

## FROM THE EDITOR

### **In This Issue: Addressing key aspects of volunteer engagement and resource management**

[...LINK TO PDF](#)

## FEATURE ARTICLES

### **A Field Study Extending the Hobson-Heler Model to Assess Website “Volunteer-Friendliness” of the Top 200 Charities in the United States**

Charles J. Hobson, Ph.D., Joshua J. Hobson, Shelli Henry, Susan M. Rouse, Ph.D., Andrea E. C. Griffin, Ph.D., Jana Szostek, J.D., & Natalie Murillo

*Nonprofit organizations have been facing enormous pressure due to our current economic woes, resulting in a nationwide rise in agency closings and mergers and further exacerbating the shortage of needed health, human, and social services. One way to minimize the impact of this financial crisis and the increased demand for social services that has come with it is to effectively recruit and utilize volunteers. Recruitment procedures using the internet are a promising approach. This paper evaluates how effectively the 200 largest charities in the United States use their website for volunteer recruitment. Utilizing the Hobson and Hobson 24-item “volunteer-friendliness” assessment tool, the websites of the 200 largest U.S. charities, in terms of total revenue, were evaluated. The reliability of the assessment tool was assessed, and norms were formulated for the 200 charities in terms of overall scale scores. Results indicated that: (1) the 24-item checklist can be successfully used as an objective, reliable measuring tool, (2) overall scores for the 200 organizations were consistently quite low, and (3) only a small percentage of the charities put forth any effort on their websites to offer volunteer opportunities to those with disabilities. Several important recommendations for enhanced nonprofit administration are discussed, along with directions for future research. ...LINK TO PDF*

**Key Words:** volunteering, volunteer-friendly, websites, charities

### **Volunteer Entry into Hospital Culture: Organization socialization, P-O Fit, commitment, and job satisfaction**

Tricia Ann Jordan, Ph.D., & Jay Fiene, Ph.D.

*Volunteers fulfill vital roles within organizations helping volunteer program administrators stretch resources and extend services. The study presented explored the relationships among the organization socialization tactics used by hospitals and volunteer perceptions of value congruence or person-organization fit (P-O fit), commitment, and job satisfaction. Research findings reveal organization socialization tactics that provided common learning experiences separated from the seasoned organization members positively related to volunteer perceptions of organization commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Socialization tactics that provided new volunteers identifiable stages of learning also positively related to perceptions of volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Additionally, tactics that allowed new volunteers to work with seasoned volunteers who modeled the volunteer role also positively related to volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and organization support. Finally, socialization tactics utilized by hospitals in this investigation that validated new volunteer values and characteristics positively related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Understanding the implications of the relationships that exist among these variables will assist volunteer program administrators in their volunteer recruitment, training, and retention efforts. ...LINK TO PDF*

**Key Words:** Hospital volunteers, organization socialization, P-O fit, affective commitment, job satisfaction.

## IDEAS AT WORK

### **Helping Volunteers Navigate Difficult Issues: Applying Solution Based Techniques**

Jason A. Hedrick

*At some point or another, the business of working with people will lend itself to mediating difficult interpersonal situations. Finding the right tools to solve these problems is of critical importance to a volunteer organization's overall positive presence in communities. The Solution Focused approach to solving problems is strategic, exploratory, and solution-based rather than problem-oriented. As the name implies, this approach to problem solving is focused on solutions and not on factors that lead to a problem. The Solution Focused approach is a here-and-now type approach that places emphasis on the present and future. Rather than analyzing problems, volunteer resource managers (VRM) can engage volunteers in conversations about potential solutions. It is a distinctly positive approach to problem solving. ...[LINK TO PDF](#)*

**Key Words:** Volunteers, Management, Leadership, Mediation

## **Strategies for Engaging Volunteers By Uncovering Individual Motivations**

Eric Malm, Ph.D., & Stephen Eberle

*A small group of motivated volunteers can accomplish incredible things. A constant challenge for any volunteer organizer is not just to find motivated workers, but to hone his or her skills at figuring out how to bring out the energy and passion of volunteers. In this paper we describe a model of volunteer resources management that places individuals within a complex network of individuals and organizations. Oftentimes volunteers come to a project through their membership of another group — be it a school, church, or community organization. Yet each volunteer is an individual, and has individual motivations that may or may not coincide with the motivations of the organizations to which s/he belong. We present two strategies which the authors (a college service learning coordinator and a college professor) have found helpful in uncovering latent motivation in groups of volunteers. When working with individuals, a structured form of 'one-on-one conversations' can help quickly drive conversations toward identifying underlying motivations. Working in classroom groups, the construction of a Community Contribution Statement provides a structure for identifying individual motivations and placing them within the context of a larger class project. Both approaches focus on the importance of acknowledging individual motivation. ...[LINK TO PDF](#)*

**Key Words:** Partnership Development, Volunteer Motivation, Volunteer Coordination

## **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

### **Development of a User Friendly Social Capital Scale in Volunteering.**

Michelle Foley, Marie Claire Van Hout, PhD, & Hilery Tarrant

*All forms of social, human and cultural capital have positive associations with volunteering, in the form of social connectivity, trust and reciprocity between individuals, groups and wider social networks, community embeddedness and sense of belonging, well-being and mutual resource acquisition relating to friendships, knowledge, skills and education. This article outlines the process undertaken by the research team in the development, validation and testing of a user friendly questionnaire used to measure social capital in volunteering, as part of a large scale mixed method social capital and volunteering study. A 16 item questionnaire was developed and using a computer administered survey tested with a group of volunteers working in a single region in Ireland. Data was collected over a 6 week period in 2011 and the target population was 84 volunteers to validate the scale. A usable sample of 71 volunteers was obtained. These respondents were representative of the entire population of volunteers in the region when compared to regional organisation's Dashboard database figures. The final summated scale of the 16 indicators had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86. Further research is required to validate the scale and to evaluate both the internal structure validity and dimensionality. This scale could be utilized in development planning, placement and administration of volunteering in communities and organisation. ...[LINK TO PDF](#)*

**Key Words:** Social Capital Theory, social connectivity, sense of belonging, trust, reciprocity

### **Assessing Volunteer Programs: Using the Net Benefits Index at Natural Resource Agencies**

J. Stuart Carlton & Susan K. Jacobson, Ph. D.

*Volunteer programs at natural resource agencies are expanding, creating a greater need for measurement and evaluation of program success. We surveyed 81 volunteer resource managers at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to assess the value of the Net Benefits Index as a measure of staff satisfaction with the volunteer program. The Net Benefits Index was positively correlated with two measures of staff satisfaction,*

*indicating that the Index can serve as a useful proxy for satisfaction while also providing detailed information about the specific benefits and challenges faced by volunteer managers. The advantages of the Net Benefits Index are that it is easy to calculate and can be used to provide a snapshot of changes in staff satisfaction over time. One disadvantage of the Net Benefits Index is that it may have to be tailored to individual volunteer programs. ...LINK TO PDF*

**Key Words:** natural resources; Net Benefits Index; program evaluation; volunteer management.

**In This Issue:**  
**Volunteer Engagement and Management**

The International Journal of Volunteer Administration (IJOVA) has long served as a valuable resource in the volunteer resource management field. Over the course of its history, the IJOVA has experienced changes that have helped maintain its relevance. Many of us remember the work that was involved in transitioning to North Carolina State University; a move that ensured the Journal would continue publishing quality manuscripts for the profession. Recently, we experienced another transition as Dale Safrit completed his term as Editor and I accepted the role with Harriett Edwards serving as Associate Editor. With any transition comes change in processes and procedures. We continue to work through many changes and updates to processes that we hope will make the IJOVA an even stronger resource in the future.

This issue of The International Journal of Volunteer Administration includes timely articles addressing key aspects of volunteer resource management. Our first feature article focuses on a timely topic and one of importance to many organizations that seek to recruit volunteers through their web presence. The second feature article then focuses on volunteer socialization, commitment, and satisfaction and highlights important implications for volunteer resource managers to consider relative to volunteer recruitment, training, and retention.

The Ideas at Work section of The IJOVA has always been a popular section for volunteer resource managers and this edition continues that trend. Malm & Eberle build on the popular topic of volunteer motivation and provide strategies for uncovering group motivations that volunteer resource managers can use in their organizations. Hedrick's article then focuses on assisting volunteers in navigating difficult issues in an organization. The Solution Focused approach allows the volunteer resource manager to focus conversations and remain positive.

Our two manuscripts in the Tools of the Trade section provide useful resources for the volunteer resource manager. Foley, Van Hout, and Tarrant detail the development of an instrument used to measure social capital in volunteering. This article is followed by Carlton & Jacobson's work using the Net Benefits Index with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Both tools have direct and immediate application for volunteer resource managers, regardless of organization type and size.

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**A Field Study Extending the Hobson-Heler Model to Assess Website “Volunteer-Friendliness” of the Top 200 Charities in the United States**

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### Abstract

*Nonprofit organizations have been facing enormous pressure due to our current economic woes, resulting in a nationwide rise in agency closings and mergers and further exacerbating the shortage of needed health, human, and social services. One way to minimize the impact of this financial crisis and the increased demand for social services that has come with it is to effectively recruit and utilize volunteers. Recruitment procedures using the internet are a promising approach. This paper evaluates how effectively the 200 largest charities in the United States use their website for volunteer recruitment. Utilizing the Hobson and Hobson 24-item "volunteer-friendliness" assessment tool, the websites of the 200 largest U.S. charities, in terms of total revenue, were evaluated. The reliability of the assessment tool was assessed, and norms were formulated for the 200 charities in terms of overall scale scores. Results indicated that: (1) the 24-item checklist can be successfully used as an objective, reliable measuring tool, (2) overall scores for the 200 organizations were consistently quite low, and (3) only a small percentage of the charities put forth any effort on their websites to offer volunteer opportunities to those with disabilities. Several important recommendations for enhanced nonprofit administration are discussed, along with directions for future research.*

**Key Words:** volunteering, volunteer-friendly, websites, charities

### Introduction

Nonprofits in the United States have experienced especially tumultuous times since the Great Recession started in 2008. The unprecedented combination of three inter-related problems has had a staggering impact on the entire sector. First, as national unemployment topped 10%, there has been a significant surge in demand for services, particularly for social and human services agencies (Banjo & Kalita, 2010; Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010; Schramm, 2010).

Second, governmental budget deficits at the local, state, and federal levels have led to substantial cuts in funding for nonprofits. Finally, the third major problem confronting nonprofits has been the continuing decline in donations. Banjo (2010) reported that, following a 2% decline in 2008, donations fell an additional 3.6% in 2009.

The combined influence of these three problems has exerted enormous pressure on the nonprofit sector, resulting in a nationwide rise in agency closings and

mergers, further exacerbating the shortage of needed health, human, and social services (Banjo & Kalita, 2010). As states began cutting their budgets in 2008 due to the recession, at least 46 states made budget cuts that resulted in reductions in services (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2011).

