

**FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION
IN AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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Presentation Track: Research

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This study determined which factors influence individuals to accept greater leadership responsibilities in organizations. An instrument was given to a sample of Florida Farm Bureau Federation members, which measured: sources of motivation, attitudes towards volunteering, and views on serving on Farm Bureau boards. The value placed on level of volunteer activity explained the greatest amount of variance for serving on a county Farm Bureau board.

Introduction

Those involved in agriculture in the United States and the State of Florida realize the need for people to step forth and provide a strong and educated voice to lead agriculture and bring the needs and issues of the agricultural industry to the forefront at the community, state, national, and international level. The Farm Bureau Federation provides a venue for the “voice of agriculture” through members with the attitude/will/desire to participate in the leadership process. Farm Bureau reflects the future of agriculture and rural communities in its membership, the younger members who are embarking on their careers and looking towards leadership positions in the future (P. Cockrell, personal communication, September 10, 2002).

Rural communities that are supported by agriculture were once the foundation of the United States and still compose a large part of the country even though rural communities are diminishing due to urbanization and the decrease of agricultural industries that provide the community base. McCaslin (1993) states, “one of the overriding concerns of those individuals working towards the stabilization and future growth of rural communities is the lack of active participation by many of its citizens” (p. 46).

The process of stabilization and revitalization in agriculture begins with effective and active leadership and participation. As Farm Bureaus can be found in most rural communities in the country and in Florida, this leadership can be found in the membership of local county Farm Bureaus. But why are those actively involved in agriculture not taking on leadership responsibilities in the Florida Farm Bureau organization? Do they lack training, skills, abilities, time, or knowledge? Or do they not have a desire to lead? This study provided data to assist in answering these questions.

The purposes of this study were to explain: individual motivations, attitudes towards volunteering, and opinions on serving on county Farm Bureau boards. Demographic information was also collected for the purpose of building an explanatory multiple regression model.

The objective of this study was to determine the reason(s) why local Farm Bureau members chose to participate or not participate in leadership roles on local county farm bureau boards

Literature Review

Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization governed by and representing farm and ranch families united for the purpose of analyzing their problems and formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity and social advancement and, thereby, to promote the national well being. Farm Bureau is local, county, state, national, and international in its scope and influence and is non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-secret in character (AFBF, 2003, para. 2).

The strength of Farm Bureau from the county to the national level begins at the grassroots with individual members who decide to become active and take on leadership roles in the organization. Farm Bureaus across the country are voluntary organizations, which rely on

their membership to provide leadership on local, county, state and national boards and committees.

Inherited in the legacy of America is volunteering on behalf of the common good. People identify the needs, issues, and problems and expect to participate in the decision making process leading to appropriate response. Voluntary activities range from short-term events, which have a time limit, to longer-term commitments of service such as the critically important decision to serve on boards (Scott, 2000).

A majority of volunteer work is completed in associations or organizations. In 1995, 71% of the adults in the United States were members of associations, not including memberships to churches and synagogues. In 1991, 53% of the population participated in active unpaid volunteer work for non-profit organizations and associations (Smith, 2000).

Omoto and Snyder (2002) developed a conceptual model of the volunteer process, which explains volunteering on multiple levels. At the individual level, the model focuses on activities and the psychological processes of the individuals which include: expressing their personal values, satisfying their need to help others, community concern, personal development, and to fulfill esteem enhancement needs. At the intrapersonal level, the dynamics of helping relationships between the volunteers and the recipients of their help are incorporated. At the organizational level, the focus is now on the goals associated with the recruitment, management, and retention of volunteers. At the societal level, the model takes into account the linkages between individuals and the social structure.

The theoretical rationale on the roles of motives comes from Snyder's (1993) functional approach to pro-social behaviors which are based on the notion that much of human behavior is motivated by specific goals or needs. To fully understand why a person is engaging in a behavior, the purpose or need served by that behavior must be identified. The fundamental concerns of motivational inquiry is understanding the processes that move people to action and the processes that initiate, direct and sustain action. Clary et al. (1998) describe the functional perspective of volunteering as encouraging the consideration of the wide range of personal and social motivations that promote sustained behavior.

An instrument used to measure motivation sources was developed by Barbuto and Scholl (1998), the motivation sources inventory has been used to predict leadership influence tactics, transformational leadership behaviors and follower compliance using sources of motivation which include: intrinsic, instrumental, external and internal self-concept. It has shown to be reliable and valid in reported studies and captures the sources of motivation.

