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“Volunteerism and Communities of Faith”

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Abstract

The literature on volunteering has consistently found a positive relationship between an individual's religious proclivity and volunteering. However, one might argue that for immigrants wishing to integrate – socially and economically – into a host society, the decision to volunteer will be equally influenced by other instrumental motives. Thus, we propose three theoretical frameworks that might explain volunteering in immigrant congregations: 1) religious beliefs, 2) social influence of peer congregants and authoritative clergy, and 3) perceived instrumental benefits of enhancing human and social capital. Using a sample of 495 congregants from 23 ethnic immigrant congregations in Philadelphia, we examine the effects of each of these motivations on immigrant volunteering. Findings suggest that among all first-generation immigrants, volunteering is strongly associated with religious beliefs, but among recent immigrants the decision to volunteer is further explained by instrumental motivations and social influence of peer congregants. A discussion of these results for volunteer administration follows.

Key Words: volunteering, immigrants, congregations, motivation

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Abstract

Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More (Faithful Families) is a research-based program that promotes healthy eating and physical activity in faith communities in nine counties in North Carolina. Faithful Families has worked with forty-one faith communities located in limited resource communities in these nine counties in North Carolina. Faithful Families uses the multi-level model to empower volunteer lay leaders and members of faith communities to carry out, in partnership with county level staff, individual education, policy and environmental

changes, and community engagement and county-level coalition building. Volunteer lay leaders have become health ambassadors in their communities, connecting faith and health for program participants using scriptures, prayers and personal examples. Dramatic increases in positive nutrition and physical activity behaviors were recorded, notably as a result of training and working closely with volunteer lay leaders. Additionally, volunteers continue to advocate for policy and environmental changes that affect the healthy eating and physical activity behaviors of their faith communities and their counties. Program implementation draws on focus group research with volunteer lay leaders and program participants. Recommendations for working with volunteer lay leaders in faith communities on health promotion programs are presented.

Key Words: lay leader, nutrition policy, health behavior, health promotion, religion

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Abstract

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Key Words: volunteers, faith-based, risk management, policy, youth, vulnerable adults

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Abstract

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Key Words: church, engagement, faith, profession

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Author: Betty B. Stallings (with Susan J. Ellis). Philadelphia, PA: Energize, Inc. (223 pages.

ISBN 978-094057661-2)

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[Editor-generated] Abstract

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[Editor-generated] Key Words: volunteers, volunteer management, church

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[Editor-generated] Abstract

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[Editor-generated] Key Words: volunteers, church, mission statement, recruitment

**In This Issue:
A Foundation of Faith**

Volunteer resource managers have long recognized the close positive relationship between volunteerism and individuals' religious beliefs and convictions. Many authors cite the religious concept of *caritas* as a, if not the, key foundational belief tenet for the social phenomenon of volunteering, especially in western religions. However, many contemporary governmental, quasi-governmental, and not-for-profit organizations and programs in the United States are often hesitant to collaborate with communities of faith in developing new and/or expanding existing volunteer based programs and initiatives due to the constitutional separation of church and state. Consequently, one may argue that in recent decades, volunteerism and faith-based communities have drifted further apart. This issue of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* will hopefully help us all reconnect these two important aspects of contemporary human society.

The issue opens with three excellent original *Feature Articles*. Itay Greenspan, Jill Witmer Sinha, and Femida Handy explore potential relationships between religious beliefs and potential motivations for volunteering among immigrant congregations in Philadelphia. The authors "Findings suggest that among all first-generation immigrants, volunteering is strongly associated with religious beliefs, but among recent immigrants the decision to volunteer is further explained by instrumental motivations and social influence of peer congregants." Next, a team of nutrition experts from North Carolina explores the role of volunteer church lay leaders in the implementation of the "Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More" faith-based health promotion program. Authors Annie Hardison-Moody, Carolyn Dunn, Ph.D., David Hall, Lorelei Jones, Jimmy Newkirk, and Cathy Thomas conclude, "Volunteer lay leaders have become health ambassadors in their communities, connecting faith and health for program participants using scriptures, prayers and personal examples. Dramatic increases in positive nutrition and physical activity behaviors were recorded, notably as a result of training and working closely with volunteer lay leaders." Finally, Marilyn K. Lesmeister and Sharon E. Rosenkoetter discuss the critical role of skills-based volunteers in congregations in developing safety policy for religious institutions. "The skills-based volunteers used their collective expertise to develop and implement a safety policy to help protect youth and vulnerable adults when those populations cannot protect themselves."

In his *Commentary*, Robert M. Bonesteel discusses the importance and the absence of the faith community within the profession of volunteer resource management, explores reasons for this occurrence, and advocates for the inclusion of the faith community in the dialogue and leadership of our profession. Harriett C. Edwards reviews the book, *Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement* by author Betty B. Stallings (with Susan J. Ellis) in *Tools of the Trade*.

From the Annals includes two articles published previously in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, all relating directly to the current issue's focus. "Church Volunteer Administration Similarities and Differences" by Janet Richards was first published in 1978, while "Using the Mission Statement to Recruit Church Volunteers" by Frances Ledwig was published originally in 1991.

I join the entire Editorial Board and Reviewers of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* in sharing this issue to remind us all of how faith and faith-based communities have long served as a firm foundation for volunteerism.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Dale Safrit". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

R. Dale Safrit, Ed.D.
Editor-In-Chief

The Road to Volunteering is Paved with Good Intentions: Volunteering in Immigrant Congregations as a Response to Religious, Social and Instrumental Motivations

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Abstract

The literature on volunteering has consistently found a positive relationship between an individual's religious proclivity and volunteering. However, one might argue that for immigrants wishing to integrate – socially and economically – into a host society, the decision to volunteer will be equally influenced by other instrumental motives. Thus, we propose three theoretical frameworks that might explain volunteering in immigrant congregations: 1) religious beliefs, 2) social influence of peer congregants and authoritative clergy, and 3) perceived instrumental benefits of enhancing human and social capital. Using a sample of 495 congregants from 23 ethnic immigrant congregations in Philadelphia, we examine the effects of each of these motivations on immigrant volunteering. Findings suggest that among all first-generation immigrants, volunteering is strongly associated with religious beliefs, but among recent immigrants the decision to volunteer is further explained by instrumental motivations and social influence of peer congregants. A discussion of these results for volunteer administration follows.

Key Words: volunteering, immigrants, congregations, motivation

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine what motivates first-generation immigrants who are members of ethnic congregations to become active volunteers within their congregation. The tradition of volunteering in congregations has a rich and well-studied history (e.g., Campbell & Yonish, 2003; Wilson, 2000; Wuthnow, 1991). This scholarship has consistently found a positive relationship between volunteering, an individual's religious proclivity, and congregation participation (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998; Wuthnow, 1991). However, with few exceptions (e.g., Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Lee & Moon, 2011), these studies have not focused on immigrant congregations.

Studying volunteering in immigrant congregations is important because one might argue that for immigrants wishing to integrate – socially and economically – into a host society, the decision to volunteer will be equally influenced by motivations other than fulfilling religious obligations. In particular, instrumental motives – that is, the potential benefits of advancing one's human and social capital – can be a reason for an immigrant to engage in volunteering. Another possible explanation is the social influence of peer congregants or authoritative clergy, which can have a significant impact on congregation members. Recent immigrants wishing to integrate into their host country, to learn the existing social norms and to gain acceptance

by other members, are more likely to respond to such peer pressure. Thus, social influence, religious beliefs, and perceived instrumental benefits are three theoretical frameworks that might explain volunteering in immigrant congregations.

Nevertheless, the question of why members in immigrant congregations choose to volunteer – or what are their volunteer motivations – has not been the focus of previous studies. We aim to address this question by examining the volunteer motivations of members of immigrant congregations. Given that immigrants typically seek to assimilate into the social and economic environment of their host country, we expect that alongside religious beliefs, instrumental motivations and the social influence of peers would play a role in immigrants' decision to volunteer within their congregation. We examine this premise using a sample of 495 first-generation immigrants from 23 ethnic congregations in Philadelphia.

Motivation to Volunteering in Immigrant Congregations

Motivations to volunteering are neither unidimensional (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991) nor homogenous (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Different population groups may report differing reasons for volunteering emanating from a combination of factors. We argue that three broad classes of motivations may influence volunteering in immigrant congregations: actualizing religious beliefs; instrumental motivations; and social influences.

Actualizing Religious Beliefs

The role of religious beliefs, and their relationship to volunteering, has been frequently examined in the literature (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998; Smith, 1998). Religious people, by personality, level of education, and/or theologically informed beliefs, are more concerned with the welfare of others and hence more willing to volunteer than non-religious people (Roehlkepartain, Naftali & Musegades, 2000; Wuthnow, 1991). Unruh and Sider (2005) offered three religiously-informed explanations for volunteer motivation: gratitude for what they have received; obedience to scriptural teaching; and an opportunity to experience God's presence. A culture of religious identity within one's family is another factor that may influence an individual's decision to volunteer (Park & Smith, 2000). Volunteering in support of vulnerable populations upholds religious obligations to help those in need and promotes religious values of charity and service to others (Cnaan, Boddie, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002; Wineburg, 2001). Thus, volunteering can be interpreted as an extension of religious beliefs (Harris, 1996). Regardless of what 'pathway' exists between religious motivations and volunteering, the voluntary nature of congregation membership suggests that members' beliefs are congruent with the religious tenets of helping and caring for others, and that members who volunteer may regard their volunteering as a way of actualizing their religious beliefs.

Our title plays with the old adage "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Despite the frequently cited religious motives for volunteering in congregations and elsewhere, such motives may not be the best predictors of actual volunteering behavior among immigrants. Although Wilson and Musick (1999) found

support for the influence of religious beliefs on actual volunteering among the most heavily involved congregation members, a number of subsequent studies suggest that – at least among less engaged or "average" believers, such beliefs were in fact, less relevant in determining who will volunteer and why (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Park & Smith 2000).

Instrumental Motivations

Economic theory maintains that volunteering is a rational productive activity that entails costs, and that individuals view such costs as an investment in building human and social capital that can bring gains in the labor market (Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth, 1996; Herzog, House & Morgan, 1991; Pearce 1993). From this economic perspective, immigrants may be drawn to volunteer as a way of re-building and enhancing human and social capital that is lost in the process of migration. First, by participating in event planning, holding governance positions, leading meetings, or engaging in community organizing within the congregation, immigrant volunteers enjoy the development of leadership skills that will serve them to build human capital outside of the congregation (Foley & Hoge, 2007; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). For immigrants, the perceived instrumental benefits of volunteering include gaining work experience, improving language skills, and getting a 'foot in the door' which can lead to paid employment (Brettell, 2005; Couton, 2002; Dudley, 2007; Handy, et al., 2010). We therefore expect that instrumental motives will be germane to the decision of immigrants in religious congregations to volunteer.

Second, making new friends and building social connections with like-minded individuals comprise the social-instrumental motivation for immigrant

volunteering (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Volunteering at congregations contributes to bonding social capital among members and facilitates bridging social capital with the wider community, as volunteering often takes place in the community, especially outreach efforts (Putnam, 2000).

Social Influences

A frequently unique cited reason for volunteering is being asked to volunteer or to help others. When individuals are part of networks within which volunteering is a social norm, they feel obligated to acquiesce when asked (Bowman, 2004; Freeman, 1997; Park & Smith, 2000). An opportunity to gain social approval – recognition, reputation, or the like – promotes people's decision to volunteer (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). Likewise, members of religious congregations are part of a social network with obligations and social norms. Compliance among congregation members is likely to impact members' participation in the group's culture of volunteering (Iannaccone, 1994). Immigrants who received voluntary services from the congregation upon their arrival and settlement in the host country, observed the congregation's social norms and culture of volunteering, and consequently felt compelled to reciprocate and give back to their community by volunteering (Handy & Greenspan, 2009).