The one bright spot amid all of this negative news has been the surprising increase in the number of Americans who volunteer. Fox (2010) cited U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures indicating that the number of volunteers jumped from 61.8 million in 2008 to 63.4 million in 2009, a 2.6% increase – the largest single-year increase since 2003. Volunteering among the unemployed rose even more during the same period, from 2.2 million to 3.5 million, an increase of 59.0%.

The expanding pool of volunteers can potentially provide nonprofits with at least a partial solution to the three pressing problems discussed above. According to the Independent Sector (2011), the estimated

dollar value of a volunteer's time is \$21.36 per hour.

The effective recruitment and utilization of volunteers could help nonprofits offset funding declines and meet the increased demand for services (Safrit & Schmiesing, 2005; Safrit, Schmiesing, Gliem, & Gliem, 2005). As Phillips and Phillips (2010, p. 19) have asserted: "Identifying, attracting, and retaining volunteers continues to be among the most difficult and time consuming tasks faced by not-for-profit organizations."

One promising approach to recruiting new volunteers capitalizes on continuing growth in internet access and use in the United States (Allen, Goh, Rogelberg, & Currie, 2010; Goh, Allen, Rogelberg, & Currie, 2009; Hackler & Saxton, 2007; McKee & McKee, 2007; Waters, 2007). While Hackler and Saxton (p. 483) noted that typical nonprofits had websites, they criticized most website content as "brochureware" and asserted that more sophisticated and interactive features were essential in meeting volunteer recruitment and other organizational goals. Goh et al. (2009) formulated a set of 14 volunteer-related best practices for nonprofit websites, derived from research and trade publication recommendations.

The researchers (Allen et al., 2010) subsequently used the 14 best practices in evaluating the websites of 93 animal welfare agencies. Major findings included: (1) the mean score was 9 of 14 best practices, (2) the most commonly used practices were providing a volunteer link (77/93, 83%) and an organizational mission statement (71/93, 77%), and (3) the number of practices used was significantly correlated with organizational size, total revenue, and the total number of volunteers at each agency.

Although not explicitly addressed in their study, Allen et al.'s findings suggest that the websites for the 93 nonprofits met

some of the basic requirements of "volunteer-friendliness". This concept will be introduced and discussed in the next section.

### **Nonprofit "Volunteer-Friendliness"**

The concept of nonprofit organization "volunteer-friendliness" was first introduced by Hobson, Rominger, Malec, Hobson, and Evans (1996). The researchers defined the construct as (p.29): "the extent to which an agency's staff, policies, and programs provide a positive, pleasant, and rewarding experience for volunteers and prospective volunteers." A conceptual model of "volunteer-friendliness" was formulated, consisting of four major components: (1) Volunteer Attraction and Recruitment, (2) Initial Personal Interaction with Agency Staff, (3) Volunteer Utilization and Assignment, and (4) Post-Volunteering Follow-Up.

Based upon this model, "volunteer-friendly" nonprofits interact with their volunteers in a positive way, leading to the development of favorable perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors. Beneficial outcomes for "volunteer-friendly" organizations are predicted to include: (1) greater success in recruiting volunteers, (2) enhanced retention of volunteers, (3) increased volunteer productivity and hours donated, and (4) expansion of the financial donor base.

Research conducted with the Hobson et al. model has confirmed its value in understanding and assessing the interface between nonprofit organizations and prospective/current volunteers. In 1999, Hobson and Malec formulated a 15-item survey to evaluate the "volunteer-friendliness" of nonprofit responses to telephonic inquiries by prospective volunteers. Calls were made to 500 United Way affiliated agencies in a large Midwestern metropolitan area, and results

indicated that many nonprofits failed to deliver high quality, welcoming service to prospective volunteers.

Malec, Hobson, and Guziewicz (2000) developed and successfully field tested the Hobson & Malec “Volunteer-Friendly Index” as a comprehensive measure of all major components in the original “volunteer-friendly” model. Heler (formerly Malec) and Hobson (2002) also used their model to evaluate the quality of work assignments given to volunteers. In 2007, Hobson and Heler conducted an extensive field test of several model propositions and found that: (1) overall volunteer satisfaction was best predicted by the quality of initial job assignments and treatment by agency staff and (2) volunteer satisfaction was strongly correlated with continuation of volunteer work at the agency, likelihood of future volunteering, and likelihood of future financial contributions.

Given the growing use and importance of web-based communication in the United States discussed above, Hobson and Hobson (2009) sought to extend the “volunteer-friendly” model to the interface between prospective volunteers and nonprofit websites. Building upon the two measurement instruments used in previous research (the 15-item telephone contact checklist and the Hobson-Heler “Volunteer-Friendly” Index), the researchers operationally defined nonprofit website “volunteer-friendliness” in terms of a 24-item (100-point) evaluation tool and pilot tested its use in assessing the websites of 75 environmentally-focused nonprofits.

There were two major findings. First, the 24-item (100-point) tool proved to be a useful, objective way to operationally define and measure the “volunteer-friendliness” of nonprofit websites. Second, overall scores (out of a maximum possible of 100) for the 75 environmentally-focused

nonprofits were poor, ranging from 0 to 49, with a mean of 10.5 and standard deviation of 11.1. Other than consistently providing basic contact information for the organization (one of the 24 items on the assessment tool), the overwhelming majority of websites failed to address the remaining 23 items. For example, 50 of 75 agencies (66.7%) failed to include a volunteer link/option on their homepage. These disappointing results provided further confirmation of Hackler and Saxton’s (2007) contention that the content of most nonprofit websites could be characterized as “brochureware”, with minimal effectiveness in recruiting volunteers.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to address the following three issues.

1. Expand use of the Hobson and Hobson (2009) 24-item (100-point) scale to assess website “volunteer-friendliness” for the largest 200 U.S. charities.
2. Formulate norms for the 200 organizations, in terms of overall scale scores.
3. Calculate inter-rater reliability for the 24-item scale.

### **Methodology**

#### *Sample Identification*

An internet search was conducted to locate the 200 largest nonprofits in the United States. Forbes.com, described as “the home page for the world’s business leaders”, provided a ranked list and brief description of the 200 largest U.S. charities, as a function of total revenue. The top five and total revenue in billions were: Mayo Foundation (\$5.6), YMCA’s (\$4.8), United Way (\$3.8), Cleveland Clinic Foundation (\$3.6), and Catholic Charities USA (\$3.2).

At the Forbes.com website, clicking on the name of a charity resulted in linking to the agency’s home page. The 200 home



pages were visited in late 2010 and evaluated using the checklist described below.

#### *Assessment Tool and Utilization*

As mentioned in the Introduction above, Hobson and Hobson (2009) formulated and field-tested a 24-item assessment tool, initially designed to evaluate the “volunteer-friendliness” of 75 environmentally-focused nonprofit websites (the instrument is attached as Appendix A). This tool was based upon measurement protocols developed in earlier research to assess volunteer attraction and recruitment in the Hobson et al. (1996) conceptual model of nonprofit organization “volunteer-friendliness”. One hundred possible points are available on the instrument, with the 24 items weighted to reflect their hypothesized importance in attracting and recruiting volunteers. Given the successful use of the tool in the Hobson and Hobson study and its general applicability to any nonprofit, it was utilized in this research to evaluate the 200 largest charities in the United States.

Two research assistants were oriented to the content of the 24-item checklist. They were then trained in how to specifically use the checklist to evaluate information contained at agency websites. The goal was to provide an objective assessment methodology in order to achieve the minimum inter-rater reliability coefficient recommended by Berk (1986) of .90 or higher. Upon completion of their training, the two raters independently assessed the 200 nonprofit websites using the 24-item tool.

#### *Analysis of Assessment Information*

Completed assessments were entered into a computer database and analyzed using SPSS. Three major analyses were conducted. First, in order to assess the reliability of the 24-item scale, the Pearson product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) was calculated between overall agency scores

computed for each of the two raters, across the 200 agencies (Coaley, 2009). This inter-rater reliability coefficient provides an index of the consistency with which the 24-item checklist can be used in assessing nonprofit websites.

Second, descriptive statistics were calculated for overall agency scores on the 24-item checklist. This included measures of central tendency (mean and median) and dispersion (standard deviation and range), and percentile scores for use in defining scale norms.

### **Results**

#### *Assessment Tool Reliability*

The calculated inter-rater reliability (two raters) for overall agency scores was .99. It thus exceeded the minimum recommended by Berk (1986) of .90. Differences between the two raters were observed in the overall scores for 7 of the 200 charities, or 3.5% (7/200). Members of the research team visited these seven websites and resolved the scoring differences, resulting in a single overall score for each organization.

In a similar manner, differences in individual item scoring between the two raters were resolved by research team members revisiting the websites. This resulted in a set of single scores on the 24 tool items for each organization.

#### *Overall Scores*

Overall scores for the 200 organizations ranged from 0 to 30 (out of a possible 100 points), with a median of 16. The mean overall score and standard deviation were respectively, 13.5 and 7.49. These values are generally similar to those obtained in the Hobson and Hobson (2009) study with 75 environmentally-focused nonprofits. For example, the mean overall agency scores in the two studies were both quite low: 10.5 (with  $n=75$ ) and 13.5 in the present research. It appears that Hackler and

Saxton's (2007) call for more sophisticated and interactive nonprofit websites to better attract and recruit volunteers applies to the largest 200 nonprofits.

Norms for the assessment tool, formulated in terms of selected percentiles and associated overall scores, are provided below.

Percentile	Overall Score
10 <sup>th</sup>	3.0
20 <sup>th</sup>	4.0
30 <sup>th</sup>	5.3
40 <sup>th</sup>	12.0
50 <sup>th</sup>	16.0
60 <sup>th</sup>	17.0
70 <sup>th</sup>	18.0
80 <sup>th</sup>	20.0
90 <sup>th</sup>	21.9
99 <sup>th</sup>	29.0

The nonprofits with the highest overall scores on the website evaluation tool are listed below, along with their individual scores. The top ten include 13

organizations, due to a 4-way tie for 10<sup>th</sup> place.

Nonprofit	Score
American Cancer Society	30
American Lung Association	29
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	28
Habitat for Humanity International	27
Heart to Heart International	26
Campus for Crusade for Christ	25
Greater Chicago Food Depository	25
Rotary Foundation of Rotary International	25
Smithsonian Institute	25
American Red Cross	24
Doctors Without Borders USA	24
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital	24
St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance	24

#### *Item Scores*

The scores for the 24 items in the assessment tool are summarized in Table 1. Individual items are listed, followed by the number and relative percentage of "Yes" and "No" ratings.

