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Compliance with Mental Health Referrals: Does It Increase Over Time?

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Previous research has found that low compliance rates are common regarding referrals for mental health services from primary care physicians. This study focused on compliance rates in the period between four weeks and four months. The participants consisted of 67 individuals who were identified by their primary care physician as positive for a mental health referral but who had not complied with this referral at the four-week follow-up. A telephone questionnaire was used to determine compliance at each interval. Analysis of the data indicated that compliance rates at the four-month interval did not significantly differ from compliance rates at the four-week interval.

INTRODUCTION

Primary care physicians are at times faced with patients having some type of psychological situation or difficulty that is beyond the realm of the primary care physician's expertise. It is at these times that the physician may refer the patient to a mental health care provider. However, several studies have indicated that, regarding referrals, noncompliance is common. The present study examines the compliance rate between an initial follow-up, which is conducted four weeks after the referral and a subsequent follow-up, which is conducted four months after the referral.

Krulee and Hales (1988) conducted a study in which 100 patients of a psychiatry outpatient clinic, who were given a referral for psychiatric services, were followed over a period of time. These individuals were contacted by phone to determine the rate of compliance, which was defined as attendance to at least one follow-up visit. The results indicated that only 45% had complied with the referral. The researchers found that the factors contributing to compliance were being married, therapist initiation of the referral as opposed to patient initiation, and receiving a list of mental health providers in the area.

Jennings and Ball (1982) conducted another study with similar results. This study involved tracking referral compliance in individuals who were referred for mental health services at Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) over a six- month period. These individuals were contacted by phone and were asked if they had complied with the referral. Compliance was defined as attending the initial appointment. The researchers had hypothesized that 89% of the individuals would comply, basing their hypothesis on ratings from the referring physicians regarding the likelihood of compliance for each patient. However, results showed that only 45% were in compliance. The significant difference between the hypothesized rate of compliance and the actual rate of compliance may be attributed to patients misleading their physicians about their intentions to comply with the referral, or possibly the physician simply wanting to see their time and effort in making the referral lead to successful results.

A study that obtained more positive results was conducted by Muir, Selby, Grimsley, Lyman, Griffith & Crosbie (1999) regarding patient compliance with mental health referrals from Nalle Clinic physicians. The study consisted of 164 individuals who were contacted by phone four weeks after the referral. Compliance was defined as attendance at the initial appointment. The results showed a 55% compliance rate. The factors influencing patient compliance were found to include age, with participants over the age of 20 being more likely to comply, sex, males had a slightly higher compliance rate than females, and marital status, fewer married individuals complied as compared to unmarried individuals.

As indicated by the above summaries of studies, compliance rates for mental health referrals are quite low. Research conducted by Nicholson (1994) has indicated that certain variables appear to influence compliance for mental health referrals. One of these variables is age. Many studies have supported the idea that the younger the individual, the less likely they are to comply. Another predictor is the reporting of specific or general complaints by the patient of the referring physician. Patients with specific psychological complaints appear more likely to attend the initial visit. And lastly, history of mental health contact affects compliance rates. Individuals with a history of mental health contact have been shown to have lower compliance rates.

The study that I have conducted focuses on data from the Muir longitudinal study mentioned above, of which I was one of the researchers. My focus, however, is on the compliance rate in the period between the initial follow-up and a subsequent follow-up, which is conducted four months after the referral has taken place. In my study, I hypothesize that the compliance rate during this time period will not be significantly different from compliance at the 4-week interval. I believe that a significant proportion of the patients that had not complied at four weeks will also not have complied at four months.

METHODS

Participants

Sixty-seven individuals identified by their primary care physician as positive for a mental health referral but who had not complied with this referral at the four-week follow-up constituted the sample. The participants were patients in Charlotte, North Carolina. The sites were chosen because of interest of the physicians in assimilating psychological services into their practices, and because they appeared to be representative of a typical family practice in the community. Twenty-two primary care physicians assisted in the present study, referring patients whom they believed were in need of mental health services.

Materials

The four-week and four-month follow-up questionnaire was reviewed to determine the compliance rate between these two periods. Both questionnaires consisted of 12 questions. One of the questions asked on both questionnaires was “Did you decide to see the referred psychologist?” The response choices were “yes” or “no” and were based on self-report.