We infer from the reviewed literature that immigrants may be motivated to volunteer as a way to integrate into the host country, including the mainstream culture and the labor market. Accordingly, our guiding research questions are:

- What are the motivations to volunteering among immigrants in congregations?
- What motivations are associated with, and better predict, immigrant-

volunteering behavior within congregations?

- Do recent immigrants differ in their motivations to volunteer as compared to established immigrants?

Methodology

The research is a cross-sectional study using a survey tool to collect data about volunteering behaviors and social integration from members of ethnic immigrant congregations in Philadelphia. The City of Philadelphia closely mirrors national statistics for volunteering, and hence provides an appropriate setting for the study of our research questions (CNCS, 2010). For instance, in 2009, 26% of Philadelphia residents have engaged in volunteering for an average of 29 hours a year; and 36% of the City residents chose to volunteer at religious organizations. These figures fall just short of average national figures for 2009: 27% of Americans volunteered for 34 hours a year, and 36.5% of all the volunteering activity was done at religious institutions.

Sample, Eligibility Criteria, and Recruitment

Sample selection. The first step involved selecting the congregations that will participate in the study. A sample of ethnic immigrant congregations was drawn from an existing census of Philadelphia congregations, which contained 1415 cases (Cnaan, Boddie, McGrew, & Kang, 2006). Three selection criteria were used to identify eligible congregations. The congregation: (a) is at least 75% ethnically homogenous; (b) has seating for at least 100 members; and (c) represents a established immigrant population in Philadelphia.

These criteria yielded a sampling frame of 192 congregations, from which we generated a stratified random sample of thirty-four potential congregations to survey.

These congregations were contacted by phone or by personal visits to determine eligibility and seek clergy approval to run the survey. Since our study was conducted several years after the census had been completed, we found several congregations that no longer existed or were not reachable at the address provided, while others did not meet our eligibility criteria. Thus, another thirty-one congregations were randomly selected from the sampling frame. Altogether, a total of 65 congregations were contacted, of which only thirty were reachable and met our criteria. Of these thirty congregations, twenty-three agreed to participate, yielding a 77% congregational response rate. These twenty-three congregations represented eight of the thirteen most prevalent immigrant populations in Philadelphia (Ceffalio & Patusky, 2006).

Respondent recruitment. The second step involved recruitment of congregants as respondents to the survey instrument. This was carried out during the summer of 2007. Visits to congregations consenting to participate in the study were made during weekly worship service. At the conclusion of the service, the clergy made an announcement about our research. Attendees were asked to voluntarily fill out the survey, and were guaranteed anonymity. We distributed paper-and-pencil surveys among all adults present at the time of the visit, and we also left surveys behind; if they were filled out, we came back to pick them up the following week. In addition, a web-based survey version was prepared and made available via the clergy to members who were not present at the day of the site visit. The web-based survey was identical in content to the paper-and-pencil survey.

A total of 559 questionnaires were collected. Thirty-five of them were filled out by second-generation immigrants, and 29 were incomplete and hence excluded. Our

final sample size was $N = 495$, with 90% paper-and-pencil surveys (on-site collection) and 10% online surveys (off-site collection). Given our method of data collection, we cannot calculate a response rate, and our sample of survey responses may be considered as a sample of convenience. Furthermore, as the off-site surveys represented 10% of all surveys, there is a potential bias of self-selection in responses.

The survey instrument. The survey included questions adapted from previous instruments (Cnaan et al., 2006; Handy & Greenspan, 2009) focusing on attendance in worship services, volunteering within and outside the congregation, motivations for volunteering, and socio-demographic characteristics. To determine the length of the survey and to ascertain easy comprehension of the questions, the survey was pilot-tested with a group of randomly chosen university students who are first-generation immigrants. Their comments were carefully considered and incorporated into the final version of the survey as deemed appropriate. The survey was also translated from English into Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese to accommodate congregants not comfortable with English. Each translated version was also tested for quality and comprehension, and corrected as required, by at least two experts whose mother tongue was the language of the survey.

Measures. We used two measures of *volunteering*: (1) a yes/no response to the question "In the past 12 months, have you volunteered with your congregation;" and (2) a count of the number of different volunteer activities within the congregation in which respondents were involved. Values of this measure ranged between 0 and 8 (see a list of those activities in Appendix A). We also measured *motivations to volunteering* by asking respondents to fill out a predetermined list of 10 statements about

volunteer motivations. Response options ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. *Congregation attendance* is a measure of the average number of times per month a respondent attended services in the past 12 months.

Previous studies on immigrant volunteers indicated that length of residency in the host country, being a woman, education levels, and employment are positively associated with immigrants' volunteering and civic participation (Cho, 1999; Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2004). We control in our model for: years in the US, gender, education, employment status, and level of English proficiency. The variable *years in the US* is highly correlated with age and income because the longer an immigrant has lived in the US, the higher his or her income, and the older his or her age. Hence, to avoid collinearity, *years in the US* serves as a proxy for income and age.

Analysis. Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS 17. Frequency distributions were calculated for all variables, factor analysis was used to construct the motivation dimensions, and Cronbach's Alpha test was used to verify the reliability of these constructs. Correlations, logistic and OLS regression were used to analyze predictors of volunteering.

Findings

Sample Characteristics

Demographics. Survey respondents were highly educated (55% with bachelors degree or more), relatively young (average age of 42 years), more likely to be employed (78% were full- or part-time employed), and nearly equally split in terms of gender composition (see Table 1). On average, respondents have resided in the US for almost 17 years. Nearly two-fifths of respondents found it difficult to communicate in English, or did not speak

English at all.

Volunteering and religious behavior.

Seventy-seven percent of the respondents volunteered within their congregation, engaging, on average, in almost two volunteering activities per year (1.84). In addition, 46% of the respondents reported volunteering outside the congregation. In terms of religious participation, respondents have been members of their congregation for an average of over 10 years and visited the congregation about five times per month.

Motivations to Volunteer

To answer our first research question, we used confirmatory factor analysis to verify the dimensions of volunteer motivation among immigrants who volunteered within their congregation. The analysis – as shown in Table 2 – confirmed that immigrants' motivations to volunteer are clustered around the three theoretical frameworks with four distinct dimensions: 1) religious beliefs, 2) social influence of peer congregants and authoritative clergy, and 3) instrumental benefits of (a) enhancing human capital and (b) building social capital. The right-hand column in Table 2 demonstrates that 'satisfying religious beliefs' is ranked highest in the list of motivations while instrumental benefits of enhancing human capital are the lowest. Having a low mean value (2.73) in the human capital-instrumental motivation indicates that respondents somewhat disagreed with instrumental reasons for volunteering.

Motivations to Volunteer and Associated Volunteer Behavior

To answer our second research question, we first conducted a bivariate analysis that examines the correlation of motivations to volunteer with actual volunteering behavior (see Table 3). We tested the four above-identified dimensions

of volunteer motivations against two measures of volunteering behavior within the congregation: a Yes/No response to the question whether the respondent has volunteered within the congregation and the count of volunteer activities performed within the congregation. We also tested the correlation of motivations with two additional variables: 1) a measure of attendance in the congregation (the number of times per month the respondent attend the congregation), and 2) the number of years a respondent has lived in the US since migration.

As the results in Table 3 suggest, the proclivity to volunteer within the congregation is negatively correlated with instrumental motivations ($r=-.134$) and is not correlated with the other motivations. In contrast, the number of volunteer activities within the congregation is positively associated with religious beliefs ($r=.145$) and the instrumental motivation to enhance social capital ($r=.157$), but not with enhancing human capital or social influences. This finding suggests that those volunteers motivated by religious beliefs will be more intentional about their volunteering and will take part in a greater number of volunteer activities. Volunteers motivated by an instrumental desire to enhance their human capital are likely to volunteer in fewer activities. They may do the minimum required to have a line of their resume confirming their civic contribution. However, those wishing to enhance social capital – meeting more and new friends – are more likely to engage in a greater number of volunteer activities in order to expand their social networks.

We performed two additional statistical procedures to answer our second research question, examining the association between motivations to volunteer and volunteer behavior, controlling for external effects. First, we used logistic regression to

examine the influence of the four motivations (independent variables) on the proclivity of volunteering within the congregation (dependent variable), controlling for gender, education, employment status, level of English proficiency, congregation attendance per month, and number of years in the US. This model was not significant implying that motivations to volunteer did not explain respondents' proclivity for volunteering.

Second, we used linear regression to examine the influence of motivations on the number of volunteer activities performed within the congregation (see Table 4). This model was significant ($F=2.488$, $p=.008$), showing a positive influence of one motivation – building social capital – on the number of volunteer activities performed. This finding means that immigrants are likely to increase their number of volunteer activities in order to build social networks lost in the process of migration. Furthermore, while the bivariate analysis suggested that the number of volunteer activities is associated with religious beliefs, this model suggested that religious motivation is no longer a good predictor of volunteering, once we controlled for other variables. People increase their number of volunteer activities in order to socialize with peers and less so for religious or other motivations. Congregation attendance was also positively and significantly associated with the number of volunteering activities within the congregation, which means the more time a person spends at the congregation, the more likely he or she is to engage in different types of volunteer activities within the congregation, not a surprising finding.

Volunteer Behavior of Recent and Established Immigrants

The minimal explanatory power of the instrumental-human capital and the social influence motivations in accounting for volunteer behavior was surprising in light of the findings in the literature. This finding led us to further investigate whether recent and established immigrants may differ in their volunteer behavior. The rationale for this differentiation is that recent immigrants are more likely to experience a need to make up for lost human and social capital, hence more motivated by instrumental reasons. By contrast, established immigrants who have been in the US for a longer time will no longer need to seek integration. Recent immigrants may also be more influenced by social pressure in an attempt to 'fit' into the mainstream culture.

Following Handy and Greenspan (2009), we divided the sample into two groups: recent immigrants, or those who immigrated less than 5 years prior to the time of the survey, and established immigrants, those who immigrated 5 or more years before the time of the survey. We compared recent and established immigrants on their motivations to volunteer and performed a t-test for differences (see Table 5). The results are revealing and expected: recent immigrants are significantly more likely to be motivated to volunteer by an instrumental motivation to enhance human capital and by social influence as compared to established immigrants. The two groups do not differ in their motivations to volunteer for religious beliefs or their desire to enhance their instrumental-social capital.

Thus, our hypothesis that recent immigrants are more likely to be motivated by instrumental reasons was supported. Nevertheless, contrary to our hypothesis, these motivations did not correlate with

higher rates of volunteer activity within the congregation. We find that recent immigrants still reported lower rates of volunteering within the congregation (63% vs. 79% for established) and a lower number of volunteer activities in which they were engaged (an average of 1.28 activities for recent immigrant vs. 1.95 for established). Recent immigrants were also less likely to attend worship services (3.82 times per month) compared to established immigrants whose average rate of attendance was 5.31 per month.

Discussion and Implications

Our main goal in this paper was to examine what motivates first-generation immigrants to engage in volunteer activity within their religious congregations. We proposed three theoretical frameworks for their volunteering: 1) religious beliefs, 2) the social influence of peer congregants, and 3) the two perceived instrumental benefits of enhancing one's human and social capital. We assumed that immigrants, who seek to integrate into the social and economic fabric of the host country, would see the potential to enhance their human and social capital through volunteer activity within their congregations. Therefore, we expected these immigrants to report motives that favor instrumental motivations for volunteering.

Contrary to our expectations, the findings suggested that religious beliefs ranked highest (see mean values in Table 2), instrumental motives to enhance human capital had, in fact, negative association with frequency of volunteering (Table 3), and only the instrumental motivation to enhance social capital (i.e., to make new friends) explained why congregants engaged in higher number of volunteer activities within the congregation (Table 4). Only when dividing the sample into two groups of recent and established immigrants, we found that recent immigrants were more likely than

established immigrants to report instrumental motives and social influence in their decision to volunteer (Table 5). However, higher scores on these two motivations did not imply higher rates of volunteering. Compared to established immigrants, recent immigrants were less likely to volunteer within the congregation or to engage in a higher number of volunteer activities.

