

Is Volunteering Work, Prosocial
Behavior, or Leisure?
An Empirical Study

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Executive Summary

Three paradigms of volunteerism are evident in the literature. Volunteering is described as ‘work,’ as a prosocial activity, and a leisure activity. This paper tests the validity of each of these models in a longitudinal analysis of nationally representative survey data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) dataset. The data provided weak support for volunteering as work, but support was found for volunteering as prosocial behavior and volunteering as a leisure activity. The strongest results, however, related to the continuity of volunteering over time, and these results provide support for socioemotional selectivity and role identity theories of volunteering.

Introduction

Volunteering - defined as freely choosing to work without payment for a community, charitable or religious organization - would appear to be a fairly straightforward activity. However, the traditional definition no longer fully captures the diverse ways that the term 'volunteering' is used in the U.S.¹ Over the last several decades, the contexts in which unpaid work occurs have changed; volunteering is not always unpaid; its motivations, dimensions and consequences are far more complex than altruism (often likened to volunteering); and it is not always truly voluntary. The context of volunteer work is quite broad. Numerous volunteers work for government agencies. A growing army of volunteers, labeled 'interns,' work for corporations. Calling them interns, rather than volunteers, reframes their role. Many volunteers receive stipends or another form of 'payment' such as tuition reimbursement which is done in Americorps. Recently, nonprofit organizations and government agencies have begun to recruit retirees to work for wages below the market value of their labor, defined as salaries, not stipends, leading to the creation of what would seem to be an oxymoron: paid volunteer work (Deutsch, 2007). Considerable research documents that volunteering is often not so freely chosen; instead it is often done in response to the expectations and even the demands of employers, family and friends (Houghland & Shepard, 1985).

Just as its nature has become increasingly complex, the motivations and determinants of volunteering are varied (Ross, 1954; Wilensky, 1961a, 1961b; Wilson, 2000). People volunteer in a broad array of settings and do many different types of 'work.' They become involved for a host of altruistic, religious, social and career-related reasons. What is perhaps most widely accepted idea about volunteering is that it is 'work.' Whether totally unpaid or compensated at an amount below its market value (often as a stipend to underwrite work expenses), volunteering is likened to a 'job' and a sequence of volunteer involvements, according to Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1988), can operate as a 'career' albeit an 'invisible' one.

Despite the varied views on the precise nature of volunteering, many scholars and volunteer coordinators conceptualize volunteering as 'work.' This is especially true when the volunteer patterns of older people, particularly retired persons, are considered. What is the connection between employment and volunteering? Is volunteering 'work' or something much more varied? A number of studies have documented the link between volunteer 'work' and paid work (Wilson & Musick, 1997a). One of the strongest influences on patterns of volunteer participation is human capital, which also influences access to employment. Better educated people more often volunteer; and individuals with limited job skills are less often involved in volunteering than managers and professionals. People with higher levels of human capital may step forward to volunteer because they have had past success in efforts to become involved, but also because organizations tend to reach out more often or are more receptive to better educated and more highly skilled volunteers (Musick & Wilson, 2008).

This paper synthesizes recent research on volunteering. It presents three paradigms of volunteerism: as work, as prosocial behavior, and as a leisure activity. After describing each paradigm, it draws on empirical data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) survey to test the adequacy of each model in predicting volunteerism by elders.

Older persons are an ideal group for understanding the relationship between work and volunteering. First, when they volunteer they are less likely to be motivated by the child and family related reasons that lead to volunteering among younger people. In that sense, then, their involvement might be more altruistic, and less constrained by social expectations, since a great deal of volunteering earlier in the life cycle involves ‘giving back’ or contributing to organizations and activities that benefit an individual and the members of his or her family. Second, older people are a more varied group in terms of their employment status. Unlike younger people, for whom long term unemployment might be due to other obligations like family commitments, or low levels of human capital making them undesirable employees, this age group includes individuals with varied levels of human capital who are working full time, working part-time, retired and unemployed.

The paper concludes that there is little support for the idea that volunteering is a work substitute in later life. More support is found for models that describe volunteering as prosocial behavior or active, meaningful leisure. However, none of these three models is highly predictive by itself. We therefore developed another model which combines elements of the three paradigms, and added a fourth element, the continuity of volunteering over time. As continuity predicts volunteering better than the other three models combined, we explore the meaning of this finding from the standpoint of socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1992) and role identity theory (Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999).

Review of the Literature

Three paradigms of volunteering are evident in the empirical, theoretical and management discussions of volunteerism. The first is that volunteering is ‘work.’ Both the activities themselves are work, and various occupational characteristics influence the propensity to volunteer. A second literature describes volunteering as one type of prosocial behavior, a form of civic and political engagement, or evidence of individuals’ connection to social networks and voluntary associations that involve altruism and reciprocity. A third strand of research focuses on how volunteering reflects lifestyle and taste, and considers volunteering to be one facet of an active and engaged lifestyle.

Volunteering as Work

While the coupling of ‘volunteer’ with the concept of ‘work’ is relatively recent (Karl, 1984), in the public mind and in the views of many scholars,

volunteering is 'work.' Tilly and Tilly (1998), for example, classify it as one of four types of work along with paid labor in the formal economy, work in the informal economy, and household labor. Wilson and Musick (1997a: 266) "assume that volunteering is work, much like any other kind of work."

The clearest way that volunteering is 'work' is that it involves the donation of time which has a monetary value and would require paying a staff member were the tasks not done by a volunteer. In 2008, the value of the average volunteer's time was \$20.25 per hour (Independent Sector, 2008). Although individual organizations tend not to publicize the value of the time donated by volunteers, the aggregate value for the nonprofit sector as a whole has been calculated and widely publicized. The most recent national estimate, for 2001, was \$239 billion, the equivalent of more than 9 million full-time employees (Independent Sector, 2001).

Even though volunteering has an economic value, it is not clear how economic factors influence the decision to work for free. Since there is a trade off between time spent working for pay and time spent working for free, then people with lower wages would be expected to volunteer more than people who earn higher wages. This is generally not the case. Freeman (1997:S141) points out that "...standard labor supply substitution behavior, which predicts that people will volunteer less when the opportunity cost of time (wages) is high - explains only a minor part of differences in volunteer activity among individuals with similar demographic characteristics." Several recent surveys point to important exceptions. Retirement more often leads to beginning to volunteer for people with lower preretirement incomes than for those whose incomes were higher while they were working (Moen & Fields, 2002).

