

MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING: DO MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRES MEASURE WHAT ACTUALLY DRIVES VOLUNTEERS?

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Do questionnaires measure the same motivations as open-ended questions? To answer this question, we analyze the correspondence between the motivations evaluated with an open-ended question and those evaluated using the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI, Clary et al., 1998) in a sample of 1,007 active volunteers. We expected some degree of overlap between both procedures, but also important differences. The results show that the variance shared by the two assessment instruments was significant although low. However, the differences were many and important. The open-ended probe provides fewer important motivations for the volunteers and greater variety of motivations. The VFI leads volunteers to mark all six motivations as important and large discrepancies appear for some motivations. For example, the social and the protective motivations are present in more than 90% of the volunteers when measured by the VFI and in less than 3% of the volunteers when measured by the open-ended question. Discrepancies and common points are analyzed to better understand what motivates people to volunteer in different fields and to better focus research and practice.

Key words: Volunteering; Motivations; Volunteer Functions Inventory; Open-ended probe; Altruism.

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There are many aspects of volunteering that are open to study, but the one that has dominated the spectrum of research is the motivations that drive volunteers. Perhaps, as Clary et al. (1998) suggest, the explanation lies in the fascination that an individual would make significant personal sacrifices for another person, particularly when that person is a stranger.

Volunteering taken as a nonobligatory, planned helping activity, sustained over time within an organizational context (Penner, 2002), has a beneficial social impact, as well as significant costs for those involved. Volunteering requires sustained amounts of time, effort, and other resources, and it occurs in an organizational setting that limits the options for individual action and requires accepting rules, carrying out roles, meeting targets and so on, all in exchange for no monetary gain. Given these circumstances, it is perfectly understandable for researchers to wonder why people are involved in this type of behavior, and for them to look for answers primarily in the area of motivations.

The functional analysis, first applied to the field of volunteering by Clary and Snyder (1991), posits that people can and do perform the same actions in the service of different psychological functions, and addresses the key question of what drives people to action, that is, why do people volunteer? And what sustains voluntary helping? Clary et al. (1998) proposed that the diverse functions identified in the original functional theorizing about attitudes (Katz, 1960) have their counterparts in volunteers' motivations. So, they proposed a set of six motivational functions served by volunteerism, and a standardized and generic

instrument to assess them, the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998; Clary & Snyder, 1999). The six motivations identified by this inventory are: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement.

For more than a decade, Clary and colleagues have provided an array of studies and papers based on the VFI and discussed a multifactor model relating to people's motivations for volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000; Stukas, Hoye, Nicholson, Brown, & Aisbett, 2014). Many other authors have taken up this area of research and applied the 30 items and six factors of the VFI to samples from different countries, including China, Italy, Germany, and Spain (Chacón, Gutiérrez, Sauto, Vecina, & Pérez, 2017; Chacón & Vecina, 1999; Clary et al., 1996; Marta, Guglielmetti, & Pozzi, 2006; Oostlander, Güntert, van Schie, & Wehner, 2014; Vecina, Marta, Pozzi, & Marzana, 2010; Wu, Wing Lo, & Liu, 2009). Many others have related the six motivations to highly diverse variables, such as the age of the volunteers (Marta et al., 2006; Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998; Okun & Schultz, 2003), the type of organization to which they belong (Powers, 2009), satisfaction and well-being (Davis, Hall, & Meyer, 2003; Finkelstein, 2008; Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005; Kee, Li, Wang, & Kailani, 2018; Vecina & Chacón, 2013; Vecina, Chacón, & Sueiro, 2009), organizational commitment and engagement (Salas, 2009; Vecina, Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2012), or length of service (Chacón, Vecina, & Dávila, 2007; Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005; Marta & Pozzi, 2008; Penner, 2002; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009; Vecina & Chacón, 1999, 2017). Due to its quality and ease of use, it has become one of the most frequently used self-reporting instruments (Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009).