Intrinsic process motivation is described as when a person is motivated to work or to engage in certain behaviors for the fun of it. The work acts as an incentive and it is derived from immediate internal gratification. Instrumental motivation is when individuals perceive their behavior will lead to pay, promotions, bonuses, or other extrinsic tangible outcomes (Barbuto et al., 2001).

Self-concept-external motivation is based on an individual who is primarily other-directed and seeking affirmation of traits, competencies, and values. The individual behaves to satisfy reference group members to gain acceptance and then status (Barbuto et al., 2001). Deci and Ryan (1995) describe this type of motivation as extrinsic motivation, the behavior where the reason for acting is something other than an interest in the activity itself.

Self-concept-internal motivation is internally based. The individual sets internal standards that become the basis for the ideal self and is motivated to engage in behaviors that reinforce these standards (Barbuto et al., 2001). Internal motivations also are motivations for cooperation that flow from individuals' values and attitudes and shape their behavior (Tyler, 2002).

Results of a study by Martinez and McMullin (2004) found that members who were active in an organization belonged almost twice as long as non-active members. Both groups had similar competing commitments on their time. Active members witnessed the effects of their efforts, witnessed organizational success and achieved a level of personal accomplishment; they believed they could make a difference. For those that were not active, the potential benefits and outcomes may have been important but unknown.

Martinez and McMullin (2004) state "volunteer roles may appeal to people with certain lifestyles based on (a) ones' position in a job; (b) whether one is employed full-time, part-time is retired, or is a home maker, (c) age and (d) the expectations and associated responsibilities of the role(s) one would fill" (p. 114). The success of the volunteer experience is largely determined by whether the volunteer experience meets the person's expectations. The more that is known about those expectations, the more effort can be made to ensure the volunteer remains motivated (Eisinger, 2002).

Organizations need to find ways to structure volunteer work, which will allow people increased flexibility to move in and out of volunteering as work and family pressures affect their lives. Turnover rate is influenced by the importance and structure of an organization, as well as age, family status, work, family stage, and life stage (Martinez & McMullin, 2004).

Joining organizations, such as Farm Bureau, also increases an individuals' social capital. An essential characteristic of a properly functioning society is engagement in civic activities because cooperative actions enable citizens to efficiently pursue common goals. Self-confident leaders are more trusting in other people, they are satisfied with their life and their achievements, and they are more likely to engage in various forms of community activities.

The trend in civic engagement, shown by membership records of organizations, has declined by roughly 25 to 50% over the last three decades. There are many reasons why social capital has eroded: time pressures, economic hard times, residential mobility, urbanization, movement of women to the paid work force, disruption of marriage and family times, the electronic revolution, and other technological changes.

The leaders in agricultural organizations have traditionally been male. With recent demographic shifts in the volunteers of organizations, more women will become a part of the

leadership. In a study of volunteer leaders in agricultural organizations, the motivations to serve in leadership roles were; the responsibility to support their profession, it is something they believe in, it is an outlet for their talents, it is a source of enjoyment and satisfaction, it is their duty to use their talents in service to others, and they believe they owe it to the industry (Kajer, 1996).

Farm Bureau is an agricultural organization, which relies on members to fill leadership positions within the organization. Individuals who belong to Farm Bureau have unique motivations to belong. It is important to understand the motivations of volunteers as understanding what motivates volunteers will allow organizations to better utilize volunteer members.

Methods

A leadership behavior instrument was developed to examine leadership attitude/will/desire of Farm Bureau members. This instrument was administered to a sample of 419 active Florida Farm Bureau members (active members are those who are full or part time farmers or farm managers). The instrument used in this study was pilot tested to ensure validity. Members of the pilot test were taken from a sample of active Farm Bureau members.

The basic survey procedure outlined in Salant and Dillman (1994) was used for the data collection of this survey instrument. The response rate for this survey was 25%. To defend this return rate, Hager, Wilson, Pollak, and Rooney (in press) determined that surveys of organizations typically receive substantially lower return rates, with a return rate of 15% reaching a level of acceptability for organizational surveys.

For this study, early and late respondents were compared as late respondents are similar to those who do not respond at all (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). There were no significant differences found in the surveys of the early and late respondents, which gave the researchers confidence that those choosing to respond represented the population.

