

# Volunteer Activity and the Demands of Work and Family Le bénévolat et les exigences du travail et de la famille Actividad voluntaria y las demandas de trabajo y familia

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Résumé de l'article

Les déterminants du bénévolat sont abordés ici en accordant une attention particulière au jeu des exigences du travail et de la famille. Des variables d'ordre explicatif incluent des mesures de revenus et de richesse, des caractéristiques du travail et du temps de travail (par exemple, le travail posté, l'horaire flexible, le travail à la maison, la semaine de travail comprimée, le statut syndical, la surqualification, la menace de perte d'emploi, la nature exigeante du travail, les heures travaillées, le prestige de l'occupation et le secteur industriel) et des caractéristiques de la famille (par exemple, l'état matrimonial, la présence ou non d'enfant, la nature du travail du conjoint, l'état de santé, la scolarité et l'appartenance religieuse).

Le cadre théorique retenu est celui d'une fonction de production propre au ménage. Il met en lumière l'importance de la prise de décision familiale en matière d'activité bénévole aussi bien que le rôle du ménage en tant qu'unité de production et de consommation. Il fait ressortir le caractère potentiellement substituable du temps et de l'argent aussi bien que l'importance du coût du temps et du revenu, et également les caractéristiques du travail et de la famille.

Ici, l'analyse économétrique est fondée sur les réponses de 6 212 répondants du Cycle 9 de l'Enquête sociale générale (ESG) du Canada de 1994. Elle présente un ensemble de données idéales dans ce type d'analyse puisqu'elle relie le bénévolat à un vaste spectre de caractéristiques propres au travail et à la famille. On a fait appel à une analyse de régression logistique, étant donné le caractère dichotomique de la variable dépendante, en lui attribuant le chiffre « un » lorsque la personne s'était adonnée à une activité bénévole formelle au cours d'une période de temps et le chiffre « zéro » lorsqu'elle ne s'y était pas adonnée.

Le bénévolat présente une composante importante et productive qui peut améliorer le rendement de divers groupes dans une relation d'emploi : les employés, les employeurs, les gouvernements et les organisations qui, de plus en plus, ont recours à des bénévoles. Cette importance est susceptible d'augmenter dans le futur parce que l'offre et également la demande de travail bénévole vont aller possiblement en s'accroissant. La demande de travail bénévole est susceptible de s'accroître pour combler un vide occasionné par le retrait de certaines activités gouvernementales, la désinstitutionnalisation et les soins fournis par la communauté, particulièrement ceux qui sont reliés à une population vieillissante dont l'espérance de vie est plus longue et qui auront à envisager l'héritage d'une inégalité croissante des revenus et de la réduction des paiements de transfert. L'offre de travail bénévole est aussi sensée s'accroître dans la mesure où s'harmonisent les phases de transition entre l'école et le travail, le travail et la retraite, où on retrouve également un nombre plus élevé d'individus au cours de ces périodes.

C'est alors qu'il devient important de comprendre les facteurs qui incitent au travail bénévole et, plus particulièrement, les facteurs associés au travail et à la famille, vu l'importance du bénévolat pour le travail et la famille. Nos travaux empiriques mettent en évidence la possibilité que fournit la fonction de production des ménages pour permettre une meilleure compréhension de la décision d'offrir du travail bénévole.

Ainsi, les gens sont plus susceptibles de faire du bénévolat s'ils peuvent « se le permettre » et ils le sont moins si le coût de substitution de leur temps est élevé. Ils sont aussi plus susceptibles de faire du bénévolat si le travail et les horaires des lieux de travail le facilitent ou ne présentent pas d'obstacles à se faire. Le fait que des membres de la famille vont possiblement offrir du bénévolat s'ils ont des enfants à la maison, en dépit de la compression du temps reliée à l'éducation des enfants, fait ressortir la nature complémentaire du bénévolat et la nature sociale de beaucoup d'activités familiales telles que l'éducation des enfants. Ce phénomène est d'autant plus vrai qu'il est étayé par le fait que le bénévolat n'est pas diminué par la compression du temps reliée à des longues heures de travail ou par le fait que le conjoint est sur le marché du travail ou de retour aux études. Les familles occupées semblent faire plus de tout, incluant le bénévolat. Les heures de travail imprévisibles et le travail par postes ont en effet un impact négatif sur le bénévolat.

