One of a Kind? Comparing Episodic and Regular Volunteers at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House

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Abstract

Studies find evidence of a growing trend in episodic volunteering and suggest that it attracts individuals with a different volunteering ethos than long-term and regular volunteers. The authors examine volunteers at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House (PRMH), an organization that successfully recruits and manages episodic volunteers and regular volunteers who are engaged in different tasks. Responding to the changing trends of volunteer labor supply, PRMH created different roles for episodic and regular volunteers. This study explored if PRMH episodic volunteers were different from regular volunteers in their motivation, satisfaction, and rewards. Certain interesting differences revealed (albeit not always in support of the authors' original hypotheses) are important both at the theoretical level and at the practical level for recruitment and management of volunteers.

Key Words:
volunteering, episodic, net cost, motivation, satisfaction, rewards

Introduction

Recently, scholars of volunteering have argued that the nature of volunteering has changed as an unintended consequence of modernity (Dekker & Halman, 2003; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Wuthnow, 1998). Individuals are switching from long-term habitual to shorter-term episodic volunteering. Several factors influence this change, including women joining the labor force, rapid change of jobs, changes in employer-employee relations, and globalization with the rapid access of global information through the Internet. These factors influence more and more people to seek out and engage in short-term experiences that will fulfill their immediate and timely needs, and then to move on to other fulfilling

experiences (Handy, Brodeur, & Cnaan, 2006).

The literature is replete with examples of the growing trend in episodic volunteering. A survey done by U.S. Department of Labor (2004) found that 28.8% of the civilian population age 16 and over volunteered through or for organizations at least once from September 2003 to September 2004. These 64.5 million individuals spent a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities; however, it found that 21.3% of the volunteers reported to provide only between one and 14 hours in the 12-month period of reference. While the study did not discuss episodic volunteering, more than one in five respondents may represent episodic volunteers.

Research by the Independent Sector in the United States further showed that over the last decade, the total number of adults volunteering increased, but the average number of hours of volunteering per week decreased, as did the total number of hours given to volunteering. In addition, the 1998 survey revealed that 41.9% of respondents indicated that they had volunteered sporadically and considered it a one-time activity whereas 39% volunteered on a regular basis. The remaining respondents (19.1%) reported that they only volunteered at a specific time of year, such as during a religious holiday or on a summer vacation (Cnaan & Handy, 2005).

A survey done by the AARP (2000) found that nearly half (47%) of volunteers age 50-59 volunteered mostly for episodic special projects. Only about a fourth (23%) volunteered for about the same amount of time each month, with about another fifth (22%) volunteering in both contexts. Brudney (2005) attempted to assess the scope of episodic volunteering in the United States and found that 31% of all volunteers could be defined as episodic volunteers, based on data from the Independent Sector. A recent British study found one-third of current volunteers to have volunteered on an occasional basis (i.e., less frequently than once a month) in the past 12 months, and 7% of this category had only taken part in a one-time activity (Low, Butt, Ellis Paine, & Davis Smith, 2007).

As a result, we find volunteering to be an increasingly heterogeneous activity, with traditional long-term and regular volunteering being supplemented (and potentially interchanged) with volunteer activities that are undertaken on an ad hoc basis and even as a one-time event. The increasing trend toward episodic volunteering, however, is often described in problematic terms (Putnam, 1995). Episodic volunteers, it is argued, would be "of a different kind" than regular volunteers. Their involvement would be of a more individual, short-lived, and noncommittal nature, and less driven by altruistic and social motivations (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Wollebæk & Selle, 2003). Moreover, because long-term and dedicated volunteering has traditionally been the norm, some organizations see this evolution as a threat for their established volunteer programs, and many struggle with the associated costs in developing new management practices targeting episodic volunteers (Handy & Srinivasan, 2004). However, there is little research that has examined empirically whether such differences in the ethos of episodic and regular volunteers actually exist.