Even though the functional theory from which the VFI is derived is compatible with the potential appearance of many other motivations, research in the field has focused on exploring the six motivations proposed by the VFI, except for exceptions that show that the VFI could not be fully endorsed to understand volunteerism (Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Hochstetler, 2014; Law, Shek, & Ma, 2011; Oda, 1991; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). It is possible that these six motivations are the most important among all possibilities and suffice to account for the existing variability, but this should be verified by comparing the motivations of volunteers as evaluated through the VFI with the motivations of the same volunteers assessed using other instruments. There are several reasons why formulating an open-ended probe provides an alternative to the standard questionnaires that pre-define the number and types of motivations to be studied beforehand. First, because it is a very direct way to evaluate the reasons that, at least on a conscious level, explain why people volunteer. In this regard, open-ended questions allow people to freely and spontaneously express what, in their opinion, is truly important to them and explains their actions, that is, their motives. According to the symbolic theory (Scott & Lyman, 1968), the motives make reference to explanations that are generated to justify one's own actions and leave considerable room for interpretation. Open-ended questions also better encapsulate the enormous variety of symbolic meanings attributable to volunteering. They also reduce the presence of other potential, nondecisive reasons, and with it the bias of providing affirmative answers to every question asked. Finally, the use of open-ended questions is a very natural procedure to apply in practical settings, whether in written or interview form.

The use of open-ended probes to evaluate the motivations of volunteers has been anecdotal (Allison et al., 2002; Hochstetler, 2014; Oda, 1991; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). This is understandable, given the longer time and higher subjectivity involved in evaluating answers given to open-ended questions, but difficult to justify in light of its other positive aspects. It is even less justifiable if we take into account the results of the comparative study by Allison et al. (2002), which underscored the little variance shared between the same motive as assessed by the two methods (maximum 0.14) and the presence of other potential motivations (enjoyment, religiosity, and team building), which are also important to volunteers. In fact, the

tenuous link between the volunteers' answers led the authors to conclude that the two procedures were probably measuring different things. The Likert-type scales of the VFI evaluate the degree to which volunteering satisfies various conscious needs, while open-ended questions provide an explanation that justifies why people volunteer.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

In this paper, we consider what is given as a fact in all research into what motivates volunteers: Do questionnaires measure the same motivations as open-ended questions? More specifically, do the motivations that matter to volunteers when evaluated using the VFI match those that are revealed when evaluated using open-ended questions? To answer these questions, we analyze the correspondence between the motivations evaluated with open-ended questions and those evaluated using the VFI in a sample of 1,007 active volunteers at various Spanish organizations.

We would expect that applying the VFI and open-ended questions to the same sample of volunteers would yield matching results, first and foremost because it is logical to think that two instruments that measure the same theoretical concept, in this case the motivations of volunteers, will yield similar results, and secondly, because this would reinforce the validity of research carried out in recent years that has relied almost exclusively on the VFI as the instrument for evaluating motivations. However, we hypothesize that significant differences will arise because people in general, and volunteers in particular, are not sure, nor are they under any obligation to be, about the differences that the experts lay out between the motivations for volunteering (or sufficient reasons for engaging in this type of prosocial action), the expectations that are associated with said actions, and the life conditions that make it possible to engage in volunteering activities, such as having free time, living close to an organization, or being expressly asked to volunteer. This lack of differentiation is reflected in the volunteers' replies to the two evaluation instruments, and makes each instrument subject to a different kind of bias, which would account for the potential hypothesized divergence in the results. Specifically, this study will test the following hypotheses:

H1. When the volunteers' motivations are evaluated using open-ended questions, motivations will frequently be provided that are in fact life conditions that facilitate volunteering. Logically, when the VFI is applied, life conditions will not appear since this instrument, designed by experts, only includes motivations.

H2. Open-ended questions will yield a wider variety of motivations, in addition to the six identified by the VFI, that the volunteers will deem to be important.

H3. The VFI will overestimate the number of motivations present among the volunteers and their importance when compared to open-ended questions. This is because its answer format, which relies on a Likert-type scale, makes it easier for some of the expectations that volunteering creates in the volunteers themselves to be erroneously regarded as motivations by the volunteers, causing an artificial increase in the number and importance of the motivations.

H4. The correlations between the answers given in each of the VFI scales and the corresponding categories associated with the open-ended questions will be positive and significant, since both instruments are evaluating the same concept.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

All of the study volunteers were active members of one of the 53 nonprofit organizations that took part in the study, some of which were international organizations and others worked only in Spain. Different inspiration values were represented (religious-nonreligious; conservative-progressive) and all of them defined volunteerism as long-term, planned, prosocial behaviors that benefit strangers and occur within an organizational setting (Penner, 2002).

The participants were 1,007 volunteers currently working in social (79%) or environmental (21%) fields. The average age was 35 ($SD = 15.06$), ranging from 16 to 82 years. Regarding other characteristics, 60% were women and 40% men, 64% were university graduates and the remaining 36% were high school graduates. They devoted an average of 24 hours a month to volunteering ($SD = 91.00$) and had been part of the organization for an average of 47 months ($SD = 61.25$).