There is also a different calculus for people who earn a salary in contrast to those earning an hourly wage. DeVoe and Pfeffer (2007:783), using a combination of survey and experimental methods, found that "being paid by the hour almost inevitably makes salient an economic frame for the evaluation of time. Being compensated on an hourly basis predisposes people to assess how they spend their time in terms of the monetary returns from their decisions." They found that workers who are paid by the hour are less often involved in volunteer work than those who are paid a salary. In a second study, they found that when they asked salaried employees to determine "their implicit hourly wage rate, they were less willing to volunteer their time without remuneration" (DeVoe & Pfeffer, 794).

Perhaps the most compelling evidence that volunteering is 'work' is the universal finding that socio-economic indicators, education and occupation, are powerful predictors of whether or not individuals volunteer. One explanation is that there is 'spillover' from a person's occupation to volunteering. Individuals bring both human and cultural capital – job skills, initiative, and knowledge about how to successfully handle and to navigate a work environment – to volunteer work (Wilson & Musick, 1997b).

Increasingly, volunteering has become a way to build human capital. The expansion of service learning programs is not only designed to build citizenship, but to give young people exposure to the world of work. Some graduate

programs require volunteer work as a precondition for acceptance. This experience is especially important for individuals who lack work experience but it is of little significance for older people.

Volunteering might also complement paid work, as some individuals might compensate for satisfactions not found in their paid jobs in volunteer work (Wilensky, 1961a). Involvement in volunteer work might be beneficial in another way, as a way of expanding social networks which, in turn, might lead to employment or business contacts. Although volunteer rates are higher for people with flexible work schedules, it is also quite curious that people with second jobs are more likely to volunteer than people with one job (Freeman, 1997). This finding is especially surprising in light of the fact that nonvolunteers most often cite a lack of time as the major reason for not being involved in volunteer work (Sundeen, 2007). Job stability also increases the probability of volunteering: people with stable work histories more often volunteer than those who are involved in a “disorderly” sequence of jobs (Wilensky, 1961b; Rotolo & Wilson, 2003).

Occupational status and work stability are important as selection factors. Musick and Wilson (2008) point out that people with higher levels of human capital and other desirable characteristics are more likely to volunteer because they are more often asked to volunteer. The process of volunteering involves a combination of two individual effects: individuals choose to volunteer, but organizations also recruit desirable volunteers and screen out individuals who might not be suitable. Individuals with higher levels of human and cultural capital are probably more likely to be asked to volunteer. In fact, numerous surveys point out that an overwhelming proportion of volunteers do not seek out activities on their own but, instead, are asked to volunteer (Freeman, 1997). Even before the current era of corporate volunteer programs involving systematic efforts to engage employees, Ross (1954) pointed out that becoming involved in communal work was beneficial to a person’s business career. Just as people moved up a paid career ladder, Ross noted that people become involved in increasingly prestigious and responsible volunteer jobs and that “philanthropic activity now serves as a means by which the modern businessman can strengthen his position in a highly competitive world by taking over as many philanthropic positions as possible” (Ross 1954:280).

Engaging volunteers with public visibility and prestige gives nonprofit organizations greater legitimacy and broadens support. This is not only the case for businessmen, but for their wives and other members of their families. The Gay Men’s Health Crisis, for example, an AIDS organization in New York City whose very name associated it with a particular social group, benefited from the volunteer participation of elite white women married to influential and visible businessmen. Having such women as volunteers linked the organization to the city’s financial and political elite and gave it legitimacy by linking it to a serving a broader constituency, not just to the gay community (Chambré, 2006).

A final issue is whether volunteering serves as a ‘work substitute.’ Since the 1960’s, the two most important changes in patterns of volunteerism in the

US are the increased participation by older persons (Chambré, 1993) and the decreased time commitment of women, particularly women who are in the labor force (Tiehen, 2000; Rotolo & Wilson, 2007). In both cases, it would seem as if the volunteering as 'work' paradigm could explain these changes since older persons are more often involved in volunteering because they are retired. Women's participation has declined because they have less free time because of their involvement in work. However, the trade off between paid and volunteer work is not straightforward. Among older persons, volunteer participation is higher among those who continue to work than for homemakers and retirees regardless of age (Chambré, 1987). Thus, lifecycle factors are important in determining women's involvement, not simply their work status.

While it is indeed the case that for women with children, volunteer commitment is higher among women without paid employment (Rotolo & Wilson, 2007), this is likely to occur because of social obligations related to children's activities, or women's decisions about how to construct their lives in the absence of the time demands of a job. Three qualitative discussions of the meaning of volunteer work for elite women find no support for the idea that it is an unpaid job. In a study of Smith College graduates, Wendy Kaminer (1984: 197) pointed out that "For these women, volunteering is simply something 'extra': it supplements instead of substituting for a paid job." Similarly, Daniels' (1988:9) investigation of upper class women points out that "they do the work because they enjoy it, not because they have to." Markham and Bonjean's (1996) study of women volunteers for a large international women's organization revealed that there was no difference in the motivations of employed women and those who were not in a paid job.

The impact of withdrawing from the labor force on a person's likelihood of volunteering is also not straightforward. Numerous studies have shown that people who are out of the labor force, either because they are not employed or are retired, are less often involved in volunteering than those who are working. To some extent, this is due to other factors like advanced age and poor health. However, even when age and health are introduced as controls, it is still true that working less does not lead people to volunteer more. Once a person does volunteer, however, the amount of time devoted to unpaid work is greater when they work part time or they are retired than if they are work on a full time basis (Chambré, 1984, 1987; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Thus, the tendency to volunteer or not is not simply related to having more time. There is also no support for the idea that volunteering tends to be more common when people retire and claim that they miss working. In fact, among retirees, involvement in volunteering is more common for those who miss working less. Data from a 1981 national survey of older persons revealed that "people who miss the structure imposed by work, the interpersonal relationships emerging in a work setting, the feeling of being useful, and the respect derived from working actually volunteered less often than people who indicated they did not miss these things" (Chambré, 1987:29).

Volunteering as Prosocial Behavior

A second paradigm focuses on volunteering as constitutive of prosocial behavior - altruism, social reciprocity and civic engagement (Penner, Dovidio, et. al., 2005). In fact, Musick and Wilson (2008:3) begin their recent book on volunteering with the statement, "Volunteering is a form of altruistic behavior." The association between volunteering and altruism is understandable in light of the fact that a great deal of volunteering involves providing direct service to other people, including comforting the needy and the sick (Chambré, 1995). Socialization into prosocial attitudes has both short term and long term effects on involvement in volunteering (Janoski, Musick & Wilson, 1998). The strong link between religion and volunteering would seem to underscore the fact that it is prosocial behavior: philanthropic behavior generally and volunteering in particular are more common for people who report that they are actively involved in religious organizations and attend services on a regular basis (Hodgkinson, Weitzman and Kirsch, 1990; Wilson & Janoski, 1995)

Clearly, a desire to help others without payment is critical to doing any form of volunteer work. Yet, a combination of altruism and self interest is common (Gidron, 1983; Van Til, 1985). Midlarsky (1991) points out that in the process of helping other people, individuals themselves benefit. This view was commonly expressed by AIDS volunteers in the late 1980's and early 1990's, who often said that they 'got' more than they 'gave' and often found volunteering not only beneficial but transformative (Chambré, 1995, 2006).