La nature productive du bénévolat est aussi mise en exergue par sa popularité auprès de jeunes travailleurs à une période de leur carrière où le réseautage et la rédaction de c.v. deviennent importants au moment de faciliter la transition de l'école au travail. Alors que le bénévolat ne semble pas réagir aux coûts et aux bénéfices associés à l'environnement du travail et de la famille, des personnes différentes semblent montrer différents caractéristiques qui les incitent à collaborer à des activités sociales telles que la religion, le fait de travailler dans les services sociaux ou simplement de s'adonner intensivement à toutes sortes d'occupations, incluant le bénévolat. Le travail et la famille demeurent importants, mais le sont également d'autres traits naturels chez les personnes les incitant à s'engager dans un large éventail d'activités d'orientation sociale.

# *Volunteer Activity and the Demands of Work and Family*

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*The importance of volunteer activity for employees, employers and governmental and non-governmental organizations that are increasingly relying on volunteers is discussed, followed by an econometric analysis relating volunteer activity to a variety of characteristics of work and family as well as to personal and demographic characteristics of the volunteers. The analysis is based on Cycle 9 of the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) of 1994—an ideal data set since it links volunteer activity to a wide range of characteristics of work and family. The results are interpreted through the lens of a household production function framework, highlighting the importance of time cost and income, but also characteristics of work and family.*

Voluntary activity is conventionally thought of as an altruistic activity designed to assist the plight of the disadvantaged and to bring a “warm glow” to those volunteering. This aspect is important, but volunteer activity also has a valuable productive component that can enhance the performance of various groups in the employment relationship.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The potential performance-enhancing effect of volunteering is illustrated by its impact on the “bottom line”—time spent volunteering yields a substantial monetary return—6–7 percent estimated in Day and Devlin (1998) and 4 percent in Devlin (2001).

For youths, volunteering can be part of résumé building and productive networking that may facilitate job search, the school-to-work transition and effective long-run placement. For older persons, voluntary activity may bridge the transition into retirement. For women re-entering the labour market, volunteer activity may be a viable mechanism to compensate for lost experience (Mueller 1975). For employers, volunteering may be regarded as a productive activity akin to experience and human capital formation, especially if it is viewed as an indicator of otherwise unobservable individual abilities (Day and Devlin 1998: 1180). The U.S. Civil Service Commission and many federal agencies accept volunteer activity as the equivalent of experience in paid employment (Dicken and Blomberg 1988). Delta Airlines has instituted volunteer activity as a form of “transitional duty” as part of the return-to-work strategy for injured workers who are well enough to do volunteer work but are not yet ready to return to their regular job.<sup>2</sup> Public sector employers are increasingly regarding voluntary activity as an alternative source of labour supply for caregiving that was formerly provided in government supported institutions, whose budgets have now been cut under restraint programs. For civil society in general, volunteer activity is regarded as an important component of building and sustaining social infrastructure, social cohesion and in developing social capital (OECD 1997; Putnam 1995). The potential importance of volunteer activity is being recognized as evidenced by its being a key ingredient in what has been labelled the Third America or the Third Sector (O’Neill 1989). Its importance is further highlighted by the fact that the first year of the new millennium—2001—was declared the “International Year of Volunteers” by the United Nations.

In spite of this potential significance, we know remarkably little about what determines the degree of volunteer activity within families.<sup>3</sup> What are the determinants of such activity and how is it likely to vary by the characteristics of work and of the family—especially important given the recent transformations within the family structure, family roles and work itself?<sup>4</sup> Is volunteering likely to be greater on the part of wealthier families because they can afford to volunteer, or from poor families because they can identify with the need for such activity? Can volunteer activity be explained by the conventional model of family labour supply with its

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2. *USA Today*, September 1, 1999, p. 3B.

3. For discussions of different rationales for volunteering, see Andreoni (1990), Rose-Ackerman (1996) and Woolley (2001, 2003). While our analysis deals with formal volunteer activity in a variety of spheres, some studies focus on volunteering in political activities (Rosenthal, Feiring and Lewis 1998; Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995).

4. Those transformations are discussed in Drago and Hyatt (2003), Duxbury and Higgins (2001), Gunderson (2002) and Lowe and Schellenberg (2001) and references cited therein.

emphasis on family wealth and the opportunity cost of time of different family members as well as inter-temporal substitution over the life-cycle? Are dual-earner families that are already likely suffering from the “time crunch” associated with the changing nature of work and family responsibilities less likely to volunteer? What effect is the changing nature of work and of working time having on the ability of employees to volunteer? Do the factors that influence the probability that people will volunteer have a similar effect on the amount of time they volunteer?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the determinants of volunteer activity through the theoretical perspective of a household production function that encompasses both the “warm glow” and the productive aspects of volunteering for various groups in the employment relationship. In the empirical work, emphasis is placed on how volunteering varies by characteristics of work and family. Especially important will be our estimate of the effect of working time and the balancing of familial obligations on the likelihood of volunteering. Comparisons will be made with the existing Canadian literature on the topic.<sup>5</sup>

