

The Influence of Major Life Events on Volunteering

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Executive Summary

This paper looks at the influence of various life events on an individual's volunteering. Specifically, the events considered in this paper are the birth of a child, getting divorced, being widowed, or having another (non-spouse) death in the household. Research has already shown that people's volunteering behaviors change over the life cycle. Young people might volunteer as means of improving their resume or to fulfill school requirements. Newly married couples decrease their volunteering in the face of the adjustment to married life. As couples begin to have children and invest in family life, their involvement shifts to be more involved in schools, youth organizations and religious communities. In their more mature years, people might increase their volunteering hours as they retire from their jobs. But as old age and declining health interfere, volunteering tapers off.

In addition to the effect of the life cycle on volunteering, I hypothesize that certain life events can also influence volunteering. The first hypothesis in the paper is that the birth of a child will decrease volunteering, even above and beyond the effect of having preschool children in the home. The second hypothesis is that

divorced individuals will be less likely to volunteer than other single people. The third hypothesis proposes that widowed individuals will also be less likely to volunteer than other single people. Finally, I also hypothesize that another death in the household (non-spouse) will increase volunteering.

The data used to test these hypotheses come from two major studies of volunteering. The first is the Philanthropy Module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics sponsored by the Center on Philanthropy (referred to as the COPPS data). The COPPS data are panel data that track households and individuals over time. In this paper, I used the 2005 data with some variables from the 2003 wave of the study. The COPPS data are used to test the first, second and fourth hypotheses. Because the number of widows in the COPPS data is so small, I use another dataset to test the third hypothesis about the effect of being widowed on volunteering. These data are the September volunteering supplement of the Current Population Study (CPS). The volunteering supplement has been collected annually by the Census Bureau since 2002.

I find that having a child decreases a person's likelihood of volunteering. The occurrence of a divorce does not alter the

likelihood of volunteering (based on the COPPS data), but it is related to a small increase in the number of hours volunteered for a secular organization. In the CPS data, being divorced slightly lowers the probability of volunteering for a religious organization. I also find that widows are more likely to volunteer overall, especially for religious organizations, but older widows are slightly less likely to volunteer and decrease their volunteer hours by a small amount. Having another (non-spouse) member of the family pass away is not related to volunteering.

Introduction

A person's volunteering behaviors and activities are not constant throughout life. As an individual progresses through the life cycle—from being young and single, to getting married, to having and raising children, becoming an empty nester, and progressing through retirement—the likelihood of volunteering and time spent volunteering change (Musick and Wilson, 2008). For instance, when a young couple first gets married, they might decrease their volunteering activities during the initial adjustment period (see Stoker and Jennings, 1995). But as the couple begins to have children and start becoming more established, they participate and volunteer more (Rotolo, 2000; Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). As the children grow older and become more involved themselves, parents tend to shift their volunteering behaviors (Sundeen, 1990). But then later in life, people might decrease their organizational associations (Knoke and Thompson, 1977; Rotolo, 2000) and further alter volunteering behaviors. As people progress through the life cycle, they adapt their volunteering behaviors to fit their situation and current motivations to volunteer.

However, what happens when the household structure and family roles are disrupted? How do life cycle events influence the decision to volunteer? Not all people proceed through the typical life cycle in a straightforward, uncomplicated way. Many people have their life cycle interrupted by certain events, such as being divorced or widowed at an early age. Major life events, such as having a child born or having a family member die, can place a great deal of stress on family members. Some of these events can produce negative effects that reduce volunteering; on the other hand, volunteering can also be a tool for coping with difficult life events. This paper looks at the influence of various life events on an individual's volunteering. Specifically, the events considered in this paper are the birth of a child, getting divorced, being widowed, or having another (non-spouse) death in the household. These types of events all significantly change the composition of a household and can inflict serious stress on household members and disrupt previous routines and behaviors.

The Life Cycle of Volunteering

An individual's volunteering behaviors naturally change over the course of the person's life. As new stages in the life cycle bring new associations and changing roles and responsibilities, people adjust their preferences for different types of activities. Adolescents in the United States volunteer at fairly high rates (Toppe, 2005). This is likely due to the supporting influence of churches, youth-oriented organizations and schools. Many schools, for instance, require volunteering as part of the curriculum or provide students with opportunities for service-learning. Youth are likely to volunteer as means of enhancing the personal experience that they can list on a resume or as something that they can put on a college application (Friedland and Morimoto, 2005). These forces have served to strengthen volunteering among individuals in the adolescent phase of life.

