

## **Social Constructs and Human Service: Managerial Sensemaking of Volunteer Motivation**

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*Managers of volunteers in human service interpret their job and experiences through a cognitive construct grounded in past interactions and experiences. This construct—sensemaking—then guides the managers' perceptions of subsequent interactions with peers, volunteers, and supervisors. Volunteers similarly make sense of their surroundings through cognitive constructions grounded in their own experiences. Unfortunately, managers and volunteers do not always make sense of their surroundings in the same way. Research has demonstrated that supervisors and paid employees may not necessarily agree in their perceptions of such issues as, for example, employee motivation. Such differences can lead to disagreements about the meaning of behaviors and the design of reward systems, eventually compromising organizational performance. In this study, sensemaking of volunteer motivation was assessed from the manager's perspective and compared with a previous study of volunteers themselves. Differences in understanding such a primary question as why volunteers are present can reasonably be expected to have an impact on organizational effectiveness. Interestingly, the predicted outcome of a different sensemaking schema was not supported in either the understanding of motivation or in the relative importance assigned to altruism. Additional attributes of volunteer managers were also considered to determine if sensemaking is driven by environmental factors such as exposure to volunteers, tenure as a volunteer manager, or social roles associated with gender constructs. These additional attributes were not found to significantly affect the process of attribution of altruistic motives.*

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**KEY WORDS:** volunteer motivation; sensemaking; volunteer management.

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## INTRODUCTION

The nonprofit sector in the United States continues to grow, accounting for more than \$100 billion of the United States' economy (O' Neill, 1989). The structure that makes this sector so distinctive is its extensive reliance on a volunteer-based workforce. Voluntary workers can be found in other sectors of the economy—primarily in education, healthcare, and human services in the public sector and among healthcare, higher education, and resort services in the private sector—but they are overwhelmingly evident in the nonprofit sector. Although there are many recent works in the field of nonprofit management (Drucker, 1990; Gelatt, 1992; Wolf, 1990) and much research in volunteer motivation (Anderson and Moore, 1978; Clary, Snyder, and Ridge, 1992; Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991), little of this work has been specifically concerned with addressing the interaction between nonprofit managers and the volunteers they recruit, train, and develop (Rothschadl, 1983).

Professional managers of volunteers have high expectations placed on them by two decidedly different constituencies: *their own supervisors* and *the volunteers with whom they interact*. Newcomers to these professional positions often experience great conflict as a result of these dual expectations. If they have come from the ranks of volunteers, they must shift their cognitive construct of their responsibilities or risk being ineffective in meeting organizational goals. For example, a volunteer youth activities director with the YMCA may become a paid employee, now having fiscal responsibility over youth activities. In this example, the primary focus of the manager must be to maintain fiscal performance to be successful in this new position. It is less likely that such employees will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the youth experience; volunteers would be responsible for that.

If managers are hired from outside the organization, it is likely that they hold more senior management positions and that their interactions with "front line" volunteers are limited. If fresh from college, such managers will be trying to make sense of their new organization and their position within it, while simultaneously defining themselves professionally. In any case, such managers are the most susceptible to being caught between two different cognitions of the organization: the social construct of the volunteers, and the social construct of the professionals.

## MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

People make sense of the world around them through a variety of processes. Through "sensemaking" (Weick, 1979, 1993), people build a cognitive understanding of the world in which they live. Weick (1979, p. 45) defines "sensemaking" as a mental process that has three steps: *selection*, *retention*, and *enactment*. Selection addresses peoples' limited ability to observe—people only observe a small

amount of what goes on around them, so they must select, either consciously or unconsciously, what they observe. Retention concerns the storage of these observations and peoples' ability to link them to relevant or irrelevant issues. Enactment is the process of acting on individuals' beliefs of why things are, usually in a manner that reinforces their beliefs, as built from the selected and retained images of what they observe.