### ***VOLUNTEERING AND THE HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION FRAMEWORK***

Given the emphasis on the relationship between work and family, the empirical results will be interpreted through the lens of the theoretical framework of the household production function where households value goods, leisure and charitable activity as a collective good. Charitable activity is “produced” via household inputs of money and volunteer time. This highlights the importance of substituting money for time within the household and over different periods in the lifecycle, and it highlights that households may economize on scarce household time both by “consuming”

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5. Comparisons are difficult, however, because of the differences in the data sets, specifications and subgroups. Vaillancourt (1994) and Day and Devlin (1996) use the 1987 Survey of Volunteering (VAT) which does not have crucial wage data. Statistics Canada studies that use the more recent 1997 or 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) (respectively Hall et al. 1998 and 2001) either provide only cross-tabulations that do not control for the influence of other factors, or, as in the case of Devlin (2001), they focus on the impact of volunteering on earnings, and only verbally discuss the impact of the determinants of the volunteering decision, with no wage or income measures. Other studies deal only with particular subgroups—youths (Jones 2000), seniors (Gunderson 1999; Jones 1999), the unemployed (Gomez and Gunderson 2001; Wong and Henson 2000, the latter focusing on the impacts, not determinants, of volunteering). None of these studies provides an econometric analysis that utilizes a comprehensive set of work and family variables as well as wage, income and union status measures for all employed persons—as is the case with this study.

fewer charitable activities that involve time (substitution in consumption), and by substituting money for time in “producing” charitable activity (substitution in production).

The household production function perspective incorporates the fact that the decision to engage in charitable activity can be based on altruistic reasons—to help a cause—with different people having different amounts of altruism as well as different causes. Or it can be more of an investment decision with the expectation of some private return in terms of such factors as reputation, resume building, networking, experience or a reciprocal favour. The household production function approach also emphasizes that volunteering is a family decision affected by family income as well as by the opportunity cost of time of different family members and the extent to which different family members allocate their time to labour market versus household activity. Families that require more of their time at home (e.g., for the care of very young children) are less likely to have time for outside charitable activities, especially in the form of unpaid volunteer time. On the other hand, some unpaid work may be associated with the activities of other family members, such as school or club or team activities of children as they grow older.

The household production function perspective also reminds us that variables such as a person’s wage rate can have opposing effects on volunteering. Other things being equal, high wage persons may be less likely to volunteer because of the high opportunity cost of their time. However, the “production function” aspect of the theory highlights that their high wage also means that they may be more “productive” in certain types of volunteer activity and hence may volunteer more, or be pressed into volunteer service where their skills are important (Freeman 1996).

In essence, the household production function perspective provides a theoretical framework that is useful for interpreting the empirical relationships between volunteering and characteristics of work and family. Rather than using it in advance to set out the expected relationships between volunteering and each of the explanatory variables, it will be used to interpret the empirical relationships that emerge and that will be discussed subsequently.

### ***DATA AND ECONOMETRIC PROCEDURES***

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The econometric analysis is based on Cycle 9 of the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) of 1994. That data is ideally suited for analyzing the relationship between volunteering and work and family since Cycle 9 provides information on whether people volunteered and if so, for how many

hours. It also has information on a wide range of work and working time characteristics (including union status and attitudes towards work) as well as family characteristics that can influence volunteer activity. It has measures that can capture economic concepts such as the opportunity cost of time as well as non-labour income or wealth. As well, it has measures that can reflect whether individuals have “fixed-effect” unobserved preferences that simply make them more prone to volunteer. The GSS also has a wide range of personal and demographic characteristics that can be important control variables, and that yield interesting information in their own right.

Information with respect to voluntary activity from the GSS is based on the survey question:

During the past 7 days, how many hours did you spend doing volunteer activities for a non-profit organisation, a religious organisation, a charity or a community group? (Some examples include organising a special event, advocating for a cause, canvassing or fundraising, coaching or teaching, serving on a committee or board of directors).

The measure of activity refers to *formal* activity and does not include, for example, informal activity not provided through an organization including family member care.<sup>6</sup>

In the GSS data set, the hours of volunteer activity were provided only in categories. They were converted here into continuous numbers by using the midpoint of each of the nonzero categories. That is, 1 to 4 hours was assigned 2.5 hours; 5 to 9 hours was assigned 7 hours; and 10 hours or more was assigned 15 hours. This category had the smallest number of respondents, which should make the assignment of hours in that group less consequential. Respondents in the categories “did not know” and “not stated” were omitted from the analysis.