Volunteering is prosocial but not altogether devoid of personal benefit. People become involved in organizations and social causes connected to their lives. Numerous scholars point out that volunteer work is closely related to the life cycle: people move into and out of voluntary associations and volunteer work at various stages in their lives in ways that are connected to other aspects of their lives. Teenagers are involved in youth organizations, and young parents participate in Little League, PTAs and other child-related activities (Knoke & Thomson, 1977; Rotolo, 2000).

As one facet of what scholars label 'civic engagement,' volunteering also has an important role in creating civil society (Putnam, 2000). This might take the form of participating in a social movement, soliciting names for a petition, or a broader host of efforts that build social capital and are designed to influence communal or social policies. Volunteering has a recursive relationship with social capital. On one hand, it is an important aspect of building social capital, especially for individuals, since the contributions and reciprocity created promote social cohesion. At the same time, having higher levels of social capital is also related to volunteering since individuals with a strong community orientation tend to volunteer more often (Okun & Michel, 2006).

In fact, the strong connection between social status and volunteering may reflect the higher levels of social capital associated with higher social status. Brown and Ferris (2007) point out that social capital variables have a stronger direct impact on philanthropic behavior than human capital factors. Their secondary analysis of the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey

data revealed that “...the estimated direct impact of education is substantially smaller when social capital is taken into account.” (p. 97). The importance of the presence of other volunteers in a person’s social networks is probably very important. Wymer (1999) found that older volunteers were much more likely than non-volunteers to have friends who volunteer.

Psychologists have focused on the importance of internalized values as motivations for helping others. This strand of research has looked at a series of variables including generativity, prosocial religious values, and sense of moral obligation. Psychologists influenced by Erik Erikson’s (1980) life stage theory of human development have pointed out that the generative stage of life begins in middle adulthood as individuals become aware of their impending mortality. In response, people begin to define their life’s purpose as leaving something behind them when they die, and try to pass on something to the next generation (Kotre, 1984). McAdams and De St. Aubin (1992) have developed a scale to measure individual differences in generative concern, or the concern that individuals have for providing for the well-being of the next generation. Generativity is clearly associated with a variety of helping behaviors, including volunteering (Rossi 2001). Furthermore, people who have a strong commitment to community building tend to channel that interest into volunteering (Okun and Michel, 2006).

Another set of prosocial values are religious precepts. The connection between religiosity and volunteering is well documented (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Park & Smith, 2000; Janoski, Wilson, & Musick, 1998; Musick & Wilson, 2008), although there is some disagreement about why this is the case. In part, the correlation can be attributed to the social networks that come with religious participation, which make it more likely that a person will be asked to volunteer. However, moral norms and values also explain the connection between religiosity and volunteering. These include external norms, or the expectations that other religious people hold about an individual’s behavior, and internal norms, or the religious values that individuals hold within themselves that motivate helping independent of the expectations of others (Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999; Schervish & Havens, 1997, 2002; Schwartz, 1977; Schwartz & Fleishman, 1978; Wilson, 2000).

Although some studies have found significant differences in volunteering among major religious groups (Chambré, 1987), others document few significant differences by denomination (Janoski, Wilson, & Musick, 1998). Becker and Dhingra (2001) and Park and Smith (2000) found that the strength or importance of people’s religious beliefs were less significant predictors of volunteering than the fact that churchgoers have more extensive social networks which provides them with more opportunities to volunteer.

A final orientation that leads to prosocial behavior is one’s sense of moral obligation. Schwartz (1997; Schwartz & Fleishman, 1978) asserted that norms of obligation are important, but disputed the contention made by many psychologists that feelings of moral obligation motivate helping through feelings of guilt. Researchers also found that highly altruistic people felt a sense of moral obligation, but not guilt, in qualitative interview studies of

Holocaust rescuers (Monroe, 1996) and exemplary moral leaders (Colby & Damon, 1992). Rossi (2001) and Einolf (in press) found that moral obligation correlated with prosocial action in the domains of family, volunteering, and charitable giving.

Volunteering and Lifestyle

A third paradigm emphasizes that volunteering is one facet of a person's lifestyle and leisure choices, and that taste has an impact on the allocation of time. For older people, who are in many ways freer to construct their lives since most do not need to work for financial reasons, volunteering is presented as a meaningful way to spend time and gain personal satisfaction while also making a contribution to their communities and to society. The transitions which occur during old age - widowhood, retirement and the empty nest - offer the kinds of junctures which direct or redirect communal and leisure involvement. As Rotolo (2000:1155) points out, "certain life stages are times of voluntary membership mobility. That is, individuals may leave one type of organization and in turn join others."

A common image of aging in the US is that it provides people with the opportunity to do what they were unable to do at earlier stages in their lives - to travel, to volunteer, to play and to do whatever they wish. This image defies the reality for several reasons. First, recent studies of time use indicate that older people spend a great deal of time in productive activities, especially caring for family members (Johnson & Schaner, 2005; Zedlewski & Schaner, 2005). Second, a great deal of the discretionary time people gain when they retire is spent in passive leisure and what Weiss (2005) calls 'puttering' (Krantz-Kent & Stewart, 2007). Thirdly, there is considerable evidence that there is a great deal of continuity between middle age and old age, that there are "strong probabilistic relationships among past, present, and anticipated patterns of thought, behavior and social arrangements" (Atchley, 1999:1).

The image of older persons as free to construct their lives as they wish may well be an oversimplification. Large numbers of elders are involved in a host of productive activities. Substantial numbers of older people combine caregiving, paid work and volunteering. Using data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), Butrica and Schaner (2005) point out that people over the age of 55 are more likely to engage in multiple productive activities (37.5%) than simply one type of activity (33.8) or in no regular productive activity (28.7%). Combining work and volunteering was relatively uncommon (2.6%) but caregiving and volunteering (19.9%), formal and informal volunteering (12.0%) and work, caregiving and volunteering (2.3%) characterized over one third of the people they interviewed, in contrast to 9.3% exclusively involved in caregiving and 1.1% who were only working.

