Motivations to Volunteer and Their Associations with Volunteers’ Well-Being

Arthur A. Stukas, Russell Hoye, Matthew Nicholson,
Kevin M. Brown and Laura Aisbett

La Trobe University

Please address correspondence concerning this article to Art Stukas, School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3086, Australia. Tel. 61-3-9479-1515. Fax: 61-3-9479-1956. Email: A.Stukas@latrobe.edu.au. The four other authors may be contacted care of Centre for Sport and Social Impact, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria 3086. Tel. 61-3-9479-3770. Fax: 61-3-9479-1010. Email: CSSI@latrobe.edu.au

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Abstract

Volunteerism is a key form of community involvement that can provide both physical and mental health benefits for volunteers as well as positive outcomes for the community. However, volunteers become involved for different reasons and recent studies suggest that other-oriented volunteers may accrue greater health benefits than self-oriented volunteers. To investigate this possibility, we surveyed 4085 Australian volunteers about their motivations using the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998), together with their well-being using measures of self-esteem, well-being, self-efficacy, social connectedness, and social trust. As predicted, these individual differences in well-being proved to be differentially associated with other-oriented and self-oriented motivations. Furthermore, other-oriented motives were positively correlated, and self-oriented motives negatively correlated, with satisfaction and intentions to continue. We discuss implications of these patterns for organizations that work with volunteers.
Motivations to Volunteer and Their Associations with Volunteers’ Well-Being

Volunteerism is a key form of community involvement that produces benefits for volunteers, the recipients of their services, the organizations for which they work, and the community and broader society (for reviews, see Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 2014; Wilson, 2012). Volunteers secure career and esteem benefits, recipients obtain much-needed services, organizations work more effectively within limited budgets, and communities develop social capital. Thus, the promotion of volunteering is often a feature of national and local government policymaking. However, the recruitment of volunteers represents a continuing challenge facing non-profit organizations, especially in the face of demographic and lifestyle changes that have resulted in an increase in episodic volunteerism and a decrease in steady weekly contributions of time and effort (e.g., Cnaan & Handy, 2005).

Volunteers pursue activities for a mix of reasons and the same activity may be pursued by volunteers with different goals (e.g., Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000). Knowing the motivations of prospective volunteers allows the tailoring of recruitment messages best able to attract them (e.g., Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene & Haugen, 1994). To aid this process, Clary et al. (1998) developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), a 30-item measure assessing reasons to volunteer that cluster into six motivations or functions (derived from earlier functional theories of attitudes as well as prior volunteerism research; see Snyder et al., 2000). These functions comprise: a values function, with volunteers seeking to express prosocial and humanitarian values through action; an understanding function, with volunteers seeking to learn more about the world, other people, and their own skills; an enhancement function, with volunteers seeking to feel needed and good about themselves; a protective function, with volunteers seeking to distract themselves from their own problems or to reduce guilt about being more fortunate; a social function, with volunteers seeking to reinforce
bonds with friends and family who volunteer; and a *career* function, with volunteers seeking to obtain benefits that can assist them with paid employment opportunities.

The functional approach to volunteerism (e.g., Snyder et al., 2000) proposes that volunteer satisfaction and intentions to continue volunteering are influenced by the match between a volunteer’s important motivations and the affordances to satisfy those motivations available in the volunteering environment. That is, volunteers are happier and intend to continue to the extent that they are able to satisfy their goals in the activity selected or assigned (see Clary et al., 1998; Stukas, Worth, Clary & Snyder, 2009). According to this approach, any important motive, when fulfilled, can lead to increased satisfaction or future intentions (see Snyder et al., 2000). However, some evidence does suggest that not all motives are created equally with regard to their impact on positive outcomes from volunteering.

Following from the longstanding debate in social psychology about whether helping is primarily altruistic or egoistic (Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley & Birch, 1981; Cialdini et al., 1987), researchers investigating motivations underlying volunteerism have examined whether reasons that emphasize outcomes for others or for the self are more strongly related to sustained volunteering. For example, Clary and Orenstein (1991) found that more other-oriented altruistic motivation was associated with less attrition from a crisis-counselling service. Similarly, Penner and Finkelstein (1998) found that other-oriented values motivation predicted length of service by AIDS volunteers. More recently, Omoto, Snyder, and Hackett (2010) found that other-oriented motivation (values and community concern reasons) was a stronger predictor of frequency of AIDS activism and general civic engagement than self-oriented motivation. Relatedly, Rubin and Thorelli (1984) found that more self-oriented motivation was associated with greater attrition from a youth mentoring program. So, acting on desires to help others may enable volunteers to be more persistent,
presumably because such desires and the values on which they are based do not readily change whereas more self-oriented motives may become satiated.

However, Omoto and Snyder (1995) demonstrated that egoistic motives (personal development, understanding, and enhancement) predicted longevity of service in AIDS volunteers, whereas altruistic motives (values and community concern) motives did not. In the absence of benefits for the self, volunteers may find it difficult to sustain their prosocial behaviors over the long haul, perhaps particularly in emotionally difficult volunteer service. Moreover, Cornelis, Van Hiel, and De Cremer (2013) found that self-oriented motivations (all of the VFI scales excluding values) predicted self-reported in-role behaviors (doing what is expected) by youth development volunteers but both self-oriented and other-oriented motivations (including VFI values as well as new scales) independently predicted extra-role behaviors (going beyond what is expected) and satisfaction. As such, self-oriented motivations may still be related to decisions to volunteer but making an extra effort is associated with also thinking and caring about others.

