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## A Functional Analysis of Altruism and Prosocial Behavior

### THE CASE OF VOLUNTEERISM

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"And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down the road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to him who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:29-37, RSV)

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This well-known parable has served as an inspiration for countless generations of Sunday school students—and for at least one generation of social psychologists. For, in this elegant story, we have the basis for several important questions surrounding helping behavior (see Darley & Batson, 1973): Does the salience of religious and ethical beliefs promote helpfulness? Is the pressure of time responsible for failures to help? Are some types of religious people particularly likely to render aid? The parable can also be viewed as exemplary of a particular form of helping behavior, that which occurs in *spontaneous helping* situations. The situation was one in which potential helpers—the priest, Levite, and Samaritan—were exposed to an unexpected opportunity to help and required to quickly and immediately decide whether to offer assistance. The parable, however, contains another component, one that we draw on for our inspiration. In the story, the Samaritan not only experienced compassion, approached the victim, and attended to his wounds, but he also transported him to an inn, stayed with him for a period of time, and saw to his needs for the immediate future. The Samaritan, in other words, also engaged in *sustained helpfulness* and exhibited a *continued commitment* to the victim's care, and these latter acts, we might reasonably assume, occurred under *nonspontaneous* conditions.

#### SPONTANEOUS AND NONSPONTANEOUS HELPING

The parable of the Good Samaritan then might be taken as exemplary of two major types of helping behavior—spontaneous and nonspontaneous helpfulness. Psychological research on helping behavior has largely focused on spontaneous situations, where subjects, most often college students in laboratory settings, are first exposed to situations (the independent variables manipulated in these studies) in which they must quickly decide whether to engage in a brief and limited act of help (the dependent variable measured in these studies). The emphasis in this research, as noted by several reviewers (Bar-Tal, 1984; Benson et al., 1980; Krebs & Miller, 1985), has been on highly salient situational cues that affect the spontaneous decision to help for a relatively brief and limited period of time. This approach to studying helping behavior has successfully identified several important situational influences on helping behavior, including the presence of others (Latané & Darley, 1970), the pressure of time (Darley & Batson, 1973), and exposure to helpful

models (Bryan & Test, 1967). At the same time, it has not provided much evidence of dispositional influences on helping behavior (e.g., Darley & Batson, 1973).

In comparison, *nonspontaneous helping* situations have quite different characteristics. They are marked by circumstances in which potential helpers have time to decide whether and how to help. Very often, in such cases, helpers actually seek out, rather than react to, an opportunity to help. Moreover, these situations frequently involve giving aid for an extended time (Benson et al., 1980). Perhaps the best examples of nonspontaneous helping activity are found in people involved in *volunteer work* on an ongoing basis, for example, providing leadership to youth groups, health care and companionship to the sick or elderly, or counseling to those with psychological difficulties.

For whatever reason, nonspontaneous helping situations have not received the same empirical scrutiny that spontaneous ones have (see Smithson, Amato, & Pearce, 1983). Nevertheless, there are several reasons that examination of nonspontaneous helping situations might just be of interest to personality and social psychologists. First, there has been some question about the influence of dispositional factors on helping behavior, as research (at least that conducted in spontaneous helping situations) has generally not supported dispositional approaches. However, it has been argued that relations between dispositions and helping will be obtained if one examines nonspontaneous situations. As Benson et al. (1980, p. 89) observed, the nonspontaneous helping situation “calls for considerably more planning, sorting out of priorities, and matching of personal capabilities and interests with the type of intervention.” If this is the case, then we should find dispositional factors exerting a much greater influence on decisions in nonspontaneous situations, relative to their influence in spontaneous situations. For now, suffice it to say that there is some support for this proposition (e.g., Allen & Rushton, 1983; Benson et al., 1980); later sections of this chapter consider this literature in more detail.

A second reason for examining nonspontaneous helping situations derives from the fact that interest in causal factors located within the person (e.g., dispositions) eventually leads to a concern with motivation. Certainly, much of the research on helping behavior is directed at motivational questions, as the questions “why do people help?” and “why do people fail to help?” are, at heart, questions of motivation. Yet, by focusing on spontaneous situations, questions of motivation tend to be limited to asking why people help in response to unexpected need

situations. Nonspontaneous helping situations force us to address additional questions. For example, why didn't the Good Samaritan stop after giving immediate aid? Why did he continue and take the victim to the inn? Why did the Samaritan then stay with the victim until the next day? And why did he ensure continued care for the victim? Thus nonspontaneous helping situations raise a whole host of motivational questions and signal the complexity of the motivational factors that may come into play in helping behavior that is sustained and continuing over time.

Third, nonspontaneous helping behavior generally, and participation in volunteer work as a prototypic instance of nonspontaneous helping behavior, are important events in their own right. Volunteer activity is a significant social phenomenon—the most recent Gallup Poll on volunteer activity estimated that 80 million American adults engaged in volunteering in 1987, with approximately 21 million giving five or more hours per week (Independent Sector, 1988). Further, volunteer work encompasses a wide variety of specific activities, ranging from baby-sitting the children of one's neighbor to delivering meals to the homebound to tutoring illiterate adults. Volunteerism, it should also be emphasized, involves one of those discrepancies between beliefs and actions so familiar to personality and social psychologists, as volunteer work is an activity that nearly everyone favors but in which a considerably smaller number actually participates (Independent Sector, 1988). In other words, the motives for nonspontaneous help are apparently present and widespread, but less frequently are those motives translated into action.

In sum, examination of nonspontaneous help, and particularly participation in volunteer work, promises to provide new perspectives on helping behavior, as it poses some fundamentally important questions about the nature of helpfulness. What processes guide people when they seek out helping opportunities? Are these processes different from the processes involved in reacting to an unexpected helping situation? What factors are implicated in decisions to offer one's help over extended periods of time? And, having engaged in an initial helping act, what leads to continued and sustained helpfulness? In this chapter, we will examine some of these questions and issues, both theoretically and empirically, by focusing on the specific case of volunteer work. We will do so from a particular perspective, that of functional analysis, whose defining features we will now present.

