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Religious Motivations and Social Service Volunteers: The Interaction of Differing Religious Motivations, Satisfaction, and Repeat Volunteering

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Abstract

Volunteers in faith-based organizations play a large and growing role in the delivery of social services in the United States. Previous research has shown that religious individuals are more likely to volunteer than are nonreligious individuals and that religious individuals volunteer for both religious reasons and church-based social reasons. However, relatively little is known about what specific aspects of religious faith most motivate people to volunteer and how the differing religious motivations affect the volunteer's satisfaction with the experience and willingness to volunteer again. We explored these questions by surveying more than 4,000 volunteers, both adults and youths, who had completed a one-week volunteer project for a Christian nonprofit organization in Appalachia. Religious motivation outweighed secular motivation for most volunteers, but a much larger percentage of adult volunteers (93 percent) were primarily religiously motivated, compared to 63 percent of youth volunteers. Of the volunteers who were primarily religiously motivated, somewhat more described their motivation in personal terms ("because it makes me feel closer to God") rather than institutional terms ("because my faith encourages me"). Personal religious motivations were particularly characteristic of volunteers who were younger, first-timers, and Catholic. Differing motivations for volunteering affected overall satisfaction and willingness to volunteer again. Religiously motivated individuals were more satisfied than secularly motivated individuals were, and religiously motivated individuals whose particular religious motivations were fulfilled were more satisfied overall and more likely to volunteer again.

Faith-based organizations are playing an increasingly important role in the delivery of social services in the United States, and many of these organizations rely heavily on volunteers (President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, 2010). Previous research has established that religious commitment is a strong predictor of volunteerism (Campbell and Yonish 2003; Caputo 2009; Cnaan, Kasternakis, and Wineburg, 1999; Perry et al. 2008; Ruiter and De Graaf 2006). However, relatively little is known about how differing types of religious motivations interact with the volunteer experience to determine volunteer satisfaction and willingness to volunteer again.

As Eisenstein (2006) demonstrates, religious motivation is distinct from traditional religiousness. In this study, we seek to move beyond traditional measures of religiosity to understand better the role of religious motivations in volunteering. We examine the motivations of a sample of religiously committed volunteers, looking at how different religious motivations lead to differing evaluations of the volunteer experience and to different levels of willingness to volunteer again. Since almost all of the volunteers (96 percent) indicated a Christian religious affiliation, we were able to analyze differences within a religiously committed group.

We analyzed a group of youth volunteers and a group of adult volunteers for a Christian nonprofit organization who participated in a week-long project repairing housing in Appalachia. At the end of their week, the volunteers completed a survey that asked about their religious background, their motivations for volunteering, and their overall evaluation of the volunteer experience. Because religious organizations play such an important part in the nonprofit sector and because religious people represent a disproportionately large share of all volunteers, the role of religion in motivating volunteerism is an important issue to be investigated.

Evidence suggests that religious individuals volunteer more than nonreligious individuals do for two reasons: because of their religious beliefs and because their church participation provides a social network that encourages volunteering (Monsma 2007). Even in the context of this faith-related association, individuals can have both religious and secular motivations to volunteer. We will examine three broad questions:

1. What are the differences between individuals who volunteer primarily for secular reasons and those who volunteer primarily for religious reasons?
2. For individuals who volunteer primarily for religious reasons, what aspects of their faith or belief seem to be the most important motivators? The positive relationship between religious commitment and volunteerism has been widely noted. Nonetheless, there has been relatively little research on what specific aspects of religious faith are most important in motivating religiously committed people to volunteer.
3. Do volunteers who differ in their level or type of religious motivation also differ in their satisfaction with the volunteer experience and does the difference

in motivation affect their willingness to volunteer again? We measured respondents' satisfaction with their religious growth during the week of volunteering and their satisfaction with the overall volunteer experience to explore whether different religious motivations (and therefore different expectations about the volunteer week) affected the respondents' expressed willingness to volunteer again.