The findings of religious motivations ranking highest needs explanation: One explanation may be that that most volunteering reported either takes place within the congregation or is initiated by the congregation. Our findings are consistent with theoretical models that posit volunteering by congregation members is a direct extension of an individual's religious beliefs (Harris, 1996; Unruh & Sider, 2005), in which volunteers espouses religious obligations to help and serve those in need (Cnaan et al., 2002; Wineburg, 2001). Another complementary interpretation suggests that it may be social desirability which makes it difficult for congregants to admit to instrumental motivations (Pearce, 1993; Shye, 2010). Social desirability tends to make individuals project favorable images of themselves during social interaction (and in survey research). Since we utilized congregation venues to conduct the survey, and most respondents answered the survey in their place of worship, the context may have contributed further to the 'social desirability' response bias. Hence the high support for religious beliefs. Such a limitation should be considered in future studies on volunteering motivations.

Recent immigrants' low volunteering rates, given their high instrumental motivations, was contrary to our expectations. Instrumental benefits that are marketable and are used to enter the labor market may not require intensive volunteering or engagement in multiple

volunteer activities, but just enough to build a resume, get a reference, or learn some new skill. This may explain why immigrants motivated by instrumental reasons volunteer for shorter periods of time and in a more episodic fashion. Indeed the literature has long recognized that congregational volunteering is instrumental in building skills such as leadership, organizing, and administrative capacities (Eck, 2001; Foley & Hoge, 2007; Verba, Scholzman & Brady 1995).

Finally, we also note that half of the sample indicated they volunteered because the clergy or another member of the congregation asked them to. The maxim of "friends bring friends" using personal networks is widely known to most volunteer coordinators and has been proven effective (Safrit & Lopez, 2001). These findings lead to practical implications for the study of volunteer behavior of immigrants that we turn to next.

Practical Implications. Undoubtedly, volunteers play a crucial role in the operation of any religious congregation. Congregants' volunteer labor allows the congregations to exist and persist. This is especially true for immigrant congregations, where budgets are normally low and oftentimes paid workers are unaffordable. It is therefore crucial for clergy and lay leadership in such congregations to develop effective recruitment strategies for volunteers from their congregation members.

To do this, it is important for volunteer administrators to unpack the motives of their volunteers. Whether it is in a faith-based institution or not, the motives of volunteers play an important role in recruiting and retaining volunteers. If volunteers are responding to religious motives, as we find, it would be sensible to use recruitment practices that reflect religious values. Other domains of

volunteering, such as environmental nonprofits may have to recruit volunteers and build in values akin to respecting the natural environment.

In light of the above findings, we believe that clergy and program administrators with responsibility for volunteer recruitment still need to appeal first to one's duty to fulfill religious and moral inclinations, and only then suggest other benefits. In the case of recent immigrants, recruitment strategies should emphasize alongside religious benefits the instrumental benefits of enhancing human capital such as learning new skills, understanding the mainstream culture, or getting experiences to build resumes. In addition, it would be worth emphasizing that volunteering provides opportunities for newer immigrants to interact with like-minded individuals and ease the difficulties of relocation. Opportunities for social networking in volunteer activities should also be enhanced. If volunteers are seeking networking, crafting volunteer tasks with this in mind will help to recruit and retain them. However, these strategies that emphasize instrumental benefits should be in tandem with approaches that honor and integrate religious values into the volunteer experiences.

Another area of importance in working with immigrants regarding volunteering is to comprehend their barriers to volunteer. Family situations, employment status and failing to understand the expectations of being a volunteer may impede recent immigrants from participating. If volunteering within the congregation eases the route for settling and integrating into new communities as found by Handy and Greenspan, (2009) and Sinha, Greenspan and Handy (2011), volunteer administrators must pay attention in providing suitable contexts that encourage new immigrants to volunteer. This might

require crafting opportunities in which they feel valued and respected. Language issues should be considered too, as it poses a barrier to many immigrants from volunteering, especially in situations where they are not fluent in the working language.

Recent immigrants may not come from cultures where volunteering is a norm. In order to recruit them, volunteer administrators should reach out to in different ways than they would for long time immigrants or native members. Organizing a session or two, for example, where the immigrants learn what volunteering entails, the responsibilities of volunteers, and the many different ways to engage as volunteers (ranging from cooking communal meals and being ushers to helping at homeless shelters and the thrift shops) can broaden the appeal of volunteering among recent immigrants.

Often individuals do not know where to volunteer and how to begin. Simply asking individuals to volunteer may yield good results, as our findings show where half the volunteers report volunteering because they were asked. Social anxiety may prevent an individual from taking the first step and coming to volunteer (Handy & Cnaan, 2007). To overcome this, established volunteers can be requested to mentor individuals and bring new recruits with them and initiate them into volunteering. It is easier to go with someone who knows what volunteering may entail than to go by oneself even if one wants to.

In conclusion, in our study, while "good intentions" were reported among both recent and established immigrants, only among the established immigrants was this motive matched by higher rates of volunteering. Administrators and program directors should persist in asking, inviting, and encouraging people, especially recent immigrants to volunteer, and reduce the barriers that faced by them. Furthermore, they should stress not only the importance of

satisfying religious obligations, but also the instrumental benefits that can be gained from volunteer experience.

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Table 1

Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N=495)

Variable	% (SD)
Volunteering within the congregation	
Yes	76.9%
No	23.1%
Average number of volunteer activities within the congregation [range 0-8]	1.84 (1.72)
Congregation attendance (average times per month) [range 0-36]	5.1 (4.5)
Average years in the US [range 0-69 years]	16.7 (12.1)
Gender	
Male	48.6%
Female	51.4%
Average age [range 17-93]	42.5 (15.2)
Higher education	
Less than Bachelors	45.0%
Bachelors degree or higher	55.0%
Employment status	
Not employed (incl. retired and student)	21.9%
Employed	78.1%
Level of English	
No English or difficult to communicate	38.2%
Easy to communicate	61.8%

SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2

Volunteer Motivations: Factor Analysis, ^a Reliability, and Mean Values

Dimension	Item description (I volunteer...)	Factor Loadings (N=215)			Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach α)	Dimension Mean
		1	2	3		
Instrumental – human capital	...to get reference for employment or university admission	.890			.909	2.73
	...to fulfill government/school service requirements	.854				
	...to enhance my resume	.839				
	...to get work experience or to get a (better) job	.804				
	...to learn more about US	.591				
Instrumental - Social capital ^b	...to make new friends		.736		-	3.49
Social influence	...because my friends volunteer	.796			.803	3.00
	...because I was asked to volunteer	.768				
	...because I was encouraged by my pastor / clergy to volunteer	.757				
	...to be appreciated by my colleagues / friends	.676				
Religious beliefs ^b	...to satisfy my religious beliefs		.883		-	4.21

^a Extraction method: principal component; Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization; converged in four iterations.

^b While the items for religious beliefs and instrumental social capital loaded together in the factor analysis, reliability testing was relatively low ($\alpha=.666$), and the two items do not theoretically fit together, hence they are treated separately.

Table 3

Correlation of Motivations to Volunteer and Actual Volunteering Behaviors^a

	(VWC)	(NVA)	(RB)	(SI)	(ISC)	(IHC)	(Att)	(YUS)
Vol. within the congregation (VWC)	1							
No. of volunteer activities (NVA)	.590**	1						
Religious belief (RB)	.070	.145**	1					
Social influence (SI)	-.020	-.025	.269**	1				
Instrumental - Social capital (ISC)	.069	.157**	.501**	.419**	1			
Instrumental – Human capital (IHC)	-.134*	-.032	.307**	.664**	.499**	1		
Attendance (Att)	.106*	.116*	-.017	-.016	-.001	-.033	1	
Years in the US (YUS)	.119**	.113*	.118*	-.003	-.014	-.127*	.205**	1

* p<.05. ** p<.01 (all two-tailed).

a All values are Pearson r correlation coefficients. Pairwise matching of variables

Table 4

Linear Regression Model with Number of Volunteer Activities Within The Congregation as Dependent Variable

	β^a	S.E.
(Constant)	-.463	.649
Motivation: Religious belief	.192 (.124)	.114
Motivation: Social influence	.064 (.037)	.143
Motivation: Instrumental – Social capital	.242* (.165)	.113
Motivation: Instrumental – Human capital	-.086 (-.057)	.132
Congregation attendance (times per month)	.079* (.164)	.032
Years in the US (cont.)	.012 (.082)	.010
Gender (1=Female)	-.169 (-.048)	.233
Higher education (1= Bachelors or higher)	.344 (.094)	.256
Employed (1=Yes)	.155 (.034)	.304
English (1=easy to communicate)	.327 (.082)	.282
N	228	
Adj. R ²	.070	
F	2.719**	

* p<.05, ** p<.01

^a Standardized coefficients are reported in parentheses

Table 5

Motivations to Volunteer – Comparison of Recent and Established Immigrants

	Recent N=78 Mean (SD)	Established N=411 Mean (SD)	t-test	df
Motivation: Religious belief	4.02 (1.21)	4.23 (1.14)	-1.126	339
Motivation: Social influence	3.36 (1.14)	2.95 (1.14)	2.163*	315
Motivation: Instrumental – Social capital	3.58 (1.24)	3.50 (1.27)	.373	309
Motivation: Instrumental – Human capital	3.27 (1.23)	2.66 (1.30)	2.900**	313
Congregation attendance (times per month)	3.82 (2.82)	5.31 (4.69)	-3.562*	138.208
Vol. within the congregation	.63 (.49)	.79 (.41)	-2.811**	93.893
No. of vol. activities	1.28 (1.52)	1.95 (1.74)	-3.102**	476
Vol. outside the congregation	.39 (.49)	.47 (.50)	-1.181	86.711

* p<.05, ** p<.01

a SD=Standard deviations in parentheses

Appendix A

Types of Volunteer Activities within the Congregation

	% reporting yes
Special event (serving meals, cooking, flower arrangements)	39.0
Training / education (Sunday school)	25.9
Maintenance / transportation (technical skills / physical labor)	22.6
Fundraising	22.0
Governance / management (committees, board)	21.6
Choir	20.8
Other	15.2
Administration (phone calls, bookkeeping)	13.1

Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More: The Role of Volunteer Lay Leaders in the Implementation of a Faith-based Health Promotion Program

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Abstract

Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More (Faithful Families) is a research-based program that promotes healthy eating and physical activity in faith communities in nine counties in North Carolina. Faithful Families has worked with forty-one faith communities located in limited resource communities in these nine counties in North Carolina. Faithful Families uses the multi-level model to empower volunteer lay leaders and members of faith communities to carry out, in partnership with county level staff, individual education, policy and environmental changes, and community engagement and county-level coalition building. Volunteer lay leaders have become health ambassadors in their communities, connecting faith and health for program participants using scriptures, prayers and personal examples. Dramatic increases in positive nutrition and physical activity behaviors were recorded, notably as a result of training and working closely with volunteer lay leaders. Additionally, volunteers continue to advocate for policy and environmental changes that affect the healthy eating and physical activity behaviors of their faith communities and their counties. Program implementation draws on focus group research with volunteer lay leaders and program participants. Recommendations for working with volunteer lay leaders in faith communities on health promotion programs are presented.

Key Words:

lay leader, nutrition policy, health behavior, health promotion, religion

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Introduction

Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More (Faithful Families) is a research-based program that promotes healthy eating and physical activity in faith communities in nine counties in North Carolina. The program was developed by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and the North Carolina Division of Public Health to address the rise in obesity and overweight in North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, State Center for Health Statistics. 2007; Trust for America's Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010). Working with faith communities is a promising strategy for

promoting healthy eating and physical activity in community settings, particularly in North Carolina. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2008), 69% of North Carolinians reported that religious beliefs and practices are "very important" in their lives. Almost half of survey respondents reported that they attend religious services at least once a week (Pew Forum On Religion in Public Life, 2008). Because faith communities have the potential to impact the behaviors and practices of a significant portion of the population in the United States, programs that integrate healthy eating and physical activity into the life and environment of the

faith community can positively influence the health of individuals.