Comparing Regular and Episodic Volunteers: A Net-cost Approach

In the emerging literature on episodic volunteering, a basic criterion used to distinguish between regular and episodic volunteering is the regularity or frequency of involvement. Regular volunteers are those who carry out activities at least once a month in a 12-month period of reference. Episodic volunteers are involved on a less frequent basis, ranging from activities undertaken every couple of months to one-time events (Handy, Cnaan, & Brodeur, 2006; Low, Butt, Ellis Paine, & Davis Smith, 2007). To understand better the different types of episodic volunteering, more differentiated volunteer classifications were also developed, taking into account the duration of involvement and the number of hours donated. Macduff (2004) identified three distinct types of episodic volunteering: temporary episodic volunteers who give a one-time service; occasional episodic volunteers who volunteer for one activity, event, or project for the organization, but at regular intervals; and interim volunteers who serve on a regular basis but only for a short period of less than six months. In their study of volunteers at summer festivals in Canada, Handy, Brodeur, and Cnaan (2006) distinguished between habitual episodic volunteers who volunteer for multiple episodic opportunities on a continual basis, and genuine episodic volunteers who volunteer for two or fewer volunteer episodes in a year. The latter group is compatible with Weber's (2002) concept of episodic volunteers as those who contribute their time sporadically, only during special times of the year, or consider volunteering as a one-off event. Weber further suggested that these volunteers give time without an ongoing commitment, often in the form of self-contained and time-specific projects.

It is important to emphasize that episodic volunteerism is not a single and uniform category, but instead broadens the spectrum of styles of volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) and adds to the complexity of the nature of volunteering (Cnaan & Amrofell 1994; Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth, 1996; Hustinx 2005). In addition, the boundaries between regular and episodic volunteering are fuzzy at best; Cnaan and Handy (2005) observed a strong association between ongoing and episodic volunteering, which implied that regular volunteers are more likely to simultaneously participate in episodic volunteer activities.

In spite of these nuances and classification efforts, this study aimed at a comparison of regular and episodic volunteers, and therefore accepted the common distinction between volunteers who come on a regular basis and carry out activities at least once a month, and those volunteers who are involved on a less frequent basis. For the purposes of this study, the authors defined the former as regular and the latter as episodic volunteers.

The authors take as a main point of departure the widely held conviction that modernity has affected the nature of volunteering, with a basic trend toward more episodic and noncommittal volunteer efforts (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003; Macduff, 2005; Wollebæk & Selle, 2003; Wuthnow, 1998). Are episodic volunteers' motives different as their effort is weaker, at least as measured in terms of frequency and intensity of

volunteering? Alternatively, are the motivations of regular and episodic volunteers similar, just that volunteers face different constraints in which to exercise their volunteering spirit? Do episodic and regular volunteers differ on the benefits they seek from volunteering?

To explore these questions, we applied the framework of the net cost theory developed in defining who is a volunteer (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Handy, Cnaan, Brudney, Ascoli, Meijs, & Ranade, 2000). Since volunteer activity is unpaid, the net-cost to any volunteer is positive; however, the net-cost will vary over different activities as a function of the intensity of involvement and benefits reaped to the volunteer. Based on this theory, the authors argue that regular volunteers incur greater costs than episodic volunteers due to their ongoing commitment over the same period of time. Furthermore, as the tasks required of episodic and regular volunteers are different, the authors would expect different people to be attracted to them for different motives and hence have different dispositions towards the rewards they receive.

For example, regular volunteers are given tasks that require training and a long term commitment from the volunteer, whereas episodic volunteers are given no training and need to offer no commitment to the organization after they have completed the task. Thus, the two groups would be expected to differ in their (1) net costs of volunteering to the organization and in their motivations to volunteer, (2) perceived benefits of volunteering (the latter being understood in terms of their levels of satisfaction with volunteering), and (3) interest in rewards offered by the organization.

First, as all volunteers willingly undertake positive net costs of volunteer activity, those incurring higher net costs (regular volunteers) are perceived as being more altruistic with a greater concern for others than those with relatively lower net costs (episodic volunteers). Consequently, the authors posit that regular volunteers are more likely to offer altruistic motives for volunteering than episodic volunteers (Handy, Cnaan, & Brodeur, 2006). Episodic volunteers are usually recruited for one or two tasks and contribute only a few hours for one activity; accordingly, they have lower net costs and are less likely to be motivated by altruistic concerns than regular volunteers.

Second, regular volunteers' higher net costs may lead them to declare higher levels of satisfaction with their involvement with the organization than will the volunteers who come episodically. This may also be a rationalizing of the higher net-costs they incur given that they undertake these costs voluntarily. It may be further exacerbated if they are motivated to make an impact; they are more likely to observe the fruits of their efforts over time because their engagement with the organization is ongoing.

