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Differences in Interpersonal Values Among Students Involved in Volunteer Service

R. Thomas Fitch

A study of college students involved in community service volunteer activities found that students' interpersonal values differed relative to whether they were involved through religious, Social Greek, or service organizations.

Student participation in volunteer community service activities has received increasing attention recently (Dodge, 1990). More and more campuses are establishing or expanding volunteer programs, often under the auspices of student affairs divisions. On the national level, the Campus Compact: The Project for Public and Community Service and the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) have been active in promoting volunteerism on campus.

It appears that a significant minority of students are involved in some type of volunteer activity at some point in their college careers. One report (Independent Sector, 1985) found that 43% of Americans in the age group 18-24 had volunteered in the previous 12 months. A survey of college students by the Carnegie Foundation (1984) reported that, since entering college, 29% of students had worked with a charity organization. In a study at one large state university (Fitch, 1989) 16% of the students had participated in an organized volunteer activity within the previous four weeks.

Two studies based on Kohlberg's (1976) stages of moral development have shown that experience in service programs leads to greater moral development in college students. Duffy (1982) followed students involved in a service program and found that they had significantly higher gains in moral development than did a control group. Gorman, Duffy, and Heffernan (1982) followed students enrolled in two courses, one which required participation in a service to the disadvantaged activity and one which had no service component. Students in the course with a service activity displayed significantly higher gains in moral development than the other students (using a pre-test/post-test control group design).

A comprehensive review of the literature on personality characteristics of community volunteers was completed by Allen and Rushton (1983). They reviewed 20 studies that compared volunteers and non-volunteers and found that the former were more empathic, had more internalized moral standards, had a more positive attitude toward self, perceived themselves as more self-

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efficacious and competent, and were more emotionally stable than non-volunteers. In one study involving values, Knapp and Holzberg (1964) found that volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers on the *Study of Values* (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1951), Religious and Social Values scales, and significantly lower on the Economic Value scale.

Fitch (1987) found that college students who volunteer are not very different from the general student population, although volunteers are also likely to be female and live on campus. Volunteers are also likely to have been influenced to volunteer by a role model in their lives (parent, teacher, friend).

If campus administrators can identify the values of students involved in community service, that may provide a clue to increasing the quantity and quality of participation. Fitch (1989) found that volunteers are significantly higher than non-volunteers on the Interpersonal values of conformity and benevolence and significantly lower in independence. Are there different values and motivations associated with the type (vehicle) of organization through which the volunteering is accomplished? This study assesses the interpersonal values of a sample volunteers who are involved in community service activities through a variety of organizations.

Method

As part of a larger study on student involvement in extracurricular activities, 285 student at a large southeastern university completed two instruments: the Survey of Interpersonal Values (SIV) (Gordon, 1976) and the Extracurricular Involvement Inventory (EII) (Winston & Massaro, 1987).

The SIV yields scores on six scales of interpersonal values: Support, Conformity, Recognition, Independence, Benevolence, and Leadership. Gordon (1976, p.1) defines the scales as follows:

Support (S): Being treated with understanding, receiving encouragement from other people, being treated with kindness and consideration.

Conformation (C): Doing what is socially correct, following regulations closely, doing what is accepted and proper, being a conformist.

Recognition (R): Being looked up to and admired, being considered important, attracting favorable notice, achieving recognition.

Independence (I): Having the right to do whatever one wants to do, being free to make one's own decisions, being able to do things in one's own way.

Benevolence (B): Doing things for other people, sharing with others, helping the unfortunate, being generous.

Leadership (L): Being in charge of other people, having authority over others, being in a position of leadership or power.

The EII measures both the quality and quantity of student participant in extracurricular activities. Students are asked to complete a set of questions for each activity they have been involved in during the previous four weeks.

Of the 285 students in the sample, 45 were involved in volunteer community service activities. It was apparent that the organizations through which the involvement occurred could be easily divided into three categories: (1) those organizations whose main function is service (e.g., Circle K, Alpha Phi Omega, the institution's umbrella volunteer group which coordinates various service activities), (2) religious organizations (e.g., the Baptist Student Union, the Wesleyan Foundation), and (3) Social Greek groups whose main function is not service but who do sponsor some community service activities. All students in the sample were involved in a volunteer activity through a campus-related organization. Seven students who indicated volunteer involvement through an off-campus group were not included in the study.

The research hypothesis for this study was: there are no significant differences among students involved in community service through religious organizations, social Greek organizations, and service organizations on the following interpersonal values:

- A. Support
- B. Conformity
- C. Recognition
- D. Independence
- E. Benevolence
- F. Leadership

The hypothesis was tested in the null form. A series of six one way (1 X 3) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) was run with the type of organization as the independent variable and one of the SIV scales as the dependent variable for each ANOVA. Post-hoc t-tests were performed on each ANOVA with significance at the .05 level of probability.