Because of the very crude measure of the hours of volunteer activity, our empirical work focuses on estimating the probability of engaging in any volunteer activity; that is, on a binary coded dependent variable coded 1 if the person engaged in any volunteer activity, and zero if they did not. Tabulations (Appendix table 1 available on request from the authors) of the average hours of volunteer activity by the different explanatory variables yielded remarkably little variation in hours of volunteering across the different characteristics of the respondents. There was little deviation from the average hours of volunteering of 5.8 hours (e.g., 4.2 hours for employees whose spouse was ill or on maternity leave, to 6.4 hours

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6. The Statistics Canada NSGVP does include questions on informal volunteering (not part of a group or organization) for others outside their household such as shopping, driving to appointments and performing housework and home maintenance (Hall et al. 1998, 2001).

for employees in public administration). For these reasons, our empirical analysis focuses on estimates of the probability of volunteering.

As is appropriate given the binary nature of the dependent variable, logistic regression is employed. Since the logit coefficients by themselves do not directly give the change in the probability of volunteering associated with a unit change in the explanatory variable, such marginal effects are calculated, evaluated at the mean probability of volunteering.<sup>7</sup>

In most cases, the coding of the variables is straightforward and readily corresponds to the variable name as used in the tables. In some cases, however, the definition is less obvious, and sometimes imputed values had to be calculated.<sup>8</sup>

### ***THE DETERMINANTS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY***

Our discussion of the empirical results will focus on the effect of the different explanatory variables on the probability of volunteering as given in column 3 of Table 1. The magnitude of these effects should be interpreted relative to the average probability of volunteering as given by the mean value of the dependent variable of .212—that is, 21.2 percent of the respondents volunteered in the week prior to the survey week.

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7. For continuous independent variables this is simply  $dP/dx = P(1-P)b$  where  $b$  is the vector of logit coefficients,  $x$  is the vector of explanatory variables and  $P$  is the probability of volunteering, with the mean  $P$  conventionally being used. For categorical independent variables, which involve discrete changes in  $x$ , the change in probability is calculated by evaluating the probability from the logistic function with the effect of the variable included, and then subtracting the probability with the effect of the variable excluded.
8. **Hourly wage:** Annual earnings divided by annual hours worked. The annual earnings figure was provided by the respondent. Annual hours worked was calculated as the product of average hours per week times weeks worked per year, both provided by the respondent. **Other household income:** The variable household income was coded in intervals: less than \$5,000 per year, \$5,000–\$9,999, \$10,000–\$14,999 etc., with the top interval being \$100,000 plus. A continuous variable was created by using the midpoint of each interval, and \$2,000 for the bottom interval and \$120,000 for the top interval. The respondent's annual earnings was subtracted from this to get a measure of other household income (i.e., non-labour market income for the respondent). **Pineo occupational prestige index:** An index of occupational prestige, reversed here to go from a low of 1 (farm labour) to 2 (unskilled manual labour) up to 14 for high level management to 15 for employed professionals to 16 for self-employed professionals. As indicated in the GSS codebook, it “groups the 4 digit SOC codes into 16 homogenous groups.” **Treatment of unknowns:** For many variables, an “unknown” response was recorded in a small number of cases. These were given the mean value.

TABLE 1  
**Determinants of Probability of Employed Persons Volunteering**  
 (Mean probability = .212; N = 6212 respondents)

	<i>Mean<sup>a</sup></i> (1)	<i>Logit</i> <i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Change in</i> <i>Probability</i>	<i>Significance</i> <i>Level</i> (4)
	(2)	(3)		
<b>EARNINGS AND WEALTH MEASURES</b>				
Wage (\$ per hour)	14.40	-.002	-.0004	.367
Other household income (\$1000/year)	25.904	.002	.0004	.132
<b>(No interest income)</b>	.730			
Received interest income <b>(No home)</b>	.269	.286	.052**	.000
Home owner	.709	.004	.001	.967
<b>WORK/WORKTIME CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
(Regular day shift)	.731			
Evening or night shift	.079	.007	.001	.959
Rotating shift	.150	-.186	-.029*	.069
Split shift	.018	.436	.082*	.058
Other shift	.021	-.048	-.008	.829
<b>(No flextime)</b>	.659			
Flextime	.341	-.017	-.003	.830
<b>(Does not do the work at home)</b>	.808			
Does the work at home	.192	.524	.100**	.000
<b>(Not on compressed workweek)</b>	.916			
On compressed workweek	.082	.145	.025	.218
<b>(Not a union member)</b>	.636			
Union member	.364	-.083	-.014	.310
<b>(Work or hours not too demanding)</b>	.654			
Work or hours too demanding	.346	.191	.034**	.009
<b>(Not overqualified for job)</b>	.799			
Overqualified for job	.201	.025	.004	.779
<b>(No threat of job loss)</b>	.763			
Under threat of job loss	.235	.080	.014	.323
Hours worked/year (100 hrs)	18.22	.003	.001	.537
Pineo occupational prestige index (1-16)	9.09	-.033	-.006**	.011
<b>(Manufacturing industry)</b>	.127			
Primary industry	.062	.166	.029	.326
Construction industry	.053	-.072	-.012	.695
Service industry	.479	-.015	-.003	.893
Health and education	.191	.270	.049**	.046
Public administration	.084	.066	.011	.673