Design and procedure

After concluding that a mental health referral would be beneficial to the patient, the primary care physician then informed the patient of his or her recommendation. The physician completed a form and placed it in a designated area for the researcher. The researcher then contacted the patient to discuss their insurance benefits and to give them the name, telephone number, and address of the proposed mental health provider.

Approximately four weeks after the referral, the researcher contacted the patient by telephone in order to complete the questionnaire, which included asking the patient about their current compliance with the mental health referral.

The researcher once again contacted the patient at approximately four months after the initial referral and asked the same question regarding compliance with the mental health referral. Upon completion of the questionnaires the data were entered into the database.

RESULTS

The four-week and four-month questionnaires were used to measure the referral compliance rate between these two periods. A binomial test of the data revealed that, of the participants who did not comply at the four-week interval, 75% still did not comply at the four-month interval, compared to 25% who had complied. This difference is significant $p < .001$. Thus, the trend of the data indicates that there is no significant difference in compliance between these two periods.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that individuals who have not complied with a mental health referral from their primary care physician four weeks after the initial referral are not likely to have complied at the four-month interval. These findings may be due to the fact that the reason the individual had for not complying at four weeks still holds true at four months. Also, it could hold true that individuals who comply with mental health referrals contain some trait that promotes a willingness to comply. A third reason could be that some individuals truly intend to comply, but for some reason do not. And, the more time that passes, the less likely the referral is to remain a priority. Future research should explore motivation for non-compliance with mental health referrals.

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Gender Differences in College Related Stress

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This study was a replication of earlier studies that have examined gender and college related stress. A questionnaire, consisting of 3 stress ratings, was given to 25 college students (16 females and 9 males). There were no significant gender differences found in any of the ratings. However, the females had a slightly higher average mean than the males. The results suggest that gender is not significantly related to college stress, which coincides with the hypothesis.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is fact of life that every human deals with on a daily basis. It could appear sporadically, all of the sudden, or over a period of time. Even though everyone experiences stress, research has shown that college students, especially, have numerous stressors that effect their daily grind. Many factors come into play periodically such as preparing for and taking exams, peer events, homework, family and social relationships, role conflict, finances, future career plans, and a possible part-time job. Those are just a few of the sources that could possibly cause stress.

Several variables also play a role in how and what causes a person to become stressed. Gender, age, life traumas or crises, psychological state, physical health, and social support are some of various potential variables that come into play when looking at and studying stress and its causes.

Why College Students?

Much research has been done on stress, and a portion of it has been conducted on college students in order to consider what specific factors contribute to perceived stress. This type of research is important because increased understanding of this topic would be helpful in the development of new coping tactics, stress management skills, stress preventative programs, and in the training of future educators and counselors. There will always be college students and they will always be stressed out about something, so any research in this area will prove to be essential information for the lives of students everywhere.

FACTORS RELATED TO STRESS

Many studies have looked at the sources of stress with regard to gender, ethnic groups, state of health, period in life, and environment. For instance, Frazier and Schauben studied stress-inducing factors that effected females the most and compared levels of stress between two different ethnic groups (1994). They discovered, by use of the Psychological Distress Inventory, that the top five sources of stress among female college students consisted of financial problems, test pressure, failing a test, being rejected by someone, and relationship breakups. The Asian American female students reported more psychological symptoms, such as depression and low self-esteem, than the European American students did. However, Ross, Niebling, and Heckert (1999) found drastically different top five, intrapersonal sources of stress among college students (both genders) by utilizing the Student Stress Survey. They found change in eating habits, change in sleeping habits, new responsibilities, heavier work load, and breaks to cause stress. Frazier and Schauban also conducted a study on stress between Asian Americans and European Americans (1994). Asian Americans ended up having a greater number of stressors and a higher degree of stress than did the European Americans. This result may reflect the impact of racism, difference in values, and the lack of use of available mental health services. According to Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann-Sager, et al. (2000) stress is related to self esteem and health status. The result of their survey conducted study suggests that low levels of self-esteem bring about poor eating habits, which in turn, causes one stress.

In 1998, Dill and Henley suggested that significant differences exist between how traditional and nontraditional students perceive stressors. They gathered matched pairs and then proceeded to perform a descriptive study. They found that nontraditional students experienced more family related stress due to their numerous roles as being older students. On the other hand, traditional students attributed most of their stress to peer and social activities related to college.