Sustained behavior represents but one positive outcome of successful service. Evidence now strongly suggests that the act of volunteering is also associated with health benefits for volunteers, especially older adults (for reviews, see Piliavin, 2010; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001); however, the mediators and important moderators of this effect are only recently being uncovered. Such research again points in the direction of particular motivations that are more beneficial. For example, Piliavin and Siegl (2007) have demonstrated that a sense of “mattering” mediates the effect of volunteering (versus not volunteering) on self-reported health in the decades-long Wisconsin Longitudinal Study. Mattering was essentially defined as being other-oriented, with items indicating that respondents felt others were aware of them and relied on them for support. Similarly, Thoits (2012) found that the effects of having a strong and salient role identity as a volunteer on
well-being were mediated by feeling a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life, and again by a sense of mattering. These studies suggest that feeling good about one’s purpose in life --when that purpose is other-oriented--may be a major contributor to physical and mental health.

Indeed, Konrath, Fuhrel-Forbis, Lou and Brown (2012) further analyzed the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study data to show that the mortality benefits that accrue to older volunteers from the act of volunteering fall particularly to those who grant greater importance to other-oriented motives (values and social1) rather than to self-oriented motives (enhancement, protective, understanding), on 10 items drawn from the VFI. In fact, those who volunteered for self-oriented reasons were no different from non-volunteers in their (higher) mortality rates. The longitudinal design used in these analyses meant that Konrath et al. succeeded in arguing that health benefits follow volunteering rather than the opposite possibility (that people in greater health are more likely to volunteer). Echoing these effects with cross-sectional data, Gillath et al. (2005) demonstrated that other-oriented motivation to volunteer (values) and motivation related to “exploration” (understanding) were associated with two further indicators of well-being, lower levels of loneliness and better interpersonal functioning.

Increased social integration has been proposed as another mechanism by which volunteering improves well-being (e.g., Piliavin, 2010). Piliavin and Siegl (2007) demonstrated that psychological well-being increases associated with volunteering were largest for those who were originally less socially integrated. Musick and Wilson (2003) and Brown, Hoye, and Nicholson (2012) also found that increases in social integration and connectedness partially mediated the relationship between volunteering and well-being. Researchers have long argued that volunteerism increases social connections and social capital (see Putnam, 2000) but few have suggested that this happens more for volunteers with
specific motives. An exception is offered by Degli Antoni (2009) who suggested that closer
ties with new social network members are likely to be built by volunteers who are
intrinsically motivated, with intrinsic motivation operationalized as primarily other-focused.

Rather than only being an outcome, high levels of well-being may also be a predictor
of volunteering behavior. For example, using longitudinal analyses of the Americans’
Changing Lives survey, Thoits and Hewitt (2001) demonstrated not only that volunteerism
had positive effects on life satisfaction, self-esteem, mastery, and other indicators of well-
being, but that people who were initially higher in well-being subsequently contributed more
hours of volunteer work than those lower in well-being. Moreover, whereas some have
argued that volunteering can contribute to building trust in communities through positive
social interactions in an extended social network (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Stukas, Daly, &
Cowling, 2005), others have argued that trust in turn leads to particular types of civic
engagement, such as service-focused volunteering (Greenberg, 2001). Musick and Wilson
(2008) provided an excellent summary of research demonstrating how self-esteem, self-
efficacy, trust, and other individual differences are associated with volunteering.

However, few researchers have proposed that different levels of well-being can lead
to different motives for volunteering. Gillath et al. (2005) posited that differences in
psychological well-being in the form of attachment orientations would be associated with
different motives for volunteering, finding that those high in attachment avoidance reported
lower other-oriented (values) and exploration (understanding) motivation (and volunteered
less) whereas those high in attachment anxiety reported higher self-oriented motivation
(enhancement, social, protective), compared to securely attached participants. Just as people
with insecure attachment styles may volunteer for different reasons, people with lower self-
esteeam, poorer self-efficacy, or reduced well-being more broadly may volunteer to satisfy
different motives, perhaps more self-oriented motives if they seek to improve themselves, than people who have higher levels of these traits.

