

Describing Volunteerism: The Theory of Unified Responsibility

Mohan J. Dutta-Bergman
Department of Communication
Purdue University

In recent years, nonprofit organizations have faced an increasing challenge in recruiting volunteers. Building on the theory of unified responsibility, this article argues that a sense of responsibility emanates across the personal and social domains of individuals who volunteer. Drawing a psychographic profile of the volunteer, this study explores the role of exercising, smoking, consumerism, and environmental consciousness. Strategic applications for recruiting volunteers are suggested based on the formative research presented.

Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute... Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America. (de Tocqueville, 1868/1999, p. 513)

The previous excerpt from the famous Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville's (1868/1999) notes on America documents the phenomenon of active community engagement that has been at the core of American society. This active engagement in the community by individuals forms the backbone of a cohesive social system and has been the subject of recent debates in the social sciences about the nature of American society. Putnam's (1995) "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" raised critical questions among academics and practitioners about social cohesiveness in the United States, with important research and policy implica-

tions. Putnam argued that social trust and community participation are facing sharp declines with tremendous implications for the future of American society.

Although a wide variety of fields including communication have taken up the debate about the nature of social capital in present society (Dutta-Bergman, 2003; Putnam, 1995; Scheufele & Shah, 2000; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001), these debates around social capital are yet to find their foothold in the public relations literature. One might argue that social capital is quintessential to the community relations role of public relations (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1998); organizations depend on an actively engaged community to participate in a dialogue with community members (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1998; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). In other words, an actively engaged public provides the important bridge between the organization and the community, playing a quintessential role in community relations (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1998). In addition, public relations professionals might have an important role to play in contributing their community relations skills in the building of high social capital communities (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1998; Ledingham, 2001). This study examines one particular element of community engagement that is critical to the formation of socially cohesive communities and particularly public relations work, volunteerism.

Volunteerism forms the core of nonprofit organizations in the United States (Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2003; Wilson, 2000). Most nonprofit organizations such as the United Way and the Red Cross depend on a constant supply of volunteers to function smoothly (Wilcox et al., 2003). In the face of the decline in the social cement that ties communities together (Putnam, 1995), it is especially important to find ways to attract individuals to volunteer their time and energy to nonprofit organizations. In addition, the community relations function of most organizations is based on understanding and engagement in effective dialogue with the volunteer segment because volunteer publics often represent the active community segment (Taylor et al., 2001). This article takes a strategic approach to developing a descriptive profile of volunteerism with the goal of (a) informing communication development targeted at recruiting and retaining volunteers and (b) understanding volunteers as a first step to the development of the dialogical strategy. The purpose is to use demographic and psychographic variables to narrate the story of the individual who participates in voluntary activities. Based on the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003), the study demonstrates that key psychographic variables integrate the lifestyle of the volunteer and serve as the different subplots of a narrative that are unified by the central theme of responsible citizenship. Based on the findings, recommendations are made for further research and for the development of practical approaches to (a) recruiting volunteers for nonprofit causes and (b) communicating effectively with the engaged volunteer segment. The following section discusses volunteerism followed by a discussion of the psychographic variables that are used to predict volunteerism.

VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism is a formalized, public, and proactive choice to donate one's time and energy freely to benefit another person, group, or organization (Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Wilson, 2000). The critical role of volunteerism at the individual and societal levels has sparked off a substantive body of research on volunteerism in a wide variety of disciplines including social psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and economic psychology (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Wilson, 2000). In its seventh biennial survey conducted in 2001, Independent Sector (2001) reported that 44% of Americans were annual formal volunteers, making up a volunteer workforce of 83.9 million people. This figure represents the equivalent of more than 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$239 billion. In 1998 an estimated 109.4 million adults volunteered, spending approximately 3.5 hours per week on volunteering. Without the availability of the volunteer force, the services offered by many nonprofit organizations would simply cease to exist (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). Acknowledging the critical role of volunteering in the United States, Snyder, Omoto, and Crain (1999) argued that the collective well-being of American society is determined by the actions of individual volunteers.

