacs & Black, 1999). To retain volunteers, organisations need to understand individual volunteer’s motives. Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992) argued that identifying an individual’s motivation to volunteer allows organisations to match volunteers with appropriate tasks. In addition, providing ‘motivationally relevant feedback’ on their performance as volunteers increases their satisfaction, which in turn increases their commitment to the organisation and hence, their desire to remain a volunteer.

To date, the literature on volunteer motivations has mainly focused on the area of human services (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Kovacs & Black, 1999; Schondel Boehm, 2000; Thompson III & Bono, 1993; Zweigenhaft, Armstrong, Quintis & Riddick, 1996) with few studies targeting motivation to volunteer at events (Farrell, Johnston & Twynam, 1998; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995). In most instances this research has focused on motivation to volunteer per se and has not discriminated between the motivations of ad hoc volunteers and long term volunteers. One exception is Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen’s (1991:272) research on the motivations of ‘habitual volunteers’, that is volunteers who “...in the 6-month period prior to the interview, had provided at least 1 hour of direct service (assisting individuals or groups in need) at least once every other week in a human service agency...”. This differs significantly to the definition of a long term volunteer that has been used in this paper. In this instance a long term volunteer is defined as a person who has volunteered at the same event or with the same organisation for at least five consecutive years. Although this definition discounts mega-events such as the Olympic Games, it does encompass smaller events held on an annual basis, such as cultural festivals and rural shows.

## **MOTIVATION TO VOLUNTEER**

The one consistent finding in the literature on the motivations of volunteers is that individuals mainly volunteer for altruistic reasons (Clary & Snyder, 1991), yet the literature suggests this is a very simplistic response to the question of ‘what motivates people to volunteer?’ (Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998). One of the earlier studies on volunteer motivations proposed that there were three types of volunteers (Henderson, 1980). The first type of volunteer is motivated by achievement. These volunteers seek feedback and respond to challenges as they are driven by a desire to excel. The second type of volunteer is motivated by affiliation. This group of volunteers is primarily concerned about relationships with others; therefore they tend to seek companionship and social interaction through their volunteering experience. The final type of volunteer is motivated by power. These volunteers want to stimulate achievement in others. More recent studies have proposed a single factor (group of motives) model for volunteering (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991), while others propose six factor models (Clary et al., 1992). The diversity of findings suggests that there is not a generic response to the question posed earlier.

Many arguments have been put forward to explain the variation in findings. Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991:272) argued that such diversity is inherent with the lack of “methodologically sound studies of motivation to volunteer”. They reviewed studies on motivation to volunteer and found such weaknesses as the lack of empirical investigation, small sample sizes (less than 100 respondents), and weak external validity. Another criticism was the lack of consideration of demand characteristics when determining people’s motives to volunteer (Okun et al., 1998). Latting’s (1998) study also suggested that ethnicity may be a contributing factor, while Farrell et al. (1998) suggested that motives varied according to the nature of the volunteer activity.

These arguments also raise the point that willingness to volunteer is influenced by both intrinsic factors (personal beliefs) and extrinsic factors. Some studies suggest that socio-economic status has an impact on an individual’s willingness to volunteer, although there is little consistency between studies. For example, Caldwell and Andereck (1994) found that people from a high socio-economic background were most willing to volunteer, while Backman, Wicks, and Silverberg (1997) and Lammers (1991) found that average or below average income earners were the larger proportion of volunteers. Similarly, factors such as ethnicity may also influence willingness to volunteer. Latting (1990) studied the difference in motivations between ‘black and white volunteers’. While differences were found, the volunteer activity was within a North American context. The literature has yet to explore willingness to volunteer in cultures based on collectivism, rather than the individualistic focus that is characteristic of ‘western’ cultures. Is it possible that the need to recruit volunteers is not as important in collective cultures where the focus is on community, as opposed to individualistic cultures where the focus is on self? While these issues are important, they are beyond the scope of this paper. The purpose of this paper is to build on the study by Farrell et al. (1998) which suggests that intrinsic motivations to volunteer vary depending on the nature of the volunteer activity.