We surveyed over 4000 volunteers from the Australian state of Victoria about their current volunteer positions and their motivations to volunteer. We also measured self-esteem, well-being, self-efficacy, social connectedness, and social trust. Although our survey was cross-sectional, our sample size allows us to examine relationships between demographic and organizational characteristics and both motivations to volunteer and indicators of well-being. In 1996, Clary, Snyder and Stukas offered a similar descriptive analysis of Gallup Poll data in which 13 items from the VFI were included; we use this earlier survey as a comparison point where possible, offering a similar presentation of data about the importance of motivations for volunteers in different types of organizations and activities. Our primary hypothesis is that other-oriented motivations to volunteer will be more strongly related to well-being than self-oriented motivations to volunteer. We suspect too that other-oriented motivations will be more strongly correlated with time spent as a volunteer, volunteer satisfaction, perceptions of the supportiveness of the volunteer organization (known to be associated with commitment; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008) and future intentions to volunteer, but we recognize that these variables may also be influenced by the extent to which motivations are able to be fulfilled in the volunteer activities at hand (i.e., by environmental affordances; Stukas et al., 2009).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 4,085 volunteers (62.8% female) from the Australian state of Victoria recruited through a national consumer panel managed by The Online Research Unit (http://www.theoru.com); approval was obtained from our university ethics committee. These volunteers ranged from 18 to 89 years old (M = 48.63, SD = 15.17), were mostly born in Australia (78.7%) and were married or in a de facto relationship (66.3%). Only 34.6% of the
sample was working full-time (23.4% part-time) and 39.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Participants were offered the opportunity to win $1000 in a lottery as a result of their survey completion.

On average, volunteers contributed 3.72 hours per week ($SD = 2.83$); however, this variable (answered on a 10 point scale with 10 representing "10 or more hours per week") was skewed, with 23.8% of the sample indicating that they worked 1 hour or less and most volunteers reporting few hours, with an upswing of 10% of the sample indicating they worked at least 10 hours per week. Reported tenure at their primary organization (answered on a similar 10 point scale; $M = 5.04$ years; $SD = 3.38$) was also skewed with 24.4% of the sample indicating they had been at the organization for 10 years or more, but otherwise the skew was positive with more volunteers at the low tenure end. For the purpose of subsequent analyses, tenure was square root transformed and hours worked was log transformed (transformations that were necessary to bring the different degrees of skewness closer to normality). We report all values in raw scores and all relationships in their original direction.

**Materials**

**Motivations to volunteer.** The Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) was used to assess six prominent motivations that volunteers have been demonstrated to hold. Each of the six scales contained five statements to which participants responded using a 7 point scale to indicate whether a particular reason for volunteering was accurate or important for them (1 = not at all important or accurate, 7 = extremely important or accurate). Each of the motivation scales was computed by averaging the five items together and all scales demonstrated solid internal consistency: values function ($\alpha = .84$; e.g., "I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving"), understanding function ($\alpha = .88$; e.g., "Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things"), enhancement function ($\alpha = .89$; e.g., "Volunteering makes me feel important"), protective function ($\alpha = .87$; e.g., :"No
matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it"), social function 
($\alpha = .85$; e.g. "People I'm close to want me to volunteer"), and career function ($\alpha = .93$; "Volunteering will help me succeed in my chosen profession").

Organizational support. The short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa (1986) was used to assess volunteers' perceptions that their organization is interested in their welfare and accomplishments. This scale included 8 items (for example, "The organization where I volunteer cares about my general satisfaction as a volunteer") to which participants responded on a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Four items were reverse scored and the eight items were averaged to form the final scale ($\alpha = .87$).

Intentions to volunteer. We adapted a similar measure from Clary et al. (1998) to assess volunteers' perceptions that they would be continuing to work for their primary volunteer organization in the future. The scale included four items (for example, "I am likely to be volunteering for the organization where I volunteer the most three years from now") with two reverse scored items about ceasing participation at some point in the future. Each item was responded to on a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and items were averaged to create scale scores ($\alpha = .81$).

Volunteer satisfaction. To assess satisfaction with their primary volunteer activity, we asked volunteers to respond to a single item ("Overall, how satisfied are you with your volunteer role where you currently volunteer the most?") on a 5 point scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). A similar single item was used by Stukas et al. (2009).

Social connectedness. The revised Social Connectedness Scale (Lee, Draper & Lee, 2001) was used to assess participants' perceptions that they are successful at forming and maintaining relationships with other people and groups. The 20 statements, including "I am
able to connect with other people" and "I feel distant from people" (reverse scored), were responded to on a 6 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Ten items were reversed scored and the 20 items were averaged together to create scale scores ($\alpha = .94$).

**Self-esteem.** The Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale was used to assess participants' attitudes toward themselves. Participants indicated their agreement with 10 statements (for example, "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") on an 11 point scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Five negatively worded items were reverse scored and the ten items were averaged to create scale scores ($\alpha = .91$).

**Trust.** In line with the approach taken in the perennial World Values Surveys (see Uslaner, 2002), we assessed trust with a single item drawn from Rosenberg (1956): "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in your dealings with people?" Participants chose one or the other option.

**Self-efficacy.** We assessed participants' overall perceptions of self-efficacy using the 10-item Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Participants responded to statements, such as "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort", on a 4 point scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (exactly true). Items were averaged to create scale scores ($\alpha = .92$) with higher scores indicating greater perceived self-efficacy.

**Well-being.** The Personal Well-being Index, a 7-item subscale of the Australian Unity Well-being Index (Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, Van Vugt & Misajon, 2003), was used to assess participants' levels of satisfaction in different life domains. Using an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied), participants evaluated how satisfied they felt with areas such as "personal relationships", "health", and "achievements in life." Scale scores were created by averaging across the 7 domains ($\alpha = .92$).

**Procedure**
Volunteers selected a principal organization for which they served and answered most questions with regard to their activities volunteering for that organization. They completed information about their current volunteer activities first and then moved through the scales in the order listed above, finishing with demographic questions.