Third, as regular volunteers incur greater costs over a longer period of time, they will be more interested in tangible rewards or forms of recognition offered by the organization than episodic volunteers to reduce their net costs. Episodic volunteers who are less likely to be engaged with the organization (and hence incur fewer costs) can more readily absorb these

costs than if they were to incur on a regular basis. For example, a volunteer who comes once a year to the organization may be willing to absorb the transportation or parking costs than somebody who incurs these costs on a regular basis. Similarly, being recognized and appreciated for ongoing efforts and commitment are more meaningful to a regular volunteer who comes may need continual reinforcement to keep coming.

In summary, we formulated three hypotheses to guide this study based on the net cost theory:

- H1: Regular volunteers and episodic volunteers will have different motivations to volunteer; regular volunteers will report being more motivated by altruistic motives as compared to episodic volunteers.
- H2: Regular volunteers will report higher satisfaction with their volunteering experiences than episodic volunteers.
- H3: Regular volunteers and episodic volunteers will have different expectations of benefits of their volunteering; we expect regular volunteers to be more interested in the rewards and recognition offered by the organization as compared with episodic volunteers.

Methods

The authors conducted an empirical study of volunteers at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House (PRMH), an organization that successfully recruits and manages episodic volunteers alongside a group of regular volunteers. Regular and episodic volunteers are engaged in different tasks for the most part at the PRMH, and this represents the intentionality of PRMH in organizing different roles for episodic and regular volunteers. Our research focus was on differences in the dispositions of both groups: motivations to volunteer, levels of satisfaction with volunteering, and the importance attached to different types of tangible rewards. We emphasize that our study is based on a nonrandom sample that is used for exploratory purposes. The focus is on comparing and contrasting regular volunteers and episodic volunteers, hence on the relative differences between both groups. Any generalizations should be made with great caution.

Setting

This study is based on a survey of volunteers at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House (PRMH), located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Volunteers help at the PRMH in a number of ways that include: staffing the front desk, driving families to and from hospitals, fundraising and program development, event planning, serving families at a house, and serving on boards and committees. Most tasks are organized for volunteers who come in on a regular basis. Last year, volunteers contributed nearly three million hours of their time at RMH homes across the country (Ronald McDonald House Charities, 2008).

Instruments and Procedure

Organizations typically have little contact with episodic volunteers, especially if they come to volunteer for one-time events, or if they come with a regular volunteer or another known contact with the organization, and require no training or commitment other than for the particular event they attend. For these reasons, organizations often do not

find it useful to maintain records of these volunteers. As such, episodic volunteers are a "moving target" and a category of volunteers that cannot be sampled with conventional methods. As organizations do not keep track of episodic volunteers, their actual population size is unknown, and information on population characteristics is impossible to retrieve.

In the case of PRMH, there were no records available for all current episodic volunteers from which to draw a probability sample. The Director of Volunteer Services could provide a list of 550 volunteers (i.e., a convenience sample) with e-mail addresses, among which were approximately 250 regular volunteers and 305 episodic volunteers. (Total numbers of volunteers were estimated to be around 310 regular volunteers and approximately 3000 episodic volunteers.) To reach out to as many PRMH volunteers as possible, we combined written and on-line surveying techniques. The on-line survey was sent out by the Director of Volunteer Services at PRMH to all volunteers with email addresses.

To include those volunteers for whom PRMH did not have e-mail contacts we used a written questionnaire that was made available when they arrived to their volunteer tasks. This method was aimed to include regular volunteers without e-mail addresses and episodic volunteers of whom PRMH did not have records. For the online survey, there were three reminders to ensure we got the maximum responses. Regular volunteers without e-mail contact and episodic volunteers were invited by the front desk staff to fill out the survey when they came to the premises. Both written and on-line surveys were self-administered and took 10 to 12 minutes to complete.

We received a total of 258 responses during the six weeks we conducted the survey in 2007. Of the respondents, 67.7% volunteered on a regular basis (i.e., once a month or more frequent), and 32.3% volunteered a few times a year or only once a year. Based on the estimated population sizes, we obtained a response rate of 56% for regular volunteers and 27% for episodic volunteers. As explained earlier, this distribution does not reflect the actual distribution of regular volunteers to episodic volunteers in PRMH, nor can the sample be tested for statistical representation.

