

Jonathan E. Booth, Kyoung Won Park, Theresa M. Glomb Employer-supported volunteering benefits: gift exchange among employers, employees, and volunteer organizations

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Employer-Supported Volunteering Benefits:
Gift Exchange among Employers, Employees and Volunteer Organizations

Abstract

Gift exchange theory is utilized to explain the growing trend of employers offering employer-supported volunteering (ESV) benefits. This paper views these benefits through the lens of gift exchange and discusses the creation of exchange relationships between the employer and employee and between the volunteer organization and employee. Hypotheses derived from the perspective of the employee are tested with a nationally representative sample of volunteers ($n = 3,658$). Findings suggest ESV benefits are positively related to hours volunteered by the employee. Volunteer hours predict employee perceptions of skill acquisition. Perceptions of skill acquisition are positively related to perceptions of job success and employer recognition. We discuss implications for business, employees, and volunteer organizations with an emphasis on human resources management policy and practice.

Introduction

In an April 2006 communication to Home Depot's employees, Bob Nardelli, former Chairman, President and CEO, showcased the efforts of the corporate volunteer program, *Team Depot* (Nardelli, 2006). Nardelli discussed *Team Depot's* Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts after Hurricane Katrina and described how such projects have not only benefited ravaged communities but have also developed new skills for employees and built relationships within the company and community. The Home Depot volunteer program facilitates employees volunteering their time as well as provides equipment, supplies and financing for volunteer projects. To ensure it meets its mission to "improve everything [they] touch," Home Depot budgeted \$15 million (not including salaries) in 2005 for volunteer activities and had a dedicated staff person at each site/store to arrange community outreach, thereby facilitating 2 million employee volunteer hours (Points of Light Foundation, 2005).

Home Depot is just one example of employers supporting their employees' volunteer activities by providing employer-supported volunteering (ESV) benefits. In a 2006 benefits survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 20 percent of 368 human resources practitioners reported their employer provides paid time off to volunteer (Gurchiek, 2007). In the 2007 Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey of 1,000 Gen Y individuals (ages 18-26), approximately 67 percent of participants indicated that an employer providing volunteer opportunities is a factor in selecting employers for whom to work; 39 percent replied that their current employer offers ESV benefits; and 28 percent reported that their current employer uses volunteer programs for employee skill and professional development (Gurchiek, 2007). According to Hewitt Associates, the number of firms offering ESV benefits grows 25% annually (Koss-Feder, 2000). Thus, the practice of ESV programs is of importance for both HR practitioners and organizational members.

This phenomenon is also global. In 2000, Business in the Community, a UK non-profit whose 700 members are all international employers, reported that 89% of its members have an ESV policy and 53% of its members provide time off (Volunteering England, 2005a). The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation (NSGVP), used in the current work, reported that the most

common ESV benefits provided by Canadian employers are the approval to take time off (28%), to change work hours (28%), and to use equipment or facilities (26%). Employers in countries such as Brazil, India, Lebanon, and Russia have also implemented ESV benefits (Volunteering England, 2005c).

Despite the increasing frequency of ESV benefits, management research is only beginning to explore the theoretical, empirical, and practical issues regarding ESV benefits (Benjamin, 2001; Tschirhart, 2005). Benjamin (2001) asserts that existing work has been based on how employers implement ESV programs, and has not focused “on analyses of either data or theoretical questions” (p. 17). Tschirhart (2005) echoes these sentiments stating “employee volunteering is a research area desperately in need of theory . . . a deeper, more theoretical understanding of employee volunteering can help guide policies and practices” (p. 25). In a recent review of ESV programs, Cihlar (2004) summarizes the state of the literature as one in which there are few rigorous studies and most information is based on anecdotal evidence – an idea suggested by others as well (Graff, 2004; Tuffrey, 2003).

Much of the volunteer literature investigates the dyadic relationship between the individual and the volunteer organization and focuses on factors that predict a person volunteering (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998; Wilson, 2000); the employing organization is not considered. Conversely, corporate social performance research has focused on the employer and on how employers benefit (Burlingame & Young, 1996; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Turban & Greening, 1997; Walsh, Weber, & Margolis, 2003); however, there is little emphasis on theoretical grounding and rigorous empirical tests concerning the relationships and benefits to other audiences (e.g., employees, community welfare, societal institutions, the public good; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Tschirhart & St. Clair, 2005; Walsh, Weber, & Margolis, 2003). Knowledge about ESV benefits may enable organizations to make informed decisions that “avoid counterproductive investments in ineffective fads and fashions, simultaneously becoming more productive and humane” (Rynes & Shapiro, 2005, p. 925). Indeed, “rigorous scholarship is needed to enhance the growing, but currently, largely atheoretical literature on employee volunteering” (Tschirhart, 2005, p. 26). The current work begins to address this need.

In this paper, we apply gift exchange theory (rooted within social exchange theory) to investigate the exchange relationship between the employer and employee that is established when the employer offers ESV benefits to employees, as well as the exchange relationship between the volunteer organization and the employee that is created and promoted by the utilization of ESV benefits. To illustrate these exchanges, we examine the employees' reports of their employing organization's provision of ESV benefits to the employee, the employee's provision of hours to the volunteer organization, and the beneficial outcomes that accrue to the employee and, ultimately, the employing organization in the form of general human capital acquisitions and workplace socioeconomic achievement perceptions. Our empirical study uses a national, cross-sectional representative sample of employee/volunteer reports of ESV benefits, volunteer hours, human capital acquisition, volunteer recognition, and job success outcomes.

The contribution of this work should be evaluated in the context of the scarcity of empirical work on this issue. Because ESV research is new and emerging, the use of large scale, cross-sectional, single-informant data are appropriate. As suggested by Spector (1994), "cross-sectional questionnaires can provide a . . . first step in studying phenomena of interest. In many areas . . . this first step has been taken and it is time to move on" (p. 390). We believe that this first step has not been previously taken in ESV research; thus, cross-sectional, self-report data are acceptable in this nascent research stage. We discuss our procedural and statistical remedies for common method bias and the implications for this research later in this paper.

ESV Programs

ESV programs, defined as "the formal and informal policies and practices that employers use to encourage and help employees volunteer in community service activities" (Tschirhart, 2005, p. 14), come in a variety of forms and encompass many activities. Common activities include encouraging and enabling employees to volunteer by implementing benefits such as flextime, time off, reimbursements, monetary gifts, donations, use of facilities, corporate transportation, and other tangible goods. Partnerships between employers and the volunteer organizations can be prearranged, formal agreements

or can be more flexible, informal types of relationships. Price (2002) used an example from the United Way to illustrate how some companies create formal partnerships with organizations. The employer “lends” its top management to the United Way to fulfill leadership positions; the employer pays the executives’ salaries while the executives are on temporary leave (Price, 2002). Many employers use external brokers or an internal staff person whose job is to develop relationships with specific volunteer organizations and jointly create volunteer programs that best align with the employer’s mission (Volunteering England, 2005b). These formalized relationships illustrate what Meijs and Voort (2004) would classify as *employer initiated*. Relationships can form in two ways: *transactional* (i.e., organizations create formal arrangements that are for their self-interest) and *integrative* (i.e., strategic relationships facilitate working together to create value for all involved; Austin, 2000; Voort & Meijs, 2004).

