

MOTIVES FOR VOLUNTEERING: CATEGORIZATION OF VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATIONS USING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

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Most studies on volunteers' motivations use standardized questionnaires, one of the most commonly used being the Volunteer Function Inventory. Open-ended questions about what motivates individuals to become volunteers are seldom employed. We hypothesize that questionnaires tend to overestimate the number of motivations and to underestimate their variety. Therefore, in this paper we analyze the answers of 1515 volunteers to an open-ended question and categorize them. The results show that volunteers give an average of 2 motivations, fewer than in the questionnaires, and that the Values motivation is the most frequently mentioned and the most important for volunteers. In addition, this Value motive coexists with others, lacking in the standard questionnaires, such as Organizational Commitment, Personal Growth, Religious, Social Change or Interest in the Activity.

Key Words: *Volunteering, motivations, categorization, open-ended questions.*

La mayoría de los estudios sobre motivaciones del voluntariado utilizan cuestionarios estandarizados, siendo el Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) el más utilizado. En muy pocas ocasiones se pregunta de forma abierta a los voluntarios por los motivos que les llevan a serlo. En este trabajo hipotetizamos que los cuestionarios tiende a sobreestimar el número de motivaciones y a infraestimar la variedad de las mismas, por lo que se analizan las respuestas cualitativas de 1515 voluntarios a una pregunta abierta por sus motivaciones y se realiza una categorización de las mismas. Los resultados muestran que los voluntarios dan una media de dos motivos, muy por debajo de lo aportado por los cuestionarios, y que Valores es la motivación más frecuentemente citada y la considerada más importante por la mayoría. Además, esta motivación parece coexistir con otras motivaciones muy diversas, no contempladas en los cuestionarios, como Compromiso Organizacional, Religiosidad, Cambio Social, Interés por la Actividad o Desarrollo Personal.

Palabras clave: *Voluntariado, motivaciones, categorización, pregunta abierta.*

The study of motives for volunteering is a recurring theme in the specialized literature in the field, and has important repercussions for the management of volunteer programmes, since the motives that emerge as important for volunteers will determine the type of recruitment, task assignment, training, and so on. The idea underlying this strategy is that the satisfaction of motives is a key factor for retention (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992; Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, & Haugen, 1994; Chacón & Vecina, 2002; Dávila & Chacón 2003; Chacón, Vecina, & Dávila, 2007; Vecina, Chacón, & Sueiro, 2009).

This functional approach, which has its origins in Katz's (1960) work on attitudes, has recently been

applied in the field of volunteers' motivations (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998), on the basis that people become volunteers and remain on volunteer programmes for various reasons and in response to diverse psychological functions. This approach has permitted the development of closed questionnaires on the motivations of volunteers, in which they obtain a score on each and every one of the motives (Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). The main drawback with these types of instrument is that people often indicate as motives what are in reality expectations, that is, they give a score to all the items on the questionnaire, though in principle not all of them determine their decision to become a volunteer or to remain as one.

In contrast, Symbolic Theory (Scott & Lyman, 1968) focuses on the subjective meanings individuals attribute to their behaviours. Motives would be explanations generated to justify or excuse one's own actions, so that they would involve a substantial interpretive element. From this perspective it is considered more appropriate to

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assess motivation by means of open questions, since they give people the freedom to express spontaneously the motives relevant in their case to participating in volunteer work, thus minimizing the confusion with expectations. Moreover, they provide a better picture of the enormous variety of symbolic meanings attributable to volunteering.

Prominent among the closed questionnaires, for being one of the first, is that designed by Omoto and Snyder (1995) for assessing the motivations of volunteers working in the field of AIDS (CMVS). This instrument includes five motivations: Values, Community Concern, Understanding, Personal Development and Esteem Enhancement. It was adapted for a sample of Spanish volunteers working in a wide range of areas and with a variety of populations (Chacón & Vecina, 1999; Vecina & Chacón, 1999). The result faithfully reflected the motivations of Values, Understanding and Personal Development. However, the Community Concern motivation was diluted, since the sample of volunteers was quite heterogeneous as regards the problems they were working on and the target populations of the volunteer work. The items of this scale came to form part of Esteem Enhancement, which was called more generically Personal Development, and a new scale, called Social Relations motivation.