When presented with an issue that does not fit their cognitive map, people will switch from automatic processing of their environmental influencers to conscious engagement until they have selected new observations that redefine their processes, or redefine their observations (Louis and Sutton, 1991). For example, a common sensemaking issue is the ability of women to do work that was formerly limited to men. Upon encountering their first female boss, employees who have had a long string of male supervisors must reconstruct their cognitive sensemaking to account for a new "type" of person who now wears the "boss" label.

Newcomers to an organization are thrown into a situation in which they are required to come to a quick understanding of their environment. The newcomer will be experiencing the change between the new and old setting, the internalized contrast between what they encounter and what their expectations were, and the surprise of what was not expected at all (Louis, 1980). The newcomer will need particular assistance in two cognitions: interpreting events in the new setting, and appreciating situation-specific interpretation schemata and cultural assumptions in the new environment (Louis, 1980). In such situations, the social constructs of the newcomer's work groups will be of paramount importance, as these will provide the strongest inputs for creating a new social construct (Fulk, 1993).

If the newcomer is managing volunteers in a nonprofit organization (or any other organization that uses volunteers), the peers of the newcomer will be other paid professionals in the organization; the majority of people with whom the newcomer works, however, may well be unpaid volunteers. Though working for the same organization or cause, professionals and volunteers may not necessarily share the same general cognitive construction of their work environment. More particularly, managers and volunteers may differ in their understanding of the *motivations* behind voluntary engagement with the nonprofit organization—and such differences in cognition can have a profound impact on organizational effectiveness.

In a study of workers and their supervisors, Kovach (1987) found that paid employees and their paid supervisors would attribute different motives to employees' behavior. Volunteer motivation was selected as the construct of interest in the current study because it is central to the success of volunteer managers. Because they have very little reward power over volunteers in the form of financial compensation, an understanding of volunteer involvement is central to the success of managers of volunteers and to the effectiveness of the organizations they manage.

Vroom (1964) suggests that motivation is a *multiplicative* function of *expectancy* (the perceived link between performance and rewards), *instrumentality* (the perceived link between effort and performance), and *valence* (the preference

one holds for the rewards tendered). Simple deductive reasoning allows for the conclusion that low values on any of these three constructs can result in radically diminished motivation.

In this paper we focus on the degree of perceptual consensus between non-profit managers and voluntary employees on the last of these three variables: valence. As managers and volunteers present their attributional schema as to motivations to volunteer, they reveal their preferences for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, or valence. Several researchers have identified what items would have value, or serve as rewards, for volunteers (c.f. Anderson and Moore, 1978; Clary *et al.*, 1992; Cnaan and Glen-Goldberg, 1991).

To explore this degree of perceptual consensus, we used the categorization method of Anderson and Moore (1978). Though their list of volunteer "motives" is dated when compared with the work of Cnaan and Glen-Goldberg (1991) and Clary *et al.* (1992), it is straightforward enough for volunteer managers to perform a simple ranking and allow us to use the sample of volunteers from Anderson and Moore (1978) as a comparison group. This was a study of opportunity, and it should be looked at as exploratory rather than authoritative. The point of this paper is to look at the consensus of sensemaking between volunteers and volunteer managers; the categories used are not seen as important an issue. For generalizability beyond this exploratory study, more modern typologies of volunteer motivation should be used.

## HYPOTHESES

Our primary research question, Do managers and volunteers ascribe the same motives to voluntary behavior?, will be explored through a comparison of managerial observations of volunteer motives with those of volunteers themselves. If managers and volunteers share similar attributions of motivation, then there is support for a model of common sensemaking of volunteer motivation. However, as a result of different environments, peer groups, and organizational expectations, it is anticipated that managers and volunteers do not make sense of their environment in the same way. This logic provides the first research hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1:** Managers of volunteers do not make sense of volunteers' motives to volunteer in a way that is consistent with that of the volunteers themselves.

This is our main hypothesis, which follows from the main focus of our paper. There are some nuances that we expect will have an effect on the results of any study, and we feel that we would be remiss if they were not addressed. These include a self-serving bias that may affect sensemaking, environmental factors in the organization that may affect sensemaking, and the social roles associated with gender that may affect sensemaking.