LITERATURE REVIEW: RELIGION AND VOLUNTEERING

In 2011, 27 percent of American adults (64.3 million people age 16 years and older) engaged in formal volunteering, and more than one third (35 percent) of this volunteering took place in religious organizations. Similar proportions hold true for teenagers (4.4 million 16- to 19-year-olds); 26 percent volunteered, and 31 percent of this volunteering took place in religious organizations (Corporation for National and Community Service 2012). These substantial figures understate the importance of religion in volunteerism, because studies show that religiosity increases all types of volunteerism, including volunteer work for nonreligious organizations (Monsma 2007; Wilson and Musick 1997).

Volunteer Motivations

Research consistently shows that when all else is held constant, more highly religious people—whether measured by religious salience, traditional beliefs, or attendance—volunteer more than less religious people do (Campbell and Yonish 2003; Monsma 2007). Research also indicates that the positive relationship between religiosity and volunteering has two causes: religious motivations and social motivations. Religious motivations may be connected to religious services and religious readings, which consistently reinforce the message that God wants all people to help others (Houston and Cartwright 2007). Social motivations are seen in the finding that individuals with larger social networks belong to more associations and volunteer at a greater rate than do individuals with smaller social networks (Becker and Dhingra 2001; McPherson, Popielarz, and Drobnic 1992; Smidt 2003). This pattern holds whether the social network springs from a church or from a bowling league (Putnam 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2012).

Comparing Youth and Adult Religious Volunteering

Only a few studies have looked at youth volunteering and religiosity. Gibson (2008) found that volunteer patterns for adults and teens were similar and that highly religious teens (measured either by church attendance or by professed beliefs) were more likely to volunteer. Caputo (2009) looked at 13- to 17-year-olds

and also found religious participation to be a strong predictor of social volunteerism. These two studies suggest that the link between increased religiosity and increased volunteerism holds for both adolescents and adults.

Religious Denominations and Volunteering

Several researchers have examined whether volunteer behavior differs by religion. Caputo (2009) found no major differences in willingness to volunteer. Rigney, Matz, and Abney (2004) note that some observers have suggested that Catholics may have a different volunteer motivation, but they too found no major difference by denomination in willingness to volunteer. Although Loveland, Jones-Stater, and Park (2008) found differences in number of memberships in civic organizations by Christian religious tradition among individuals who attend services infrequently, mainline Protestants belonging to more civic organizations than black Protestants or Catholics do, the differences virtually disappeared among frequent attenders.

DATA AND METHODS

The respondents for our survey were members of church youth groups and their adult chaperones who were drawn from across the eastern third of the United States. The youth and adult volunteers worked side by side during a week-long service project rehabilitating housing in Appalachia. During the summer of 2011, both youth and adult volunteers completed an exit survey at the end of their week of service.

The housing rehabilitation program is conducted in twenty-nine centers located in four Appalachian states for eight weeks each summer. The centers conducted two types of exit surveys, one that focused on issues of center management and one that focused on issues of motivations to volunteer. Half the centers administered the management survey one week while the other half administered the motivation survey; the following week, they switched. In total, we collected 5,192 motivation surveys. Because we wanted to examine the motivations of adults and youths separately, we discarded 603 surveys that lacked clear age information and surveys that had been filled out by individuals aged 18 to 22 years, an age group that could not be clearly characterized as adult or youth. This left 4,589 respondents, comprising 2,697 (65 percent) youths age 14 to 18 years and 1,622 (35 percent) adults.

FINDINGS

Secular Motivations Versus Religious Motivations

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree, on a five-point Likert scale, with statements about their motives for volunteering. All volunteers expressed both religious and secular motivations for volunteering.

Previous studies have suggested that religious individuals are more likely to volunteer, both for strictly religious reasons and for church-based social reasons. There is little evidence about which motivation predominates. In the one major study of the question, Monsma (2007) compared religious motives to "social network" motivation, a broader measure than our measure of church-based friendships. He found that both religious and social network motivations are important predictors of volunteering but that the social network motivation is stronger.

We examined whether volunteers have primarily friendship-based social motivations, which would lead them to say they volunteered because their (church-based) friends volunteered, or primarily religious motivations, which would lead them to say they volunteered for reasons of God or faith. The responses indicate that social motivations play a part for some volunteers but that religious motivations are considerably stronger than friendship-based social motivations.