### A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF NONSPONTANEOUS HELP

Clearly, the questions that arise in thinking about volunteer work as continued, sustained, nonspontaneous help are fundamentally motivational in nature. That is, they ask about the motives that are involved when one decides whether to commit oneself to an ongoing task and then must regularly decide whether or not to continue to participate in it. How then are questions such as these, which concern the motivational foundations of volunteerism, to be addressed? One approach we have found promising builds on the strategy of *functional analysis*. By definition, a functional analysis is concerned with the reasons and purposes that underlie and generate psychological phenomena—the personal and social needs, plans, goals, and functions being served by people's beliefs and their actions (e.g., Snyder, 1988). Accordingly, a functional analysis of volunteerism is concerned with the needs being met, the motives being fulfilled, and social and psychological functions being served by the activities of those people who engage in volunteer work.

In personality and social psychology, the functional approach is most strongly identified with theories of attitudes and persuasion (e.g., Herek, 1987; D. Katz, 1960; M. B. Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956; Snyder & DeBono, 1987, 1989). To the question, "Of what use to people are their attitudes?" the functional theorists responded by addressing the means by which attitudes might help meet needs, execute plans, and achieve goals and by proposing that people may hold the same attitudes or engage in apparently similar behaviors for very different motivational reasons and to serve quite different psychological functions.

Although functional theorists have tended to emphasize their own preferred sets of functions, certain ones occur with some regularity across diverse functional approaches to attitudes and persuasion. Some attitudes are thought to serve a knowledge function, bringing a sense of understanding of the social world. Other attitudes may help people fit into important social situations; as such, they are thought to serve a social-adjustive function. Attitudes serving a value-expressive function are thought to help a person express deeply held values, convictions, and dispositions. And attitudes serving an ego-defensive function are said to help protect the person from accepting undesirable or threatening truths about the self.

This list is by no means exhaustive of the personal and social functions that have been ascribed to attitudes, because other functions

have been proposed, and even some on this list have received other labels. Nevertheless, the functions on this list have both theoretical roots (e.g., D. Katz, 1960, has argued that they embody the themes of the major theoretical views of human nature) and empirical foundations (e.g., Herek, 1987, has asserted that they emerge empirically from his studies of attitudes). At the very least, though, this set of functions does provide some sense of the flavor of the functional approach. To be sure, researchers have experienced some difficulties in testing functional theories of attitudes (see Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969). Many of these problems were empirical ones, often having to do with the assessment devices used to measure functions, problems that largely have been overcome by new and emerging approaches to studying the functional bases of attitudes and persuasion (e.g., Herek, 1987; Shavitt, 1989; Snyder & DeBono, 1987, 1989).

To students of attitudes and persuasion, the functional theories have been appealing for a host of reasons. Foremost among these reasons are (a) the functional theories' explicit concern with the motivational infrastructure of attitudes, (b) their assertion that the same attitude may serve different functions for different people, and (c) their implication that attempts to influence attitudes and change behavior will be successful to the extent that they address the function being served by the current attitude.

Each of these considerations has its counterpart in a functional analysis of volunteerism, and each promises to reveal the personal and social motivational foundations of volunteer activity. Acts of volunteerism that appear to be quite similar on the surface may reflect markedly different underlying motivational processes, that is, they may be serving differing personal, social, and psychological functions (see Omoto & Snyder, 1990). Let us illustrate by using the list of functions we have abstracted as a *heuristic* device to consider the diversity of motivations that may contribute to volunteerism. In doing so, we make no claim that this set of functions contains the only ones relevant to volunteerism. Rather, we take them as a point of departure and see our task as one of assessing just how good a heuristic device they are for understanding volunteerism.

Consider, first, the often discussed notion that helping behavior generally, and volunteer work specifically, is motivated by a helper's concern for the recipient of help. Frequently, this type of motivation is discussed in terms of altruism (e.g., Batson, 1987), although other theorists use different labels and somewhat different conceptualizations,

for example, Staub's (1978, 1984) prosocial orientation as a personal goal and Schwartz's (1977) moral obligation as a personal norm. When volunteer activity is based on altruistic concern for others in need, humanitarian values, and/or desires to contribute to society, the functional model conceives of such behavior as serving a *value-expressive function* for the individual. The idea of a value-expressive function thus incorporates the general hypothesis that values about other people's well-being influence helping behavior. At the same time, the functional model suggests that volunteering is not only guided by the values themselves but also helps individuals remain true to their conception of self and allow the expression of deeply held values, convictions, and personality dispositions.

At other times and for other people, the act of volunteering may serve a *social-adjustive function*, reflecting the normative influences of friends, family, and other significant associates who themselves are volunteers. This type of motivation also has figured prominently in several accounts of helpfulness, including Rosenhan's (1970) normative altruism that is controlled by social rewards and punishments. From the functional perspective, volunteering may help one fit in and get along well with important members of one's reference group. It is, in this case, a response to social pressure coming from one's existing social network. Additionally, some people may perceive volunteering as providing a way of expanding their social circles, that is, to make new social contacts or for new social opportunities.

There also may be cases where volunteering serves an *ego-defensive function*, helping people to cope with inner conflicts, anxieties, and uncertainties concerning personal worth and competence. Ekstein (1978) discussed several psychoanalytic accounts of helping behavior, noting that those writers have focused on the mechanisms of guilt, reaction formations (as defenses against greed and sadism), or narcissism, exhibitionism, and masochism. We might also include here Zuckerman's (1975) hypothesis that those with a strong belief in a just world would, in a time of personal need, help another in order to make themselves deserving of desirable outcomes. In general, in the case of the ego-defensive function, some people may look upon volunteering as a way of providing self-protection—to protect themselves from accepting the undesirable or threatening conclusions about the self that might be warranted in the absence of the good works of their volunteerism, to work on their own psychological problems, or to ensure that they will deserve, and, therefore, receive, good things in the future.