**Results and Discussion**

**Data Screening**

There were a small number of participants who selected the midpoint for every item on a scale (and some who selected the midpoint for every item on every scale). This resulted in spikes at the midpoint of the distribution of scales for which means were located elsewhere. We converted these responses to missing data, scale by scale: Volunteer Functions Inventory (N = 78), self-esteem (N = 175), well-being (N = 168), organizational support (N = 193), and intent to volunteer (N = 261). For the self-efficacy and social connectedness scales and the trust and satisfaction items, we chose only to convert to missing the 52 participants who gave midpoint responses to all seven of the above scales.

All variables were skewed, as shown by the ratio of the skewness coefficient to the standard error of skewness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Career motivation was positively skewed, as were social and protective motivation. Values motivation was negatively skewed as were understanding and enhancement motivation, self-esteem, social connectedness, well-being, self-efficacy, organizational support, volunteer satisfaction, and intent to volunteer. We performed square root transformations on each of these variables or on reflected versions of the variables where negatively skewed. When this did not bring variables closer to normality, logarithmic transformations were conducted. These procedures resulted in extensive reductions in skewness. Only enhancement motivation (which was not severely skewed; \( z = -2.82 \)) was not brought closer to normality by transformations and therefore it was left untransformed. In all cases, raw untransformed means and standard deviations are
reported here and scale scores have been retained in their original direction for reporting purposes.

**Motivations to Volunteer**

As shown in Table 1, we found a similar rank ordering of motivation importance as has been found in other samples (for example, the U.S. sample from Stukas et al., 2009). Value expression ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.32$) was the most important motive, followed by understanding ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.51$), enhancement ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.60$), social ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.53$), and protective motivation ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.56$) with pursuit of career opportunities ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.75$) the least important reason for volunteering. Almost a third of the sample rated all five items on the career scale as "not at all important" which may be characteristic of a sample of volunteers who already have careers or who are no longer in the workforce.

**Gender.** Nevertheless, different groups in our sample granted more or less importance to different motivations for volunteering. For example, as shown in Table 1, women ranked all motivations higher than men except for social motivation, which men indicated was more important to them. In their American national sample, Clary et al. (1996) found similar gender differences, although they found that women reported more social motivation than men and there were no differences in career motivation. As shown by Cohen's $d$, the gender differences in motivation here were small, but they may be in line with research suggesting that women are often more likely to serve as volunteers than men (although such differences are also typically small). For example, Musick and Wilson (2008) suggested that women are often socialized to take more responsibility for others, adopting a more communal approach to life, whereas men may be more likely to take an instrumental approach. Such differences in approach may result in different choices about how to volunteer as well as in differing rates of volunteerism.
**Age.** Across the age spectrum, older volunteers granted reduced importance to all motives (save only value expression). The correlation coefficients with age were: career ($r = -0.50$), social ($r = -0.08$), values ($r = 0.002$), understanding ($r = -0.16$), enhancement ($r = -0.20$), and protective ($r = -0.22$) and all (except with values) were statistically significant at $p < .01$. Clary et al. (1996) also reported decreases across age for the career, understanding, and protective functions (but non-significant differences for the other motivations). However, other researchers have found that increasing age may be associated with increases in some motivations. For example, Okun and Schultz (2003) found that whereas career and understanding motivations decreased with age, social motivations increased, suggesting that differences in the desire to experience positive emotions in relationships may be involved. It stands to reason that younger volunteers may be more interested in learning and career development than older volunteers.

**Organization type.** More importantly from a practical standpoint, we also found significant differences in the importance of certain motives based on volunteer organization type. Following the same strategy that was used by Clary et al. (1996), in Table 2, we report the relative importance of motivations for each type of organization using logistic regression to predict volunteerism for a particular organizational category (coded 1) against all other categories (coded 0) with the six motivation scales from the VFI as predictors.

Taking sport volunteers, our largest single subgroup, as an example, we can see that, relative to other volunteers in other areas, volunteers in the sport area reported less values, career, and protective motivation and more social and enhancement motivation than other volunteers. These differences make intuitive sense. For example, comparatively fewer sport volunteers may be pursuing careers in this area (see Cuskelly, 2004), at least as compared to volunteers in the business area who rate career motives higher than other volunteers. Similarly, volunteers who assist in the sport arena may be less likely to be pursuing a
humanitarian agenda, given that most community sporting organizations are run primarily by volunteers and serve a wide constituency, not just people in serious need. Additionally, parents may feel social pressures to get involved in the sports that their children pursue (e.g., Cuskelly, 2004) and such activities may offer opportunities to feel good seeing the happiness brought to children.

Such conclusions may be easy to draw post hoc after the relationships in the data are known, and many of the findings for other types of organizations also make intuitive sense. However, our findings are not always consistent with the patterns found by Clary et al. (1996) and we would be hard pressed to predict or summarize all of the significant associations in Table 2. What we do not see in Table 2 is that other-oriented (or self-oriented) motivations to volunteer are favored exclusively by volunteers from any particular type of organization. Nevertheless, for coordinators of volunteer programs, these descriptive data may prove invaluable, given their potential use in recruitment efforts (see Clary et al., 1994; Stukas et al., 2014). For example, we would advise those seeking volunteers for sporting activities to focus primarily on social and enhancement motivations, while perhaps not completely ignoring the values and understanding motives that are rated highly in our sample as a whole.