Average Motivations. Among youths, the statement "I volunteer because it makes me feel closer to God" had an average score of 4.3 on a five-point scale, and the statement "I volunteer because my faith encourages me to do so" had an average score of 4.0. By contrast, the main social motivator average was much lower for youths: Volunteering "because my friends volunteer" had an average score of 3.4. Another secular motivator, résumé building, averaged only 3.1 points.

For adults, the disparity between religious and friendship motivations was even higher. Adults scored the "faith encourages me" and "feel closer to God" reasons for volunteering similarly, at 4.4 points. The influence of friends who volunteer scored lower than was the case for youths, at 2.7 points; neutral and negative responses accordingly outweighed positive ones on the Likert scale. As might be expected in an older group, résumé building averaged a very low 1.9 points.

Motivational Differences by Group. We created three categories of primary motivations by summing each respondent's score on two secular motivations ("I volunteer because it looks good on my résumé" and "I volunteer because my friends volunteer") and subtracting the result from the sum of two religious motivations ("I volunteer because it makes me feel closer to God" and "I volunteer because my faith encourages me to do so"). If the sum was negative, we categorized the respondent's motivation as primarily secular (about 12 percent of the sample). If

the sum was zero, we categorized the respondent as having equal secular and religious motivation (about 14 percent of the sample). Finally, if the sum was positive, we categorized the respondent's motivation as primarily religious (about 73 percent of the sample). While the sample as a whole was more religiously than secularly motivated, we did find differences in motivation by age, gender, previous volunteer experience with this nonprofit organization, and religious faith tradition. We explore these differences below.

Adults (93 percent) were much more likely to be religiously motivated than were youths (63 percent), as Table 1 shows. The balance of youth volunteers was fairly evenly split between being secularly motivated (18 percent) and having equal secular and religious motivations (18 percent). Although the 36 percent of youths who were equally or secularly motivated represent a minority, it seems a notably large minority for church-group youths who have volunteered for an explicitly religious nonprofit organization.

Table 1: Volunteer Motivation by Age

Religious Motivations	Adults	Youths	Total
Greater secular motivation	1.20%	18.05%	12.12%
Equal secular and religious motivation	6.01%	18.45%	14.07%
Greater religious motivation	92.79%	63.49%	73.81%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,497	2,753	4,250

Note: $\chi^2 = 446.60$; $p < 0.001$.

As Table 2 indicates, females (76 percent) were slightly more likely to be primarily religiously motivated than were males (71 percent). This finding is in accord with earlier studies, which indicated that women are more likely to be religious and to volunteer.

Table 2: Volunteer Motivation by Gender

Religious Motivations	Male	Female	Total
Greater secular motivation	13.39%	11.52%	12.45%
Equal secular and religious motivation	15.98%	12.95%	14.45%
Greater religious motivation	70.63%	75.52%	73.10%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,927	1,961	3,888

Note: $\chi^2 = 12.07$; $p = 0.002$.

Secular and religious motivations differed somewhat by the respondent's faith tradition. As might be expected, non-Christians (69 percent) were more likely than any other group to report primarily secular motivations. Among the religiously affiliated, Catholic respondents (17 percent) were the most likely to report predominantly secular motivations, followed by the group of self-characterized other Christians (12 percent). Evangelical (7 percent) and Protestant (6 percent) volunteers, by contrast, were least likely to cite primarily secular motivations and were correspondingly most likely (82 percent of each group) to report primarily religious motivation.

Table 3: Volunteer Motivation by Religion

Religious Motivations	Protestant	Evangelical	Catholic	Other Christian	Non-Christian	Total
Greater secular motivation	6.38%	7.09%	16.86%	11.55%	68.75%	11.81%
Equal secular and religious motivation	11.81%	11.35%	16.20%	16.06%	18.06%	14.00%
Greater religious motivation	81.80%	81.56%	66.94%	72.39%	13.19%	74.19%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,896	141	611	13	144	4,056

Note: $\chi^2 = 566.31$; $p < 0.001$.