Finally, for other people and at other times, service as a volunteer may fulfill a *knowledge function*, whereby greater understanding is achieved through this kind of activity. For these people, volunteer work may provide new insights into the people they have contact with, thereby satisfying an intellectual curiosity about the world in general and the social world in particular. Volunteer activity might also provide the opportunity to exercise, and/or practice, knowledge and skills that otherwise could not be used. In addition to gaining an improved understanding of the world they live in, or honing specific skills, volunteer work may provide opportunities to acquire new skills and competencies, skills that represent ends in themselves or skills that might prove useful for a career. In general, it seems that very little work on this kind of motivation has been conducted in relation to helping behavior. In the case of volunteer activity, however, this motivation that focuses on gaining new understanding (which may be specific in content or general) may be especially relevant in the case of volunteer activities that have "joblike" characteristics and where volunteer and paid versions of the work coexist (e.g., volunteer and paid firefighters).

Thus a functional analysis incorporates and continues several trends already present in the literature. Some of the functions share some features with other theoretical constructs, and the notion that the same activity may, for different people, serve very different functions has also been expressed in the literature. It should be clear, then, that participation in volunteer activity is a complex phenomenon. And not only may the same act serve different functions for different people, the same act may serve more than one psychological function for the same individual. Analyzing volunteer work in terms of the functions it serves points to this complexity and encourages us to consider the wide range of personal and social motivations that promote this form of helping behavior. To be sure, the set of functions we have focused on may or may not be precisely *the* set of functions. Nevertheless, this set of functions may serve productively as a guiding framework for examining and organizing the literature on volunteerism.

#### RESEARCH ON VOLUNTEER WORK

To date, there is little published research that has *explicitly* tested the functional model. There is, nevertheless, a considerable body of

research concerned with voluntary action. Researchers have been interested in relations between various factors, quite often sociological in nature, and involvement in neighborhood block organizations (e.g., Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann, & Meier, 1987), self-help groups (e.g., A. H. Katz, 1981), and social movements (e.g., Zald & McCarthy, 1987). In this chapter, however, we will concern ourselves with research that addresses the *motivational* foundations of involvement in the more traditional, service-oriented volunteer work—activities where one assists another directly, often on an individual basis (D. H. Smith, 1974). We do so because it is this type of service-oriented voluntary action that most clearly fits with conceptions of "helping behavior." Furthermore, we believe that such research on motivations ultimately speaks, albeit at times indirectly, to the utility of an analysis of *psychological* functions.

In the review that follows, we will be considering four kinds of investigations of participation in volunteer work. One kind has relied on surveys in which respondents have identified themselves as volunteers or nonvolunteers and researchers have then compared these groups on sociological and/or psychological variables. A second kind has examined volunteers working within organizations (and hence did not rely on self-reported volunteer status) and then provided descriptions of the sample without comparisons to a nonvolunteer group. A third kind of investigation has explicitly compared a group of volunteers with one of nonvolunteers. And, finally, a fourth kind has focused on a group of volunteers and compared committed volunteers with less committed volunteers, with commitment often operationalized by length of service. The first three kinds of studies attempt to answer the question of why people volunteer and how volunteers differ from nonvolunteers motivationally, and the fourth kind addresses the question of why people continue to volunteer, or, more specifically, the matter of whether levels of motivation are related to amounts of service. Below, we discuss studies representative of these four types and their findings and place them within the framework of a functional analysis.

#### National Surveys of Volunteers

For several years now, the Gallup organization has been surveying the American public about their participation in volunteer activities (Gallup organization, 1981, 1986; Independent Sector, 1988). Using a

broad definition of volunteer work (one that included informally helping one's friends and neighbors as well as working within a service organization), the 1981 survey revealed that 52% of the population had performed some volunteer work during the previous 12 months; the 1985 survey found 48% participation; and the 1988 poll found 45% involvement. Further, the three surveys have consistently found the greatest percentages of volunteers in the activity areas of religious organizations, informal helping, and education. Finally, in terms of specific tasks, the 1985 and 1988 surveys revealed that the most frequently reported tasks were assisting the elderly or handicapped, acting as an aide or assistant to a paid employee, baby-sitting, fund-raising, and serving on committees. Demographic information also has been obtained from respondents, and people most likely to be involved in volunteer work are those who are female, White, and under the age of 50; those who are employed, especially those in part-time jobs; and those who live in suburban and rural environments. Participation also tends to be positively related to socioeconomic status, as volunteering increases with education, income, and occupational prestige.

The Gallup surveys also ask respondents to indicate their reasons for volunteering. Consider, now, the motivations reported in Table 5.1 from the perspective of our functional analysis. Although the surveys were not conducted with this framework in mind, there is some indication that at least some of the functions are involved in volunteers' participation. For example, the most frequently indicated reason, "do something useful; help others," as well as "religious concerns," seem consistent with the value-expressive function. The item "had someone who was involved or would benefit from it" (e.g., a family member or friend also was participating or is one of the recipients of the activity) may well reflect social-adjustive concerns. Further, from the functional perspective, knowledge concerns may be tapped by the item "wanted to learn, get experience." Finally, we wonder if the "feel needed" part of the item "enjoy the work; feel needed" may be tapping some part of the ego-defensive function.

### Studies of Volunteers

A second attempt at answering questions about the motivations of volunteers has proceeded by obtaining samples of volunteers through volunteer organizations. Thus, unlike the national surveys, these studies do not have to rely on self-reported volunteer status. This kind of study,

**TABLE 5.1** Percentage of Volunteers Reporting Various Reasons for Volunteering: National Surveys<sup>a</sup>

Reasons	1981	1985	1988
Do something useful; help others	45.0	52.0	55.8
Had an interest in activity, working	35.0	36.0	NI <sup>b</sup>
Enjoy the work; feel needed	29.0	32.0	33.5
Religious concerns	21.0	27.0	21.8
Had someone who was involved in the activity, or would benefit from it	23.0	26.0	27.2
Wanted to learn, get experience; work experience; help get a job	11.0	10.0	9.4
Had a lot of free time	8.0	10.0	8.6
Previously benefited from activity	NI	NI	9.9

a. From the Gallup organization's national surveys of volunteering conducted for the Independent Sector in 1981, 1985, 1988 (Gallup organization, 1986, Independent Sector, 1988). The survey item was as follows: "For what reasons did you first become involved in your volunteer activities?" and the above reasons were response alternatives. Multiple responses were allowed.

b. NI = question was not included on that year's survey.

however, has focused on a particular group of volunteers, and comparisons to nonvolunteers are made only implicitly. Finally, the studies discussed below have all included measures intended to reflect volunteers' motives, with the measures ranging from the relatively simple to the more sophisticated.