But the questionnaire that has undoubtedly been most extensively used over the last decade is the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), designed by Clary, Snyder and cols. (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, & Miene, 1998). It includes six different motivations: Values (humanitarian interest in helping others), Understanding (desire to learn more about various matters), Social (need to adapt to the subjective social norm, that is, to what is valued by close and significant others), Career (need to gain career-related experience), Enhancement (interest in experiencing positive feelings) and Protective (need to protect oneself and escape from negative feelings such as loneliness).

Some authors have questioned the indiscriminate use of closed questionnaires for assessing volunteers' motivations (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Chacón, Menard, Sanz, & Vecina, 1997). In this line, López-Cabanas and Chacón (1997) argue that closed questionnaires can lead to a situation whereby volunteers confuse the motive (or motives) that actually explain why they volunteer with the expectations about being a volunteer and/or the consequences of being one – that is, what can reasonably be expected to occur when they make the decision to volunteer, but is not necessarily the reason why they make that choice.

Studies which use open questions for assessing motives for volunteering are understandably scarce (Oda, 1991), among other reasons because they are much more costly to analyze and involve a greater element of subjectivity in the researchers who have to categorize them. One of the few works that compares the volunteers' responses to an open question with scores on a closed questionnaire, the VFI, is that of Allison, Okun and Dutridge (2002). The authors start out from the assumption that with a Likert-type scale respondents would be indicating the extent to which the volunteer work satisfies different conscious needs, whilst with an open question they would be providing an explanation for why they made the decision to become volunteers. The two methods would therefore be assessing different aspects. The results of the cited work show that the open question elicits fewer motives and a wider variety of motivations than the VFI. In general, volunteers mention two motives on average, and additional motivations, not included in the questionnaires, appear, such as Enjoyment, Religiosity and Team Building. The limitations of the study, which may explain its restricted impact, revolve around the sample characteristics: relatively small and homogeneous (195 volunteers belonging to the same organization). Moreover, in view of the way the question was formulated, some volunteers in the sample may have understood that they were required to mention just one motive.

The goal of the present work is to analyze and categorize the responses of 1515 volunteers to an open question about their reasons for volunteering. We hypothesize that, as in the study by Allison, Okun and Dutridge (2002), the volunteers' responses will be varied and will likely reveal the conscious and determinant motives that explain why they volunteered, and not the associated expectations. This will be reflected in a small average number and a wide variety of motives.

METHOD

Participants

The sample was made up of 1515 volunteers from 132 aid and ecological organizations. Sixty per cent were women and 40% were men. Mean age was 31 years, with a range of 15 to 82. The educational level of the sample was high, with over 50% of university graduates.

Instrument

In addition to enquiring about sociodemographic data, the instrument included an open question about the motivations for volunteering. The wording of the item

was as follows: “List in order of importance the reason or reasons why you decided to become a volunteer”. In the space for the reply there were several lines, the first few numbered, so as to make it clear to the volunteers that they could list as many responses as they wished.

Procedure

The categorization process involved two phases. In the first, a theoretical list was drawn up that included the motives identified in the most widely used questionnaires and their definition. From the VFI (Clary et al., 1998), all six motives were included: Values, Understanding, Social, Career, Enhancement and Protective. The Community Concern motive was added from the CMVS (Omoto & Snyder, 1995), while from its Spanish adaptation the Social Relations motive was included (Chacón & Vecina, 1999). Finally, the list included motives identified by Allison, Okun and Duttrige (2002): Religiosity, Enjoyment and Team Building. A total of 11 motivational categories were defined a priori.