Table 1 (continued)

	Mean <sup>a</sup> (1)	Logit Coefficient (2)	Change in Probability (3)	Significance Level (4)
<b>FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
<b>(Single never married)</b>	.267			
Married or common law	.617	.016	.003	.936
Widowed	.023	.020	.003	.935
Separated or divorced	.093	.215	.038	.134
<b>(No children at home)</b>	.586			
Children at home	.414	.291	.053**	.001
<b>(No spouse)</b>	.399			
Spouse working, looking or at school	.455	.130	.022	.481
Spouse at home or retired	.114	-.043	-.007	.836
Spouse ill or on maternity leave	.009	-.331	-.050	.450
<b>PERSONAL/ DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS</b>				
<b>(Female)</b>	.472			
Male	.528	.287	.052**	.000
<b>(Age 15–19)</b>	.044			
Age 20–29	.204	-.710	-.095**	.001
Age 30–39	.297	-.437	-.064**	.040
Age 40–49	.233	-.350	-.053	.109
Age 50–59	.155	-.370	-.055*	.099
Age 60–69	.057	-.488	-.070*	.053
Age 70 and over	.009	-.309	-.047	.427
<b>(Non-immigrant)</b>				
Immigrant	.154	-.492	-.071**	.000
<b>(No religious attendance)</b>	.392			
Once or a few times per year	.277	.429	.080**	.000
At least once a month	.120	.717	.143**	.000
At least once a week	.191	1.458	.324**	.000
<b>(Health poor or fair)</b>	.072			
Health good	.238	.421	.079**	.008
Health very good	.371	.362	.067**	.018
Health excellent	.316	.398	.074**	.010
<b>(Less than high school)</b>	.199			
High school graduate	.185	.362	.067**	.003
Some post secondary	.126	.644	.127**	.000
Comm. college/voc. ed.	.270	.470	.089**	.000
University graduate	.220	.621	.122**	.000
<b>(Ontario)</b>	.241			
Atlantic	.190	.329	.060**	.002
Quebec	.180	-.309	-.047**	.010
Manitoba/Sask.	.134	.290	.053**	.012
Alberta	.124	.327	.060**	.005
British Columbia	.132	.509	.097**	.000
Constant	1.000	-2.715	-.453**	.000

Pseudo R-squared = .173. \*\* denotes significance at the .05 level, and \* at the .10 level. Note: <sup>a</sup> Mean values for the categorical variables give the proportion of observations in each category. They may sum to slightly less than 1 if there were missing observations in that category. Typically, this occurred in less than 1% of the cases.

### *The Effect of Earnings and Wealth Measures*

The earnings and wealth measures have the expected effects based on the household production function perspective. That is, wealthier people volunteer more as indicated by the positive coefficient on each of the measures of wealth—household income (less the respondent's own employment earnings); being in receipt of interest income; and being a home owner (although the later is statistically insignificant). The effect of being in receipt of interest income (and hence of having investments) is especially large, with such persons being about .05 more likely to volunteer—a large amount relative to the average probability of .21. In essence, volunteering appears to be a “normal good”—something we do more of if we can afford to do so. The same result also emerges in the only other comparable Canadian econometric study to include an income measure (Vaillancourt 1994).

Higher wages have no significant impact on the probability of volunteering. This likely reflects the *net* effect of income and substitution effects working in opposite directions. That is, higher wages increase volunteer activity by enabling people to afford to volunteer (income or wealth effect) but they also reduce volunteer activity by raising the opportunity cost of time spent volunteering (substitution effect). The coefficient on our wage measure is a gross wage effect, capturing both the income and substitution effects. The small negative magnitude of the net impact suggests that these income and substitution effects roughly offset each other. This highlights, however, that the pure substitution component is negative—that is, the higher opportunity cost of time leads to reduced volunteer activity.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Effect of Workplace and Working-time Characteristics*

Working time arrangements can have substantial impacts on facilitating or inhibiting volunteer activity—especially important given the changing nature of work-time arrangements often associated with dual earner families. Relative to the regular day shift, a split shift increases the probability of volunteering by .08, a substantial amount relative to the average probability of .21. Split shifts tend to be “split” between early morning and the end of the day, leaving much of the day free for volunteering. In contrast, the uncertainty associated with rotating shifts reduces the

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9. This can be seen from the fact that there is a positive wealth effect from the various measures used to capture wealth (discussed previously). If the wage and income measures were in comparable units so we could net out the income effect from the gross wage effect, the pure or income compensated substitution effect of the wage variable would be substantially more negative than the small effect from the gross wage change.

probability of volunteering. Somewhat surprisingly, flextime does not seem to facilitate volunteering, perhaps because slight variations in start and end times do not substantially free up time for volunteering.