Young adults (people in their early 20's) are often busy working on an education or starting a new marriage and might not make time for volunteering. Stoker and Jennings (1995) found that although marriage in general increases political participation, new marriages decreased participation initially as the young couple adjusted to their new married life. This is likely to be true for volunteering as well. As young couples begin to have children, they will alter their behaviors and begin to volunteer more (Brown, 1999). However, the relationship between volunteering status and children is complicated; it depends on a variety of factors, such as the gender of the parent, the parent's employment, and the ages of the children and the number of children in the family (Musick and Wilson, 2008). For instance, parents with very young children volunteer fewer hours than parents whose children are older (Menchik & Weisbrod, 1987; Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). This is because young children require more caregiving time from their parents because there are many things that they cannot do for themselves. However, as the children grow older and become more independent and as they become involved in more activities, parents are often drawn into volunteering opportunities, especially those related to their children and families. Family members often volunteer for organizations that other family members are involved in or benefit from (Wymer, 1997; Nichols & King, 1998; Smith, 1994; Becker & Dhingra, 2001). As the number of children in the family increases, the likelihood of volunteering increases but the number of hours volunteered decrease because of increased time constraints (Carlin, 2001). So even though having children draws people into volunteering experiences, their time for such activities is still limited. So at the peak of family life, we can expect more volunteering, especially volunteering that is focused on the benefit of family members.

Then as children leave the home and parents face retirement, their volunteering shifts once again. While younger people might volunteer to further their own careers and to seek a greater understanding of the world, older people report that they volunteer in order to feel useful or to make social connections (Okun and Schulz, 2003). Volunteering in later life can depend on many factors, such as volunteering done before retirement, employment status during retirement years, the age when a person retires, the overall health of the person and the presence of a spouse who volunteers. Mutchler et. al. (2003) find that for those who were already volunteering before retirement, working during retirement had no effect on their volunteering hours. However, those who were not volunteering before they retired and who are not working during retirement were more likely to begin volunteering during retirement. There is also some evidence that people increase the number of hours that they volunteer as they enter retirement. Older Americans who have retired and are not working tend to increase their volunteering hours (Caro and Bass, 1997; Moen et al. 2000). In fact, many national volunteering programs are specifically aimed at increasing volunteering among these groups, such as Retired and Senior Volunteer Program or Foster Grandparents. Older

Americans have becoming an increasingly important segment of the volunteer pool.

Beyond the impact of natural progress through the life cycle on volunteering, I believe that specific life events can also alter volunteering behaviors. These events might alter family routines by creating time pressures the prevent volunteering. Or they might change a person's motivations to volunteer by providing a social or coping outlet. The following section discusses four of these life events and present hypotheses about the impact these events might have on volunteering.

Hypotheses

As already discussed, the presence of children in the home can influence volunteering decisions in many ways. Even though married people with children are more likely to volunteer than married people without children (Boraas, 2003; Brown, 1999; Hayghe, 1991), this effect varies with the ages of the children. The presence of young preschool children in the home can discourage volunteering or at least cause parents to decrease the amount of time they spend volunteering in order to care for their young children (Menchik & Weisbrod, 1987; Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). Young children place time constraints on parents and restrict the number and kinds of activities that parents can do outside of the home. Parents of young preschool children just do not have as much free discretionary time as parents of older children or people without children (Robinson and Godbey, 1996).

Having a child born into the family will likely have an immediate dampening effect on volunteering. Having a new baby requires great adjustments from parents; a newborn baby disrupts the parents' normal schedules and sleeping routines and requires a great deal of attention (Feeney, et. al, 2001). In addition, the adjustment period after having a baby can be a difficult time for many women, as evidenced by the prevalence of post-partum depression. And post-partum depression doesn't just affect the woman; spouses of women experiencing post-partum depression are more likely to experience symptoms of depression or other psychological problems themselves (Roberts et. al, 2006). These stresses and disruptions can have a negative impact on volunteering. The new baby takes times and resources away from potential volunteer opportunities. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Parents who have had a child born recently will be less likely to volunteer than people who haven't had a child born recently, even above and beyond the negative effect of having preschool children in the home.