The responses given to the open question by the 1515 volunteers totalled 4017. These were transcribed by two expert judges (50% each). First of all, the two judges together classified the responses of 70 participants selected at random, discussing differences of opinion and homogenizing classification criteria. After this process there appeared two new categories not considered in the initial list, Interest in the Activity and Organizational Commitment. Moreover, subcategories were distinguished within some of the categories due to the high frequency of appearance of some types of response, which did not exactly match the definition of the category in the corresponding questionnaire. For example, distinguished within the Values category were the subcategories Social Transformation, Reciprocity, Help for a Specific Territory and Help for a Specific Group, which are types of values but do not fit in the definition of values included in the questionnaires, which consider only those of humanitarian interest in helping others. As regards the Knowledge-Understanding category, the subcategory of Self-knowledge was inserted, which is a type of knowledge not accounted for in the definition.

In the second phase, the judges categorized all the responses independently, so that two categorizations were obtained for each one of the responses. Inter-judge reliability was determined using the Chi contingency coefficient, and ranged from .94 to .97 depending on the category. Disagreements were resolved by means of

discussion between the judges, and where necessary an opinion was obtained from a third judge, expert in the field, so as to arrive at a single and agreed categorization. Finally, all the responses included in each category were reviewed one by one, with the aim of detecting and correcting possible errors of categorization or coding.

RESULTS

The categorization process described resulted in the structure of categories and subcategories set out below. From each one an intentional definition is proposed and some prototypical examples presented. It should be borne in mind that when subcategories are proposed for a category, it is because in the case of the general category (despite nominally being capable of including the subcategories), the items that make it up, and therefore its semantic content, neither cover nor include the content of the subcategories.

1. Values motive: includes any expression that makes explicit some type of social value, with an altruistic or other-centred interest that translates into a desire to help others. The responses most frequently included in this general Values category were: “to be helpful”, “to serve others”, “out of solidarity” and “to do something useful.”

As mentioned previously, within this general category specific subcategories opened up, on the basis that they were cited with some frequency by the volunteers and that the content to which they referred went beyond the definition of the general category established in the closed questionnaires and used in this study as a starting point. Thus, for example, Values included the subcategories Religious, Social Transformation, Reciprocity, Interest in Helping a Specific Group and Interest in Helping a Specific Territory.

Subcategories of Values

1.1. Religious Values: religious or spiritual motives are cited generically, or there is specific mention of professing a certain religion. This subcategory includes responses such as: “my religious conviction,” “to give a testimony of faith,” “Catholic ideology” or “spiritual.”

1.2. Social Transformation Values: this refers to values related to the need for social change, also covering political participation and components, all with the goal of making the world a better place and reducing injustice. Examples of expressions included in this subcategory are: “to build a better world,” “a fairer

world,” “to make the world better than it is now” or “to do my bit to improve the world.”

1.3. Reciprocity Values: this includes responses based on the social norm of reciprocity in a general or specific way, and which clearly express that the reason for volunteering is to give back or show gratitude for something received previously: having received some benefit, the person feels the obligation to give something in return. Prototypical examples are: “to help, as I was helped before,” “feeling of gratitude,” “to teach what I was taught,” or “to share what I have been given.”

1.4. Community Concern Values: this is conceptualized as a value in which there is expressed an interest in helping a specific community. This subcategory has been subdivided in two: the Helping a Specific Territory Values motive and the Helping a Specific Group Values motive.

1.4.1. Helping a Specific Territory Values: the responses included in this subcategory reflect some type of collaboration in a particular geographical area known to the volunteer and about which he/she is concerned. Those mentioning this motive express their interest in: “to do something for my community,” “to work for my people,” “to get involved in the problems of my people” or “for the sake of the neighbourhood.”

1.4.2. Helping a Specific Group Values: in this case the interest in helping refers not to a general concern, but rather revolves around a specific segment of society or a particular group. The most frequent responses are: “to help children,” “I like the group that I help,” “to help the deaf-blind (or people with mental deficiencies, prison inmates, the sick, etc.)” or “to help drug addicts.”

2. Knowledge-Understanding Motive: this category reflects an interest in learning about and understanding the world, in developing new perspectives and interpretations, and in acquiring and strengthening skills. Typical responses are: “to learn,” “to know,” “curiosity,” “new perspectives,” “to learn in new situations” or “to find out about other realities.”

