

Understanding Motivations for AmeriCorps Service, Their Antecedents, and Their Consequences

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Introduction

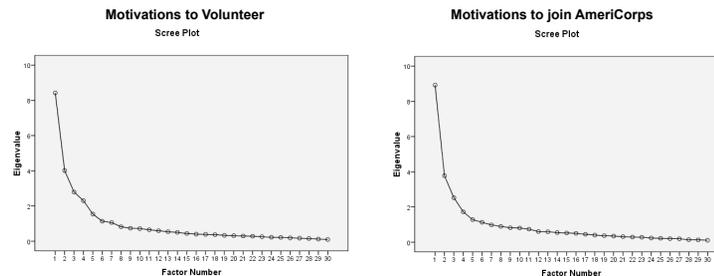
- AmeriCorps is a nation-wide service program that has had over 400,000 people serve since 1994
- AmeriCorps is often regarded as a form of volunteerism because it involves sustained, voluntary helping, however AmeriCorps also incorporates features of work, such as a modest monetary stipend for service
- Previous research employing the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998) has revealed a common, six-factor motivational structure underlying volunteerism
- The VFI was used to examine whether the structure of motivations found in individuals who choose to join AmeriCorps is similar to and/or different from that observed in volunteerism
- The present study also examined antecedent variables hypothesized to predict motivations for joining AmeriCorps, and whether motivations to join AmeriCorps predict criterion variables relating to AmeriCorps service

Methods

- Motivations for volunteering and joining AmeriCorps were assessed in AmeriCorps members in Minnesota (N=143)
- The survey was part of an ongoing longitudinal study following AmeriCorps members through their year of service (similar to longitudinal studies with volunteers; Snyder & Omoto, 2008)
- Hypothesis 1: Exploratory factor analysis will reveal a similar structure of motivations to join AmeriCorps as commonly found in motivations to volunteer
- Hypothesis 2: Other-oriented (as opposed to self-oriented) motivations would be better predicted by and better predict a number of variables relating to AmeriCorps service

Results: Exploratory Factor Analysis

- Principal axis factor analysis with promax rotation, set to eigenvalues of over 1, revealed a high degree of similarity between the structure of motivations for volunteering and joining AmeriCorps
- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of motivations to join AmeriCorps at the beginning of the service year revealed a five-factor solution that combined the positive and negative aspects of ego-related motivations into one factor, which is similar to the motivations of those who have just begun to volunteer.
- EFA of motivations to serve in AmeriCorps assessed midway through the service year indicated that motivations for joining AmeriCorps become better differentiated over time, more closely resembling the motivation structure of those who have experience volunteering



Conclusion

- Over time, the motivations for joining AmeriCorps become better differentiated and assume the structure of motivations to volunteer
- Altruistic personality and past volunteer behavior predicted both other-oriented and self-oriented reasons to join AmeriCorps
- Other-oriented and self-oriented motivations to join AmeriCorps predict service-related variables such as identification with AmeriCorps and expectations for the AmeriCorps program, however sometimes in different patterns and with varying levels of significance
- Results of this investigation suggest motivations to serve in AmeriCorps closely mirror the structure of motivations to volunteer

Results: Antecedents and Consequences

- Understanding and values motivations were combined to form an other-oriented motivation to join AmeriCorps, and career, social, protective, and enhancement motivations were combined to create a self-oriented motivation
- Altruistic personality scores measured at time one predicted both other-oriented motivations for joining AmeriCorps ($b = .61, p < .001$) and self-oriented motivations ($b = .42, p < .001$) at time one
- Involvement in past volunteer activities measured at time one predicted both other-oriented motivations for joining AmeriCorps ($b = .27, p < .001$) and self-oriented motivations ($b = .26, p < .001$) at time one, however when motivations from time two were used, past involvement only predicted other-oriented motivations ($b = .14, p < .05$; self-oriented: $b = .16, p > .05$)
- Higher expectations of the AmeriCorps program measured at time one were predicted by the other-oriented motivations to join AmeriCorps ($b = .62, p < .001$) but not self-oriented motivations ($b = -.09, p > .05$) at time one
- Identification with AmeriCorps measured at time one was also predicted by both other-oriented motivations for joining AmeriCorps ($b = .63, p < .001$) and self-oriented motivations ($b = .26, p < .01$) at time one, however at time two identification only predicted self-oriented motivations ($b = .32, p < .05$; other-oriented: $b = -.09, p > .05$)

References

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