Existing research brings to surface key demographic variables that are significant predictors of volunteering. Among these demographic variables, education is the most consistent predictor of volunteering (McPherson & Rotolo, 1996; Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994). Wilson (2000) pointed out that education boosts volunteerism by heightening awareness of problems, increasing empathy, and building self-confidence. Educated people, Wilson argued, are also more likely to be asked to volunteer because they belong to more organizations where they learn civic skills. The evidence relating income with volunteering is mixed (Wilson, 2000). Investigating the relation between the hours volunteered and wage income, some researchers documented a negative relation (Wilson, 2000). Menchik and Weisbord (1987), on the other hand, found that the hours of volunteering work are positively related to income from all sources. Raskoff and Sundeen (1995) found that income was positively correlated only with health-related and education-related volunteering and had no impact on religious or informal volunteering. Volunteerism also typically increases with age (Wilson, 2000). In the United States, women are more likely than men to volunteer (Wilson, 2000). Based on the existing research, the following hypotheses and research question are proposed regarding the relationship between demographic variables and volunteerism:

- H1: Education will be positively related with volunteerism.
- H2: Age will be positively related with volunteerism.
- H3: Women will be more likely to volunteer than men.
- RQ1: What is the relation between income and volunteerism?

Beyond the demographic research, a review of the literature on volunteerism (see Wilson, 2000) demonstrates a great deal of work on the role of values and motives for volunteering (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998; Snyder et al., 1999). Volunteers rate working to improve their communities, aiding the less fortunate, doing something for their country, fulfilling life goals of personal charity, and helping others higher than nonvolunteers (Schervish & Havens, 1997; Straub, 1997). Overall, however, the relation between values and volunteering is weak and inconsistent (Greeley, 1999; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998; Ladd, 1999; Smith, 1998; Wilson & Janoski, 1995). Wilson (2000) articulated multiple reasons for the weak relation between values and volunteerism: (a) volunteerism takes multiple forms, each inspired by a different set of values; (b) different groups attach different values to the same volunteer work; and (c) values are ineffectual outside the support communities that reinforce particular norms. Despite the situational differences that underlie volunteerism, it may be argued that certain individual-level variables provide the common thread that unifies volunteerism. Underlying values perhaps can be substantially and systematically linked to volunteerism when the life of the volunteer is investigated as a whole instead of using a microscopic lens to examine volunteerism or one particular aspect of it (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). What is being suggested here is the need to contextualize volunteerism in the realm of other activities that are integral to the life of the individual who chooses to volunteer his or her time and energy to community organizations. These activities, by their linkages, perhaps bring to surface stable underlying values. The common underlying thread, it is argued in this article, is a sense of responsible action. Articulated in de Tocqueville's (1868/1999) work on community participation, responsible action is an integral constituent of healthy citizenship that carries rights and responsibilities for the community member (Wilson, 2000) and can perhaps be better understood when elucidated in the context of the actively engaged lifestyle of the volunteer. Psychographic research becomes particularly relevant in exposing the clusters of activities, interests, and opinions that are practiced by the individual consumer (Dutta-Bergman, 2003).

A PSYCHOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE OF VOLUNTEERING: THE THEORY OF UNIFIED RESPONSIBILITY

Psychographic factors encompass the activities, interests, and opinions of consumers (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, in press). Through their structured associations, psychographic variables suggest a way of life, a way of doing things, and a systematic integration of life choices manifesting themselves in a particular lifestyle (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, in press). A unifying consumption pattern is shared across a plethora of consumer categories (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004; Dutta-Bergman & Wells, 2002; Wells, 1974,

1975). Psychographic researchers argue that by locating agency in the individual consumer and by looking at the individual we can adequately capture him or her in the context of the variable of interest. The research participant needs to be treated as a complete individual, exploring the linkages, nodes, networks, and contexts that are central to his or her life. In this sense, the individual who chooses to volunteer, it may be argued, makes an active choice of living a responsible way of life that manifests itself in the domain of other activities that mark his or her life. His or her choices in different domains, therefore, are integrated by this sense of living responsibly and practicing activities that demonstrate responsible choices.

