

Understanding the motivation of sport volunteers: Toward an extended conceptual model and measurement matrix

Jaeyeon Hwang, Florida State University

Jim Hinterlong, Florida State University

**Management/Leadership
Session 16**

**Friday, May 30, 2008
3:00 PM - 3:25 PM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 413**

Volunteer activities are essential elements to the effective functioning of sport organizations (Cuskelly, McIntyre, & Boag, 1998; Chelladurai, 1999). In particular, many sporting events, ranging in scope from regional to mega-sporting competitions, would not be feasible without the expertise, skills, knowledge, and labor of volunteers (Strigas, Jackson, & Ratliffe, 2002). The effective and efficient management of volunteer capacity enables organizations to achieve their goals and mission. Volunteers decide whether to assist in this work based upon a variety of factors, responding to the salient aspects of the volunteer opportunity (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Sherraden, Tang, & Thirupathy, 2003). Therefore, understanding the motivation of volunteers is essential for sport organizations attempting to recruit, manage, and retain volunteers. The aim of this paper is to present a conceptual model of volunteer motivation that extends prior, more general frameworks to include components reflecting the unique aspects of sport.

Previous studies of volunteer motivation (Caldwell & Andereck, 1994; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Kemp, 2002) did not present a universal typology for volunteer motivation, but most studies included the following three motivation forms: (a) altruistic, with a goal of increasing others' welfare; (b) egoistic, with a goal of increasing the volunteer's welfare; and (c) social obligation, with a goal of repaying a debt to society (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Knoke & Prensky, 1984; Parker, 1997; Phillips, 1982). While this construction of volunteer motivation is used in the sport management literature, it was generated from studies examining general volunteers instead of investigating volunteers in sport. Green and Chalip (1998) noted this limitation in sport management research. In short, most studies did not reflect or explore the unique characteristics of sport volunteer motivation (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Kemp, 2002; Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail, 2007).

Systematic investigation and theory development is needed to better understand the precursors, process, and consequences of volunteering in sport, because sport organizations have different characteristics compared to other non-profit organizations. We propose that the centrality of "sport" itself differentiates sport organizations from other organizational forms. Katz and Kahn (1978) asserted that people motivated by values are at increased likelihood for internalization of system goals. In the same vein, we suggest that the values of sport can influence volunteers' motivation through cognition and affective processes.

We offer a conceptual framework, operationalized as a matrix, to capture the complex, multidimensional motivation of sport volunteers. We expand upon the three core motivations of general volunteering: altruism, egoism, and social obligation. First, we outline three motivational foci: the sport organization, the sporting event, and the sport itself. We posit how aspects of sport, including associated values and social status effects, may be uniquely important to volunteers - independent of the features of the sport organization or event. We then consider how the three core motivations may be manifest among volunteers across these three foci. We conclude with recommendations for using this framework to support future research, such as the development of new lines of inquiry and approaches to measurement.

This conceptual model allows us to differentiate how the three general motivations shape volunteers' attraction to sporting organizations, events, and particular sports. Distinguishing volunteers with varying levels of each general motivation associated with each focus measures sport volunteers' motivation in a more accurate and detailed manner. We envision this model can be used to generate a motivation profile for sport volunteers, which will differ from any produced considering only general motivations. Motivation profiling in turn would allow more efficient and effective volunteer recruitment, fit assessment and segmentation, and improved retention. These enhancements would better enable sport organizations to direct the considerable energies and efforts of their volunteers toward organizational goals and mission.