Measures

Open-ended question on motivations. Participants were asked to list, in writing and in order of importance, the reason(s) that led them to volunteer. They were given sufficient time and space to answer.

Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998). We used the 30-item questionnaire adapted to Spanish (Dávila, 2003). Volunteers were asked how important or accurate each of the 30 possible reasons for volunteering were for them when doing volunteer work, using a Likert-type scale where 1 indicated *not at all important/accurate* and 7 *extremely important/accurate*.

Data Analysis

First, we classified the qualitative answers of the volunteers to the open-ended question. Three members of the research team conducted an initial analysis of the content and defined the theoretical categories into which the volunteers' answers could be classified. The six categories considered in the VFI, defined based on the content of their items, provided a direct reference to define equivalent categories based on the answers to the open-ended question. Subsequently, four independent evaluators proceeded to categorize all of the answers given into one of the categories proposed, and Kappa coefficient was calculated as a measure of agreement between them.

We then carried out a descriptive frequency analysis of the answers to both the VFI and the open-ended questions. In both cases, we analyzed the percent of volunteers who claimed to be driven, or not, by each motivation. In the case of the motivations evaluated using the VFI, we also analyzed the importance attributed to each of the six motivations.

Finally, and in order to provide data on the convergent validity, we did a comparative analysis of each of the motivations evaluated using the two instruments (VFI vs. open-ended question). We calculated the student's t -test for independent samples to create two groups, depending on whether or not each motivation was present or absent in the answer to the open-ended question, and compared the average scores on the associated continuous VFI scale. The confidence level was set at 99%. For each motivation, we also

calculated the point-biserial correlation (r_{bp}) between the dichotomous variable associated with the open-ended question (presence/absence of each motivation) and the scores from the continuous 7-point scale associated with the VFI.

RESULTS

Categorization of the Volunteers' Answers to the Open-Ended Question

Four independent evaluators categorized all the answers written by the volunteers into a total of 14 categories. Twelve of them involved motivational categories, one involved conditions that favor volunteering, and another included all the other reasons that did not fall into the above categories. Of the twelve motivational categories, six corresponded to those included in the VFI (values, understanding, enhancement, social, career, and protective), and the other six arose from the experts' analysis of the content of the answers, and were as follows: community concern, enjoyment, reciprocity, social commitment, interest in the task, and personal growth.

The Kappa coefficient of the four raters' categorizations ranged from .94 to .97, depending on the category, thus exhibiting good inter-rater reliability. The 14 categories derived from the volunteers' answers to the open-ended question and examples of them can be seen below. The definitions of the motivations included in the VFI are those provided by the original authors of the instrument (Clary et al., 1998).

1. Values (V): Volunteerism provides for individuals to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others. It includes answers of the type "to be helpful," "out of a sense of solidarity," "because I want to help other people." The answers involving religious faith were included in this category because they were always viewed as associated with values involving helping others.

2. Understanding (U): Volunteerism permits new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills, and abilities that might otherwise go unpracticed. Typical answers include "out of curiosity," "to learn in new situations," "to learn different realities."

3. Enhancement (E): It involves a motivational process that centers on the ego's growth and development and involves positive strivings of the ego. Although this definition includes aspects of personal development, the items proposed for measuring it only include aspects to improve self-esteem and the need to make new friends. Adhering strictly to what is evaluated by these items, we included in this category answers related to improving self-esteem and the need to make friends. Examples of this answer include "the need to feel useful," "to feel good about myself," "to give myself worth," "to meet new people."

4. Social (S): It reflects motivations concerning relationships with others and refers to engaging in an activity viewed favorably by important others. This category includes expressions such as "my friends talked me into it," "because I have friends in the organization," "my parents influenced me," "the NGO was founded by my sister," "because of a colleague."

5. Career (C): The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering. The most typical expressions make references to "improve my CV," "gain professional experience," "get back into the labor market," "look for work."

6. Protective (P): This motivation centers on protecting the ego from negative features of the self, reduce guilt or address one's own personal problems. This category included answers of the type "to help myself," "to face my everyday reality," "because I was lonely," "to fill a gap in my life," "to accept what happened to me."

7. Community concern (Cc): It expresses an interest to help, but not in general; rather, to help a specific group or location. People who cite this reason express an interest to “do something for my community,” “work for my city,” “I like the group I am helping,” “help drug addicts.”

8. Enjoyment (En): It refers to the need to have fun and enjoy, and includes answers of the type “because I like it and it is fun,” “I enjoy it,” “I have a good time,” “I felt like it.”