MEASURE OF STRESS

In 1999, Sarafino and Ewing decided that the current instruments for measuring stress were not adequate due to the fact that they did not view stress as transactional, nor did they contain specific measurements of stressor intensity or frequency. They addressed these problems by producing new items of student surveys. The outcome was named the Hassles Assessment Scale for Students in College. Sarafino and Ewing demonstrated this new stress scale to be reliable and valid when testing the frequency of hassles, the extent of pondering about hassles, and the unpleasantness of the hassles. This new scale should prove to be very useful in future stress research.

COMMON TRENDS

In sum, previous research has looked at stress and college students with various scales and determinants, such as ethnicity and age. Although different variables and situations lead to distinct results, some commonalties can be pointed out. Common trends point out that college students frequently experience extreme amounts of stress, and have little time for outside networks and hobbies. The need for further research in order to help college students deal with stress is probably the most common thread that runs throughout past studies.

With all the past research that has been done in regard to stress and college students, some gaps still remain to be studied. Frequent physical illnesses, such as reoccurring headaches, as a result of the constant stress that students deal with should be researched in order to determine the types of stressors that result in physical ailments (Hudd, Dumlao, Erdmann-Seger, et al.,2000). The largest gap within the literature is that none of these studies had equal participant representation. All of the studies consisted of far more women than men (even when comparing stress according to gender). The outcome of this is the inability to fully generalize the results to the population.

An examination of stress in college student research has shown that there are common factors that students experience which cause them to become stressed. Therefore, the research suggests that stress and college students are related. Some research has found that ethnicity plays a role possibly due to racism or value differences, where other studies have proved that gender and state of health are related to stress. Even though this topic has been studied over the years, remaining gaps of knowledge still exist that need to be looked into. Finally, stress is a normal part of life. Preventative steps and counseling are needed only when the stress becomes excessive, problematic, or results in mental or physical problems.

Since there has been a lack of studies providing equal representation when it comes to college students and stress, this study will focus particularly on that. The purpose of the present study is to determine if gender plays a role in college related stress. It is hypothesized that gender will not be significantly related to college stress. Even though women tend to be thought of as more “stress prone”, it is predicted that college life does not discriminate when it comes to stress.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 25 college students from the general psychology subject pool were recruited by voluntarily signing up for this study, in exchange they received extra credit. Being from the “general psychology subject pool” means that all the participants were currently enrolled in a general psychology lab at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Since the study was designed to measure gender differences, there was available sign up space for 7 males and 8 females in the first session, and 8 males and 7 females in the second session. Even though all the spaces were filled only 9 males and, surprisingly, 16 females showed up at the sessions. The students were given an identical questionnaire in order to assess their college related stress.

Design and Materials

The questionnaire used for this study was a compilation of two other surveys, “Are You Burned Out?” and “The Hassles Assessment Scale for Students in College” (Sarafino & Ewing, 1999). The newly formed questionnaire consisted of 13 questions related to college in some form. Each question had three parts: frequency, unpleasantness, and time dwelled. Frequency was defined as how often in the past month or so the event occurred. Unpleasantness was termed as how boring or displeasing the event was when it actually happened. Finally, dwelled was the extent to which one is usually bothered by each event when it was not actually present, before or after it occurred. All three aspects were rated on a likert-type scale ranging from 0-4, with 0 representing never and 4 representing always. Since the scores were rated 0-4, higher scores meant more stress. “Do you feel overwhelmed by your schoolwork?” is an example of the type of question that appeared on the survey. A general information section followed the directions. This was for the experimenters’ purpose of determining gender differences. The survey took approximately twenty minutes to complete.

Procedure

There were two sessions in order to try to get an equal number of sexes. However, the procedures were the same in both cases, even the designated room was the same in order to control for extraneous variables.

The participants were first given a consent form to read and fill out, which gave information about the purpose of the experiment. Then the experimenter handed out the questionnaire to the students, and then proceeded to read the directions aloud to them. After making sure that everything was clear, the experimenter was sure to mention that some participants might experience slight anxiety due to the fact that the questions were stress related. Since the questionnaire was simple and moderately short, it took approximately twenty minutes or so to complete. The experimenter then handed out the extra credit slips and debriefed the participants by telling them the true nature of the experiment including the hypothesis, the variables, and repeated all guarantees of confidentiality. The participants were thanked again for their participation, and were free to leave.