Jenner (1982), for example, asked women in the Junior League to indicate their reasons for volunteering by selecting one of four response options. The most frequently chosen option was belief in the organization's purpose (46%), followed by the opportunity to do interesting work (25%), a friend's request to join (16%), and respect for the people in the organization (14%). Somewhat similarly, Anderson and Moore (1978) had volunteers (obtained from volunteer recruitment and referral centers) respond to a 10-item list of reasons, indicating as many reasons as applied: 75% reported that helping others was involved in their volunteering, followed by feeling useful and needed (50.6%), self-fulfillment (39.3%), personal development (34%), and improving the community (32.7%). Fitch's (1987) volunteers in college community service organizations rated the importance of 20 items designed to

reflect altruism, egoism, or social obligation reasons for volunteering. Here, the highest rated item was an egoistic one ("It gives me a good feeling or sense of satisfaction to help others"), followed by altruistic ("I am concerned about those less fortunate than me"), egoistic, and social obligation ("I would hope someone would help me or my family if I/we were in similar situations") reasons.

Other investigations have focused less on separate items and more on classes of items, often in terms of altruistic and egoistic motives. Wiehe and Isenhour (1977) assessed the importance of four motivational categories (for volunteers obtained through a recruitment and referral center) and found that the order of importance (in descending order) was altruism, personal satisfaction (spend free time in a personally gratifying manner), self-improvement (upgrade job skills), and external demands (club or class requirement). Gidron (1978) asked volunteers in health and mental health institutions to report the extent to which they expected to receive several types of extrinsic rewards (rewards the organization controls) and intrinsic rewards (rewards associated with volunteers' subjective interpretation). While two-thirds of the sample expected two extrinsic rewards (training, contact with other volunteers), the vast majority expected the intrinsic reward of "stressing one's other-orientation." Also with respect to intrinsic rewards, just under 80% expected "self-development, learning, and variety in life" rewards as well as "opportunities for social interaction" rewards. Finally, in a study of Red Cross policymaking, administrative, and operational volunteers, Frisch and Gerrard (1981) factor-analyzed their motivational items and obtained an altruistic and an egoistic factor; further, they found that altruistic motives were the primary ones.

Similarly, based upon surveys that used extensive batteries of open-ended and structured items to ascertain people's motives for doing AIDS-related volunteer work, Omoto and Snyder (1990) found that value-expressive considerations figure prominently in most AIDS volunteers' motivations. Participation in AIDS volunteer work gave them a chance to act on personal values, convictions, and beliefs—to do something important to them. Moreover, these functional motivations occurred against the background of relevant personality dispositions. For example, AIDS volunteers motivated by value-expressive concerns also scored high on measures of nurturance, empathy, and social responsibility. To be sure, value-expressive functions were not the only ones served by AIDS-related work. Consistent with the functional analysis, other motives were present in varying degrees, suggesting that

the same acts of volunteerism may serve quite different psychological functions. Functions other than the value-expressive ones, however, were relatively less important overall.

Clearly, these studies have relied on different kinds of volunteers and have used different measuring instruments. Some consistencies, however, have emerged and are interpretable within the functional framework. First, the volunteers in these investigations report the importance of altruism, or the value-expressive function, as a factor in their involvement. Second, these investigations also found evidence for other motives, many lumping these together under the egoistic label, although some did make distinctions among self-oriented motives (e.g., Gidron, 1978). Finally, several studies reported relations between age and some of the motives. Volunteers who were younger, relative to the other age groups, were more likely to report that the motives of gaining career-related experiences, making social contacts, and learning and self-development were moderately important (Anderson & Moore, 1978; Frisch & Gerrard, 1981; Gidron, 1978; Wiehe & Isenhour, 1977); older volunteers (over 55 years) in Gidron's study (1978) were somewhat more likely to view volunteering as a way of maintaining contact with their community. It is interesting that these findings suggest the importance of some needs and functions may well vary with one's life situation and/or stage of development. At the same time, these studies argue that value-expressive needs are a consistent feature of volunteer activity.

### Comparisons of Volunteers and Nonvolunteers

A third type of study has proceeded by explicitly comparing volunteers with nonvolunteers on several dimensions. For example, in a comparison of male members of rescue squads and Big Brothers with male nonvolunteers on responses to the 16 PF (an omnibus personality inventory), B.M.M. Smith and Nelson (1975) found that volunteers were more extraverted, lower on need for autonomy, and (for older volunteers) had greater ego strength. And Pearce (1983) compared volunteer and paid employees engaged in the same kind of activity (newspaper, poverty relief, family planning, or fire department) and found the volunteers to have higher levels of service (e.g., "a chance to make a real contribution") and social (e.g., "working with people I like") motivations than paid workers; the two groups of workers did not differ on intrinsic motivation (e.g., "enjoyment of just doing the work").

One investigation deserving particular attention is Oliner and Oliner's (1988) extensive comparison of (authenticated) rescuers of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe and nonrescuers. They found that rescuers were higher on social responsibility and prosocial action orientation measures, more internal in their locus of control, and more responsive to the pain and suffering of others than nonrescuers. Overall, rescuers exhibited what Oliner and Oliner call the capacity for extensive relationships (stronger feelings of attachment to and responsibility for others, including nonfamily and nonfriends), whereas nonrescuers were marked by constrictedness (centered on themselves and their small circle of family and friends). Rescuers' actions also appeared to be rooted in different developmental experiences and catalyzed by different factors. Specifically, some rescuers' (37%) first act of rescue illustrated an empathic orientation (i.e., motivated by a direct connection to a victim, tied to an emotional reaction to an external event); for others (11%), their first act reflected a principled orientation (i.e., motivated by the violation of fundamental principles, such as justice and care); however, the majority (52%) of rescuers acted out of a normocentric orientation (i.e., motivated by obligations to a significant social group).