This article presents the design and implementation of the Faithful Families program, and focuses on the role of volunteer lay leaders in program implementation and design. Volunteer lay leaders serve as pillars of the program's dissemination, in that they co-lead weekly educational lessons with trained nutrition and physical activity professionals. They also have become health ambassadors in their faith communities, drawing on training they receive from Faithful Families staff, who serve as volunteer resource managers on the project. These volunteer lay leaders work toward policy and environmental changes in the faith community and at the county level. Working closely with volunteer lay leaders has produced dramatic results in individual behavior change and in the environment of the faith community; however, as we will discuss, this type of collaborative work with volunteers takes time and relies on a give and take relationship. We describe the role volunteer lay leaders play in program implementation and offer several recommendations (given by volunteer lay leaders themselves) for volunteer resource managers who want to work with volunteers in the faith community, with particular focus on health education programming.

Program Design

Faithful Families has worked with forty-one faith communities in nine counties in North Carolina: Harnett, Lee, Durham, Moore, Cleveland, Granville, Guilford, Vance and Warren. Of the 941 individuals who provided income information on assessments conducted by Faithful Families program staff, 63% are designated as low-income (at or below 185% of federal poverty level). Faithful Families aims to improve access to and education about

healthy eating and physical activity for those who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of poverty and marginalization. According to Faithful Families health assessments, the effects of poverty on health are immense: 72% of participants are overweight or obese, 7% reported that they suffer from heart disease, 24% from high cholesterol, 20% from arthritis, 12% from diabetes, and 37% from high blood pressure.

Faithful Families is a collaborative project at the state and county level. The project was designed and is administered by state-level partners: the North Carolina Division of Public Health and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, NC State University. In addition to collaboration between state-level partners, Faithful Families was developed using the input of an all volunteer advisory board. In the summer of 2007, state and local faith community leaders participated in a collaborative summit where they identified the particular needs and assets of faith communities in North Carolina related to health promotion programs and interventions. One result of the summit was the creation of a Faithful Families advisory board, a group of volunteers that met quarterly for the first two years and now bi-annually to provide guidance on program design, curriculum review, and general input and feedback on working with religious communities. This volunteer board, now made up of faith leaders and health professionals from the counties where the program has been implemented offer guidance on working with volunteers in the faith community, helping to ensure community buy-in and support for the program. As Safrit and Schmiesing (in press) have noted, "program evaluation, impact and accountability" is a key component to working effectively with volunteers, as determined by their empirical PEP model for volunteer administration (p.

23). The volunteer advisory board serves a key purpose in advocating for the program's continuation in that they provide key evaluation feedback on program progress and areas of concern.

In each of the nine Faithful Families counties, county Cooperative Extension Agents, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Program Associates and Health Promotion Coordinators from local health departments work together to build on existing contacts (health ministry networks, denominational bodies) to recruit faith communities and volunteer lay leaders for the project. The EFNEP Program Associate, along with the Faithful Families Program Coordinator, who is jointly employed by the NC Division of Public Health and the NC Cooperative Extension Service, took the lead and held meetings with both lay and ministerial faith community leaders in each county. Project staff spent time building relationships with these leaders to ensure project buy-in and commitment. As Carolyn L. Bird has noted, Cooperative Extension Services can greatly expand program accessibility for hard-to-reach populations by drawing on volunteers; however, these volunteers must be willing to serve in such a capacity, in addition to being able to effectively communicate with the populations they will serve (Bird, 2011). Faithful Families staff recruited volunteer lay leaders who exemplified these skills by holding in-depth conversations with faith leaders and county staff. This type of grassroots, community-based outreach demands significant time from staff and partners (Woodson & Braxton-Calhoun, 2006). However, it is key to ensuring an engaged pool of volunteer lay leaders.

Faithful Families is based on the socio-ecological or multi-level model for behavior change (McLeroy, Bibleau, Streckler, & Glanz, 1988). The model provides a framework for intervening at

multiple levels of influence on health behaviors and practices thus is appropriate for the complex nature of the faith community. The program combines evidence-based or best practices that target individual behavior with environmental and policy changes that will remain after the interventions have been completed. Research has demonstrated that a multi-level approach is both attentive to the complexities of faith community dynamics and can also help to empower faith community members to advocate for policy and environmental changes in their organization and in the community-at-large (Campbell et al., 2007; Kaplan et al., 2009). Faithful Families staff works collaboratively with volunteer lay leaders in the faith community to implement each element of the program.

Program Implementation: Working with Volunteer Lay Leaders in the Faith community

A key component of the Faithful Families program that utilizes the skills and capacities of volunteer lay leaders is the implementation of a nine-lesson faith-based nutrition and physical activity curriculum. This curriculum combines open-ended questions about faith and spirituality with rigorously tested nutrition and educational messages developed by EFNEP. The curriculum was developed with input from county health department and Cooperative Extension staff and the Faithful Families volunteer advisory board.

Volunteer Training

Volunteer lay leaders are recruited and trained in each faith community where Faithful Families is offered. Volunteer lay leaders from the faith community are trained by Program Associates from EFNEP (who serve as the volunteer managers for the project), to co-lead educational sessions.

This extensive training and technical assistance is a part of the volunteer management plan for the program. The training includes role playing and hands-on activities to help volunteer lay leaders experience and understand their responsibilities throughout the program. Volunteers are able to practice co-teaching lessons, preparing recipes and conducting food demonstrations. This volunteer training has become standardized and is now a permanent part of the Faithful Families curriculum delivery system.

In addition to this training, the Faithful Families county staff (who serves as the volunteer manager) provides extensive technical assistance each week to the volunteer lay leaders. This includes reminders about upcoming lessons (and the respective staff and volunteer roles during the lessons), instructions about cooking demonstrations, and support for general or specific questions about the lessons. The EFNEP Program Associates have discovered that this in-depth technical assistance is necessary to ensure that volunteer lay leaders feel confident in delivery of the lessons they co-lead, which in turn leads to successful program outcomes. The success of the curriculum implementation is measured using pre-and post-test behavior questionnaires developed by EFNEP.

Working with volunteer lay leaders has been shown to be effective in faith-based health promotion programs because faith community members trust these natural leaders in their communities to deliver educational messages (Pullen-Smith, Carter-Edwards, & Leathers, 2008). As Pullen-Smith, Carter-Edwards and Leathers (2008) argue based on their work with lay health ambassadors in a diabetes program, “by training volunteers from the general community, community-based organizations (CBOs), and/or faith-based organizations (FBOs), residents can receive culturally

sensitive health education messages from individuals who are part of the community” (p. S74). Faithful Families creates such “culturally sensitive” programming through the volunteer lay leader’s role during the educational lessons. Volunteer lay leaders use scriptures, readings, and faith-based practices to connect health information to the participants’ faith tradition. As Kaplan et al. have argued, integrating religious and health messages is critical to participants in health programs in faith communities (Kaplan et al, 2009). This integration continues into the policy and environmental change component of the program, where volunteer lay leaders link potential changes in policies and environments in the faith community (serving water, hosting a community garden) to religious practices and beliefs. Volunteer lay leaders help community members identify policy and environmental changes that can be implemented in the faith community to improve the nutrition and physical activity behaviors and practices of its members.

Volunteer Lay Leaders and Community Engagement

In addition to individual education and organizational policy and environmental changes, Faithful Families works to connect faith communities to county-level organizations and programs that support healthy eating and physical activity. Volunteer lay leaders have taken what they learned from the program to build partnerships with other faith communities and health-based community groups to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity in their counties and surrounding communities. As Bird (2011) found in her study of Extension workers and SHIP volunteers, partnering organizations can draw on the resources of volunteers to expand services and contribute “to community capacity building” by training

and empowering local volunteers (p. 6). As she writes of the NC Cooperative Extension and NC Department of Insurance SHIP partnership, “both organizations benefit through enhancements to their mission execution and community residents’ lives are enhanced through the efficient delivery of services incorporating volunteer management and volunteer resources” (p.6). For Faithful Families communities, partnership and volunteer resources have contributed to significantly widened service usage of county resources by Faithful Families faith communities. This includes, but is not limited to resources for promoting good nutrition and physical activity.

A comprehensive Faithful Families Resource Guide was created to enhance access to resources and supplement technical assistance for each faith community. This guide is used in concert with hands-on technical assistance from county and state staff, so that volunteers in faith communities can take a more active leadership role in promoting, enacting and sustaining their own health programs and policy and environmental changes.

Volunteers play a key role in the implementation of Faithful Families at each level of the program’s influence: individual education, community change, and county coalition building. As will be elaborated below, they connect faith and health for program participants, drawing on the particular resources and traditions of their faith community. They also encourage participants to plan and implement policy and environmental changes that support healthy eating and physical activity in the faith community. Their work grounds this program. It is in large part due to their contributions that the significant program results have been achieved. These include the following results for 566 participants in the first three years of the program delivery: 88% improved in one or more food resource

management practices; 65% improved in one or more food safety practices; 66% used food labels more often to make food choices; 48% increased consumption of calcium-rich foods; 49% increased vegetable consumption; 42% increased fruit consumption; and 32% of participants increased the amount of daily physical activity. Additionally, over 119 policy and environmental changes have been made among the forty-one faith communities that have implemented Faithful Families.

Working with Volunteers in Faith Communities.

Focus group discussions with 61 individuals demonstrated that volunteer lay leaders have been empowered to serve their faith community as health ambassadors. They also play a powerful role in program delivery. Volunteer lay leaders are offered a comprehensive training with Cooperative Extension staff, after which they co-lead lessons with a Faithful Families EFNEP Program Associate in the educational series, focusing on nutrition, physical activity and the connection to faith. Volunteer lay leaders introduce the spiritual element into each lesson by offering scripture, prayers, or other practices to connect faith and health in each of the meetings. As one lay leader reported during focus groups, “Every night, when we would open our meeting, we always found a scripture that had to do with our bodies and faith. We made it an issue” (Harnett County lay leader, focus group, 2008). Making health a faith issue was not hard for participants or volunteer lay leaders. Many found that faith and health are intimately connected, citing the Christian scriptural reference of the “body as a temple,” or noting that God wanted participants to have a positive “quality of life” (Harnett County lay leader, focus group, 2008). In addition to faith having a positive influence on health behaviors,

several participants noted that their faith was strengthened by their positive progress in the program: "I feel like...for me, you have to put your mind, to have faith that you can do this. There is nothing impossible, and you can do this, and you can make this change" (Harnett County participant, focus group, 2008). When the focus group facilitator posed the question of whether others felt that their faith was strengthened through the program, another participant chimed in with, "Yeah. Because I didn't think I could stop drinking sodas. I really didn't" (Harnett County participant, focus group, 2008). Faith-based health promotion researchers have noted that when spirituality is infused in health promotion work, participants are able to make positive changes in their health behaviors (Kaplan et al., 2009). For Faithful Families participants, health and faith are intimately connected. The program emphasized these connections, building on the volunteer lay leaders' experience and community knowledge to help participants continue to integrate their spiritual and physical health.

Although initial project plans included volunteer lay leaders as co-facilitators of the nine-session educational series, project staff did not anticipate the pivotal role that these volunteers would play in the program's success. Volunteer lay leaders not only connected faith and health for participants, but they also helped communities to plan and implement policy and environmental changes that support healthy eating and physical activity. They encouraged participants to feel empowered to change the physical and habitual environment of their communities. As one woman said, "I have watched over the years how we have prepared our foods when we had functions. I actually saw a lot of unhealthy foods. I thought, OK when [Faithful Families] came along, this is a chance to educate us on how to prepare our

foods...And I thought, in my mind -- this is when a light bulb went off -- we don't have to cut out the fellowship meals, we just have to cut out the way we do them, the way we prepare them, the foods that we bring" (Harnett County lay leader, focus group, 2008). These shifts in practice and environment have changed the ways foods are served at faith community functions. As one participant noted, "One thing I will say is that we have ladies that can cook. But we're using less fat in our foods and in some situations we've eliminated it altogether . . . we have learned to change how we prepare the food [which] has been a benefit to us" (Harnett County participant, focus group, 2008). One church improved food that was being prepared for an annual event: "For homecoming, a lot of people don't know it, but we didn't have any fried chicken...and we don't usually have pitchers of water, but we did, and now we're in the process of starting a group walking, like in the area" (Harnett County lay leader, focus group, 2008). Additional policies adopted by Faithful Families faith communities include: offering water at all events, serving fruits and vegetables at all events, offering healthy options (like grilled meats), and requiring physical activity breaks during meetings and classes. Environmental changes, such as marking walking trails, encouraged faith community members to increase their physical activity levels. Faith communities also created walking groups that met 30 minutes prior to a scheduled meeting time to walk around the faith community campus. Additionally, faith communities have opened physical activity facilities to non-members and created community gardens that provide fresh fruits and vegetables to those in the faith community and other community partners. They have also joined county health teams, working to connect vital public health services and resources to their faith community members. Volunteer

lay leaders have spearheaded these efforts in their communities, as a result of their participation in Faithful Families.