In the present study, the dependent variable is stress score on the questionnaire and the independent variable is gender (ex post facto). This is an independent groups design because the subjects were independent from one another and they were only tested once.

RESULTS

The results were analyzed using three separate independent t-tests for each measure of stress. The scores from the questionnaire were not significantly different for males and females. However, the females did have a slightly higher mean than the males. See Table 1 for group means and standard deviations. There were no significant differences between genders for frequency, $t(23)=-.468$, $p>.05$, unpleasantness, $t(23)=-.667$, $p>.05$, or time dwelt, $t(23)=-.315$, $p>.05$.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study indicate that college related stress is not significantly related to gender, therefore the hypothesis was supported. However, females did have higher mean averages in all three stress measurements, which is consistent with Frazier and Schauben's findings that females tend to stress more over college related events (1994). Other studies also coincide with the fact that college students, despite gender, deal with stress directly related to college. According to Dill and Henley, traditional students refer to college as being their main source of stress (1998). Despite this, the purpose of the study to attain an equal number of both genders was unsuccessful. This, in turn, altered the external validity of the study by hindering generalizability.

Some extraneous variables were controlled for by giving all the participants the same questionnaire in the same room, the same time of day, and by the same person. Other possible extraneous variables such as age, race, and social status could not be controlled. However, the use of randomization distributed age quite evenly (most participants were 18 or 19 years old) as was the ethnicity of the participants (they were either Caucasian or African American). Possible threats or limitations to the internal validity of this study might have been participant personality traits such as determination or apathy, amount of sleep acquired the previous night, and there is always the possibility that the first batch of participants told the succeeding ones about the true purpose of the study, which might have affected how they responded.

Understanding college related stress and how it affects students could be helpful information to counselors and in the creating of new stress coping and management skills. Society today regards females as being more stress prone than males, but college involves equal challenges and incentives for both sexes. An interesting idea for future research would be to examine gender differences between college related stress and general every-day life stress. Another topic of interest for future research might be to study different races to see if diverse backgrounds and cultures play a role in the area of college stress.

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Table 1

Group Means and Standard Deviations for the Three Stress Ratings

	Gender	
Stress Rating	Males	Females
Frequency	23.44 (5.92)	24.94 (10.02)
Unpleasantness	21.11 (9.05)	23.94 (10.71)
Time Dwelled	18.89 (8.65)	20.19 (10.48)

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Does the German Language and Society Support More Self-Control than the American?

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The delay of gratification paradigm by Mischel, Ebbesen, and Zeiss (1972) is once again the basis for a study, this time a cross-cultural one. The participants will be 90 American and 90 German first-grade children attending various schools and assigned to three of the original five conditions. The determining factor in this study will be the same as the one previous: the amount of time a child can delay obtaining a snack. With this information a correlation between the American and German children and between the different schools can possibly lead to other cross-cultural studies of languages and their societies' impact on self-control.

Alcohol and drug use, eating disorders, and fingernail biting are just some of the many self-control problems that we face in this country today. The general lack of self-discipline that can be attributed to anything seems to prevail in the modern society.

Webster (1999) describes self-control as the controlling of one's feelings, desires, or actions by one's own will. The Oxford English dictionary (1995) writes that it is the power of controlling one's external reactions, emotions, and equanimity which is mental composure and evenness of temper especially when in misfortune. Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1994) refer to self-regulation in their book as any effort by a human being to alter its own responses, including actions, thoughts, feelings, desires, and performances.

The failing process Baumeister et al. (1994) describe falls into two main categories: underregulation and misregulation. When people lose control of their attention this is called transcendence failure, which falls under both categories. Attention failure occurs when people lose the capacity to see beyond the immediate situation, hence, cease to regulate their lives in accordance with their long-range goals. What struck me while reading his book was that the one main problem underlining both of these categories, which also contributes to the failure of attending to something, was the inability or the desire not to control feelings or emotions. If self-control behaviors are designed to maximize the long-term best interests of the individual (Barkley, 1997), then those emotions and feelings must be brought under control. When people focus their emotionson themselves they tend to neglect to do the tasks that should be done to further oneself and therefore they begin to accept or agree to their own self-control failure.