In other cases, the partnership is simply a more informal “understanding” that the employer has with the employees and the community. An employer provides benefits that enable employees to make their volunteer decisions autonomously. These more flexible relationships typically do not necessitate formal communication, and there is no major commitment to just one volunteer organization. For example, American Express allows employees to take a fully paid 6-month sabbatical to work for a community non-profit if the employee has been involved with the volunteer organization for at least ten years (Koss-Feder, 2000). Regardless of an ESV program’s structure, one might posit that the employer, employee, and volunteer organization benefit from the exchange as described below.

Applying Gift Exchange to ESV Relationships

Within the social sciences, social and economic exchange theories have often been used to explain reciprocal relationships between individuals (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Schieffelin, 1980), between the organization and individual (e.g., Fuller & Hester, 2001; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), and between organizations or nations (e.g., Dillon, 1968). Economic exchange is focused on transactional utility maximizing agreements regarding the exchange of valuable resources (goods, services, money) in fairly straightforward transactions (e.g., exchange money for a pair of shoes;

exchange hours worked for an hourly wage). Blau (1964) introduced social exchange to explain the socio-emotional reciprocal relationships between parties that go beyond economic exchange and are utilized to build and foster continued strong relationships. Within the management literature, it is often used to explain relationships between individuals and organizations. Gift exchange is a derivation of social exchange. As Balkin and Richebé (2007) asserted in their paper proposing training investments as gift exchange, gift exchange is a “special type” of social exchange that is “governed by a set of rules that apply to *how* to exchange the gifts” (p. 55).

In gift exchange theory, a *gift* is characterized as an intangible and/or tangible “good or service (including the giver’s time, activities, and ideas) voluntarily provided to another person or group” while *exchange* involves “giving something in return for something received previously or simultaneously, or in anticipation of future returns” (Belk & Coon, 1993, p. 394). Gift-giving can elicit a simple “Here, this is for you,” and “Thanks” or is composed of more complex components such as “selection of certain times, places, and assemblages of people” (Belk & Coon, 1993, p. 394) which are activities common to volunteer interactions and programs (Wilson, 2000). Gifts also convey “important symbolic messages;” in essence, the gift is the “message and channel for delivering the message to the recipient” (Belk, 1979, p. 95-96). For example, by providing ESV benefits employers communicate that it is a giving organization and cares about its employees and the community.

As in the broader social exchange framework, gift-giving can allow for integration, fostering individuals and/or organizations to collectively work together and create and maintain close social ties that ultimately lead to ongoing transactions (Sherry, 1983). As Sherry (1983) posited, “attached strings are a connotative aspect of the gift;” thus, “social bonds [are] forged and reciprocation encouraged” (p. 158). Gift exchanges between the parties occur and are sustained because each party values each other’s gift and the bond created, and as one party supplies its gift to the other, the other feels a duty to reciprocate though not necessarily in an equivalent form (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Duty or obligation is at the core of all formal and informal gift exchange relationships (Belk & Coon, 1993; Mauss, 1990). As long as exchanges maintain equilibrium, parties involved perceive balanced relationships (Balkin &

Richebé, 2007). The objective of gift exchange is to maintain successful and sustainable relationships; thus, as long as the gifts exchanged are valued and respected by the respective party, the relationships continue, and parties are not attentive to gifts being equitable in value (Blau, 1964; Mauss, 1990).

The nature of gift-giving and the tenets that guide gift exchange behavior have been examined by sociological and anthropological studies (e.g., Blau, 1964; Bourdieu, 1980; Cheal, 1988; Firth, 1972; Gouldner, 1960; Leach & Leach, 1983; Mauss, 1990; Testart, 2001). Balkin and Richebé (2007) outlined their understanding of these rules of gift exchange. First, parties must understand the feelings and desires of the recipient and what the recipient really needs. In the case of ESV programs, in explaining the exchange between employers and employees, employers need skilled employees, and volunteer experiences provide skills; however, employees need support in the form of time and resources to participate in volunteer activities. In the exchange between volunteer organizations and employees, volunteer organizations need people to volunteer hours, yet employees need, for example, exposure to skill development through their volunteer experiences.

Second, parties should demonstrate their appreciation when gifts are offered. In the exchange between employers and employees, employees should demonstrate their appreciation for ESV benefits by acquiring skills and utilizing them for the good of the employer, and employers should show appreciation to their employees by recognizing such skills. Volunteer organizations convey their appreciation to the employees' hours volunteered and, ultimately, the employers' generosity of ESV gifts by providing volunteer activities that develop human capital.

Third, explicit contracts cannot exist between parties where the giver can place penalties upon the recipient if the recipient does not offer a specified gift in return at a designated time and/or value. Given the very nature of the volunteer experience, parties involved in the exchanges are voluntarily gifting which is inherently not dictated by contract; thus, penalties are not enforced. An employer's ESV gifts typically have few stipulations; the benefits exist to support the needs of the employee and community. Therefore, the anticipated gifts received in return should have no timestamp or contractual strings attached. Further, the parties are not necessarily cognizant of the gifts' monetary values and would not

communicate “the gift exchange balance sheet” (Balkin & Richebé, 2007, p.58). In these situations, the gifts exchanged are not appraised monetarily; they are appraised for their social value and mutual concern between parties. When the employee takes advantage of the ESV benefits, the “employer supports an employee’s request . . . and gives the employee some flexibility in making up the lost work productivity” given the hours volunteered (Balkin & Richebé, 2007, p. 57). The employee recognizes his/her employer’s support, and the employee gives back by supporting the employer in achieving its missions or objectives that are important to the employer (Balkin & Richebé, 2007) – such as utilizing human capital gained that may improve performance on the job.

Finally, though gift exchange is dynamic in order to sustain gift-giving relationships, delays in exchange of gifts are expected. Reciprocation of a gift too quickly may communicate that the receiver has not thought clearly of what the giver truly needs and values or that the recipient is merely trying to pay off a debt instead of trying to maintain a social and personal relationship (Balkin & Richebé, 2007). In the case of ESVs, the exchange of ESV benefits for skill utilization on the job or the exchange of volunteer hours for new skill acquisitions from volunteering is not immediate and plays out over time. Skill development takes time to accumulate from volunteer hours, as does the application of skills to the job and employer recognition from skill development and utilization. These rules that guide gift exchange resurface in our hypotheses development below.