Divorce also interrupts and changes family routines. Divorced individuals experience a huge psychological shift as they transition from being married to being single again. Other shifts could include changes in the person's employment situation, changes in financial assets and security, a move to a new home or city, or changes in social patterns (Wallestein and Blakeslee, 1996). These changes and adjustments bring with them many stresses and

worries. For instance, divorce can cause great financial stress among women, especially women who have been married for a long time (Galloway, 1994). This is a reasonable fear since divorce has been shown to lead to a decrease in wealth (Zagorsky, 2005). In addition to lowering financial outcomes, divorce can also lead to poorer health; those who have been divorced, widowed or separated report lower health outcomes than those who are married (Liu and Umberson, 2008). Divorce can bring many new pressures into a person's life and this pressure forces an individual to find ways to cope with these changes.

Divorces can also have a negative impact on the children of the couple getting divorced, which can create more obstacles for volunteering. Children of a divorced couple can manifest psychological distress, behavior problems, and academic problems (Portnoy, 2008). These problems will place further stress and worry on the couple who have gotten divorced and will take time and other resources away from volunteering. The parent with primary custody of the children will also have less available time and energy to devote to volunteering, especially for organizations that are not directly related to the children's benefit, because the parent must now spend more time on caregiving and maintaining a household on their own. Being a single parent can be very difficult and the time that a person spends running a family and household may find little time for participation in other activities. Divorce has been shown to decrease several measures of political participation (Stoker and Jennings, 1995). Empirical evidence has also shown that single parents, especially single parents with preschool children, are less likely to volunteer (Sundeen, 1990). Thus it is likely that in the aftermath of a divorce, a person will have to decrease volunteering activities in order to deal with the more immediate pressures that the divorce has created in their families. Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H2: People who have had a recent divorce will be less likely to volunteer than those who have not recently had a divorce.

Coping with widowhood can be similar in many ways to coping with divorce. However, widowhood has the potential for even stronger negative effects in a person's life. Widowhood is one of life's most stressful events (Dohrenwend et al. 1978; Holmes and Rahe 1967). Many studies have found the negative effects of widowhood to be even greater than the negative effects of getting divorced (Farnsworth, Pett, and Lund 1989; Gove and Shin 1989; Kitson 2000). These negative effects can include a decrease in physical health (Liu and Umberson, 2008), increased morbidity and mortality rates (Preigerson et al., 1997), and other negative psychological effects (Turvey et al., 1999). Being widowed completely alters a person's life and daily routines, and the shock and sadness that accompany the death of a spouse can take a huge toll on a person.

After being widowed, a person has to re-adjust all of his or her daily routines and decisions and must compensate for the work being done by the departed spouse (Carey, 1979-1980). This process of reconstructing a person's life in the wake of losing a spouse can lead to many changes in a person's

behavior, especially their social patterns and volunteering. Empirical research in this area has been rare and the results have been mixed. Utz, Carr, Nesse and Wortman (2002) compared people who lost a spouse with people who were married continuously over the same time period. They found that widowed persons increased their informal social activity following the loss of the spouse, but their formal activity level (including participation in volunteering) remained unchanged after the spouse died. Another study of widowed persons found that the death of spouse tends to decrease political participation and voting, but that this effect depends on the political participation of the spouse when he or she was still alive (Stoker and Jennings, 1995). Musick and Wilson (2008) find that widows have a lower volunteering rate than people in other marital status brackets, including divorcees, those who have never been married, and married people. Because widowhood is such a difficult and traumatic life experience, I expect that widows will decrease their volunteering in order to have more mental and emotional space to grieve.

H3: People who have recently been widowed will be less likely to volunteer than other single people who have not been recently widowed.

Having another death in the family (besides a spouse) can be similarly traumatic. These events can include losing a child or losing a grandparent or other adult that lives with the family. One of the ways that people can potentially cope with a death in the family is through reaching out and doing work in the community. A study of women after the death of their only child revealed that 63 percent of these women volunteer their time through some type of organization, and 39 percent of those women started their volunteer work after the death of their child (Infeld & Penner, 1996). Thus, volunteering can serve as a means for people to reinvest themselves in life after a traumatic event like losing a family member.

Having an ill or disabled elderly family member living in the household can be a difficult thing for a family, especially if that person is ill or disabled. In those instances, adult family members might be spending a considerable amount of time in caregiving to the elderly family member. The bulk of this work often falls on the women of the family. Caregiving activities can be very time-consuming for those providing care. One conservative estimate from the National Family Caregiving Survey indicates that an average amount of time spent in caregiving per week is 17.9 hours (Arno, Levine, & Memmott, 1999). One survey of seriously ill patients who had been discharged for home care found that in 20 percent of the families of these critically-ill patients a family member had to quit a job or make another serious life change in order to care for the ill family member (Covinsky et al., 1994). Thus, while an elderly family member is in the home, adult family members who are doing the caregiving might need to decrease their volunteering activities. Empirical evidence has shown this to be true; Taniguchi (2006) found that among women, giving care to an elderly relative was negatively related to volunteering. However, after the elderly family member has passed away, adult members of the household