Freud (1923/1962) once claimed about the Victorian era that stifling one's impulses, feelings and desires has psychologically harmful effects. We have taken this to justify an ever-increasing abandonment of self-control. We should remember that emotions are allowed to be felt and at times be expressed: there is a time and place for everything.

With this understanding of self-control and emotions I began to speculate about the differences between cultures and found that there had been a number of studies done but none that were between two Western civilizations. Through my experiences while living in Germany I began to wonder if through their language and society Germans had a higher ability to delay gratification than Americans. The German language in itself is a very structured one, the definition of words are logical, as well as the deliverance of the language through the society upholding punctuality, honesty, and a strong work ethic. While doing research on the depletion of self-control (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) I came across a Delay of Gratification paradigm (Mischel, Ebbesen, & Zeiss, 1972) which I feel can be used, as it has been many other times, for an experiment based on a cross-cultural study, this time between American and German children. This paradigm I believe will be able to show a difference between the two societies and languages that the children have been exposed to.

METHOD

Participants

The participants will be180 children ranging in age from 5 to 7 years, which would represent those who could attend first grade in the two countries. Ninety children will be American, with both parents born and raised in America and the other 90 children will be German, with both parents born and raised in Germany. Within each of the two groups the ratio of male to female will be equal as well as within each of the three subgroups that will be formed from the above two. The first subgroup will consist of 30 American children who attend a randomly chosen public elementary school in America. The second subgroup will consist of 30 American children attending a German immersion school in the U.S. where the lessons are completely in German, such as Bruns Avenue in Charlotte, NC. There will be 30 American children in the third subgroup who attend an American elementary school in Germany, such as the Bonn International School (BIS) in Bonn, Germany. The second group of 90 children will also have three subgroups beginning with the first, which will consist of 30 German children attending a randomly chosen public elementary school in Germany. The second subgroup will consist of 30 German children attending an American immersion school in Germany where the lessons are completely in English, such as the above mentioned BIS. For the third subgroup there will be 30 German children who attend a German elementary school in America such as the Bruns Avenue. Five females and five males making a total of ten will be randomly assigned to each of the three conditions from each of the six subgroups.

An added note of concern is where the public school from each of the countries would be randomly chosen. For purposes of trying to achieve equality I believe that the American schools should be of a suburban nature where in the United States inner-city conflicts can be set aside. The German school system as well as laws place lower- income housing in higher income neighborhoods, so that children of mixed walks of life go to school together seems to rid the German cities of most inner-city school problems.

MATERIALS

Using Mischel et al’s (1972) experiment, the testing room will have a barrier behind which the experimenter, but not the children, can see and reach. Behind the barrier on a table will be placed a toy spring (“Slinky”) and a plate where there will be placed two different snacks, one will be more nutritious than the other. Example: a quarter of an apple and a similar size sweet such as a marshmallow (for the German’s a Dickmann or Mausespeck). On the floor next to the barrier there will be a box of attractive modern toys. A table and a chair will be against one wall, and on the table will be a bell.

A modern addition to the original experiment will be a video camera set up behind the barrier recording what the children actually do during the experiment. The footage will be shown to the parents when the experiment is completed. Necessary consent documents will be obtained beforehand though disclosure of the true intent of the experiment will have to be delayed, followed by a debriefing, to forestall the parents forewarning the children on how to behave.

PROCEDURE

When a child enters the room he or she will be shown the box of toys and some of them will be demonstrated by the experimenter. The child will be instructed that he or she will be able to play with them later, but first he or she will play another little game. The experimenter then will guide the child to sit in the chair at the table. The game is that the experimenter will leave the room but when the child rings the bell the experimenter will return. This will be played a few times till the child has comprehended the concept. Next, the experimenter will open an envelope with the random schedule of the condition to which the child will have been assigned.

The experimenter will then take the plate from behind the barrier place it in front of the child and ask him or her to tell the experimenter which one of the snacks the child would like to have. The experimenter will then inform the child that he or she will have to leave the room for a while, but when he or she returns by him- or herself the child can have the preferred snack. The child is reminded, though, that if he or she would like to have the experimenter return then he or she could ring the bell but that he or she would then receive the other lesser preferred snack.