9. Reciprocity (R): This category refers to the social norm of reciprocity and includes answers in which the volunteers clearly express a desire to pay forward something they have received in the past. Typical examples include “to help the same way others helped me,” “a feeling of gratitude,” “to teach what I have been taught,” “to share what I have received.”

10. Social commitment (Sc): It refers to ideological values that underscore the need for social change in order to improve the world and reduce injustice. Examples of expressions included in this category are “to build a better world,” “to make the world more just,” “to make the world a better place,” “to do my part to improve things.”

11. Interest in the task (T): This motivational category refers to the interest in the specific activity in question, not to volunteering per se or its purpose. Typical answers in this category are “I like the activity I am doing,” “I like camping, hiking, and climbing,” “I like sign language.”

12. Personal growth (G): The person volunteers as a way to evolve in a positive way, for personal growth and enhancement. Volunteers express this category through answers such as “for personal growth,” “to grow as a person,” “to expand my personal experiences.”

13. Life conditions conducive to volunteering: This category includes answers that are not motivations per se, but rather necessary conditions or requirements that make it easy or possible to be able to volunteer. Typical answers in this category include “I have free time,” “I am out of work,” “I was asked,” “there is an NGO near my house,” “I am very dynamic.”

14. Other reasons: This category includes answers that cannot be classified, generally because they are vague and nonspecific. This category includes answers such as “for personal reasons,” “I am searching,” “variety,” “sympathy.”

Descriptive Analysis of the Volunteers’ Answers to the Open-Ended Question

The 1,007 volunteers in the sample provided a total of 2,640 answers to the open-ended question. Seven percent gave no answers and respondents gave an average of 2.64 answers ($SD = 1.34$) ranging from 0 to 5 answers. The median was 3 and the mode 4. Twenty-two percent of the volunteers in the sample provided a single motivation. Table 1 shows the 2,640 volunteer answers, classified into the 14 categories used based on the frequency in which they appear. Note that: a) the three motivations most frequently cited by the volunteers in the sample when given an open-ended question were values, enhancement, and understanding. All three are in the VFI; b) values is, by far, the most important of the three categories, accounting for 37% of the volunteers’ answers, with the remaining 63% of the answers being distributed among the 13 other categories; c) the motivations cited least often were social and protective, which are both also included in the VFI; d) life conditions conducive to volunteering, which are not motivations per se, were the fourth most cited reason, present in 7% of the answers given by the respondents to the open-ended question; e) twenty-six percent of the volunteers’ answers to the open-ended question are included in six motivational categories not considered in the VFI: community concern, reciprocity, social commitment, enjoyment, personal growth, and interest in the task.

TABLE 1
Frequencies of answers, percent of volunteers who cite each motivational category and the importance attributed to it, depending on the evaluation procedure (open-ended question vs. VFI)

| | Open-ended question | | | | Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|------|
| | Frequency of answer | % | No. of volunteers who cite it | % | No. of volunteers who cite it | % | Average importance (1-7) | SD |
| Values | 985 | 37 | 703 | 70 | 1,007 | 100 | 5.65 | 0.92 |
| Enhancement | 230 | 9 | 211 | 20 | 999 | 99 | 4.34 | 1.28 |
| Understanding | 211 | 8 | 191 | 19 | 1,004 | 99 | 5.73 | 1.01 |
| Conditions | 193 | 7 | 178 | 17 | | | | |
| Career | 168 | 6 | 147 | 14 | 842 | 84 | 3.06 | 1.63 |
| Community concern | 156 | 6 | 150 | 14 | | | | |
| Reciprocity | 132 | 5 | 120 | 11 | | | | |
| Social commitment | 124 | 5 | 116 | 11 | | | | |
| Enjoyment | 108 | 4 | 106 | 10 | | | | |
| Personal growth | 100 | 4 | 100 | 10 | | | | |
| Interest in the task | 49 | 2 | 49 | 5 | | | | |
| Social | 35 | 1 | 35 | 3 | 996 | 99 | 4.31 | 1.36 |
| Protective | 26 | 1 | 26 | 3 | 941 | 93 | 2.99 | 1.26 |
| Others | 123 | 5 | 113 | 11 | | | | |
| Total | 2,640 | | 2,245 | | | | | |
| Average | 2.64 | | 2.22 | | 5.75 | | | |

Note. The motivations in bold correspond to the six motivations identified by the VFI.

