

Factors Which Influence Leadership Participation in Agricultural Organizations

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Abstract

This study examined why individuals may accept greater leadership responsibilities within organizations. A sample of active members of the Florida Farm Bureau Federation, a voluntary agricultural organization, were given an instrument to measure their sources of motivation, attitudes towards volunteering, and their views on serving on county Farm Bureau boards. Demographic information was also obtained in this survey. Multiple regression was used to determine which factors influence individuals to accept greater leadership responsibilities and serve on their local Farm Bureau boards. This study found that how high the volunteer activity is evaluated will be the greatest determinant in 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. A reasonable choice to provide this voice for agriculture and provide individuals who have the attitude/will/desire to participate in the leadership process are members of Farm Bureau. 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 make up large parts of the country, 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.

Family or individual farms make up the largest majority of farms in the United States. Over 1.9 million farms are family farms, which has increased by 250,000 from 1992. The trend of growth of smaller farms is also evident in Florida. Family farms are the largest type of farm, with over 37,000 in this category, approximately 10,000 more than in 1992 (USDA, 2004). 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 problem leading to this research was: To keep a strong voice and presence at the local, state, and national level, agriculture needs qualified leaders who are willing and able to work on behalf of agriculture, rural communities and their livelihoods as agriculture in the United States and the state of Florida is rapidly changing.

In this study, a researcher designed leadership behavior instrument was given to a sample of active Florida Farm Bureau members to determine their motivations and their attitudes towards volunteering to serve on their county Farm Bureau boards. Active members are Farm Bureau members who are full-time farmers, part-time farmers, or farm managers. Currently only active members are elected to county boards or other leadership positions in the Farm Bureau organization (P. Cockrell, S. Butler, & R. Hemphill, personal communication, July 17, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

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 in America is volunteering on behalf of the common good. People are identifiers of needs, issues, and problems and expect to participate in the decision making on how to respond to these. Voluntary activities range from short-term events, which have a time limit, to longer-term commitments of service such as serving on a board. The choice to sit on an organization's board is an important decision (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 various 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 retainment of volunteers. At the societal level, the model takes into consideration the linkages between individuals and the social structures of their society.

Self-actuation is the motivation of individuals to seek ways to fully express their interest, talents and potentials as human beings. The people who are characterized by these motives may have talents or power over others by the virtue of their knowledge or talents. Altruism is the principal motivational theme for people who seek opportunities to help others (Cavalier, 2000). In rough terms, altruism is defined as an internal concept that refers to the tendency or disposition of an entity to help others (Smith, 2000).

The theoretical rationale on the roles of motives comes from Snyder's (1993) functional approach to prosocial 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 being served by that behavior should 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 perform certain kinds of work or to engage in certain types of behavior 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 doing it is something other than an interest in the activity itself. It may be due to something a person feels pressured to do.

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).

Loyalty or commitment to the group or organization can also be a motivation of volunteering as people in groups come to identify with those groups. Tyler (2002) describes social identity theory as one that individuals in groups identify with those groups and merge their sense of identity with the groups and when people identify with groups they put the welfare of the group above their own. When there is no identification with a group, if an individual believes that the organization does not represent their interests or if an individual is content, they may become apathetic and do not feel the need to participate.

Leaders play an important role in creating and sustaining a group with which individuals can become loyal and committed to. The feeling of group identification encourages cooperation on behalf of the group because people merge their sense of themselves with the group. The important role of attitudes and values in stimulating cooperation suggests the importance of creating a supportive culture or value climate within a group. "Leaders need to stimulate intrinsic

interest in group roles, identification with the group, and the development of moral values and feelings that group authorities are legitimate” (Tyler, 2002, p. 779).

Results of a study done 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).

The generations of individuals who compose the volunteer segment of the population are facing different issues and pressures. Individuals who belong to the “baby boomer” generation are facing pressures of the needs of their children and their aging parents. Those individuals who were born between 1960 and 1980, the members of Generation X, are inwardly focused and less inclined to be involved. They are facing personal and professional pressures as they build their careers and families. Life pressures, particularly those of time and family are limiting the availability of traditional volunteers (Safrit & Merrill, 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, suburbanization, movement of women to the paid work force, disruption of marriage and family times, the electronic revolution and other technological changes. A social trend, which influences social capital and coincides with the downturn in civic engagement, is the breakdown of the traditional family unit. Since the family is a key form of social capital, its eclipse is part of the explanation for the reduction in joining and trusting in the wider community (Scheufele & Shah, 2000).

It has been shown that a greater number of social ties increased the likelihood that a group will be more successful in organizing for concerted action (O'Brien, Hassinger, Brown & Pinkerton, 1991). Social capital is important when discussing agricultural organizations as social capital has strong influences in these organizations.

When discussing leadership in agricultural organizations, the leaders have traditionally been male. With recent demographic shifts in the volunteers of organizations, more women will become a part of the leadership of these organizations. In a study of volunteer leaders in agricultural organizations, the motivations to serve in leadership roles in agricultural organizations were found to be a concern for people, the responsibility to support their profession, it's something they believe in, it's an outlet for their talents, it's a source of enjoyment and satisfaction, it's their duty to use their talents in service to others, and they believe they owe it to their industry (Kajer, 1996).

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

Purpose(s)/Objective(s)

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 use within the 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 in local county farm bureau boards

Methods/Procedures

A leadership behavior instrument was developed to examine leadership attitude/will/desire within Farm Bureau members. This instrument was administered to a sample of 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 researcher was given a computer generated random list of active members and mailed surveys to 419 of these members. The size of this population of active members was 36,100 (P. Cockrell, personal communication, September 10, 2002). Using a 50/50 split with a $\pm 5\%$ sampling error, 419 members of this population were selected to participate in this study.