Each of these policy and environmental changes emerges out of the conversations generated during the Faithful Families classes led by the volunteer lay leaders. Volunteer lay leaders use scripted questions in the curriculum to guide participants to think about the ways that our environment impacts health behaviors and decisions. For example, questions like, “How does our faith community help members to eat smart?” help participants to explore the ways that their community might better equip its members to make healthier nutrition choices. In fact, Faithful Families program staff noted that these open-ended questions promoted an on-the-spot policy change in one faith community. After talking about the benefits of whole grain products, class participants decided to create a policy that at each of their snack-supper meals; whole wheat bread would be served along with the choice of white bread for sandwiches. While most policy and environmental changes did not happen within the course of the lesson, the lessons themselves and the conversations they generated were pivotal in informing needed policy and environmental changes. Trained volunteer lay leaders asked critical questions and built on the religious and health assets of the faith community itself. This resulted in notable policy and environmental changes. Faithful Families staff worked with volunteer lay leaders to design and implement these changes, based on the input of faith community leadership and program participants.

A significant outcome of the pilot stage of the program was the creation of a faith-based health action team as part of an existing health action team in Harnett County. The Healthy Harnett action team continues to meet regularly in order to

improve coordination and collaboration among health programs and resources in the county. This model of collaboration among faith communities, county health education programs, and existing county coalitions is being expanded into other counties.

Volunteer lay leaders have been empowered, through their training as Faithful Families volunteer lay leaders, to become health ambassadors in their own communities and in the community-at-large.

Implications and Recommendations

As with many community-based initiatives, the project plan for Faithful Families shifted to meet each faith community’s needs and perceived assets. The volunteer lay leaders noted that the flexibility of the Program Associate in working with faith communities was an incredible asset. The volunteer lay leaders recommended this type of flexible stance when working with volunteers from the faith community. As one woman said, “We learned a lot from [her]—but [she also] learned from us...[you need to be] open minded. She allowed one of the pastors to do something on clean and unclean foods; she gave us leeway” (Lee County lay leader, focus group, 2010). Another lay leader followed up, saying, “You know you have to have a knack to stand up in front of groups of people from different backgrounds and different religions, to modify how you are approaching that and do it in a nice, even way...[a] non-threatening [way]. She was] very good at presenting [that]” (Lee County lay leader, focus group, 2010). As our project staff learned, working with volunteers in faith communities requires an approach to the work as a “two-way street,” learning from the community while they also learn from you. As others have noted, taking a community-based participatory research approach to work with a faith community allows the community to be

empowered to make the changes they need and want – rather than having these things imposed from the outside (Campbell et al., 2007; Cowart et al., 2010). Our work with Faithful Families communities demonstrates that this type of participatory approach can lead to the empowerment of volunteer lay health advocates who work for community changes that are appropriate, necessary, and relevant for community members themselves. This type of collaborative work takes time and it involves partnerships at all levels – state, county, local, individual.

An additional finding and recommendation for others who wish to work with volunteer lay leaders in faith communities regards volunteer management. As noted above, the volunteer lay leader training plays a large role in supporting and training these volunteers. These trainings allow volunteers to practice skills they will utilize during the lessons they co-lead. These include: offering spiritual or religious insight when appropriate, teaching four of the five lessons on their own, and helping with food demonstrations. By offering a standardized training, Faithful Families has provided a structured environment for volunteers that empowers them to become leaders in their community and in the community-at-large. This follows Safrit and Schmiesing's (in press) recommendation that "formal programs and organizations engaging volunteer do so with a logistical, holistic, systematic process that maximizes a volunteer's impacts on the program's/organization's clientele being served while minimizing inconveniences and demands on the volunteer as an individual" (p. 2). For Faithful Families staff, working with volunteer lay leaders in faith communities has meant extensive, time consuming technical assistance in the form of (at the least) weekly check-ins with volunteer lay leaders to review upcoming lesson materials and address any concerns or

questions. It is our recommendation that others who wish to work in the faith community include time for this hands-on technical assistance in their volunteer management plans.

Building effective partnerships with faith communities entails working collaboratively at all levels of influence, including with volunteers, to encourage positive changes in policies, practices and environments. By empowering community volunteer lay leaders in program delivery and service, Faithful Families has helped to increase healthy eating and physical activity among individuals in limited-resource counties of North Carolina. Additionally, these individuals have become health ambassadors in their communities, working for policy and environmental changes to support healthy eating and physical activity in their faith communities and the community-at-large. We argue that working with volunteer lay leaders in faith communities requires a good deal of relationship building and a sense of give and take between county staff and volunteers. Working with volunteer lay leaders to develop and implement health promotion programs in communities of faith delivers results that are strong, measurable and sustainable.

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Skills-Based Volunteers in Congregations: Developing Safety Policy

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Abstract

Despite frequent headlines about child maltreatment in religious settings, many faith-based organizations have not adopted formal policies to prevent the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. As congregations seek to establish policies for safe environments, they may find tremendous assets in volunteers with professional training in areas such as education, personnel management, and criminal justice. One congregation recruited a work group of volunteers with such professional knowledge and experience to address risk management issues. Skills-based volunteers are an asset to the congregation for the important work of developing safety policies. In a congregation of about 400 members, eight skilled volunteer who had 287 combined years of professional experiences, accepted the challenge to create a safer environment in their congregation. This article describes the need to develop child protection policies in faith-based organizations and guidelines for developing a child protection policy. The authors provide clear policies to prevent maltreatment, respond to allegations, fulfill the mission of the faith community, and involve skills-based volunteers effectively. The skills-based volunteers used their collective expertise to develop and implement a safety policy to help protect youth and vulnerable adults when those populations cannot protect themselves.

Key Words:

volunteers, faith-based, risk management, policy, youth, vulnerable adults

Introduction

“Historically, the church has opened its doors to all. It follows therefore, that people with a whole range of life experiences are coming into its buildings week by week, including those who abuse children” (Churches Child Protection

Advisory Service, 2005, p. 1).

Congregations generally exhibit a high degree of trust in their participants, relying on the members and leaders to conduct themselves according to high ethical standards. “Sometimes this trusting attitude persists even in the face of questions or

reports of misconduct” (Melton, 2008, p. 64). During the past 10 years the media have repeatedly exposed instances of trusted adults in faith-based communities abusing and/or maltreating children or vulnerable adults. Unfortunately, a high proportion of those who abuse children within the church have been found to have been members, or even congregational leaders, for years prior to the revelation of inappropriate behavior (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service, 2005).

Given the nature of their ministries, congregations routinely promote close personal relationships among paid staff, volunteers, and youth. Such relationships may occur without the organization providing sufficient education for workers to understand healthy and appropriate interpersonal boundaries with youth (Melton, 2008). As congregations plan to provide education and establish policies for safer environments, volunteers with professional training and experience in areas such as education, human relationships, risk management, personnel management, social services, law, technology, and criminal justice, may serve as important assets.

The history of faith communities, their culture of trust, and the lack of adequate safeguards in congregations can create an environment that gives predators easy access to especially vulnerable populations, such as youth, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

The Problem

According to testimony provided to the U.S. Senate (Boyce, 2008) an estimated 905,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect in 2006, and approximately 1,500 children die annually as a result. Such violence against children happens in many places including faith based communities. A study by the John Jay College of Criminal

Justice in New York reported 4,392 plausible claims of childhood sexual abuse by priests or deacons in the American Catholic Church between 1950 and 2002 (Gibbons, 2008). Further, in its annual report of sexual abuse claims, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops revealed 635 new allegations in 2006, which was nine percent fewer than the previous year (Gibbons). Insurance companies share related data for Protestant churches. During the past 10 years, Church Mutual, the company insuring the majority of Protestant churches, reported about 100 sexual abuse cases a year involving minors and congregational staff or volunteers (Gibbons). Two smaller insurance companies reported respectively “an average of 160 reports of sexual abuse against minors every year for the past two decades” and “an average of 73 reports of child sex abuse [or] other sexual misconduct every year for the last 15 years” (Gibbons, p. 21).

Child maltreatment is under-recognized in most faith based organizations because the structure for reporting issues is lacking, and therefore increases the difficulty in assessing and reporting the extent of the problem. “Protestant ... denominations are less centralized than the Catholic Church...[and] many churches are independent, making reporting ... harder” (Gibbons, p. 21). Undoubtedly, many instances of abuse go unreported, so overall statistics are difficult to confirm.

Another reason that child abuse in religious settings has been under-recognized is because the concept of charitable immunity has shielded religious organizations from litigation. It was common practice that society provided immunity from lawsuits to religious communities that were viewed as providing charitable services. “In other words, congregations were protected from lawsuits

because their value to society as a whole was seen to be more important than any individual's possible claims of injury" (Melton, 2008, p. 65). This appraisal no longer serves to protect institutions in cases of abuse or sexual misconduct. Now, the public and the courts consider that the harm done by abuse of youth or children is too great to go unreported and unpunished. Today, punishment may come in the form of incarceration as well as monetary damages awarded in verdicts against the perpetrator and/or the institution in which the victim was mistreated. Damage awards have ranged from thousands to many millions of dollars (Melton).

Congregations have not sufficiently discouraged child maltreatment. "Churches are famously passive, and even inactive, when it comes to screening the volunteers and/or employees who work with youth. Often, no investigation is done at all before total strangers are welcomed aboard as new volunteer(s)" (Melton, 2008, p. 64). Some religious communities in the past have chosen to forgive repentant perpetrators and reassign them to another role in the congregation, perhaps failing to understand that abusers tend to continue their misconduct.

Concern for children, however, along with public scrutiny, is challenging more faith based communities to create policies and structures by which to screen, select, educate and guide staff and volunteers who work with children. Prevention policies are being established in congregations throughout the United States and around the world in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In 2007, America's largest Protestant group, the Southern Baptist Convention pursued another level of protection by taking a vote "to study the feasibility of establishing a database of

Southern Baptist clergy and church staff who are credibly accused of, have confessed to, or were convicted of sexual abuse or harassment" (Gibbons, 2008, p. 22).

Still, when faith-based organizations consider risk prevention policies they report emotional reactions from their congregants (Melton, 2008). Examples of comments include, "I am trustworthy. Why do I have to prove it?"; "Why do I need to keep the doors open at all times when I am with children?"; "Why do you screen my worthiness through a background check?"; and, "We've never done it this way before."

Skilled Volunteers

Defined broadly, "skilled or skills-based volunteering is the practice of using work-related knowledge and expertise in a volunteer opportunity" (Ellis, 2009, p. 3). More specifically, the term skills-based volunteering refers to "engagements done on behalf of a nonprofit or public agency without charge ... where volunteers perform work similar to what they do at their places of employment, or for which they have received professional training" (Warshaw, 2009, p. 4).

Faith-based organizations can benefit from skilled volunteers who understand that there is a great likelihood (i.e., 90% or greater) that a child is abused by someone known by the victim; that most sexual molesters psychologically manipulate children and adult gatekeepers (e.g., parents, teachers, chaperones) prior to attempting abuse; and, that very few (less than 10 percent) of all sexual predators will ever encounter the criminal justice system (Norris, 2009a). A skills-based volunteer typically focuses on strategic decision-making and sustainability of the organization rather than on direct service to people (Warshaw, 2009).