**Task type.** Unlike other past studies, we also asked volunteers the primary activity they undertook at their principal organization. Again, we examined whether motivations differed between volunteers doing certain types of tasks as compared to all other tasks using logistic regression, as shown in Table 3. These descriptive data may prove useful for the placement or retention of volunteers, if program coordinators seek to ensure that volunteers are engaged with activities that best allow them to fulfill their primary motivations. For organizations that offer more than one type of position to volunteers, Table 3 may be more instructive about where not to place volunteers than about where to place them. For example,
volunteers with strong values or social motivation might not prosper doing administrative tasks and those with important understanding motives might find fundraising stymying. Overall, no particular task cornered the market on especially other-oriented volunteers with all tasks differing by a combination of motives.

Nevertheless, we should stress that, although our sample is large and composed of volunteers rather than non-volunteers, the motivational patterns found here may be indicative of the benefits that volunteers who remain in these positions (and organizations) have found important; we know less about the anticipated benefits and reasons that may draw volunteers to certain activities and organizations but which are ultimately not achieved or sustaining (see Willems et al., 2012). With such caveats in mind, we hope that Tables 2 and 3 will still be instructive.

**Individual Differences in Well-being**

To investigate our primary hypothesis, we examined the role of several indicators of well-being (self-esteem, well-being, social connectedness, self-efficacy, and social trust) as predictors and/or outcomes of volunteer motivations and activity. On average, our sample proved quite healthy, with mean scores over the midpoint of each scale: self-esteem \( M = 7.34, SD = 1.81 \), well-being \( M = 7.30, SD = 1.78 \), social connectedness \( M = 5.42, SD = 1.03 \) and self-efficacy \( M = 3.17, SD = 0.46 \). Correlations amongst these measures ranged from \( r = .47 \) to \( .71 \) (all \( p < .001 \)). For social trust, 70.1% of our sample indicated that "most people can be trusted" with only 29.9% feeling that "you can't be too careful"; those reporting higher trust also scored significantly higher on each of the other well-being indicators (all \( r \)'s > 10; Cohen's \( d \)'s ranged from .41 to .66). These positive results may be reflective of a sample entirely composed of volunteers, given the established links between volunteering and physical and mental health (e.g., Piliavin, 2010).
Associations with motivations to volunteer. As predicted, individual differences in well-being were differentially associated with the six motivations assessed by the VFI (see Table 4). Due to correlations among the VFI scales, we elected to use linear regression to examine the differing contributions of the six scales to variance in well-being by entering them simultaneously as predictors. As seen in Table 4, the primary other-oriented motivation of value expression is positively associated with all of the well-being indicators, as are social motivation (nominated as other-oriented by Konrath et al., 2012) and understanding motivation (typically considered to be self-oriented in past research; e.g., Konrath et al., 2012; Omoto et al., 2010). However, understanding motivation has been discriminated from other self-oriented motives by Gillath et al. (2005) as representative of the exploration system active in securely attached people; as such, it may be associated with better well-being (i.e., secure rather than insecure attachment) and, if volunteers are motivated to learn about new people, could be construed as other-oriented. These findings extend the past literature that suggests that other-oriented motivations are better for volunteers but which has not used these measures.

The largest effects in Table 4 show that lower levels of self-esteem, personal well-being, social connectedness, self-efficacy and trust in others were associated with higher protective motivation, a self-oriented motive. Volunteers who indicated that they served as a way to escape from their troubles reported lower well-being (broadly construed). Those who might be struggling to feel good about themselves or who are dealing with loneliness due to a lack of rewarding social connections may seek out volunteer activities in order to distract themselves from their negative feelings. However, we did not find the same pattern of results for the enhancement scale, which was not significantly related to any outcome, potentially due to shared variance with the protective scale (zero-order correlations with the enhancement scale do show negative correlations with self-esteem and social connectedness).
In contrast, Mayer, Fracastoro and McNary (2007) found that organizational-based self-esteem was positively correlated with a combined enhancement/protective function they called "sense of worth" (with items from both VFI scales). This form of self-esteem reflects "the perception individuals have of themselves as important, meaningful, effectual, and worthwhile within their organization" (Mayer et al., 2007, p. 329; italics added). As such, it seems more likely that this measure of self-esteem, focusing on behavior in the organization as well as treatment by the organization, would be related to perceptions that protective and enhancement goals can be achieved rather than to the sorts of self-perceptions assessed by the Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem scale that might lead someone to volunteer to avoid thinking about themselves (or to boost their self-worth). In other words, feeling that you are a valued and capable member of the organization may be an outcome of choosing to volunteer in order to feel good or to avoid one's troubles whereas feeling that one is useless, a failure, and with not much to be proud of might help to create motivation to volunteer in order to turn around this condition.