The cognitively founded theoretical frame is based on the premise that individuals maximize the consistency among their attitudes directed at different objects (product categories and brands) and issues (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2004, in press; Wells, 1974, 1975). Grunert, Bruns, and Bisp (1997) proposed the cognitive framework of lifestyle study arguing that cognitive structures are made of declarative and procedural knowledge, a system of cognitive categories, their associations, and scripts. These cognitive categories and their associations result from lifelong learning, and manifest themselves in enduring dispositions to behave. Therefore, the individual becomes a repository of related activities, interests, and opinions that get enacted within a particular cognitive mind-frame or are a part of specific cognitive categories and associations. Certain activities come in a package of other related activities that are all integrated by an underlying theme. The cognitively oriented psychographic approach of categories, associations, and scripts has been used in marketing to explain a plethora of behaviors (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, in press).

Reynolds (1973) used Kelly's (1955) theory of personal constructs to develop a theoretical basis for lifestyle research. Kelly's theory of personal constructs provides a description of the processes involved in the individual's organization and structuring of the world. The individual, going through the events that define his or her life, develops a "construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs" (Kelly as cited in Reynolds, 1973, p. 22). The content of the constructs and the hierarchical systems within which they are organized form a relatively stable system that minimizes inconsistencies and incompatibilities (Kelly, 1955; Reynolds, 1973). These transparent patterns become evident in the way that a person charts a course of behavior to live a style of life (Reynolds, 1973). Individuals then may be clustered into subcultures based on the similarities of their construction systems (Reynolds, 1973). Reiterating the notion of patterns that serve as the markers of individual lifestyle, Holt (1997) advocated a poststructuralist approach to lifestyle in which "consumption patterns are expressed through consumption practices" (p. 333).

In this article, consumer practices are introduced and accorded placement in the context of their relation with volunteerism. Underlying volunteerism is a keen sense of social responsibility and responsible action (Dutta-Bergman, 2003;

Snyder & Omoto, 1992). The extent to which other consumption variables will reflect the sense of responsibility will determine the correlation of these variables with volunteerism. The key psychographic variables examined in this study are linked with volunteerism by this sense of responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). They reflect a commitment to engage in personally and socially responsible action and serve the foundation for the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). The theory of unified responsibility states that a sense of responsibility underlies the personal and social domains of individual action (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, in press). Individuals who are more likely to be responsible actors in their personal lives are also likely to be actively engaged in responsible actions in their social lives (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, in press). A sense of responsibility integrates the multitude of consumption practices enacted by the individual, manifesting itself in the way of life of the volunteer across a plethora of attitudes, interests, and opinions (Dutta-Bergman, 2003).

To construct the profile of the responsible volunteer, this article draws on de Tocqueville's (1868/1999) defining work on social participation in the United States. Shedding light on the coexistence of rugged individualism and communitarian involvement in American life, de Tocqueville noted a unique sense of personal efficacy and self-interest that drives the individual to be socially engaged (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; de Tocqueville, 1868/1999). Explaining the idea of "self-interest rightly understood," de Tocqueville (1868/1948) wrote:

The Americans...are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of self-interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state. (p. 122)

In de Tocqueville's (1868/1948) depiction of the American lifestyle, individual responsibility and communitarian responsibility were not two ends of a seesaw (Wiesenfeld, 1996). Instead, both responsibility types reflect a more general commitment to responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Responsibility to one's own interests also undergirds the responsible enactment of social behavior in the public sphere (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, in press). The choice to actively participate in the community is driven by a strong sense of reciprocity and exchange, with an understanding that responsible participation in the community rewards the individual participant in the form of better resources, stronger impact on policy, better health, and so forth. The next few paragraphs integrate the de Tocquevillean (1868/1948) idea of an intertwined web of personal and social responsibility, arguing that different psychographic variables are related to volunteerism, based on an underlying orientation toward responsibility. The psychographic variables included in this

study are manifestations of responsibility at the personal or social levels and hence related with volunteerism. They are health consciousness, consumerism, and environmental consciousness. Whereas health consciousness and consumerism are treated here as indicators of individual responsibility, environmental consciousness is conceptualized as an indicator of communitarian responsibility.