Results

Of the 45 students involved in volunteer community service, 16 (36%) did so through service organizations, 13 (29%) through social Greek organizations, 10 (22%) through religious organizations, and 6 (13%) through some combination of the three. The average amount of time spent in volunteer service was 7.05 hours per student for the four weeks previous to completing the EII.

For the purpose of analysis, the combination group of six students was not used. The ANOVAs revealed no statistically significant differences among the three groups for the scales of Support, Conformity, or Leadership. Significant differences were found for the scales of Recognition, Independence and Benevolence. A summary of the six ANOVAs is reported in Table 1.

The post-hoc t-tests which were performed for each ANOVA with significant differences revealed that each of the three vehicles (groups) for involvement was significantly higher than the other two on one scale. The social Greek group was higher on Recognition, the service group was higher on Independence, and the religious group was higher on Benevolence. These results are reported in Table 2.

Discussion and Practical Implications

If institutions of higher education and student affairs professionals accept the premise that volunteer community service is a valuable experience for college students, this study may have important implications for improving the quality and quantity of student involvement in service activities.

Students may become involved in volunteer activities through a variety of avenues or vehicles. This study revealed involvement through three types of organizations, each with a different purpose and focus. The values of involved students were different depending upon the type of organization (or vehicle) through which the service was accomplished.

The higher score on the Recognition scale of the SIV for the students involved through social Greek groups implies that these students are more likely to value being admired and attracting favorable notice. In addition to other reasons for service involvement, it appears that members of Greek organizations may be involved because they see service activities as providing them with the favorable recognition they value. Student affairs professionals should be aware of this in promoting service through these organizations, perhaps by providing some type of formal recognition and campus-wide reward system for service involvement by Greek students.

The students involved through organizations that have service as a primary purpose scored higher than did the others on the Independence scale. This is congruent with the nature of some such organizations, which serve as coordinating bodies for service activities. These volunteers are allowed to serve with a high degree of independence; there is often little group cohesion or contact in such organizations. Institutions may choose to structure such umbrella coordinating bodies so that the independence of volunteers and potential volunteers is preserved. This type of arrangement allows students to choose the time and manner of involvement without restrictions that may limit a sense of independence.

The higher Benevolence score for students involved through religious groups is understandable given the emphasis on serving others in many religious organizations and denominations. This is also congruent with the demographic finding in one study (Fitch, 1989) that students who give a higher rating to the importance of religion in their lives are more likely to be in service type activities.

Certainly, institutions affiliated with religious denominations have student religious organizations, and most secular institutions also allow religious student groups to operate on campus, although with varying degrees of official recognition. Regardless of the type of institution, student affairs professionals can encourage service involvement of this type through an appreciation for the diversity that religious organizations provide to a campus environment.

Further research on student involvement in community service is a necessity. This study is limited by its small sample size but the statistically significant results point toward important implications for institutions interested in

providing an environment which rewards such involvement. Today's college student is sophisticated enough to realize whether his or her institution values volunteer service or merely pays lip service to the idea. It is our challenge and responsibility as student development educators to strive for campus environments which reflect humanitarian values.

Note: Campus Compact can be contacted at Box G, Brown University Providence, RI, 02912. COOL can be contacted at 180 18th St. NW, Suite 705, Washington, DC, 20006.

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Table 1.
 Summary of Analyses of Variance for Vehicle
 of Service Activity Involvement: SIV Scales

Source	df	MeanSquare	F-Ratio	p
Support Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	17.23	0.84	.45
Error	36	20.63		
Conformity Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	3.95	0.15	.86
Error	36	26.64		
Recognition Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	181.77	7.04	.00
Error	36	25.81		
Independence Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	206.01	5.07	.01
Error	36	40.60		
Benevolence Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	244.25	8.27	.00
Error	36	29.55		
Leadership Scale				
Vehicle of Involvement	2	31.78	0.85	.44
Error	36	37.34		

Table 2

Post-hoc t-test for SIV Scales with Significant Differences on ANOVAs						
Recognition Means						
Religious = 17.88			Greek = 20.78			
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Service = 17.95	0.28	24	0.78	-3.15	27	0.00
Religious = 17.88				-3.77	21	0.00
Independence Means						
Religious = 17.88			Greek = 11.46			
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Service = 18.44	2.45	24	0.02	2.85	27	0.01
Religious = 12.40				0.35	21	0.73
Benevolence Means						
Religious = 26.00			Greek = 17.08			
	t	df	p	t	df	p
Service = 18.94	-3.94	24	0.00	0.83	27	0.42
Religious = 26.00				4.48	21	0.00