Sample characteristics

The 258 respondents ranged in age from 18 to 89 years, with a mean of 45.4 (SD=15.9). The largest category (50%) reported a household income above $100,000, whereas only just over five percent reported being in the lowest annual category of below $20,000. About half of respondents (52%) were married or lived in a common law arrangement and the majority of them (54.8%) reported having children, with a third (33.7%) having children living with them.

We analyzed the data to assess if regular and episodic volunteers were significantly different in terms of their key demographic characteristics. We found that for gender, education, marital status, employment status, and income, there was no significant association with volunteering type. However, episodic volunteers were younger on average than regular volunteers; the average age of episodic volunteers was 40.8 years, they

were younger by six and a half years than regular volunteers of 47. 4 years ($t=-2.956$, $p<.01$). Furthermore, episodic volunteers were more likely to be employed full time than regular volunteers (Chi-Square = 26.01, df = 6, $p < .001$).

Regarding years of volunteering, the regular volunteers in our sample had volunteered for significantly more years at PRMH than the episodic volunteers, on average 5.6 years versus 2.9 years ($t=-5.93$, $df=246$, $p<.001$). Those episodic volunteers on average had been involved for about three years; this suggests that PRMH more likely relies on 'habitual' episodic volunteers than on 'genuine' episodic volunteers (see Handy et al., 2006).

Episodic volunteers were more likely to be involved in tasks that by nature lent themselves to volunteers coming in on an ad hoc basis, whereas regular volunteers were more likely to fill tasks that required specialized responsibilities, training and skills. Regular volunteers were significantly more likely to be involved as front-desk volunteers. Episodic volunteers, on the other hand, more likely participated in the guest chef program than in any other program. This was the only program that consistently used episodic volunteers, and was indeed organized to take advantage of volunteers who wanted only an ad hoc commitment to the PRMH. We find that 84% of episodic volunteers indicated that they participated in the guest chef program, as compared to 80% of regular volunteers who had participated as front desk volunteers and checked in families arriving to PRMH, assisted other volunteers, kept records, and helped with travel and other needs of the families. These differences in both years of volunteering and types of activities done by over 80% of our sample lend validity to our distinction between regular and episodic volunteers at PRMH based on their frequency of involvement.

The Research Questions

This study focuses on the differences in motivations, satisfaction, and rewards of volunteering between regular and episodic volunteers at PRMH. To measure volunteers' motivation to volunteer, as well as their level of satisfaction with their volunteering experience at the PRMH, and their interest in tangible rewards, we used three series of statements with a Likert-type response format. To determine the set of latent dimensions, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis. The results reported here are based on a generalized least squares extraction with orthogonal rotation (Varimax) and Kaiser normalization, which does not allow the extracted factors to be inter-correlated. We only retained items with factor loadings above .40 and the final solution reflected a simple structure. We treated all measures as additive scales.

First, the analysis revealed three motivational dimensions that refer to self-enhancement, career-enhancement, and value-driven motivations (compare Clary et al., 1998). The first factor (Cronbach's alpha .72) included 7 items that reflect the importance of self-enhancement motivations, understood in terms of a motivational process that revolves around the ego's growth and development, as well as new learning experiences and the chance to use one's knowledge and skills. These items are: being appreciated by staff/organization (.51); to use one's skills and experiences (.45); to spend one's free time in a

meaningful way (.45); because PRMH is well appreciated by society (.50); because it changes one's perspective on things (.49); because of the training received (.66); because one feels very close to other volunteers at PRMH (.61).

The second motivational dimension (Cronbach's alpha .74) incorporated 5 items that predominantly represent the value of volunteering for career enhancing motivations, that is, as an investment in one's human and social capital: to improve one's job skills (.85); because it is required for school or work (.49); to meet new people (increasing one's networks) (.51); to receive peer recognition (.45); because it looks good on one's résumé or application for a job or higher education (.61).

The third scale (Cronbach's alpha .63) reflected value-driven reasons for volunteering. Volunteers are motivated by the opportunities to express their altruistic values and humanitarian concerns for others. The scale is based on the following 4 items: a sense of civic duty (.40); to continue a family tradition (.72); to make Philadelphia a good place to live in (.66); because I am needed (.50).

Satisfaction with volunteering (Cronbach's alpha .71) is measured by means of a scale that consists of 6 items: satisfaction with the work one does (.58); the appreciation of the families (.53); appreciation of the staff (.42); the relationship with other volunteers (.60); training and experience (.68); the flexibility of when one can volunteer (.51).