All of the answers given to the open-ended question were analyzed to identify the presence or absence of each motivation, regardless of the number of answers given within the same category. This means that if a volunteer cited reasons that can be classified in a single category on two or more occasions, said reasons were counted only once, indicating that the motivation in question is present. Using this approach, the average number of different reasons drops to 2.22. Analyzing the percent of volunteers who cite each of the fourteen categories when asked about their motivations using an open-ended question, Table 1 shows the following: a) the values motivation remains the one most frequently cited by the volunteers, being given by 70% of respondents; b) the enhancement and understanding motivations are present in 20% and 19% of the volunteers in the sample, ranking second and third, respectively; c) 17% percent of the volunteers give a motivation that in fact refers to conditions that are conducive to volunteering, such as having free time, being close to an NGO, and so forth; this response category ranks fourth; d) the motivations referenced least by the volunteers are social and protective, both of which were cited only 3% of the time; e) the six new motivations not included in the VFI are provided by 10% of the volunteers on average each (range from 5% to 14%).

Descriptive Analysis of the Volunteers' Answers to the VFI

In order to directly compare the above figures to those resulting from the VFI, we proceeded to re-categorize each of the six continuous scales in the VFI into dichotomous scales (with 1 indicating the ab-

sence of the motivation in question and a score of 2 or higher indicating its presence). The average number of different motivations present in volunteers when answering the VFI is 5.75 ($SD = 0.50$), ranging from a minimum of two and a maximum of six different motivations. The median is equal to 6, as is the mode. Specifically, we see that: the large majority of volunteers in the sample who were given the VFI (79%) cite each and every one of the six motivations considered in the questionnaire; 18% cite five of the motivations in the VFI as present; none of the volunteers in the sample exhibits just one motivation, and only 3% of the volunteers cites two, three, or four different motivations.

As for the percent of volunteers who cite all of the motivations as present, Table 1 shows the following: a) 100% of the volunteers who took the VFI claimed to be motivated to some extent by values. This turns the values variable into a constant; b) something similar seems to be happening with the understanding, enhancement, and social motivations, which are present in almost 99% of the volunteers who took the VFI; c) the career motivation is present to a lesser extent in the sample of volunteers who took the VFI, though the percent of volunteers who claimed to be motivated by it is quite elevated (84%).

Analyzing the importance attributed by the volunteers to each of the motivations in the VFI on the original scale of 1 to 7, Table 1 shows that understanding receives the highest average score, very closely followed by values and enhancement. The motivations that seem to be the least important to volunteers when answering the VFI are career and protective.

Based on the above descriptive results, we may conclude that, as hypothesized, there are obvious differences between the data output by the two procedures for assessing motivations. We see that the volunteers in the sample have two motivations on average when answering the open-ended question, and six when answering the VFI. We also see that the answers to the open-ended question yield a wider variety of motivations, as many as 12 (the six included in the VFI and a further six).

Comparative Analysis Between the Volunteers' Answers to the VFI and the Open-Ended Question

Figure 1 shows the percentage of volunteers who claim to be driven by each of the six motivations being compared in the two procedures (VFI vs. open-ended question), and displays the differences described in the previous section. It clearly shows that the VFI overestimates the presence of the six motivations it evaluates, some more than others, especially social and protective. These two motivations are practically absent from the answers the respondents gave to the open-ended question and yet are present in almost 100% of the answers given to the VFI. The smallest difference involves the values motivation, which is overestimated by 30%.

To analyze the commonality between the two evaluation instruments, we first applied the student's *t*-test for independent samples. Two groups of volunteers were set up based on the presence or absence of each of the motivations in the answers to the open-ended question, and then compared with the average score on the associated VFI scale. The results, given in Table 2, show that there are in fact significant differences between the two groups for all the motivations, and that the direction of these differences is as expected for two instruments that measure the same theoretical concepts. This means that, for example, in the case of the values motivation, those volunteers who claimed to be driven by it when answering the open-ended question score significantly higher on the VFI scale for values than those who did not claim to have this motivation. The same occurs with the remaining VFI motivations.