As Anderson and Moore's (1978) list is along a continuum of altruism and ego, a second hypothesis is concerned with the *direction* of the difference between

managerial attributions of volunteer motivation and volunteer self-reports of reasons for volunteering. The altruistic deception construct (Francies, 1983; Gidron, 1978; Smith, 1981) would suggest that volunteers (as well as all people in general) socially construct their volunteer work as having been motivated by altruistic purposes, regardless of any other actual reason for engaging in such activity. Smith's altruistic deception argument is that there is a social bias favoring altruistic justification for voluntary behavior over a more self-interested rationale. Because they are free from the self-perception bias of volunteers, it is expected that managers will attribute less altruism to the volunteers' motives than will the volunteers themselves.

**Hypothesis 2:** Managers of volunteers will attribute less altruistic motivations to volunteers than voluntary workers attribute to themselves.

The process of sensemaking should be affected by the environment of the individual, as these external cues provide one strong input to the cognitive process. For example, it can be expected that an individual who has been a volunteer but is now a manager would have a cognitive construct more similar to volunteers than a manager who has never been a volunteer. Likewise, a manager who has greater exposure to volunteers will make sense of volunteer motivation more similarly to volunteers than an individual with less exposure to volunteers. Thus our third hypothesis is as follows.

**Hypothesis 3:** Increased managerial time of exposure to volunteers relates positively to similar constructs of volunteer behavior between managers and volunteers.

Managers generally have a greater opportunity to interact with volunteers, and thereby a greater opportunity to understand the ways in which these volunteers make sense of their own motivation to serve the organization. Thus, it is expected that managers with greater job tenure (as differentiated from time of exposure to volunteers) will have more similar social constructs with volunteers than managers who have less tenure in their job.

**Hypothesis 4:** Increased managerial tenure in a volunteer management job relates positively to similar constructs of volunteer behavior between managers and volunteers.

In explicating social roles theory, Eagly and Crowley (1986) present a system of social constructs that places different gendered expectations on people of different sexes. Jacobs (1989) points out that there are a lifetime of influences that serve to reinforce such a construct. One of the reasons that women have been so well received as professionals in nonprofit organizations is that "charity" was historically seen as "women's work" (Reskin and Roos, 1990), and that such work met women's social role expectations to use their more "caring and empathetic nature to nurture" those in need, as compared with men, who are expected to be involved in "heroic

and chivalrous" altruistic social roles (Eagly and Crowley, 1986). As nonprofits have risen in financial stewardship, there has been a commensurate regendering of the role of professionals in nonprofits toward men (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

Social role theory also lends itself to studies of prosocial behavior and empathy. In such studies, researchers have attempted to determine what the basis is for the common perception that men and women perceive the world differently, and act accordingly. Prosocial behavior is of particular relevance for the study of volunteers, as volunteering is generally regarded as one dimension of socially desirable behavior.

Although the study of prosocial behavior began in developmental psychology, it quickly gained a following in social psychology because of the link with altruism and the assumption that personality traits could predict social behaviors such as altruism. This has not been found to be the case; Gergen, Gergen, and Meter (1972), in a clever multitrait, multiple volunteer opportunity study showed that helping was situation dependent and not trait (or sex) dependent. Recent findings in prosocial behavior concur that there are no consistent sex or gender role differences in helping behavior (Miller, Bernzweig, Eisenberg, and Fabes, 1991), though there might be a slight difference in cognitive structures leading to the helping behavior (Mills, Pedersen, and Grusec, 1989), and that social roles are a large determinant of behavior (Eagly and Wood, 1991). This leads to our final hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 5:** Male and female managers of volunteers make sense of volunteers' motives similarly.

## METHODS

This exploratory study is grounded in research conducted by Anderson and Moore (1978) on the reasons volunteers give for volunteering. The major difference in the current research method is that written surveys were mailed to *managers* of volunteers, rather than to the volunteers *themselves*. The rationale for this research design is to allow for conclusions relating to whether or not managers make sense of volunteer motivation in the same way volunteers themselves do.