The instrument used in this study was a leadership behavior instrument which was composed of three parts: a motivation sources inventory, a semantic differential scale to measure volunteering attitudes, and a Likert scale inventory to assess respondents' desire about serving on a county board. The motivation sources inventory was developed by Barbuto and Scholl (1998) and measures the sources of motivation. The authors developed this inventory to predict behaviors of individuals and it was used in this context as a factor that contributes to members willingness to serve (or not to serve) on their county Farm Bureau boards.

From the literature, motivation factors, attitudes on volunteering and demographic variables have been identified as influences on participation in organizations and whether individuals will step forth for additional leadership responsibilities within these organizations. These contribute to the attitude/will/desire measured by this instrument. A conceptual model, which represents this part of the study, is provided in Figure 1. In this model, leadership is a function of motivation factors, volunteering attitudes, a desire to serve, and demographic variables.

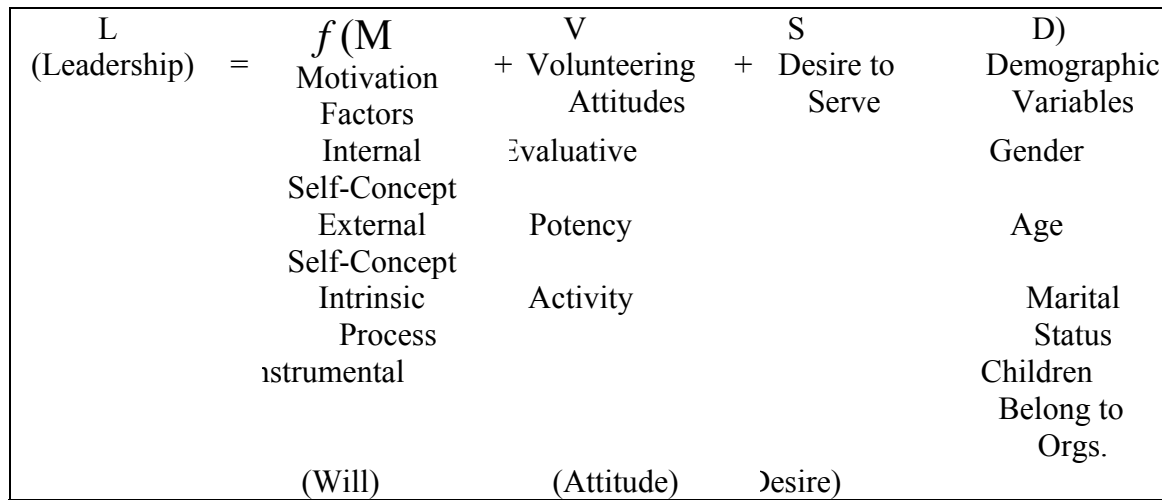


Figure 1. *Conceptual model of leadership*

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to accomplish this objective. For this analysis, the dependent variable is participation on a county board, and the independent variables were: motivation external self-concept (a factor derived from obtaining the mean of the six external self-concept statements on the Motivation Sources Inventory section of the instrument), motivation internal self-concept factor (derived from the six internal self-concept statements), motivation intrinsic process (derived from the six intrinsic process statements), motivation instrumentation (derived from the six instrumentation statements), volunteering evaluative factor (derived from obtaining the mean of the four evaluative adjective pairs on the volunteer section of the instrument), volunteering potency factor (derived from obtaining the mean of the four potency adjective pairs), volunteering activity factor (derived from obtaining the mean of the four activity adjective pairs), years of membership in Farm Bureau, family involvement in Farm Bureau, time devoted to Farm Bureau, Farm Bureau events attended in the past year, involved in other agricultural organizations, belong to other organizations, marital status, children, gender, age, member of 4-H, member of FFA, member of other youth development organizations, participated in leadership development programs, farm size, and work off the farm.

Findings

Table 1 provides the initial Pearson correlation, degrees of freedom, and significance values for the twenty-four independent variables that were identified for use in the stepwise, backward multiple regression analysis was used to predict participation on local county Farm Bureau boards. Significant Pearson correlation values were identified for use in the regression analysis (Table 1). The “volunteering evaluative factor” had the highest *r-value* of .47.