The concept of volunteers applying their professional expertise in not-for-profit organizations is not new but one that has gained momentum recently as various summits and national campaigns have explored the potential of intentionally and strategically applying corporate skills in the nonprofit world (Ellis, 2009). While this does not assume that all nonprofits lack professional staff, it does assume that many nonprofits do not have sufficient staff with expertise to accomplish specific tasks, such as developing a child protection policy.

Research has shown that individuals are motivated to volunteer for reasons such as personal growth or achievement, group affiliation, or community influence. Warshaw (2009) proposes that skills-based volunteers are motivated to serve because they may:

- have attained a certain status and now want to volunteer for an organization's cause by applying their professional knowledge to address management problems in new arenas;
- have a newly-minted degree and are anxious to test their knowledge and ability in service to a cause in which they believe;
- have technical skills which may not be found elsewhere in the nonprofit organization; and/or
- be social entrepreneurs who want to innovate new ways of addressing an issue.

Recently, Nelson (2007) applied social exchange theory to survey data collected from 562 Baptist volunteers in Virginia. He found that skills-based volunteers consider it a fair exchange to contribute time and energy for roles that engage their expertise, and more specifically that "Through engaging in meaningful work, [skilled volunteers] broadened their

knowledge and developed their creative potential" (p. 108). He also found that skilled volunteers were comfortable with the talents they could offer in religious settings, but were most "concerned with the fit between their interests and the church ... goals" (p. 111). As congregations seek to establish policies for safe environments, they may find tremendous assets in volunteers with professional training and experience in areas such as education, human relationships, risk management, personnel management, social services, law and criminal justice, and secure technology.

An Example of Skills-Based Volunteers in One Congregation

In this case study, skilled volunteers were members of a work group who were asked to develop a congregational policy to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the maltreatment of children. The eight volunteer members of the work group were currently in or retired from a professional position, and all were associated with the congregation in the case study (see Table 1). Four held doctoral degrees, three master degrees, and one a bachelor's degree. They had 287 combined years of experience relevant to the emerging safety policy. The four women and four men were all over age 50. All were deeply committed to keeping children, families, volunteers, paid staff, and the organization's reputation safe. They were also committed to ministering to all persons who use the congregation's services. These volunteers demonstrated great loyalty to this work. Their attendance at meetings once or twice a month, over the 22 month period, was nearly perfect.

Safety Policies

Hamilton (2006) delineated ten items to include in a safety policy to prevent child abuse in congregations. His

recommendations are a combination of policies, procedures, education, and communication. Specifically, he suggests that faith-based organizations need to: (1) establish a written position statement with definitions; (2) adopt the “two adult” rule for youth supervision; (3) keep classrooms welcoming and open to visitors; (4) ask every paid or volunteer staff member to complete an application; (5) check reference(s) listed on application; (6) conduct a national criminal background check on every applicant; (7) interview each paid or volunteer applicant; (8) establish an identification system for non-guardian adults to transport youth; (9) comply with the state’s child abuse reporting statute; and (10) keep clergy and congregational leadership informed. Each of these elements was included in the new policy for the congregation in the case study.

Additionally, Melton (2008) recommended that child protection policies for faith-based organizations include: (1) appropriate interpersonal boundaries; (2) statements for appropriate use of technology; (3) an adult behavior code; (4) open design elements in facilities (e.g., windows in doors); (5) sufficient ratio of adult supervision to youth participants during activities; (6) limited private counseling roles; (7) education for parents, families, teachers, and supervisors, and (8) adequate insurance. Again, all of these elements were included in the congregation’s safety policy in the case study discussed here.

Effective implementation of a safety policy requires education for all stakeholders. The Abuse Prevention Systems (Norris, 2009b) recommends a five-part training system for volunteers and staff: (1) explanation of safety principles and their relationship to statistics; (2) methods for volunteer selection and screening; (3) how

to conduct criminal background checks and use that data effectively; (4) specific actions and behaviors expected of volunteers and staff as a result of safe environment policies; and (5) details about how the policy is managed effectively. Each of the five elements was included in the training provided for staff and volunteers in the case study.

When developing a safety policy, Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (2005) recommends that the congregation asks the following critical questions:

- Is there anyone in our organization able to identify possible signs or symptoms of abuse?
- Could a child seek help in our organization, if s/he were being mistreated?
- What would we do if a child said s/he was being abused?
- Would we respond differently if the allegation was against a member, employee, volunteer, or stranger?
- Do our policies help address these matters?
- Do we have a responsibility to bring these issues to the broader faith community?

The volunteer work group spent considerable time discussing these questions and incorporating processes to address each one in the emerging policy for this congregation.

Policy Development

The volunteer work group recommended that any staff member or potential volunteer would be subject to the requirements of the congregation’s safety policy if that individual interacted with children or vulnerable adults three or more times during a year, or if they supervised one overnight stay. Now the policy affected

a number of volunteers in the congregation and emotions were heightened.

Developing a safety policy was also time-consuming for this committed group of skills-based volunteers. The process spanned nearly a two-year period (see Table 2). The commitment led to intense, but respectful debates among members of the work group regarding the philosophy, specific terms, and even punctuation chosen to define the policy.

Decisions made by the volunteer work group were based on information from existing congregational policies, a review of model policies from national and regional denominational affiliates, and the volunteers' professional knowledge and experience with risk management policies established by schools, work sites, the 4-H Youth Development Program, Boy Scouts, social network guidelines, criminal justice systems, and insurance companies.

At several points during the policy development, volunteers found that they were at odds with one or more paid staff members. Each time, the skills-based volunteers used the situation as an opportunity to communicate, invite input, and seek balance by weighing their professional knowledge with their understanding of this faith-based organization.

According to Warshaw (2009), highly skilled volunteer assignments are most likely to be in one of two areas of work: improving operations through tangible products or increasing organizational capacity. In this case study, the volunteer work group accepted both areas of responsibility during the process of developing a safety policy. First, they improved organizational operations by developing a policy handbook that included applications, forms, and interview procedures. Figure 1 summarizes the

elements developed to implement the safety policy. Second, they planned and conducted education for key ministry stakeholders, the administrative council, and the congregation to enhance overall organizational capacity. Warshaw also identified four stages, in which to engage skilled volunteers in capacity building assignments in a not-for-profit organization. The stages are: (1) assessment, (2) planning, (3) engagement, and (4) evaluation. This volunteer work group engaged in each of the four stages as the safety policy was developed and implemented.

Conclusion

The history of faith based communities, their trusting culture, and the lack of adequate safeguards has created an environment that can give predators easy access to especially vulnerable populations within congregations. Yet, developing a safety policy to protect children and vulnerable adults in places of worship often creates other challenges.

This case study described how skills-based volunteers were engaged when a congregation was faced with a safety concern that was difficult, time-consuming, and emotionally charged. Skills-based volunteers were willing to commit time and expert knowledge to address it. They developed a policy statement, an application and selection process, a system for criminal background checks, guidelines for file management, and provided education for congregational members.

While personal commitment is required for any volunteer work, greater commitment is needed to successfully traverse a controversial task such as creating policy for protecting children and vulnerable adults in a faith-based community. Skilled volunteers are likely to be committed when

they accept an invitation to apply their expertise for a cause of their choice.

Warshaw (2009) reminded us that organizations can benefit from highly skilled volunteers if “boards, management teams, staff members and current volunteers work collaboratively” (p. 4). In one community, skilled volunteers helped a faith-based organization achieve their goal to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Implications

Congregations can, first, fully acknowledge that all volunteers bring skills to their role in a not-for-profit organization, and then recruit skilled volunteers to address specific needs such as creating and implementing safety policies for youth and vulnerable adults. All faith-based organizations may engage skilled volunteers by:

- purposefully identifying and recording the range of skills that each congregant brings to the organization, both expert skills gained through one’s professional training and other expertise nurtured through interests, hobbies, and life experience;
- cultivating relationships with highly-skilled volunteers who may be interested in sharing their education, qualifications, and reputation;
- recruiting and selecting volunteers with appropriate expertise to serve in difficult assignments; and
- inviting skills-based volunteers to assist with in-depth, but short assignments.

Specifically, when engaging skilled volunteers in developing safety policies, faith-based organizations may:

- encourage individual volunteers to communicate openly, independently, and respectfully;

- encourage group problem-solving;
- be prepared for professional disagreement and debate within the group;
- strive for decision-making by consensus;
- find ways to communicate the qualifications of skilled volunteers to stakeholders;
- provide technology to document group work that may require frequent editing; and
- provide a budget to implement the necessary aspects of an organizational safety policy.

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About the Authors

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Table 1

Experience of Skills-Based Volunteers Developing Safety Policy in Case Study

Volunteer	Education/Discipline	Professional Responsibilities	Years
A	Engineering, Administration	Dean, university professor, officer in the National Collegiate Athletic Association	40 years
B	Theology	Credentialed church leader, pastor	29 years
C	Adult Education, Volunteer Program Management	University assistant professor, 4-H volunteer resource manager, risk manager	34 years
D	Photographics, Macintosh Certification	Science photographer, technology use consultant	14 years
E	Human Development and Family Sciences, Special Education	Teacher, administrator, program director, university professor	38 years
F	Education	Elementary teacher, administrator, principal	41 years
G	Chemistry, Process Engineering, Industrial Management	Chemist, industrial manager, educator, administrator	51 years
H	Public Administration, Education, Theology	Criminal justice officer, pastor	40 years

Table 2

Timeline for Developing and Implementing a Safety Policy in Case Study

Timeframe	Process	Individuals Involved
September 2008	Interim clergy requested review of existing risk management policies	Interim pastor, work group, Congregational Council
September-October 2008	Work group met 2-4 hours monthly, researched current policies developed for this congregation; discussed implications of the policy	Work group, interim pastor
October-November 2008	Researched policies developed by other congregations	Work group, interim pastor
December 2008-January 2009	Drafted statement but rejected it as inadequate	Work group, interim pastor
February-August 2009	Started over, debating every word and phrase	Work group
September 2009	Obtained locked file space (safe, file cabinet); began assessing the facility and making structural changes to address safety concerns	Congregational Council, work group
October 2009-February 2010	Arranged demonstrations and secured a national database through which to conduct criminal background checks	Work group
January-February 2010	Reviewed and approved draft of policy	Congregational Council
March 2010	Added details and continued to edit policy	Work group
March-April 2010	Planned education for key stakeholders, volunteers, and congregation	Work group with input from staff
March-April 2010	Took additional steps to create a safe physical environment in facility (e.g., added windows to doors)	Work group
April 2010	Conducted training about policy for staff and volunteers in congregation	Work group members and clergy facilitated learning with all staff and key volunteers
April-May 2010	Trained select individuals to conduct criminal background checks using the national database	Facilitated by a national database representative for staff and members of work group
April 2010	Introduced full policy to congregation in newsletter; scheduled group information session	Congregational members
May 2010	Posted policy on Wiki site and bulletin board	Congregational members
May-June 2010	Implemented policy at all levels	Congregational Council, staff, and related committees

Figure 1. Resources Developed to Support Safety Policy

- Policy handbook outlining and defining details for the safety policy
- Application to volunteer with children and vulnerable adults in the congregation
- Application for a staff position
- Form and process to obtain three personal references
- Form listing questions and documenting interview process
- Form to authorization permission to conduct a criminal background check
- Guidelines for collecting, filing and maintaining private records
- Form to report alleged incident of abuse
- Form listing guidelines and participation agreement for a registered sex offender to be monitored in congregational life

Where is the Faith?

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Abstract

This article comments on the importance and the absence of the faith community within the profession of volunteer resource management. Additionally, it explores reasons for this occurrence and advocates for the inclusion of the faith community in the dialogue and leadership of our profession.