After the child’s comprehension is determined the experimenter will implement one of three conditions. In condition 1 the experimenter will give the toy spring to the child to play with while the experimenter leaves the room. In condition 2 the experimenter will ask the child simply to think of a few fun things and encourage the child to think of whatever the child thinks is fun without showing him or her the toy spring. And for condition 3- that will be the control group- the experimenter will give no further instructions before leaving the room. Upon return either because the bell was rung or because of the time limit -three minutes- the child will receive the deserved reward and will be able to play with what is in the box of toys. The dependent variable will be the amount of time a child can wait till the experimenter returns without having eaten the snacks provided.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Using the correlational method I purpose to have 45 factors compiled from the following four categories: (a) the correlation between each of the conditions within each of the subgroups, (b) correlating the similar conditions between each of the subgroups of the American children, (c) correlating the similar conditions between each of the subgroups of the German children, and (d) between the countries correlating the similar subgroups and their conditions. After correlating all of the factors I expect that the results will resemble those of Mischel’s et al. (1972) in regard to the American children who attend a public elementary school in America as well as in Germany. However, those who attend a German immersion school in America, I suspect, will have higher self-control than the other American students. I believe that those German students who attend the American immersion school will have less of an ability to delay gratification than that of the other German students. But, I feel on a whole that the German children will be substantially more able to delay gratification than the American children.

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A Study of Prosocial Personality Characteristics & Leadership Traits Involving PTA Volunteers

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This study was conducted to better understand why people volunteer in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Active and inactive members of a PTA volunteer organization were measured on their prosocial personality characteristics, leadership styles and their correlation. The results did not support the hypothesis that active member volunteers would be significantly higher in both prosocial personality characteristics and relationship-style leadership measures than inactive members. A second hypothesis that a positive correlation would exist between prosocial personality and relationship-style leadership measures was also not supported. The results of this research suggest the need for additional research to understand the motivations of volunteerism such as PTA involvement.

Parents and Teachers regularly unite for a common cause of improving the educational systems in which their family and community are dependent. These individuals volunteer their time and resources and have become a vital link to the success of schools. This study looks at this type of volunteerism or helping to better understand the characteristics of the individuals involved. The study of helping, according to Omoto and Snyder (1995), initially concentrated on two research traditions. The first type is that of a spontaneous helper who through an unexpected or "impromptu" situation acts out of concern or desire to help or rectify a situation. A second type of helper is that of provider. It can be described as one who feels obligated, conditioned or desires to assist in the care of another with whom they are related or directly involved with and thus assist in their wellbeing or care. A volunteer, however, performs similar activities as the two traditional types of helper but is fundamentally different. A volunteer consciously considers and then takes action to commit and perform short or long term volunteer work for the improvement and well being of others, often being unfamiliar with the recipients of their behavior and without pay (Omoto and Snyder 1995).

The literature on volunteerism concentrates on characteristics of the volunteer, and the underlying motives, and personality traits. A number of studies also incorporate studying organizational commitment, in and out-group identification, and the social construct in which volunteerism takes place.

Motivation to Volunteer

Studies have been done to establish identifiable motivations that precede volunteerism and those that sustain it. To understand why someone would give part or all of themselves, physically, intellectually, emotionally and financially for the betterment of another or others is worthy of additional study. In an attempt to understand motivation, Clary et al. (1998) suggest that the same functional analyses that have added to the knowledge in other areas of psychology also "hold the promise of unraveling the complex motivational foundations of volunteer activity" (p.1517). Functional analyses attempt to identify the underlying functions or motives for volunteering regardless of how they manifest themselves or appear on the "surface" in the behavior or actions of the volunteer. Clary et al. (1998) analyzed previous functional theorizing and isolated these functions into six categories which are; values (altruism), understanding (learning opportunity), social (interpersonal development), career (developing skills), protective (protect ego, reduce guilt), and enhancement (enhance positive feelings). Omoto and Snyder's (1995) earlier study devised an inventory on motivations for AIDS volunteers. They took theoretically derived motivations, and perceptions of motivations collected through interviews with AIDS organization staff to derive at an inventory of motivations. Like, Clary et al., Omoto and Snyder (1995) identified values, understanding, personal development, and esteem enhancement. But unlike Clary et al., they attempted to address concern for the community as opposed to a motivation for career development. A more recent study by Simon, Sturmer and Steffens (2000) also looked at AIDS volunteerism. The study, in keeping with functional analysis, developed a questionnaire on individual and group motivation. They found two motivations emerged. "Gaining knowledge and understanding emerged for homosexuals and expressing humanitarian values emerged for heterosexuals" (Simon et al., 2000, p. 497). Although these researchers differed somewhat in defining functions, it simply gives clearer understanding to motivation, in that it differs within groups and between individuals. For example, an individual who is motivated to assist AIDS patients probably has many similar but also has very different and distinct motivations from someone who serves the local parent-teacher association (PTA).