Looking Deeper into Religious Motivation: Which Aspects of Belief Are the Prime Motivators?

As we noted earlier, studies have shown that religious beliefs are an important motivator of volunteerism, but the studies did not examine what specific aspects of those religious beliefs produce the increased volunteerism. We examined the underlying components of this religious motivation through two items on the survey: "I volunteer because it makes me feel closer to God" and "I volunteer because my faith encourages me to do so." The first item attempts to capture an internal, personal religious motivation to volunteer. The second item attempts to capture an external, institutional religious motivation to volunteer.

Because we want to understand what drives religiously motivated individuals, in this section we will examine only the subgroup of respondents who reported

being religiously motivated rather than primarily secularly motivated. This removes approximately 600 volunteers, discussed in the preceding section, who were more motivated by friendship or résumé building. These dropped cases represent roughly 12 percent of the respondents.

As might be expected, of the remaining group of volunteers, a large majority expressed both types of religious motivations to volunteer. More than 83 percent of the respondents somewhat agreed or agreed with the statement that they volunteer to feel closer to God, and 75 percent somewhat agreed or agreed with the statement that they volunteer because their faith encourages them to do so. Nonetheless, there was substantial variation in the intensity ("somewhat agree" versus "agree") with which respondents endorsed these motivations.

To determine group-based differences in religious motivation, we took the responses for the "feel closer to God" motivation and subtracted the responses for "because my faith encourages me." The higher the resulting number, the more the respondent is motivated by internal (personal) religious motives rather than externally guided (institutional) religious motives. Roughly 61 percent of the sample had equal personal and institutional religious motivations for volunteering, about 27 percent had greater personal religious motivations, and the remaining 12 percent had greater institutional religious motivations.

The responses indicated no difference by gender between volunteers who were institutionally motivated ("my faith") and those whose religious motivations were more internal and personal ("feel closer to God"). However, we did find differences by age, by whether the respondent had volunteered with this nonprofit organization before, and by religious faith tradition.

As Table 4 shows, youths (33 percent) were considerably more likely than adults (20 percent) to be personally religiously motivated. Because the psychological development literature often characterizes adolescence as involving a search for autonomy and personal identity, it is not surprising that more youths than adults would express an individualistic motivation.

Table 4: Type of Religious Motivation by Age

Religious Motivations	Adults	Youths	Total
Institutional	12.81%	10.18%	11.35%
Equal institutional and personal	66.88%	56.64%	61.17%
Personal	20.30%	33.18%	27.48%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,389	1,748	3,137

Note: $\chi^2 = 64.7234$; $p < 0.001$.

When we examined different religious motivations by whether the respondent had volunteered with this nonprofit organization previously, we found that a greater proportion of first-time volunteers (32 percent) than repeat volunteers (24 percent) were personally religiously motivated, as Table 5 shows. This pattern is similar for adults and youths.

Table 5: Type of Religious Motivation by First-Time Volunteer Status

Religious Motivations	Repeater	First Time	Total
Institutional	10.33%	11.74%	10.97%
Equal institutional and personal	65.99%	56.42%	61.63%
Personal	23.68%	31.84%	27.40%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,626	1,363	2,989

Note: $\chi^2 = 30.3924$; $p < 0.001$.

Finally, we found differences in religious motivations for volunteering by faith tradition. As Table 6 shows, Catholics (34 percent) and other Christians (32 percent) were more likely to report personal religious motivation than were Protestants (24 percent) and, somewhat surprisingly, evangelicals (14 percent). By contrast, evangelicals (18 percent) were more likely to report being institutionally religiously motivated than were Protestants (12 percent), Catholics (10 percent), and other Christians (10 percent).[1]

In comparison to the other denominations, the religious motivations of the Catholic volunteers were driven less by the guidance of their faith and more by personal religious considerations. This seems to contradict the hypothesis of Tropman (1995), who postulated a Catholic ethic that emphasized community and community service, in contrast to the more individualistic ethic of many Protestant denominations, a hypothesis that is partially supported by a panel study (Wilson and Janoski 1995). However our findings are in accord with the empirical findings of Caputo (2009) and Rigney, Matz, and Abney (2004).