can return to their previous volunteering habits. Having a death in the family might also provide more opportunities for volunteering. In many instances women's caregiving responsibilities have served as a springboard for political activity, especially advocacy on behalf of causes that would benefit a disabled family member (Gordon, 1994; Lister, 1997; Mink, 1995; Skocpol, 1992). In addition, after an ill family member dies, the time previously spent caregiving can easily be transferred to more formal helping behavior through volunteering. Thus, the final hypothesis is:

H4: Persons who have had a recent death in the household (other than the death of a spouse) will be more likely to volunteer than those who have not had a recent death in the family.

Data, Variables and Methodology

I use two datasets to test these hypotheses. The first dataset comes from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics Philanthropy Module (COPPS), commissioned by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. The COPPS data are collected every other year by the Survey Research Center at the Institute for Social Research, located at the University of Michigan. In 1968, the study commenced with a survey of 4,800 households and all the individuals in those households, and the PSID has continued to track these individuals, their spouses, children and cohabitators through the years, even as they split off to form new families. Beginning in 2001, the PSID included a philanthropy module that asks questions about giving, volunteering, and religious behavior. The analysis in this paper uses data from the 2005 wave of the COPPS data with a few variables pulled in from the 2003 wave. The 2003 COPPS data covers volunteering done from January 2002 to December 2002, and the 2005 COPPS data reports on volunteering done between January 2004 and December 2004. The volunteering information in the COPPS data only pertains to household heads and their spouses, which represents a little more than 11,000 people.

The second dataset is the Current Population Survey's (CPS) September Volunteering Supplement. The Current Population Survey is collected monthly by the Census Bureau and is primarily designed to gather information about employment in the United States. In many months, the CPS questionnaire includes questions on a variety of other topics. Since 2002, the September supplement of the CPS has included questions on the incidence and intensity of volunteering. For the analysis in this paper, I use the 2005 CPS data to more closely correspond with the 2005 COPPS data. The 2005 CPS covers volunteering done from September 2004 to September 2005. The CPS collects volunteering information from all adult household members ages 15 and above. Approximately 90,000 people are asked the volunteering questions each year.

The rationale for using two datasets for the analysis in this paper is that neither dataset will allow me to test all of the hypotheses simultaneously. I use the COPPS data to test the first hypothesis (having a child born), second hypothesis (getting divorced) and the fourth hypothesis (having a death in the

family). Because the COPPS data are longitudinal data, I can create variables representing whether any of these life events have happened since the previous wave of the study (between 2003 and 2005). This allows me to directly test the effect of these life events on volunteering. I cannot use the COPPS data to adequately explore the influence of being widowed on volunteering because there were so few widows in the COPPS data. Therefore, I use the CPS data to test the hypothesis about being widowed. Although the CPS data do not allow me to sort out those who have been recently widowed or to compare their volunteering from one wave to another, the CPS data do allow for closer subgroup analysis of older and younger widows because of its much larger overall sample size.

Dependent Variables. There are two primary dependent variables used in this analysis. The first dependent variable is a binary measure of whether the person volunteered during the previous year. Both the COPPS and CPS questionnaires include a question asking about volunteering done during the previous year. Volunteers are coded as 1 on this binary variable. The second dependent variable is the log of hours volunteered during the previous year. The COPPS and CPS studies collect this information in slightly different ways, but in each dataset the number of hours volunteered across all organizations during the previous year can easily be computed. The COPPS data ask people about volunteering done for seven specific types of organizations—religious, youth, senior, health, organizations for people in need of basic necessities, social organizations and other. Then respondents are asked to indicate how often they volunteered for each type of organization and how many hours they spent volunteering for each type of organization. The hours volunteered were summed across the seven different types of organizations to create the hours volunteered variable. In the CPS data, respondents are asked to list all of the organizations that they volunteered for and then to classify the organization into one of seventeen categories—religious, youth, health, animals, etc. Respondents then indicate how often they volunteered for each organization and the number of hours spent volunteering for each type of organization. The hours spent volunteering for each organization were summed to create the total hours volunteered variable in the CPS dataset. Because the hours volunteered variable is skewed, I took the log of the variable to approximate a normal distribution.