Other studies have gone beyond a dichotomous volunteer-nonvolunteer distinction and obtained overall indices of participation in volunteer activity, then correlated this continuous measure with measures of dispositional factors. Benson et al. (1980), for example, had people recall their involvement in specific types of helping during the past year. A multiple regression analysis revealed that number of hours spent helping was predictable from social responsibility, locus of control, and intrinsic religion; the number of types of helping reported was predicted by intrinsic religion, size of town where the person grew up, and church attendance. More recently, Amato (1985) developed a measure of planned help, which includes both formal organized activities (many of which involve volunteer work) and informal activities (items about planned help to family and friends). His investigation revealed that the best predictors of formal planned help were high scores on social responsibility and low scores on authoritarianism; the best predictors of the informal subscale were (being lower on) internal locus of control and experiencing generally positive mood states.

Perhaps the most extensive examination of volunteers and nonvolunteers is Allen and Rushton's (1983) review of 19 published studies comparing community mental health volunteers with nonvolunteers.

Their review indicated that volunteers, compared with nonvolunteers, possessed more internalized moral standards, positive attitudes toward self and others, a greater degree of self-efficacy, more emotional stability, and greater empathy. Overall, Allen and Rushton concluded that community mental health volunteers possessed several characteristics associated with what may be thought of as an "altruistic personality."

Clearly, the investigations comparing volunteers with nonvolunteers have focused on several types of volunteer tasks and relied on a variety of dispositional measures. We can, nevertheless, consider these studies from the perspective of a functional analysis. Perhaps the most apparent function to surface is the value-expressive one. Whether operationally defined by social responsibility, the value of helpfulness, moral or ethical principles, or service motivation, the evidence is generally consistent with respect to the existence of value-expressive needs. Other functions also appear, especially the social-adjustive function. For example, the social-adjustive function may be reflected by the extraversion of rescue squad and Big Brother volunteers (B.M.M. Smith & Nelson, 1975), the social motives of volunteer employees (Pearce, 1983), and the normocentric orientation of some rescuers of Jews (Oliner & Oliner, 1988).

### Partially Versus Fully Committed Volunteers

In this section we consider studies that address the question of the factors, especially motivational ones, that are influential in determining how long volunteers engage in an activity. Here, the comparison is not between volunteers and nonvolunteers but between volunteers who exhibit different levels of commitment. Several studies previously discussed did include some measures of volunteers' commitment. In the 1988 Gallup survey (Independent Sector, 1988), for example, the reported reasons and frequencies for continuing to participate were quite comparable to reasons for volunteering in the first place (reported in Table 5.1). Similarly, Jenner (1982) asked respondents about their reasons for maintaining membership in the Junior League; 48% cited their belief in the organization's purpose and 42% cited the personal rewards of their work.

Other investigations have more directly, and in greater detail, addressed questions about continued participation by comparing volunteers with different levels of participation. In a study of participants in the civil rights movement, Rosenhan (1970) observed that activists



could be classified as partially committed (participating in one or two "freedom rides") or fully committed (participating in various ways for at least one year). The two types of activists reported different socialization experiences, which, in turn, produced motivational differences. Fully committed volunteers were autonomous altruists, intrinsically motivated by a concern for others, while the partially committed were normative altruists, motivated more by self-concerns, often involving social rewards and punishments.

In their work with crisis-counseling volunteers, Clary and Miller (1986) examined the interaction of socialization experiences and the social rewards provided by training group cohesiveness. As expected, autonomous volunteers (those reporting socialization experiences similar to Rosenhan's fully committed activists) had a high commitment to the volunteer work regardless of group cohesiveness. The commitment of normative volunteers (those with experiences similar to Rosenhan's partially committed activists) varied with the training group experience; for these volunteers, having received this socially rewarding experience increased their commitment to a level comparable to the autonomous group.

In addition to the Rosenhan and Clary and Miller studies, which were concerned with socialization antecedents of help-related motivations, other investigations have focused more directly on the motivation-commitment relationship. Clary and Orenstein (in press) found that volunteer crisis counselors who terminated their participation early had reported fewer altruistic reasons for volunteering in the first place than did either volunteers who completed the expected period of service or those who were terminated for lack of ability. Further, Rohs (1986) reported that length of service as a 4-H volunteer leader was directly related to the role of significant others (the influence was positive in some cases, negative in others) and indirectly related (via the positive influence of others) to beliefs about the value of 4-H to society.

Two additional studies have also examined altruistic motives but, contrary to the studies cited above, failed to find a relationship with commitment. Rubin and Thorelli (1984) found, as predicted, that length of participation with a Big Brother/Big Sister program was inversely related to the number of egoistic reasons motivating entry into this work but unrelated to the number of altruistic motives. (It should be noted, however, that the category of egoistic reasons included eleven items, but the altruistic reasons category contained only four; hence considerations of differential reliability may cloud interpretation of these

findings.) Pierucci and Noel's (1980) study of correctional volunteers found no differences among committed, partially committed, and uncommitted groups on measures of altruistic, personal reward, or interest motivations.

Also relevant to the issue of commitment to volunteer activities are the comparisons between rookie and veteran blood donors reviewed by Piliavin, Evans, and Callero (1984). According to the authors, there are five motivational categories relevant to blood donation: external social motives, community or social group responsibility, personal moral obligation, self-based humanitarian concern, and hedonic motives. Among rookie donors, there appeared to be two subgroups. The initial donation of the "externals" seemed to be determined by strong social pressure and that of the "internals" by a personal decision or the simple suggestion of friends. With repeated donations, community responsibility and moral obligation motives gain in strength (the "internal" rookies appear to be further along in this regard). Eventually, with enough donations, "role-person" mergers may occur where the blood donor role is viewed as a part of the self (Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987).

Investigations of volunteer behavior that have examined duration of participation can readily be viewed within the functional framework. Once again, evidence for the value-expressive function emerges, with positive relations between this function and continued participation being observed. Two studies, however, did not provide confirming evidence, and one even suggested that duration was related to the absence of egoistic motives and not to the presence of value-expressive ones (Rubin & Thorelli, 1984). There also was some evidence for the social-adjustive function, with Rohs (1986), for example, finding that significant others had an impact on the duration of service of volunteer leaders. Rosenhan's concept of normative altruism can profitably be viewed in social-adjustive terms, and it appears that the commitment of these volunteers can be increased by providing desired social experiences (Clary & Miller, 1986). Finally, the initial and continual donations of Piliavin, Evans, and Callero's (1984) "external" blood donors seem to reflect social-adjustive concerns.