Understanding Employee Perceptions of the Gift Exchange Relationships

In the existing volunteering literature, anecdotal research suggests myriad benefits from volunteering relationships for those engaged in our proposed gift exchange relationships (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Graff, 2004; Tuffrey, 2003). For example, if an employee utilizes the employer’s ESV benefits, he/she may gain social capital, in addition to human capital, that may provide networks which may be a source for an employer of future hires, new business partners/ventures, new suppliers, and/or new customers. Further, goodwill and increased consumer loyalty may be fostered by the community perceiving the employer positively for allowing its employees to volunteer and the subsequent volunteer activities achieved. At the same time, employee morale may be increased by engaging in volunteer

activities. Volunteer organizations benefit not only from the increased hours volunteered, but also because they do not have to invest in selection mechanisms for qualified volunteers: employees utilizing ESV benefits have already gone through a selection process when hired by the employer. Additionally, the volunteer organizations may retain manpower or a steady supply of volunteers given the sustainability of gift exchange relationships. Understandably, not all volunteer activity leads to improved performance and bettered outcomes. Hence, we note that negative interaction ultimately violates trust, undermines duty and obligation, and does not abide by the gift exchange rules outlined above, thus ending continued gift exchanges (Blau, 1964; Cheal, 1988; Mauss, 1990).

We recognize that many gifts have potential to be exchanged in the volunteering relationships that are facilitated by ESV benefits. However, following Balkin and Richebé's (2007) assertions about employer investments in a gift exchange framework and given the limits of our data, our hypotheses development focuses solely on employee perceptions of ESV benefit receipt, hours volunteered, human capital acquisition, and workplace socioeconomic achievement. Abiding by Sutton and Staw's (1995) suggestion regarding theoretical developments in new and emerging research areas, we are able to illustrate the existence of these gift exchange relationships between the employer and the employee and between the employee and the volunteer organization by utilizing these variables.

ESV benefits and volunteer hours. In the literature on volunteering, many individual motivations have been ascribed including the following: individual intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Pelozo & Hassay, 2006; Peterson, 2004); non-profit organizational support (Farmer & Fedor, 1999); cultural and social capital such as religion and informal social support (Wilson & Musick, 1997a); work and family influences (Freeman, 1997; Gomez & Gunderson, 2003); and human capital influences such as education levels and income levels (Vaillancourt, 1994).

In addition to the role of myriad individual motivations to volunteer, an employer's provision of ESV benefits is likely to increase volunteering. ESV benefits provide an employee access to more time, decreased cost, and options to assuage workplace constraints, thereby making it more likely for an employee to provide a volunteer organization with more hours of volunteer work. Without ESV benefits,

employees may be less inclined to volunteer especially given today's work-life conflicts (Volunteer Canada, 2001). Price (2002) suggested that employees find it easier to volunteer when the employer assists with volunteering and/or handles the communication and logistics. Further, Peterson (2004) determined that employer recruitment strategies influence participation in corporate sponsored volunteer activities. ESV provisions may also suggest normative information encouraging involvement in volunteering. Overall, an employer sponsoring ESV benefits not only signals to employees that they are valued but also that their volunteering is valued. ESV benefits provide assistance to overcome existing obstacles to participation in volunteer activities thereby increasing the likelihood and amount of volunteering.

Hypothesis 1. Employer-Supported Volunteering (ESV) benefits are positively related to employees' hours of volunteering.

Volunteer hours and skill acquisition. Although employer volunteer programs are generally believed to provide skill acquisition opportunities for employees (Points of Light Foundation & Center for Corporate Citizenship, 2005), there is not extensive work testing explicitly this linkage. Some have looked at this relationship, but findings have either been qualitative, descriptive, or anecdotal (Geroy, Wright, & Jacoby, 2000; Graff, 2004; Hall, McKeown, & Roberts, 2001; Pancer, Baetz, & Rog, 2002). For example, while participating in volunteer activities, volunteers reinforce their existing skills but also may acquire new ones such as communication and interpersonal skills through interacting with other volunteers, the community, and the volunteer organization staff. Volunteer organizations may train volunteers to perform certain tasks; examples are fundraising, technical, managerial, and organizational skills. Further, a new appreciation and understanding of community and social issues, arising through involvement, may enable the volunteer to better understand his/her employer's customer base.

Day and Devlin's (1998) study represents one exception to the absence of empirical work on employers and volunteering. Day and Devlin proposed and tested the idea that wage premiums are awarded to volunteers; employers are willing to pay more to volunteers because volunteering may signal unobservable characteristics of their employees and/or because skills acquired through volunteering are

valuable to the employer. Results suggest a wage premium for volunteers. However, given data limitations, they were unable to make any inferences regarding the reasons for these wage premiums, and, thus, questions about why an employer would provide ESV benefits and whether skills actually accrue to volunteers remain. The current study investigates these issues theoretically and empirically by positing and testing the notion that skills accrue to volunteers that are valuable to and rewarded by the employer.

The rationale for the linkage between volunteer hours and skill acquisition is straightforward: as employees increase their volunteer hours, the employee spends more hours interacting with the volunteer organization. As a result, the volunteer organization in exchange for hours volunteered may assign the employee more tasks to complete, more complex assignments, or larger scope projects that facilitate greater opportunities for skill acquisition.

Hypothesis 2. Employees' hours of volunteering are positively related to skills acquired from volunteering.

Skill acquisition and socioeconomic achievement. Wilson (2000) emphasized that knowledge acquisition from volunteering can be a conduit to one's workplace socioeconomic achievement that later may result in an individual's more positive reputation on the job, aid one in finding future work, or enhancement of "the quality of [the current] job" (p. 232). As a result of skill acquisition, it is likely that the employee will feel more equipped and capable on the job, and, thus, he/she will perceive himself/herself as being more successful on the job. An employee's perception of his/her success is influential in one's decision to continue the gift exchange cycle and volunteer activities.

In their study of predictors of job success, Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, and Graf (1999) determined that skill acquisition is significantly related to career satisfaction. According to the authors, training contributes to employee intrinsic career success. In their meta-analysis, Ng, Eby, Sorensen, and Feldman (2005) determined significant corrected correlations between organizational sponsored training and skill development opportunities and three measures of success on the job (i.e., salary, promotion, and satisfaction). Similar to these studies, we hypothesize that human capital acquisition is a predictor of the employee's job success perceptions.

Hypothesis 3a. Skills acquired from volunteering are positively related to an employee's job success perceptions.

Further, Akerlof (1982) suggests the likelihood of being rewarded or recognized on the job is partially a function of skill acquisition and successful application of those skills to the job; he considered this a gift exchange between employer and employee. The same is likely to be true in the context of skills acquired via volunteer activities. Given that the employer understands the value of skill acquisition from volunteering and application of those skills to the job, the employer is likely to acknowledge or recognize employee skills gained from volunteering. Thus, employer recognition plays a role in sustaining the gift exchange relationships.

Hypothesis 3b. Skills acquired from volunteering are positively related to the employers' recognition of employees for volunteering.