Subcategory of Knowledge

2.1. Self-knowledge: this refers to the need to know oneself better, to learn about one’s own limits and capacities, to explore one’s own strengths. Typical expressions included in this subcategory are: “to know myself better,” “to find out about my abilities,” or “to know my potential, capacities and limits.”

3. Social Adjustment Motive: the responses included here reflect that the volunteers are motivated as a result of normative influences, that is, to adjust to what they believe are the expectations of significant others, such as family or friends. The fact of knowing other volunteers prior to becoming one is also included in this category. Common expressions are: “my friends talked me into it,” “because of friends in the same organization”, “through the influence of my father,” “my sister was the founder” or “because of my colleague.”

4. Career: in these cases the motive for the activity is to improve one’s professional skills and/or improve one’s chances of finding work. The most prototypical expressions refer to: “CV,” “to acquire professional experience,” “to return to the world of work” or “looking for work.”

5. Protective: refers to the need to avoid negative situations in one’s life that might be threatening one’s self-concept. In these cases volunteering serves to protect oneself and avoid the anxiety produced. The expressions here often have clear negative connotations. Responses are commonly of the type: “due to a personal problem,” “to help myself,” “to come face to face with real everyday life,” “out of loneliness,” “to fill a gap in my life” or “to enable me to accept what happened.”

6. Enhancement: this motivational category includes a wide variety of meanings in the definition included in the VFI. Specific expressions refer to volunteer work increasing people’s self-esteem, making them feel important or necessary, making them feel better about themselves or being a way of making new friends. As can be seen, in reality it includes widely varying aspects, some related to the improvement of mood and others related to self-esteem or the need to forge or maintain social relations. This diversity led to the distinguishing of four subcategories, one covering aspects related to self-esteem, another on the need for personal growth, a third referring to the need for relations with other people and a fourth covering enjoyment. Common responses in this category are: “to improve my mood through volunteer work,” “personal satisfaction”, “to feel good” or “for personal gratification.”

Subcategories of Enhancement

6.1. Enhancement: includes aspects related to personal value involving the direct search for increasing self-esteem. Prototypical responses are: “the need to feel

useful,” “I wanted to feel useful,” “out of self-esteem” or “so as to value myself.”

6.2. Personal Growth: the person states that they are volunteering as a way of changing positively, of developing and becoming stronger as a person. The expressions of volunteers who report this motive reflect their interest in: “personal enrichment or growth,” “personal change,” “personal development”, “personal progress,” “personal experience” or “satisfying personal curiosity.”

6.3. Social Relations: this subcategory reflects a need to establish new social relations, volunteer work offering a means of doing so. Expressions included in it are: “to make friends,” “social relations,” “to meet people with the same interests and curiosity,” “to meet like-minded people,” “to meet new people” or “to bring new people into my life.”

6.4. Enjoyment: this category includes responses that refer directly to the fact that the person likes and enjoys the volunteer work. Some examples would be: “because I like it,” “I enjoy it and it’s fun,” “fun,” “having a good time” or “I fancied it.”

7. Organizational Commitment: this category refers to a link of an emotional nature with a particular organization. In these cases people go into volunteer work out of commitment to the organization and the people involved with it.

Subcategories of Organizational Commitment

7.1. Institutional Commitment: this revolves around commitment to the entity; volunteers feel a certain identification with the movement as such, with its philosophy and politics. The responses included: “out of feelings of affinity with the organization,” “to keep Scouting going,” “out of a scout feeling,” “I like the organization” or “I share the interests of the organization.”

7.2. Commitment to the Group: the commitment is more closely related in these cases to the people making up the group, and less closely to the organization itself. Typical examples of responses would be: “I identify with the group,” “to keep continuity with the group,”

“because of the other group members” or “because of the people in the group.”