Independent Variables. The first set of independent variables used in the COPPS data are the life event dummy variables. The first variable is a dummy variable representing whether a child was born to both the head and the head's spouse since the 2003 wave (child born = 1, no child born = 0). The second is another dummy variable indicating whether the person has gone through a divorce since the 2003 wave (divorced since 2003 = 1, not divorced since 2003 = 0). I also include a dummy variable indicating whether the person was widowed since the 2003 wave (widowed since 2003 = 1, not widowed since 2003 = 0). These two variables were based on a question in the COPPS data that asks about changes in the household head's marital status since the previous wave of data collection. The final life event variable is another

dummy variable capturing whether there has been a death in the family since 2003 (death in the family since 2003 = 1, no death in the family since 2003 = 0), not including the death of either the household head or the head's spouse. This variable represents the death of another family member—either a child or another adult living in the household.

As a control variable, I also include a variable capturing whether the person indicated that they volunteered in the 2003 wave (coded as 1 for volunteers and 0 otherwise). The other independent control variables in this analysis capture both individual and household demographic information. The first variable is a dummy variable indicating whether the person is male (male = 1, female = 0). The second variable is the respondent's age at the time of the 2005 interview. I also include a variable that is the age variable squared in order to more appropriately approximate the non-linear relationship between age and volunteering. Next, the analysis also includes a dummy variable indicating whether the person is white (white = 1, other races = 0). Another dummy variable captures whether the person is employed fulltime (employed = 1, not employed = 0). The next measure comprises the number of years of school that the person has completed.

The first household characteristic variable is the log of household income during the previous year. Next, I include a dummy variable for whether or not the person is married and living with his or her spouse (married = 1, not married = 0). The number of children under the age of 18 in the household is also included along with a dummy variable indicating whether there are preschool children (under the age of 5) in the home (presence of preschoolers = 1, no preschoolers = 0). Finally, the last household variable is a dummy variable indicating whether the family owns their home or not (owns home = 1, rents or other = 0).

There are a few differences between the variables used in the analysis with the CPS data compared to the analysis with the COPPS data because of data constraints. The CPS analysis does not include the child born and death in the family life event dummy variables because they are not included in the CPS questionnaire. Pertaining to life events, the CPS includes a dummy variable indicating whether the person is divorced (coded as 1) and another dummy variable indicating whether the person is separated (coded as 1). I also include a dummy variable for widowed persons (coded as 1). With the inclusion of the married dummy variable, the excluded marital status category in this case is people who are single and have never married. This will allow me to make comparisons between persons who are divorced and widowed relative to other single people. I also include an interaction term to capture potential differences in volunteering behaviors between older widowed persons and younger ones. It is likely that younger widows will behave differently than older widows. This interaction term was created by multiplying the widow dummy variable by the person's age. The only other difference between the variables used in the CPS and COPPS analysis is that the CPS has no measure of volunteering in a previous wave because the CPS are not longitudinal data.

Methodology. To look at the impact of life events on a person's choice to volunteer during the previous year (a binary variable), I use logit regression and report the odds ratios. For the second dependent variable—the log of hours volunteered during the previous year—I use tobit regression because the data are censored at 0 hours volunteered. Survey weights were used for all analyses conducted with both datasets. The analysis is repeated separately for volunteering done for religious organizations, secular organizations and all organizations pooled together.

Results

Table 1 shows some basic descriptive statistics for both the 2005 COPPS and 2005 CPS data.

Insert Table 1 about here

The demographic profiles in Table 1 follow the patterns that we would expect based on the volunteering literature. Volunteers in both of these samples are more likely to be female than male. In the COPPS data, volunteers are 42 percent male compared to 46 percent of non-volunteers who are male. In the CPS data, 41 percent of volunteers are male compared to 50 percent of non-volunteers. The mean age for both volunteers and non-volunteers are approximately the same in both datasets. Volunteers are also more likely to be white—73 percent of COPPS volunteers and 88 percent of CPS volunteers. A higher percentage of volunteers are employed than non-volunteers—78 percent vs. 71 percent in COPPS and 68 percent vs. 60 percent in CPS. Volunteers also come from households with higher incomes—the average income for volunteers in the COPPS data are approximately \$26,000 higher than the average income for non-volunteers and the income difference in the CPS data between these two groups is \$17,000. A higher percentage of volunteers are married (75 percent in COPPS and 63 percent in CPS) than their counterpart non-volunteers (65 percent married in COPPS and 50 percent married in CPS). Volunteers and non-volunteers in the COPPS data are not significantly different in terms of the number of children they have, but in the CPS data, volunteer households have more children on average (.7 in volunteer households vs. .4 in non-volunteer households). In the COPPS data, a lower percentage of volunteers come from households with preschool children (20 percent) than non-volunteers (24 percent), but there is very little difference in the CPS data in terms of the percent of volunteers and non-volunteers living in households with preschoolers. Volunteers also generally own their own homes. Also, 57 percent of volunteers in 2005 also reported volunteering in the 2003 wave compared to 14 percent of non-volunteers in the 2005 wave who said they volunteered in 2003.