### Methodological Considerations

We have, up to this point, considered several types of studies that have examined the issue of volunteers' motivations and its relations to

various aspects of volunteer behavior. Now consider the studies as a group from a methodological standpoint. Our review has presented the research on its own terms and provided very few comments about the methods used in these investigations. There are, however, a number of methodological questions that apply to most, if not all, of the studies. Overall, these investigations have relied on field methodologies, have applied correlational approaches, and have examined people who have selected themselves into volunteer or nonvolunteer categories. These features of the research are potential sources of concern, in particular, regarding the possibility of demand characteristics, the timing of the motivational measures, and the adequacy of the measures themselves.

In their review of research on community mental health volunteers, Allen and Rushton (1983) considered the possible operation of demand characteristics. To the extent that volunteers are aware of the interest that researchers have in their motives, they may perceive a "demand" to adopt a "good volunteer" role. Allen and Rushton argued that the demand characteristics explanation is rendered less plausible by the fact that studies have failed to find correlations with social desirability measures. Moreover, one study they reviewed (Knapp & Holzberg, 1964) examined relations between dispositional factors obtained during subjects' freshman year (as part of the college's testing program) and participation in a volunteer act that occurred one to three years later; this lengthy separation between the measurements of dispositions and participation renders a demand interpretation rather unlikely.

A second related concern arises when dispositional measures are measured along with, or even after, measures of volunteer activity. Quite simply, the volunteer experience may change the volunteer and his or her motivations, and, rather than motivations influencing volunteering, it may be a case of volunteering influencing motivations. Both Allen and Rushton (1983) and Clary and Miller (1986) cite several studies that have found positive personality and motivation-relevant changes as a result of volunteering. Still, there are investigations that have used prospective methods, assessing dispositional factors at the beginning of the volunteer experience and then tracking volunteers' participation. Such prospective studies (e.g., Clary & Miller, 1986; Clary & Orenstein, in press) have found initial motivational differences related to later behavioral differences in volunteers and suggest that these motivational factors may have causal significance and influence subsequent aspects of the volunteer experience.

A final concern centers on the measures that have been used to assess motivations, particularly the psychometric properties of those measures. Many of the investigations have relied on separate items without regard to larger groupings, some have grouped items according to some rational scheme (often, altruistic versus egoistic), others have grouped items empirically, still others have provided practically no information about the measures, and some have utilized previously developed scales (often, Berkowitz & Lutterman's, 1968, social responsibility scale). Clearly, the widespread use of measures of unknown reliability and validity is troublesome and suggests the need for the development of adequate measures of volunteer motivation. Nevertheless, in spite of the methodological concerns, different studies, using a variety of measurement procedures, have revealed some consistencies.

#### THE FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS: HOW WELL DOES IT FARE?

As we have argued all along, a functional analysis offers one scheme for understanding the motivations of volunteers and incorporates many of the consistent findings. Taking the literature on volunteers' motivation as a whole, the evidence is consistent with the fundamental tenets of the functional approach, namely, that the same action may involve different motives and that different motivations will require different satisfactions. But what about the specific motives identified by the functional approach? Perhaps the one consistent finding throughout this literature on the motivations of volunteers is that implicating the value-expressive function. Whether referred to in these terms, or as altruistic motivation or humanitarian concern, the desire to help others has been found time and again to be characteristic of volunteers, to distinguish volunteers from nonvolunteers, and to discriminate between partially and fully committed volunteers. Thus there seems to be a pervasive value-expressive component that is central to volunteer activity.

There is evidence for other functional motivations as well, but it is certainly not as clear and consistent as that for the value-expressive function. Clearest, perhaps, is the evidence for the operation of the social-adjustive function. Piliavin, Evans, and Callero's (1984) studies of blood donors have found that donations, and especially the initial one, were affected by social pressure. Similarly, Oliner and Oliner (1988) found that the initial involvement of the majority of rescuers of

Jews was in response to perceived pressure from members of one's social circle. Pearce's (1983) volunteer employees reported higher levels of social motivation than did the paid employees, although in this case the motivation centered more on the friendship aspect of social motives. Finally, there are the normative altruists (e.g., Clary & Miller, 1986; Rosenhan, 1970) who responded with the social consequences of their actions in mind.

Several studies suggest the knowledge function may be involved in the participation of some volunteers. Some blood donors, for example, reported curiosity about the donation experience as one factor in deciding to make an initial donation (Piliavin, Evans, & Callero, 1984), and Gidron's (1978) volunteers in institutional settings reported that they expected to learn from their experience. Other volunteers apparently desire more specific, job-related skills. Thus, when Jenner's (1982) Junior League volunteers indicated the role that volunteering played in their lives, 15% perceived it as preparation for a new career or as a way of maintaining career-relevant skills.

Of the functions we have examined, the ego-defensive function seems to have the least amount of evidence for its operation in volunteerism. Several studies did, however, present findings relevant to the ego-defensive function. Both Rosenhan (1970) and Clary and Miller (1986) examined the psychoanalytic idea that altruistic behavior is related to the presence of inner conflicts (and thus helping others provides a way of defending one's ego) by considering differences between "normative" and "autonomous" altruists in their experience with psychological treatment. It is interesting, and contrary to the psychoanalytic hypothesis, that both studies found it was the less committed normative volunteers who reported more experience. Finally, in Omoto and Snyder's (1990) studies of AIDS volunteers, although ego-defensive motivations tended to be relatively unimportant to AIDS volunteers overall, when they were present, they occurred in a meaningful context of relevant personality dispositions. The AIDS volunteers who were motivated by ego-defensive concerns were also the ones with relatively low self-esteem, high need for social recognition, and high death anxiety. There is then some evidence that *some* volunteers may volunteer out of ego-defensive needs, although at this point this does not appear to characterize a large number of people.