Further verification of this possibility comes from a cluster analysis of several productive activities: employment, volunteering, caregiving, informal helping and home maintenance. Using data from the Americans' Changing Lives Survey, Burr, Mutchler and Caro (2007) identified four styles of productive

aging: helpers (46.1%), home maintainers (35.4%), worker/volunteers (14.9%) and super helpers (3.6%). The different types allocated varied amounts of time and effort to different activities. Except for the home maintainers, the three other styles of productive aging were involved in moderate amounts of volunteering, about two hours a week. Further support for the idea that volunteering is one facet of a more engaged lifestyle comes from the analysis of a 1981 national survey of older persons. The data indicate that older volunteers were significantly more likely to be involved in a host of active leisure pursuits (interacting with friends, neighbors and family) in contrast to non-volunteers who spent more time watching television or listening to the radio, sitting and thinking, or doing nothing (Chambré, 1987).

Continuity in Volunteering

Another indication that volunteering may be a reflection of lifestyle and taste is the fact that there is a great deal of continuity in volunteer participation over the course of a person's life. It may, in fact be the case that some people are 'joiners' (Hauseknecht, 1962). Data on continuity of volunteerism is quite limited since most longitudinal surveys track people over a limited number of years. In addition, most surveys are cross-sectional and ask about current involvement; little information exists on the dynamics of moving in and out of volunteer roles over a considerable period of a person's life.

The strongest support for continuity of participation comes from Moen, Dempster-McClain and Williams' (1992) thirty year study of 427 married women in Upstate New York. Women who occupied multiple roles when they were first interviewed in 1956, including involvement in community and volunteer work, exhibited similar patterns when they were later interviewed in 1986. Data from several other studies with shorter time frames reveal that people who volunteer in midlife tend to continue their involvement as they age (Butrica, Johnson & Zedlewski, 2007b; Moen & Fields, 2002).

Yet, while continuity theory posits a high probability of maintaining life patterns, it also points out that some areas of life are potentially subject to greater change. Data from Atchley's (1999) Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Adaptation, a twenty year study, found that while most people experienced continuity in their basic values (82.2%) and friendships (82.2%), discontinuity was not uncommon for lifestyle measures (43.3%). The area where discontinuity was most common was involvement in community organizations, where over half of respondents (56.1%) experienced discontinuity. About half of those experiencing discontinuity (or one in four respondents in the total sample) became more active, while half of those experiencing discontinuity became less active. Persistence and change are evident in other surveys of older volunteers. One in four respondents in the Cornell Retirement and Well-Being Study began to volunteer during the early stages of their retirement (Moen and Fields, 2002). However, between 1996 and 2004, one third of nonvolunteers in the Health and Retirement Survey became involved in volunteering but three-fifths of 1996 volunteers were no

longer involved by 2004 (Butrica, Johnson & Zedlewski, 2007a). The probability of beginning to volunteer increased when people stopped working or caring for a parent or spouse (Butrica, Johnson & Zedlewski, 2007a).

Some sociologists and psychologists have considered volunteering as a social activity rather than a prosocial one, meaning that people engage in volunteer work for the pleasure of interacting with other people in addition to any values or altruistic motivations they may have. The personality trait of extroversion has been found to correlate with volunteering (Bekkers, 2005; Rossi, 2001). Other studies have found that participation in any social activity correlates positively with volunteering, including activities that have no prosocial content (Wilson & Musick, 1997b; Wilson, 2000). This evidence indicates that an interest in spending time with others, independent of altruistic or values motivation, plays a role in motivating people to volunteer. According to this model, then, volunteering is one type of meaningful social and leisure activity.

There are other models, however, to explain continuity in volunteering. One of these is Piliavin and Callero's role identity theory (Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999; Piliavin & Callero, 1991). Role identity theories of behavior postulate that, as people engage repeatedly in a type of activity, they develop a role identity as a particular type of actor. A person who volunteers several times may come to think, "I am the kind of person who volunteers," and eventually, "Volunteering is an important part of who I am." People might take up volunteering for any number of reasons at first, but when one volunteer commitment ends, they seek out more volunteer work, because they have assimilated the role of volunteer into their sense of self. In this way, previous volunteering may predict future volunteering independently of the reasons that an individual began volunteering in the first place.

A second theoretical explanation of continuity in volunteering is socioemotional selectivity theory (Hendricks & Cutler, 2004). According to this view, there are "lifelong selection processes by which people strategically and adaptively cultivate their social networks to maximize social and emotional gains and minimize social and emotional risks" (Carstensen, 1992: 331). People who find volunteering to be rewarding seek out further activities because as a way of maximizing the social and emotional gains they receive from their scarce free time. Rather than conceptualizing volunteers as people who seek out activities to compensate for the loss of work roles or because of prosocial motivations, it is perhaps more appropriate to think of them as individuals who have had previous experience and success with volunteer activities. These individuals expand their commitment level by devoting more time to volunteering as competing demands are altered, rather than beginning to volunteer when and because they retire.

Hypotheses

The literature review describes three ways that past researchers have conceptualized volunteering by the elderly: as work, as prosocial behavior, and

as a lifestyle pattern of active leisure and civic engagement. These patterns might be most pronounced for older people who spend less time in paid employment and are less constrained by the family life cycle related volunteer commitments of younger people. In this study, we propose to test which of these models of volunteer work is most effective in predicting who will volunteer during old age, particularly during retirement. From each conceptualization, we derived a series of hypotheses and we test these hypotheses using data from a nationally representative survey.

Volunteering as work

If retired people view volunteering as a type of work, or a work substitute, they may volunteer for a number of reasons. First, they may see volunteering as a way of recapturing the achievements and the psychological and social satisfactions they derived in their work lives, which they now miss in retirement. These could include social networks, prestige, a feeling of being useful and valued, and engagement in meaningful, productive activity. Another possibility is that volunteering can be compensatory: a new unpaid career, a vehicle for work-related achievement in retirement that did not occur during a person's pre-retirement work life.

In both cases, the nature of a person's pre-retirement employment would affect their decision to volunteer after retirement. Retired volunteers whose paid careers were in helping professions may see volunteering as a way of continuing their pre-retirement career. However, retired volunteers whose paid work was not in helping professions may seek more meaningful work in retirement. It is not obvious whether people with former careers in helping professions are more or less likely to volunteer in retirement, so both hypotheses are tested here.

Conceptualizing volunteering as work, or that aspects of a person's work life are determinants of volunteer patterns, leads to several hypotheses:

H1: Elderly people with a history of full-time work are more likely to volunteer than those who did not work full time. People who are retired from full-time work are more likely to volunteer, as a way of regaining the prestige, social contact, and sense of value and purpose that they lost when they left their paid jobs.