The basis of the argument of Farrell et al. (1998) was developed through a comparison of two studies using similar scales, one in the area of human services and the other in the area of events. The first study was conducted by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) who reviewed 27 studies on motivation to volunteer in the area of human services. They found 28 recurring motives that they combined into a scale that was tested on 258 volunteers in human services and 104 non-volunteers. Analysis of the data was conducted using factor analysis with a varimax rotation, and resulted in four factors emerging as underlying motivations for volunteering. Three of the factors had low eigenvalues and percentages of variance and were therefore deleted from the scale. The outcome was a reliable ( $\alpha = .86$ ) 22 item unidimensional scale, which they named the Motivation to Volunteer Scale (MVS) (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991:275).

This research by Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) indicated that volunteers in the area of human services sought a ‘rewarding experience’ rather than volunteering because of one single motive or category of motives. The items on the MVS represent both altruistic and egoistic motives, suggesting that volunteers want to both give to the organisation and “get back some type of reward or satisfaction” but they make no clear distinction between the two (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991:675). The results were surprising as Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) had anticipated support for either a two category model (Latting, 1990) or three category model (Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989) of motivations to volunteer. However, they maintained that their study overcomes many

of the methodological issues mentioned earlier, although they did note that the external validity of the scale needed to be further tested by applying it to different populations and settings.

This challenge was taken up by Farrell et al. (1998) who adapted the MVS for an event setting. They altered Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's (1991) original 28 item scale by deleting items that related only to human services and adding items specific to the special event of the winter sport, curling. The items that were dropped included 'volunteering is an opportunity to change social injustices', while event specific items were added such as 'because it was a chance in a lifetime'. The result was a 28 item scale they called the Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS). Using a similar statistical analysis technique to Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991), the data from the SEVMS were analysed using principal components analysis with a varimax rotation. This produced four factors, which were *purposive* (a desire to do something useful and contribute to the community and the event); *solidary* (incentives related to social interaction, group identification, and networking); *external traditions* (motivations related to family traditions and the use of free time that can be seen as external influences on an individual's volunteer career); *commitments* (incentives that link external expectations and personal skills with commitment to volunteering). These factors when combined explained 49.7% of the variance and had alpha reliability scores ranging from .86 to .65 (Farrell et al., 1998:293), therefore all four factors were retained. Farrell et al. (1998:298) suggested that the differences in the ratings of individual items, and the number of factors resulting from the MVS and SEVMS, indicated that there are differences between the motivations of volunteers in the areas of human services and events and that event "managers need to be prepared to address the variety of motivations when seeking volunteers for special events."

Two further studies conducted on motivation to volunteer at events (Caldwell & Andereck, 1994; Williams et al., 1995) provided further support for the multidimensional model that resulted from the SEVMS. However, a comparison of studies is hampered by the variation in research instruments. Nevertheless two of the factors from Caldwell and Andereck's (1994) three-factor model mirror those of the SEVMS's *purposive* and *solidary* motives. In both instances the purposive motive contained higher rated items than solidary, suggesting that consistent with the volunteer literature per se, altruism is a key motivator.

Williams et al. (1995) used a more event specific set of items to determine motivations to volunteer, however the items were not analysed beyond the rating that each item was given. Although there were a mix of *purposive* and *solidary* items within the five highest ranking items, the clearer relationship to the SEVMS and Caldwell and Andereck's (1994) findings is the least important motives. In all three instances items that can be considered material incentives are of a lesser importance. While incentives such as free passes to an event may play a minor role in recruiting volunteers, it would seem that appealing to an individual's sense of community, both in giving to the community (purposive) as well as belonging to the community (solidary), would be a more effective recruitment strategy.

It appears that motivations to volunteer at events have both differences and similarities to the motives relating to volunteer in human services. However, it is not clear if this distinction between motivations for the two areas applies to infrequent and/ or

long term volunteers. The purpose of this study, therefore, is twofold. Firstly, it establishes that there are differences between the motivations of long term volunteers in the areas of events and human services. This suggests that the motivations of long term human services volunteers cannot be directly related to long term volunteers at events, and vice versa. Secondly, it details the motives for long term volunteers at events, suggesting that the motivations of volunteers change over time.

## **METHOD**

The initial sample for this study consisted of 383 long term volunteers in Australia. Of these, 227 respondents had volunteered with the same human services organisation for at least five consecutive years, and 156 respondents had volunteered for the same event for at least the past five years. Cases with one or more of the discriminating variables missing from their response were omitted from the analysis resulting in a final sample size of 248, of which 136 were from human services and 112 were from events.