### Sample

The current study uses data collected from managers of volunteers across several agencies by means of a written survey instrument. Data from the survey were analyzed and compared with findings from the work of Anderson and Moore (1978). Anderson and Moore obtained their list of agencies from 49 branches of the Canadian Volunteer Bureau, the largest nonprofit umbrella agency in Canada. The survey list for the present study was obtained from the United Way, the largest nonprofit umbrella agency in the United States.

This research used a stratified random sample of human service agencies in San Diego County. The sample of human service agencies was identified through *Directions* (United Way of San Diego County, 1991), the human service directory of San Diego County. This directory includes United Way member agencies, nonmember nonprofit agencies, and public sector agencies. This sample selection technique mirrors Anderson and Moore's use of a random sample of volunteer agencies obtained through local volunteer bureaus. The agencies in the current study were categorized according to "primary services provided" as (a) Adult Care Services, (b) Community Enhancement, (c) Disabled Services, (d) Health Services, (e) Human Dignity and Rights, (f) Human Services, and (g) Youth Services (United Way, 1991).

### Survey Measures and Research Procedures

Two surveys were mailed to each executive director of 100 human service agencies. Each executive director was requested to distribute the survey to two entry-level managers (defined as an entry-level job position with that agency) who currently managed volunteers for the agency. The employees were requested not to speak with others about their answers until they had completed and returned the survey. A self-addressed stamped envelope accompanied each survey. Follow-up phone calls were made to all agencies to request participation by the agency. Participating agencies were not tracked, thereby ensuring the anonymity of responses.

The actual survey had 56 variables of interest and was divided into four sections. The first section included questions to confirm whether the respondents did indeed manage volunteers and, if so, the number of volunteers managed. The survey also included a calculation for the number of volunteers that the managers interacted with on a weekly basis.

The second section concerned the volunteers supervised by the managers. The first part of this section addressed the managers' perceptions of what motivates volunteers. Two approaches were used. The first approach was based on a Likert scale developed by Anderson and Moore (1978). For each of 10 different attributes, managers were asked to rate the strength of a variety of motivations to volunteer. These motives can be found in Table I. The second approach was an interval-level scale based on the allocation of percentage points to each of the 10 attributes developed by Anderson and Moore; the relevant question asked managers, "What do you see as the primary motives of your volunteers?" The Likert allocation approach allowed for a comparison of the current study's results with Anderson and Moore's original work (1978); the percentage scale measure was employed as a secondary method confirmatory data measure. Additional space was provided for an open response wherein the managers could add unlisted motivations.

**Table I. More and Less Altruistic Motives Classification**

More Altruistic	Less Altruistic
Help others	Companionship
Improve the community	Feel useful and needed
	Friends (who volunteer in agency)
	Gain work-related experience
	Meet people
	Occupy spare time
	Personal development
	Self-fulfillment

**Table II. Volunteer Characteristics**

Parameter	Weighted Responses (%)	National Data (%)
Age (in years)		
1-17	2.02	10.61
18-24	17.18	8.78
25-29	13.82	9.92
30-34	15.26	10.82
35-39	15.17	10.92
40-44	10.82	11.02
45-49	6.53	11.22
50-54	3.93	8.98
55-59	4.36	9.18
60+	10.74	7.55
Degree		
None	3.26	—
Grade school	8.64	18.10
High school	22.29	21.90
Some college	—	29.05
Associate	5.18	—
Bachelors or more	—	30.95
Bachelors	24.61	—
Professional	27.63	—
Masters	4.68	—
Doctorate	4.98	—
Employment <sup>a</sup>		
Full time	66.09	52.69
Part time or unemployed	33.91	47.31
Gender		
Female	57.46	53.13
Male	42.54	46.87

*Note.* Some characteristics do not total to 100% as a result of rounding; all national data are from Hodgkinson *et al.* (1992); — indicates missing data.

<sup>a</sup>For employment, Hodgkinson *et al.* (1992) report that 52.69% of all volunteers are working full time, and the remainder are either unemployed or working part time. We collected both working (72%) and not working (28%), and full time (92%) and part time (8%) of those working.