The importance of tangible rewards (Cronbach's alpha .87) includes the following 6 items: receiving an award (.94); being recognized at an event publicly (.94); attending the Volunteer Appreciation Events (.56); getting a thank you note (.61); getting a free meal at PRMH (.61), and a reference letter (.62).

Findings

Motivations: Based on the net-cost theory, we firstly hypothesized that episodic volunteers would be less motivated by altruistic concerns in comparison with regular volunteers. We first looked at the separate statements, and for eight items, we noted statistically significant differences in the percentages of regular and episodic volunteers answering that they fully or somewhat agreed to these items being important as motivations to volunteer (Table 1).

The findings suggest that episodic volunteers more frequently emphasized social incentives to volunteer, e.g., someone asked them to volunteer, or they followed the example of friends or family. In addition, they were much more likely to be driven by a civic or religious sense of duty, and more likely understood their volunteering as a way to make Philadelphia a good place to live. Regular volunteers, on the other hand, were more likely to support motivations that included the opportunity to meet new people, and being close to other volunteers at PRMH. This seems to indicate that for episodic volunteers, it is more important that their volunteering is embedded in already established social relationships such as groups with whom they come to PRMH, whereas regular volunteers are more strongly oriented to the larger volunteer group at PRMH itself, and are able to develop stronger and more meaningful ties to other volunteers through their regular service.

Table 1
Motivations to Volunteer: Percentages Responding "Strongly Agree" and "Somewhat Agree"

Motivation	Volunteer Type			Total
	Episodic	Regular	Difference	All
Because it feels good to volunteer	97.3%	98.0%	NS	97.8%
To help families in need	98.6%	96.5%	NS	97.2%
To spend free time in a meaningful way	91.2%	93.2%	NS	92.6%
Because it changes my perspective on things	87.9%	88.0%	NS	88.0%
Because I am needed	91.2%	82.6%	NS	85.4%
Because I feel a sense of civic duty	83.1%	67.6%	*	72.5%
Because PRMH is well appreciated by society	74.2%	68.1%	NS	70.1%
I am appreciated by staff/organization	61.3%	66.2%	NS	64.7%
To make Philadelphia a good place to live in	86.2%	50.0%	***	61.6%
To use skills and experiences	54.8%	62.1%	NS	59.9%
To meet new people	40.3%	58.2%	*	52.7%
Because I was asked to volunteer	67.6%	42.6%	***	50.7%
Because I feel close to other volunteers at PRMH	29.5%	58.6%	***	50.0%
To explore my strengths	39.7%	46.4%	NS	44.3%
Because my friends volunteer for PRMH	60.9%	35.0%	***	43.3%
To fulfil religious/spiritual obligations or beliefs	56.5%	21.7%	***	32.5%
To find satisfaction/appreciation I cannot find in paid work	32.8%	21.6%	NS	25.1%
To continue family tradition	41.3%	15.6%	***	23.7%
Because family/friends/I received services PRMH	23,7%	15,4%	NS	17.9%
To improve my job skills	15.3%	14.7%	NS	14.9%
Because of the skills and training I receive	8.2%	16.3%	NS	13.7%
Because it looks good on resume	5.0%	13.3%	NS	10.8%
To receive peer recognition	15.0%	7.4%	NS	9.7%
Because it is required for school or work	5.1%	3.0%	NS	3.6%

Levels of statistical significance *** p<.001, **p<.001, *p<.05

Next, an independent samples t-test (Table 2) compares episodic and regular volunteers on the three motivational factors, and revealed that both groups differ with regard to the importance attached to value-driven reasons for volunteering, but not with regard to self-enhancement and career-enhancement motivations. Interestingly, and contrary to our first hypothesis, episodic volunteers think more idealistically of their volunteering activities than regular volunteers (mean score of 4.01 versus 3.35 on a 1-5 point scale).