Social Perspective on Volunteerism

Another area of study is from a social perspective, reviewing organizational commitment and in and out-group identification for understanding volunteerism. Jessica Reynolds Jenner (1984, 1983) studied organizational commitment among women volunteers in two related studies to help understand changes in commitment level over time and the motivation for these changes. She used an earlier-developed 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979). She concluded that one's attitude and commitment might remain stable over time toward an organization but that the commitment does not serve as a predictor of behavior. In other words a person may be committed to the organization but the level of commitment can not serve as a measure for the amount of volunteer hours they will actually perform. This is significant to the understanding of organizational expectations of long-term volunteer's commitment and work. The earlier mentioned AIDS study by Simon et al. (2000), also looked at organizational commitment and in and out-group identification. They studied AIDS volunteers and measured homosexuals as an in-group and heterosexuals as an out-group within the AIDS organization. They correlated high group identification for homosexuals as a predictor of willingness to volunteer and high individual identification (identifying self as unique) with willingness to volunteer for heterosexuals. They concluded, "People help other people to the extent that they view those other people as members of the same social category or in-group…" (Simon et al, 2000, p. 498).

Personality Characteristics and Traits of Volunteers

The final area in the understanding of the volunteer participants is to consider personality traits or characteristics. Empirical research has existed for quite sometime that identifies personality traits; the question is can volunteer traits be measured? A prosocial personality trait defined by Penner, Fritzsche, Craiger and Freifeld (1995), is a lasting concern for the wellbeing of others, to feel compassion and act on that compassion by helping to improve or assist in the wellbeing of others. Penner et al. (1995) devised a prosocial personality measurement. The measurement consists of two factors—Other-Oriented Empathy and Helpfulness. Other-Oriented Empathy measures feelings of empathy and responsibility towards the needs of others. Helpfulness measures one's present and previous experience or history with helping others (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The results of their study show a correlation of these two factors and their combined positive predictability towards volunteering.

As the literature reveals there are identifiable functions, and personality traits, as well as insight about volunteer organizations and commitment that help lend knowledge to the understanding of why people volunteer and continue to participate in volunteerism. The current literature, however, concentrates primarily on volunteering in the context of helping people in an adverse medical or disadvantaged situation. For example a great deal of current research looks at the AIDS volunteerism phenomenon. Additional areas of study should include environmental groups, churches, youth organizations such as Boys and Girl Scouts, and/or the PTA.

Prosocial Personality Traits

The purpose of this study was to see if prosocial traits existed among people who volunteer in settings that were less adverse of a climate, where volunteering was done to improve upon an already stable situation. The revised Prosocial Personality Battery developed by Penner (in press) measures prosocial personality traits using a Likert-type 5 point scale, the higher the score the higher prosocial personality. This study looks at PTA member volunteers because of the organizations general purpose and less adverse climate compared to the other forms of volunteerism previously researched. PTA member volunteers go beyond the status of member to become active volunteers giving their time and energy for the advancement of the organization and its mission. This researcher hypothesized that active PTA member volunteers will have scored significantly higher than non-active PTA members on the Prosocial Personality Battery.

Leadership Traits in Volunteerism

A second area of research in this study on volunteerism was to identify any other personality traits or styles that might correlate with a prosocial personality trait. This could be useful in not only identifying additional personality characteristics for certain types of volunteerism, but also could aid in the recruiting and managing of volunteers. This study investigates one type of leadership style theory and how it correlates with the prosocial personality trait.

The contingency theory of leadership developed by Fiedler (1967, as found in Smither, 1997) establishes that leadership is an attitudinal style as opposed to a personality trait. One's leadership style, according to Fiedler, is one of two forms either a task-structured orientated style or a human relations-consideration orientated style. A task-structure orientated style focuses more on accomplishing a task and the controlling of that task. A human relations-consideration oriented style focuses on developing relationships to improve the performance in accomplishing a task (Smither, 1997). In the context of volunteerism, a person who scores low on the (Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) scale prefers more structured task compared to those who perform high need less structured task and more opportunity to focus on developing relationships in order to accomplish a task. Given the relationship and coalition building nature of PTA volunteerism this researcher hypothesizes that scores on LPC scale positively correlate with scores on the Prosocial Personality Battery.