Table III. Agency Characteristics

Field of Service (total)	Study Participants (%)	San Diego County (%)	Economic Sector	United Way Membership
Adult Care Services (5/189)	9.4	7.4	Private, for-profit (0)—0.0%	Members (27)—50.9%
Community Enhancement (12/563)	22.6	22.2	Private, non-profit (47)—88.7%	Not members (26)—49.1%
Disabled Services (2/232)	3.8	9.2	Public, governmental (6)—11.3%	
Health Services (15/855)	28.3	33.7		
Human Dignity and Rights (1/119)	1.9	4.7		
Youth Services (8/297)	15.1	11.7		

The second part of this section concerned demographic information relating to the volunteers who serve the subject agency. Managers were asked to include the ages and gender of the volunteers, the percentage of volunteers who have worked full time, the percentage of volunteers who are currently otherwise employed, and the educational level of the volunteers. This information allowed for a comparison of the sample volunteer demographic profile with the demographic profile of U.S. volunteers as contained in *Dimensions of the Independent Sector* (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Toppe, and Noga, 1992), and it was therefore a tool for assessing the representiveness of the sample respondents. Table II contains summary data for volunteer characteristics.

The third section dealt with agency characteristics. The initial question asked for identification of the type of agency—either public, nonprofit, or private. The final question in this section asked the area of service upon which the agency concentrated; these categories were consistent with the “types of agencies” listed in *Directions* (United Way, 1991). An “other” category and explanation blank were included along with the seven agency categories. If “other” was marked, the category for the agency was identified through the description listed in the explanation blank and was counted in one of the seven main categories. Table III contains summary data for agency characteristics.

The fourth and final section included items designed to gather general information about the respondents themselves. The data from this section were used to determine a general demographic profile of the managers, including their amount of exposure to volunteers, their tenure in their current job, and their gender. Table IV contains summary data for respondent characteristics.

Table IV. Respondent Characteristics

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Highest Educ. Achievement <sup>a</sup>	Sex
Years as prof. mgr. of volunteers	4.7	3.8	No degree (1)—2%	Female (34)—64%
Years in current position	4.0	4.0	High school diploma (7)—13%	Male (19)—36%
Age	38.9	10.0	Associates degree (10)—19%	
			Bachelors degree (14)—26%	
			Professional degree (1)—2%	
			Masters degree (14)—26%	
			Doctorate (6)—11%	

<sup>a</sup>Does not add to 100% as a result of rounding.

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data were coded and then analyzed. To ensure that the survey was representative of voluntary workers in general, the managerial reporting of volunteer demographics was weighted by the number of volunteers in the agency and then compared with national volunteer demographics. To verify that the data were representative of the agencies selected, frequency counts were made of the agency's primary area of service and cross-tabulated with the number of listings for each category in *Directions* (United Way, 1991). The chi-square test of independence, with two rows and seven columns, indicated that the sample was representative of the population. Table III indicates the areas of service for both the sample as well as the population.

For Hypotheses 1 and 2, the 10 motives were divided into "More Altruistic" and "Less Altruistic" categories (see Table I). Spearman's rho was used to compare the ranking of responses of managers with those of volunteers in Anderson and Moore's research. For Hypotheses 3–5, the omnibus null hypothesis *F* test was used to determine significant differences.

### RESULTS

Over a period of 22 days, a total of 62 surveys were returned. Of these, nine were from agencies informing the researcher that they did not utilize voluntary labor. Seven agencies were no longer performing service (they had ceased to exist since the publication of the agency directory) and their mail was returned to the sender. In addition, one reply envelope was returned empty and as such no data were recorded. This leads to a total of 53 usable surveys returned out of a possible 168, or a 31.5% response rate.

#### Volunteer Demographics

In the interest of generalizability, the volunteer demographic data were weighted by the number of volunteers in the agency as reported by the managers to

see if the volunteers with whom the managers worked were representative of volunteers in the U.S. in general. With the use of the chi-squared test of independence, it was determined that the gender and ages of the volunteers reflect those of volunteers in general (Hodgkinson *et al.*, 1992), whereas academic degree and work status did not (refer to Table II). Demographic data of volunteers are not available for the Anderson and Moore (1978) study, but their assumptions include a sample representative of volunteers as a whole.