8. Interest in the Activity: this motivational category refers to interest in the activity involved in the volunteer work, rather than in volunteering per se or the aims of the organization. Within this category two subcategories can be distinguished:

Subcategories of Interest in the Activity

8.1. Interest in the Specific Activity: this includes interest in a particular activity that can be done as a volunteer, which may be expressed in a general or more specific way. Prototypical responses would be: “I like the activity,” “ecological activities,” “cultural activities,” “going on trips away,” “camping,” “trekking,” “mountaineering,” “I like sign language” or “handicrafts.”

8.2. Interest in Activity with People: this includes an interest in activities involving contact with people. Typical expressions used in relation to this subcategory are: “working in teams,” “working with people,” “working in groups” or “I want to work with people.”

9. Conditions: this category includes responses that did not constitute motives as such, but rather conditions or requirements that facilitate becoming a volunteer. Examples of responses are: “I have free time,” “I am unemployed,” “to do something different” or “they asked me.”

10. Others: this category includes responses that could not be classified, generally due to their being vague or unspecific. The following responses exemplify this residual category: “reasons of a personal nature” or “searching.”

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS EXPRESSED BY VOLUNTEERS

Nine per cent of the 1515 volunteers in the sample gave no response to the open question. A total of 17% gave one motive, and 30% provided two different motives for becoming a volunteer (Table 1). Less than 1%

	No motive	One motive	Two different motives	Three different motives	Four different motives	Five different motives	Six different motives
N Participants	136	263	457	440	213	5	1
Percentages	8.98%	17.36%	30.16%	29.09%	14.06%	.33%	.07%

Table 2
Frequencies and percentages of the categories and subcategories of motives

		In first place	Total frequency			In first place	Total frequency
Category Values				Category Enhancement			
Participants (1515)	N	880		Participants (1515)	N	133	
	Percentage	58.09%			Percentage	8.78%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	63.81%	Total motives (4056) 48.08%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	9.64%	Total motives (4056) 17.33%
Subcategory Community Concern (Subcategory Specific Group)				Subcategory Enjoyment			
Participants (1515)	N	97		Participants (1515)	N	44	
	Percentage	6.4%			Percentage	2.9%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	7.03%	Total motives (4056) 6.36%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	3.19%	Total motives (4056) 4.27%
Subcategory Social Transformation				Subcategory Personal Growth			
Participants (1515)	N	76		Participants (1515)	N	38	
	Percentage	5.02%			Percentage	2.51%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	5.51%	Total motives (4056) 4.44%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	2.76%	Total motives (4056) 3.94%
Subcategory Reciprocity				Subcategory Social Relations			
Participants (1515)	N	24		Participants (1515)	N	7	
	Percentage	1.58%			Percentage	.46%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.74%	Total motives (4056) 1.53%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.51%	Total motives (4056) 3.82%
Subcategory Religious				Subcategory Esteem Enhancement			
Participants (1515)	N	17		Participants (1515)	N	23	
	Percentage	1.12%			Percentage	1.52%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.23%	Total motives (4056) .86%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.67%	Total motives (4056) 2.34%
Subcategory Community Concern (Subcategory Specific Territory)							
Participants (1515)	N	9					
	Percentage	.59%					
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.65%	Total motives (4056) .64%				
Category Knowledge-Understanding				Category Career			
Participants (1515)	N	67		Participants (1515)	N	65	
	Percentage	4.43%			Percentage	4.29%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	4.86%	Total motives (4056) 8.38%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	4.71%	Total motives (4056) 6.09%
Subcategory Self-knowledge							
Participants (1515)	N	1					
	Percentage	.07%					
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.07%	Total motives (4056) .32%				
Category Organizational Commitment				Category Interest in the Activity			
Participants (1515)	N	73		Participants (1515)	N	24	
	Percentage	4.82%			Percentage	1.59%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	5.29%	Total motives (4056) 4.88%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.74%	Total motives (4056) 2.29%
Category Organizational Commitment (Subcategory Institutional Commitment)				Category Interest in the Activity (Subcategory Specific Activity)			
Participants (1515)	N	62		Participants (1515)	N	16	
	Percentage	4.09%			Percentage	1.06%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	4.50%	Total motives (4056) 4.12%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.16%	Total motives (4056) 1.45%
Category Organizational Commitment (Subcategory Commitment to the Group)				Category Interest in the Activity (Subcategory Activity with People)			
Participants (1515)	N	11		Participants (1515)	N	8	
	Percentage	.73%			Percentage	.53%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.80%	Total motives (4056) .76%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.58%	Total motives (4056) .84%
Category Social Adjustment				Category Protective			
Participants (1515)	N	16		Participants (1515)	N	7	
	Percentage	1.06%			Percentage	.46%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	1.16%	Total motives (4056) 1.18%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	.51%	Total motives (4056) .81%
Category Conditions				Category Others			
Participants (1515)	N	79		Participants (1515)	N	50	
	Percentage	5.21%			Percentage	3.3%	
Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	5.73%	Total motives (4056) 6.8%	Motives in first place (1397)	Percentage	3.63%	Total motives (4056) 4.76%