Additionally, the *absence* of recognition may play a role in failure to sustain the gift exchange relationship. Previous literature has determined that individuals will continue to volunteer if they perceive that their work is appreciated and are somehow rewarded (Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Field & Johnson, 1993; Gora & Nemerowicz, 1985). Field and Johnson (1993) suggested that individuals are likely to discontinue service to the volunteer organization if they are not receiving adequate rewards. Farmer and Fedor (1999) determined that a volunteer organization receives greater participation and longer service duration from its volunteers, as long as the volunteer perceives the volunteer organization as appreciating and valuing his/her service. Similarly, a lack of recognition from an employer for the volunteer hours and corresponding skill development may result in lower rates of participation in volunteering. These findings are consistent with the reciprocity expectations evoked in gift exchange theory. Overall, given both that recognition is a function of skill acquisition (Akerlof, 1982) and that the absence of recognition may reduce volunteering and skill acquisition, it is likely that skill acquisition is rewarded with recognition by the employer.

Method

Data and Sample

The data are from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (NSGVP). The 2000 NSGVP is one of the most extensive assessments measuring giving, volunteering, and participating behaviors ever completed. Statistics Canada administered the 2000 NSGVP to five of the six rotation groups of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) during October through December 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2001). Of the 40,236 households who responded to the LFS, 28,173 NSGVP interviews were completed (70% response). Of the NSGVP respondents, 13,449 non-volunteers were screened out after being identified as non-volunteers, yielding a removal of 65% of non-volunteer respondents. The remaining NSGVP sample contains a nationally representative sample of 14,724 Canadians, ages 15-69, from all ten provinces. Due to our focus on the gift exchanges among the constituents (i.e., employers, employees, and volunteer organization), we narrowed the initial NSGVP sample down to those that are employees (and not self-employed or unemployed) and are volunteers. This reduced the sample to a total of 4,275 individuals (29%).

Based on the sample of 4,275 individuals, we imposed two additional selection rules to the final sample. First, we decided to drop individuals ($n = 429$) that were required to volunteer by their employers or by the government. Several have questioned if mandated volunteering can be legitimately considered volunteering (Meijs & Voort, 2004). Second, careful examination on the variables of interest suggested outliers associated with the number of volunteering hours. Thus, we decided to drop 37 individuals who were located at the upper 1 percent of the sample in volunteering hours (discussed below). Therefore, the final sample was a total of 3,809 individuals. Due to missing values, the analysis is based on a final sample of 3,658 individuals.

Measures

As recognized by the Podsakoff, Shen, and Podsakoff (2006) critique of measurement models within the literature, many measures are often inaccurately treated as reflective constructs when they are in fact *formative measures*. Unlike reflective measures in which items are assumed to be a manifestation

of an underlying construct, formative measures are composed of items presumed to be determinants of an emergent construct that define the construct rather than reflect it. Evaluating formative measures as reflective can influence one to incorrectly interpret a construct's effect on another (Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003). Within the current study, ESV benefits, volunteer hours, and skill acquisition variables are considered formative measures.

Podsakoff et al. (2006) provide four criteria to consider when determining the nature of a measure: direction of causality, interchangeability, covariance, and similarity of the nomological network. For illustrative purposes, we discuss these criteria as they relate to the ESV measures. First, the *direction or causality* for formative constructs suggests that formative constructs are conceptualized as being determined by their measures. We believe that each ESV construct is determined by the benefit items provided (i.e., time off and flextime items determine time oriented ESV benefits); ESV items are not reflective of a larger ESV benefit latent construct. Second, items for formative constructs are not expected to be *interchangeable*, and we would argue that our ESV items are not interchangeable. For example, an item on use of facilities is not interchangeable with an item on donations. Third, items for formative constructs need not *covary* at a high level with one another; they may be positively, negatively, or unrelated to one another. One could argue that ESV benefit items may operate such that they substitute for one another; presence of one does not mean that other benefit items are offered. Empirically, our ESV items are positively correlated, but not highly correlated with one another. Fourth, the *nomological network* for the antecedents and outcomes of the items need not be similar for formative measures. We suggest that the antecedents and outcomes of different ESV items may indeed be different. Given this illustration and that volunteer hours and skill acquisition variables also meet the criteria above, the variables discussed qualify as formative measures.

Employer-supported volunteer (ESV) benefits: Time oriented & financial/logistic oriented. Eight items were asked about ESV benefits and are grouped into two categories as presented below along with the number of participants endorsing the item. Time oriented ESV benefits were measured by summing two dichotomous items (1 for "Yes" and 0 for "No") asking if in the past 12 months the employer offered

the following: (1) approval to take time off or the opportunity to spend some time doing volunteer work while on the job ($n=1042$), and (2) approval to change work hours to spend time volunteering ($n=1019$). The financial/logistic oriented ESV benefits were measured by summing six items (1 for “Yes” and 0 for “No”) asking “In the past 12 months, did you get any of the following types of support from your employer to help with your volunteer activities?” The items included: (1) approval for use of facilities or equipment for your volunteer activities ($n=967$); (2) employer’s donation of prizes, gift certificates, food, etc. ($n=91$); (3) employer’s donation of t-shirts, company goods, etc. ($n=30$); (4) employer’s financial donation to the organization ($n=78$); (5) employer’s providing transportation ($n=13$); and (6) employer’s sponsoring of an event, paid entry fee, membership fee, etc. ($n=73$). Given these are formative items, we summed the indicators as this is one appropriate method to determine a formative construct’s estimate (Nachum, 2003). The time oriented ESV benefit’s mean was 0.55 and ranged from 0 to 2, while the financial/logistic oriented ESV benefit’s mean was 0.36 and ranged from 0 to 6.

Volunteer hours. Prior to reporting hours volunteered, participants indicated the unpaid voluntary activities or services they were involved in within the past year for a group or organization. These items aided participants to clearly understand the comprehensive meaning of volunteering and what it includes. Examples are as follows: “In the past 12 months, as an unpaid volunteer for an organization, did you do any canvassing, campaigning, or fundraising; did you serve as an unpaid member of a board or committee; did you teach or coach for an organization; did you collect, serve, or deliver food or other goods; did you help to maintain, repair or build facilities?”

Following items about activities, participants reported the hours volunteered for twelve volunteer organization types during the previous 12 months (e.g., culture and recreation, education and research, religion, business/professional associations, and health). An additional item asked the individual to identify remaining hours volunteered for volunteer organizations not specified. The volunteer hours

variable was derived by aggregating participants' reports of hours. After removing 37 individuals with excessive volunteer hours, the aggregated hours mean was 125.15 and ranged from 1 hour to 1248 hours.¹

Skills acquired from volunteering. Skill acquisition from volunteering was measured by summing responses to seven dichotomous (1 for "Yes" and 0 for "No") questions asking "Have your volunteer activities provided you with: (1) fundraising skills ($n=1706$); (2) technical/office skills ($n=1158$); (3) organizational/managerial skills ($n=2159$); (4) increased knowledge, for example, about health, women's issues, political issues, etc. ($n=2316$); (5) communication skills ($n=2465$); (6) interpersonal skills ($n=2886$); and (7) some other skills ($n=3$)?" The skills acquired mean was 3.47 and ranged from 0 to 7.

