

## Attachment to Volunteering

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*We propose that volunteers' attachment to their work is determined by the level of resources they bring to it, the rewards they derive from it, and the context in which the work is carried out. We test this theory using two waves of the Americans' Changing Lives panel study (1986–1989). The resources part of the theory is supported: the likelihood of remaining in the volunteer labor force across the two waves is greater for the more highly educated, those who report higher rates of formal and informal social interaction, and those who have children in the household—the last effect is stronger for women. Respondents reporting an increase in regular working hours across the two waves are more likely to cease volunteering. However, declining functional ability has no effect on attachment. The reward part of the theory is not consistently supported. Commitment to volunteer work in the first wave (measured by hours volunteered) predicts being a volunteer in the second, but enjoying the work has no effect, and being satisfied with the results of the work decreases attachment. Compared to a number of other work contexts, church-related volunteering in the first wave is the strongest predictor of being a volunteer in the second.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Much of the productive work performed in the United States goes unrecognized and uncounted by conventional measures of regular employment (Herzog and Morgan, 1992). The focus is almost exclusively on “mar-

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ket work” or paid labor while labor performed in the informal sector, such as volunteer work, is largely ignored (Tilly and Tilly, 1994:291). This oversight is surprising given that volunteers are essential to the provision of many services, such as child care and working with the disabled. Also, many public institutions, such as museums and parks, depend on volunteers to supplement the work of regular staff. Smith (1997:124) estimates that volunteer workers contribute 28 million full-time equivalents to the U.S. domestic economy each year.

No doubt the tendency to think of voluntary associations as part of the “leisure sphere” has contributed to this neglect. Volunteering is viewed as primarily consumptive, much like attending a concert. Many of the social activities associated with voluntary associations are primarily expressive, but to confine our attention to this aspect of the volunteers’ world not only overlooks the productive work people do on behalf of their own voluntary associations (“associational volunteering”), but also overlooks the enormous amount of work performed on behalf of nonprofit organizations (“service program volunteering”; Smith, 1997:120).

In real life, volunteer work, like market work, provides both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, that is, it is production and consumption simultaneously.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, we believe more can be known about the causes and consequences of volunteering if we focus on the fact that it is work. Volunteering is productive in the same way that “market work” is productive, because it is an alternative but unpaid (or underpaid) means of producing something others consume. This resemblance to market work should not be pushed too far. It is precisely the act of generalized exchange, the giving of a service to outsiders without expectation of exclusive and immediate benefits, that separates volunteer work from paid work (Janoski and Wilson, 1995:274).

We assume that the desire to do good is more or less evenly distributed, but that the resources to fulfill that desire are not. This encourages us to think of labor force participation in the voluntary sector in the same way we think about labor force participation in the for-profit sector. This, in turn, encourages us to think that the factors governing entry into and exit from the volunteer labor force resemble those governing mobility in and out of the conventional labor market.

The growing recognition of the contribution of volunteering to national productivity has prompted a number of recent studies aimed at locating the pool from which volunteer workers can be recruited most efficiently

<sup>4</sup>Hakim (1996) offers a useful way of distinguishing expressive or consummatory activities from “productive” activities. A productive activity would not lose its value if a substitute did the task.

(Hayghe, 1991; Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1992; Smith, 1997). In this study we focus not on who is most likely to volunteer but why some continue to volunteer while others drop out. Given the difficulty of recruiting volunteers in the first place, attrition is a serious matter. We propose that people can be “attached” to the volunteer labor force in the same way people can be “attached” to the conventional labor force. *We define attachment objectively, as the consistency with which individuals are to be found in the labor force over time* (Maret, 1983). This is very different from the psychological state of “attachment” as measured by Dubin *et al.* (1976:289).

Only recently has attention been directed at the dynamics of volunteering—why some people are so attached to the work that they almost make a career out of it, while others’ involvement is more fleeting.<sup>5</sup> As Cress *et al.* (1997:62) point out, “Much of the literature on recruitment to groups implicitly assumes that the same dynamics that account for recruitment (e.g., selective incentives, ideological congruence, network ties) also account for persistence and participation.” A notable exception is the series of ingenious studies by McPherson and his collaborators, who have been able to show that highly educated people are not only more likely to volunteer in the first place but also volunteer for longer spells (McPherson, 1981); that weak ties pull people into new groups, but also pull current members out of existing groups and promote turnover (McPherson *et al.*, 1992); that the type of volunteer work an organization performs (e.g., church-related, union) makes a difference to membership duration (McPherson, 1983); that people who belong to voluntary associations located in niches where there is intense competition for volunteer workers have shorter membership duration spells (McPherson and Rotolo, 1996; Popielarz and McPherson, 1995); and that people who participate more intensively in voluntary associations are the soonest to leave (Cress *et al.*, 1997:72).

This line of research demonstrates that people’s affiliation with and participation in a voluntary association is affected by ecological factors. The voluntary sector consists of a multitude of nonprofit organizations, programs, and voluntary associations that are all competing for volunteer labor in the same way that for-profit firms compete for regular labor (O’Neill, 1989). However, McPherson and his colleagues are more interested in the system-level sources of attachment to voluntary associations

<sup>5</sup>A number of studies have examined the dynamics of political activism, which is one form of volunteering (e.g., McAdam, 1988; Sherkat and Blocker, 1997). They show that people who participated in the social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s were more likely to be active in politics in follow-up studies than those who did not participate. However, they focus mainly on differences between activists and nonactivists. They do not examine differences among the activists to see which factors mediate the impact of early activism on later volunteering.

than in the individual-level attributes that might also help explain that behavior (Cress *et al.*, 1997:62). Furthermore, the definition of “volunteering” in these studies is broader than ours and embraces activities where there is no beneficiary population other than the members. For example, McPherson and Rotolo (1996:187) give as an example of “membership turnover” one bowler leaving a team because of a new baby to be replaced by another who now has time free because his child has entered grade school. This kind of activity is best treated as consumption because no altruism is implied.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, these studies are informative and suggestive. We agree that highly educated people not only volunteer more but probably get more rewarding task assignments and for this reason remain in the volunteer labor force for longer spells. We also agree that the context in which volunteering takes place makes a difference to how attached people are.

## THEORY

The resemblance between “market work” and volunteer work consists of the fact that they are both productive activities. In either sphere, being able and willing to produce depends on what people can give and how well they are rewarded—what they bring to the job and what they get in return. Theoretically, a decline in resources—what people can give—should bring about a decline in volunteering. Similarly, if the work is unrewarding, volunteers are less likely to continue doing it. The resemblance between market work and volunteer work also consists of the fact that the actual work performed varies by the type of tasks performed and the context in which the work is done. In the case of market work, the contrast between the work of a lawyer employed by a large private law firm situated on Wall Street and the work of a lawyer employed by a state-funded legal aid office has obvious consequences for attachment to the work. Similar differences exist in the sphere of volunteer work. In this section, we identify two kinds of resources or “capital” people bring to their volunteer work, conceptualize the benefits to be derived from it, and describe how we propose to estimate the effects of work context on attachment to volunteering.