Health Consciousness

A key psychographic variable that integrates and explains an array of individual health activities is health consciousness (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004). Indicative of the consumer's intrinsic motivation to maintain good health, health consciousness manifests itself in a healthy lifestyle (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991; Moorman & Matulich, 1993; Park & Mittal, 1985). The health conscious consumer engages in health-oriented activities such as eating healthy, eating fruits and vegetables, engaging in physical activity, and avoiding smoking (Bloch, 1984; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Gould, 1990; Moorman & Matulich, 1993; Walker, Sechrist, & Pender, 1987) that reflect a high level of active personal responsibility and self-efficacy (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Kraft & Goodell, 1993). Demonstrating an internal locus of control, health conscious individuals respond negatively to items such as "It is the doctor's job to keep me well," and "My health is outside my control" (Kraft & Goodell, 1993). The theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004) suggests that the underlying notion of responsible living that drives the individual to take charge of his or her health also perhaps leads him or her to volunteer his or her time for community organizations. The individual who engages in healthful life choices is propelled by a high level of personal responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Because the theory of unified responsibility articulates that the different manifestations of responsibility in the public and private domains are likely to be correlated, it may be argued the individual who engages in healthy activities such as exercising and not smoking (manifestations of responsibility in the private realm) also volunteers his or her time in community organizations (manifestation of responsibility in the public realm). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H4: Health consciousness will be positively related to volunteerism.

Consumerism

Celebrated as the ultimate expression of the marketing approach (Kotler & Dubois, 1977), the consumerism movement was driven by the idea of an active consumer who is motivated by self-interest, is empowered, and is willing to play a dynamic role in the marketplace to serve his or her needs (Bourgeois & Barnes, 1979). The engaged consumer is aware of his or her needs and actively

participates in the exchange process in the marketplace to satisfy these needs, resulting in a high level of product-consciousness and product information-orientation (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003). The active consumer seeks out information on products, is sensitive to the quality of the products that he or she purchases and returns products with which he or she is dissatisfied. Consumerism, in short, reflects an action-orientation, a willingness to take charge and to take responsibility for one's consumption choices (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Extrapolating the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003) to the consumer domain, it may be articulated that this tendency to play an active role in consumption choices instead of passively accepting the consumption outcomes is reflective of a sense of personal responsibility that may also be expressed in the domain of volunteerism, a manifestation of social responsibility. The consumerist is impelled by responsibility to the self, which in turn is likely to be correlated with the communitarian responsibility of the volunteer, resulting in a positive relationship between consumerism and volunteerism (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H5: Consumerism will be positively related to volunteerism.

Environmental Consciousness

According to the theory of unified responsibility, a plethora of lifestyle variables is likely to be drawn together by a sense of responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, in press). The individual who actively participates in his or her community demonstrates an overall sense of responsibility in the context of the surrounding environment of which he or she is an integral part (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003; Swenson & Wells, 1995). This sense of responsibility, according to the theory of unified responsibility, may also be observed in the attitude of the volunteer toward his or her environment (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003; Shrum, McCarty, & Lowrey, 1995). The responsible individual is likely to engage in those activities that protect the quality of the environment because the environment is instrumental to his or her enjoyment of a better quality of life. Volunteering for community organizations and caring about one's environment are both markers of a sense of responsibility directed outward (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). The motivation to take social responsibility and the perceived ability to do so makes the environmentally conscious consumer particularly likely to volunteer. In other words, both volunteerism and environment consciousness are reflective of a sense of responsibility in the public sphere. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H6: Environmental consciousness will be positively related to volunteerism.