Satisfaction: The second hypothesis focused on the difference in satisfaction levels with volunteering experiences between episodic and

regular volunteers. We found partial support for this hypothesis. We asked the respondents 'How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your volunteer experience in PRMH' and listed six different aspects of volunteering. It should be noted in Table 3 that overall high levels of satisfaction existed among volunteers of the PRMH. Respondents almost unanimously expressed strong satisfaction with the volunteer work, the appreciation from families, staff, and relationship with other volunteers. We found no significant differences between episodic and regular volunteers for these items, which generally refer to volunteers' interpersonal relationships. However, statistically significant differences existed regarding training and experience as well as flexibility of volunteering. While 94.4% of regular volunteers were satisfied with the training and experience received, only 59.3% of episodic volunteers expressed similar levels of satisfaction. As for flexibility of volunteering, 73.3% of episodic volunteers were somewhat to very satisfied, compared to 94.4% of regular volunteers.

Table 2
Independent Samples T-Test: Comparison of Mean Scores of Episodic and Regular Volunteers at PRMH for Motivations, Satisfaction, and Rewards

Variable Type	Min-Max range	Mean	Std. Deviation	Independent samples T-Test
Values	1-5			***
Episodic (N=60)		4.01	.57	
Regular (N=131)		3.35	.78	
Total (N=193)		3.57	.78	
Self-Enhancement	1-5			NS
Episodic (N=60)		3.63	.59	
Regular (N=128)		3.72	.63	
Total (N=190)		3.69		
Career	1-5			NS
Episodic (N=58)		2.21	.79	
Regular (N=129)		2.24	.78	
Total (N=189)		2.24	.80	
Satisfaction	1-4			NS
Episodic (N=52)		3.56	.45	
Regular (N=136)		3.66	.38	
Total (N=190)		3.63	.40	
Rewards	1-5			**
Episodic (N=62)		1.44	.78	
Regular (N=117)		1.83	.85	
Total (N=181)		1.70	.85	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3
Levels of Satisfaction Among Regular and Episodic Volunteers at PRMH: Percentages that "Somewhat" to "Fully Agree"

	Volunteer Type			Total
Satisfaction Type	Episodic	Regular	Difference	
Satisfaction with work	92.8%	98.0%	NS	96.3%
Appreciation of the families	95.7%	99.3%	NS	98.2%
Appreciation of the staff	94.4%	94.6%	NS	94.5%
Relationship with other volunteers	88.2%	93.9%	NS	92.1%
Training and experience	59.3%	86.6%	***	79.1%
Flexibility of when I can volunteer	73.3%	94.4%	***	88.2%

Levels of statistical significance *** p<.001, **p<.001, *p<.05

On the basis of a factor analysis, the six aspects of satisfaction could be reduced to one latent factor. An independent samples t-test for the satisfaction scale resulted in no differences between episodic and regular volunteers (Table 2). On average and across all items, both groups appear to display similar levels of satisfaction. Our second hypothesis, consequently, is not supported.

Rewards: The third hypothesis focused on the tangible rewards from the volunteer work. We asked volunteers to indicate the subjective importance of eight tangible rewards offered by the PRMH. Regular volunteers placed significantly higher importance to appreciation by staff and families, attending the volunteer appreciation events, free meals, and free parking (Table 4). Appreciation by staff and families was the most important reward for both groups, and being publicly recognized at an event and receiving a certificate or an award were the least important to both groups.

The rewards scale included six of these eight items (as discussed above), and the independent samples t-test indicated that episodic and regular volunteers differed in the overall importance of the rewards, as regular volunteers placed a higher importance to the different rewards than episodic volunteers (Table 2). Our third hypothesis is thus supported. However, it should be noted that on average, both regular and episodic volunteers attach little importance to receiving tangible rewards (a mean score of 1.83 and 1.44 respectively on a 1-5 point scale).

Multivariate regression analysis: In a final step, we perform a multivariate analysis in which we assess the impact of the type of volunteer (episodic versus regular) while controlling for the simultaneous influence of length of service and background characteristics on the volunteers' motivation, satisfaction, and interest in tangible rewards. The results of the independent samples t-tests in Table 2, which compared episodic and regular volunteers' mean scores on the factor scales and were discussed above, appear robust in the multivariate regressions as shown in Table 5. Episodic volunteers are significantly more likely to emphasize value-driven motivations, and attach substantially less importance to tangible rewards in comparison to

regular volunteers. There is no impact of volunteer type on the other three measures.

Interestingly, there is a net effect of years of volunteering on career enhancement motivations. The longer the volunteers have been involved, the less likely they stress this motive. Or in other words: the more one is interested in using volunteering for resume-building, the sooner one drops out of volunteering, and this irrespective of how frequent one is involved.