Because evangelical denominations often emphasize the individual's personal connection to God, it is somewhat surprising that evangelicals were the least likely to report that they were motivated by the desire to "feel closer to God."

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[1] Because only 19 non-Christians were members of this subgroup, their percentage breakdowns are not meaningful.

Table 6: Type of Religious Motivation by Faith Tradition

Type of Religious Motivation	Protestant	Evangelical	Catholic	Other Christian	Non-Christian	Total
Institutional	11.54%	18.26%	10.02%	9.51%	26.32%	11.07%
Equal institutional and personal	64.73%	67.83%	56.48%	58.47%	31.58%	61.62%
Personal	23.73%	13.91%	33.50%	32.02%	42.11%	27.32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Observations	1,551	115	409	915	19	3,009

Note: $\chi^2 = 566.3077$; $p < 0.001$.

The Effect of Different Motivations on Satisfaction with Religious Outcomes

Do volunteers with different motivations also differ in their satisfaction with the volunteer experience? We considered several measures of satisfaction. In this section, we explore the volunteers' satisfaction with specific religious outcomes. In the next section, we will look at how their overall satisfaction with the volunteer experience and their willingness to volunteer again were affected both by their motivations for volunteering and by the success of the organization in meeting their most important religious expectations.

We asked volunteers about the degree to which their specific religious motivations for volunteering had been fulfilled. In particular, we asked them to specify the extent to which they agreed with two religious evaluation statements: "I am satisfied with the opportunity [this program] has given me to deepen my faith" and "Because of this experience I feel closer to God."

The majority of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed with both statements, but there were notable differences between groups. Because the answers skewed positively, we treated agreement with the two religious statements as dichotomous variables (i.e., "agree" versus all other answers). We constructed a variable to measure the extent of religious motivation ("feel closer to God" motivation plus faith-based motivation minus two times friendship motivation). We then used logistic regression to look at how well strong religious motivations predicted satisfaction with the two religious evaluation measures (whether the experience deepened the respondent's faith and, separately, whether it helped the respondent to feel closer to God). We ran these models separately for youths and adults.

As Table 7 indicates, there was a clear positive relationship between being more religiously than secularly motivated and being satisfied with both religious

outcomes. However, two groups particularly deviated from the volunteer norm: Religiously motivated evangelical adults and first-time volunteers (youths and adults) were considerably less satisfied with their religious outcomes than were other volunteers. Although the reason for the relative dissatisfaction of evangelical adults is not clear, the relative dissatisfaction of the most religious first-time volunteers seems intuitively plausible. First-time volunteers overall are unlikely to be as positive as repeat volunteers because some first-timers discover that the program is not what they expected or hoped. By contrast, repeat volunteers are a self-selected group who liked the program enough in the past that they chose to return this year.

Table 7: Logistic Regression of Satisfaction with Religious Outcomes for Youths and Adults

Variables	Model 1: Youth Deepen Faith	Model 2: Youth Closer to God	Model 3: Adult Deepen Faith	Model 4: Adult Closer to God
Religious minus friends motivation	1.18*** (10.49)	1.23*** (12.23)	1.05** (2.27)	1.09*** (4.07)
Evangelical Protestant	1.24 (0.76)	1.26 (0.79)	0.55** (−2.14)	0.65 (−1.48)
Catholic	1.29 (1.89)	1.37** (2.30)	1.48 (1.85)	1.10 (0.48)
Other Christian	1.07 (0.65)	1.24** (2.03)	1.00 (−0.03)	1.30 (1.51)
Non-Christian	0.62 (−1.78)	0.12*** (−4.06)	0.49 (−1.28)	0.17** (−2.23)
Female	1.05 (0.56)	1.03 (0.33)	1.60*** (3.77)	1.47** (3.01)
Involved with youth group	1.25*** (5.94)	1.44*** (9.19)	1.31*** (4.51)	1.40*** (5.47)
First-time volunteer	0.84** (−1.96)	0.90 (−1.08)	0.65*** (−3.33)	0.76** (−2.08)
Constant	0.50*** (−3.84)	0.22*** (−7.79)	0.41** (−3.18)	0.29*** (−4.34)
Observations	2,341	2,342	1,226	1,228

Note: z-statistics are in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$.