Finding organisations that were initially willing to participate in this study posed particular problems, as their recognition of the value of long term volunteers made them a difficult population to access. For instance, many of the organisations that were approached to participate in this research declined on the basis that they did not want their long term volunteers to be 'bothered' because they were perceived to be such valued employees. One organisation cited the fear of litigation over breach of confidentiality as a reason for declining to participate. Despite these difficulties, the efforts of the researchers to source respondents from a range of events and services helped to overcome one of the criticisms of previous studies - that the sample was taken from a single organisation or a single event (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991).

As the participating organisations in this study were not able (or willing) to provide the contact details of long term volunteers for reasons of confidentiality, it was decided that the best way to access potential respondents was to send mail-back questionnaires via their specific organisations. Although postal questionnaires are not ideal due to their low response rate (Neuman, 1997), they were regarded as the most appropriate data collection method for this research. The response rate for event volunteers was 98 responses from 150 surveys sent (65.3%) while the response rate for human services volunteers was 227 responses from 500 surveys sent (45.4%). The higher than expected response rate can be explained by the fact that this study was supported by senior staff of the organisations who then distributed questionnaires to their volunteers.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section asked a series of socio-demographic questions. The second section asked respondents to rate the 24 items of the Long Term Volunteer Motivation Scale (LTVMS) on a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The LTVMS is based on Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's (1991) Motivation to Volunteer Scale (MVS). As mentioned previously this scale was originally designed to determine motivation to volunteer in the area of human services but it was subsequently adapted by Farrell et al. (1998) for use at a special event, resulting in the SEVMS.

As this paper investigates the motivation of long term volunteers in general, the SEVMS was refined accordingly. For example, the item 'it was a chance of a lifetime' was not appropriate for a scale targeting long term volunteers hence this item was

deleted. Other items, such as ‘a relative or friend is involved in curling’ was altered to ‘a relative or friend is involved in this organisation’. The outcome was a 24 item scale, which was named the Long Term Volunteer Motivation Scale (LTVMS). The items on the LTVMS were preceded by the statement “please circle the number [from the Likert scale] that best represents why you are a long term volunteer”.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 10.0. The results are presented in three stages. Firstly, frequency distributions were used to provide a socio-demographic profile of the sample populations. Secondly, a discriminant analysis was performed to establish if differences existed between the motivations of long term human services volunteers and long term event volunteers. Finally, principal component analysis was performed to identify the motives of long term volunteers at events.

As shown in Table 1, the gender of the sample population of event volunteers consisted of marginally more males (51%) than females (49%). All respondents were over 20 years of age, with 30.6% over 60 years of age. The highest proportion of respondents (39.8%) was employed full time, followed by 24.5% of respondents who were retired. The number of years that respondents had volunteered at an event ranged from 5 to 57 years. The duration of involvement was dependent not only on the volunteers’ willingness to give of their time but also the length of time the event had been staged. For example, the Woodford Folk Festival, which is staged by the Queensland Folk Federation, has only been in existence for 16 years.

The sample population of human services volunteers consisted of considerably more females (70%) than males (30%). All respondents were over 20 years of age, with 66 % over 60 years of age. The highest proportion of respondents (64%) was retired followed by respondents describing themselves as a ‘housewife’ (11%) and only 10% were employed full time. The number of years that respondents had volunteered with a human service organisation ranged from 5 to 56 years.

**Table 1: Profile of sample populations**

	Human Services Volunteers	Event Volunteers
Gender		
• Male	70%	51%
• Female	30%	49%
Age		
• 20-30	0.9%	1.9%
• 31-40	2.6%	12.1%
• 41-50	8.4%	24.8%
• 51-60	19.8%	28.7%
• 60+	66.0%	30.6%
Employment Status		
• Employed Full Time	10%	39.8%
• Home Duties	11%	5.4 %

• Retired	64%	24.5%
Years as a Volunteer		
• 5-10	65.2%	46.4%
• 11-20	27.8%	27.5%
• 21-30	5.3%	13.0%
• 30+	1.7%	13.1%