Table 1

*Response Frequencies and Relative Percentages (rounded to nearest whole percentage) for Nonprofit Website "Volunteer-Friendliness" Evaluation Items*

Evaluation Items	Yes	No
1. Volunteer Link/Option on Agency Homepage	147 (74%)	53 (26%)
2. Appreciation Expressed for Considering Volunteer Opportunities after Clicking on Volunteer Link	27 (13%)	173 (87%)
3. Statement of Value and Importance of Volunteers to Agency	99 (49%)	101 (51%)
4. FAQ Option Concerning Volunteering	30 (15%)	170 (85%)
5. Skills/Interests Survey for Prospective Volunteers	29 (14%)	171 (86%)
6. Skills/Interests Survey Results Matched with Appropriate Volunteer Assignments	5 (2%)	195 (98%)
7. Online Application for Volunteering	82 (41%)	118 (59%)
8. Descriptions of Available/Potential Volunteer Assignments	122 (61%)	78 (39%)
9. Wide Variety of Volunteer Options Available:		
a) Online	16 (8%)	184 (92%)

b) At Home	27 (13%)	173 (87%)
c) At Agency	104 (52%)	96 (48%)
d) At Field Location	72 (36%)	128 (64%)
e) Individual	125 (63%)	75 (37%)
f) Group/Team	51 (25%)	149 (75%)
g) Interact/Work with Client	97 (48%)	103 (52%)
h) Short Term	117 (59%)	83 (41%)
i) Long Term	113 (57%)	87 (43%)
j) Daytime	115 (58%)	85 (42%)
k) Evening	106 (53%)	94 (47%)
l) Weekend	105 (53%)	95 (47%)
10. Pictures of Volunteers on the Volunteer Webpage	97 (48%)	103 (52%)
11. Quotes from Volunteers on the Volunteer Webpage	49 (24%)	151 (76%)
12. Information Concerning how Volunteering can Lead to Exciting/ Rewarding Jobs or Careers	12 (6%)	188 (94%)
13. Volunteer Orientation/Training Available	69 (34%)	131 (66%)
14. Agency Commitment to Providing Meaningful Volunteer Assignments	10 (5%)	190 (95%)
15. Commitment to Exceptional Treatment of Volunteers by Agency Staff	4 (2%)	196 (98%)
16. Accommodations Provided for Volunteers with Disabilities:		
a) Hearing	4 (2%)	196 (98%)
b) Visual	4 (2%)	196 (98%)
c) Physical	5 (2%)	195 (98%)
d) Mental/Emotional	2 (1%)	198 (99%)
17. Volunteer Coordinator Contact Information Available	49 (24%)	151 (76%)
18. Variety of Ways to Contact the Agency:		
a) Telephone	192 (96%)	8 (4%)
b) Fax	58 (29%)	142 (71%)
c) Email	191 (96%)	9 (4%)
d) Postal Mail	175 (88%)	25 (12%)
19. Description of Agency Use of Volunteer Satisfaction Surveys	4 (2%)	196 (98%)
20. Description of Average Satisfaction Survey Scores for Volunteers	3 (1%)	197 (99%)
21. Final Thank You at the Bottom of the Volunteer Webpage	19 (9%)	181 (91%)
22. Agency-Offered Links to Other Affiliated Nonprofit Websites if no Matching/Appropriate Volunteer Opportunities are Available	24 (12%)	176 (88%)
23. Agency Response Within 24 Hours to Questions Posed via Email	49 (24%)	151 (76%)
24. Agency Response Within 24 Hours to a Request or Application to Volunteer	21 (10%)	179 (90%)

The top five items, in terms of frequency of “yes” responses, along with the actual frequencies and associated percentages were:

1. Item #18, Variety of Ways to Contact Agency
  - (a) Telephone – 192 (96%)
  - (c) Email – 191 (96%)
  - (d) Postal Mail – 175 (85%)

2. Item #1, Volunteer Link – Option on Agency Homepage – 147 (74%)
3. Item #9e, Individual Volunteer Options – 125 (63%)
4. Item #8, Descriptions of Available/Potential Volunteer Assignments – 122 (61%)
5. Item #9h, Short Term Volunteer Options – 117 (59%)

The findings confirm the “brochureware” criticism of nonprofit websites, first noted by Hackler and Saxton (2007).

The five items with the lowest frequencies of “yes” responses and associated percentages were:

1. Item #16, Accommodations Provided for Volunteers with Disabilities
  - (d) Mental/Emotional – 2 (1%)
  - (a) Hearing – 4 (2%)
  - (b) Visual – 4 (2%)
  - (c) Physical – 5 (2%)
2. Item #20, Description of Average Satisfaction Survey Scores for Volunteers – 3 (1%)
3. Item #15, Commitment to Exceptional Treatment of Volunteers by Agency Staff – 4 (2%)
4. Item #19, Description of Agency Use of Volunteer Satisfaction Surveys – 4 (2%)
5. Item #6, Skills/Interests Survey Results (for individual prospective volunteers) Matched with Appropriate Volunteer Assignments – 5 (2%)

### Discussion and Conclusions

Three major conclusions can be reasonably drawn from the results obtained in this study.

First, the 24-item checklist proved to be an objective, reliable measurement tool. It offers a straightforward methodology to assess volunteer-friendliness as applied to nonprofit websites.

Second, overall scores for the 200 largest U.S. charities were consistently quite

low, with the highest score being 30 out of 100 possible points. All of the nonprofits could thus significantly benefit from targeted improvements to their websites.

Third, fewer than 5% of the 200 nonprofits offered accommodations at their website for volunteers with disabilities. The overwhelming majority of websites did not specifically address volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities.

### Implications

#### *Nonprofit Administration*

Based upon the findings of this research, there are several important implications for nonprofit administrators. First, the 24-item tool can be easily and objectively used to evaluate the current volunteer-friendliness of an organization’s website, identifying major strengths and areas for improvement.

Second, based upon assessment results, a comprehensive improvement strategy can be formulated and implemented, focusing initially on easy-to-make, high-impact areas (e.g., including a volunteer link on the homepage, developing an online volunteer application, and insuring responses to email inquiries within 24 hours). A recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Hodges (2009), can be very helpful in identifying “best practices” in web-based recruitment and utilization/assignment of volunteers. Four popular sites for recruiting volunteers and matching them with appropriate nonprofit assignments were analyzed and compared, including [usaservice.org](http://usaservice.org), [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org), [idealist.org](http://idealist.org), and [1-800-volunteer.org](http://1-800-volunteer.org). Visits to each of these sites can assist nonprofits in identifying specific ways in which to improve their website recruiting effectiveness. Administrators could also consider registering volunteer opportunities at their agencies with these sites.

It is important for nonprofits to monitor and document the impact of website enhancements on their volunteer recruitment efforts, in order to assess the return on the time and money invested. Outcome variables of interest include: (1) website visitor counts, (2) the amount of website visitors that click on volunteer opportunities, (3) the amount of website visitors that inquire about volunteer opportunities, (4) the amount of volunteer applications submitted online, (5) the amount of volunteers recruited through the website, (6) the number of hours worked by volunteers recruited through the website, (7) the amount and value of financial donations made by volunteers recruited through the website, and (8) the amount of volunteers recruited through the website who go on to fill part-time or full-time positions at the agency.

A third practical implication involves the importance of obtaining professional IT services in order to formulate and operate an effective website for volunteer recruitment. While many nonprofits do not have the financial resources to hire an IT professional as an employee or consultant, several low-cost or no-cost options are available. These include: (1) using a current board member or volunteer with IT expertise, (2) recruiting a board member or volunteer with the necessary expertise, (3) negotiating donated services from an IT firm in exchange for acknowledgement at the agency website and other promotional considerations, and (4) seeking assistance from local universities in the form of service learning projects or internships for students in computer, business, or nonprofit management classes.

### **Future Research**

The results of this study suggest that future research would be helpful in the following five areas. First, while the inter-rater reliability of the 24-item tool was

established in the present study, research is needed to confirm the scale's validity. A large sample, cross-sectional design could be used to correlate scale scores with the total number of agency volunteers. Multiple regression could be utilized to empirically assess the weights assigned to individual items in the scale and principal components analysis could be used to assess the underlying factor structure of the tool. In addition, longitudinal designs could be employed to determine if targeted website improvements result in predicted increases in volunteers recruited, and to compare the relative efficacy of different improvement strategies.

Second, research with the 24-item tool would be of interest using a larger, more representative (random, if possible) sample of nonprofits. This would allow for the generalization of the findings to the entire sector.

Third, given the widespread lack of attention to opportunities for disabled volunteers, research in this area would be helpful in engaging this under-represented population.

Fourth, more research is needed on the ways in which nonprofits can upgrade and improve their website capabilities. Particular attention is needed on identifying the most cost-effective approaches for financially challenged agencies.

Finally, research would be useful in addressing how increasingly popular social media can be integrated into a comprehensive IT strategy for volunteer recruitment.

### **Study Limitations**

The two primary limitations of the present study involve the nature and size of the sample utilized. First, the non-random sample consisted of the 200 largest charities in the United States, in terms of total revenue, with substantial financial resources

unavailable to other organizations. Thus, generalizations to the population of U.S. nonprofits must be made cautiously.

Second, the size of the non-random sample is quite small compared to the total number of U.S. nonprofits, estimated by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2011) to be 1,014,816. Two hundred represents approximately .02% of the total. Again, caution must be exercised in generalizing from the findings of this study to the population of nonprofits as a whole.

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### About the Authors

**Dr. Charles J. Hobson** has an active research program on volunteerism, has published and presented papers in the field, and is co-developer of the Volunteer-Friendly Index for nonprofits. Dr. Hobson has been a volunteer board member for the Visiting Nurse Association and the Lake Area United Way, as well as board member and President of the Northwest Indiana Wellness

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**Shelli Henry** works for Berlin Metals in marketing and inside sales. She has been an adjunct professor for several years, teaching courses in organizational behavior and introduction to business. Shelli remains very active in a variety of volunteer efforts through her church.

**Dr. Susan M. Rouse** is an advisory board member for Area Health Education Centers, which focuses on preparing youth for health-related careers. She has volunteered in leadership positions for Girl Scouts of Calumet Council, American Heart Association, and American Cancer Society. She has also worked with area schools to provide Junior Achievement programming.

**Dr. Andrea E. C. Griffin's** research program is diverse. One overarching theme involves examining how organizations and individuals present themselves to each other. She has served as President of the Board of City Ballet Theatre in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for several years. In addition, she has volunteered with the United Performing Arts Fund and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee, the YWCA of Greater Milwaukee, and the YMCA of Northwest Indiana.

**Jana Szostek** is actively involved in community service through her church. She implemented and directs a ministry in her church designed to increase the involvement of church members in outreach ministries. Through this ministry, her church has supported several local needs, including abuse shelters, youth programs, and food programs. She also serves as a Trustee. In addition to her work with her church, Jana is an active member of the Indiana Patient Preferences Coalition, a task force working to propose legislation that gives individuals the power to make healthcare decisions in advance of incapacity.