The results from the logit and tobit regressions for the COPPS data are reported in Table 2. The first three columns of Table 2 show the odds ratios for the logit regression run using the binary dependent variable of whether the person volunteered during the previous year. The first column shows the results for religious organizations, the second column shows the regression results for secular volunteering and the third column presents the regression

results for volunteering done for all organizations. The last three columns of Table 2 show the tobit regression coefficients for the regressions using the hours volunteered during the previous year as the dependent variable. Again, the results are broken down into volunteer hours for only religious organizations, secular organizations and all organizations.

Insert Table 2 about here

The odds ratios in the first three columns represent the change in the odds of the dependent variable while holding the all other variables in the model constant. If an odds ratio is greater than one, this means that a one unit increase in the independent variable (holding all other variables constant) makes a higher score on the dependent variable more likely. An odds ratio between 0 and 1 means that a one unit increase in the independent variable (holding all other variables constant) is associated with a lower score on the dependent variable. For instance, in the first column of Table 2, the odds ratio for the male dummy variable is .67, which means that the odds of a male volunteering is .67 less than the odds of a female volunteering. The odds ratio for the employment dummy variable is 1.25, which means that the odds of an employed person volunteering is 1.25 more than the odds of an unemployed person volunteering.

The first hypothesis is that having a child born into the family will decrease volunteering. This hypothesis is supported by the data. Having a child born into the family decreased the odds of a person volunteering for both secular (odds ratio = .54, $p < .001$) and religious organizations (odds ratio = .68, $p < .05$). Having a child born into the family also decreased the number of hours volunteered for both religious (-53.52, $p < .10$) and secular organizations (-101.38, $p < .01$). The second hypothesis is that divorced individuals will be less likely to volunteer than other single individuals. This hypothesis is not supported by the COPPS data. This variable was not statistically significant in any of the logistic regressions. In the tobit regression looking at the hours volunteered for secular organizations, the regression coefficient on the divorced dummy variable was marginally significant (60.37, $p < .10$). However, other than that, there appears to be no relationship between getting divorced and volunteering. The fourth hypothesis is that having a death in the family (other than the household head or spouse) will increase volunteering. Again, this hypothesis is not supported by the data. The death in the family dummy variable was not statistically significant in any of these regressions.

To test the third hypothesis, we must use the CPS data. The COPPS data have too few widows to make statistically analyses of these subgroups reliable. Table 3 shows the regression results using the CPS data. This table mirrors the information presented in Table 2 with the addition of the widowed dummy variable and the widowed/age interaction term and the exclusion of the variable about volunteering done in 2003.

Insert Table 3 about here

Hypothesis 3 states that those who are widowed will be less likely to volunteer than other single people. To more closely examine this hypothesis, I included the widowed/age interaction term to separate the volunteering

behaviors of older widows from younger widows. Given that older people have a higher likelihood of being widowed and are more likely to expect such an occurrence and given that they are probably in a more financially secure position, it is likely that being widowed will impact these two groups differently. As seen in Table 3, this does turn out to be the case. Table 3 shows that widows are much more likely to volunteer overall and especially to volunteer for religious organizations. The odds ratio of a widow volunteering for a religious organization is 3.97 ($p < .001$), so the odds of a widow volunteering for a religious organization are 3.97 times greater than the odds of a single, never married person volunteering for a religious organization. Widows also spent more time volunteering. Widows particularly spent more time volunteering for religious organizations (197.35, $p < .01$) and overall (226.91, $p < .001$). Widows also spend marginally more hours volunteering for secular organizations (101.79, $p < .10$). Older widows, however, decreased their volunteering. The odds ratios for the widow/age interaction term in the logistic regressions all showed a slight decrease in the odds of volunteering, especially for religious organizations. Older widows also volunteered fewer hours overall for both religious (-2.52, $p < .01$) and secular (-1.86, $p < .05$) organizations, although this effect is much smaller than the effect of being widowed on hours volunteered.