METHOD

Data

The data were drawn from the annual consumer survey sponsored by DDB Needham, Inc, with the respondents representing a subsample of consumers maintained by Market Facts (for additional description of the data, see Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Five thousand questionnaires were mailed to the panel members. A total response of 3,613 was received and served as the database of the study. The response rate was 73%, which is acceptable for a consumer panel mailing. The data were collected through 48 states (omitting Alaska and Hawaii). Respondents in the database varied in ages from 18 to 91. The mean age was 47 with a standard deviation of 16 years.

Measures

Dependent Measures

The dependent measure in this study was the consumers' willingness to volunteer in community organizations and was measured by the single item: "volunteered in a community organization" measured on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*definitely disagree*) to 6 (*definitely agree*).

Independent Measures

Four demographic and three psychographic variables were included in this study.

Age. Age was measured by a single item that simply asked the respondent to report his or her exact age in number of years.

Gender. Respondents reported their gender on a single-item dichotomous variable that asked them whether they were male or female.

Education and income. Education was measured by a single item, "education level of respondent." The scale ranged from 1 to 7, with 1 (*attended elementary*), 2 (*graduated from elementary*), 3 (*attended high school*), 4 (*graduated high/trade school*), 5 (*attended college*), 6 (*graduated college*), and 7 (*post-graduate school*). A single item, "household income of respondent" measured income.

Health consciousness. Extant research suggests that health consciousness manifests itself in a multitude of lifestyle domains (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Health consciousness was comprised of two different variables: exercising and smoking.

Exercising was measured by six items: “went to an exercise class,” “did exercise at home,” “went to a health club,” “jogged,” “walked more than 1 mile for exercise, and “rode a bicycle” measured on a scale of 1 (*definitely disagree*) to 6 (*definitely agree*). When subjected to a principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation, a single factor with eigenvalue greater than one was generated. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .63. “The number of cigarettes consumed daily” measured smoking.

Consumerism. Four items were used as indexes of consumerism, “returned an unsatisfactory product,” “used a toll-free number to get information about a product or service,” “mailed away for a free informational or educational brochure,” and “used a magazine ad’s 800# or reply card to request information about a vacation.” When subjected to a principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation, a single factor was generated. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .73.

Environmental consciousness. Environmental consciousness was measured by five items. These five items were “I worry a lot about the effects of environmental pollution on my family’s health,” “I would be willing to accept a lower standard of living to conserve energy,” “I support pollution standards even if it means shutting down some factories,” “I make a special effort to look for products that are energy efficient,” and “I make a strong effort to recycle everything I possibly can.” All five items yielded a single factor with factor loadings ranging from .56 to .63. Cronbach’s alpha of the aggregated scale was .61.

RESULTS

To test the hypothesis and observe the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The theoretical model suggested in this study predicted that psychographic variables would predict additional variance in volunteerism beyond the effects of the demographic variables. The seven independent variables were entered in two different blocks. Demographic variables (age, gender, income, and education) were entered into the first block and the psychographic variables were entered in the second block. Three psychographic variables were introduced into the model: health consciousness, consumerism, and environmental consciousness. The rationale for this analytic framework was guided by the exploratory nature of this study in detecting the additional variance in volunteerism explained by theoretically meaningful psychographic variables.

The variables included in this study cumulatively accounted for 13.4% of the variance in the volunteerism of individuals. Supporting the nomological network, the three psychographic variables explained 5.5% of the additional variance in

volunteerism, whereas the demographic variables account for 7.9% of the variance. The results of the regression analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Gender, education, and age had significant positive effects on volunteerism, whereas the effect of income was not significant. Supporting H1, education ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) was positively related with volunteerism, emerging as the strongest demographic predictor of volunteerism. H2 was also supported, with age ($\beta = .16, p < .001$) having a significantly positive impact on the extent to which individuals were likely to volunteer. Supporting H3, it was observed that gender ($\beta = .09, p < .001$) was a significant predictor of volunteerism, with women being significantly more likely to volunteer than men. In response to RQ1, the regression analysis pointed out that the effect of income on volunteerism was not significant. In the psychographic realm, H4 was supported, with a positive relationship between exercising ($\beta = .13, p < .001$) and a negative relationship between smoking ($\beta = -.06, p < .001$) with volunteerism. Also supporting H5, consumerism emerged as a strong predictor of volunteerism ($\beta = .15, p < .001$). Finally, in support of H6, environmental consciousness positively predicted volunteerism ($\beta = .04, p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