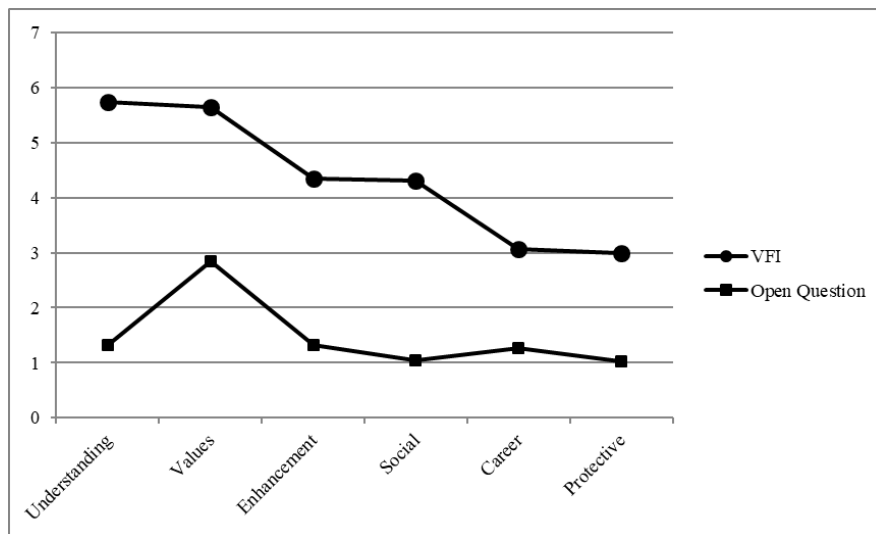


FIGURE 1
 Percent of volunteers who mark each motivation as present when answering the VFI and the open-ended question.

TABLE 2
 One-way ANOVA for each motivation.
 Differences between the presence/absence of each motivation in the open-ended question and the VFI score

| | Open-ended question | VFI | | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
| Values | Absent | 5.45 | 1.04 | -4.16 | 456 | .000 |
| | Present | 5.74 | 0.86 | | | |
| Understanding | Absent | 5.67 | 1.06 | -4.02 | 352 | .000 |
| | Present | 5.95 | 0.78 | | | |
| Enhancement | Absent | 4.25 | 1.29 | -4.79 | 970 | .000 |
| | Present | 4.73 | 1.17 | | | |
| Career | Absent | 2.83 | 1.54 | -11.74 | 190 | .000 |
| | Present | 4.44 | 1.48 | | | |
| Social | Absent | 4.29 | 1.36 | -2.65 | 949 | .008 |
| | Present | 4.92 | 1.37 | | | |
| Protective | Absent | 2.98 | 1.26 | -2.15 | 950 | .032 |
| | Present | 3.56 | 1.34 | | | |

Note. VFI = Volunteer Functions Inventory.

To ascertain the magnitude of the variance shared by the two evaluation instruments, we calculated the point-biserial correlations between the scores on the VFI scales and the dichotomous present/absent scores for the open-ended question. Table 3 shows that they are all low, though significant. The highest correlation is obtained for the career motivation (.35). The square of this correlation, indicative of the mag-

nitude of the relationship, shows a 12% common variance, meaning that how the volunteers rate on the VFI career scale only matches what they say when answering the open-ended question 12% of the time. This percentage is much lower in the remaining cases: 2% for the values and enhancement motivations, 1% for understanding, and below 1% for social and protective.

The comparative results above are indicative of a certain convergent validity, which is to be expected as both instruments aim to evaluate the motivations of volunteers. However, they also exhibit very low percentages of common variance, something that the hypotheses also anticipated.

TABLE 3
 Point-biserial correlation for each motivation between the VFI score
 and the presence/absence in the open-ended question

| VFI (scale 1-7) | Open-ended question (presence/absence) |
|--------------------|---|
| Values | .14** |
| Understanding | .11** |
| Enhancement | .15** |
| Career | .35** |
| Social | .09** |
| Protective | .07** |

Note. VFI = Volunteer Functions Inventory.
 ** the correlation is significant to within .001.

DISCUSSION

Most of the research conducted in recent decades involving what motivates volunteers has relied on the VFI as the evaluation instrument. In this study, we consider whether the six motivations evaluated by this instrument are present in the volunteers, and if they matter most to them, since according to the functional theory of motivations, it is perfectly conceivable for there to be others, especially in new fields. To answer this question, we compare the answers given in the VFI to those given to an open-ended question by a sample of 1,007 volunteers. The differences observed are notable, though there are also considerable similarities.

In terms of the similarities, we observed that in both cases, the values motivation stands above all others. It is the only motivation noted by 100% of the volunteers in the VFI and 70% of those who answered the open-ended question. It is also the sole motivation provided in 37% of the 2,640 answers given to the open-ended question, with the other 13 categories accounting for the remaining answers. We may conclude in line with other studies (Chacón et al., 2017), that the values motivation, whether evaluated with an open-ended question or the VFI, is present in the vast majority of volunteers, so much so that when measured using the VFI, the variable becomes a constant, meaning it is present in 100% of the cases. This result voids the VFI's predictive potential and allows for a new interpretation of the surprising results found in some studies, such as the one that found hetero-centric motivations to contribute most to the respondents' desire to continue volunteering. In light of these data, we would say that the most important motivation is values, but it is so saturated that it results in a ceiling effect, thereby nullifying its own predictive power.