Key Words:

church, engagement, faith, profession

When I was young, the children in my neighborhood used to play a game called chase, a group form of hide and seek. The structure of the game was for kids to break into two groups, where one group of children would search for and capture members of the other group of children. As kids were caught, they would switch to the capturing team and then help find the other children until everyone was on the same team. For the kids, this was a summer delight. They were able to explore their neighborhood, work together to achieve a goal, and eventually everyone ended up on the same team celebrating all the fun had.

There seem to be many corollaries between this game and the advancement of our volunteer resource management profession. Just like we had fun as children, most individuals and organizations in this field are passionate about volunteer engagement and enjoy their work. Even after moving from this profession, many continue their passion of volunteering and service. Just as we as kids explored our neighborhood and worked together, local professional associations have formed to

provide support to volunteer resource managers and provide a place for professionals to determine the direction of volunteer engagement in communities. One of the results is that through these networks, professional volunteer resource managers (VRMs) in need have found other likeminded peers who are able to offer help and advice. However, there seems to be one difference between this game and our profession. By the end of the game all the children end up on the same team. Unfortunately, as we continue to see our profession grow, change, and develop it does not seem as though all voices are present to inform and guide the discussion as to our future.

As our profession is discussed and when initiatives are planned, we see the representation of governments, non-profits, corporations, and academics. Each of these groups has VRMs who, as experts, act on their behalf promoting and protecting the interests of their representative groups. The intended result is that through such collaboration, understanding of others' needs occur, mutually beneficial solutions

are found, and the profession grows stronger. Yet, the faith community is largely missing in the discussion and leadership of our profession.

Before going further, let us be clear. This statement is not discounting the presence of faith-based volunteer organizations that work on behalf of houses of worship such as Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, the Jewish Federation, or the organizations supported by the Islamic Social Services Association. They are doing great work and their VRMs are represented professionally. Also, the observation is not intended to minimize the volunteer efforts of churches, mosques, and synagogues. Many organizations and communities rely heavily upon the people power of their adherents. Without them, the provision of social services, community programs, and spiritual ministry would disappear leaving many hurting people without recourse. But it is for this very reason the concern is raised regarding the absence of professional volunteer engagement by houses of worship. Where is their contribution in the leadership of and the participation in the larger discussion of the field of volunteer resource management?

Houses of faith have had an important historical impact on our country. Before others, houses of faith mobilized people to meet the needs of the poor, the widowed, and the orphaned. They were active participants organizing individuals to abolish slavery, promote suffrage, institute prohibition, and champion civil rights. No matter a person's religious inclinations or political leanings, houses of worship have been actively involved in shaping our country through the organizing, training, and supervision of volunteers.

Today's houses of faith continue to have an impact in our society and on volunteerism. In America today there are more than 250,000 houses of worship,

millions of adherents, and countless internal and external programs that require volunteers. Yet in professional circles it seems that this segment of volunteer resource management is missing from the larger dialogue.

As I have contemplated this situation, my first reaction was to assume that, given the size of many houses of worship, they may not have individuals who formally manage volunteers as paid professionals. This issue of size could explain their lack of presence in the leadership of our profession locally, regionally, and nationally. However, I am aware of church volunteer management associations that meet and work much like local DOVIAs (Directors of Volunteers In Agencies). So to see what form of professional support there was, I conducted a quick Google search. Based upon the search findings, it became evidently clear that houses of worship are not absent from our profession. There are millions of pages of information and thousands of resources all advising and directing houses of worship on how to manage volunteers. Yet, this dialogue by churches, mosques, and synagogues often does not engage the secular, but rather they rely upon one another.

This disengagement raises the question, "Why are they not involved with the rest of us?" It would be easy to point fingers and consider what is wrong with them for not being involved with us and participating in our profession as a whole. Yet is the responsibility of seeking out and engaging us actually theirs? In returning to the analogy of the game at the beginning of this article, it would seem that the responsibility rests with those that are seeking and aware to find those that are absent. In short, it is our responsibility to reach out to the houses of faith. Of course, this assumes that we need and want their

participation. Given the historical contribution of houses of worship, the number of volunteers they represent, and the tenet that inclusion of diversity is better than exclusion; we should accept such an assumption. So the question now is, “Why are we not actively involving houses of worship in the leadership of our profession?”

There are many reasons why, individually, this has not occurred. However, it seems there are two primary issues that may be impacting this lack of involvement. First, with the secularization of the United States there are natural tensions put upon relationships between houses of worship and non-faith based organizations. There seems to be a concern that due to the motivations of proselytization and evangelism it is not possible to find common ground with houses of worship. Connected with this discomfort is that the understanding of faith is not monolithic in this country. The variance complicates our ability to communicate and understand one another. This extra work on our part can hinder our willingness to reach out to the faith community to dialogue with them

about the values, direction, and function of our profession. The other issue is that houses of worship are decentralized, making involvement more difficult. With multiple faiths each having multiple traditions that have multiple organizational structures, it causes communication both with and within the faith community very challenging. Difficult communication often causes people to withdraw from one another. As we withdraw from the faith community, we fail in providing leadership regarding volunteer engagement.

It is for these reasons, it is imperative for us to reach out to the faith community and invite them to engage in the dialogue and share in the leadership of volunteer engagement. In so doing, we will understand them and their needs while we help them understand our volunteer resource management profession and our needs. By including the faith community we will find common ground that broadens our conversation, we will better understand everyone’s needs, we will find better solutions that benefits all, and we will increase the strength and vitality our profession as a whole.

About the Author

Rob Bonesteel has professionally engaged volunteers since 1997. Currently he is the volunteer director for The Salvation Army Central Territory serving the 11 Midwest states. He is also active in promoting the field of volunteer engagement. Currently he is the president elect for the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement and the past president for his local association, the Association of Volunteer Administrators of Metropolitan Chicago.

Leading the Way to Successful Volunteer Involvement

Betty B. Stallings (with Susan J. Ellis). Philadelphia, PA: Energize, Inc. (223 pages.
ISBN 978-094057661-2)

Reviewed by Harriett C. Edwards, Ed.D.

For volunteer administrators who are familiar with Susan Ellis' *From the Top Down*, this book is essentially the tools, forms and resources to put words into action. Betty Stallings (with Susan Ellis) has focused upon developing an immediately useful compendium of materials to help with everything from hiring the right director of volunteer involvement to dealing with risk management planning.

Stallings begins by focusing upon personal and organizational philosophies of volunteering. Several worksheets and samples are provided to support individuals in the development of philosophy statements and action plans based upon those statements. This is followed by a chapter focusing on the process of planning for volunteer engagement. Stallings provides checklists, action planning worksheets and samples to support executives in these leadership processes.

Chapter three deals with budgeting and financial management in volunteer programs covering everything from developing an initial budget to identification of potential donors and supporters. Her practical approach to managing funds and her tools for idea development make this chapter particularly useful.

Chapters four through seven provide critical tools for supporting the screening and placement of volunteer directors and building a management team that will support volunteers in the organization. In these chapters she covers such topics as staffing models,

position descriptions and titles, recruitment of candidates, interview questions, challenges in building a management team, and building a supportive organizational culture for volunteer involvement. There are also materials to help design systems for effectively partnering volunteers with paid staff. Stallings provides additional materials to help design collaboration strategies to insure that volunteers are integrated throughout the organization in appropriate ways. With multiple worksheets and planning tools, these chapters provide valuable resources ready to be put to work for the organization.

Board engagement in the volunteer process is covered in Chapter eight, where Stallings again provides a plethora of valuable tools for board assessment and for self-assessment by the Executive Director to determine success with board engagement. The final two chapters focus upon managing legal and risk issues and upon evaluation and accountability as critical management components.

In typical Stallings style, the author includes a bibliography of additional resources to add to this collection of incredibly useful and practical tools. For anyone interested in putting the concepts in *From the Top Down* to work in a volunteer-driven organization, Stallings has provided the tools in a thoughtful, organized and most useful publication. She even supports the connection between this new publication and *From the Top Down* by

providing references for each chapter to link the tools and resources to the original text. The only thing that would make this publication more useful would be providing a website or digital version of the worksheets and tools to make them easier for individuals to utilize. Even without the digital support, it is

well worth the investment to add this outstanding resource to your volunteer resource management library – I'm certainly glad that I did!

About the Reviewer

Harriett C. Edwards, Ed.D. is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in Continuing Volunteer Education in the Department of 4-H Youth Development and Family & Consumer Sciences at North Carolina State University. Her research is focused upon episodic volunteerism and teens as volunteers.

Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted (with updated format editions) from Volunteer Administration (1978), Volume XI, Number 3, pp 49-52.

Church Volunteer Administration Similarities and Differences

Janet Richards

[Editor-generated] Abstract

The author discusses her perceived need for coordinating the volunteer services freely rendered by members of churches. She compares and contrasts church-based volunteer management with volunteer management in any formal organization. She concludes that the same management principles from the business world that are applied to volunteer management in non-profits should also be applied to volunteer management in churches.

[Editor-generated] Key Words: volunteers, volunteer management, church

In an article which appeared recently in VOLUNTARY ACTION LEADERSHIP, Alice Leppert refers to voluntarism in the church as a 'half-awake giant', with churches and their members emerging as change-agents in community affairs. Ms. Leppert also mentions that "there is a volume of activity within the typical congregation which rightfully can be called volunteering". I would like to speak to that contention. Based on two years as a Coordinator of Volunteers in a church and many more years as an active church member, I have readily observed that there is a notably unrecognized need for coordinating the services freely rendered by the membership in the programs of the church.

Considering the fact that the number of paid staff in most churches ranges from two to seven or eight and the number of volunteers involved in any week could easily run from 50 to several hundred, perhaps it is time to consider the church as an agency, just as one would consider a hospital, a library, the

Red Cross or any of the hosts of other agencies in the community which uses volunteers. *The contribution of its members to the life of the church deserves the same fine quality of administration that those other agencies are being encouraged to provide for their volunteers. Churches have survived a long time with their present systems of volunteer involvement. Perhaps the time has come to look at those systems and question whether there is a way to improve them.*

While there are a number of ways in which administering a volunteer program in a church is different, there are many ways in which it is very much the same as in any other agency. With the church's great dependence on a volunteer work force to keep its programs going, the same principles of good administration very much apply. So often churches have been guilty of calling on the same core of members to do the bulk of the work. With a Volunteer Coordinator on staff, the responsibilities can be spread out

among many people. Moreover, the intentional matching of the tasks to be done and the resources in persons is sharpened and focused.

In my own church of 3000 members, there are 900 jobs where volunteers carry responsibilities in areas such as being choir members, Sunday School teachers, ushers, acolytes, Altar guild, Church Council, executive committees of various church organizations, persons to count offerings, special greeters on Sunday mornings, etc. After a year, with a Coordinator of Volunteers on staff, at least 200 more members were involved in the church's internal volunteer programs. For example, the same persons were previously expected to count the offerings for both services, which means being on hand 4 to 5 hours. The Coordinator of Volunteers recruited enough people to make separate teams for each service for each Sunday in the month, thus doubling the number of persons involved in that one responsibility alone. The captains for those counting teams had previously been Church Council people. The Coordinator of Volunteers, with approval from Church Council, recruited other individuals to serve as captains – once more expanding the responsibility among a larger portion of the congregation. This also relieved Church Council to invest more time and energy in the managing of church affairs. (A side benefit is that this involvement of even more members provided a wider field of potential for recruiting Finance Committee people.)

Adhering to the principle of recruiting for a specific period of time, with the continuation in that responsibility being renegotiable

periodically, the Coordinator of Volunteers surveyed several different groups to give them an opportunity to be relieved of duties, which may have become a burden to them. This meant exposure to the possibility of having to do a mass recruiting if many of these volunteers chose to 'get out'. The opposite happened, however. In one group, out of sixty phone calls, only four asked to be relieved of duty; three said they'd stay with it for another six months; and the balance willingly signed on for another full year. The response seemed to reflect an appreciation for the businesslike approach of negotiation.