The CPS data will not allow me to replicate the analysis testing the first and fourth hypotheses, however, we can see that effect of being divorced on volunteering the CPS (hypothesis 2). In the CPS data, divorced individuals are less likely to volunteer for religious organizations (odds ratio .87, $p < .05$). However, the divorced dummy variable is not statistically significant in any of the other regressions. Thus, the CPS data provide some mixed support for the second hypothesis, but generally provide the same results as the COPPS data.

Discussion

This paper contributes to our understanding of volunteering behavior by helping us to understand how changes, especially major changes, in the structure and composition of families and households impact volunteering done by family members. Major life events such as having a child born into the family, going through a divorce or being widowed, or having another family member die, can have a major impact on a person's daily activities. These events might also alter a person's motivations to volunteer. In this paper, I find that having a child born recently into the family has a negative impact on volunteering and hours volunteered. This effect is above and beyond the normal negative impact of having preschool children at home. Really young children require a great deal of time and attention, and these time constraints make it difficult for parents to volunteer. A newborn baby is even more dependent upon the parents and disrupts the normal family routines and sleeping patterns and forces families into an adjustment period after the birth of an infant. It appears that this adjustment period corresponds with a decrease in volunteering and the hours volunteered.

The results about the relationship between divorce and volunteering were mixed. The COPPS data showed that divorce is not related to a person's likelihood of volunteering, but that divorce does slightly increase the number of hours volunteered at secular organizations. The CPS data show that divorcees are less likely than people who are single and never married to volunteer for religious organizations. These results are difficult to puzzle out and could indicate that there are several different pathways that a person can take after a divorce, depending on a person's emotional and mental health, employment situation, family situation, and social networks. For instance, social networks are related to adjustment patterns after a divorce (Duffy and Smith, 1990). Having a strong social network not only helps divorcees to adjust positively to divorce, but these relationships can also serve to prevent symptoms of maladjustment (Krumrel, et. al. 2007). Social networks are also strongly linked with volunteering. Previous research has shown that a person's social networks matter a great deal in the decision to volunteer because people will volunteer in order to help or please a friend or acquaintance or to benefit a family member (Nichols & King, 1998; Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994; Wymer, 1997). As social networks shift after a divorce, volunteering can shift too—either by increasing or decreasing hours volunteered for particular organizations. More research will be needed to fully explore these results and to determine the circumstances under which a divorced person either increases or decreases their volunteering.

One reason for the mixed results regarding divorce and volunteering could be limitations in the data. Although the COPPS data are longitudinal, the waves are two years apart. Therefore it is impossible to distinguish people who have been divorced within the last few months from those who had been divorced close to two years. The CPS data also do not tell us how long it has been since the person has been divorced, so we also cannot distinguish newer divorces from older divorces. The length of time since the divorce could make a difference in the results, especially given the cycles already present in volunteering behaviors.

Although I hypothesized that being widowed was negatively related to volunteering, the CPS data show that widows are more likely to volunteer, especially for religious organizations. They also increase the amount of time they spend volunteering for these organizations. Volunteering can potentially help the grieving and adjustment process after being widowed. Musick and Wilson (2003) found that volunteering helped to lower the depression rates of people over the age of 65 because their volunteering helped them to feel more socially integrated. Volunteers have been shown to be happier, more satisfied with their lives, to have increased self-esteems, and to generally score higher on measures of well-being than non-volunteers (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). In addition to these mental and emotional health benefits, volunteers also experience positive physical health benefits from their volunteer work (Sherraden & Eberly, 1982; Wilson & Musick, 1999). It is possible that widows are seeking many of these positive benefits of volunteering after the death of their spouse. It is interesting, too, that widows are primarily increasing their

volunteering for religious organizations. This could mean that widows seek comfort and solace by being more engaged in their religious communities after the death of a spouse. The effect of widowhood on volunteering also needs to be explored more in future research. Other factors that might affect the relationship between widowhood and volunteering are the age when the person loses his or her spouse, the volunteering and activity level of the spouse who has passed away, the nature of the relationship between the two individuals, and the kinds of volunteer work being done (Musick and Wilson, 2008).

Overall, the main message of this paper is that some life events change volunteering behaviors more than other life events do. The birth of a child decreases volunteering but being widowed increase volunteering for religious organizations. Divorce seems to impact volunteering in unpredictable ways, and the death of another family member does not impact volunteering. This paper helps to further our knowledge about how life events influence volunteering. Future research can continue this line of inquiry by determining how the length of time after a life event is related to volunteering. Other inquiries can be made into the varied ways that people respond to a divorce or death in the family and which of those pathways might lead toward more volunteering or might decrease a person's volunteering.