Another similarity involves the three motivations that comprise the three categories most frequently mentioned by the respondents, and that also encompass most of the volunteers' answers, whether evaluated using the VFI or the open-ended question. These motivations, which are cited by a large percentage of volunteers regardless of the evaluation instrument, are values, enhancement, and understanding.

Lastly, as concerns the similarities, we may conclude that there is a certain relationship between the results output by the two instruments, and that said relationship goes in the expected direction, such that those who claim to be driven by a certain motivation score significantly higher in the corresponding VFI scale. However, the common variance percentages are very low, which necessitates an in-depth analysis of the differences observed.

Regarding the differences identified when both measuring procedures were used, we may conclude that VFI overestimates the number of different motivations present in the volunteers, since the average number of motivations output by this instrument is six, while the average number of motivations indicated by the open-ended question is two. Moreover, 22% of the volunteers who expressed their motivations in their answer to the open-ended question mentioned having a single motivation, while none of the respondents to the VFI seemed to have just one motivation. Practically identical data were obtained in a comparative study by Allison et al. (2002) conducted with a much smaller sample of volunteers all belonging to the same organization. In this study, carried out with a much larger and varied sample in terms of the type of organization, the volunteers also exhibited two different motivations on average when answering the open-ended question.

Secondly, the VFI also seems to overestimate the presence of all six motivations in the volunteers. Specifically, this occurs in more than 79% of the responses involving five of the six motivations (enhancement, understanding, career, protective, and social). Particularly noteworthy is the overestimated presence of the social motivation, which is cited in 99% of the volunteers' answers in the VFI, but only in 3% of their answers to the open-ended question. These results are compatible with the hypothesis which assumes that, in their responses to standardized questionnaires like the VFI, volunteers will confuse motivations, or sufficient reasons to explain their behavior, with the expectations associated with it. When given possible reasons they had not considered earlier, presented in a Likert-type scale, volunteers would tend to respond positively to reasons that are less important and that have little to no effect on their behavior, but that they expect to be present in some way. However, when answering an open-ended question, they would only include those reasons that they consciously believe justify and explain their behavior. These data support the conclusions of Allison et al. (2002) and the interpretation of the symbolic theory (Scott & Lyman, 1968) involving the great symbolic load of the written answers that explain the behavior of people on a conscious level.

Thirdly, this study emphasizes how the VFI underestimates the range of potential motivations driving the volunteers. When the volunteers in the sample were asked, using an open-ended question, about their motivations, their answers reflect the six motivations contained in the VFI (two of them at a very low percentage), and six additional ones: community concern, reciprocity, social commitment, enjoyment, personal growth, and interest in the task. The enjoyment reason had already been identified in the study by Allison et al. (2002) and was later confirmed in other studies (Law et al., 2011; Rokach & Wanklyn, 2009). Reciprocity, understood as a kind of obligation, and community concern, as a kind of civic responsibility, were also identified by some authors (Hochstetler, 2014; Law et al., 2011). The same functional theory from which VFI is derived is compatible with this finding, which should be taken into account in order to improve this instrument's descriptive sensitivity.

Finally, we also observed that the open-ended question, despite being a highly direct and non-suggestive way of assessing the motivations of volunteers, exhibits its own bias. It is significant that 17%

of the respondents claimed to be motivated by circumstances or conditions that, while they facilitate volunteering, are not motivations per se. Questionnaires are free from this bias since their designers obviously do not include such items on the scales.

Contributions of this Work to Improve Assessments of Volunteers' Motivations

This comparative study, carried out on a broad sample of volunteers at different organizations, provides an insight into the advantages and disadvantages of the two procedures for evaluating what motivates volunteers. This knowledge could prove useful when deciding when one procedure is better suited than the other, depending on the context. An analysis of similarities and differences between the two evaluation procedures could also be useful to propose changes to the VFI to enhance its sensitivity.