Note. The number of motives named in first place differs from the number of participants since it excludes those participants who gave no answer, and includes the multiple motives expressed in participants' first response.

mentioned five or more motives. The mean of the responses given by the 1515 volunteers in the study was 2.6, and the mean of different motivations was 2.23.

Table 2 shows that the motive most frequently cited was that of Values (48%), with more than double the number of mentions compared to the motive in second place: Enhancement, which accounted for 17%. Motives accounting for lower percentages were Knowledge-Understanding (8%), Career (6%), Organizational Commitment (5%), Interest in the Activity (2%), Social Adjustment (1%) and Protective (.81%).

These data lead to the conclusion that the majority of volunteers perceive themselves as motivated by Values of different kinds. Thus, analyzing the subcategories we have distinguished within the Values category it can be seen that the motive mentioned most frequently is Community Concern (Specific Group), which accounts for 6% of the total, followed by Social Transformation (4%), whilst the rest (Reciprocity, Religious and Community Concern (Specific Territory)) receive 1.5% of responses or less.

As regards the analysis of the Enhancement subcategories, the most prevalent are Enjoyment, with 4%, Personal Growth (4%) and Social Relations (4%), followed in last place by Esteem Enhancement (2%).

In order to rate the importance attributed by volunteers to each of the motives cited, we analyzed the responses given in first place, participants having been told to indicate the order of importance. As can be seen in Table 2, the pattern obtained is very similar to that reflected in the total frequencies of motives. First of all we find Values, which accounts for 64% of the motives given in first place (1397). This is followed by Enhancement, which (as in the previous analysis) is the second most widely cited, accounting for 10% of the motives and mentioned by 9% of the volunteers. In third place come three motives: Organizational Commitment, Knowledge-Understanding and Career, with percentages very close to 5%. The remainder of the motives obtain percentages lower than 1.75%.

All of these data permit us to conclude that the volunteers in our sample perceive that their principal motivation is other-centred (Values), and that it far surpasses the rest. More specifically, Values is the motive most frequently cited and the one considered most important by the majority of volunteers, and appears to coexist with other motivations, considered much less important, but highly diverse. In this sense, the results of the categorization revealed that the motives cited by the volunteers can be grouped in 19

different categories or subcategories, 8 more than the initial number and 13 more than considered in the closed questionnaire on motives currently most widely used (VFI). Our study also shows that the number of motives provided by each volunteer is relatively low, at two or three per volunteer on average.

Finally, it should be highlighted that almost 7% of the total motives actually correspond to conditions, such as "Having free time" or "I was asked to," and not to genuine motivations, since in these cases it would nearly always be possible to ask questions of the type: If you had free time, why out of all the many possible activities did you choose volunteering? or Why did you agree to be a volunteer when they asked you to? In the light of these data it can be concluded that while open questions appear to minimize the confusion between motives and expectations, they nevertheless increase the confusion with conditions that merely facilitate volunteering, not being motives as such.

DISCUSSION

One of the most relevant aspects of the present study is that it is one of the few to assess volunteers' motives in a qualitative fashion, and to the best of our knowledge is the only study that works with such a large and diverse sample of participants and organizations.