### Human Capital

In studies of conventional labor markets, the resources individuals bring to the market are called “human capital” (Coleman, 1988:S100).

<sup>6</sup>To do justice to their research, it should be noted that, in Cress *et al.* (1997:75), some attempt is made to analyze separately voluntary associations that target a beneficiary population other than the members themselves. Their results for this subsample are unchanged.

Educational credentials and job training are commonly cited as examples of human capital. We believe the same logic can be used to explain how the labor market for volunteers operates. Indeed, the “dominant status model” outlined in Smith’s (1994) review of the individual attributes associated with volunteering could be taken as validation of human capital theory. According to this model, high-resource people—as measured by criteria such as education, income, occupation, and race—compete better in the volunteer labor market because they are better endowed with knowledge, organizational skills, and discretionary time.

We assume that if individual resources help determine why people take up volunteering, they will also help explain why people give it up. Specifically, we propose that any decline in individual resources will increase the chances of exiting the volunteer labor force. The work of most volunteers is discretionary. It is neither a role obligation (e.g., child care) nor necessary for survival (e.g., paid employment). If individual resources such as free time or health decline, discretionary activities are the first to suffer (Hogan *et al.*, 1993:1450). Previous research on volunteer attrition backs up the idea that resources decline can be vitally important. A study of older people asked former volunteers why they were no longer active: “the most common responses were health problems, family obligations . . . ‘spend time doing other things’ and employment” (Caro and Bass, 1995:86). Respondents to a British survey, when asked why they had given up volunteering, included a job change and less free time among their reasons (Sheard, 1995). Chambre (1987:36) cites two studies (of older volunteers) that reach the same conclusion; “poor health was the most important reason why people stopped doing volunteer work.”

### **Social Capital**

The second type of resource we identify is social capital. It describes resources, such as information, trust, and cooperative labor, acquired and mobilized through social connections. Studies of conventional labor market behavior show that how quickly people find new jobs, and the kinds of jobs they find, are affected as much by the kinds of social networks they have as it is by the kinds of individual resources they bring to the search (Granovetter, 1995). Social resources are just as important for getting a job in the volunteer sector, perhaps more so because volunteer work is burdened by the “free rider problem.” How long will you pick up litter in your neighborhood if you do not see anyone else doing it and your solitary effort has no discernible impact? How much longer would you do this work, on the other hand, if the clean up campaign were sponsored by an

organization to which you belong or by the school that your child attends? In other words, the decision to volunteer is affected by what other people are thinking and doing as much as it is by what we are thinking and doing (Marwell and Oliver, 1993:102). This is why more socially integrated people—not social isolates—are the most likely to volunteer (Wiltfang and McAdam, 1991). Many of us take up volunteer work because we are members of a social group—it is a joint activity of our church, service organization, or labor union (Smith, 1994:253; Verba *et al.*, 1995). Many of us are introduced to volunteering by friends or acquaintances (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1992).

Little research has been conducted on the contribution of social resources to attachment to volunteering. Do long-term social activists possess more social capital than activists who participate more sporadically? A follow-up study of volunteers for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Campaign of 1964 suggests that they do. McAdam (1988:190) found that the 1960s volunteers most likely to be still active in the 1980s were those who had stayed in touch with other participants in the campaign. The long-term activists also reported higher rates of pre-1964 volunteer work. We believe that more socially integrated people are more likely to remain in the volunteer labor force. Their social ties supply a steady stream of new volunteer opportunities—or a steady stream of volunteer demands—and provide social support for the work they are doing.<sup>7</sup>

### Benefits

It is a reasonable assumption that people who are well rewarded for their work are more likely to continue doing it, while those who receive few rewards are the most likely to drop out. Attachment to the regular labor force is strongest among those who are paid well, who receive regular promotions and are “locked in” by lucrative pension benefits, as well as among those who find their work intrinsically satisfying. Many of the benefits used to secure the loyalty of paid employees are unavailable to voluntary associations and nonprofit organizations. This would seem to place a premium on intrinsic rewards and, indeed, volunteer work is expected to be motivated by moral or purposive incentives (Knoke and Wood, 1981; Schervish, 1995:5; Wilson, 1973). It would follow that attachment to volun-

<sup>7</sup>More particularly, of course, they are more likely to keep volunteering if they have rewarding social relations with people they come in contact with through their volunteer work: “volunteers are significantly more likely than regular employees of an organization to report that friendly coworkers are important in their decision to remain within their organization” (Pearce, 1993:11).

teer work must depend on volunteers finding their work enjoyable and “worthwhile.” On the other hand, we must not forget that an attractive feature of volunteer work is that it is freely chosen (Wuthnow, 1995)—people contrast their work as volunteers with their work as paid employees. Having decided to give up their free time, volunteers need to believe they have “something to give” and that they make a difference. They become disillusioned if their input is ineffective, perhaps more so than if they were getting extrinsic rewards for it. For this reason, we need to take into account how satisfied people are with the results of their work—they are likely to abandon it if they think they are wasting their time.

### Work Context

Exchange theory can take us only so far in explaining attachment to volunteer work because it focuses on individual resources and benefits. Studies of market work suggest that the context in which work is performed has a considerable impact on people’s attachment to it (Dubin *et al.*, 1976:293). Unfortunately, the “study of contextual variables in general is much less developed than other areas of research on volunteer participation” (Smith, 1994:246) and it is not altogether clear what “context” would mean in the case of volunteer work. In Dubin’s research, context is used to describe a wide variety of organizational and technological dimensions of the work environment, as well as informal workplace social relationships, any one of which can be a significant source of attachment to work.

Despite these specification difficulties, we think it is worth pursuing the idea that the environment in which work is performed makes a difference to attachment. This has been demonstrated recently by McPherson and his collaborators, as noted above. Using population ecology models, they have shown that organization-level and system-level variations can affect how long people remain members of voluntary associations. The more demands organizations make on their members, the shorter the duration spell. Short duration spells are also characteristic of organizations located in competitive niches.

We lack the data to test these ecological theories about membership duration. In any case, they apply not to participation in the volunteer labor force as a whole but to membership in specific voluntary organizations. Our data set does provide us with information concerning the “area” in which the volunteer work was done. Volunteers were asked whether their work was connected with a school or other educational organization; a political group or labor union; a senior citizens group or any other organization related to the elderly; a church, synagogue, or other religious organiza-

tion; or “any other national or local organization, including United Fund, hospitals and the like.”