Discriminant analysis using the linear discriminant function rule was used to predict class membership of individual observations based on a set of predictor variables. Previous studies into motivations of volunteers have been primarily concerned with identifying underlying motivations or factors. While this method can be reliable given a homogeneous sample, a mixture of two separate populations would confuse the results if their motivations were indeed identifiably different. The intention was to determine whether event volunteers and human services volunteers could be differentiated rather than to quantitatively interpret coefficients. Discriminant analysis was therefore chosen as a means of identifying whether differences exist and was performed to determine whether a classification scheme could be identified to predict the population from which an individual response is most likely to have come. Discriminant analysis was selected over logistic regression, itself based on the assumptions that a logistic model is appropriate, and that the residuals associated with the logistic model are normally distributed, because "...it is always desirable to obtain the simplest model that has a satisfactory predictive performance" (Worth & Cronin, 2003:111). As highlighted by Worth & Cronin (2003), the use of discriminant analysis is appropriate when data in the two groups are normally distributed and have approximately equal variance-covariance matrices. The simplification of the likelihood rule is justified in this case with Box's test ( $p=0.1$ ) allowing acceptance of the null hypothesis of equal population covariance matrices. It is acknowledged that the test for Box's M is not powerful and relies on normal distribution of random variables. The central limits theorem, however, suggests that normality can be assumed given the sample size ( $N=112$ ).

The six discriminating variables identified, shown in Table 2, allowed correct cross-validated classification of responses by volunteers at events in 66.3% of cases, and correct cross-validated classification of responses by volunteers in human services in 75.8% of cases. In cross validation, each case is classified by the functions derived from all cases other than that case.

**Table 2: Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients**

	Function
	1
I have more free time than I used to have	.587
I am expected to volunteer	-.442
A relative or friend is involved in this organisation	-.446
I want to be involved in the subculture of the organisation	-.634
I want the opportunity to meet paid employees	.494
I am gaining/ developing new skills	.489

75.4% of original grouped cases were correctly classified and 72.9% of cross-validated grouped cases were also correctly classified. These results provide strong support for the suggestion made by Farrell et al. (1998) that there are differences between the motivations of volunteers in the areas of human services and events, and specifically the

motivations of long term volunteers in human services and events. Further event specific research is required if motivations are to be fully understood.

Following the same statistical procedures that were conducted by Farrell et al. (1998) and Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991), principal component analysis with a varimax rotation was used on the LTVMS data to identify the motivations of long term event volunteers. Six factors were identified with eigenvalues greater than one, while the scale had an alpha coefficient of 0.83. Four of the factors, when combined, explained 49.5% of the variance and had alpha scores ranging from 0.86 to 0.61 and were therefore retained. The fifth factor explained 6.9% of the variance but, with an alpha coefficient of 0.26, was not considered reliable. However, if the item 'I have more free time than I used to have' was deleted from the scale, the alpha for this factor was 0.80 so the remaining items in factor 5 were retained. Factor 6 explained 6.1% of the variance but with an alpha of 0.36 was not retained. The rotated component matrix is shown as Table 3.

**Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix**

Items	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I want the opportunity to experience 'behind the scenes' operations	.788					
I want to be involved in the subculture of the organization	.785					
Volunteering allows me to vary my regular activities	.773					
I want to develop relationships with others	.734					
Volunteering broadens my horizons	.731					
I want to interact with others	.703					
I want to work with different people	.658		.342			
I have benefited from this organization and I want to give something back to the community	.402		.337			
I want the opportunity to meet paid employees		.831				
I like the 'extras' given to volunteers (eg. uniforms)		.775				
Being a volunteer with this organization is considered prestigious		.663				
I did not have anything else to do with my time		.649	-.318			
I feel I am doing something worthwhile			.787			
Volunteering makes me feel better about myself			.696			
I believe volunteering creates a better society			.674			
I want to continue a family tradition of volunteering				.723		
A relative or friend is involved in this organization				.690		
Most people in my community volunteer				.633		
I am expected to volunteer				.603		.347
I have more free time than I used to have		.333			-.673	
I am gaining/ developing new skills	.320		.332		.663	
I am gaining some practical experience	.503				.568	
My skills are needed						.713
I have past experience providing similar services (other than as a volunteer for this organization)						.693

Rotated Component Matrix  
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis  
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Three of the four factors identified by Farrell et al. (1998) have been further supported by this research. Items forming Component 1, explaining 19.2% of the variance, are consistent with the *solidary* factor. Items forming Component 3, including the highest rated items in this study ('I feel I am doing something worthwhile' and 'I believe volunteering creates a better society') are consistent with the *purposive* factor and explain 9.9% of the variance. Caldwell and Andereck's (1994) findings that the *purposive* motive contained higher rated items than the *solidary* motive were supported by this study, suggesting that altruism is a key motivator, which is consistent with the volunteer motivation literature per se. Component 4 contained items consistent with the *external traditions* factor identified by Farrell et al. (1998) that explained 8.7% of the variation. The means of these items ranged from 2.7 to 3.6 (1=most important to 5=least important) suggesting an ambivalent attitude to these items as a motivation for volunteering.