Employer's recognition. The recognition variable was measured by an item asking "Did your employer give you recognition or a letter of thanks for your volunteer activities?" within the last year. We coded "Yes" as 1 and "No", "Don't Know", "Not Stated," or "Refused to Respond" as 0.

Job success perception. The job success perception variable was measured by an item asking "Do you think your volunteer activities have helped your chances of success in your paid job [in the past 12 months]?" We coded "Yes" as 1 and "No", "Don't Know", "Not Stated," or "Refused to Respond" as 0.

Control variables. A rich set of control variables has been identified in the literature as key factors affecting an individual's volunteer behavior (for a comprehensive review, see Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982; Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997a). These comprehensive controls allow for more precise, less biased estimates that strengthen analyses.

Background variables: Wilson (2000) reported that aging may have a negative effect on one's decision to volunteer. In some societies gender may not have an effect; however, women in North

¹ An unreasonable number of volunteer hours were reported by some of the participants. Unfortunately, there is no well accepted recommendation to deal with this kind of measurement error, which demands a judgment call. We decided to drop observations in the 1 percent of the upper tail of the volunteer hour distribution. A total of 37 individuals were dropped: their average number of volunteer hours was 1829 hours (equivalent to 229 eight hour days) and ranged from 1260 hours to 4800 hours. Although dropping these individuals may eliminate individuals who are heavily involved in volunteer activities or executives "on loan" to a volunteer organization, we were unable to determine the nature of the outlying response. To ensure robustness of our results, we ran the same analyses without dropping the highest 1% and with dropping individuals with the highest 5% of volunteer hours. Results from these analyses were consistent with those presented here.

America have a tendency to volunteer more than men (Wilson, 2000). Potentially, one's national origin or background "makes a difference to what kind of volunteer work people do" (Wilson, 2000, p. 228).

These variables were measured as follows: *Gender*, coded "Male" as 1 and "Female" as 0; *Age*, "15-24," "25-34," "35-44," "45-54," "55-64," and "65 years and older"; coded each category as 1, otherwise 0 with "15-24" as a reference category; *Immigration status*, if a respondent was born in Canada, coded "Yes" as 1 and "No" as 0.

Human, social, and cultural capital: Wilson and Musick (1997a) hypothesized that human, social, and cultural capital are related to one's volunteer choices. For *human capital*, they reported that both education and income are positively related to volunteering and also found that individuals working more hours typically volunteer less. Human capital variables were measured as follows: *Education*, "less than high school," "graduated from high school," "some post secondary," "post secondary diploma," "university degree"; coded each category as 1, otherwise 0 with "less than high school" as a reference category; *Household income*, "less than \$20,000," "\$20,000 to \$40,000," "\$40,000 to \$60,000," "\$60,000 to \$100,000," and "greater than \$100,000"; coded each category as 1, otherwise 0 with "less than \$20,000" as a reference category; and *Working hours per week*, "30 to less than 40 hours," "40 to less than 50 hours," and "50 hours or more" with "less than 30 hours" as a reference category.

For *social capital* variables, we followed Wilson and Musick's (1997a) operationalizations using children present at home and marital status. Each has been determined to provide social networks that facilitate volunteering. Social capital variables were measured as follows: *Children at home under 18*, coded "Yes" as 1 and "No" as 0; and *Marital status*, coded "Married" as 1 and "Single" as 0.

Cultural capital was measured using *church attendance*. Wilson and Musick (1997a) determined that one's religiosity has a direct effect on one's volunteering. The question, "How often have you attended religious services or meetings," was reverse-coded such that 1 indicates "Not at all" and 5 indicates "At least once a week."

Occupation and volunteer organization categories: Wilson and Musick (1997b) argued that a connection may exist between an individual's occupational choice and volunteering; certain job

characteristics may encourage individuals to be more involved in certain social activity. Further, individuals who volunteered for religious or educational organizations appeared to volunteer more.

Occupational type included ten occupational types, such as management, sales and services, and health and was captured by nine dummy variables (management as reference type). *Volunteer organization type* included twelve organization types, such as culture, education, and health, and was captured by eleven dummy variables (cultural organization as reference type).²

Motivation: We based our measures of motivation on Knoke and Wright-Isak's (1982) taxonomy (i.e., rational choice, normative conformity, and affective bonding); "a 'predisposition/opportunity' model of the relationship between individual motives to contribute resources to organizations and organizational incentives to induce commitments" (Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982, p. 209). *Rational choice* presupposes that the individual's decision making is driven by his/her desire for utility maximization (Knoke, 1988; Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982). An individual invokes *normative conformity* when his/her behavior is based on moral and value laden precedent or standard that society or his/her group values and deems acceptable (Knoke, 1988; Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982). *Affective bonding*, rooted within social interaction, explains one's motivation to act given his/her emotional connectedness to another or a group (Knoke, 1988; Knoke & Wright-Isak, 1982).

We operationalized the three motivation variables as follows: *Rational choice* was measured by combining three items asking reasons for volunteering related to professional development: (1) to improve job opportunities; (2) to explore strengths; and (3) to use skills and experience. We coded "yes" as 1 otherwise 0, and aggregated each dummy variable. The variable ranged from 0 to 3, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.49. *Normative conformity* was measured by three items that asked participants

² Due to the fact that 1,203 individuals volunteered at more than one organization type, their memberships to the organization type were not mutually exclusive. Thus, we assigned those individuals to an organization type where they volunteered the longest hours. This can lead to loss of estimate precision. However, a tradeoff exists. An alternative way is to create dummy variables to make all the multiple memberships to the twelve organization types exhaustive, which would result in many dummy variables. In this paper, we believe that the first option is desirable, not only because it is simple, but also because it is not important to interpret, for example, that an individual who volunteered at both healthcare and religious organizations volunteered 25 hours longer than an individual who volunteered at a healthcare organization only.

about their exposure to volunteering when they were younger. The items are as follows: (1) Did you personally see someone you admired helping others? (2) Were you helped in the past by others? (3) Did one or both of your parents do volunteer work in the community? We coded “yes” as 1 otherwise 0. The variable ranged from 0 to 3, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.51. *Affective bonding* is based on a four item index: how often do you socialize (1) with parents or other relatives and (2) with friends who live outside the neighborhood; and how often do you spend time (3) with friends participating in sports or recreation activities; and (4) watching family members participate in sports or recreation activities. Items ranged from 1 to 4, where 1 indicates “every week” and 4 indicates “not at all.” We reverse coded the items and constructed one continuous variable, yielding its reliability coefficient of 0.50.

Common Method Bias

Given that our independent and dependent measures were collected from a single informant using a single survey instrument, we were aware of the potential for common method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) offer *procedural* and *statistical remedies*. We considered these in determining the extent that our data possess common method bias.