Table 1. *Pearson Product Moment Correlations Between Independent Variables and Serving on County Boards (N=81)*

	df	r	Sig.(2-tailed)
Serving on County Boards	79	1.00	.
Motivation External Self-Concept Factor	79	.16	.12
Motivation Internal Self-Concept Factor	79	.26	.01
Motivation Intrinsic Process Factor	79	-.11	.32
Motivation Instrumental Factor	79	-.07	.54
Volunteering Evaluative Factor	79	.47	.00
Volunteering Potency Factor	79	.17	.11
Volunteering Activity Factor	79	.39	.00
Years of Membership in Farm Bureau	79	.08	.49
Family Involvement in Farm Bureau	79	.11	.31
Time Devoted to Farm Bureau per Month	79	.12	.29
Number of Farm Bureau Events Attended	79	.30	.01
Involved in Other Agricultural Organizations	79	.14	.18
Belong to Other Organizations	79	.35	.00
Marital Status	79	.04	.71
Children	79	.20	.06
Gender	79	-.05	.67
Age	79	-.13	.34
Member of 4-H	79	.20	.06
Member of FFA	79	-.09	.93
Member of Other Youth Development Organizations	79	.38	.00
Participated in Leadership Development Programs	79	.31	.00
Farm Size	79	.20	.14
Work Off Farm	79	.16	.17

Note: Model is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Seven independent variables were used in the final multiple regression analysis. As Table 2 indicates, these independent variables have a significant relationship and impact on the dependent variable, participation on local county Farm Bureau boards.

Table 2. *Regression Analysis with Variables which Made Significant Contributions (N=86)*

	df	r	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Motivation Internal Self-Concept	84	.26	.01
Volunteering Evaluative Factor	84	.47	.00
Volunteering Activity Factor	84	.39	.00
Number of Farm Bureau Events Attended	84	.30	.01
Belong to Other Organizations	84	.35	.00
Member of Other Youth Development Organizations	84	.38	.00
Participated in Leadership Development Program	84	.31	.00

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .05$)

The final multiple regression analysis with the remaining five variables is presented in Table 3. Why individuals take on additional leadership roles such as serving on their local county Farm Bureau boards is explained by these five variables. As discussed in the literature, how individuals evaluate volunteer opportunities, the volunteer activities they are engaged in, how active they are in the organization (represented by the number of events they attended) and if they have participated in other organizations or leadership development programs all factor into whether individuals will step forth and assume greater leadership responsibilities.

Table 3. *Final Regression Analysis with Variables which Made Significant Contributions (N=86)*

	β	Beta	<i>t</i>	df	Sig.	R ²	Adj. R ²
Constant	-.50		-.63	79	.53		
Volunteering Evaluative Factor	.46	.34	2.75	79	.01		
Volunteering Activity Factor	.24	.17	1.43	79	.16		
Number of Farm Bureau Events Attended	.20	.19	1.93	79	.06		
Member of Other Youth Development Organizations	.39	.20	1.86	79	.07		
Participated in Leadership Development Program	.46	.17	1.61	79	.11	.40	.36

Note: $F=9.96$; $\alpha < .05$

From this table, “volunteering evaluative factor” has the highest Beta value of .34 and is statistically significant, which indicates the largest explanatory power between this variable and the dependent variable.

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

In the multiple regression analysis, how individuals evaluate volunteering is a factor was the strongest determinant whether they volunteer for additional leadership responsibilities in the Farm Bureau organization such as serving on county boards. Other factors which accounted for participation on county boards included: volunteering activity factor, Farm Bureau events attended, member in other youth organizations, and participation in leadership development programs. Being involved in youth organizations may serve to encourage future participation in organizations as adults, especially if the membership was a positive experience.

Organizations and the boards that guide their direction are changing due to the motivations of the members that volunteer for the organization and who the organization serves. The FFBF uses boards on the county and state level and could provide valuable research on organizational boards and specifically what motivates board members to participate. Information on organizational boards and the motivations of board members is lacking and Farm Bureau could be an indispensable source of this information.

Three demographic questions that were asked on this survey instruments asked if respondents had been members of 4-H, FFA, or other youth leadership organizations and results indicated that close to half of those who responded had belonged to either 4-H, FFA, or other youth development organizations. It would be interesting to continue this line of research and investigate the influence of these organizations on leaders. Those who had participated in such organizations could be compared to those who have not and differences noted.

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