Why should we expect volunteers in any one of these areas to show higher rates of attachment than volunteers in the others? We have no reason to believe working conditions, authority structures, task assignments, or agency size—the kinds of contextual variables on which Dubin focuses—vary systematically by the area in which volunteer work is performed. Nevertheless, we believe we can tease out contextual differences by asking which of these spheres provides the strongest *institutional support* for volunteer work. Wuthnow (1995:105) has observed that all “volunteering takes place in institutional contexts.” As people engage in volunteer work, they learn to play roles in institutions—how to care and who to care for. Schools provide internships, community agencies create mentorships, labor unions offer committee memberships, churches organize outreach projects. Of all the spheres identified in our data set, we believe church-related work receives the strongest institutional support and for this reason has the highest rate of attachment. More than any other context, the religious congregation best combines the function of family and bureaucracy. In this context, caring for others is part of being a community from which the volunteer draws part of his or her core identity (Wuthnow, 1995:126). At the same time, church members learn that “serving on committees and programs is a way of behaving in a caring manner” (Wuthnow, 1995:129). It is not surprising that religious participation is a strong predictor of volunteering, much stronger than religious belief (Wilson and Janoski, 1995). We therefore expect to find the highest rate of attachment amongst volunteers whose work is associated with church-related organizations.

In summary, in this research we attempt to explain attachment to the volunteer labor force. We are less interested in how resources enable people to get volunteer jobs and more interested in how they function to make it easier for people to keep those jobs. We are less interested in motives for volunteering than we are in how people’s attachment is affected by the benefits they derive from it. We are less interested in why people choose one field of volunteer work rather than another than we are in the consequences of that choice for how long they remain volunteers.

### ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

When it comes to market work, a person’s labor force status at any moment says nothing about that person’s work history. By the same token, calculating the proportion of the population employed at two different



dates tells us little about how firmly attached people are to working. The same is true for volunteering; rate stability conceals considerable movement in and out of the labor force.

Attachment to work over time is best measured by multiple waves of data collected from the same respondents at different times. We use two waves of data from the *Americans' Changing Lives Study* gathered in 1986 and 1989. Two waves of data yield four possible patterns as far as labor force participation is concerned: a person could volunteer in both waves, volunteer in neither wave, not volunteer in the first wave but volunteer in the second, and volunteer in the first but not in the second. Given our interest in attachment, it makes sense to compare the first and fourth options, thereby defining the person who volunteers in both waves as attached. We therefore limit our study to those who reported volunteering in the first wave, construct a dichotomous dependent variable measuring whether or not they were still volunteering in the second wave, and use logistic regression to make the estimations.<sup>8</sup>

Our modeling strategy and hypotheses are as follows:

### **Human Capital**

Under this heading, we include those individual resources, a decline in which might weaken attachment to volunteering. We use a measure of functional health and compute a change score from T1 to T2 (Hogan *et al.*, 1993). We use a measure of hours worked in the regular labor force and, again, compute a change score between T1 and T2: "the amount of free time available seems especially important for the amount of time people give to [volunteer] activities" (Brady *et al.*, 1995:275). We ruled out the possibility of including income as a measure of human capital because the time elapsed between our two waves of data (three years) is too brief to yield many respondents whose incomes had changed. The appropriateness of including a measure of educational achievement is also debatable. It makes little sense to speak of a "decline" in education. However, we

<sup>8</sup>We are aware of the limitations of having just two waves of data, separated by a short interval of time, to measure attachment. The data tell us nothing about the respondent's volunteer activity before 1986 or after 1989. It is commonly understood that some people tend to make a "career" out of volunteering (that is, much of the volunteering is done by a few people who move from one volunteer activity to another). The chances are good that respondents at T1 who have been volunteering for some time are more likely to reappear as volunteers at T2 than respondents who at T1 have only been volunteering for a short time. The right censoring problem is that we might be treating as detachment what is only a temporary absence from the volunteer labor force and, had we data on the years intervening between T1 and T2, these same temporary absences might have been found among those we are treating as attached.

decided to include education at T1 because prior research has demonstrated a positive effect of educational level on membership duration in voluntary associations (McPherson, 1981). It is plausible that highly educated people find volunteer work more rewarding and for this reason become more attached to it.

*Hypothesis 1:* The greater the decline in their functional health, the more likely are respondents to stop volunteering.

*Hypothesis 2:* The greater the increase in their regular working hours, the more likely are respondents to stop volunteering.

*Hypothesis 3:* The higher the level of education at T1, the more likely are respondents to be volunteering at T2.

### Social Capital

We propose that social capital increases attachment. Unfortunately, we do not have data to test the theory that weak ties shorten membership duration (McPherson *et al.*, 1992). However, we do have measures of the level of social integration reported by our respondents. We have one measure of informal social integration—frequency of talking with friends, neighbors, and acquaintances on the telephone. We have two measures of formal social interaction: participation in the meetings of clubs and societies, and frequency of attendance at religious services.

An additional measure of social capital we use is the number of children in the household. As children are usually thought to compete with attachment to the *regular* labor force (Maret, 1983:97), we should explain why we treat children as a resource when it comes to volunteering. Children draw their parents out into the community and into local organizations, such as the Boy Scouts or Little League (Clary and Snyder, 1991). They multiply volunteer opportunities, as work in one sphere brings people into contact with those working in others and thus increases the chances of remaining in the volunteer labor force. Because women are more responsible for child-rearing than men, and volunteer for longer spells than men (McPherson and Lockwood, 1980), we propose a subsidiary hypothesis that the effect of children in the household on volunteer attachment is stronger for women than men. Negrey's (1993:93) interviews with working women support this line of reasoning. She found that women's choice of community activities "was an extension of their roles as mothers . . . one way of deepening involvement in their children's lives."

- Hypothesis 4:* The more frequently volunteers interact informally with others, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 5:* The more frequently volunteers attend meetings of clubs, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 6:* The more frequently volunteers attend religious services, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 7:* The more children volunteers have in their household, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 8:* The positive effect of number of children in the household on volunteer attachment is stronger for women than men.

### Benefits

Benefits increase attachment. Our data set provides us with a number of opportunities to measure benefits. One item asks respondents how much they *enjoy* their volunteer work, a second asks how satisfied they are with the *results* of their volunteer work, and a third asks them to place a monetary *value* on the work they do. We argue that attachment is more likely among those who report enjoying and being satisfied with the results of their volunteer work. We also expect to find attachment rates higher among those who place greater value on their work. Such people clearly attribute considerable significance to their volunteer efforts and for that reason are less likely to abandon it. They are also, perhaps, more likely to suffer cognitive dissonance if they give up the work, having made a greater investment in it. Thus

- Hypothesis 9:* The more volunteers enjoy their work, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 10:* The more satisfied volunteers are with the results of their work, the less likely are they to drop out.
- Hypothesis 11:* The more volunteers value their work, the less likely are they to drop out.