The flexibility of carrying out your work at home does have a large impact, increasing the probability of volunteering by .10, almost half of the average probability of .21. The extra day off per week typically created by compressed workweeks (e.g., four 10-hour days) also facilitates volunteering, albeit the effect is significant only at the 0.22 level.

Somewhat surprisingly, given their collective orientation and emphasis on “voice,” union members are no more likely to volunteer than are non-union members. Perhaps the most unexpected effect is that persons who find their work or work hours too demanding are actually more likely to volunteer their time in spite of their work pressures. It is possible that volunteering serves as a safety valve for the pressures of work, or that there is reverse causality in that their time spent in volunteering is putting pressure on their work and worktime.

Perceiving oneself as overqualified for the job does not have a significant effect on volunteering as a way to better utilize one’s qualifications. If paid employment does not fully utilize one’s qualifications, it is possible that unpaid work is even more likely to be frustrating in this dimension. The threat of a job loss also does not have a significant effect on volunteering. This is likely the net effect of opposing forces: potential job losers may volunteer to establish networks; but they may also be focussing on sustaining their job.

Working long hours at one’s existing job does not significantly affect the probability of volunteering. Long hours can leave little time for volunteering, but busy people tend to be busy at everything, with these effects possibly offsetting each other.

Persons in high-status occupations tend to be less likely to volunteer even after controlling for the opportunity cost of their time. Their focus seems to be on paid employment. Persons in the “caring and nurturing” sectors of health and education tend to be much more likely to volunteer, suggesting that there are “fixed effects” or unobserved traits in individuals that induce them to enter such jobs as well as to volunteer.

### *The Effect of Family Characteristics*

There is not substantial variation in the probability of volunteering across the different marital status categories. However, persons with children living at home are substantially more likely to volunteer. This highlights that volunteering and childraising are complementary in spite of the

time pressures of childraising. Obviously, many volunteer activities are associated with the raising of children in the broader community.

The probability of an employed person volunteering did not vary substantially depending upon the labour market and other activities of that person's spouse. An employed person whose spouse was also working, or actively seeking work, or at school, did not decrease their volunteer activity. This suggests that the time crunch of the dual earner family is not an impediment to volunteering. The reciprocal or collective benefits that may come from volunteering may offset some of the domestic time pressures.

### *The Effect of Personal and Demographic Characteristics*

Somewhat surprisingly, the probability of volunteering is 0.05 greater for employed males than for females. This likely reflects the fact that wages (and hence the opportunity cost of time) are controlled for in this econometric analysis.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the volunteering here is formal volunteering for an organization, and females are more likely to do informal volunteering associated with childraising activities.

Volunteering is much higher in the youngest age group of 15–19 than in all other age groups,<sup>11</sup> reflecting the importance of resume building and productive networking in facilitating the school-to-work transition for that group. Volunteering is much lower for immigrants than for non-immigrants, in spite of the importance of networking and social capital development for immigrants.<sup>12</sup> They may engage in more informal volunteering in their own immigrant community, including remittances and activities in their

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10. In studies that are unable to control for wages (Day and Devlin 1996; Vaillancourt 1994; Wong and Henson 2000) males are less likely to volunteer or the differences are insignificant, although Devlin (2001) finds that males are more likely to volunteer. In the raw tabulations (Appendix available on request from the authors) the proportions who volunteer are very similar for males (0.215) and females (0.207).

11. This is generally not the case in the raw tabulations (Appendix Table 1, available on request from the authors) where the proportion who volunteered in every age category beyond age 29 was always in the 20 plus range compared to 17.2 percent for the 15–19 age group and even lower at 14.3 percent for the 20–29 age group. This suggests that the higher probability of volunteering for older workers found in the raw tabulations likely reflects the indirect effects of other factors (e.g., higher wealth, more children or religious involvement) that are associated with more volunteering. Once these factors are controlled for in the econometric analysis, the effect of age by itself becomes negative. This is also found in Vaillancourt (1994) and Wong and Henson (2000) albeit not in Devlin (2001).

12. This effect of immigrant status is found in other econometric studies (Day and Devlin 1996; Devlin 2001; Vaillancourt 1994).

home country, and they may be inhibited from formal volunteering for organizations because of language and cultural barriers.