**Natalie Murillo** works as a research associate and data analyst. She enjoys volunteering for animal welfare and children's causes, and is actively involved in the children's ministry at her church. She is also a frequent volunteer in the daily activities and special programming at her son's school.



## Appendix A

<i>Nonprofit Website "Volunteer-Friendliness" Evaluation Checklist</i>			
Evaluation Items	Available Points	Evaluation	
		Yes	No
1. Volunteer Link/Option on Agency Homepage	8		
2. Appreciation Expressed for Considering Volunteer Opportunities after Clicking on Volunteer Link	2		
3. Statement of Value and Importance of Volunteers to Agency	6		
4. FAQ Option Concerning Volunteering	6		
5. Skills/Interests Survey for Prospective Volunteers	6		
6. Skills/Interests Survey Results Matched with Appropriate Volunteer Assignments	6		
7. Online Application for Volunteering	6		
8. Descriptions of Available/Potential Volunteer Assignments	6		
9. Wide Variety of Volunteer Options Available:	(12)		
a) Online	1		
b) At Home	1		
c) At Agency	1		
d) At Field Location	1		
e) Individual	1		
f) Group/Team	1		

g) Interact/Work with Client	1		
h) Short Term	1		
i) Long Term	1		
j) Daytime	1		
k) Evening	1		
l) Weekend	1		
10. Pictures of Volunteers on the Volunteer Webpage	2		
11. Quotes from Volunteers on Volunteer Webpage	2		
12. Information Concerning how Volunteering can Lead to Exciting/Rewarding Jobs or Careers	2		
13. Volunteer Orientation/Training Available	4		
14. Agency Commitment to Providing Meaningful Volunteer Assignments	4		
15. Commitment to Exceptional Treatment of Volunteers by Agency Staff	4		
16. Accommodations Provided for Volunteers with Disabilities:	(4)		
a) Hearing	1		
b) Visual	1		
c) Physical	1		
d) Mental/Emotional	1		
17. Volunteer Coordinator Contact Information Available	4		

18. Variety of Ways to Contact the Agency:	(4)		
a) Telephone	1		
b) Fax	1		
c) Email	1		
d) Postal Mail	1		
19. Description of Agency Use of Volunteer Satisfaction Surveys	2		
20. Description of Average Satisfaction Survey Scores for Volunteers	2		
21. Final Thank You at the Bottom of the Volunteer Webpage	2		
22. Agency-Offered Links to Other Affiliated Nonprofit Websites if no Matching/Appropriate Volunteer Opportunities are Available	2		
23. Agency Response Within 24 Hours to Questions Posed Via Email	4		
24. Agency Response Within 24 Hours to a Request or Application to Volunteer	4		

**Volunteer Entry into Hospital Culture:  
Organization socialization, P-O Fit, commitment, and job satisfaction**

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**Abstract**

*Volunteers fulfill vital roles within organizations helping volunteer program administrators stretch resources and extend services. The study presented explored the relationships among the organization socialization tactics used by hospitals and volunteer perceptions of value congruence or person-organization fit (P-O fit), commitment, and job satisfaction. Research findings reveal organization socialization tactics that provided common learning experiences separated from the seasoned organization members positively related to volunteer perceptions of organization commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Socialization tactics that provided new volunteers identifiable stages of learning also positively related to perceptions of volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Additionally, tactics that allowed new volunteers to work with seasoned volunteers who modeled the volunteer role also positively related to volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and organization support. Finally, socialization tactics utilized by hospitals in this investigation that validated new volunteer values and characteristics positively related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Understanding the implications of the relationships that exist among these variables will assist volunteer program administrators in their volunteer recruitment, training, and retention efforts.*

**Key Words:** Hospital volunteers, organization socialization, P-O fit, affective commitment, job satisfaction.

**Introduction**

Volunteers fulfill vital organizational roles within organizations contributing 8.1 billion hours of service in 2009 (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2010). An organization's investment of time and resources to socialize new members into their culture benefits both the volunteer and

organization. For instance, Kim, Cable and Kim (2005) found institutionalized socialization tactics positively associated with Person Organization (P-O) fit, job satisfaction, commitment, and decreased intention to leave directly. Interestingly, many of the investigations examining organization socialization (Allen & Meyer, 1990a;

Ashford & Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen & Anderson, 2004; Jones, 1986) have predominately utilized samples composed of college graduates, students, or paid organizational newcomers. Few investigations have sought insight into the socialization of volunteers. This investigation examined the socialization of volunteers into the cultures of hospitals by investigating the relationship among socialization tactics employed and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit, organization commitment and job satisfaction.

### Organization Socialization

Van Maanen (1978) suggested organizational socialization refers to the experiences associated with learning how things work when entering a new organization or accepting a new position or role. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) propose socialization tactics employed by organizations fall within these six dichotomous categories, including

- *formal* and *informal*
- *individual* and *collective*
- *sequential* and *random*
- *fixed* and *variable*
- *serial* and *disjunctive*
- *investiture* and *divestiture*.

When defining these tactics *formal* socialization tactics separate newcomers from other organization members while they learn their new role while *informal* socialization tactics allow interaction with experienced organization members during the learning process. *Individual* socialization tactics provide unique learning experiences while *collective* tactics provide similar learning experiences for all newcomers. *Sequential* socialization tactics move newcomers through identifiable phases while *random* tactics provide a more elusive learning process. *Fixed* socialization tactics provide newcomers with specific organizational advancement information

while *variable* tactics provide little specific information about organizational advancement. *Serial* tactics use experienced members to train newcomers while *disjunctive* tactics do not. *Investiture* tactics confirm the newcomer's individual values and character while *divestiture* tactics attempt to change the newcomer's values and character (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The researchers suggest different socialization tactics produce different role orientations. Continuing the work of Van Maanen and Schein, Jones (1986) suggested the six tactics fall within a framework representing an institutionalized or individualized approach taken by the organization. Within Jones' model content, context and the social experiences associated with socialization differentiate tactics as institutionalized or individualized tactics. Again, different approaches produce different outcome for the organization and its members. For instance, institutionalized socialization tactics relate to greater commitment, job satisfaction and decreased intention to leave (Jones, 1986). In this instance, the benefit to the organization lies in developing a program to help new members understand the organization's culture while enhancing their commitment, potentially increasing their satisfaction with the role they fulfill, and decreasing their intention to leave.

### P-O Fit

Chatman (1989) defines P-O fit as a congruence of the values held by the organization and the values held by the person. For the volunteer program administrator important relationships exist between organization member P-O fit perceptions and other organization outcomes. For instance, O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) found when P-O fit increased so did perceptions of job satisfaction. While increased P-O fit

decreased intention to leave the organization. Cable and Judge (1996) found positive associations between P-O fit and willingness to recommend the organization to peers. As organization's continue to do more with less the development of a pool of volunteers that are satisfied with the work they do and willing to continue with the organization helps save training resources. Likewise, developing a group of volunteers who recommend their organization to peers will assist the volunteer program administrator with recruitment efforts. As more organizations move toward enhancing their services through the use of volunteers word-of-mouth becomes an important recruitment tool.

### **Commitment**

This investigation examined affective commitment or of feelings of attachment, identification with the organization and involvement with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Understanding how a volunteer's commitment relates with job satisfaction, intention to leave and work effort becomes increasingly important as volunteer program administrators try to stretch resources. For instance, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found that affective commitment positively associated with organization member job satisfaction. Affective commitment also negatively related with organizational turnover. Simply stated when affective commitment increased organization turnover decreased.

### **Job Satisfaction**

While Jones (1986) found that institutionalized socialization tactics positively related to organization member job satisfaction. This satisfaction resulted in more than a happy organization member. Increased job satisfaction produces a benefit for the organization too. For example, Testa

(2001) concluded when food service employees perceived greater job satisfaction this facilitated greater organizational commitment resulting in greater work effort. The dual benefit connected with job satisfaction makes understanding socialization tactics that enhance job satisfaction increasing important for volunteer program administrators.

The three research hypotheses proposed for the investigation include:

*Hypothesis 1:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit.

*Hypothesis 2:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of organizational commitment.

*Hypothesis 3:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction.

### **Methodology**

This quantitative study used a correlation design collecting data from hospital volunteers from August 2008 through January 2009. Participants were recruited from a convenience sample of hospitals within a 200-mile radius of Western Kentucky University. Each hospital reported a bed count between 140-450 total beds to the Kentucky Hospital Association, had an active volunteer program, and conducted a training activity for new volunteers. Upon gaining permission from each hospital's volunteer program administrator the researcher attended a volunteer meeting seeking study participants. Respondents voluntarily completed a pen and paper survey

distributed and collected during the meeting. No follow-up meetings took place. Data collection occurred at six Western Kentucky hospitals. Of 230 surveys distributed, 180 completed surveys were returned achieving a return rate of 78%.

The survey included items from four scales measuring organizational socialization tactics (Jones, 1986), commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), volunteer satisfaction (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001), and perceived P-O fit (Cable & De Rue, 2002). These scales used a 5 or 7-point Likert-scale. From Jones' (1986) organization socialization tactics scale the survey included three items from the *collective and individual, formal and informal, investiture and divestiture, sequential and-random, and serial and disjunctive scales* to measure socialization tactics experienced by hospital volunteers. These scales measured the organizational member's perception of (a) socialization occurring in a group versus individual settings, (b) organization use of formal versus individual learning experiences, (c) actions that build up or attempted to change values/characteristics of each individual, (d) learning experiences that build upon each other, and (e) opportunities to be in contact with seasoned organization members while learning their new organizational roles. When used in correlation study designs, a positive correlation between the socialization tactic and a second variable are interpreted as a relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and the second variable (Jones, 1986). Re-wording of scale item reflected the participant's volunteer position within the organization.

The survey contained three items from Meyer et al. (1993) revised version of the affective commitment scale (ACS). This scale measured organizational commitment based on identification with, involvement in,

and attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990b). Volunteer satisfaction with organizational support and empowerment were measured using Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley's volunteer satisfaction index (VSI). Modeling the works of Cable and DeRue (2002) and Cable and Judge (1996) three items measured the perceived P-O fit of hospital volunteers. They included: "I find there is a good fit between my personal values and the values and culture of the hospital where I volunteer," "The values and culture of the hospital match my personal values," and "I see similarities between the things I value in my life and the things the hospital where I volunteer values." Respondents also provided information related to their age, gender, and length of volunteer service.

## Results

Respondent's gender distribution make-up included 74.4% female and 25.6% male. Respondents were predominately 65 years of age or older with 18.5% reporting their age as 65-69, 21.3% reporting their age as 70-74 and 48.3% reporting their age as 75 years or older. Only 1.7 % of participants reported recent volunteer recruitment while 2.9% of respondents reported volunteer involvement of less than three (3) months. Twenty-two percent of respondents reported volunteering for their hospital for 4-6 years, 15% reported volunteering for 7-10 years and 33.5% report volunteering for 10 or more years. Cronbach's alphas for the scales ranged from .58 to .90. The lowest alpha scores occurred in the Formal-Informal, and Collective-Individual Socialization Scales of .58 and .65 respectively. Final correlation analysis occurred after dropping one item from the Collective-Individual, Formal- Informal and Investiture-Divestiture Socialization Scales. Table 1 summarizes the results of correlation analysis.