METHODS

Participants

Surveys were distributed to thirty-six PTA members affiliated with a Charlotte North Carolina elementary school. Thirty-three of the 36 participants (7 men and 27 women) successfully completed the survey. The participants ranged in age from 35-50 ($\underline{M}$ = 40) and had at least one child active in the school with which the PTA was affiliated. Thirty of 33 participants were parents in a "traditional" family unit of two parents and three participants were parents in single-parent households. The participants were placed into one of two groups based on their responses to a questionnaire in which they were asked to mark the PTA committees, positions, and activities in which they actively participated. Seventeen participants who indicated they were active in at least one category were deemed an active PTA volunteer member. Sixteen participants who indicated that they were a member but were not active in any other category were deemed an inactive PTA member.

Material and Procedures

During a family involvement dinner sponsored by the PTA, participates were given an instruction sheet, a consent form, participant data sheet, and Prosocial Personality Battery and LPC Scale assessment questionnaire, which were compiled into a single assessment. An assistant was used and instructed on the distribution of the materials. Homeroom teachers were used to collect the material, which were placed in sealed envelopes by the participants. Additionally, instructions were given verbally and in writing by the assistant to ensure continuity of understanding among participants.

RESULTS

Two separate independent $\underline{t}$ tests were used to analyze the group means of active volunteers and inactive PTA members on prosocial trait and on leadership. There was not significant evidence to suggest that active volunteers and inactive members scored differently on the Prosocial Battery (PSB). The active volunteers results were similar ($\underline{M}$ = 114.12, $\underline{sd}$ = 7.36) to the inactive members results ($\underline{M}$ = 112.81, $\underline{sd}$ 10.37), $\underline{t}(31) = .419$, $\underline{p} = .678$. There was also no significant evidence to suggest that active volunteers and inactive members scored differently on the Least Preferred Coworker Scale (LPC). The active volunteers results were similar ($\underline{M}$ = 67.53, $\underline{sd}$ 17.07) to the inactive members results ($\underline{M}$ = 60.25, $\underline{sd}$ 11.50), $\underline{t}(31) = 1.427$, $\underline{p} = .164$. A Pearson's correlation was performed for both groups to test for a positive relation between PSB and LPC. There was not significant evidence to suggest that a positive correlation exists between the PSB and LPC for both groups ($\underline{r} = .159$, $\underline{p} = .377$).

DISCUSSION

According to the results of these tests, individuals affiliated with the PTA do not differ significantly in prosocial personalities and leadership traits between active and inactive members. It also reveals that there is not a positive correlation between prosocial personalities and leadership traits. It should be noted however, that this sample was taken from PTA members who were attending a family event. It may be possible that those attending, whether actually involved in the facilitating of these types of events, may be prosocial in nature and that could partially account for similarity in scores. A larger sample size that included parents who were both non-members and non-active in all types of school activities may be a better comparison. It is also interesting to note that of the 18 active members 12 listed more than one other organization or group in which they actively serve, however, of the 16 non-active member only four listed another organization or group in which they serve and did not list more than one. It is because of these results that additional research should continue. Research into motives or circumstance that makes one prone to actively volunteer needs exploring, as well as, a larger group sample in different types of organizations. According to this research it seems that those participating in a non-health, non-critical need sector like the PTA are not significantly more prosocial. It seems that other factors exist that motivate these individuals for being active. Research that identifies these motives would be helpful in the recruitment and retention of volunteers in this type of volunteerism. The results of the correlation study reveals that there is no relation between being prosocial and having leadership traits. This may be helpful in the managing of volunteers, knowing that volunteers may respond differently to a leadership role in an organization which is often a requirement of volunteers due to limited resources.

Volunteerism is a valuable resource in the maintaining of many services in the United States. Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene and Haugen (1994) found in 1991 20.5 billion hours of volunteer work, which is equivalent to the work of over 9 million full-time workers. Each year millions of people's lives are enhanced because of the volunteering behavior performed by others. Volunteers assist those living, learning, and dying. It is a phenomenon worthy of much additional study.

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