There is an extremely strong positive relationship between volunteering and religious activity,<sup>13</sup> with the probability of volunteering increasing substantially for each category of greater religious activity. This suggests that there are strong “fixed effects” or traits within individuals that encourage them to engage in more socially oriented activities such as volunteering, religion or, as indicated previously, “caring” jobs such as in health and education. As well, most religions stress the importance of giving and caring for the disadvantaged.

Consistent with the household production function perspective, individuals are more likely to volunteer if they are in good or excellent health. Volunteering also increases with higher levels of education even after controlling for the effect of earnings and non-labour income that is likely also higher for persons of higher education.<sup>14</sup> Educated persons are likely more “productive” at volunteering, especially formal volunteering for organizations, and their education may have exposed them to social issues and causes that are dealt with through the social capital formation associated with volunteering.

The probability of volunteering is substantially lower in Quebec than in other provinces.<sup>15</sup> Traditionally, that province has relied heavily on state regulation to deal with social issues, and this may be a substitute for private volunteering (Vaillancourt 1994; White 2001). It may also be the case that informal volunteer activity is more prominent in Quebec—the data in this study being restricted to formal activity through an organization. As well, the Catholic church exerts a strong influence in that province. Since that effect cannot be controlled for in our statistical analysis, much of the Quebec effect may be capturing the effect of Catholicism compared to Protestantism, and the much greater tradition of volunteering in Protestant societies.<sup>16</sup> The latter likely reflects the fact that most Protestant religions were founded as volunteer organizations, they tend to be local and non-hierarchical, and they rely on social norms (Woolley 2001, 2003).

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13. This effect of religion is found in other econometric studies (Day and Devlin 1996; Devlin 2001; Vaillancourt 1994).

14. This strong effect of education is also found in other econometric studies that are not able to control for income and wages (Day and Devlin 1996; Devlin 2001; Vaillancourt 1994).

15. The lower likelihood of volunteering in Quebec or French speaking Canada is also found in other econometric studies (Day and Devlin 1996; Devlin 2001; Vaillancourt 1994) and it is documented in the simple tabulations from the Statistics Canada NSGVP surveys (Hall et al. 1998, 2001).

16. Woolley (2003) discusses the international evidence and literature.

### ***SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS***

Volunteer activity has an important productive component that can enhance the performance of various groups in the employment relationship—employees, employers and governments and organizations that are increasingly relying on volunteers. This importance is likely to grow in the future as both the demand and supply of volunteer labour is likely to increase. The demand for volunteer labour is likely to increase to fill any void created by retrenchment in government activities, such as de-institutionalization, and community-based care especially associated with an aging population with longer life expectancy, as well as the legacy of growing income inequality and reduced transfer payments. The supply of volunteer labour is likely to increase to the extent that there is greater phasing in school-to-work and work-to-retirement transitions as well as larger numbers in those groups.

In such circumstances, it is important to understand the factors that influence the decision to volunteer, and especially those factors related to work and family, given the importance of volunteer activity to work and family. Our empirical analysis highlights that the household production function perspective, which emphasizes the importance of the household as both a producing and investing unit and as a consuming unit, can shed considerable light on understanding the decision to volunteer.

People are more likely to volunteer if they can “afford” to do so, and they are less likely to volunteer if the opportunity cost of their time is high. They are also more likely to volunteer if the work and worktime characteristics of their workplace facilitate volunteering and do not pose barriers to volunteering. The fact that family members are more likely to volunteer if they have children at home, in spite of the time crunch associated with childraising, highlights the complementary nature of volunteering and the social nature of many family activities such as the raising of children. This is further supported by the fact that volunteering is not reduced by the time crunch associated with working long hours or with one’s spouse also being in the labour market or in school. Busy families seem to do more of everything, including volunteering. What did have a negative effect was unpredictable working hours. Rotating shift workers were much less likely to volunteer than workers with comparable characteristics.

The productive nature of volunteering is also highlighted by its prominence among employed young people who are at a stage in their career when networking and résumé building are important in facilitating the school-to-work transition.

While volunteering does seem responsive to the costs and benefits associated with the work and family environment, different individuals also

seem to possess specific traits that encourage them to engage in social activities such as religion, working in “caring occupations” and simply working intensively at all tasks including volunteering. Work and family matter, but so do these more innate individual traits that foster their engaging in a wide range of socially oriented activities.