The Effect of Different Religious Motivations on Overall Satisfaction

In addition to examining respondents' satisfaction with the religious outcomes of the program, we captured their overall level of satisfaction. Overall satisfaction was measured through responses to the survey item "I am satisfied with my overall experience with [this program]." Once again, we divided the variable between the highest rating ("agree") and all other responses. In general, respondents were very satisfied with their experience, but the more religiously motivated individuals were much more satisfied than were the secularly motivated ones. Table 8 lists

Table 8: Logistic Regression of Overall Satisfaction for Youths and Adults

Variables	Model 5: Youths	Model 6: Adults
Outcome: closer to God	1.23**	1.37**
	(2.91)	(2.62)
Outcome: deepen faith	1.33***	1.85***
	(3.75)	(4.12)
Outcome service to people in need	2.25***	3.03***
	(6.38)	(5.31)
Outcome: food	1.06	1.14
	(1.24)	(1.86)
Outcome: evening gathering	1.77***	2.06***
	(9.16)	(6.82)
Outcome: supply delivery	1.39***	2.79***
	(6.01)	(10.74)
Evangelical Protestant	0.59	0.80
	(−1.63)	(−0.60)
Catholic	1.37	2.49**
	(1.83)	(3.13)
Other Christian	1.06	1.28
	(0.44)	(1.13)
Non-Christian	3.42***	3.93
	(3.91)	(1.61)
Female	1.00	0.91
	(−0.03)	(−0.55)
Church involvement	1.05	0.99
	(0.92)	(−0.14)
First-time volunteer	0.92	1.03
	(−0.71)	(0.15)
Constant	0.00***	0.00***
	(−12.87)	(−14.15)
Observations	2,320	1,237

Note: z-statistics are in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

specific elements of satisfaction and how well they predict overall satisfaction. Satisfaction with strengthening the faith was a particularly strong predictor of overall satisfaction for both youths and adults. However, a large halo effect suggests that satisfaction with many aspects of the experience similarly predicted overall satisfaction. Accordingly, we looked next at a measure of a higher, more demanding level of satisfaction: willingness to volunteer again.

Fulfilled Religious Motivations and Willingness to Volunteer Again

Measuring Fulfilled Motivators. Drawing on the functional model for volunteering that was first developed by Clary and Snyder (1991), we hypothesized that a strong predictor of willingness to volunteer again is how well the strongest religious motivations are met. This model suggests that if an individual's primary motives for volunteering are fulfilled by the volunteer experience, the likelihood that the individual will continue to volunteer will increase (McBride and Lee, 2012; Stukas et al. 2009).

To construct a variable that measures both the intensity of an individual's specific motivator and the individual's level of satisfaction with how well that motivator was fulfilled, we multiplied the level of a motivation by how well the volunteer indicated that it was met.[2] For example, if a volunteer gave the highest rating (5 on a five-point scale) to "feel closer to God" as the reason for volunteering and then indicated the highest level of satisfaction (5) on the item about how well the experience brought the individual closer to God, the value for the fulfilled motivator variable is 25 (5×5). We constructed a similar "fulfilled motivator" faith variable by multiplying the responses on the item measuring faith as a motivator and the item measuring how well the week strengthened the respondent's faith.

Measuring Willingness to Volunteer Again. We measured two forms of willingness to volunteer again: willingness to volunteer for this organization next year and willingness to volunteer for this or other social service nonprofit organizations next year. In looking at youths' willingness to volunteer for this specific organization next year, we began by counting all youths who positively responded to the statement "I want to volunteer for [this organization] next year." Because high school seniors "age out" and are ineligible to participate as youth volunteers in this program next year, we also included all positive responses to a separate question that asked whether the youth was interested in serving as a summer staff member in this program next year. For adults, we determined willingness to

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[2] Similar scales were first developed by Stukas and colleagues (2009).

volunteer for this organization again by counting all affirmative responses to the same primary statement ("I want to volunteer with [this organization] next year") plus all positive responses to a statement about volunteering for this organization's separate adult program.