The demographic variables introduced into the study supported the nomological network. Older individuals are more likely to volunteer their time and resources than younger individuals. Education had a positive effect on volunteerism, with the more

TABLE 1
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Explaining Volunteerism

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Volunteerism^a</i>	
	<i>Final β^b</i>	<i>R²</i>
Demographics		.079**
Gender ^c	.09**	
Education	.21**	
Age	.16**	
Income	.03	
Psychographics (activities/interests/opinions)		.055**
Health consciousness—Exercise	.13**	
Health consciousness—Smoking	-.06**	
Environmental consciousness	.04*	
Consumerism	.15**	
Total <i>R²</i>		.134**

^aHigh scale value indicates greater volunteerism. ^bBeta weights from final regression equation with all variables included. ^cCoded as 1 = male, 2 = female.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

educated individual being more likely to spend his or her resources in the community organization. Women were more likely than men to serve as volunteers. Income had no significant impact on the willingness of the individual to volunteer.

The demographic profile of the volunteer raises critical theoretical and applied questions. Why is education a positive predictor of volunteering? What is the relation between education and income in the context of volunteering? What are the broader implications of the positive effect of education on volunteering? Because communities tend to form around education clusters, what are the long-term implications for communities with lower socioeconomic indicators? This is a particularly relevant question for practitioners and policy makers because individual community participation produces long-term outcomes for the community such as reduced morbidity and mortality (Hawe & Shiell, 2000; Lomas, 1998; Veenstra, 2000; Veenstra & Lomas, 1999; Wilkinson, 1996).

The findings of this article support the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). Indeed, the actions that integrate the lifestyle of the volunteer connect individual-oriented and communitarian-oriented nodes with an emphasis on living a responsible lifestyle. These different activities, interests, and opinions are interlinked by the commitment to live a life that embodies good citizenship (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, in press). Exercising was a positive predictor of the willingness to volunteer in community programs. Individuals who went to an exercise class, did exercise at home, went to a health club, jogged, walked more than 1 mile for exercise, and rode a bicycle also were more likely to volunteer. The commitment to individual health manifests itself in the commitment to the community the individual belongs to. This finding raises important questions for social marketing campaigns targeting community organizations as sites for introduction of an intervention. An exercise campaign seeking to increase the extent to which individuals exercise is less likely to succeed when it uses community organizations because at-risk individuals who practice unhealthy practices are less likely to participate in the community organization.

Highly engaged individuals who are actively involved in their consumption choices are more likely to volunteer as compared to their counterparts who do not actively participate in the consumption process. Individuals who gather information about products and return unsatisfactory products also are more likely to volunteer their time and resources to community organizations. The positive relation between consumerism and volunteerism provides support for the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). An active orientation in ensuring that he or she has the optimal consumption experience represents a strong self-orientation and emanates into the domain of other-orientation. Individualism and communitarianism find a shared space in the lifestyle of the volunteer, substantiating de Tocqueville's (1868/1948) notion of self-interest rightly understood.

The finding regarding the positive relation between consumerism and volunteerism raises important questions about discussions that attest to a trend toward selfishness in American society. Is self-orientation a direct opposite of other-ori-

tation? This article demonstrates the possibility of coexistence of self and other orientations, positing that the development of one perhaps accompanies the development of the other, instead of depleting mutual resources and being in direct competition with each other. A more complex understanding of self and other orientations needs to be developed. The finding in the realm of consumerism also questions the argument that the increasing consumer orientation of present American society has depleted communities of cohesive ties, breeding individualistic tendencies in the communities. Organizations delivering their products and services to the responsible individual need to be particularly cognizant of the active participation of the group in his or her community, suggesting strong interpersonal influence and strong ability to mobilize resources.