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## RÉSUMÉ

### **Le bénévolat et les exigences du travail et de la famille**

Les déterminants du bénévolat sont abordés ici en accordant une attention particulière au jeu des exigences du travail et de la famille. Des variables d'ordre explicatif incluent des mesures de revenus et de richesse, des caractéristiques du travail et du temps de travail (par exemple, le travail posté, l'horaire flexible, le travail à la maison, la semaine de travail



comprimée, le statut syndical, la surqualification, la menace de perte d'emploi, la nature exigeante du travail, les heures travaillées, le prestige de l'occupation et le secteur industriel) et des caractéristiques de la famille (par exemple, l'état matrimonial, la présence ou non d'enfant, la nature du travail du conjoint, l'état de santé, la scolarité et l'appartenance religieuse).

Le cadre théorique retenu est celui d'une fonction de production propre au ménage. Il met en lumière l'importance de la prise de décision familiale en matière d'activité bénévole aussi bien que le rôle du ménage en tant qu'unité de production et de consommation. Il fait ressortir le caractère potentiellement substituable du temps et de l'argent aussi bien que l'importance du coût du temps et du revenu, et également les caractéristiques du travail et de la famille.

Ici, l'analyse économétrique est fondée sur les réponses de 6 212 répondants du Cycle 9 de l'Enquête sociale générale (ESG) du Canada de 1994. Elle présente un ensemble de données idéales dans ce type d'analyse puisqu'elle relie le bénévolat à un vaste spectre de caractéristiques propres au travail et à la famille. On a fait appel à une analyse de régression logistique, étant donné le caractère dichotomique de la variable dépendante, en lui attribuant le chiffre « un » lorsque la personne s'était adonnée à une activité bénévole formelle au cours d'une période de temps et le chiffre « zéro » lorsqu'elle ne s'y était pas adonnée.

Le bénévolat présente une composante importante et productive qui peut améliorer le rendement de divers groupes dans une relation d'emploi : les employés, les employeurs, les gouvernements et les organisations qui, de plus en plus, ont recours à des bénévoles. Cette importance est susceptible d'augmenter dans le futur parce que l'offre et également la demande de travail bénévole vont aller possiblement en s'accroissant. La demande de travail bénévole est susceptible de s'accroître pour combler un vide occasionné par le retrait de certaines activités gouvernementales, la désinstitutionnalisation et les soins fournis par la communauté, particulièrement ceux qui sont reliés à une population vieillissante dont l'espérance de vie est plus longue et qui auront à envisager l'héritage d'une inégalité croissante des revenus et de la réduction des paiements de transfert. L'offre de travail bénévole est aussi sensée s'accroître dans la mesure où s'harmonisent les phases de transition entre l'école et le travail, le travail et la retraite, où on retrouve également un nombre plus élevé d'individus au cours de ces périodes.

C'est alors qu'il devient important de comprendre les facteurs qui incitent au travail bénévole et, plus particulièrement, les facteurs associés au travail et à la famille, vu l'importance du bénévolat pour le travail et la famille. Nos travaux empiriques mettent en évidence la possibilité que

fournit la fonction de production des ménages pour permettre une meilleure compréhension de la décision d'offrir du travail bénévole.

Ainsi, les gens sont plus susceptibles de faire du bénévolat s'ils peuvent « se le permettre » et ils le sont moins si le coût de substitution de leur temps est élevé. Ils sont aussi plus susceptibles de faire du bénévolat si le travail et les horaires des lieux de travail le facilitent ou ne présentent pas d'obstacles à se faire. Le fait que des membres de la famille vont possiblement offrir du bénévolat s'ils ont des enfants à la maison, en dépit de la compression du temps reliée à l'éducation des enfants, fait ressortir la nature complémentaire du bénévolat et la nature sociale de beaucoup d'activités familiales telles que l'éducation des enfants. Ce phénomène est d'autant plus vrai qu'il est étayé par le fait que le bénévolat n'est pas diminué par la compression du temps reliée à des longues heures de travail ou par le fait que le conjoint est sur le marché du travail ou de retour aux études. Les familles occupées semblent faire plus de tout, incluant le bénévolat. Les heures de travail imprévisibles et le travail par postes ont en effet un impact négatif sur le bénévolat.

La nature productive du bénévolat est aussi mise en exergue par sa popularité auprès de jeunes travailleurs à une période de leur carrière où le réseautage et la rédaction de c.v. deviennent importants au moment de faciliter la transition de l'école au travail. Alors que le bénévolat ne semble pas réagir aux coûts et aux bénéfices associés à l'environnement du travail et de la famille, des personnes différentes semblent montrer différentes caractéristiques qui les incitent à collaborer à des activités sociales telles que la religion, le fait de travailler dans les services sociaux ou simplement de s'adonner intensivement à toutes sortes d'occupations, incluant le bénévolat. Le travail et la famille demeurent importants, mais le sont également d'autres traits naturels chez les personnes les incitant à s'engager dans un large éventail d'activités d'orientation sociale.