Procedural Remedies. The data were captured confidentially and disseminated to researchers anonymously; no participant can be identified (*survey anonymity*). Given that Statistics Canada had no relation to the employer or the volunteer organizations, the participant should not have had incentive to understate or embellish responses (decreased *evaluation apprehension*). Another important characteristic is that measures were not asked in the sequence similar to our model (*predictor & criterion measurement separation*). Additionally, the majority of variables (e.g., ESV benefits and hours volunteered) are *factual items* and not attitudinal or perceptual items. Further, items throughout the survey (a) had familiar terms; (b) avoided unfamiliar nomenclature or syntax and provided examples if needed; and (c) kept short, succinct, focused items while avoiding double-barreled items (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000). Thus, *scale item quality* has also helped to diminish common method variance.

Statistical Remedies. Following techniques outlined in Podsakoff and Organ (1986) and Podsakoff et al. (2003) to statistically estimate the extent of common method bias, we conducted

Harman's single-factor test using indicators from only our main variables of interest. As a result of the unrotated principal component analysis, common method bias does not seem problematic given there was no general factor. The first factor accounted for 11.46% and does not account for the majority of the variance. However, Podsakoff et al. (2003) have suggested that Harman's method is a weak detection tool.

Though detection tools are limited for formative measure models, another option is to conduct a partial correlation adjustment, where a marker variable that is theoretically unrelated to at least one other variable in a study (preferably the dependent variable) can be used to control for common method variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). We used the amount of *financial giving* that the respondent gave in the past twelve months as the marker variable. Although donations can relate to volunteer hours, we believe that there is no theoretical reason for it to relate to the dependent variables, employer's recognition and perception of job success. Our data showed a small positive correlation ($r=0.10$, $p<0.001$) between giving and hours. Given the positive correlations, partialling out the variance shared by them will result in lower correlations among the variables of interest, therefore providing conservative correlation estimates. All significant zero-order correlations remained significant after the partial correlation adjustment, suggesting that common method bias is not a serious problem (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for the key variables. The zero-order correlations suggest preliminary support for the hypotheses. Time oriented and financial/logistic oriented benefits were positively associated with hours volunteered ($r = .14$, and $r = .09$, respectively), hours volunteered was positively associated with skills acquired from volunteering ($r = 0.24$), and skills acquired was positively associated with employer's recognition of employee volunteering ($r = 0.16$) and employee job success perceptions ($r = 0.33$). They were all significant at the 0.001 level. A comprehensive correlation table with all control variables can be obtained from the authors upon request.

Insert Table 1 about here

To examine how ESV benefits were associated with our key variables, we split the sample into two groups: those who received ESV benefits for the last 12 months and those who did not. Table 2 displays the results from the mean-difference test of these two groups. The results showed a remarkable difference: all the key variables were significantly higher for employees who received ESV benefits than for employees who did not receive ESV benefits. The effect sizes suggest that these differences are moderate to large (Cohen, 1969; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991); $d = 0.23$ (hours volunteered); $d = 0.39$ (skills acquired); $d = 0.78$ (employer's recognition); and $d = 0.37$ (job success). The effect size indicates that 1.3% of the variance in hours volunteered; 3.7% of the variance in skills acquired; 13.2% of the variance in employer's recognition; and 3.3% of the variance in job success is accounted for by employees that receive ESV benefits versus employees that do not.

Further investigation by splitting the group with ESV benefits into three groups (i.e., those who received the time oriented ESV benefits only, and the financial/logistic ESV benefits only, and both) confirmed the additive effect of ESV benefits (available from authors upon request). That is, all the key variables were significantly higher for employees who received both types of ESV benefits than for employees who received either type of ESV benefits.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 3 reports the results from hierarchical regression analyses testing our hypotheses.³ Model 1 and 2 show that in accordance with Hypothesis 1, employees who received time oriented and financial/logistic oriented volunteering benefits from employers were more likely to engage in more hours of volunteering ($b=24.23$, $p<0.001$, and $b=11.69$, $p<0.05$, respectively), after other factors were accounted ($\Delta F=31.18$, $p<0.001$). More specifically, the ESV benefit coefficients in Model 2 indicate that for each additional unit of time oriented ESV benefits, volunteer hours increase by 24 hours, and that for each

³ Since the dependent variable, volunteer hours, was left-censored, Tobit regression is a correct statistical approach for Model 1 and 2. The results from the Tobit regressions were virtually identical to the OLS results, and thus, we tabulated the OLS results for comparison purposes to Model 3 and 4.

additional unit of financial/logistic oriented ESV benefits, volunteer hours increase by 12 hours. Thus, taken together, volunteer hours increase by 36 hours.

Model 3 and 4 support Hypothesis 2. Hours for volunteering significantly increased the level of skill acquisition ($b=0.0017$, $p<0.001$) after the effect of time oriented and financial/logistic oriented volunteering benefits was partialled out ($\Delta F=112.72$, $p<0.001$). For every additional 100 volunteer hours, the number of reported skills acquired increases by 0.17.

The results from logistic regression show strong support for Hypotheses 3a and 3b. For example, employees who acquire skills from volunteering increased the likelihood of feeling successful on the job ($b=0.36$, $p<0.001$) in Model 6, and the likelihood of being recognized by the employer ($b=0.12$, $p<0.001$) in Model 8. In other words, reports of acquiring one unit of skills increases the likelihood of reporting being recognized by the employer by 12 percent and the likelihood of reporting feeling successful on the job is increased by 43 percent. The χ^2 -difference test shows that skills acquired from volunteering have additional explanatory power after other factors were controlled ($p<0.001$).

Insert Table 3 about here

Robustness checks for these results revealed that they were not driven by statistical artifacts. Repeating the analyses using the Huber-White estimator of variance that is valid under the presence of heteroskedasticity suggested nearly identical results. Finally, we checked robustness of our results by using the logarithmic transformation of volunteer hours (Freeman, 1997). Results were highly consistent.

Supplemental Analyses

From our hypotheses, one may infer a mediating process for hours volunteered and skills acquired. A priori, we did not hypothesize mediation; we solely hypothesized main effects. However, post-hoc, for exploratory purposes, we conducted path analysis to discern mediation. We ran structural equation modeling using the partial least squares (PLS) technique, PLS-Graph for Windows 3.0 beta version (Chin, 2001, 2003). For models with formative measures, PLS is a suited approach for path modeling given that other techniques have difficulty with identification of formative measures (Chin,

1998). The precision of the model's path coefficients are determined using a bootstrapping procedure that allows for t-statistic calculation (utilizing 500 resamples generated with 3,658 cases per sample). In our study, the path coefficients were significant and suggested the mediating nature of volunteer hours and skills acquired (Time Oriented ESV Benefits→Volunteer Hours, path coefficient=0.14, $p<0.001$; Financial/Logistic Oriented ESV Benefits→Volunteer Hours, path coefficient=0.08, $p<0.01$; Volunteer Hours→Skills Acquired, path coefficient=0.25, $p<0.001$; Skills Acquired→Job Success, path coefficient=0.34, $p<0.001$; Skills Acquired→Recognition, path coefficient=0.15, $p<0.001$). Further, these results also supported our hypotheses and were similar to our previous analyses.