For both youths and adults, we operationalized their willingness to volunteer for other social services by positive responses to the statement "I will seek opportunities to volunteer with other social service projects in the next year."

Results. As Table 9 shows, the "fulfilled motivator" variables do predict willingness to volunteer again, both overall and—a bit more strongly—for this specific organization. Adults and youths are generally similar in their willingness to volunteer again; other group differences for the most part reflect expected patterns.

Table 9: Logistic Regression of Likelihood to Volunteer Within the Next Year

| Variables	Model 7: Youth Same Nonprofit	Model 8: Youth All Nonprofits	Model 9: Adults Same Nonprofit	Model 10: Adults All Nonprofits
Closer to God motivation × evaluation	1.04*** (3.29)	1.04*** (3.55)	1.05*** (3.38)	1.05** (3.05)
Faith motivation × evaluation	1.04*** (3.51)	1.04** (2.77)	1.07*** (4.43)	1.06*** (3.41)
Evangelical Protestant	0.66 (−1.41)	0.53 (−1.81)	0.62 (−1.61)	0.50** (−2.25)
Catholic	1.11 (0.67)	0.90 (−0.62)	1.37 (1.46)	1.22 (0.85)
Other Christian	1.29** (2.05)	0.95 (−0.38)	1.20 (1.09)	1.03 (0.18)
Non-Christian	1.78** (2.25)	1.64 (1.78)	1.29 (0.41)	3.32** (2.06)
Female	1.40** (3.23)	1.97*** (5.48)	0.93 (−0.58)	1.47** (2.66)
Involved with youth group	1.22*** (4.62)	1.38*** (6.43)	1.16** (2.32)	1.42*** (5.12)
First-time volunteer	0.48*** (−6.81)	0.54*** (−4.81)	0.54*** (−4.70)	0.60*** (−3.54)
Constant	0.52** (−2.93)	0.51** (−2.72)	0.09*** (−6.86)	0.09*** (−6.61)
Observations	2,364	2,367	1,235	1,239

Note: z-statistics are in parentheses.
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$.

For example, adult evangelicals were more negative in their responses than other volunteers, as were first-timers. In addition, most studies have shown female volunteers to be more religious, and our results also show that fulfilled religious motivators for women were particularly likely to produce a greater willingness to volunteer for all types of social projects.

Figure 1 shows how the probability of volunteering again changes as religious fulfillment increases. Greater motivational fulfillment consistently leads to higher levels of volunteering again, but there are some differences between first-time volunteers and returners.

It is not possible to say whether the probability of volunteering again differs for the two groups at lower levels of fulfilled motivation because the confidence intervals overlap. However, by roughly fulfillment level 12, we can say that fulfilled religious motivators have a larger impact on returners than on first-timers. This suggests that nonprofit agencies cannot take their returners for granted and must ensure that their volunteers' faith motivators are fulfilled each time they return. Although Figure 1 is based on the responses of adults and on "deepen my faith" as the motive, very similar patterns are found for "feel closer to God" motivators and—a bit more strongly—for youths.