In addition to these direct measures of benefits, we also measure how many hours respondents reported volunteering in Wave 1. We treat this as an indicator of commitment, and commitment should increase attachment. Also, people who, in T1, are already volunteering many hours signal by this behavior their greater commitment to the work, and it is reasonable to suppose this commitment will continue into T2.<sup>9</sup> Thus

<sup>9</sup>It should be noted that Cress *et al.* (1997) find that the more hours people devote to voluntary association activities, the more likely are they to drop out. This would clearly indicate some kind of burnout problem. However, this finding pertains to commitment to a particular organization, while we are measuring attachment to volunteer work in general.

*Hypothesis 12:* The more hours volunteers work in the first wave, the less likely are they to drop out.

### Work Context

In the *Americans' Changing Lives* data set, respondents were not asked to specify what they did as volunteers, nor was information gathered on their work environment. All we know is in which of the five areas they decided to work. Furthermore, the choices given were not mutually exclusive. Respondents were able to name more than one area. To test our idea that church-related volunteering is more durable than any of the other four areas, we created a subsample of respondents limited to those who mentioned only one volunteer activity. Among the members of this group the volunteer choice was exclusive, which makes it possible to compare the effect on attachment of making one choice rather than another. Thus

*Hypothesis 13:* Respondents who report volunteering for church-related causes are the least likely to drop out.

We report these results in Table III.

In addition to these independent variables, we impose a number of controls using variables known to be related to volunteering but whose relation to attachment is uncertain. We control for age because a young adult (our youngest respondents are 25) "will have a different pattern of memberships than someone who has already had a rich associational history" at the time of the interview (Cress *et al.*, 1997:69). We also know that volunteer activity peaks in middle age (Sheard, 1995:120), and we wish to guard against confusing the effect of health or number of children in the household with a simple effect of age. We control for race because it is not clear whether there are race differences in the composition of the volunteer labor force or in the movement in and out of that labor force. Some believe Blacks are less likely to volunteer (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1992; Sundeen, 1992), while others report higher volunteer rates for Blacks (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Williams and Ortega, 1986). None of these studies addresses the issue of attrition as such, but we cannot be sure of the consequences of race for attachment and thus control for it.

### DATA

The data we use are taken from a panel survey entitled *Americans' Changing Lives*, which used a multistage stratified area probability sample

of persons 25 years of age or older and living in the contiguous United States (House, 1995). Blacks and persons over 60 years of age were sampled at twice the rate of Whites less than 60 years of age in order to facilitate comparisons by age and race. We used a weight variable to adjust for these oversamples. In 1986, 3617 respondents were interviewed for the first wave, while 2867 respondents were available in 1989 for the second wave. Of the individuals who were not surveyed during the second wave, 584 were living but did not respond, while 166 had died. Respondents were surveyed in their homes by interviewers of the Survey Research Center and had a response rate of 67% in the first wave. Nonrespondents did not vary substantially by age, race, or other known respondent characteristics. For this study, we construct a data set consisting only of those respondents ( $n = 1232$ ) who reported at least one volunteer activity in the first wave.

## VARIABLES

### Dependent Variable

#### *Attachment (T1 and T2)*

In both waves, respondents were asked whether they did any volunteer work in the previous twelve months in five different areas. Unfortunately, this question fails to distinguish between “associational” and “program” volunteering (Smith, 1997) but it does provide a good measure of the respondent’s *range* of activities. The variable is coded 1 if the respondent volunteered during both waves; otherwise, the respondent is coded 0. Since respondents were given five options, this method of conceptualizing and measuring attachment conflates those who drop from 5 activities to 0 with those who drop from 1 to 0. Clearly, these are not identical processes. The alternative was to construct a linear change variable but this would have treated the drop from 5 to 4 as equivalent to the drop from 1 to 0, which we think would be more misleading. Table I shows that only 18% of T1 volunteers were active in three or more areas. Our conflating problem is thus not serious. It is nevertheless true that the drop from 1 to 0 is less difficult than the drop from 5 to 0, and there might be some difference between those who report 5 at T1 and those who report one. This, in turn, might bias those coefficients in our model related to the number of volunteer activities at T1. For instance, respondents who report higher rates of social interaction at T1 might be more likely to be volunteers at T2, but this is largely because they list more volunteer activities at T1. To partially control

for these possibilities, we include dummy variables for the number of volunteer activities listed at T1.

### **Independent Variables**

#### *Education (T1)*

Years of schooling completed.

#### *Functional Health (T1 and T2)*

This item taps the degree to which respondents' abilities to fulfill normal functioning is impaired. The Gutman-type scale consists of five items: (1) whether the respondent is currently confined to a bed or chair most or all of the day, (2) difficulty bathing, (3) difficulty climbing stairs, (4) difficulty walking several blocks, and (5) difficulty with heavy housework. Responses on the scale range from one to four, with higher scores indicating greater ability. For the regression analyses we created a new variable measuring *change* in functional health between T1 and T2. Respondents are coded 1 if their functional health worsened between the two waves and 0 if it improved or remained the same.

#### *Work Hours (T1 and T2)*

Respondents were asked how many weeks and hours per week they worked for pay during the previous year. Based on their answers to these questions, respondents were given a score indicating hours worked in the past year. A new variable was constructed for the regression analysis, measuring *change* in work hours between T1 and T2. Respondents are coded 1 if their work hours increased and 0 if their work hours decreased or remained the same.

#### *Informal Social Interaction (T1)*

Respondents were asked how often they talk on the telephone with friends, neighbors, or relatives. Response categories were more than once a day, once a day, two or three times a month, about once a week, less than once a week, never.

*Meetings (T1)*

Respondents were asked how often they attended meetings or programs of groups, clubs, or organizations to which they belonged. Response categories were more than once a week, once a week, two or three times a month, about once a month, less than once a month, never.

*Church Attendance (T1)*

Respondents were asked how often they attended religious services. Response categories were more than once a week, once a week, two or three times a month, about once a month, less than once a month, never.

*Children in Household (T1)*

This variable measures the number of children living in the respondent's household. Responses on the item range from none to seven.

*Volunteer Hours (T1)*

Volunteers were asked how many hours they spent doing volunteer work in the past year. Response categories were less than 20, 20–39; 40–79; 80–159, 160 hours or more. Midpoint values were used to represent each category and the highest category was given a value of 200.