H2a: Retirees whose previous work was in helping careers are more likely to volunteer than those who worked in non-helping careers. If there is continuity between paid work and volunteering, then retirees who left careers of public service may particularly miss the sense of purpose these careers gave them. They may also possess other personal characteristics and values that make them more likely to do volunteer work.

H2b: Retirees whose previous work was in non-helping careers are more likely to volunteer than those in non-helping careers. Alternatively, people who worked in service professions might view retirement as a chance to be free from obligation, while people who worked in non-service professions may view

retirement as a chance to give back to the community and do more meaningful work.

H3: Retirees who work part-time by choice are more likely to volunteer, while those who work part-time by necessity are less likely to volunteer. Many retirees work part-time, but their reasons differ. Some work part-time by choice, for the social contact and feeling of purpose that work gives them, but others work part-time by necessity, for income. If retired volunteering is a type of work, working by choice should correlate positively, while working by necessity should correlate negatively.

H4: Satisfaction with one's job before retirement should correlate positively with volunteering after retirement. If individuals found their pre-retirement career to be satisfying, they are likely to seek similar satisfaction during retirement through unpaid work. If they found their pre-retirement career to be unsatisfying, they are more likely to seek satisfaction through other activities.

Volunteering as prosocial behavior

The second theoretical perspective views volunteering as a type of prosocial behavior, motivated by moral values that encourage people to help others and to make a contribution to their community. If this perspective is correct, these values should correlate with volunteering. Also, people who engage in helping behaviors in other domains, such as toward family members, should be more likely to help others through volunteering.

H5: Prosocial values, such as generativity, religious values, and a sense of moral obligation, correlate positively with volunteering. If volunteering is an altruistic or prosocial activity, then those individuals who possess prosocial values and motivations should be more likely to volunteer. Among the prosocial beliefs and values that are often correlated with volunteering in the research literature are generativity, religiosity, and sense of moral obligation, and each of these is expected to correlate with volunteering.

H6: Helping and giving care to family members correlates positively with volunteering. If prosocial values, traits, and motivations predict formal helping behaviors, such as volunteering, they should also predict informal helping behaviors, such as assisting family members. In other words, people who are helpful by nature should help others across a range of domains, not just within one area of action.

Volunteering and Lifestyle

If volunteering is one facet of a more active lifestyle in old age, then high levels of social engagement should be associated with volunteering. These could include participation in other types of active, social leisure activities, and the personality trait of extroversion which is highly correlated with volunteer engagement (Musick & Wilson, 2008).

H7: Extroversion should correlate positively with retired volunteering. If retired people view volunteer work as an opportunity for social contact, then individuals who most value social contact should be the ones most often involved in volunteering. Accordingly, a measure of the personality trait of extroversion should correlate positively and significantly with volunteering.

H8: Participation in other active, social leisure activities should correlate positively with volunteering. Retired people who view volunteer work as one type of social outlet are likely to seek out other social outlets. In addition, stronger ties to a variety of social networks introduces people to volunteer opportunities and, at the same time, increases their chances of being asked to become involved in volunteering. In these ways, volunteering should be correlated with other activities involving social contact, such as attending meetings of sports, hobby, and leisure groups, and informally socializing with one's neighbors.

Continuity in Volunteering

H9: Past volunteering should predict future volunteering. According to role identity theory, people who volunteer before retirement incorporate the role of volunteer into their sense of self, and will continue to volunteer when they retire. According to socioemotional selectivity theory, people who found volunteering to be socially and emotionally rewarding before they retired will choose to spend their leisure time volunteering after they retire. Both theories predict that pre-retirement volunteering will correlate with post-retirement volunteering.

Data and Methods

To test the hypotheses generated by the three paradigms of volunteering, we used data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) survey, a panel survey with two waves of interviews, in 1995 and in 2005. The use of this dataset allows us to add to the growing volume of research on volunteering that relies on longitudinal data. Most previous research has been based on cross-sectional data (cf. Chambré, 1987) and conclusions about the importance of continuity and discontinuity and the impact of role transitions have been speculative, rather than empirically based. The use of longitudinal datasets contributes to our theoretical understanding of volunteering as a dynamic activity in which people's involvement ebbs and flows at different moments in their lives in response to a variety of contingencies.

The MIDUS study was based on a nationally representative random-digit dialing sample of non-institutionalized, English-speaking adults, born between 1920 and 1970. Both telephone and written survey questionnaires were used, and the estimated overall response rate to the first wave was 60.8%. The MIDUS dataset contains weights to adjust for the biases related to the characteristics of non-responders to the first wave. The main MIDUS survey has a sample size of 3,032, and the survey instrument contained nearly 2,000 questions. The

survey is a particularly useful source of data for this analysis because it contains modules that measure volunteering and its correlates.ⁱⁱ

Only 1,490 respondents to the original survey responded to both the telephone survey and the written questionnaire in the 2005 wave. Three hundred and fifty-five respondents completed only the phone survey in Wave Two, 212 died, and 735 either could not be located or refused to respond to either the phone or the mail survey. Those who responded to both the survey and the telephone questionnaire in the second wave differed from non-responders in several ways which correlate with volunteering. Responders were slightly older than non-responders, had higher incomes and more education, and were more likely to be white and female. They were more likely to be donors to religious and secular charities in the 1995 wave of the survey but were not more likely to be volunteers. Respondents who died between 1995 and 2005 were older than the rest of the sample, had lower education and incomes, were less likely to volunteer in 1995, and were more likely to be male.

Our analysis examines 470 respondents who were 60 and older in 2005. They were between the ages of fifty and seventy-five in 1995, and between sixty and eighty-five at the second wave in 2005. Their average age in 2005 was 69.1, and the standard deviation of age was 6.9.

Dependent variable: Volunteer status

The MIDUS survey asked respondents to write in how many hours they spend volunteering each month. The survey included a question on educational and youth volunteering, one on health and medical volunteering, and one on all other types of volunteering. MIDUS did not ask respondents to report their religious volunteering separately, so religious volunteering is included in the “other volunteering” category. We added the answers to these three questions to create a single measure of volunteering. Four in ten respondents, or 41.5% of the total sample, did some type volunteer work in a given month in 1995, and 44.4% volunteered in 2005. The mean hours per month spent volunteering were 5.4 in 1995 and 6.3 in 2005, and the standard deviations were 15.4 for 1995 and 13.1 for 2005. The variable was skewed to the right, with a small number of respondents contributing a large amount of volunteer time.