Also of note, finally, is the gender bias in self-enhancement motivations and levels of satisfaction. Female volunteers are more likely to volunteer for personal motivations, and to report higher levels of satisfaction with their volunteering experience. In addition, volunteers' income class influences their interest in tangible rewards. The higher the income, the weaker the importance attached to various types of rewards.

Table 4
Importance of Tangible Rewards: Percentages Responding "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important"

Type of Reward	Volunteer Type			Total
	Episodic	Regular	Difference	
Receiving a certificate or an award	1.5%	2.8%	NS	2.4%
Being recognized at an event publicly	4.5%	2.8%	NS	3.4%
Attending the volunteer appreciation events	4.6%	31.3%	***	23.0%
Getting a thank you note	17.9%	17.7%	NS	17.8%
A free meal at PRMH	3.0%	13.4%	*	10.1%
Free Parking	22.7%	43.7%	**	36.8%
Reference letter	6.1%	13.8%	NS	11.1%
Appreciation by staff and families	45.7%	65.3%	**	59.0%

Levels of statistical significance *** p<.001, **p<.001, *p<.05

Table 5
Multivariate Linear Regressions: Motivations, Satisfaction, and Rewards

Volunteer Characteristics	Values	Self-Enhancement	Career	Satisfaction	Rewards
Volunteer Type (ref=Regular)	.41***	-.09	-.10	-.02	-.21*
Years volunteered at PRMH	-.01	-.14	-.23*	.04	.04
Background variables					
Age	.13	.07	-.15	-.04	-.03
Gender (ref=Male)	.09	.21**	.02	.21*	-.10
Years of education	-.05	-.001	.02	-.08	-.06
Income	.11	-.12	-.16	-.05	-.27**
Adj. R-Square	.17	.04	.16	.02	.10

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Discussion and Conclusions

This study found significant differences between episodic and regular volunteers, but not always in the ways predicted. First, it is important to note that at PRMH, episodic and regular volunteers were involved in almost completely separated circuits of programs, tailored to the different intensity of involvement of both groups. Episodic volunteers more frequently performed ad hoc and noncommittal activities, whereas regular volunteers were more likely to engage in tasks that required specialized responsibilities, training and skills. Regular volunteers were involved over a longer-term basis than episodic volunteers. Nevertheless, at the PRMH, episodic volunteering likely seems to represent a habitual than a genuinely one-off activity.

Second, we found notable differences in motivation to volunteer between the two groups. However, contrary to our expectations, episodic volunteers were more likely to see themselves motivated by values than regular volunteers, yet both groups were equally likely to emphasize more self-oriented motivations. Interestingly, episodic volunteers to some extent seemed more idealistic about their involvement, stressing their religious and civic sense of duty, and their ability to make Philadelphia a better place to live in through their volunteering activities. We explain this finding by the fact that given that their volunteering experience is of a short-term nature, it is less likely to become mundane or repetitive and more likely to retain its novelty and remain a positive and fulfilling one.

This finding is intriguing. The net-cost theory upon which we based our hypothesis relies explicitly on the public perception of the benefits and costs of a volunteering activity and our extrapolation to motivations or what 'goes on inside the head' of a volunteer may not be a valid. Thus our findings suggest that the net-cost theory must be applied judicially in assessing on the benefits and costs that are extrinsic and not intrinsic to the volunteer.

Motivational differences further suggested that for episodic volunteers, the volunteer activity was more likely to be embedded in social relationships and group memberships that exist outside the PRMH; whereas regular volunteers were significantly more strongly oriented towards the group of PRMH volunteers. While episodic volunteers thus seemed to rely primarily on their established social networks, regular volunteers more likely reached out to other volunteers at PRMH they did not know before.

With regard to levels of satisfaction, we expected regular volunteers to be more satisfied than episodic volunteers because of their higher net costs. Both groups however appeared to be equally satisfied concerning the volunteer work, appreciation from families, staff, and relationship with other volunteers. One reason why episodic volunteers were equally satisfied with their volunteering as regular volunteers may be that the short-term nature of their volunteering and the immediate results of their work made it much easier to have a satisfying experience. Another reason may be, as explained earlier, the intrinsic nature of satisfaction may not lend itself to the public perception of extrinsic benefits on which the net cost theory is formulated.