The results show that on being asked about their motivations by means of an open question, volunteers tend not to mention more than two different motives, as already reported by Allison, Okun and Dutridge (2002). In that study the authors presented the volunteers with a single open question and a single space for their response, which may have led some of them to mention just one motive; in our study, on the other hand, given the question format, the implication for participants was that they could indicate multiple motives, but even so, Allison, Okun and Dutridge's (2002) findings were confirmed. When questionnaires such as the VFI are applied for assessing volunteers' motivation, all the motives tend to obtain scores close to or above the mean (Pérez, 2010), so that these instruments would seem to be overestimating the number of motives present in volunteers on making their decision. These results support, on the one hand, the hypothesis that questionnaires on motives for volunteering confuse respondents' true motives with their expectations or other cognitive aspects; and on the other, Symbolic Theory (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002), according to which the two assessment methods would actually be evaluating different aspects. On presenting them with

possible motives they had not previously thought of, volunteers tend to respond positively, out of either acquiescence or social conformity, but not because these are the genuine reasons. It would seem more appropriate to assess motives through an open question, given that all motives are expectations, but not all expectations are motives.

Although the questionnaires appear to overestimate volunteers' number of motives, and while it may seem paradoxical, they underestimate the variety of possible motives, since in our analysis of the responses there appeared subcategories that do not figure in the most widely used questionnaires, but which show notable frequency, such as the Subcategories of Social Transformation, Reciprocity and Religious, within Values, or that of Enjoyment, within Enhancement, or even new categories such as Organizational Commitment and Interest in the Activity. All of these, except Religious, appear with percentages higher than motives such as Social Adjustment or Protective, traditionally included in motives questionnaires, so that these categories and subcategories should be taken into account in their own right.

It has also been found that the order of importance of motives assessed through questionnaires differs from that obtained by means of an open question. The clearest case is that of the Knowledge-Understanding category. When questionnaires are used, this motive emerges as the first or second most highly rated by volunteers (Pérez, 2010), whilst through an open question its importance decreases considerably, and less than five per cent cite it as their principal motivation.

Two suggestions emerge from the results of this study, one of an applied nature and the other related to research. First, on assessing volunteer motivation it would be advisable for those running volunteer programmes to employ both methods: the questionnaire and the open question. Second, it would seem appropriate to adapt the existing questionnaires or develop new ones that include the new motives detected in studies which use open questions.

The principal limitations of the present work concern methodological aspects. First of all, although it is possibly the study with the largest sample and involving the greatest variety of volunteer organizations, this does not guarantee the representativeness of the sample (even though one should also bear in mind that it is almost impossible to achieve this goal, given the absence of a complete census of volunteers, or even of volunteer organizations.

Secondly, the categorization process always involves certain levels of subjectivity, and despite the good inter-rater reliability, it is commonly necessary to interpret to some extent what respondents have said and to impose some restrictions on a rich, continuous and varied reality of motives, fitting it to a set of more or less pre-established categories, whose boundaries are always artificial. Sometimes these boundaries may correspond to quite subtle differences, so that for reasons of caution or rigidity they can modify what the volunteer actually wanted to say. Thus, the judges had to deal with issues such as deciding which motives reflected expressions as apparently similar as: "to be useful, to feel useful, or to do something useful." Obviously, it is on the response to questions such as these that the results to some extent depend. Some of the categorization problems could perhaps have been resolved if instead of confining our research methodology to written responses we had been able to interview the volunteers; moreover, with this approach we could have drastically reduced the number of answers included in the Others category due to their ambiguity or difficulty of classification.

As regards future research lines, we might consider the need to explore in more depth the structure of the Values category, since it appears to include highly diverse aspects, and a good deal more of them than are currently taken into account. In sum, there are many, many Values. The high prevalence of this category makes it advisable to carry out more detailed analysis. But without doubt the next step in the present line of research is to compare in a single sample the motives assessed in a closed questionnaire with those evaluated via open question. This would help to provide more substantial confirmation of the conclusions which, in view of the methodology used here, can only be considered tentative.

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