Component 2 explains 11.7% of the variation and consists of the four lowest rated items. These can be interpreted as referring to *tangible gain* or personal benefit gained by volunteering. The means of these five items range from 3.7 to 4.5 and signify strong disagreement with *tangible gain* as a motivation. This indicates that there is limited value in catering to these motives when trying to retain volunteers, a finding which is consistent with previous research (Caldwell & Andereck, 1994; Williams et al., 1995 and Farrell et al., 1998). Disagreement with *tangible gain* as a motivation for volunteering may be either because personal gain is not important or because opportunities for personal gain are minor or non-existent. Further research is required to determine whether personal gain is inherently disagreeable to long term volunteers or whether opportunities to provide volunteers with rewards should be explored.

Component 5 explained 6.9% of the variation and consisted of two items, ('I am gaining some practical experience' and 'I am gaining/ developing new skills'). These items express a desire for personal gain, the benefits of which can be channelled back into the organisation.

Items consistent with the *commitments* factor ('my skills are needed' and 'I have past experiences providing similar services') identified by Farrell et al. (1998) did not reliably form a component, although, with a mean of 2.04, 'my skills are needed', is clearly of importance in the long term volunteer's motivations. Skill development within an organisation and subsequent reinforcement of the organisation's appreciation of a volunteer's skill contribution would therefore appear to be a valid retention strategy.

## CONCLUSIONS

People have more pressure on their time now than they did in the past, therefore volunteers may be more interested in "...finite project-based, team-based activity rather than a year's or decade's long commitment" (Hollway, 2002:58). The infrequent nature of events is such that volunteers are only asked to commit to a set period of time, often once a year, rather than giving an ongoing commitment of their time throughout the year, as is often the case in the area of human services. Given that events are increasingly dependent on volunteers and that people have increasing pressure on their time, it is

important that event managers acknowledge volunteers as a vital part of the workforce and that they manage them accordingly.

While recruiting and training volunteers are important components of volunteer management, so too is the retention of volunteers. To help ensure the volunteer has a satisfying experience and ultimately decides to continue to volunteer, motivations for volunteering must be determined. This study has focused on the motivations of long-term volunteers as distinct from infrequent volunteers. Farrell et al. (1998) found that the motives of event volunteers differ to those of human services volunteers. This study supports their finding in relation to long term volunteers. Further, it shows that long term volunteers at events have five key motives. Primarily, long term event volunteers are motivated by the belief they are doing something worthwhile that will benefit society. This is followed closely in importance by their desire to socialise and be part of a community. The opportunity to gain new skills has a neutral influence – it is beneficial but not a strong reason to volunteer. There are two groups of motives that have minimal influence on the decision to volunteer. Specifically these are external pressures, such as a family history of volunteering, and the tangible gains to be had, such as uniforms.

Many of these motives were found to be similar to what had been found by Farrell et al. (1998) about the motivations of event volunteers for the sport of curling, suggesting that many of the motives of volunteers (be they infrequent or long-term volunteers) at a range of events are similar. The difference for long term volunteers is that the opportunity to learn new skills and to gain experience is a distinct motive. Although not a highly rated motive, it does suggest that what encourages volunteers to continue volunteering at events is the opportunity for personal development. The challenge for volunteer managers is to identify changes in motivations of volunteers. Establishing volunteer motivations should be an ongoing, rather than a one-off occurrence, thus enabling volunteering tasks to be changed to allow ongoing satisfaction and retention (Green & Chalip, 1998; Clary et al., 1992; Henderson, 1980).

While an examination of the differences in motivations between groups of long term volunteers demonstrates that differences exist, it does not explain why volunteers cease volunteering. Only by monitoring individual's motivations to volunteer over time will we be able to determine when changes in motivations occur (including a change to an absence of motivation) and if changes in socio-demographic and/ or organisational factors explain any of that change, as suggested by Okun et al. (1998). Research of this nature will help redress the current imbalance in the literature, which focuses on the practical aspects of planning and managing volunteers, with little emphasis on retaining volunteers (Cuskelly, 1995). As our understanding of motivation to volunteer increases, so too will our ability to help ensure the longevity of organisations through the retention of volunteers.

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