Our finding on generally high satisfaction levels may not warrant the explanations we provide, if we expect that volunteers vote with their feet, that

is, that they are not likely to continue volunteering, at a cost to themselves, if they are not satisfied. However, this mechanism may equally likely appear in both groups, and responses biased by social desirability may equally affect both groups. Moreover, we believe that since satisfaction was not measures by a dichotomous choice (i.e., are you satisfied or not), but on a scale of 1-5, we are more likely to get the nuances of satisfaction that we are interested in for the differences between the two groups.

Interestingly, episodic volunteers were less satisfied with the training they had received. Given that PRMH provides hardly any training for episodic volunteers, this finding seems to indicate that notwithstanding that episodic volunteers participate on a more ad hoc basis and perform tasks that involve little responsibility and complexity, they nevertheless are expecting to receive some form of training. This also suggests that episodic volunteers are not that noncommittal as commonly perceived. They desire to act in a professional way, to deliver high-quality work, and are in need of adequate training to reach that goal.

In addition, episodic volunteers appeared also less satisfied with the flexibility of when they could volunteer. This is remarkable given the nature of episodic volunteering and contradicts common observations regarding episodic volunteers. The usual perception is that episodic volunteering offers the volunteer more flexibility and freedom of choice. In other words, episodic volunteering offers individualized volunteers an *a la carte* menu regarding the amount of time they want to give and in what way they want to contribute (Wollebæk & Selle, 2003). However, the success of the PRMH episodic volunteer program seems to result from the highly standardized and structured form of volunteering. Volunteers get clear instructions on at what time they should come in, by what time they should be ready to serve a meal, and by what time they should be leaving, as well as general instructions on what should be served. The program leaves no freedom regarding when and for how long one volunteers on a chosen day. Although the program proves to be highly successful, our findings nonetheless show that such strict arrangements are not always to the benefit of episodic volunteers' levels of satisfaction. Organizations involving episodic volunteers are thus confronted with a tension between, on the one hand, the 'ready made' nature of activities that involve little training and cost to the organization, and, on the other, episodic volunteers' apparent similarity to regular volunteers regarding their need for training and flexibility.

Our findings regarding tangible rewards from the volunteer work suggest that regular volunteers placed an overall higher importance on rewards attached to their volunteering work than episodic volunteers. These benefits, extrinsic in nature, reduce their net cost of volunteering and may result in sustaining their efforts over a longer term. It was also found in previous research that the longer people volunteered the more aware they were of the range of rewards attached to volunteering (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999). Of the rewards available, regular volunteers placed significantly higher importance on free meals and free parking, both of which reduced their costs of volunteering. This is not surprising if one considers that they came to volunteer more frequently and for longer periods of time. Consequently, their costs of volunteering were generally higher than those of episodic volunteers.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that some important differences exist between regular and episodic volunteers and that existing research on volunteering, which

is mostly based on regular volunteers does not necessarily apply to episodic volunteers without certain caveats. Even though our volunteers experienced the same environment, furthered the same cause, and served the same clientele, albeit in different ways, their motivations for and benefits from volunteering differed on several important dimensions. For example, we need to account for the differences in the costs and benefits facing regular and episodic volunteers and further differentiate them as extrinsic and intrinsic.

Further research is needed to investigate of the challenges and opportunities of managing episodic and regular volunteers within an organization as it is not always easy to blend episodic and regular volunteers under one management style. For this we need more information on the benefits, costs, and barriers facing volunteers, and the relations of episodic volunteers with regular volunteers and staff.

Some implications for volunteer resource managers from this study relate to understanding the use of episodic volunteers. By responding to the changing volunteer labor supply to their advantage, and recognize the differences between what drives regular and episodic volunteers, organizations can increase their use of volunteer labor. The PRMH staff successfully created roles that are suitable for episodic volunteers, in addition to holding on to their regular volunteers in the organization. Thus, they increased the number of organizational volunteers without negatively affecting regular volunteering. Our findings also indicated that episodic volunteers might have different motivations and expectations that need to be met. For example, managers of volunteers should note that although episodic volunteers are less rewarded than regular ones, they also need recognition, and a simple thank-you note may suffice. Interestingly, a thank you note, a rather inexpensive gesture on part of the organization, is equally valued by episodic and regular volunteers, and is a good way to appreciate all volunteers. Although the nature of episodic volunteering is short-term, episodic volunteers expect some training that will help them fulfill their temporary roles. They also wish for flexibility, but due to organizational needs, this is not always possible.

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