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Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics						
	COPPS Data			CPS Data		
	Volunteers	Non-Volunteers	Overall	Volunteers	Non-Volunteers	Overall
Percent male	42	46	45	41	50	47
Mean age	45	44	44	45	45	45
Percent white	73	63	65	88	82	84
Percent employed	78	71	73	68	60	62
Mean grade completed	14.0	12.7	13.1	14.1	12.6	13.1
Mean household income	\$86,196	\$63,098	\$69,798	\$69,677	\$52,464	\$57,975
Percent married	75	65	68	63	50	54
Mean number of children	1.0	.9	.9	.7	.4	.5
Percent households with preschool children	20	24	23	13	12	12
Percent own home	75	62	66	83	71	74
Percent volunteered in 2003	57	14	27	—	—	—

Table 2: Regression Results for COPPS Data

Variables	Person volunteered last year (odds ratios)			Hours volunteered last year (tobit coefficients)		
	Religious Organizations	Secular Organizations	All Organizations	Religious Organizations	Secular Organizations	All Organizations
Child born since 2003	.68*	.54***	.53***	-53.52 [†]	-101.38**	-81.90*
Divorced since 2003	1.10	1.21	1.20	-18.40	60.37 [†]	54.97
Death in family since 2003	.87	1.33	1.11	-61.15	-30.99	-31.64
Volunteered in 2003/Hours volunteered in 2003	14.34***	5.87***	6.54***	.57***	.37***	.43***
Male	.67***	.91	.73***	-53.90***	-57.03***	-57.96***
Age	1.02*	.99	1.01	3.54 [†]	.57	1.56
Age-squared	.99	.99	.99	-.01	-.01	-.01
White	.73***	1.75***	1.11 [†]	-62.04***	51.22***	9.65
Employed	1.25*	.99	1.13 [†]	36.84*	-14.69	9.97
Highest grade completed	1.14***	1.16***	1.19***	30.06***	46.49***	45.54***
Household income (log)	.99	1.10*	.04	4.03	25.73***	23.94**
Married	1.45***	.82	1.12 [†]	65.17***	-38.01**	-7.65
Number of children	1.27***	1.22***	1.32***	47.53***	59.28***	66.50***
Presence of preschool children	.75**	.72***	.66***	-69.63***	-121.37***	-123.94***
Own home	1.29**	1.10	1.23***	57.19***	35.02*	55.10***
R ²	.25	.13	.19	.03	.02	.02
N	11,299	11,354	11,354	11,313	11,317	11,279
LR Chi ² / F	2,422.19***	1,205.17***	2,665.26***	963.20***	967.64***	1,222.52***

Table 3: Regression Results for CPS Data

Variables	Person volunteered last year (odds ratios)			Hours volunteered last year (tobit coefficients)		
	Religious Organizations	Secular Organizations	All Organizations	Religious Organizations	Secular Organizations	All Organizations
Widowed	3.97***	1.40	2.76***	197.35**	101.79 [†]	226.91***
Widowed*Age	.98***	.99 [†]	.98***	-2.52**	-1.86*	-3.43***
Divorced	.87*	1.06	.97	-12.14	7.18	-2.68
Separated	.95	1.02	.99	-12.36	-.27	-6.66
Married	1.53***	.90**	1.13***	71.88***	-14.23*	23.30***
Male	.71***	.74***	.65***	-9.17*	-42.38***	-62.62***
Age	.98***	.98***	.97***	-1.62 [†]	-3.60***	-5.07***
Age-squared	1.00***	1.00**	1.00***	.03**	.03***	.06***
White	1.09 [†]	1.47***	1.44***	-48.13***	56.56***	52.32***
Employed	1.08*	1.01	1.03	-8.08	-7.33	-5.74
Highest grade completed	1.08***	1.14***	1.16***	-1.72	21.96***	24.92***
Household income (log)	1.06**	1.29***	1.25***	-22.09***	39.34***	32.39***
Number of children	1.16***	1.27***	1.38***	.87	42.18***	48.13***
Presence of preschool children	.79***	.63***	.56***	-2.09	-82.30***	-85.79***
Own home	1.67***	1.18***	1.47***	32.22***	22.13***	49.48***
R ²	.04	.05	.08	.004	.01	.01
N	79,981	80,140	80,140	24,578	79,064	88,865
LR Chi ² / F	1,802.12***	3,450.06***	5,865.84***	22.02***	69.01***	117.55***