Table 1

Pearson Correlations among Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Serial	1								
Sequential	.511*	1							
Collective	.400*	.562*	1						
Formal	.427*	.389*	.440*	1					
Investiture	.586*	.541*	.346*	.290*	1				
Commitment	.522*	.549*	.595*	.323*	.514*	1			
P-O Fit	.445*	.533*	.371*	.363*	.418*	.451*	1		
Empowerment	.628*	.601*	.461*	.405*	.609*	.638*	.669*	1	
Organization Support	.548*	.669*	.456*	.427*	.626*	.582*	.671*	.791*	1

<sup>a</sup>  $N = 180$ ; \*Correlation is significant at  $p < .01$

<sup>b</sup> A positive correlation between socialization tactic and any other variable is to be interpreted as the relationships between the institutional end of the continuum and the variable. A negative correlation indicates a relationship with the individualized end (Jones, 1986).

*Hypothesis 1:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of P-O fit. All institutional socialization tactics positively related to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit with *sequential socialization tactics* having the strongest relationships ( $r = .533$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and *serial socialization tactics* having the second strongest relationship ( $r = .445$ ,  $p < .01$ ). *Investiture socialization tactics* also positively related to P-O fit ( $r = .418$ ,  $p < .01$ ). *Collective socialization tactics* positively related to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit ( $r = .371$ ,  $p < .01$ ). While *formal socialization tactics* showed the weakest relationship to volunteer perceptions of P-O fit ( $r = .363$ ,  $p < .010$ ).

*Hypothesis 2:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of organizational commitment. The strongest positive relationships between institutional socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of affective commitment occurred between *collective* and *sequential socialization tactics*  $r = .595$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $r = .549$ ,  $p < .01$  respectively. The next strongest relationship occurred between *serial socialization tactics* and commitment ( $r = .522$ ,  $p < .01$ ). *Investiture socialization tactics* also positively related to commitment ( $r = .514$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The weakest positive relationship occurred between *formal socialization tactics* and volunteer



perceptions of commitment ( $r = .323, p < .01$ ).

*Hypothesis 3:* When organizations employ institutionalized socialization tactics, there is a positive relationship between institutionalized socialization tactics and volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction. In this instance, all five institutionalized socialization tactics related positively with volunteer perceptions of job satisfaction as measured by their perceptions of empowerment and organization support.

*Serial, investiture* and *sequential socialization tactics* showed the strongest relationship to perceptions of empowerment  $r = .628, p < .01, r = .609, p < .01$  and  $r = .601, p < .01$  respectively. *Collective* and *formal socialization tactics* also positively related to perceptions of empowerment  $r = .461, p < .01$  and  $r = .405, p < .01$  respectively. *Sequential* and *investiture socialization tactics* showed the strongest relationship to volunteer perceptions of organization support ( $r = .669, p < .01$  and  $r = .626, p < .01$  respectively). While *serial, collective* and *formal socialization tactics* also related to volunteer perceptions of organization support ( $r = .548, p < .01, r = .456, p < .01$  and  $r = .427, p < .01$  respectively).

## Discussion

The research findings reveal organization socialization tactics that provided common learning experiences (i.e., *collective socialization tactics*) positively related to volunteer perceptions of organization commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. Similarly, socialization tactics that separated new organization volunteers from others while they learned new organization roles positively (i.e., *formal socialization tactics*) related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment, and satisfaction with

organization support. Socialization tactics that provided new volunteers identifiable stages of learning (i.e., *sequential socialization tactics*) also positively related to perceptions of volunteer commitment, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support. While organization socialization tactics that allowed new volunteers to work with seasoned volunteers who model organization roles (i.e., *serial socialization tactics*) positively related to commitment, satisfaction with empowerment, and satisfaction with organization support. Finally, socialization tactics utilized by hospitals in this investigation that validated new volunteer values and characteristics (i.e., *investiture socialization tactics*) positively related to commitment, P-O fit, satisfaction with empowerment and satisfaction with organization support.

This investigation has important implications for volunteer program administrators. Socialization of new volunteers can positively impact their perceptions of value congruence (P-O fit), organization commitment and satisfaction. By enhancing the volunteer's perceptions of P-O fit, organization commitment and satisfaction the administrator can potentially increase the volunteer's intention to stay, the work effort the volunteer provides, and the volunteer's willingness to recommend the organization to their peers.

Therefore, by merely enhancing P-O fit through socialization activities the volunteer program administrator has the opportunity to develop a pool of volunteers who will potentially recommend the organization to others (Cable & Judge, 1996). This is an important fact, as Becker and Dhingra (2001) found social ties of church members influenced decisions to volunteer. A willingness by volunteers to recommend the organization to their friends assists the volunteer director in *word-of-*

*mouth* recruitment. Additionally, Huang, Cheng, and Chou (2005) found a positive association between P-O fit and extra effort to work. This extra effort work may result in increased productivity as volunteers fulfill their roles within the organization. Finally, Cable and Judge (1996) found a positive relationship between P-O fit and decreased intention to leave. Considering the expenses associated with constantly retraining volunteers to fill positions others vacated retaining volunteers is economically beneficial. Enhancing organization commitment has a similar impact on intention to stay with your organization (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) and extra work effort (Preston & Brown, 2004).

Examining the works of others reveals increased organization member perceptions of job satisfaction may be very beneficial to the organization. For instance, Testa (2001) found that increased job satisfaction may also facilitate additional organization commitment and extra effort to work. Additionally, increasing perceptions of volunteer job satisfaction can contribute to feelings that the volunteer's work fulfilled expectations. When the volunteer is fulfilled their willingness to continue their service is enhanced provided there are activities to help integrate them into the organization (Yui, Tung, & So-kum, 2001). In this instance, activities that socialize the volunteer into the culture of the organization increase satisfaction which in turn contributes to the volunteer's sense of fulfillment.

#### **Study Limitations**

The investigation has several limits including:

1. The participants in this investigation were selected from a convenience sample of hospital volunteers that met specific criteria and elected to participate.

2. Study participants relied on their ability to recall their socialization experiences when completing the questionnaire.
3. The generalizability of the results is limited by the nature of the roles fulfilled by the volunteers participating in the study. The range of roles filled by these individuals did not include high stress positions within the organization.
4. The generalizability of the results is limited by the age range and length of service of the volunteers. The majority of the volunteers were 65 years of age or older and/or reported involvement with the organization for 7 or more years.
5. Social desirability or the tendency for individuals to avoid looking bad (Bickman & Rog, 1998) may present another limitation of the investigation. Volunteers participating in this investigation may have answered questions in a manner that made their volunteer director look good regardless of their true feelings.

#### **Conclusion**

This study offers volunteer program administrators with opportunities to build stronger ties between the volunteer and the organization. Through socialization tactics that provide (a) common learning experiences, (b) enhance the volunteer's current values, (c) provide opportunities in which experienced members share in the training, and (d) provide formal training periods to learn new roles the administrator has the opportunity to build organization commitment, P-O fit, and job satisfaction. Benefits derived from the volunteer's positive perception include increased interest in remaining with the organization, increased willingness to recommend the organization to peers, and extra work effort. The findings of the study suggest the right combination of socialization tactics pays dividends for the organization during tough

economic times. In the end the volunteer and organization become stronger through efforts spent to help volunteers enter the organization.

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## Helping Volunteers Navigate Difficult Issues: Applying Solution Based Techniques

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### Abstract

*At some point or another, the business of working with people will lend itself to mediating difficult interpersonal situations. Finding the right tools to solve these problems is of critical importance to a volunteer organization's overall positive presence in communities. The Solution Focused approach to solving problems is strategic, exploratory, and solution-based rather than problem-oriented. As the name implies, this approach to problem solving is focused on solutions and not on factors that lead to a problem. The Solution Focused approach is a here-and-now type approach that places emphasis on the present and future. Rather than analyzing problems, volunteer resource managers (VRM) can engage volunteers in conversations about potential solutions. It is a distinctly positive approach to problem solving.*

**Key Words:** Volunteers, Management, Leadership, Mediation

### Introduction

Professionals working in volunteer organizations understand the value and importance of mobilizing volunteers to achieve goals beyond what one can do themselves. Very few organizations value this work force more than youth serving agencies. 4-H programs, scouts, youth athletic programs, and church groups all recruit, train, and rely on volunteers. Their success depends on the caliber of volunteers who manage the foundation of the programs in which they volunteer for. Keeping volunteers aligned with organizational expectations, philosophies and goals can be a challenge especially when conflict complicates this relationship. How do you empower volunteers to find viable solutions to problems while maintaining the organizational philosophies?

At some point or another, the business of working with people will lend itself to mediating difficult interpersonal situations. Finding the right tools to solve

these problems is of critical importance to a volunteer organizations overall positive presence in communities. When difficult situations occur it is common for volunteers to focus on the cause of the problem, how it started, who did and said what, and how these things deviated from normal expectations. Generally, people have preconceived ideas of how things should work and when they do not take place in such a way, a problem occurs. Many of us have the propensity to focus on the problem and highlight what went wrong. For volunteer resource managers, one of the biggest hurdles initially in solving volunteer problems is repositioning focus from reliving the issue to thinking about steps that can be taken to solve the problem.

Positive management of problem situations can retain quality volunteers, increase volunteer ownership of their efforts and make the overall experiences positive for clientele. Nonprofit organizations that actively listen to volunteers' suggestions and

demonstrate social accountability have a greater likelihood of seeing volunteers stay with an organization for an extended period of time because they not only understand the nonprofit but also feel it is capable of accomplishing its mission (Waters and Bortee, 2007).

Many techniques can be used to manage conflict, but one in particular can be empowering to volunteers, adaptable and easily implemented by volunteer resource managers. After evaluating the efficacy of Solution Focused Therapy in a wide variety of settings through 15 various studies, Gingerich and Eisengart (2000) suggest that Solution Focused Therapy may be useful in a broad range of applications.

### **History and Basic Principles of the Solution Focused Therapy**

Solution Focused Therapy (SFT) has its roots in clinical social work and was developed by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg in the 1980's (De Shazer et al., 1986). The solution-focused mission is to create conversation that focuses on solutions. The technique is goal-driven, individual based, and focuses on strengths (what is good that is happening) rather than on weaknesses, such as problems (Wallerstedt and Higgins, 2000).

While SFT is primarily utilized by mental health therapists as a tool to guide clients, its foundations can also be adapted for use in other disciplines. Its effectiveness is well established and supported by a solid and growing body of research. Since its origins in the mid-1980s, solution-focused therapy has proved to be an effective intervention across a whole range of problem presentations (Iveson, 2002).