*Volunteer Value (T1)*

To assess how much they felt their volunteer work was worth, respondents were asked, "If the organization had paid someone for the volunteer work you did, about how much do you think it would have cost them?" Response values fall into four categories and range from less than \$500 to \$3,000 or more. It should be noted that respondents' estimate of the value of their work "is considerably higher than the average wage rate for paid work" (Herzog and Morgan, 1992:183). However, we assume that this bias affects all respondents equally.

*Volunteer Enjoyment (T1)*

Respondents are asked, “How much did you enjoy doing that volunteer work—did you enjoy it a great deal, quite a bit, some, a little, or not at all?”

*Volunteer Satisfaction (T1)*

Respondents were asked, “How satisfied were you with the results of your volunteer work—completely, very, somewhat, not very, or not at all satisfied?”

The skewed distribution on the enjoyment and satisfaction variables made it necessary for us to truncate them, combining the two least favorable categories with the middle category. Both variables are reverse coded such that higher scores indicate greater enjoyment or satisfaction.

*Volunteer Work Context (T1)*

We created five dummy variables to indicate whether or not the respondent volunteered for each of the five areas of volunteer work.

*Number of Volunteer Activities*

To measure number of volunteer activities mentioned at T1, we created four dummy variables, collapsing categories 4 and 5. The “one activity” category is used for comparison in the regression analyses.

*Gender*

1 = female, 0 = male.

*Race*

1 = Black, 0 = White and others.

*Age (T1)*

In order to determine whether there is a nonlinear relationship between age and attachment, we created several dummy variables for age. The age



ranges used were 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65–74, and 75 and over. We omitted the youngest group in the analyses to provide a category of comparison.

## RESULTS

Although respondents were allowed to mention up to five different volunteer activities, just over half (54%) reported only one (Table I). Volunteers averaged one hour of work a week. By 1989, 28.3% of the 1986 volunteers were no longer contributing. Comparing Columns Two and Three in Table I, it is evident that dropouts worked longer hours in their regular jobs, had less education, valued their volunteer work less, worked fewer volunteer hours, attended meetings and religious services less frequently, and had fewer children in the household. As might be expected, the more active of the T1 volunteers were more likely to be volunteering three years later.

**Table I.** Mean Levels of Independent Variables for all T1 Volunteers and by Volunteer Status at T2 (Variable Range in Parentheses)

	All T1 volunteers ( <i>n</i> = 1232)	T1 volunteers remaining at T2 ( <i>n</i> = 883)	T1 volunteers dropped out at T2 ( <i>n</i> = 349)
<b>Human capital</b>			
Functional health (1–4)	3.78	3.80	3.72
Work hours (0–4940)	1159.63	1143.33	1200.87
Education (0–17)	12.78	13.06	12.04
<b>Social capital</b>			
Informal social interaction (1–6)	4.80	4.89	4.57
Attend meetings (1–6)	3.71	3.97	3.07
Attend church (1–6)	4.12	4.29	3.69
Children in household (0–7)	.93	.98	.80
<b>Benefits</b>			
Volunteering enjoyment (1–3)	2.47	2.49	2.41
Volunteering satisfaction (1–3)	2.26	2.24	2.30
Volunteer value (1–4)	1.77	1.89	1.48
Volunteer hours (10–200)	65.30	73.04	43.18
<b>Number of activities</b>			
1 Volunteer activity (0–1)	.54	.46	.74
2 Volunteer activities (0–1)	.28	.31	.22
3 Volunteer activities (0–1)	.13	.17	.03
4+ Volunteer activities (0–1)	.05	.07	.01
<b>Sociodemographic controls</b>			
Gender (0 = male; 1 = female)	.64	.65	.64
Black (0 = other; 1 = Black)	.26	.23	.31
Age (24–90)	50.99	51.00	50.97

The results of the first stage of the multivariate analysis are shown in Table II.

Human capital theory draws some support from these results, despite the fact that Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed. A decline in functional health makes no difference to volunteering. This could indicate an inadequate measure of “resources” as far as volunteering is concerned; the functional health measure is biased in the direction of physical limitations and little of the work volunteers do entails strenuous physical labor. There are three

**Table II.** Estimated Net Effects of Human Capital, Social Capital, Benefits, and Extent of Volunteering on Commitment to Volunteering (Logistic Regression Estimates;  $N = 1231$ )

	Coefficient <sup>a</sup> standard error	Odds ratio	Coefficient/ standard error	Odds ratio
<b>Human capital</b>				
Functional health change	.005/.359	1.038	.007/.360	1.058
Work hours change	.092/.159 <sup>b</sup>	1.409	.091/.159 <sup>b</sup>	1.404
Education	.117/.029 <sup>c</sup>	1.079	.121/.029 <sup>c</sup>	1.082
<b>Social capital</b>				
Informal social interaction	.119/.059 <sup>c</sup>	1.186	.110/.059 <sup>c</sup>	1.172
Attend meetings	.116/.045 <sup>c</sup>	1.125	.122/.045 <sup>c</sup>	1.132
Attend church	.194/.044 <sup>d</sup>	1.213	.196/.044 <sup>d</sup>	1.214
Children in household	.159/.067 <sup>c</sup>	1.245	.060/.084	1.086
<b>Benefits</b>				
Volunteering enjoyment	.041/.107	1.103	.046/.108	1.116
Volunteering satisfaction	-.121/.106 <sup>c</sup>	.756	-.126/.107 <sup>c</sup>	.747
Volunteer value	.082/.105	1.142	.078/.106	1.135
Volunteer hours	.155/.002 <sup>b</sup>	1.004	.171/.002 <sup>c</sup>	1.004
<b>Number of activities</b>				
2 Volunteer activities	.150/.166 <sup>d</sup>	1.789	.145/.167 <sup>d</sup>	1.755
3 Volunteer activities	.374/.396 <sup>d</sup>	6.749	.375/.396 <sup>d</sup>	6.780
4+ Volunteer activities	.406/1.417 <sup>b</sup>	32.321	.401/1.417 <sup>b</sup>	31.058
<b>Controls</b>				
Gender	.006/.149	1.020	-.015/.152	.949
Black	-.096/.237 <sup>b</sup>	.554	-.095/.238 <sup>b</sup>	.559
Age 35–44	.056/.186	1.239	.057/.187	1.242
45–54	.042/.228	1.235	.047/.229	1.266
55–64	.109/.259 <sup>b</sup>	1.789	.113/.260 <sup>b</sup>	1.823
65–74	.084/.276	1.596	.093/.278	1.681
75 and over	.019/.389	1.194	.024/.391	1.253
<b>Interaction term</b>				
Female × Children in HH	—	—	.155/.116 <sup>b</sup>	1.336
Intercept	-2.619		-2.605	
$X^2/df$	262.00/21		268.23/22	
Pseudo $R^2$	.175		.179	

<sup>a</sup> Standardized estimate.