Figure 1: Predicted Probability of Adult Returners and First-Timers Volunteering with the Same Nonprofit Organization Next Year
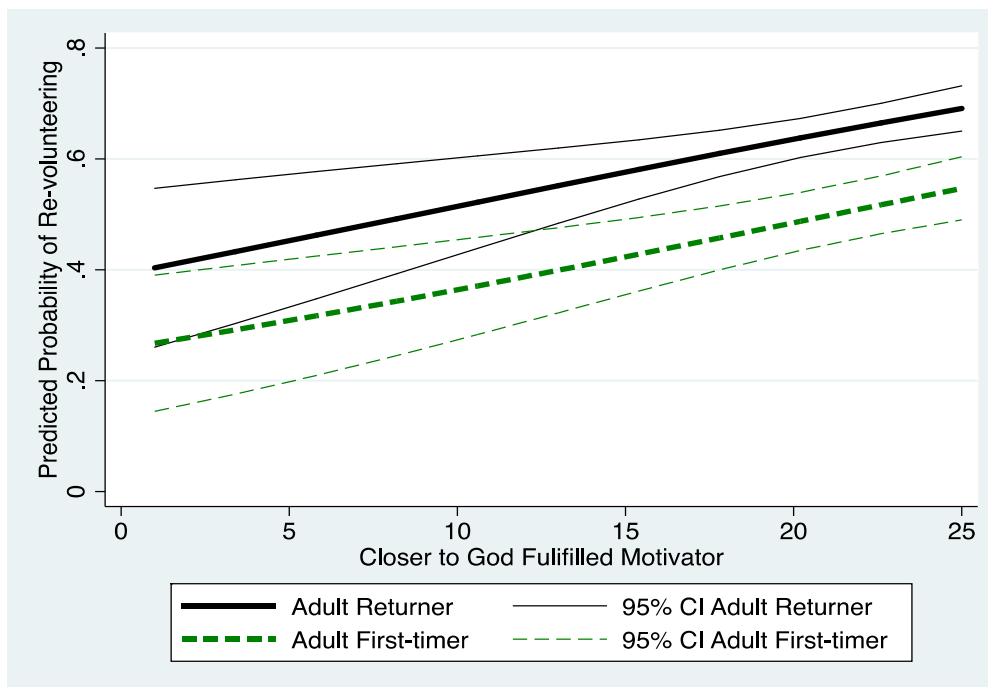
Implications for Faith-Based Social Service Agencies

This study's results suggest a number of practical implications for volunteer recruitment and retention in faith-based nonprofit organizations. Because youths are much more likely than adults to cite social motivations along with religious ones, volunteer recruiters should focus on multiple incentives when recruiting youths. Although first-time volunteers were more religiously motivated (and less socially motivated) than returners, they were also more dissatisfied and less likely—even when their religious motivators were fulfilled—to say they would volunteer again.

These characteristics suggest that recruiters should recognize that first-time volunteers need a great deal of guidance and attention throughout their initial volunteer experience. The findings also suggest that recruiters for religious nonprofit organizations will find that repeat volunteers and strongly religious women are their most reliable recruits because these individuals are most likely to be satisfied with their experience and to volunteer again.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Religious individuals represent a disproportionately large share of volunteers for all nonprofit organizations. Therefore, there are both theoretical and practical advantages in better understanding religion-based motivations for volunteering and how these motivations affect satisfaction with the volunteer experience.

The survey results from more than 4,000 volunteers for a Christian nonprofit organization suggest that some volunteers are primarily motivated by secular incentives (friendships or résumé building) but that most volunteers are primarily motivated by religious incentives. However, there are clear subgroup differences, religious motivations being much stronger for adults than for youth volunteers and slightly stronger for female and Protestant volunteers.

In addition to the differences between secular and religious motivations for volunteering, we found differences within the religiously motivated group. For individuals who are primarily motivated by religious incentives, volunteering is driven both by personal religious reasons (to feel closer to God) and by institutional religious reasons (to follow the guidance of one's faith). However, personal religious motivations are considerably more important (and institutional ones correspondingly less important) to youth volunteers, first-time volunteers, and Catholic volunteers. Somewhat surprisingly, evangelical volunteers are less likely than volunteers from other religious traditions to be motivated by the desire to "feel closer to God."

Religious motivation affects volunteers' overall satisfaction and their willingness to volunteer again. In particular, religiously motivated individuals are more satisfied than are secularly motivated individuals, and those with strong religious

motivations who believed that the volunteer week fulfilled their specific religious needs are the most willing to volunteer again.

These findings help to illuminate the components of religious motivation for volunteering, showing that young, Catholic, and first-time volunteers responded more to personal than to faith-based religious motivations. These results highlight the need to continue to move beyond measures of religiosity in studying volunteering to look at different types of religious motivations to volunteer. The findings also support the functional model of volunteering because whether the volunteer's most intense religious motivators were fulfilled was a strong predictor of willingness to volunteer again. Future research can build on these initial findings by developing a more complete set of religious motivations for volunteering and by exploring the effect of these motivations on volunteer satisfaction (and willingness to volunteer again) in other types of nonprofit organizations.

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