Since its inception over two decades ago, Solution-focused Therapy has earned its place within social science disciplines and is widely accepted in the fields of

counseling, social work, education and business. The techniques used in this approach are extremely adaptable to many situations, can be applied quickly, and do not require a long term investment of time to find solutions to problems. The approach has strength in focusing on moving forward with positive change rather than focusing on the roots of the issue or past history. More importantly, the techniques actively engage volunteers in finding the solution or solving the problem. The process empowers volunteers to take ownership of a situation and outline their own steps in solving the conflict.

### **Four Basic Solution Focused Strategies to Help Guide Volunteers**

**The Miracle Question:** Probably the most well-known and popular intervention within the solution-focused approach is the "miracle question" (de Shazer, 1988). It is one of the defining principles of the Solution Focused approach (de Shazer, 1988). The miracle question is a method of constructing conversation to help clientele envision how the future will be different when the conflict/problem is no longer present, thus shifting a volunteer's focus from reliving the problem. During this process of questions, goals can often be identified by volunteers with guidance of the VRM. Careful consideration to how the question is framed will help clientele move away from what the problem is and focus on how to begin solving the issue.

A traditional version of the miracle question would be framed like this (adopted from Dolan, 2010): *"Suppose our meeting is over, you go home, do whatever you planned to do for the rest of the day. And then, sometime in the evening, you get tired and go to sleep. And in the middle of the night, when you are fast asleep, a miracle happens and all the problems that brought you here*

*today are solved just like that. But since the miracle happened over night nobody is telling you that the miracle happened. When you wake up the next morning, how are you going to start discovering that the miracle happened? ... What else are you going to notice?"*

A VRM working with a volunteer can frame the Miracle question depending on the context of the volunteer problem. For example, a 4-H volunteer may be frustrated with their teen officers in their 4-H club. The Miracle question may look similar to the following: *"If you woke up tomorrow, and a miracle happened so that you no longer felt your 4-H club officers do not follow through with their responsibilities, what would you see differently? What would the first signs be that a miracle has occurred within your club? What would 4-H members be doing differently in your club?"* *"What would you be doing differently?"*

The use of this question reframes the problem into positive discussion. Beyond that, you have engaged the volunteer to identify, on their own, what changes need to occur to begin to move the 4-H club into effectiveness. The "first signs that a miracle happened" is meant to direct the volunteer towards outlining the initial steps for change. VRM's need to guide volunteers to develop positive goals, or what they will do, rather than focus on the volunteer's frustration and complaints. For example: *"What will you be doing differently when someone says you have successful officers in your 4-H Club?"*

**Scaling Questions:** Scaling questions can be used to identify useful differences for volunteers and may help to establish goals as well. Scaling questions also can help volunteers incrementally set goals. They enable volunteers to focus on steps that can eventually lead to positive change. The

range of a scale can be defined in different ways each time the question is asked, but typically a range from "the worst the problem has ever been" (zero or one) to "the best things could ever possibly be" (ten). The volunteer is asked to rate their current position on the scale, and questions are then used to help the volunteer identify resources (e.g. "what's stopping your club from slipping one point lower down the scale?"), exceptions (e.g. "on a day when your club is one point higher on the scale, what would tell you that it was a 'one point higher' day?") and to describe a preferred future (e.g. "where on the scale would be good enough? What would a day at that point on the scale look like?").

**Exception Seeking Questions:** The objective of this strategy is to refocus the volunteer to search for times when the problem is less severe or absent. Again, it's a strategy that shifts discussion away from the circumstances that created the issue. Exception seeking questions help volunteers reflect and identify what has worked in the past and can be used to encourage the volunteer to repeat such behaviors. Simply asking the volunteer to outline a time when the problem did not exist and then encourage the volunteer to describe what different circumstances existed in that situation can expose significant changes that can be implemented to resolve the issue at hand. For example: *"I understand you and Mary are having challenges working together in your 4-H club. You and Mary have been advising your 4-H club together for many years. Can you think of times when you worked well together? Describe how that worked for you? When the problem did not exist, what were you doing then?"*

**Coping Questions:** Coping questions are designed to elicit information about volunteer resources that may have gone unnoticed by them. Examples of coping

strategies can be brought forth from even the most heated volunteer problems. For example: *"I can see that things have been really difficult for you and your involvement with the local horse committee, yet I am struck by the fact that, even so, you manage to devote a lot of time, expertise and effort working with the group. How do you do that?"*

Genuine interest and empathy can help to highlight strengths of their commitment. The initial summary "I can see that things have been really difficult for you" validates their situation. The second part "you manage to devote a lot of time and effort." is also a valid comment, but one that counters the problem. Undeniably, they cope and coping questions start to gently and supportively challenge the problem-focused narrative (de Shazer, 1988).

### Conclusion

The goal of solving conflict should be positive resolution. Any time you can accomplish this task while at the same time empowering volunteers in the process, it is a win/win. If conflict can be managed well, it will often times enable an organizations to have better retention rates and satisfaction among volunteers. The SFT approach can be another tool in the VRM's arsenal of mediation strategies that can be drawn upon when the opportunity presents itself. With a bit of practice and deliberate thought into framing questions, the strategy can produce desired results and engage volunteers in their own problem solving actions.

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## Strategies for Engaging Volunteers By Uncovering Individual Motivations

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### Abstract

*A small group of motivated volunteers can accomplish incredible things. A constant challenge for any volunteer organizer is not just to find motivated workers, but to hone his or her skills at figuring out how to bring out the energy and passion of volunteers. In this paper we describe a model of volunteer resources management that places individuals within a complex network of individuals and organizations. Oftentimes volunteers come to a project through their membership of another group — be it a school, church, or community organization. Yet each volunteer is an individual, and has individual motivations that may or may not coincide with the motivations of the organizations to which s/he belong. We present two strategies which the authors (a college service learning coordinator and a college professor) have found helpful in uncovering latent motivation in groups of volunteers. When working with individuals, a structured form of 'one-on-one conversations' can help quickly drive conversations toward identifying underlying motivations. Working in classroom groups, the construction of a Community Contribution Statement provides a structure for identifying individual motivations and placing them within the context of a larger class project. Both approaches focus on the importance of acknowledging individual motivation.*

**Key Words:** Partnership Development, Volunteer Motivation, Volunteer Coordination

### Introduction

Anyone who organizes volunteers—whether they are individuals volunteering in a community context, or students doing volunteer work in an educational context—knows that finding ways to motivate volunteers is a key ingredient to the success of a project. This paper describes specific strategies for identifying the personal interests and passions of volunteers to ensure effective volunteer resource management. We present a model of volunteerism that places individuals within a

complex network of individuals and organizations. Oftentimes volunteers come to a project through their membership of another group — be it a school, church, or community organization. Yet each volunteer is an individual, and has individual motivations that may or may not coincide with the motivations of the organizations to which she or he belong. We present two strategies which the authors (a college service learning coordinator and a college professor) have found helpful in uncovering latent motivation in groups of

volunteers. When working with individual volunteers, a structured *one-on-one conversation* can help quickly drive conversations toward identifying underlying motivations. Working in classroom groups, the construction of a *community contribution statement* provides a structure for identifying individual motivations and placing them within the context of a larger class project. Both approaches focus on the importance of acknowledging individual motivation.

### Literature Context

Motivating volunteers requires a deep understanding of their individual interests. The term ‘reciprocity’ is often used in the partnership literature and focuses motivation at the organizational level (Sandman, 2008; McLean and Behringer, 2008; Stoecker, 2005). Authors such as Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq and Morrison (2010), Gilchrist (2009) and Bringle, Clayton and Price (2009) describe the richer context of complex networks that include dynamic relationships and competing motivations. We argue that for the full potential of a volunteer network to be realized, the individual motivations of each participant must be recognized and honored. Thus the idea of reciprocity is extended from the organization to the individual — each individual needs to get something from partnership work, just as the volunteer organization receives benefit from efforts of each individual volunteer.

### Listening Strategies

**One-on-One Conversations:** Stephen Eberle, Director of Partnerships

As the Director of Partnerships, my work is frontloaded in partnership development and light on project implementation. This is to say that the early stages of a partnership are where I spend the most of my time and energy. I listen to the

ideas of both faculty members and community stakeholders and try to match the appropriate players together to create a project. Many community members know exactly what kind of program they are trying to build and they can name the exact help the college can offer. Many professors know exactly what kind of class they want to teach and what kind of service-learning experience they wish for their students to have. These wishes and desires are transactional; they include little room for the variables and few opportunities that come with partnership. Of course, sometimes a transaction fills the exact need of the college or the community. But a series of successful transactions can lead to partnership and transformation — if the college and the community are open to variables.

Another key to partnership comes in learning the self-interest of your community partner and articulating your own self-interest. Unfortunately self-interest can be confused with selfishness leading one to pursue a selfless attitude. Denying the benefits that can come to us personally and professionally through partnership in an effort to stay focused on one’s constituents can stifle a partnership and prevent it from growing to its full potential. Identifying and articulating that self-interest helps us present projects honestly and transparently. This can only be done by moving beyond the boundaries of a professional relationship and asking questions that get to the core of the person sitting in front of you.

When developing a partnership, it's important to uncover self-interest to determine whether the project we identify is mutually beneficial for both parties. Often a faculty member will come to me with a set plan for a service-learning experience. I listen to his/her ideas, capturing the key fundamentals of the course proposal. I ask questions about why the faculty member is interested in those topics. I try to learn what

personally touches him/her and how it lines up with his/her values. Then I try to walk the faculty member back a few steps, deconstructing the syllabus and the expectations and the schedule and every other detail of the service learning engagement. We brainstorm some potential partners in the community, and then I set out to talk to the partner. The only way our partnership can be reciprocal is if the faculty member and the community partner plan the course and the experience together.

Determining the community partner's self-interest is also imperative when putting together a project. The director of a social service non-profit certainly has an interest in serving the poor, keeping the food pantry stocked, reducing the workload of staff, and advertising their parenting program. But the director is a person with self-interest. S/he may have a boss downtown who drives him/her nuts. S/he may want to get a promotion. S/he may want to spend more time with a new spouse. Once I know these things I can ask "how will this partnership benefit the both of us?"

In short, in order for me to build a truly reciprocal partnership with the director of this social service organization, I need to develop a personal relationship with him/her. I need to have one-to-one conversations with him/her where I uncover his/her self-interest. S/he needs to have those conversations with me. From there we can start putting the programmatic pieces together. How can I work with this director to put together a program that meets the needs of our institutional mission while also affords us the opportunity to advance in our jobs? It's possible. But most do-gooders act selfless and ignore themselves. That's where hidden agendas and competing priorities can run reciprocity off the rails.