In addition, one might posit that there are limits to the benefits accrued through volunteering. Certainly, if an employee spends excessive hours volunteering, skill acquisition may meet diminishing returns. More hours volunteering may not always benefit the employer and employees. A supplemental analysis tested this possibility with the inclusion of a curvilinear term for volunteer hours in Model 4 predicting skills. The squared term for hours volunteering was significantly negatively related to skill acquisition, indicating a curvilinear relationship and the existence of an optimal level of hours for volunteering in skill acquisition. As seen in Figure 1, our computation of the critical point indicated that volunteer hours exceeding 587 hours a year, which is equivalent to 73, 8-hour days of volunteering (1.4 days per week), does not acquire additional skills. In interpreting this result, we must consider that this is a relationship between number of volunteer hours and the number of skills acquired, not the overall depth of skill acquisition. Thus, it may be that those who volunteer more hours develop fewer skills at greater depth.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Discussion and Conclusion

In contrast to the often studied dyadic relationship between the volunteer and the volunteer organization, we explored the exchange relationships between the employer and the employee and between the employee and the volunteer organization that are initiated by the employer offering ESV

benefits to its employees. Gift exchange theory, a social exchange theory derivative, was used to describe the nature of the relationships. This current research stands as one of the first theoretical treatments of the operation of ESV benefits in the literature.

Further, we empirically tested these gift exchange relationships via the employee perceptions of ESV receipt, hours volunteered, human capital acquisition, job success and volunteer recognition measures. Given our illustrative data, our empirical findings provided preliminary support that ESV benefits facilitate exchange relationships as hypothesized. First, we found that ESV benefits positively influence an employee's volunteer hours. This result suggests that though providing ESV benefits is costly to employers, an employer who provides more volunteer benefits helps its employees minimize costs and challenges associated with volunteering, and, consequently, employees volunteer more hours. Volunteer organizations benefit indirectly from ESV benefits by receiving more volunteer hours and potentially achieve savings given the increased hours provided by employees from the employer.

Next, we found that volunteering more hours was associated with more perceived skills acquired from volunteering, after accounting for ESV benefits employees received. Though we are unable to provide the exact cost-benefit calculi, the finding suggests that providing ESV benefits may be another, perhaps more efficient, route to skill acquisition. That is, the employer may reduce training costs by providing ESV benefits that facilitate employees learning skills through their volunteer experiences. Volunteer experiences may result in additional positive byproducts such as employee retention and community reputation. However, more hours of volunteering may not always be beneficial. Our preliminary analysis suggests that the relationship between hours volunteered and number of skills acquired may be curvilinear; increased volunteering leads to an increase in perceived number of skills acquired, but only up to a point.

Our results with regard to a volunteer's workplace socioeconomic achievement also support our hypotheses. Specifically, we found that individuals who report acquiring skills from volunteering are more likely to report being recognized by their employer and ultimately report feeling more successful on the job. Judge, Higgins, Thoreson, and Barrick (1999) suggested that it is imperative to an organization's

performance for its employees to feel accomplished, rewarded, and successful. Similarly, for the volunteer organization, a more satisfied volunteer workforce that experiences achievement and success may likely continue its service and promote improved performance. Our results suggest that accomplishments resulting from volunteering may achieve such organizational goals.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study has several limitations stemming from both the data analyzed as well as the nature of our research question. First, though our theory posits causal relationships, the cross-sectional nature of the 2000 NSGVP does not allow a test of causal hypotheses and raises the possibility of reverse causality. For example, perceptions of skill acquisition and job success may have led participants to volunteer more hours. However, because ESVs and employer recognition are reported in a more objective fashion and not subject to individual attempts to change them, proposals of reverse relationships are less likely. Future research can address these issues using a longitudinal data set.

Second, common method bias and social desirability are concerns. In a survey that is geared toward volunteering, participating, and giving, one may feel that he/she should reply in ways that is socially desirable, and consequently, the observed correlations of the variables may be artificially inflated. All the data are also collected from one source, raising common method bias concerns. However, given the procedural and statistical approaches we used to evaluate this issue, we are confident that the extent of common method biases in these data is not extensive and not wholly responsible for these results. Future research examining these relationships should utilize data collected from all parties engaged in the exchanges. This would not only combat the issue of single source data, but also would represent a better match between gift exchange theory and empirical data.

Third, because we used an existing dataset, we were constrained to using the items available which were not specifically designed to test our theory. For example, many of the items were measured dichotomously and assessed only the presence of, rather than level of, ESV benefits and skills acquired. The measure of hours of volunteering may not capture fully the nature and complexities of the volunteer experience. Further, we were unable to examine if ESV benefits influence the individual's decision to

volunteer, as individuals who were not volunteering were not asked to respond to questions about ESV benefits. Future research can examine these issues by collecting more detailed information on ESV benefits, the nature of the volunteer experience, skill development, and outcomes from both non-volunteers and volunteers.

Finally, our findings may not be generalizable outside of Canada; volunteering and ESV benefits may be influenced by cultural perspectives. Although surveys suggest an increase in the number of employers providing ESV benefits globally, culture-specific factors may create dynamics that are different from those exchanges we investigated in this paper. Future studies exploring the presence and patterns of volunteering and ESV benefits in different cultures would be valuable.

Despite the limitations of the data, we feel the representativeness of the sample and the scarcity of empirical work on this topic suggest that use of this dataset is reasonable to develop preliminary findings in this emerging area. Schmitt (1994) supports this idea, proposing that the appropriateness of methods and measures should be based upon the particular body of research's stage of development. He states, "I think it is appropriate to use methods and research designs in a newly developing area that would be unacceptable in another area of research" (p. 395). As stated earlier, ESV research is at a nascent stage.

In addition to the suggestions for future directions flowing from the limitations detailed above, we also offer conceptual ideas for further work. Future research might examine the linkages between other gifts in this broader exchange such as personnel retention and improved customer and community perceptions for the employer, personal fulfillment, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment for the employee, and accomplishment of objectives for the volunteer organization. From a more practical perspective, future research might examine which skills are more effectively/efficiently developed through volunteering versus traditional training and development. Thoughtful, empirically based approaches to matching employees with volunteer experiences to promote development would provide greater benefit to employers and employees rather than skill acquisition as a byproduct of the volunteer experience.