That some functions seem to be more prevalent than others in volunteers' motivations may say something about the types of volunteer opportunities that have been the focus of research. In other words,

volunteer opportunities may well differ in the functions they are likely to engage. If so, then we need not only a functional analysis of persons who volunteer but also a *functional analysis of the situations* in which people volunteer. Consider two recent advertisements for volunteers: "Writer—Write a column about volunteer opportunities for suburban newspapers. Determine column content from information retrieved from a computer." "Special event driver—Play an important role in the third annual Jail and Bail fundraiser for a nonprofit agency that provides jobs for disabled and disadvantaged people. Pick up celebrities, local business personalities and other donors. Drive jailees to mock jail site in downtown Minneapolis." ("You Can Help," 1989, p. 5T) It may be the case that the writer activity will satisfy some knowledge functions (e.g., to practice and exercise one's writing skills as well as gain some job-related experience) while the driver activity may well fulfill social-adjustive motivations (e.g., allowing one to make new, and here, high-status, social contacts). Thus these two volunteer opportunities represent situations that engage differing psychological functions.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

It remains for us to consider some of the implications of a functional analysis of helping. Let us begin with the specific case of volunteerism, which has served as the vehicle for our analysis, and consider how the functional perspective offers some prescriptive advice for the practice of volunteerism. Let us then broaden the scope to consider implications for the conceptualization of helping behavior and consider such fundamental issues as the integration of both dispositional and situational perspectives on helping behavior and the long-running egoism versus altruism debate.

#### The Practice of Volunteerism

The functional analysis of volunteer activity should have significant applications to the work of organizations that rely on the unpaid help of volunteers for providing services to people in need. A functional analysis points to the critical importance of the match or mismatch between an individual's motives for volunteering and the ability of volunteer activities and volunteer organizations to satisfy those motives. One implication of this proposition is that attempts at *recruiting*

volunteers will be successful to the extent that they tailor persuasive appeals to potential volunteers' motives. A second implication is that individuals' *self-selecting* (or initiating) certain volunteer activities as opposed to others can profitably be viewed from the standpoint of the functions that guide the selection and initiation process. Finally, our analysis implies that *commitment* to a volunteer activity and continued service as a volunteer will occur to the extent that volunteer work serves the psychological functions of volunteers.

Given the links between a functional analysis of volunteerism and the functional approaches to attitudes and persuasion, it's quite natural that there are implications for the issue of volunteer recruitment. For effective recruitment, one would first need to know something about potential volunteers' needs and motives. This may be at the level of individual volunteers (in one-to-one recruitment) or of groups of potential volunteers (e.g., giving advertisements to engage the common motivations of readers of a certain periodical). Following this, the persuasive attempt, either face-to-face or in media advertisements, should be tailored to the motives and goals of the individual. Persuasive communications then might demonstrate how particular needs and goals could be satisfied through volunteering generally, through association with a particular organization, or through a specific activity (e.g., telephone counseling volunteer work provides experience and skills relevant for a career as a therapist).

Similar notions apply to placing volunteers in specific tasks and encouraging continuing, sustained service. One such attempt has been reported in the literature on volunteering. Francies (1983), based on his experience with social service volunteers, developed a measure of seven volunteer needs and then used the measure to match volunteers to activities. Volunteers matched with the needs profile, relative to a control group assigned tasks without the profile, received more suitable assignments; further, volunteers with better matches exhibited greater job satisfaction and longer tenure. Similarly, Clary and Miller (1986) found that "normative" crisis-counseling volunteers (who may be high in social-adjustive motivations) exhibited greater commitment if they participated in a cohesive training group experience; the same experience had no impact on "autonomous" (perhaps value-expressive) volunteers.

### The Egoism Versus Altruism Debate

The debate over the selflessness versus selfishness of a helper's motives has been vigorous, both in the psychological literature (see Batson, 1987, and see Chapter 3) and in the literature on the motivations of volunteers (see Van Til, 1988). In both literatures, the argument centers on whether the motivations underlying a helpful act are ever truly altruistic (based on concern for the other) as opposed to egoistic (based only on concern for the self). The issue also arises in connection with the functional approach, where the value-expressive function is akin to altruistic motivation, and, in fact, the two have been linked in the literature (e.g., Frisch & Gerrard, 1981); the remaining functions have a much more self-serving or egoistic flavor to them.

Careful consideration of the functional approach, however, leads us to question the "purity of motives" idea. At the level of the individual helper, the functional analysis encourages the notion that a volunteer's action may be guided by multiple motives. While our review suggests that the value-expressive component is an important one, the literature also suggests that this function is often combined with other functions. Surveys, for example, find respondents reporting multiple reasons for volunteering, and it appears that many volunteers report both egoistic and altruistic reasons (e.g., Anderson & Moore, 1978). Also, recall Pearce's (1983) finding that volunteer employees reported higher levels of service *and* social motivation than did paid employees. Thus the functional analysis and research on volunteers both suggest that individuals have a multiplicity of motives for volunteering.

Some of the constructs used in the functional approach also question the "purity" idea, suggesting that a function may not be either altruistic or egoistic but may actually consist of a mixture. This raises the question of whether altruistic motives can truly be teased apart from egoistic motives. This is readily apparent in the very meaning of the value-expressive function, where values (in this case, altruistic ones) are thought to become part of one's identity and self-concept, and "the reward is not so much a matter of social recognition or monetary advantage as of establishing one's self-identity, confirming one's notion of the sort of person one sees oneself to be, and expressing the values appropriate to this self-concept" (D. Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 361). Hence, actions taken in the service of altruistic and humanitarian concerns may also be sources of personal rewards and self-affirmation. A similar point is made in Callero, Howard, and Piliavin's (1987)

application of role-person merger to veteran blood donors—self and altruistic roles of the blood donor merge, incorporating both social and personal norms. Thus the most seemingly “altruistic” construct within the functional approach, the value-expressive function, may well consist of both a concern for a needy other (an altruistic element) and a need to express or act on that value (an egoistic element).

Just as one can question whether altruistic motives are purely altruistic, we can wonder whether egoistic constructs are themselves purely egoistic. Consider, for example, the social-adjustive function. Snyder and DeBono (1987, 1989) have suggested that one way to think about and investigate the social-adjustive function is in terms of its association with the interpersonal orientation characteristic of the high self-monitor, and it has been argued that the high self-monitoring/social-adjustive individual is interested in facilitating smooth and pleasing social functioning. Obviously, the desire for smooth social intercourse has its self-serving component, but it may also have an element of concern for the other. That is, smooth interactions benefit not only the self but also others participating in the interaction. Daniels's (1985) discussion of the various manifestations of sociability among women volunteers who organize “benefits” illustrates this point, as these hostesses often strive to minimize the social distance among guests from very different social strata.