The overeducation of volunteers in the San Diego area compared with the Hodgkinson *et al.* (1992) national survey could be explained in any of a number of ways. The most likely explanation is that because of the higher technological nature of most of the industry in San Diego, as well as an expansive postsecondary public education system and a large body of military personnel holding tuition reimbursement opportunities, there are a greater number of higher degrees per capita in California than in the nation as a whole (United States Bureau of the Census, 1991).

The geographic location of the sample could similarly skew the work data. Because of the higher costs of living in California (for example, home prices) relative to the rest of the U.S., it is more common for two spouses to work than for only one to work (United States Bureau of the Census, 1991). Therefore, proportionally more people in this state are employed full time than in other parts of the country. There is no theoretical rationale for arguing that the lack of representativeness systematically biases the research findings.

**Hypothesis 1:** Managers of volunteers do not make sense of volunteers' motives to volunteer in a way consistent with that of the volunteers themselves.

A Likert scale analysis revealed that managers and volunteers make sense of volunteer motivation in a similar fashion. Anderson and Moore's (1978) ranking of volunteers' motivation is very similar to the managers' perceptions on the Likert scale items used within the current research: the top five motivations are both the same and similarly ranked (see Table V). Managers attribute the same set of

Table V. Rank Ordering of Likert Scale Motivation to Anderson and Moore

Motive	Volunteers (Anderson and Moore, 1978)	Managers (Likert Scale)
Help others	1	1
Feel useful and needed	2	2
Self-fulfillment	3	3
Improve the community	5	4
Personal development	4	5
Gain work-related experience	8	6
Meet people	7	7
Companionship	10	8
Occupy spare time	6	9
Friends	9	10

Table VI. Rank Ordering of Percentage Scale Motivation to Anderson and Moore

Motive	Volunteers (%) (Anderson and Moore, 1978) <sup>a</sup>	Managers (%) (Percentage Scale)
Feel useful and needed	15.85	19.67
Help others	22.08	18.87
Gain work-related experience	6.55	15.44
Self-fulfillment	12.31	10.49
Personal development	10.07	9.47
Improve the community	10.02	9.16
Companionship	2.01	5.38
Meet people	6.73	4.06
Occupy spare time	9.60	3.79
Friends (who volunteer in agency)	3.96	2.93

<sup>a</sup>Anderson and Moore's percentages are derived from their cumulative motive frequency counts, divided by the sum of responses.

motivations to volunteer that the volunteers have already endorsed in Anderson and Moore's work (the Spearman's rho for the correlation of the two lists is 0.88, while the alpha cutoff at 1% is 0.79). Only three motives were listed by respondents in the open-forum response area of section two on the survey: two statements of "friends work there" were included into the "friends" category, and one statement of "something to do" was categorized into "occupy spare time."

On the interval-level scale measure, the mean scores of "help other people" and "improve the community" are high—both rated in the upper half of the list. It is also apparent that both "feel useful and needed" and "gain work-related experience" are stronger motives according to managers than to the volunteers themselves, with "feel useful and needed" accounting for 19.67% of the managers' attribution, compared with 15.85% for the volunteers (see Table VI). "Gain work-related experience" was reported as a motivation to volunteer by 15.44% of the managers, whereas only 6.55% of the volunteers indicated this to be a motivation for their volunteering. However, these initial conclusions are not significant at the 5% alpha level. The Spearman's rho correlation of the two lists is 0.70, with the significance cutoff at 0.65. Hypothesis 1 is therefore *rejected*—managers and volunteers do not hold significantly different social cognitions in their understanding of volunteers' motives to volunteer.

**Hypothesis 2:** Managers of volunteers will attribute less altruistic motivations to volunteers than voluntary workers attribute to themselves.