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .05$ .

<sup>c</sup>  $p < .01$ .

<sup>d</sup>  $p < .001$ .

other possibilities. The first is that, by confining our study to those who are volunteering at T1, we have “selected out” the unhealthy, those most at risk of illness debilitating enough to prevent them from volunteering. Another possibility is that attrition between the first and second wave has weeded out the seriously ill, those most likely to drop out of the volunteer labor force. Finally, health status has little effect on attachment because people devote only limited amounts of time to volunteer work, which enables them to fit it into their schedule when they are capable of doing it. This is where the parallel between market work and volunteer work breaks down. Volunteer agencies can rarely impose the kind of work regimen on their staff that regular employers expect of their employees. Indeed, flexibility of scheduling is one of the most appealing features of volunteer work.

Hypothesis 2 is supported. Those volunteers whose regular working hours rose between 1986 and 1989 were more likely to be no longer volunteering in 1989. This finding lends some support to the speculation that, nationwide, “overworked Americans” are cutting back on their volunteer contributions (Schor, 1991:126).

Hypothesis 3 is supported. More highly educated people are not only more likely to volunteer in the first place, they are also more likely to continue volunteering. Some of the reasons given for why more highly educated people elect to volunteer can also help explain their attachment to the work. Their greater awareness of social needs not only draws them into the volunteer labor force but also explains why they would see the work as never ending. We further believe that educated people are more attached to volunteer work because they tend to get better jobs once they enter the voluntary sector. Data from the 1987 *General Social Survey* Socio-Political Participation Module (Davis and Smith, 1994) show that educated people not only belong to more voluntary associations but that they are more likely to hold office in them and to have served on a committee. Brady *et al.* (1995:273) show that more highly educated people are much more likely to perform “skill acts” as volunteers (e.g., writing letters, attending a meeting where decisions are made, planning or chairing a meeting, giving a presentation or speech). Educational credentials mean more enjoyable and rewarding tasks.

In a recent review, Snow and Oliver (1995:574) report “overwhelming” evidence that collective behavior rests on “preexisting ties or network linkages.” McAdam (1988) believes these linkages have an enduring effect. Our results suggest that these findings can be generalized to volunteering. Hypothesis 4, that the rate of attachment is higher among those in more frequent contact with friends and neighbors, is supported. Hypotheses 5 and 6 are also supported: more frequent attendance at meetings of clubs

and societies, and more frequent attendance at religious services reduces attrition.

Hypothesis 7, predicting a higher rate of attachment for volunteers with children in the household, is supported. We also tested for an interaction between gender and children in the household. The results of this test are reported in the second column of Table II. While there is no main effect for gender reported in column one of Table II, the interaction term in column two is significant.<sup>10</sup> The presence of children in the household has a stronger effect on women than men.<sup>11</sup> This finding throws a new light on the dynamics of volunteering. Women have been cast in the role of “social housekeepers” by many social scientists (e.g., Daniels, 1988). However, social survey evidence on this issue is mixed. Women consistently rate themselves, and are rated by men, as more empathic and altruistic than men (Greeno and Maccoby, 1993:195). Some studies show that women are indeed more likely to have volunteered in the past year than men (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1992:59). Other studies (Hayghe, 1991) report that men are more likely to volunteer than women. Both Smith (1994) and Sundeen (1990) claim that gender differences are spurious and disappear with controls for socioeconomic status. Gallagher (1994:573) found that men belong to more voluntary organizations but they devote no more time to volunteering than women. None of these studies considers whether or not predisposing factors might affect men and women differently. Our results would suggest that socialization is probably not the reason why there are gender differences in volunteering but that sex role definition (or the allocation of power and responsibility within the household) is the answer. Women do volunteer work because it is part of the role of being a mother.

The idea that benefits cement attachment to volunteering receives little support from these results. Table I shows that most respondents enjoy and are satisfied with their volunteer work. However, Hypothesis 9 is not validated. How much people enjoy their volunteer work seems to have no effect on their attachment to it. Hypothesis 10 is the reverse of what we expected. People who reported being satisfied with the results of their

<sup>10</sup>The absence of a gender effect in the main model is not too surprising. Gender differences in volunteering tend to disappear once socioeconomic controls are imposed (Wilson and Musick, 1997). However, it is worth noting that women account for a higher proportion of program volunteers than associational volunteers and our conflation of these two forms might be hiding gender differences in volunteer attrition (Smith, 1994).

<sup>11</sup>In ancillary analyses (not shown) we found that men’s attachment to volunteering was totally unaffected by having children in the household, while the effect for women was positive. We also conducted two analyses to see if age of child was important. We found attachment to volunteering to be lowest among those with very young children and highest among those with children between the ages 5 and 18.

volunteer work at T1 were actually less likely to be volunteering at T2. Perhaps this item is simply too skewed toward the favorable end—those who are dissatisfied with volunteer work have already dropped out by T1. It should also be remembered that we are measuring attachment in regard to the volunteer labor force as a whole rather than to a particular job or volunteer activity, and it might be the case that the less satisfied in the first wave simply left one volunteer job for another but remained volunteers. But there are two other explanations for this surprising finding. The first lies in the wording of the question, which asks respondents if they are satisfied with the *results* of their work. Perhaps volunteers unsatisfied with their work at T1 are more likely to be volunteering at T2 because they believe there is more work to be done. The second explanation is that satisfaction with volunteer work does not operate on attachment in quite the same way as it does on regular work. Volunteer work is meant to be informed by altruistic motives, by a sense of giving and self-sacrifice. It might seem self-indulgent to expect the work to be “satisfying” because this suggests that the donor is receiving in return as much or more than he or she contributes. Indeed, lack of satisfaction with the results of the work could be considered part of the job. Helping the needy is a never ending task, dissatisfaction with what one has been able to accomplish thus far only serves to strengthen the determination to continue.

Hypothesis 11 is not supported. Respondents who place little monetary value on their volunteer work are no more likely to drop out than those who value their work highly. Table I does show some small difference between volunteers who stay and volunteers who leave with respect to how much they value their work. However, this difference disappears once controls for education and work hours are imposed. Clearly, cognitive dissonance is not at work here. It could be that, by controlling for such factors as age, education and work hours, we have partialled out those most likely to regard their labor input as valuable—one reason the educated continue to volunteer is that they believe their work “counts for something.” It is equally likely, however, that, while people can be persuaded to place a monetary value on their volunteer work, they are reluctant to think of their benevolence in those terms and to calculate the opportunity costs.