Finally, environmental consciousness was a positive predictor of the willingness to volunteer. Communitarian responsibility toward the enactment of volunteer activities was also manifest in the responsibility toward the environment. Those individuals who reported that they worried a lot about the effects of environmental pollution on their family's health, were willing to accept a lower standard of living to conserve energy, supported pollution standards even if it meant shutting down some factories, made a special effort to look for products that were energy efficient, and made a strong effort to recycle everything they possibly could were more likely to volunteer. The web of a unified lifestyle is brought to the surface throughout the different activities, interests, and opinions explored in this study; psychographic research serves as the conduit for the expression of this linkage, explaining a significant amount of variance beyond demographics (Dutta & Youn, 1999; Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004, *in press*). Future research may extend the psychographic web to include other variables related to public relations research.

Implications

The support for the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003, 2004) suggests that nonprofit organizations seeking to position themselves as viable volunteering outlets for the already active volunteer segment need to (a) highlight their responsible commitment to the community and (b) incorporate communicative strategies appealing to different aspects of a responsible lifestyle such as consumerism, healthy eating, exercising, and environmental consciousness. Message and channel strategies that incorporate the strengths of the organization in multiple realms of responsibility are likely to attract the segment. Activities such as fitness walks for fund raising and cleaning up the local neighborhood are likely to draw the attention of the volunteer. In addition, organizations that appeal to the high self-efficacy and the active orientation of the volunteer segment are more likely to attract volunteers as compared to organizations that communicate a more passive orientation. Given the information orientation of the segment, messages targeting the group ought to emphasize strong arguments that highlight the quality of the product or service.

On a similar note, organizations that are concerned about building strong community relations by engaging in dialogue with the active segment (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor et al., 2001) need to make sure that they deliver high-quality products and services, respond to consumer needs by providing adequate information, monitor and publicize the health benefits of their products and services, follow environmentally friendly policy, and fundamentally embody social responsibility in their strategic choices. It is critical for organizations to monitor the quality of products and services that they offer to effectively communicate and satisfy the active volunteer segment (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Taylor et al., 2001). Those organizations that deliver products or services that are of low quality, are unhealthy, or are not environmentally safe are likely to draw negative attention from the actively engaged volunteering segment, leading to the potential for negative word-of-mouth communication. In addition, organizations ought to make sure that they create and maintain open lines of communication and present strong arguments to effectively communicate with the volunteering segment (Taylor et al., 2001).

In addition to communicating to the already active volunteer segment, some organizations might follow the ambitious strategy of recruiting new volunteers. These organizations that are attempting to increase volunteerism in their communities by appealing to the traditionally nonvolunteering segment ought to position volunteering as an activity that is likely to appeal to younger individuals with lower education levels. Alternative communication strategies need to be devised that construct volunteering in nontraditional frames of "having fun" or "hanging out with the guys." Local car clubs, for instance might provide a viable venue for drawing the nonvolunteering segment. The support for the theory of unified responsibility (Dutta-Bergman, 2003) also perhaps suggests that appeals to responsible action that are often highlighted in nonprofit campaigns are less likely to draw the individual who is typically less likely to volunteer in the community.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Using a descriptive approach, this article draws on lifestyle research to construct a theory of unified responsibility, providing support for lifestyle research. Similar approaches may be used in future research to demonstrate lifestyle clusters that are organized around activities, interests, and opinions. This article demonstrates that lifestyle research holds promise to provide the basis for theory building in consumer behavior and needs to be explored in the context of a plethora of other consumption variables. One of the limitations of the study is the use of secondary data for constructing the narrative of the volunteer. Some of the reliability scores were low. In addition, the study was conducted to document a predominantly White culture within the United States; therefore, the theoretical explanations presented are culturally limited. Future research may explore the linkage between individual and communitarian responsibility in planned surveys, specifically examining the role of responsi-

bility and other motivating factors that underlie the linkages. The quantitative approach to documenting the cluster of lifestyle variables may be complemented by ethnographic studies that focus on narrating the life stories of the volunteer.

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