From the findings related to Hypothesis 1, managers do not appear to attribute less altruistic motives to volunteers than volunteers do to themselves; neither the Likert scale measures nor the percentage scale measures are significantly different from the findings of Anderson and Moore.

The overall rankings of volunteer motives in the current study and the work of Anderson and Moore are virtually identical, with statistical significance established

at the 5% alpha level. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the attributions of volunteer motivation made by managers and volunteers themselves. This indicates that the self-perception bias of volunteers is not significant if operational at all, and that altruism is recognized in their respective cognitions by both volunteers and their professional managers as playing a vital role in human volunteer motivation. Hypothesis 2 is *rejected*.

**Hypotheses 3 and 4:** Increased managerial time of exposure to volunteers relates positively to similar constructs of volunteer behavior between managers and volunteers. Increased managerial tenure in a volunteer management job relates positively to similar constructs of volunteer behavior between managers and volunteers.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 were designed to test the impact of managerial exposure to volunteers and job tenure upon sensemaking. A one-way analysis of variance was executed to determine if either volunteer exposure or tenure affected motivational attributions at a significant level. The  $F$  for volunteer exposure was calculated at 1.12, and the  $F$  for job tenure was calculated at 0.17, but neither exceeded the critical  $F$  level of 4.00 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 1, 60$ ). The statistical nonsignificance of these findings points to a lack of impact of volunteer exposure and job tenure on social constructs concerning volunteers' motivations by the managers surveyed, and hence Hypotheses 3 and 4 are *rejected*.

**Hypothesis 5:** Male and female managers of volunteers make sense of volunteers motives similarly.

A one-way analysis of variance was employed to determine if there was a significant difference between male and female responses.  $F$  was calculated at 1.11, but the cutoff, or minimum  $F$  level, is 4.00 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 1, 60$ ), and 4.08 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 1, 40$ ). With 53 degrees of freedom, the data fell between these two values but did not meet either cutoff. This would support the finding that men and women managers of volunteers do not significantly differ in how they attribute motives to volunteers. As with the Likert scale measure, findings related to the percentage scale measure were statistically nonsignificant.

In addition, both age and education level were examined to determine if the sample were systematically biased, as Eisenberg (1991) has pointed out such bias could mask or create gender effects. A one-way analysis of variance was executed to determine if either age or education level significantly affected the final social construct. The  $F$  for age was computed at 2.75, and the  $F$  for education level was calculated at 1.48, but neither exceeded the critical  $F$  level of 4.00 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 1, 60$ ). The lack of impact of age and education level on managerial attributions about volunteers' motives points to at best a weak link among these variables, social constructs, and sensemaking about other people. Hypothesis 5 is *rejected*.

### Summary of Findings

The findings of the current study indicate that managers tend to make sense of volunteer motivation in the same way that volunteers do. The similarity in ordinal ranking between volunteer responses in Anderson and Moore's (1978) work and managerial responses in the current study on the Likert scale and percentage scale measures points to a general consensus on the question of why volunteers volunteer across these two groups. More particularly, managers and volunteers share a common sense of the role of altruism in volunteer motivation. Furthermore, neither extent of exposure to volunteers, job tenure, nor gender significantly affect managers' attributions as they relate to volunteer motivations.

### CONCLUSIONS

In order to be effective, managers must possess an accurate understanding of their employees' motivations to work. This is equally true whether supervising paid or volunteer workers. The findings of the current study provide some evidence that managers of volunteers generally hold such reliable assessments of employee motivations. This is especially important, as it contradicts earlier findings regarding the relationship of managers and paid employees (Kovach, 1987). Although the present study was exploratory in nature, the lack of a finding consistent with Kovach is especially telling, because there were many issues that should have biased this study to create differences that were not found. The two groups compared—aside from the contrast of volunteers and managers of volunteers—diverged in time (a period of almost 20 years), and culture (Canada and the United States). In those 20 years there has been a reduction of women in the volunteer workforce (beginning in 1974), and an increase in older volunteers (Hodgkinson *et al.*, 1992). In terms of national culture, volunteerism is more idealized in the United States than in Canada (Pancer and Pratt, 1999), and it is considered a part of the national identity of many Americans. Canadian national culture has moved toward that of the U.S. in recent years as a result of the influence of American-based multinational companies (Frankman, 1998), but there is no reason to expect that this change would have shown up in this study. It may be that Kovach's findings are appropriate for managers of paid employees, but that this is not generalizable to volunteer workers. However, there is no reason to expect that a supervisor would have a better sense of volunteer motives over paid employees.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the current study is to offer some assurance to nonprofit managers that their intuitions about volunteer motivation can be relied on as a basis for restructuring volunteer incentive programs. Tailoring job rewards as directly as possible to high-valence volunteer preferences would likely lead to better volunteer–assignment fit, and thereby reduce both turnover and burnout as well as increase volunteer work satisfaction (Cherrington, Reitz, and