Hypothesis 12 is supported. The more hours volunteered in the first wave, the more firm the attachment to volunteering. It is interesting that this effect is net of the *number* of volunteer activities mentioned. It can be treated as an indicator of the *intensity* rather than the scope of the respondent’s commitment to volunteer work. While we have argued that this result makes sense in light of cognitive dissonance theory, it is just as plausible that devoting more hours to volunteer work signals a depth of

commitment to volunteering as part of a “lifestyle” that easily spans the three years separating the two waves of the study.

Finally, while the control variables are not the focus of this analysis, they deserve some comment. We expected a curvilinear relation between age and volunteering. We therefore created dummy variables that would not only control for the effect of age on the dependent variable but would also enable us to compare middle-aged people with younger adults. The data fit the expected pattern, except that the highest rate of attachment is found in the 55–64 age group rather than the group preceding it, a little later than we expected. This age effect is consistent with Knoke and Thomson’s (1977:55) finding that the number of voluntary association memberships is lowest among the “young marrieds” and highest among the “older parents.” They suggest that some of this might be due to women reentering the regular labor force after their children have left the home and being exposed to more participation opportunities. Another theory is that parents take up volunteering as a substitute for child care once the offspring have flown the nest. Our analysis would appear to rule out the second theory because we are controlling for the number of children in the household. Of course, we are measuring not voluntary association memberships at one time but the likelihood of a person maintaining volunteer work over a three-year span. Remembering that the contrast category is 24–34-year-olds, the difference might be more one of residential stability and greater experience with volunteer work.

Race also has an effect on attachment. Blacks are more likely to drop out than Whites. Given the other variables in the model, which would control for some of the race differences in resources and the like, we can only speculate that this higher attrition rate might have something to do with the less favorable volunteer opportunities with which Blacks are provided.

Table III reports the results of our analysis of the subsample of people who reported only one volunteer activity in the first wave. In this model we include dummy variables for the volunteer option, where the omitted category is the church-related group. Volunteering to help the elderly, to work for political organizations or unions, and volunteering in connection with educational issues are all less stable than is volunteering in connection with the church (as is the “other” category). Hypothesis 13 is therefore supported. Once again, it should be remembered that we are not measuring whether the respondents are volunteering for the same cause across the two waves, simply whether they are volunteering at all. And it should be noted that we cannot be sure that church-related volunteering has the same retentive power among the rest of the sample, those who reported volunteering for more than one activity in the first wave. However, in an

**Table III.** Estimated Net Effects of Human Capital, Social Capital, Benefits, and Work Context on Commitment to Volunteering Among Those Volunteering for One Activity at T1 (Logistic Regression Estimates;  $N = 461$ )

	Coefficient <sup>a</sup> standard error	Odds ratio	Coefficient/ standard error	Odds ratio
<b>Human capital</b>				
Functional health change	-.090/.735	.360	-.085/.738	.378
Work hours change	.144/.242 <sup>b</sup>	1.736	.152/.245 <sup>b</sup>	1.793
Education	.044/.044	1.029	.042/.044	1.028
<b>Social capital</b>				
Informal social interaction	.063/.088	1.091	.051/.089	1.075
Attend meetings	.165/.066 <sup>b</sup>	1.174	.170/.067 <sup>b</sup>	1.179
Attend church	.038/.082	1.037	.018/.083	1.018
Children in household	.147/.099 <sup>b</sup>	1.233	.004/.118	1.006
<b>Benefits</b>				
Volunteering enjoyment	.081/.171	1.219	.093/.174	1.256
Volunteering satisfaction	-.111/.165	.771	-.139/.168	.722
Volunteer value	-.020/.169	.961	-.026/.170	.948
Volunteer hours	.250/.003 <sup>c</sup>	1.007	.283/.003 <sup>c</sup>	1.008
<b>Volunteer work context</b>				
Educational	.222/.358 <sup>b</sup>	.410	.285/.378 <sup>c</sup>	.316
Political	-.247/.534 <sup>c</sup>	.182	-.267/.535 <sup>d</sup>	.158
Senior citizen	-.253/.648 <sup>d</sup>	.098	-.276/.661 <sup>d</sup>	.079
Other	-.323/.355 <sup>d</sup>	.267	-.352/.364 <sup>d</sup>	.236
<b>Controls</b>				
Gender	.068/.236	1.275	.043/.241	1.164
Black	-.097/.372	.554	-.104/.377	.530
Age 35-44	.058/.290	1.275	.060/.295	1.287
45-54	.033/.333	1.179	.045/.337	1.246
55-64	.179/.391 <sup>b</sup>	2.551	.179/.394 <sup>b</sup>	2.555
65-74	.091/.434	1.695	.107/.440	1.867
75 and over	.018/.577	.853	.016/.583	.867
<b>Interaction term</b>				
Female × Children in HH	—	—	.238/.178 <sup>c</sup>	1.654
Intercept	-1.565		-1.247	
$X^2/df$	102.45/22		110.60/23	
Pseudo $R^2$	.181		.193	

<sup>a</sup> Standardized estimate.

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .05$ .

<sup>c</sup>  $p < .01$ .

<sup>d</sup>  $p < .001$ .

analysis not shown we did compare the retention rate for church-related volunteering among the one-volunteer group with the retention rate for church-related volunteering among the two-or-more group. This is a comparison of groups rather than individuals. Nevertheless, the same pattern was found: church-related volunteers once again show the highest rate of attachment.

## DISCUSSION

There is a chronic shortage of volunteer labor, the need for which is made more urgent by reductions in government services. The difficulty of recruiting volunteers places a premium on preventing attrition. However, the dynamics of volunteering are not well understood. Why do some make a career out of volunteering, while for others involvement is short-lived? In this study we have attempted to answer this question by drawing a parallel between volunteer work and "market work." We treat each as a kind of productive activity and assume that involvement in this activity will be a function partly of what people bring to it and partly of what they get out of it.

Our results justify this approach to some degree, but there are also obvious differences between the two kinds of work. In both cases, education is positively related to attachment. In the regular labor force this is a reflection of the superior, and more secure, jobs education provides. The mechanism in the case of volunteer labor is not clear, but there is plenty of evidence that more highly educated people get better volunteer jobs. There are also parallels in the effect of free time; in both cases, free time is an asset. Many people limit themselves or shift to part-time work because of other demands on their time, such as family care responsibilities. Similarly, volunteers cut back on their volunteer effort as their regular jobs become more time-consuming. The parallel breaks down when it comes to health. Functional impairment, which might impede most forms of market work, has no impact on attachment to volunteer work. In this case, being part of the volunteer labor force is different from being a member of the regular work force. In the latter, most work is quite structured and interdependent with the work of others. Employees are expected to keep hours, be punctual, clock in, and take sick leave if ill. Work occurs in clearly delineated blocks of time. Increasing functional impairment makes doing this kind of work quite difficult. Not only is volunteer work less time-consuming but volunteer agencies must be flexible with respect to time demands. Driving for the Red Cross might simply require a commitment of half a day a month, to be worked out at the volunteer's convenience. This kind of arrangement can more easily work around functional impairment. It is also more likely in the volunteer labor force that the worker chooses an activity to suit his or her level of ability and commitment. If health deteriorates, the volunteer simply alters his or her schedule or asks for a reassignment of function.