Another principle that has been made very clear in this situation is that volunteers have a right to expect assignments equivalent to their abilities. This means letting people know that it is perfectly okay to say "no" when asked to do something they really are not interested in or capable of doing. Many people feel obligated to say "yes" when the church asks anything of them. They also feel very guilty if they cannot do what is asked, even when the reason is legitimate. By promising to call again – and then doing so – the Coordinator of Volunteers has helped people realize that it is perfectly acceptable to be honest about accepting or rejecting an assignment.

One of the tools from the business world which has been applied to volunteering is that of training. In the church setting, volunteers have been recruited for responsibilities with little thought of providing training. Public school teachers often are asked to teach Sunday School; therefore, no training is thought to be necessary. Businessmen are asked to serve on the governing body

of the church and it is believed that they will bring their several skills from business into the managing of the church's affairs. The assumption that neither of these groups needs or wants training needs to be checked out. Also, when laymen are asked to be canvassers in the church's annual pledge campaign, what are the skills they bring? Usually their major qualification is a commitment to the work of the church. But communication, interviewing or sales skills are minimal. These canvassers, given training for the job they have agreed to do, achieve a far greater degree of self-satisfaction for themselves, while being even more effective for the church. Opportunities for training to do the work of the church need to be available and varied.

The task of a Volunteer Coordinator in a church has some unique features. The most obvious is the fact that, unlike almost any other setting, the clients and the volunteers are one and the same. Among other things, this means that volunteers are their own bosses, in that the church operates solely on the financial contributions of its members. Volunteers, then, who are working with paid staff are also in the position of being the boss. It is unlikely that many volunteers in the church even think of it in these terms or would let it affect their work, but in subtle ways it is in the air when volunteers and staff work together.

Another way in which this fact has a bearing on the administration of a volunteer program in the church is that a way must be found to utilize the skills – however limited – of all of those who volunteer. Because the church 'belongs' to all its members, those who volunteer

must be provided with the opportunity to be meaningfully involved. On occasion this can be a problem, particularly when a member feels competent for a certain assignment, but in reality is not. The Volunteer Coordinator then is faced with the challenge of finding a way to use the existing skills and of making the individual feel the importance of an alternate assignment.

Still another unique feature of the volunteer program in a church is that there really are no recruiting problems in the usual sense. All of the members of the church are potential volunteers to be called for any project or program. What other agency has such a readily available recruitment source?

After two years of sensing that this arrangement was not as ideal as it looked on the surface, I recently identified the precise problem: since all staff are as familiar with the potential volunteers as the Coordinator of Volunteers is, they can freely recruit the volunteers themselves. In other agencies this volunteer source is somewhat removed from staff and they find it expedient to work through the volunteer office. In a church, where the function of a Volunteer Coordinator is somewhat foreign, staff tend to by-pass the office to fill their own needs. This complicates the jobs of coordination and record keeping. The major role, then, of the Coordinator of Volunteers in churches becomes one of identifying the variety of skills available and encouraging the use of as many members as possible.

The efficient utilization of volunteers is just as important – though not always recognized – in churches as it is in any other situation. Think of the

amount of time the clergy would be able to devote to pastoral care if they had Volunteer Coordinators to handle the recruiting in their churches.

Traditionally, no matter what size the congregation is, the minister is presumed to know the people and their skills best. When need for volunteers arises, it is the minister who is most frequently asked for recommendations (or to actually make the contact). The minister is the one who meets with and gets to know the new members as they join the church, and is therefore the one most often held responsible for passing these members' interests and skills along to the right group. How helpful it can be to have a Coordinator of Volunteers to take care of these details.

Not everyone who belongs to a church WANTS to work in the church because they have found something there that appeals to them. Usually in the flush of new membership, they are eager to get involved. If that eagerness does not find an outlet, it will drift elsewhere to find acceptance. Involving new members as quickly as possible in the life of the church will help retain them as active, contributing members. To take it a step further, that involvement deserves the same respect and efficient care that community agencies would give it. No volunteer likes to be taken for granted. Volunteers

like to find work waiting for them when they are scheduled to come in.

Volunteers like meaningful involvement that meets their capabilities. Volunteers like to feel they have options and choices regarding what they do and how long they will be involved.

What little has been written about coordination of volunteers in churches seems to have taken the stance that the church population is a tremendous potential resource for community agencies to tap for volunteers in their programs. By developing thoroughly the concept of a volunteer program within the church itself, building good management practices and efficiently utilizing those resources for the work within its own walls, the church could more feasibly expand those practices to help in the recruitment of volunteers for other community agencies.

Management principles from the business world are being applied to volunteer administration. We need to carry it a step further and apply those same principles to volunteer administration in churches. It is long overdue, considering the numbers of volunteers in churches.

About the Author

At the time of the article's original publication...

Janet Richards was Coordinator of Volunteers, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania.

Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted (with updated format editions) from The Journal of Volunteer Administration (1991), Volume IX, Number 3, pp 35-38.

Using the Mission Statement to Recruit Church Volunteers

Frances Ledwig

[Editor-generated] Abstract

The author discusses methods of engaging the time and talent of church members as volunteers with a primary focus on using the organization's mission statement.

[Editor-generated] Key Words: volunteers, church, mission statement, recruitment

Introduction

An enormous reservoir of energy and talent is present in the numerous religious congregations in North America. For the most part, believers are waiting to be called to service, service which will offer them opportunities and enable them to act out their beliefs and convictions. Imagine what could be accomplished by mobilizing these diversely rich talents! Church and community volunteer leaders need only to learn how to tap into this vast reserve of human energy and conviction.

The word "church" is used here in its broadest sense, to include all organized religious groups of any denomination. The "volunteers" are members of the congregation who work without pay to accomplish the mission of their particular organizations (the gathered church) and in the wider community (the scattered church).

Thesis

The purpose here is to develop a method of tapping into the time and talent of members of a religious congregation, with a primary focus on using the organization's mission statement. It is appropriate to recruit church volunteers for both the gathered

church and the scattered church. The same volunteer management principles apply in each situation; however, in this case, they will be treated separately for clarity.

The Mission Statement

A general understanding of a mission statement (or "declaration" or "proclamation" as some congregation call it) is a basic premise for what follows. For our purposes, a mission statement can be defined as a statement of identity and purpose for a community of believers (who we are, and what we are called to do). The written statement gives direction and purpose to the religious organization. It can be as brief as a sentence or two or as long as a couple of paragraphs. However, the trend is toward simplifying statements so that they will be more easily read, understood, and used.

Examples

A.) The church of _____ is a community of believers in association with the church universal, who strive to serve the world in order to prepare the Kingdom of God as proclaimed in the scriptures. We do this by giving mutual assistance in daily life, witness, worship, and service to

those outside our community (Rademacher, p. 177).

B.) We, the community of _____ declare it to be our primary mission to live in a faithful relationship to our God. We are called to be a listening, worshiping, serving, and loving people. We will pursue this mission with the help of God through the gifts and talents of our members (Harms, p. 29).

The mission statement should be drafted by a group of leaders, with opportunity for input from all members, and presented to the congregation for ratification and ownership. The mission statement becomes a cornerstone from which all activity is built. It becomes an essential tool for planning, goal setting, and program planning, including *volunteer participation*. To be of optimum value, it must be communicated often to those who are attempting to accomplish the mission. The statement should be published, displayed, referred to, reviewed yearly, and changed if necessary.

Using the Mission Statement to Recruit Church Volunteers for Work in the Gathered Church

Most religious organizations subscribe to the idea that each member has been created with unique and valuable gifts meant to be discovered, developed, and used on behalf of others (Wilson, p.15). Fortunate are those church members whose leaders (both paid and unpaid) take seriously their roles of vision setting and planning before making an appeal for volunteer participation.

Those who design work for volunteers need knowledge of and a sensitivity to the gifts and needs, as well

as the rights and responsibilities, of the membership in that particular community or tradition. (This supports the selection of a person from the congregation or community as the volunteer coordinator.)

Effective leaders design volunteer jobs to accomplish a part of the mission. They are able to communicate how a job relates to the overall mission, the work of paid staff, and other volunteers. A written description of each volunteer job is a key component in deciding who is needed to do the job.

The members of the church cited above in Example "A" might fulfill their mission in their gathered church by:

1. forming a single parent support group within their membership to "give mutual assistance in daily life,"
2. expanding roles for members with talent and knowledge in areas of worship such as prayer leadership or heading a worship environment planning group.

For most members, at least in the case of adults, membership in the congregation itself is voluntary. Committed members welcome the opportunity to contribute to the life and mission of their church, and they have a right to expect their involvement to be well-planned and related to the mission. Often the Director of Volunteers is the person who raises an awareness of this and begins to create the climate in which it can happen.

Helping an organization to form its mission statement could be the first

step to helping members become involved in the work of their church. In some instances, the attempt to manage volunteers more effectively in a congregation may necessitate some improvements in overall management of the organization. While good administration and good pastoral care are not mutually exclusive, good management practices are often not the primary concern of religious organizations. Remember, it is mission that motivates members to commit their time and talent, not necessarily the task itself. Focusing on a mission statement which reflects the members' values will make a big difference in recruiting volunteers for action in the gathered church.

Using the Mission Statement to Recruit Church Volunteers for Work in the Scattered church

A given congregation can be seen as a group of people who "stand for making a difference in the world. What better place to recruit volunteers for a project which will meet their criteria for mission?

For instance, in the case of example mission statement "B" cited above, members might fulfill their mission to the scattered church by:

1. "listening" and "loving" victims of abuse, by volunteering in a domestic violence prevention center or a rehabilitation program for parents who have abused their children,
2. "serving others by using our gifts and talents" in administration of community organizations which promote

and protect human dignity, such as Red Cross board or a city government's human relations commission.

An important condition for church members using their gifts, in the name of their church, in community or agency programs is the clear understanding that using the volunteer position to proselytize for one's particular tradition is inappropriate and could jeopardize the success of the program. This should be addressed in the training and orientation sessions of both the church and the agency.

Before an agency or project volunteer coordinator considers approaching congregational leaders or members to recruit volunteers, it is imperative that she or he thoroughly understand the mission of her or his own organization or agency. The recruiting coordinator should then:

1. Send a letter of introduction to the religious organization, explaining the opportunities the agency/program can provide the members.
2. Make an appointment with the congregational leader.
3. Inquire about a mission statement. Read, discuss, and make sure she or he understands it.
4. Explore the possibilities for involving the church's members in the work of the agency, program or project to the mutual benefit of each organization.
5. Get the name and phone number of the person in the church with whom to review the situation at length and to

determine if the match is feasible.

A worthwhile nonprofit agency program or project which can relate its needs for volunteer services to a church's mission statement and goals, without compromising the integrity of either's values, could indeed find a treasure in the church's membership. This is especially true for those traditions which place a high value on outreach and positive societal change, looking to make a difference in the world.

Summary

Whether one is attempting to involve volunteers in the work of the gathered church or the scattered church, keying into the organization's mission is the first step to successful recruiting. Upon analyzing the elements critical to effective volunteer involvement, it becomes obvious that efforts which are successful are well managed from the beginning to end, including planning, organizing, designing jobs, recruiting, interviewing screening, orienting, training, coaching, recognizing, and evaluating.

The beginning is a clear statement of purpose—who is involved and what they do, and the mission statement. The end is the evaluation of what was accomplished, assessing whether indeed the mission was carried out and the goals were achieved as planned. This "end" becomes a "beginning" as we begin again our mission-focused planning, thus continuing the cycle of action based on beliefs.

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About the Author

At the time of the article's original publication...

Frances Ledwig, Director, had founded Volunteer Development Associates after developing and directing a school volunteer program and a large urban church volunteer program from 1984 until 1988. She enthusiastically shared the knowledge, skills, and experience she has gained, in addition her extensive professional education in volunteer management. Ms. Ledwig holds a B.A. degree from the University of Texas and is certified by the Volunteer Management Program at the University of Colorado. She had worked as a laboratory research assistant, a teacher, and a volunteer administrator. She had 30 years experience as a volunteer leader and follower in community, church, and school organizations.