In our study, lower levels of self-esteem, well-being, social connectedness, and trust (but not self-efficacy) were also significantly associated with higher career motivation, another self-oriented motive. Most studies comparing other-oriented and self-oriented motives in volunteers have not included career motivation in their analyses. Indeed, although it is clearly self-oriented, career motivation may share more in common with the extrinsic and controlled pressures to act examined by researchers in the self-determination theory tradition (e.g., Weinstein & Ryan, 2011) or who study students who have been required to volunteer (e.g., Stukas, Snyder & Clary, 1999). These studies suggest that volunteering for external reasons, because one is pressured, is associated with poorer outcomes, including poorer well-being (e.g., Gebauer, Riketta, Broemer & Maio, 2008). The only variable we assessed that was not negatively related to career motivation was self-efficacy, which was unrelated. These
findings, linking protective and career motivation to poorer well-being, extend the past literature that suggests that self-oriented motivations are worse for volunteers but which has not used these measures.

One key addition to the literature offered here is to examine not only traditional measures of well-being but also measures of social capital, such as social connectedness and trust (see Brown et al., 2012). Omoto and Snyder (2002; 2010) have highlighted how a strong psychological sense of community may be both cause and consequence of volunteering. Stukas et al. (2005) demonstrated that volunteers who satisfied their most important motivations in their activities also reported higher levels of trust and sense of community. However, until now, there have been no data reported to show that other-oriented motivations are positively correlated and self-oriented motivations are negatively correlated with measures of social connectedness and trust.

The past literature (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Konrath et al., 2012) has suggested that other-oriented volunteering leads to better well-being. However, the case could be made that, in this sample, the healthiest volunteers (i.e., those highest well-being, broadly construed) were telling us clearly that they engaged in service because of their prosocial values and concern (as well as for understanding and social motives). Conversely, volunteers experiencing personal difficulties may have been willing to admit that they were drawn to volunteering because of the affordances it offered to avoid their problems or to build a career. However, with our cross-sectional data, we are not able to tease out the direction of these effects to determine whether differences in well-being are cause or consequence of motivations to volunteer. As Thoits and Hewitt (2001) point out, relationships between volunteering and well-being could be bi-directional and reciprocal. Further longitudinal studies could tell us more.

\textbf{Measures of Volunteer Activity and Outcomes}
We asked volunteers to tell us how long they had been a volunteer at their principal organization and how many hours per week they devoted. Tenure and hours per week were positively correlated at $r = .19$ ($p < .001$). Volunteers also reported the perceived support available from the organization ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.05$; on a 7-point scale), their satisfaction with their volunteer role ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.91$; on a 5-point scale), and their intentions to continue at the same organization in the future ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.21$; on a 7-point scale).

Overall, our sample was composed of satisfied volunteers who perceived good organizational supports and intended to continue serving, although there was some variability. Satisfaction was positively correlated with perceived organizational support ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) and future intentions ($r = .33$, $p < .001$) and organizational support correlated positively with intentions ($r = .54$, $p < .001$). These outcomes were also positively correlated with hours volunteered each week (support $r = .08$, $p < .001$; satisfaction $r = .15$, $p < .001$; intentions $r = .11$, $p < .001$) and years spent at the current organization (support $r = .05$, $p = .001$; satisfaction $r = .10$, $p < .001$; intentions $r = .19$, $p < .001$), although these relationships were all very small, suggesting that other factors also predict volunteer activity.

For example, men reported both longer hours ($t(4083) = 8.87$, $p < .001$, $d = .29$) and a longer tenure at their current organization ($t(4083) = 10.82$, $p < .001$, $d = .35$) than women. However, women reported small advantages in outcomes over men across the board (satisfaction $t(4031) = 2.14$, $p = .03$, $d = .08$; organizational support $t(3890) = 5.76$, $p < .001$, $d = .18$; intentions $t(3822) = 1.78$, $p = .08$, $d = .06$). Age was also associated with perceptions of greater organizational support ($r = .16$, $p < .001$), more satisfaction ($r = .15$, $p < .001$), higher intentions to continue ($r = .22$, $p < .001$), more hours per week volunteered ($r = .18$, $p < .001$), and of course a longer tenure ($r = .41$, $p < .001$).

**Associations with motivations to volunteer.** We also found small but significant relationships between the volunteer motives (entered as a set into linear regression), and
volunteer activity and outcome measures (see Table 5). Career motivation, an extrinsic and self-oriented motivation, was associated with lower activity and reduced satisfaction, perceptions of support, and future intentions. A similar result was found by Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) for American hospice volunteers. Moreover, Bortree (2011) found that extrinsically motivated (required) service lowered future intentions by reducing both involvement and perceptions of organizational support. Pursuing extrinsic career benefits may function similarly. Protective motivation, also self-oriented, was associated with less positive outcomes as well, and with a shorter tenure as a volunteer but a greater number of hours per week (possibly to increase distraction efforts). However, contradicting predictions, self-oriented enhancement motivation was associated with more positive outcomes; we speculate that volunteers were more easily able to find affordances to satisfy their enhancement needs in their activities (affordances not assessed by us) and this is why this motive is associated with positive outcomes (following Clary et al., 1998).