Scott, 1971). For example, a manager of volunteers could develop an innovative volunteer recognition plan around the significance of the volunteers' work in light of the importance volunteers place upon "feeling useful and needed."

Although it is necessary for managers to understand what values drive volunteers to engage themselves with nonprofit organizations, this knowledge is not sufficient to ensure managerial effectiveness. As noted previously, motivation is a function not only of the desire for particular rewards—a matter that managers seem to have some accurate sense about where their volunteers are concerned—but of expectancy and instrumentality as well (Vroom, 1964). In addition to the accuracy of their perceptions of volunteer motivations, managers must seek to ensure that volunteers both hold the reasonable expectation that their efforts will lead to increased performance and see a link between their volunteer performance and the rewards they desire. Although managers may well have one piece of the volunteer motivation puzzle clearly in hand—they have an accurate "read" of what volunteers seek from their volunteer engagement—if there are areas left for improvement, these will have to do with a clearer specification of the effort-to-performance and performance-to-reward linkages. Central to this task is the establishment of unambiguous performance expectations for volunteers.

#### Directions for Further Research

Perhaps the greatest research design limitation of the current study is that the perceptions of volunteers from a study conducted a number of years ago in Canada were compared with the perceptions of managers from a study conducted quite recently in the United States. This is a deficiency to the extent that one can reasonably expect such perceptions of motivations to volunteer to have shifted over time and vary from one geographic area to another. However, the researchers engaged in the current study see no basis for making either assumption; Anderson and Moore (1978) generalized motives of volunteers from Canada to the United States. Nonetheless, it is recommended that future research pair data from volunteers directly with the managers for whom they work. Additionally, the sample should be expanded to include a greater number of managers in a larger population to verify that the current findings are not limited to volunteer managers in San Diego County. The dominant model of volunteer motives appears to be the Volunteer Function Inventory (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, and Miene, 1998), which has an established measure for the volunteers themselves, but not for the volunteer managers to rate their volunteers—this will need to be developed to use this model. Finally, one deficiency discovered in the literature review was that there are no published demographic studies of volunteer managers *themselves* aside from membership figures for such organizations as the Association of Volunteer Administrators based in Richmond, Virginia. Anderson and Moore (1974) have already conducted a study comparing volunteers between the two countries;

studies of the attributes—both traits and skills—of successful volunteer managers within effective nonprofit institutions would be most illuminating. Such studies could easily employ either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies; the best studies would probably combine both into a single research design.

It has been noted that the accuracy of managerial perceptions of volunteer motivations is not sufficient to ensure a highly innervated volunteer workforce. Inadequate research attention has been given to the perceptions of volunteers regarding the links between their efforts and their contribution to organizational well-being, or between their performance and achievement of desired outcomes. Both these constructs beg for further inquiry. More particularly, it would be useful for nonprofit managers to apprehend the extent to which precise specification and evaluation of volunteer performance affects volunteer motivation. Are there differences in volunteer motivation—and the objective indicators of same—between nonprofit organizations that clearly articulate their expectations of volunteer performance, versus those nonprofits that neither specify nor evaluate volunteer performance? Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) would imply the answer to this question is yes; empirical verification of this premise would prove a most fruitful direction for future research into the motivational schema of volunteer workers.

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