**Community Contribution Statement:** Eric Malm, Assistant Professor of Economics and Business

As a college professor who teaches a course on community economic development that is linked to a community arts festival each spring, I'm concerned about more than just having a successful learning and service experience in a particular semester. The long-term viability and success of my class depends directly on the contributions that students make to the community each semester. Simply put, if students don't produce, then the partnership upon which the course is based will wither and die. And the relationships with those in the community, who are also partners in potential future efforts, may be put in jeopardy (for both me and other faculty at the institution).

The carrot or stick of a grade is not enough to motivate many students to take the risks and make the effort that is involved in community-based projects. Students can show up for an event, or make a token effort to follow up with a community member about a project, but ultimately if students don't feel some degree of ownership in the project many of them will exert little effort. Yet when students do feel ownership or a connection with a project they are capable of making meaningful contributions, oftentimes going beyond what a teacher might ask of them. The challenge is finding ways of connecting the volunteer project with the individual interests of students.

The *community contribution statement* is a tool I have developed to help identify and build connections between students' interests and the needs (both current and potential) of a community project (in this case an annual arts festival). The idea was adapted from a university self-directed learning program (Hironaka, 2011). The creation of the statement is a multi-week process. First, members of the

community come into class and tell their personal stories about why they participate in the arts festival. These stories model volunteerism in general, and illustrate how volunteers connect their personal interests and passions with the needs of a community project. The second step is for students to write a paragraph or two describing ways that they could picture themselves contributing to the arts festival. While the students are shown a list of projects that have been done in the past, and told about the festival operating committees, they are encouraged to think broadly and creatively about how they could bring part of themselves into the project.

I meet with each student individually to discuss their ideas and take notes. Then I go through and try to match student interest with festival needs. Some student interests (say, in graphic design) are fairly easy to link to a known community need (like the design of a program book). Other student interests (like creating a video) might not have been done in the past, but can be easily incorporated into a known community need (creating a video that can be used for marketing). Even student interests that appear to be far from the community need (like running a volleyball activity for kids), can be ‘adjusted’ into an activity that fits (like creating a set of children’s activities). Honoring and respecting the ideas that students bring forward is critical; and it can be surprising to see how student ideas can influence how the festival takes shape.

Students then create a formal community contribution statement document that has three sections: *contribution area*, *learning goals* and *assessment*. The contribution area section describes, in detail, what they will do to contribute to the festival. This section combines their individual interest and the community need. The learning goals section asks them to think about what it is they expect to learn

while doing the activity. This section is intended to remind them that they should expect to get something out of their participation—that they will both give and receive. The assessment section describes how the students will know if they did what they said they would do. This section both helps them think about how they might measure their progress, and also reminds them that part of their class grade is tied to their success. The community contribution statement represents a process of inclusion, and a sort of contract describing what they student will do during the class.

### Conclusions

In the heat of the moment it’s often easy for a volunteer organizer to be focused on getting done what ‘they’ (or the volunteer organization or college) wants to accomplish. Yet most people involved in this sort of work recognize the importance of engaging individuals on a personal level. In this paper we present two related models for identifying and cultivating the individual interests of volunteers. The *one-on-one conversation* provides a framework for consciously and systematically identifying latent motivations of individuals. The *community contribution statement* provides a framework for identifying individual interests and connecting them to the needs of the community project. Both tools provide a way of broadening the definition of reciprocity to include all participants in a partnership students, faculty, staff, community partners, community members, other stakeholders.

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## Development of a User Friendly Social Capital Scale in Volunteering.

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### Abstract

*All forms of social, human and cultural capital have positive associations with volunteering, in the form of social connectivity, trust and reciprocity between individuals, groups and wider social networks, community embeddedness and sense of belonging, well-being and mutual resource acquisition relating to friendships, knowledge, skills and education. This article outlines the process undertaken by the research team in the development, validation and testing of a user friendly questionnaire used to measure social capital in volunteering, as part of a large scale mixed method social capital and volunteering study. A 16 item questionnaire was developed and using a computer administered survey tested with a group of volunteers working in a single region in Ireland. Data was collected over a 6 week period in 2011 and the target population was 84 volunteers to validate the scale. A usable sample of 71 volunteers was obtained. These respondents were representative of the entire population of volunteers in the region when compared to regional organisation's Dashboard database figures. The final summated scale of the 16 indicators had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86. Further research is required to validate the scale and to evaluate both the internal structure validity and dimensionality. This scale could be utilized in development planning, placement and administration of volunteering in communities and organisation.*

**Key Words:** Social Capital Theory, social connectivity, sense of belonging, trust, reciprocity

### Introduction

Research has underscored the positive relationship between participation in volunteering and enhanced social capital, in the form of social connectivity, trust and reciprocity between individuals, groups and wider social networks, community embeddedness and sense of belonging, well-

being and mutual resource acquisition relating to friendships, knowledge, skills and education (Claibourn and Martin 2000; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Hurlbert, Haines, & Beggs, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Wollebæk and Selle 2002; Stone and Hughes, 2002; Wollebæk and Selle 2003; Mayer, 2003; Van der Gaag, Snijders, &

Flap, 2004; Briggs, 2004; Son and Lin, 2008; Brunie, 2009; Eurodiaconia, 2010). Volunteer participation rates and intensity increase as individuals experience heightened levels of trust and reciprocity based on active, passive and multiple levels of familiarities within their volunteer group or community (Sixsmith, Boneham, & Goldring, 2001; Sixsmith and Boneham, 2002; Wollebæk and Selle, 2002; Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; Kolodinsky, Kimberley, & Isham, 2004; Son and Lin, 2008; Lee, Brudney, & Goodman, 2009; Antoni, 2009). Intrinsic motivations to volunteer which facilitate social networking are grounded in familiarity (Antoni, 2009) and informal contributions in community engagement (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2001; Sixsmith and Boneham, 2002). Indeed, social relations and networking in volunteer processes can improve individual social skills and assertiveness, outlook on life, wellbeing, knowledge and levels of civic engagement (Ellis and O'Brien, 2001; Hill, 2011; Brodie *et al.*, 2011). The research was undertaken as part of a large scale sequential mixed method study, which utilised social capital theory as heuristic device to explore social processes in volunteer experiences and processes. This '*Tools of the Trade*' article shall outline the process undertaken by the research team in the development, validation and testing of a user friendly questionnaire used to measure social capital in volunteering. The questionnaire was informed by qualitative findings from the first phase of the study (Van Hout, Tarrant and Foley, 2012 forthcoming).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Ethical approval for the study was granted in 2010 at Waterford Institute of Technology, Ireland. The purpose of the study was to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure social capital in

volunteering. The following steps were followed to develop the scale;

1. Conceptualize volunteering and its relationship to Social Capital
2. Develop a scale to measure the degree that volunteering adds to social capital
3. Assess the content validity of the scale
4. Measure the scale reliability

### **Population/sample design**

Non probability sampling was adopted for the study. Due to resource constraints a computer administered survey was considered to be the best approach for data collection. At 90% confidence levels, a sample size of 84 was required to represent the population under investigation. All Volunteers with a register e-mail address at the volunteering center were invited to take part in the questionnaire study. Variables were collected on demographic characteristics to ensure the respondents were representative of the entire Volunteers' registered in the region under investigation.

### **Data collection**

Data was collected over a four week period in October 2011. Following the Dilman (1978) procedure for questionnaire administration the survey was sent in three mailings (i.e. 1 week, 2 weeks and 4 weeks). A statement of purpose, including confidentiality and anonymity was prepared for the mailing to appeal to the respondents' altruistic sentiments. A return rate of 83(12%) and a useable rate of 71(10%) were obtained from the mailing. After the 6 week cut-off period the survey was terminated and the electronic data was imported into a standard software package, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). No information was available for the non-respondents so the demographic characteristics of the respondents were compared with Dashboard figures, a database used to record volunteering

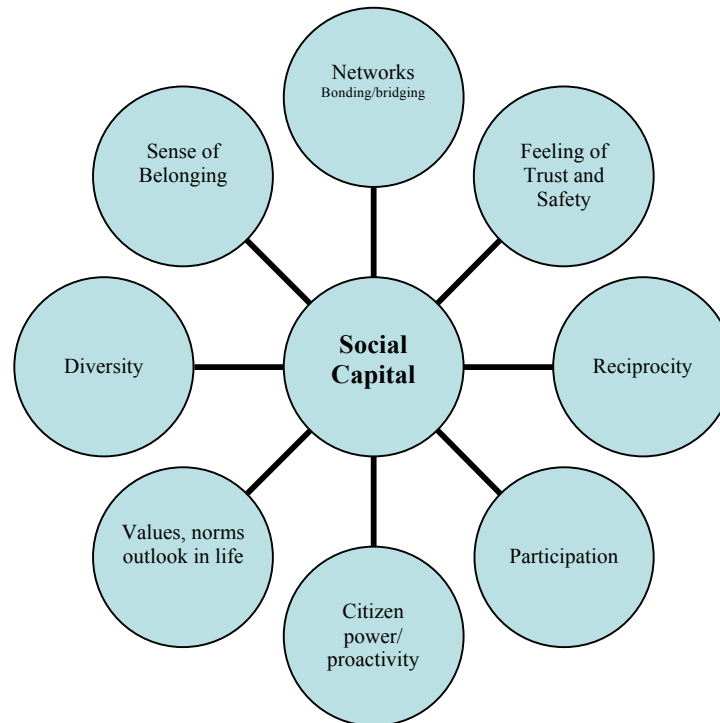


activity in the region. These were analysed and considered to be representative of the target population in relation to gender, age, level of education and employment status and deemed useable in the study.

### Conceptualizing volunteering and social capital

For the purpose of this study social capital was conceptualized as having 8 domains

**Figure 1**



Social Capital Model – adapted from Boeck et al (2006)

With reference to the literature and the fore mentioned qualitative study, 14 indicators of volunteering were developed from the social capital framework, which resulted in the construction of 16 statements.

**Table 1**

	Statement	Please circle your choice for each statement listed below; Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
1	Generally speaking there is a good community spirit in the area or areas I volunteer in;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
2	People that I volunteer with can be trusted;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
3	I feel a sense of belonging because I volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
4	The rewards of volunteering are greater than the input I give as a volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
5	Volunteering has increased my involvement in community life;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly

6	Being a volunteer has improved my social relationships;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
7	I enjoy the feeling of participation when I volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
8	Volunteering has improved my ability to gain or sustain employment;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
9	I have learned new skills while participating as a volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
10	Volunteering has increase my sense of well-being;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
11	My confidence to try new things has been improved because of my work as a volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
12	Volunteering has increased my awareness of others;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
13	I have a greater understanding and acceptance of other cultures because of volunteering;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
14	Working as a volunteer has increased my understanding and acceptance of people with special needs or disability;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
15	Being a volunteer has raised my awareness of diversity in society;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly
16	I have formed lasting relationships as a direct result of being a volunteer;	Agree strongly, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Disagree strongly

Table 1 – showing each of the statements used in the calculation of total capital score (TCS)

These included community spirit, trust in volunteering, sense of belonging, involvement, social relationships, participation, skill development, well-being, confidence, awareness of others, awareness of diversity, and acceptance of other cultures, acceptance of disability or special needs, and rewards. The scale development consisted of a five point likert scale with participants' requested to indicate their level of agreement by ticking their preferred option for each of the listed statements. Each statement was scored using an arbitrary value, agree strongly = 2, agree =1, neutral=0, disagree=-1, disagree strongly =-2 and finally numerated to give a total capital score (TCS). This produced a scale of -32 to +32. Scores above 0 were deemed to indicate the contributory value of

volunteering to social capital. Score less than 0 were considered not to contribute to volunteer based social capital.