As can be seen in Table 5, other-oriented values motivation was positively associated with measures of volunteer activity and outcomes; such findings are in keeping with past research (Finkelstein, 2009; Finkelstein et al., 2005). However, the effects on volunteer tenure and hours per week were small. Indeed, the variance explained in volunteer activity by all six motivations was very low. Only social motivation, also potentially other-oriented, proved to be a modest predictor of tenure, suggesting the influence of close others on decisions to remain a volunteer (e.g., Greenslade & White, 2005). Although social motivation was unrelated to volunteer outcomes, we found that understanding motivation was, similarly to values, related positively to both outcomes and activity (save only a negative correlation with tenure, suggesting volunteers could come to learn all they can and then leave). Thus, given this pattern of results, understanding motivation may need to be further investigated to determine whether it is primarily other-oriented or whether it should be considered a self-
oriented motivation that is associated with positive rather than negative outcomes from volunteering, perhaps due to its links to the exploration goals of securely attached people (Gillath et al., 2005).

**Associations with measures of well-being.** In order to examine the possibility (raised by Thoits and Hewitt, 2001) that well-being is a significant influence on volunteer activity, we investigated the association between our five indicators and measures of volunteer activity and outcomes. As with the motivations, our well-being indicators (entered as a set into linear regressions; see Table 6) did not explain much variance in volunteer activity (either hours per week or tenure at the organization). Self-esteem had the stronger of these small relationships with activity, but again, it may be either cause or consequence of these relationships (e.g., Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Social connectedness was the strongest predictor of satisfaction, perceived support, and future intentions. This is consistent with research linking volunteerism with social capital. According to Putnam (2000), volunteering behavior can result from greater social and community connections. Indeed, many organizations use personal asking to recruit people from current volunteers’ social networks (O’Connor, 2006); research on the positive effects of sense of community on volunteering suggests a similar pattern (e.g., Omoto & Snyder, 2002, 2010). Volunteerism by those who are better at establishing connections may be more satisfying and engender greater organizational support. However, social connectedness may also increase with successful volunteering (e.g., Brown et al., 2012; Stukas et al., 2005); we are not able to tease apart the direction of causality in this survey. Trust in others, another indicator of social capital (Putnam, 2000) was unrelated to volunteer outcomes, although it did increase with tenure. The other well-being indicators did not have strong and consistent relationships with outcomes or activity. Instead, the VFI motivations to volunteer may be better predictors of successful outcomes from volunteering, particularly if task affordances
and functionally-relevant benefits can be ensured (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Stukas et al., 2009).4

Conclusions

Overall, Australian volunteers who engaged in service primarily for other-oriented reasons, to express their prosocial values or to reaffirm their relationships with close others, or for exploration reasons, to learn more about other people, the world, and their own strengths, were more likely to report higher levels of well-being (self-esteem, self-efficacy, well-being, social connectedness, and trust). They were also more likely to report higher satisfaction, perceived support from the volunteer organization and intentions to continue volunteering. In contrast, Australian volunteers who engaged in service primarily for self-oriented reasons, to distract themselves from personal problems or to advance their careers (but not specifically to feel good about themselves), were more likely to report lower well-being and poorer outcomes. Future research is now needed to better understand the causal direction of these effects and the possible mediators that link other-oriented volunteering to better outcomes.

Organizations that work with volunteers may wish to seek those with other-oriented motivation and to encourage it in current volunteers. As Okun, O’Rourke, Keller, Johnson, and Enders (2014) have pointed out, religiosity and the key other-oriented motivation of value expression are positively associated, suggesting that religious organizations may be a valuable source of reliable volunteers. Furthermore, organizations may find that other-oriented motivations also prove easier to fulfill (i.e., acting on one’s values or living up to social expectations is as simple as showing up) than self-oriented motivations (e.g., avoiding one’s problems or meeting possible employers), making the person-environment “matching” effects, known to predict greater satisfaction and intentions to continue (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Stukas et al, 2009) more likely for other-oriented volunteers.
However, volunteers are rarely purely other-oriented or self-oriented in their motivations (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Cornelis et al., 2013). As such, we recommend that organizations be wary of those who might not show enough interest in helping others but not necessarily seek to turn away volunteers who wish to help themselves too. After all, if organizations are able to provide opportunities that allow volunteers to satisfy their primary motivations, whatever they may be, this may attenuate the differences in outcomes attributable to motivation type, and potentially increase benefits for all.
Notes

1 Not every researcher agrees about which motivations should be classified as other-oriented or self-oriented. Konrath et al. (2012) used a definition of other-oriented that has less to do with altruism and more to do with the use of other people as a guide for behavior than other conceptualizations; therefore social motivation was included as other-oriented. However, other researchers (e.g., Gillath et al., 2005) identify social motivation as self-oriented, given the relationship benefits available from yielding to normative pressures exerted by close others who encourage volunteerism. In this study, we have adopted a general definition that can incorporate social motivation as well as understanding motivation (to the extent that it involves an interest in learning about people) in the other-oriented categorization; however, we ultimately use the relationships in our dataset to support these interpretations.

2 In order to confirm that the six factor structure of the VFI held in our dataset, we conducted a principal axis factor analysis requesting six factors with an oblimin rotation. Each of the VFI items loaded primarily on its appropriate factor with only “volunteering is a way to make new friends” loading strongly on two factors (enhancement and understanding). We note that this is the identical pattern of results that Clary et al. (1998) reported.