### The Study of Helping Behavior

In this final section, we consider nonspontaneous help, volunteer activity, and the functional approach within the larger context of research on helping behavior. Specifically, what does the work covered in this review contribute to our understanding of helping behavior? Most obvious, perhaps, is the support this approach offers for the relations between dispositional variables and helping behavior. In comparison with studies of helping in spontaneous situations, studies on volunteering (studies conducted on a variety of volunteer activities, with a variety of methods) have found an important role for dispositional forces in understanding many aspects of this kind of helping behavior.

This finding about when dispositions affect helping behavior seems to be quite consistent with the distinction made by personality and social behavior theorists between strong and weak situations (Snyder & Ickes, 1985). “Strong situations” are those that are highly structured

and provide highly salient cues for behavior, while “weak situations” are less structured and offer fewer guidelines regarding behavior. It seems that participation in volunteer activity, *at least with respect to initial involvement*, constitutes a “weak situation”—potential helpers can, more “coolly” perhaps, decide whether or not to act, choose their specific volunteer tasks, and decide how long to maintain their involvement. Moreover, they may be able to do all these things in ways that take into account their personal motivations and psychological functions. Spontaneous helping situations, by comparison, surprise potential helpers with opportunities to help and provide very little time for reflection upon whether and how to act; action then is guided by situational cues (e.g., the presence or absence of others).

More broadly, however, our functional analysis and the literature on volunteerism suggest that one adopt a “disposition-by-situation” interactionist approach to understanding helping behavior. This is apparent from the argument that the role of dispositions in helping behavior varies with the psychological strength of the situation (that is, strong, spontaneous versus weak, nonspontaneous situations). The functional approach also encourages the interactive approach by arguing for the *match* between a helper's motives and the kinds of satisfactions available in the situation. Thus, on the person side we need to consider potential helpers' personal needs, plans, and motives; on the situation side we need to examine the opportunities offered by helping situations and the way in which these opportunities satisfy or stymie personal motivations.

Clearly, this approach has some utility in dealing with volunteerism as a prototypic form of nonspontaneous, sustained helping behavior. What, however, does the functional approach offer to helping behavior conceptualized in the broadest of terms? First, as mentioned before, the functional approach suggests that a variety of motives may underlie helping activities, in terms of both different motives being important for different people and even two or more psychological functions being important for one individual. Second, these functions may also be involved in spontaneous situations, as particularly strong needs may “prime” a person to react in certain ways in an emergency situation (see Wilson, 1976). Third, several motivations that are central to the functional approach have their counterparts in the helping literature generally, especially the value-expressive and social-adjustive functions. The functional analysis, however, suggests that other functions may also be involved, and it behooves us to determine whether these other

functions exist and how they might influence helpfulness. Finally, the functional analysis, along with Piliavin's research on motivational changes in blood donors (e.g., Piliavin, Evans, & Callero, 1984) and research on the development of prosocial reasoning (see Eisenberg, 1986), suggest that we attend to changes in the functional foundations of helping that may occur with age and/or those that occur as people have experience with helping other people.

All of the benefits cited above for understanding the motivational foundations of both voluntary action and helping behavior are predicated on the assumption that one can measure the motivations underlying volunteer activity. And, as previously noted, there is a pressing need for a psychometrically sound measure of volunteers' motivations. To explore the ideas generated by our functional analysis, we have recently begun work on an inventory designed to assess the several psychological functions served by volunteer work (Clary & Snyder, 1990). The initial form of the inventory consisted of several scales, each measuring a specific function (based initially on the value-expressive, social-adjustive, ego-defensive, and knowledge constructs as well as a measure of career-oriented motivation). Early indications are that each of the scales is reliable, and a factor analysis of volunteers' responses to the scale revealed that multiple factors are involved, and the factors are generally consistent with a functional analysis. Thus some of the first steps toward investigating the functional approach to volunteer work are currently being taken.

The potential uses of such an inventory of the functions served by volunteering are considerable, and, here, the objectives of researchers and practitioners merge. Researchers, such as ourselves, can use it to test key propositions about the functional foundations of volunteering, propositions that provide the foundation for both theory development and practical application. We would expect, for instance, that recruitment of people into volunteer work will be more effective when persuasive messages appeal to their psychological motives for volunteering. Further, people should be more effective and satisfied when they are placed in volunteer opportunities that engage psychological functions important to them. And, finally, volunteers' commitment to the volunteer activity is expected to depend on the match of volunteers' motivations and the ability of the volunteer opportunity to satisfy those psychological needs.

In sum, a functional analysis offers a framework for examining the motivational foundations of helping behavior, one that emphasizes the

personal and social needs and goals, and plans and motives, served by helping and prosocial behavior. At the very least, a functional framework does perform the useful heuristic function of organizing the diverse literature on the societally significant topic of nonspontaneous, sustained volunteerism. But, in a more general sense, this approach, we have every reason to hope, may help set the agenda for theoretical and empirical inquiries into helping behavior.

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## Spontaneous Communication and Altruism

### THE COMMUNICATIVE GENE HYPOTHESIS

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The phenomenon of altruism is remarkable in that it is of great interest to investigators at widely differing levels of analysis in the behavioral sciences: At the level of behavioral genetics, on one hand, and of complex social behavior, on the other. *Altruism* broadly defined is the tendency of one organism to act to increase the welfare of another organism, with no obvious benefit and often at a cost to the actor. Social psychologist C. Daniel Batson (1983, p. 1381) defined *altruism* as "a desire within one organism to increase the welfare of another organism as an end-state goal." Sociobiologist E. O. Wilson (1975) defined it as "the surrender of personal genetic fitness for the enhancement of personal genetic fitness in others" (p. 106), or "when a person (or animal) increases the fitness of another at the expense of his own fitness" (p. 117). Altruism was put into evolutionary perspective by Hamilton

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