Independent variables: Volunteering as work

Labor force status: We created a dummy variable for the respondent’s 1995 labor force status. Most of the people in the labor force in 1995 were employed, but this category also includes people who were unemployed and looking for work, on sick leave, or temporarily laid off. In 1995, 265 respondents were employed in 1995, and an additional sixteen were not employed but in the labor force, for a total of 281. One hundred and sixty respondents already described themselves as retired in 1995. In 2005, 115 of the 470 respondents were in the labor force, 281 described themselves as retired, and 34 were working but also stated they were retired.

Occupation: Our interest in whether or not there is a link between volunteering and being in a helping profession or another type of occupation led us to create two dummy variables. The first coded a person’s current or

most recent occupation according to Department of Labor occupational codes. We used these codes to create a dummy variable that distinguished respondents working in certain helping occupations (health care workers and teachers) from people in other types of occupations. Twenty-nine of the 281 employed respondents worked in these fields. Of course, there are other occupations that involve helping or public service, but these were the most straightforward occupations to code.

As a comparison group, we coded a second dummy variable for those who were managers in a business or commercial enterprise before they retired. The position of manager is similar to doctor or teacher in that it requires education, skill, and experience, and involves contact with other people, but differs in that it does not involve public service or helping. As such, it is a good comparison category. Twenty-three of the 281 employed respondents worked as managers.

Voluntary vs. involuntary employment: In order to determine whether individuals who work part-time past the age of sixty are more likely to volunteer if they work part-time by choice rather than by necessity, we divided the sample into thirds by income, and considered the wealthiest one-third of respondents who were working part-time to be working by choice, and the poorest one-third to be working by necessity. Fifty-two of the respondents who were employed in 2005 were in the poorest third, and 49 were in the wealthiest third.

Job satisfaction: The 1995 MIDUS survey has two variables that measure job satisfaction. The first is a single item measure that asks respondents to rate their current work situation on a 0-10 scale, where zero represents "the worst possible work situation" and ten represents "the best possible work situation." The mean for this variable was 7.5, and the standard deviation is 2.5.

The second measure includes six statements about how respondents feel about their current job, such as "I feel a good deal of pride in my work," "I feel that others respect the work I do," and "I've had opportunities as good as most people's." Respondents were asked how much each statement describes their feelings about their work, on a scale from one ("not at all") to four ("a lot"). We averaged these together to make a single index, with a mean of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 0.5.

Independent variables: Volunteering as prosocial behavior

Generativity: Both waves of the MIDUS survey incorporated six items from the Loyola Generativity Scale (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) which measures a respondent's level of concern for the next generation. MIDUS asked respondents to describe how much six statements apply to them, on a one to four scale ("not at all" to "a lot"). The statements include "many people come to you for advice," "you like to teach things to people," and "you have had a good influence on the lives of many people." Averaging these items together creates a single index, with a mean of 2.8 and a standard deviation of 0.6.

Moral obligation: the 1995 MIDUS survey contained twenty-one questions about respondents' sense of moral obligation to friends, family, employers, the community, and to others in general. Each question asked how obligated, on a

zero to ten scale, the respondent would feel to perform an action. Examples include how obligated the respondent would feel “to drop plans when your children seem very troubled,” “to take a friend into your home who could not live alone,” “to do more than most people would do on your kind of job,” “to serve on a jury if called,” and “to volunteer time or money to social causes you support.” We used both the single-item measure of obligation to volunteer time and money, and an index created by averaging all twenty-one questions together. The mean score for the single item measuring obligation to volunteer time or money was 6.5, and the standard deviation was 2.6. The average for all twenty-one items averaged together was 7.3, and the standard deviation was 1.4.

Religious commitment: We followed Wilson and Musick’s (1997b) strategy of using religious service attendance as a rough proxy measure for the religious values that motivate helping behavior. The 2005 MIDUS survey asked respondents how often they attend religious services, with categories including never, less than once a month, once a month, once a week, and two or three times a week. We recoded these to an interval scale with values of zero, three, twelve, fifty-two, and 125. The average value was 41.6, and the standard deviation was 43.5.

Family caregiving: The 2005 wave of MIDUS asks whether respondents took care of a sick friend or family member for one month or more during the last twelve months. Just over one in ten (11.5%) respondents answered yes to this question. The 2005 wave of MIDUS also asked how much time respondents spend helping friends and family members in a typical month. A few respondents reported very high amounts of time spent helping, so we truncated this variable at 100 hours in order to prevent extreme values from biasing the regression results. In a typical month, 64.9% of respondents spent some time helping family, the average time spent helping was 17.7 hours, and the standard deviation was 27.3.

Independent variables: Volunteering as leisure

Extroversion: The 2005 MIDUS interview asked respondents to state the degree to which certain words describe them on a scale of one (“not at all”) to four (“a lot”). Five words, “outgoing,” “friendly,” “lively”, “active”, and “talkative”, were used to measure extroversion. This five-item index is a reduction of well-tested psychological scales that measure extroversion and the other “big five” personality traits (Rossi, 2001). The average score on this scale is 3.2, and the standard deviation is 0.5.

Leisure participation: The 2005 wave of MIDUS asks respondents about their participation in social clubs, and in sports and hobby groups. Those who participated in such groups were asked to write in the number of hours they spend in these activities during a typical month. Only 29.0% of respondents participated in such groups; the average time spent was 1.4 hours and the standard deviation was 3.3.

Sociability: The 2005 study included two questions about informal socializing with neighbors. One asked how often respondents have any contact, “even something as simple as saying ‘hello,’” with their neighbors. The other

asked how often respondents “have a real conversation or get together socially” with their neighbors. These questions had six ordinal response categories, ranging from “never or hardly ever” (one) to “almost every day” (six). We averaged them together to create a single index, with a mean of 4.2 and a standard deviation of 1.3.

Independent variables: Continuity in volunteering

The 1995 wave of the MIDUS study contained a set of questions about volunteering identical to the 2005 wave. 34.5% of the respondents in our sample volunteered in 1995, for an average of 4.2 hours per month. We transformed this variable into a dummy variable for the regression analysis, with 0 = no volunteering in 1995, and 1 = any volunteering.