Posing open-ended questions on the most important reasons that drive volunteers is particularly convenient in applied contexts to recruit, select, and train volunteers, as it identifies the unique idiosyncrasies of each person in different contexts. These idiosyncrasies would be uniquely manifested in each volunteer in terms of the number and variety of motivations present and their possible combinations. In this regard, and based on the classification of reasons presented in this paper, it is possible to use six new categories of motivations: community concern, reciprocity, social commitment, enjoyment, personal growth, and interest in the task. The variety and wealth of the content provided by these new motivations is useful to the management of volunteer programs in two ways. It does so first by providing an insight into the motivations of volunteers from a more balanced perspective in terms of how self-centric and hetero-centric said motivations are. While the VFI offers one hetero-centric motivation (values) and five self-centric motivations (enhancement, understanding, career, protective, and social), the categorization presented herein adds four more hetero-centric (values, community concern, social commitment, and reciprocity) and eight self-centric motivations (enhancement, understanding, career, protective, social, enjoyment, personal growth, and interest in the task). Secondly, this variety of motivations expands the management possibilities of organizations, which can focus their recruitment messages on a wider variety of goals and set up more varied tasks and processes that allow satisfying these new motivations.

Using the VFI to evaluate the motivations of volunteers is very practical in research contexts, since it greatly simplifies the results by only including motivations. However, this study has made it clear that the VFI vastly overestimates the number and importance of all the motivations it evaluates, and underestimates their variety. It would thus be advisable to make some changes to the original questionnaire so that it can better reflect reality. In this regard, we would recommend the following:

- Delete the social and protective categories, at least from the standard version, since they are the least frequently mentioned and the least important, not only as concerns the six VFI motivations, but the 14 into which the volunteers' answers to the open-ended question can be classified. Including 10 items to assess two motivations that seem to drive fewer than 3% of volunteers seems unjustified a priori, unless this somehow serves to further some research goal. Moreover, their content, in the former case involving volunteering because important people approve of it and in the latter because it protects the ego, are clearly intended to prevent negative aspects, something that is not in keeping with trying to explain prosocial behaviors that go beyond benefitting oneself and that, as per Omoto and Snyder (1995), are less likely to result from a sense of personal obligation. Along these lines, the original work by Clary et al. (1998) already found that the social function was one of the less significant functions in a study of motives for volunteer-

ing of elderly volunteers. The lack of support for the protective motivation to volunteer was shown by Yoshioka, Brown, and Ashcraft (2007).

- Inclusion of new motivational categories, absent in the VFI, that, due to how often they are cited by volunteers in their answers to the open-ended question, should be considered among the potential motivations for volunteering: community concern (cited by 14% of volunteers), reciprocity (11%), social commitment (11%), and enjoyment (10%).

- Reformulation of the enhancement motivational category since, on the one hand, none of its five items refers to the personal development aspects mentioned in the category's definition. These aspects are obviously present in volunteers. Specifically, 10% of the volunteers expressly mention them in their answers to the open-ended question, meaning said personal growth aspects should be excluded from the definition of the enhancement scale and a new scale devised with items that evaluate these aspects. On the other hand, the VFI enhancement scale includes one isolated item involving the need to make friends ("Volunteering is a way to make new friends"). In our opinion, and in keeping with what has been suggested (Okun & Schultz, 2003), this content, related to the need to make social connections, has sufficient theoretical breadth in and of itself to warrant an independent category that could be called the social relations motivation. The frequency figures for this specific content justify this proposal, since 40% of the answers assigned to the enhancement category expressed contents that can be assimilated into the item that measures the need to make new friends. If these answers are removed from the enhancement category, the new social relations category would comprise approximately 10% of the answers, placing it somewhere in the middle in terms of frequency.

These improvements would turn the VFI into an instrument that is more sensitive to the reality it is attempting to measure. This, along with the necessary precautions that must be taken when interpreting the results (since, as this work has made clear, said procedure entails a great deal of acquiescence bias), would allow for the continued use of this instrument in the future.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitations of this work are methodological in nature. First, even though this study could involve the largest sample of volunteers and organizations, this does not guarantee the representativeness of the study. We must recognize the near impossibility of attaining this objective when there is no complete census of volunteers, or even of volunteer organizations. Second, the categorization process carried out with the answers to the open-ended question always entails a certain degree of subjectivity. Despite the inter-rater reliability indices, such a process requires interpreting what the respondents said and confines a reality rich in continuous and varied motives into a restricted set of more or less agreed-upon categories whose limits will always be artificial. In any event, processes of these same interpretive characteristics form the basis that allows constructing standardized instruments like the VFI.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this comparative study, we may conclude that individuals who volunteer are driven by a much wider variety of motivations than is reflected in the most widely used questionnaire in the last decades, the VFI, and by a much smaller net number of motives. We may also conclude that the

two procedures for evaluating motivations compared in this paper have different biases that may account for the differences identified: the open-ended question favors the appearance of motivations that are in fact conditions that are conducive to volunteering, and the VFI favors the appearance of motivations that are in fact associated expectations.

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