The basic survey procedure outlined in Salant and Dillman (1994) was used for the data collection of this survey instrument. This procedure was used to produce an acceptable response

rate so as to try to avoid nonresponse error. The response rate for this survey was 25%. To defend this return rate, Hager, Wilson, Pollak, and Rooney (2003) 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. In a study by Green and Hutchinson (1997) on the *Effects of Population Type on Mail Survey Response Rates and on the Efficacy of Response Enhancers*, the authors found that the response rate for those involved in agriculture was 30%, while the general public had a return rate of 35%.

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). Differences were examined in the responses of these groups to determine if there were any significant differences between the responses, the differences examined include survey responses and demographic information. There were no significant differences found in the surveys of the early and late respondents, which indicates that it was an unbiased sample of recipients.

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. The inventory was used in this context, as a factor that contributes to members will to serve (or not to serve) on their county Farm Bureau boards. This instrument was pilot tested with a group of active Florida Farm Bureau members who were not included in the final sample.

The Cronbach's alpha of the entire motivation sources inventory was 0.8, which indicates that the inventory had a high level of internal consistency or reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the overall semantic differential scale was 0.81, which indicates a high reliability for the scale. The high Cronbach's alpha of the Likert scale, 0.838, indicates that all the items in this scale are measuring the same underlying theme, which is the respondents view of serving on 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 that was 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*

L	$f(M$	V	S	D)
(Leadership) =	Motivation Factors	+ Volunteering	+ Desire	+ Demographic
		Attitudes	to Serve	Variables
	Internal Self-Concept	Evaluative		Gender
	External Self-Concept	Potency		Age
	Intrinsic Process	Activity		Marital Status
	Instrumental			Children
				Belong to Orgs.
	(Will)	(Attitude)	(Desire)	

Multiple linear regression was used in the accomplishment of this objective. Regression is used to determine the nature of the relationship between a dependent variable and more than one independent variable (Black, 1999). 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

Results/Findings

There were a total of twenty-four independent variables that were considered for use as predictors in this stepwise, backward multiple regression analysis. Table 1 provides the initial Pearson correlation, degrees of freedom, and significance values for these variables that were identified as predictors of participation on local county Farm Bureau boards. Pearson correlation

values, r , that are close to or above .3 (both positive and negative) were identified. 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. These factors were: motivation internal self-concept, volunteering evaluative factor, volunteering activity factor, number of Farm Bureau events attended, belong to other organizations, member of other youth development organizations, and participated in leadership development programs.

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 ($p < .05$)

In the final multiple regression model, a stepwise backward selection was utilized. Two variables met the removal criterion: belong to other organizations and motivation internal self-concept factor. These two variables did not make a statistical significant contribution to how well the model predicts the dependent variable. 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	.46	.17	1.61	79	.11	.40	.36
Participated in Leadership Development Program							

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

The adjusted R^2 value ($R^2 = .36$) describes how much of the variance in the dependent variable (serving on county boards) is explained by the model. The five independent variables that are included account for 36% of the variance. The F-value of 9.96, which was significant at the .05 level, represents the ratio of the improvement in prediction as a result of fitting the model relative to the inaccuracy that still exists in the model (Field, 2000). 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.

Conclustions/Recommendations/Implications

In the multiple regression analysis, how individuals evaluate volunteering 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.

Though the literature provided evidence that family status, gender and age were all variables that influenced volunteering; these factors were not found to be significant for this study and whether individuals will participate on their local county boards. The literature also described the importance of motivation and why volunteers chose to participate in organizations and volunteer opportunities. In the regression model used for this analysis, the four motivation factors were eliminated and were not included in the final analysis. This could be due to a problem with the instrument used in this study as the respondents may not have understood the nature of the questions and how they relate to their volunteer roles in organizations.

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 instrument 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.

Farm Bureau should make serving on county farm bureau boards appealing to individuals on a personal level. They should believe that their participation will add value to their lives, give them a sense of personal achievement and that the organization they volunteer for allows them to use their skills and talents. Results showed that active Farm Bureau members place a high value on the volunteer activity and how they evaluate this activity. Activities that had positive or high evaluative terms are more appealing to individuals. Farm Bureau should make the volunteer experience a positive one for its members, as if they feel it is uninteresting or unimportant they are less likely to participate.

From this analysis, it could also be concluded that Farm Bureau members want to be active; they want to accomplish something and derive more satisfaction in volunteer activities that allow them to do this. For those individuals who participated in volunteer activities, they witnessed the effects of their efforts, witnessed organizational success and achieved a level of personal accomplishment; they believed they could make a difference. (Martinez & McMullin, 2004).

In addition to the changing demographics in rural communities and a changing constituency that Farm Bureau represents, the Farm Bureau organization itself needs to be examined, as organizations today are different than the organizations that were formed almost a century ago, such as Farm Bureau.

Florida Farm Bureau also should understand the motivations of its' volunteer members to retain the membership levels of its active members. As volunteers are the backbone of this organization, there is a great need for the retainment and recruitment of new volunteers for the organization. Additional research could be conducted in this area to determine exactly what motivates individuals to accept great responsibilities in Farm Bureau.

Participating in youth organizations and leadership development programs were found to be important determinants in accepting leadership roles in the Farm Bureau organization. Further research should be conducted which examine these findings. The leadership programming offered by Farm Bureau should be evaluated, and additional programming offered to active members to encourage the facilitation of increased leadership responsibilities by these members.

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