Table 1: Independent variables

Variable	Range	Mean or % yes	Standard deviation
H1: In the labor force in 1995	0-1	59.8%	n/a
H2a: Helping career in 1995	0-1	6.2%	n/a
H2b: Non-helping career in 1995	0-1	4.9%	n/a
H3a: Working in 2005	0-1	31.7%	n/a
H3b: Low income and working in 2005	0-1	11.1%	n/a
H3c: High income and working in 2005	0-1	10.4%	n/a
H4a: Job satisfaction in 1995 (single question)	0-10	7.5	2.5
H4b: Job satisfaction in 1995 (6-item index)	1-4	3.5	0.5
H5a: Generativity (6-item index)	1-4	2.8	0.6
H5b: Obligation to volunteer (single question)	0-10	6.5	2.6
H5c: Obligation overall (21-item index)	0-10	7.3	1.4
H6a: Caregiving for family member in 2005	0-1	11.5%	n/a
H6b: Hours/month helping family	0-110	17.7	27.3
H7: Extroversion (5-item index)	1-4	3.2	0.5
H8a: Hours/month in social and leisure groups	0-15	1.4	3.3
H8b: Religious attendance in 2005 (times/year)	0-125	41.6	43.5
H8c: Socializing with neighbors (ordinal scale)	1-6	4.2	1.3
H9: Volunteer in 1995	0-1	33.5	n/a

Method of Analysis

We used logistic regression in our analysis because the dependent variable is not normally distributed. To conduct logistic regression, the volunteer measure was converted into a binary variable, with 0 = no volunteering and 1 = any volunteering. In reporting the logistic results, we give

the log of the odds ratio for each independent variable rather than the slope coefficient. Estimates of the predictive power of each regression model are estimated using the Nagelkerke calculation of pseudo-R squared (Nagelkerke, 1991). We also performed Tobit regression upon the original variables. As the Tobit results and the logistic results were similar, we report only the logistic results here. The Tobit results are available from the authors upon request.

We first ran a series of bivariate logistic regressions to examine whether there was any support for each hypothesis. We then combined the variables that showed a statistically significant bivariate relationship into a single multivariate model, and examined whether the variables continued to be significant when age, gender, education, and past volunteering were added as controls. We introduced these variables because they are also significant predictors of volunteering for people of all ages, including older persons (Chambré, 1987; Wilson & Musick, 1997b).

Findings

Bivariate results

At the bivariate level, we found weak and inconsistent support for the volunteering as work paradigm, and stronger support for the paradigms of volunteering as prosocial behavior and volunteering as lifestyle.

Volunteering as work: There was weak and inconsistent support for the theory that volunteering by the elderly is a replacement for work. Working in 1995 (Hypothesis 1) had a positive but only marginally significant relationship with volunteering in 2005 ($p = .064$). A person's 2005 work status also had a statistically significant ($p = .021$) but very weak positive correlation with whether or not they volunteered in 2005 (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .006$). This relationship was mediated by income in an unexpected way (Hypothesis Two). Although volunteering is generally more frequent among higher status individuals, this was not the case in old age, where retired people with lower incomes were more often involved in volunteering. For high income retirees, employment was not significantly associated with volunteering, but for low income retirees, employment had a statistically significant ($p = .017$) and positive relationship ($R^2 = .016$). This is consistent with earlier studies which found that individuals with lower preretirement earnings tend to begin to become involved in volunteering when they retire (Moen & Fields, 2002).

There was partial support for the idea that volunteering is a work substitute or operates in a compensatory manner during retirement. People with helping careers in 1995 were more likely to volunteer in 2005, but not people with management careers in 1995. This suggests that some retirees seek the satisfaction they received from helping others in their paid pre-retirement work by volunteering during retirement (Hypothesis Three). There was not, however, a correlation between a person's 1995 job satisfaction and their involvement in volunteering during retirement in 2005 (Table 2). Thus, hypothesis four was not supported, as there was no evidence that people who

enjoyed working in 1995 sought to recapture the rewards of employment during their retirement years by volunteering.

Volunteering as prosocial behavior: There was greater support for the second paradigm of volunteering as prosocial behavior. As hypothesis five predicted, both generativity ($R^2 = .057$, $p < .001$) and religious services attendance ($R^2 = .084$, $p < .001$) correlated with volunteering. Not only the single item measure assessing a person's sense of obligation to volunteer or to give money to charity predicted volunteering ($R^2 = .068$, $p < .001$), but also the twenty-one item index of one's general sense of moral obligation ($R^2 = .036$, $p = .001$).

There was not, however, a statistically significant relationship between volunteering and giving care to a family member, nor was there a statistically significant relationship between formal volunteering and informal help to friends and family members. Thus, no support was found for Hypothesis Six, that prosocial individuals would be more likely both to give informal assistance to family members and formal assistance through volunteering.

Volunteering as lifestyle: Of all the hypotheses in the study, Hypothesis Seven received the strongest support. Attendance at sports, hobby, and social group meetings was one of the best predictors of volunteering ($R^2 = .085$, $p < .001$). Informal social contact with neighbors also significantly correlated with volunteering ($R^2 = .026$, $p = .003$). Hypothesis Eight, that extroversion would predict volunteering, was also supported ($R^2 = .025$, $p = .004$).

Continuity in volunteering: Of all the hypotheses, strongest support was found for Hypothesis Nine. Volunteering in 1995 was a very powerful predictor of volunteering in 2005 ($R^2 = .309$, $p = .000$).

Table 2: Bivariate logistic regression results

Variable	Odds ratio	R squared	P
<i>Volunteering as work:</i>			
H1: Working in 1995	1.437	.010	.064
H2a: Helping career in 1995	3.506	.029	.002
H2b: Non-helping career in 1995	1.407	.002	.429
H3a: Working in 2005	1.736	.006	.021
H3b: Low income and working in 2005	2.032	.016	.017
H3c: High income and working in 2005	.850	.000	.843
H4a: Job satisfaction in 1995 (single question)	1.045	.004	.263
H4b: Job satisfaction in 1995 (index)	1.449	.012	.120
<i>Volunteering as prosocial behavior:</i>			
H5a: Generativity	1.124	.057	.000
H5b: Obligation to volunteer	1.213	.068	.000
H5b: Obligation overall	1.277	.036	.001
H5c: Religious services attendance	1.012	.084	.000

H6a: Caregiving (dummy)	1.332	.003	.325
H6b: Hours spent helping others	1.004	.003	.327
<i>Volunteering as Lifestyle:</i>			
H7: Extroversion	1.694	.025	.004
H8a: Sport, hobby, and social group participation	1.234	.085	.000
H8b: Contact with neighbors 2005	1.241	.026	.003
<i>Continuity in Volunteering:</i>			
H9: Volunteer in 1995	10.191	.309	.000

Multivariate results: Comparing the paradigms

We first calculated the Nagelkerke pseudo R-squared values for logistic regressions involving all of the variables in each paradigm. The seven variables in the volunteering as work paradigm had a combined pseudo R-squared of .076; the five variables in the volunteering as prosocial behavior paradigm had a combined pseudo R-squared value of .170, and the three variables in the volunteering as lifestyle paradigm had a combined pseudo R-squared value of .098. Even taken together, the variables that made up each paradigm were less strong predictors of volunteering in 2005 than the single variable that measured continuity in volunteering.