Social capital helps cement attachment to volunteering. While volunteers at T1 varied in the amount of formal and informal social interaction they reported (i.e., some volunteers reported low amounts), the rate of



attachment was highest among the more socially active. This finding is quite significant. It suggests that social integration performs two functions for volunteering. It serves to draw people into volunteering, providing information about opportunities, increasing the chances of being asked to contribute, and easing entry into the labor force if it is done in the company of one's friends. Once volunteering is underway, social ties change their function. Now they are important because they help legitimate the work, provide social support in times of work stress and, perhaps, raise the social costs of dropping out because this would mean losing contact with, or experiencing the disapproval of, one's acquaintances. Unfortunately, our measures of social capital are imperfect. They do not tell us how much of the informal interaction is with the same or different people (strong vs. weak ties) and they do not tell us how much of the interaction measured involves other volunteers.

Benefits offer a mixed picture. Market work emphasizes outcome benefits, principally pay for services rendered. However, it is well known that outcome benefits are not by themselves enough to attract people even to market work. People who enjoy their work, who think their work makes a difference, and who believe their efforts are of value are the least likely to drop out of the labor force. One of our measures of commitment—number of hours volunteered—does predict attachment to volunteering quite well. We do not discount the argument that the number of hours volunteered in the first wave simply indicates a deep-seated motivation to help others, a sense of altruism strong enough to survive the three years spanned by the study. However, we also suggest that the number of hours volunteered in the first wave acts as a commitment mechanism. People are inclined to think that, since they have already sacrificed a fair amount of time to charitable work, they have all the more reason to continue doing it, otherwise their previous efforts lose value (Becker, 1960). However, the three benefit variables failed to have the effect we predicted. While respondents did place (a somewhat exaggerated) money value on their time, this had no bearing on their attachment. Nor did enjoying the work. We offered an *ex post facto* interpretation of the negative coefficient for the satisfaction effect in which we emphasize the negative—it is the people least satisfied with what they have accomplished who are most likely to continue volunteering. Perhaps our parallel with “market work” is too facile. A job in sales and marketing might prove unsatisfactory if few sales are made, especially if commissions are involved. A “job” in fund raising for the local public radio station, on the other hand, does not necessarily discourage further effort if goals are not reached. People might simply be more determined to try again. We clearly need to discover more about the expectations with which volunteers approach their work, the rewards they

expect to get from it, and the effect both expectations and rewards have on their perseverance.

Finally, we have shown, in a very preliminary way, that the context in which volunteers work affects their attachment. Specifically, we have shown that the rate of attachment is highest among those who volunteer in connection with the church. Our regression models contain a measure of frequency of church attendance. The effect of work context on attachment is thus not simply a spurious measure of religiosity. People who volunteer in connection with the church will be more consistent volunteers regardless of their level of church attendance. We argue that the church offers the strongest institutionalized support for volunteer work. Much of the activity of a church outside of worship services is devoted to "mission" or "stewardship" work. What we do not know from these data is how much of this work is devoted primarily to church members themselves. Thus, a "volunteer" for the church can be part of the team that helps run the community soup kitchen, perhaps in conjunction with people from several other congregations. Here, the church is a springboard for volunteer work in the community at large. However, the "volunteer" can also help out during the Wednesday night Bible study class, or take a turn visiting parishioners who are too ill to attend worship services. Here, volunteering takes place "within" the church. There might be a link between this finding and an earlier longitudinal study of voluntary association memberships by Babchuk and Booth (1973). They found that the likelihood of voluntary association activity declining was least among those who belonged to fraternal orders in the first wave of the study, with veterans' organizations close behind. These types of organizations reward long-term membership and "generally do not need to influence persons outside the organizational boundaries to achieve their goals" (Knoke and Wood, 1981:31). In other words, churches make support for fellow members one aspect of belonging, volunteering is an integral part of membership, and membership is seen as a long-term commitment. Other kinds of volunteer work (e.g., better schools, political campaigns, hospital helpers) do not fuse belonging and volunteering in the same way.

## CONCLUSION

Our understanding of attachment to volunteer work can be improved if we treat it as a form of productive labor for which people need "credentials" and from which they need to derive benefits. Our study confirms the

contribution of human capital to maintaining a volunteer labor force but it leaves unanswered many questions about the linking mechanism. Are more highly educated people simply more cognizant of needs, always conscious of what is left undone, even as they move from one volunteer task to another? Are they simply granted more attractive volunteer jobs in which burnout and disillusionment are less likely? Our study also offers some support to an idea with a long history in sociological studies of nonprofit organizations—that people are attracted by intrinsic features of the work rather than extrinsic benefits, which are largely absent. However, our study could be improved by better measures of intrinsic rewards. And it remains unclear whether conventional measures of “job satisfaction” are applicable to the volunteer labor force. More studies are needed of what volunteers seek to derive from their volunteer work. Perhaps they do not expect to be “satisfied” with something that should, after all, demand sacrifice. Perhaps paying the price is part of the benefit. On the other hand, precisely because they are volunteers and not paid staff, they might have a stronger need for their work to “be appreciated” by those they are trying to help.

We were able to show that social interaction, variously measured, helps sustain volunteer work. The meaning of these measures, however, is far from clear. It makes sense for formal interaction (as we measure it) to predict attachment. If you stop participating in club meetings or attending church regularly this either causes, or is caused by, your detachment from volunteering. The connection to informal social interaction is more obscure. McPherson and his colleagues are able to measure ties within and without voluntary associations. They show that ties to people outside an organization can actually draw people from it. Our measure of informal social interaction is far too crude to permit this kind of test for we do not know how extensive these informal contacts are, and we do not know if the contacts are with fellow volunteers. On the other hand, it should be remembered that, unlike McPherson and his colleagues, we are not studying attachment to this or that organization but simply attachment to volunteer work of some kind. For this, social integration does seem important. Finally, the role of children in fostering volunteer work is widely recognized. *Very* young children are a detriment to volunteer work. New parents are among those least likely to volunteer. Parents of children between 5 and 18, however, are the most likely. The simplest interpretation of this finding is that people are “tied” to volunteer work by the social needs of their children. This finding is generalizable to other forms of community participation, such as church attendance, where children are also an important mediating influence.

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