Future research might also investigate whether there is a dark side to ESV. Some have argued that employer involvement in volunteering may change the nature of the volunteer motivations and non-profit missions (Tschirhart & St. Clair, 2005). For example, is volunteering becoming non-voluntary as organizations increasingly encourage participation? If so, then are volunteers acting in the interest of the non-profit or self-interest? Will non-profits modify their projects and objectives to make them more palatable to organizational participation? Will some causes be left behind as organizations play a larger role in volunteer activities? These issues are important to consider as the work of non-profits and private sector employers become more tightly coupled.

Practical Implications

Our paper has important implications for employers. Specifically, our results suggest that benefits for the employer, in the form of skill acquisition, may result from the provision of ESV programs. Thus, employers would be wise to direct their efforts strategically so they can enhance their benefits received that result from their gifts of ESV benefits. For example, a skill-matching alliance would benefit employers and volunteer organizations and crystallize the exchange predicted from our gift exchange theory. The employer can create relationships with volunteer organizations that adequately train its employees with appropriate skills (or other outcomes) instead of the employer directly providing human capital investment to its employees. The employer may find it necessary to create alliances with multiple volunteer organizations (i.e., a portfolio of multiple relationships) to adequately provide enriching experiences for its diverse employee population that may have differing skill level needs and backgrounds. Further, as mentioned earlier, recent surveys have established that new workforce entrants (e.g., Generation Y) may expect employers to provide ESV benefits, and, thus, these benefits may provide a competitive advantage to employers in hiring new employees. Additionally, these programs and benefits may be a tool for retention. This suggests the critical role of ESV benefits policy to create feasible programs that satisfy the joint needs of the employer and employee.

Our findings have implications for volunteer organizations as well. Specifically, the provisions of ESV benefits by an employer are associated with increased volunteer hours. For the volunteer

organization, our findings provide an empirical justification for volunteer organizations to market the gains to employers from being involved in the community. Volunteer organizations should identify the skill(s) that can be delivered to employees and can market itself to employers who have interest in building partnerships that value such skills.

In addition to the volunteer hours received, the volunteer organization also benefits by receiving quality workers without significant recruitment, selection and retention expenses. Govekar and Govekar (2002) stated that “volunteer labor is not free, for the organization must train volunteers and supervise them, which require the work of paid labor to run a volunteer program; given such costs, an organization is not likely to accept all of the volunteers who wish to work for it” (p. 43). Thus, a volunteer organization requires the best volunteers to meet its mission. One important advantage of partnerships with employers is that the volunteer organization receives workers from the employer that have already been through the employer’s recruitment and selection process; the “bad apples” have been weeded out by the employer. Additionally, the employer’s ability to retain its employees via ESV benefits may also be advantageous to the volunteer organization as general and specific volunteer knowledge will not be lost and more integrative relationships can be formed (Points of Light Foundation and the Center for Corporate Citizenship, 2005).

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind combining theoretical development and empirical investigation of ESV benefits. Based in gift exchange theory, we propose that reciprocal gift-exchange relationships are initiated via the offering of ESV benefits. In addition, using a large, nationally representative sample, we empirically test an application of the theory. Results suggest the provision of ESV benefits is positively associated with increased volunteer hours. Increased volunteer hours are positively associated with greater skill acquisition – a benefit to the individual and employer. Reports of skill acquisition are positively associated with reports of being recognized at work and perceptions of job success. These theoretical and empirical contributions have management implications for both the employer and the volunteer organization.

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for the Key Variables^a

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Time oriented ESV benefits	0.55	0.79					
2. Financial/Logistic oriented ESV benefits	0.36	0.62	0.40***				
3. Volunteer hours	125.15	170.08	0.14***	0.09***			
4. Skills acquired from volunteering	3.47	1.80	0.18***	0.17***	0.24***		
5. Employer's recognition	0.21	0.41	0.28***	0.38***	0.04**	0.16***	
6. Perception of job success	0.31	0.46	0.19***	0.14***	0.14***	0.33***	0.14***

^a $n=3658$, and the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables utilized in the study are available from the authors upon request.

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Two-tailed tests.

Table 2. Mean-Difference Tests of the Key Variables by ESV Benefits

Variable	Volunteers without any ESV benefits (n=1980)		Volunteers with ESV benefits (n=1678)		t-value	Effect Size
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.		
Volunteer hours	106.95	155.36	146.64	183.68	7.08 ***	$d = 0.23$
Skills acquired from volunteering	3.15	1.85	3.84	1.66	11.79 ***	$d = 0.39$
Employer's recognition	0.07	0.26	0.37	0.48	23.59 ***	$d = 0.78$
Perception of job success	0.23	0.42	0.40	0.49	11.14 ***	$d = 0.37$

*** $p < 0.001$

Two-tailed tests.

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Volunteer Hours, Skills Acquired from Volunteering, Perceptions of Job Success, and Recognition by Employer

Variables ¹	OLS				Logit			
	Volunteer Hours (Hypothesis 1)		Skills acquired from Volunteering (Hypothesis 2)		Perception of Job Success (Hypothesis 3a)		Recognition by Employer (Hypothesis 3b)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Motivation								
Affective bonding	20.02 ***	18.36 ***	0.20 ***	0.17 ***	-0.01	-0.08	0.18 *	0.16 *
Normative conformity	5.91 *	4.34	0.20 ***	0.20 ***	0.15 ***	0.09 *	0.11 *	0.09 †
Rational choice	23.46 ***	19.83 ***	0.67 ***	0.64 ***	0.84 ***	0.68 ***	0.23 ***	0.16 **
ESV benefits								
Time oriented ESV benefits		24.23 ***	0.19 ***	0.15 ***	0.30 ***	0.27 ***	0.49 ***	0.48 ***
Financial/Logistic oriented benefits		11.69 *	0.26 ***	0.24 ***	0.22 ***	0.15 *	1.13 ***	1.11 ***
Volunteer hours (*100)				0.17 ***	0.10 ***	0.05 *	-0.01	-0.03
Skills acquired from Volunteering						0.36 ***		0.12 ***
Intercept	10.68	9.26	0.86 **	0.84 **	-2.49 ***	-3.02 ***	-3.82 ***	-3.95 ***
Model <i>F</i> / Likelihood Ratio (χ^2)	5.38	6.59	20.31	23.01	695.52	867.76	650.70	666.09
R^2 (Adjusted R^2) / Pseudo R^2	0.06 (0.05)	0.08 (0.07)	0.21 (0.20)	0.23 (0.22)	0.15	0.19	0.17	0.18
ΔF ($\Delta\chi^2$)		31.18***		117.07***		157.17***		15.15***
Log Likelihood					-1908.86	-1822.74	-1545.14	-1537.45

$n=3658$. ¹ All control variables outlined in the text were analyzed in all regressions. For the reader's ease, we report only key variables along with the motivational controls in the table above. The coefficients observed in Table 3 are from the full regression with all control variables included. Complete regression results for all variables in the study can be obtained from the authors upon request.

† $p < 0.10$

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Two-tailed tests.

Figure 1. *The Curvilinear Relationship between Volunteer Hours and Skills Acquired from Volunteering*