Multivariate results: Toward a theoretical synthesis

Although the lifestyle paradigm was the most predictive of the three models, it had a limited explanatory power. To develop a more nuanced and effective model of volunteering which synthesizes predictors from all three models, we ran a multivariate regression of all the statistically significant bivariate predictors from the three models. These were working in 1995, working in a helping career in 1995, working and being low-income in 2005, generativity, obligation to volunteer, extroversion, and social group participation. Since the variables measuring 1995 labor force status and working in a helping career in 1995 were collinear and only the latter variable remained statistically significant in the multivariate model, we omitted a person's 1995 labor force status from the analysis.

The final multivariate model contains seven statistically significant variables: working in a helping profession in 1995, working and having a low-income in 2005, generativity, having a sense of obligation to volunteer, religious service attendance, and social group attendance. These six variables explained 18.0% of the variation in whether or not a person volunteered in 2005 (Table 3, Model 1). All of these variables except working in a helping profession were robust to the inclusion of control variables for sex, education, and age (Table 3, Model 2). When past volunteering was added to the model, obligation to volunteer became non-significant (Table 3, Model 3).

Of all the variables, however, the single best predictor of volunteering in 2005 was whether or not a person volunteered in 1995 (Nagelkerke pseudo $R^2 = .309$). When the causal variables were tested for whether they were robust to the inclusion of controls for sex, education, and age, the Nagelkerke R-squared value only increased from .235 to .286 with the inclusion of these three control variables (Model 2), and only education was statistically significant in this model. However, the Nagelkerke R-squared value jumped from .286 to .444 with the inclusion of the variable measuring volunteering in 1995 (Table 3, Model 3).

Table 3: Multivariate logistic regression results

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Helping profession (1995)	2.963*	1.726	1.524
Working and low-income (2005)	2.045*	2.293*	2.693**
Generativity (2005)	1.087**	1.060	1.074*
Obligation to volunteer (1995)	1.147**	1.138**	1.020
Religious attendance (2005)	1.011***	1.121***	1.013***
Social group attendance (2005)	1.136***	1.013***	1.120***
Male		1.054	1.092
Age		.968	.956*
Education		1.187***	1.099
Volunteered in 1995			8.667***
Constant	.027***	.131	.530
% Correct (Base = 61.3)	67.6	71.7	77.4
Nagelkerke pseudo R squared	.235	.286	.444

* Significant at $p \leq .05$ ** Significant at $p \leq .01$ *** Significant at $p \leq .001$

Discussion

Data from the MIDUS survey indicate that there was limited support for the work paradigm of volunteering. The two other models, volunteering as prosocial behavior and volunteering as lifestyle, received greater but only moderate support. Therefore, conceptualizations of volunteering as either a work substitute, as prosocial behavior or as a lifestyle choice have limited predictive value on their own. In fact, the single strongest predictor of whether or not a person volunteered in 2005 was the individual's volunteer status in 1995. Past volunteering had a stronger influence (R squared = .309) than the next six most predictive variables combined (R squared = .235). A combination of factors influences volunteering since, even when past volunteering is included, many of the other variables remained significant. In fact, variables from all three paradigms were significant in the combined model: working and having a low-income, generativity, religious attendance, and social group attendance (Table 3, Model 3).

These findings are consistent with other longitudinal studies that show continuity in voluntary participation over the life course (McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Moen, Dempster-McClain & Williams, 1992; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Musick and Wilson (2008) suggest that individuals become volunteers not only because they have characteristics that increase the chances of themselves choosing to volunteer, but that they are recruited to volunteer because of those characteristics. Similarly, there appears to be a cadre of individuals, called "joiners" (Hausknecht, 1962) or the "civic core" (Reed & Selbee, 2001), who contribute a disproportionate amount of time and money to communal and charitable activities.

Both socioemotional selectivity theory and role identity theory offer explanations for the continuity in volunteering over time. The current data do not allow us to test which of these theories best explains the correlation between volunteering in 1995 and volunteering in 2005, or whether some other theoretical explanation better explains the correlation. Future research is needed to explore continuity in volunteering through the life course, and how this continuity is affected by life transitions such as retirement.

Conclusion

Our study describes how none of the three common paradigms of volunteering - as work, as prosocial behavior and as lifestyle - fully captures the determinants of volunteering. Instead, we posit an alternative model that combines elements of all three. This analysis, along with previous research (Chambré, 1983, 1987), shows that volunteering is not a work substitute when people retire. Two other models of volunteering, as prosocial behavior and as leisure, also have limited predictive value. Combining variables from all three paradigms creates a moderately strong model, but the best single predictor of volunteering after the age of 60 is whether or not a person volunteered in the past.

For retirees, this is important since volunteering in one's pre-retirement years is highly predictive of involvement during retirement. While it is indeed true that human capital variables are highly predictive of volunteering, it is not the case that those who retire and who miss working tend to be the individuals who begin to volunteer during retirement. Instead, it is likely that people continue past patterns of involvement when they retire, and that retirees seek volunteer work as both a prosocial activity and as a type of leisure. As socioemotional selectivity theory suggests, people with past histories of volunteering will seek out gratifying activities during old age. As active, meaningful leisure that provides the opportunity to be socially and politically engaged, volunteering offers rewards that neither employment nor recreation alone can offer. Volunteering has several benefits: it provides people with a context for social interaction, a chance to have fun, and an opportunity to do something meaningful and useful. As no other activity in retirement provides these three benefits simultaneously, volunteering can play a unique role in the lives of the elderly.

It is quite likely, then, that retirees do not perceive volunteering as simply a work substitute, a moral obligation, or a leisure activity. Elements from all three models predict retired volunteering, but especially the latter two, supporting Chambré's (1993) earlier claim that retirees see volunteering as a unique form of "active, meaningful leisure." It may be that not only retirees, but people of all ages engage in volunteering for a similar reason. Like few other activities, volunteering gives people a chance to enjoy life, make contact with others, and find purpose and meaning. One dimensional views of volunteering as work, prosocial behavior, or leisure make volunteering easier

for researchers to study, but a multidimensional view best explains why so many people find volunteering to be rewarding.

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ⁱⁱ Full information about the sample, response rate, weighting, and survey design are contained in the MIDUS codebook, available from the MIDUS website at midmac.med.harvard.edu/research.html.