### Face and content Validity

All sixteen statements were further assessed for face and content validity. These included an expert in social capital research, two facility members of an academic institution, a manager of a volunteering center, a statistician and two volunteering administration officers. Four volunteers were also asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on the relevance, applicability, misunderstanding and instructions of the questionnaire. Time for completion was also measured, so as to increase the participation rate of the questionnaire. No major ambiguities were found in the contextual arrangement of the

statements and through a process of discussion the final 16 statements were agreed with the researchers.

### Reliability

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to calculate internal consistency and to check that the items in the scale were measuring the underlying construct, i.e. Social Capital in Volunteering. The impact of removing each item from the scale was examined by comparing each of the values to the final alpha value. On examination, all 16 items were above the recommended level of 0.7 for Cronbach alpha and therefore remained within the scale in the final calculation of the alpha value (Bland and Altman, 1997). The Total Capital Score (TCS) had good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient reported of 0.86.

### Discussion

Care was taken to develop a valid and reliable summated scale to measure for measuring social capital in volunteering. Using the social capital model from Boeck, Fleming, & Kemshall (2006) and the results of the qualitative study, 16 statements were constructed and tested for internal reliability. It appears that the scale developed is valid and reliable in measuring the extent that volunteering adds to social capital. This scale could be utilised as a dependant variable for a wide variety of research designs, including studies that attempt to measure social capital in volunteering based on demographic, organisational and individual attributes, and in causal comparative studies. The tool can also be used as an evaluation tool to assess volunteering development and assist in volunteer administration processes. Data can be obtained both formatively and summatively. We also recognise that the small response rate is a problem in this

study and it is feasible that this sample represent those who have stronger interest in volunteering activity. The research is confined to one geographical location and it may limit the extrapolation of results to Volunteers in general. However, it is possible to develop this scale further with the addition of indicator items to measure internal structure validity and assess dimensionality. Nonetheless, the main advantage of this scale is that it is short and can be easily administered and does not overburden the volunteer. Further research will determine if the scale is reliable in target populations.

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## Assessing Volunteer Programs: Using the Net Benefits Index at Natural Resource Agencies

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### Abstract

*Volunteer programs at natural resource agencies are expanding, creating a greater need for measurement and evaluation of program success. We surveyed 81 volunteer resource managers at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to assess the value of the Net Benefits Index as a measure of staff satisfaction with the volunteer program. The Net Benefits Index was positively correlated with two measures of staff satisfaction, indicating that the Index can serve as a useful proxy for satisfaction while also providing detailed information about the specific benefits and challenges faced by volunteer managers. The advantages of the Net Benefits Index are that it is easy to calculate and can be used to provide a snapshot of changes in staff satisfaction over time. One disadvantage of the Net Benefits Index is that it may have to be tailored to individual volunteer programs.*

**Key Words:** natural resources; Net Benefits Index; program evaluation; volunteer management.

### Introduction

Natural resource and environmental agencies use volunteers for many tasks, from customer service to citizen science (Leslie & Velez, 2004). Reliance on volunteers is increasing due to stretched budgets, broadening agency goals, and a desire to incorporate stakeholders into management (Pfeffer & Wagenet, 2007). One challenge of implementing a successful volunteer program is finding time and staff to successfully manage a volunteer force. This challenge is both practical, as managing volunteers is time-consuming and may require specialized skill, and attitudinal, as some agency staff may resent volunteers or be concerned that volunteer-collected

data will be unreliable (Foster-Smith & Evans, 2003). Agency managers often cite staff satisfaction with and support of volunteer programs as a significant challenge (Jacobson, 2009; Jacobson, Carlton & Monroe, 2006). Despite the prevalence of volunteer programs in natural resource agencies and the need for critical assessment to improve the programs (Ferraro & Pattanayak, 2006), there have been few published, data-based assessments of volunteer programs in natural resource agencies.

The Net Benefits Index has been proposed as a means of measuring staff satisfaction with charitable organizations' volunteer programs (Hager & Brudney,

2005). The Net Benefits Index is an additive index that determines whether an organization's staff perceives its volunteer program as providing a net benefit to the organization. Though couched in terms of costs and benefits, the Index is not a traditional cost-benefit analysis. Instead, it measures staff perception, an important component of job satisfaction (Mathieu, Hofmann, & Farr, 1993). Measuring the satisfaction of recreationists, volunteers, and staff in natural resource agency volunteer programs is often complex (Jacobson 2009; Jacobson, Carlton, & Monroe, 2012). The Net Benefits Index, which is quick to conduct, minimizes the complexity and can provide a timely snapshot of staff opinion.

This study assesses the Net Benefits Index as a measure of staff satisfaction at a natural resource agency. We surveyed volunteer resource managers (VRMs) in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), who collectively supervise approximately 1200 active volunteers, and compared Index scores to reported staff satisfaction levels from a survey of FWC staff. This study tests whether the Net Benefits Index effectively reflects employee satisfaction with volunteer programs while providing additional data for program improvement.

## Methods

All FWC staff (n=809), including those who reported supervising volunteers, were sent an internet-based questionnaire about the FWC volunteer program. The questionnaire was designed and administered using Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Potential respondents were sent a pre-survey notice from the researchers and 3 reminder emails, including one signed by the FWC director.

To calculate the Net Benefits Index, respondents who self-identified as volunteer

resource managers rated 6 benefits and 8 challenges related to using volunteers. The list of benefits and challenges was developed by Hager and Brudney (2005) in consultation with a Delphi panel of volunteer resource managers from charities. Respondents rated the benefits and challenges of the volunteer program on a three-item scale that was adjusted to provide equal weighting of the total benefits and challenges. The benefits were rated as helping to a "Great Extent" (2.66 points), "Moderate Extent" (1.33 points), or "Not at All" (0 points). The challenges were rated as being a "Big Problem" (2 points), "Small Problem" (1 point), or "Not a Problem" (0 points). Calculation of the Index ( $\sum \text{benefits} - \sum \text{challenges}$ ) resulted in scores between -16 (all challenges) and +16 (all benefits) (Hager and Brudney, 2005).

Additionally, respondents were asked two general satisfaction items, rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

1. The effort I invest in supervising volunteers is worth it because of the benefits that volunteers provide.
2. Overall, I'm satisfied with the volunteer program in my division or office.

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to measure the association between the Net Benefits Index and the satisfaction items, using SPSS version 16.0 (SPSS Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ).

## Results

Eighty-one volunteer resource managers responded to the survey. While the survey method prevented class-specific response rate calculation, the response rate for all FWC staff (including VRMs and other staff members) was 67.8%. Comparing the first and last waves of respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977) revealed no evidence of nonresponse bias.

The average Net Benefits Index score was 5.47 (SD=4.662), indicating that the benefits of using volunteers moderately outweighed the challenges. The normalized (i.e., with weighting removed) score for each item in the Net Benefits Index can be found in Table 1. The mean score for the “effort I invest in supervising volunteers is worth it because of the benefits that volunteers provide” item was 4.95 (SD=1.24) on a scale of 1–5, indicating that,

on average, respondents strongly agreed with that statement. The average score for the “Overall, I’m satisfied with the volunteer program in my division or office” item was 3.65 (SD=0.94) on a scale of 1–5, indicating slight agreement. Both general items were significantly positively correlated with the Net Benefits Index ( $r=0.525$  and  $0.458$ , respectively,  $p<0.01$ ) and each other ( $r=0.405$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 1. Net Benefits Index item scores for the 81 Volunteer Resource Managers, modified from Hager and Brudney (2005). Items were rated on a normalized, 0–2 scale with higher ratings indicating a greater benefit or challenge.**

Item	Mean Score (S.D)
<i>Benefits</i>	
Cost savings	1.63 (0.58)
Increased public support for your programs, or improved community relations	1.62 (0.68)
Capability to provide services or levels of services you otherwise could not provide	1.59 (0.69)
Increased quality of programs or services you provide	1.58 (0.64)
Access to specialized skills possessed by volunteers	1.47 (0.77)
More detailed attention to the people you serve	1.39 (0.69)
<i>Challenges</i>	
Indifference or resistance on the part of paid staff toward volunteers	1.06 (0.55)
Volunteers’ absenteeism, unreliability, or poor work habits or work quality	1.00 (0.57)
Recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers	0.87 (0.66)
Regulatory, legal, liability constraints on volunteer involvement	0.84 (0.73)
Lack of staff time to properly train and supervise volunteers	0.83 (0.65)
Recruiting volunteers with the right skill set or expertise	0.81 (0.62)
Recruiting volunteers available during the workday	0.76 (0.70)
Lack of adequate funds for supporting volunteer involvement	0.71 (0.68)

## Discussion

The Net Benefits Index was significantly positively correlated with both of the satisfaction questions. This result indicates that the Index may be an appropriate indicator of volunteer resource manager (VRM) satisfaction with volunteer programs, with higher Index scores

coinciding with higher overall satisfaction. Additionally, the Index provided more detailed information about which parts of the volunteer program were more beneficial or more challenging. For example, VRMs found indifference of paid staff toward volunteers and volunteer absenteeism to be the largest challenges and program funding



to be the smallest challenge. Similarly, VRMs found cost savings and increased public support to be bigger benefits than the ability to pay detailed attention to the people they serve. Collecting empirical data such as this Index is a critical part of assessing program success and making program improvements (Margoluis and Salafsky 1998).

There are several caveats that must be considered. First, the Index is additive and based on an assumption that the weighting scheme, designed to count the benefits and challenges equally, is appropriate. Further research might indicate that certain benefits or challenges are more important than others and should be weighted differently. Additionally, appropriate weightings may vary by organization, and other agency-specific benefits or challenges may need to be incorporated.

However, such concerns overlook the premise of the Net Benefits Index. On the whole, the Index provides an easy-to-administer, quick assessment of staff satisfaction with a volunteer program. The questionnaire delineates both benefits and challenges associated with a volunteer program that might not be captured by general satisfaction-type questions, and may be used to improve programming. Additionally, the Index can be measured over time to assess general trends in the program or even compared across different segments of a large volunteer program. In many cases, the simplicity and user-friendliness of the Index might outweigh the questions surrounding its constraints, providing a net benefit, indeed.

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