3 We note that “I can learn how to deal with a variety of people” is the second highest loading item on the Understanding scale in Clary et al.’s (1998) factor analysis.

4 As suggested by a reviewer, we also examined, first, the extent to which our six motivations still predicted future intentions after controlling for volunteer tenure, hours per week, satisfaction and perceived organizational support, and, second, the extent to which motivations were still related to our indices of well-being after controlling for these measures of volunteer activity and outcomes. As Penner (2002) suggested, these organizational experiences may have a strong influence on sustained volunteering and potentially on well-
being. However, in all of these analyses, the direction and statistical significance of the motivation effects remained virtually unchanged (although the effect sizes were smaller), save only for a handful of instances. Understanding motivation became a non-significant positive predictor of future intentions ($\beta = .03$) and well-being ($\beta = .04$) but a significant negative predictor of trust ($\text{Exp}(B) = .82$) after including these covariates. Career motivation became a significant positive predictor of self-efficacy ($\beta = .04$).
References


Author Biographical Information

Art Stukas, PhD, is Associate Professor of Social Psychology in the School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University.

Russell Hoye, PhD, is Professor and Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Business, Economics, and Law, and Director of the Centre for Sport and Social Impact, La Trobe University.

Matthew Nicholson, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Deputy Director of the Centre for Sport and Social Impact, La Trobe University.

Kevin Brown, PhD, is Principal Research Fellow in the Centre for Sport and Social Impact, La Trobe University.

Laura Aisbett, PhD, is a researcher in the Centre for Sport and Social Impact, La Trobe University.
Table 1

*Gender Differences in Motivations to Volunteer*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Male M</th>
<th>Male SD</th>
<th>Female M</th>
<th>Female SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Social</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>-5.04</td>
<td>3165.97</td>
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<td>.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>4005</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
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<td>1.52</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>4005</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4005</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>2993.33</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.15</td>
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<td>Career</td>
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<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4005</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.13</td>
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</table>
Table 2

*Logistic Regression Analyses Predicting Activity in Specific Types of Volunteer Organizations Versus All Other Organizations from Volunteer Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>C</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture/Recreation</td>
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<td>2.32***</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
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<td>3.53***</td>
<td>0.15***</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.19***</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
<td>0.54**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Research</td>
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<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.21***</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>3.53***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>385</td>
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<td>4.34***</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.98***</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<td>Social Services</td>
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<td>0.57***</td>
<td>2.90***</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.74***</td>
<td>3.29***</td>
<td>1.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
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<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.80*</td>
<td>2.44**</td>
<td>4.63***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing/Employment</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/Politics</td>
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<td>0.52</td>
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<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>4.79**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philanthropic</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.47</td>
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<td>International</td>
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<td>1.28</td>
<td>3.57**</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>2.44***</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.72***</td>
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<td>0.25***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business/Professional</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>24.34***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 3

*Logistic Regression Analyses Predicting Activity in Specific Types of Volunteer Tasks Versus All Other Tasks from Volunteer Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.62*</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.62*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership/Committee</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>1.94***</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.76***</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.38***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event Management</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>1.69***</td>
<td>0.56***</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visiting People</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1.19</td>
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<td>0.73***</td>
<td>7.28***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Befriending/Mentoring</td>
<td>142</td>
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<td>1.21</td>
<td>0.80*</td>
<td>2.36**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice/Counselling</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>1.66*</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.81*</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>296</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
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<td>Representing</td>
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<td>1.10</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
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<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Practical Help</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.43***</td>
<td>1.22***</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Help</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>0.66*</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.64*</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of the Above</td>
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<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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</table>


*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 4

*Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Individual Differences in Well-Being from Volunteer Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>3896</td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.48***</td>
<td>-.18***</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>.09***</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.34***</td>
<td>-.11***</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
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<td>.07***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.28***</td>
<td>-.01</td>
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<td>Connectedness</td>
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<td>.19***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.43***</td>
<td>-.18***</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4007</td>
<td>2.02***</td>
<td>1.52***</td>
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<td>0.48***</td>
<td>0.40***</td>
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*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 5

*Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Volunteer Activity and Outcomes from Volunteer Motivations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>R²</th>
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<td>Hours per Week</td>
<td>3896</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05*</td>
<td>.08**</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.07**</td>
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<td>Tenure (years)</td>
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<td>.06**</td>
<td>-.06*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.05*</td>
<td>-.28***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4007</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>-.10***</td>
<td>-.17***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Org. Support</td>
<td>4007</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.11***</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
</tr>
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<td>Future Intentions</td>
<td>4007</td>
<td>-.04*</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>.10***</td>
<td>-.18***</td>
<td>-.33***</td>
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</table>


*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
Table 6

*Regression predicting Volunteer Activity and Outcomes from Well-being Indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>WB</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure (years)</td>
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<td>.12***</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.05*</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
<td>.11***</td>
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<td>.26***</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. Support</td>
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<td>.11***</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.08***</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Intentions</td>
<td>4007</td>
<td>.08**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SE = Self-Esteem; WB = Well-being; EF = Efficacy; SC = Social Connectedness; TR = Trust

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001