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An Exploratory Analysis of Long-Term Effects of Role-Model Volunteering on Young Adults

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This study explores the long-term effect of parental role-modeling of volunteer behaviors as children age into adulthood. Although previous research indicates a relationship between concurrent parental and child volunteering, there is very little work that explores the long-term effect of parental volunteering (during a child's adolescent years) on their adult children. We merged several modules of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics that allowed for significant granularity to explore this question. We found evidence that parental role-modeling during an individual's adolescent years is associated with higher rates of young adult volunteering. Our findings are intended to provide practical insight to nonprofit organizations on how to strengthen and maintain volunteer rosters.

Keywords: Intergenerational, volunteer, role-model, parent, adolescent

Introduction

Volunteers in 2021 donated roughly 4.1 billion hours to nonprofit services, which is equivalent to an economic value of $122 billion (Schneider & Marshall, 2023). The substantial size of the US volunteer workforce can present management challenges. Volunteers in recent decades are less likely to dedicate sustained annual efforts to the same organization, instead favoring shorter (and more infrequent) time periods, focusing on specific projects (such as volunteering for a mega-event), or one-time volunteering with a group at an organization (e.g., soup kitchen or thrift store (Cnaan et al., 2021)). Often termed episodic, this type of volunteering is associated with reduced availability, increased turnover, and increased costs (Compion et al., 2022; Hyde et al., 2014). This reality impacts nonprofit organizations' capacity to carry out their activities, forces continual recruitment of new volunteers, and complicates efforts to retain volunteers (Traeger & Alfes, 2019). To increase volunteer pools one strategy may be for organizations to understand how volunteers are formed (Janoski, et al, 1998).

The current body of work on volunteer management calls for additional potential sources of volunteers (Barnes & Sharpe, 2009) with a higher likelihood of continued service (Butt et al., 2017). Our work contributes to the existing volunteer management scholarship in this vein. We ask whether young adults are more likely to volunteer if their parents role-modeled volunteer behaviors during their formative adolescent years. Thus, the young adult children of parent

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volunteers may present a potential volunteer source for nonprofit organizations. We further ask if young adults are more likely to volunteer if they previously volunteered during their adolescent years. If adolescent volunteering predicts young adult volunteering, then nonprofits may nurture more efficient volunteer workforces with higher likelihood of continued service by focusing efforts on individuals with early volunteer experiences.

Previous Research and Hypotheses

Effect of role-modeling on volunteering

Several theories describe the role of family socialization, status transfer, and household conditioning in the efforts to increase youth volunteering. Socialization is the process by which children learn values, socio-emotional skills, and cognitive skills (Bandera, 1986; Grusec & Davidov, 2010; White, 2021). While there are multiple socialization sources in young people's lives, the most important of these are the social interactions with primary caregivers (Padilla-Walker, 2014). Socialization theory provides a potential explanation for how young people develop prosocial behaviors, which, for the purposes of this study are defined as voluntary behaviors intended to benefit others.

A considerable amount of research supports this assertion. Wuthnow (1995) notes that the ethic of caring begins in the family setting. Parental socialization is associated with prosocial attitudes and behaviors that have a significant impact on engaging volunteers (Bekkers, 2007; Brown & Lichter, 2006; Janoski, et al., 1998; Keeter et al., 2002; Schmid et al., 2024; White, 2021; Wilson, 2000). Further, prosocial behaviors that are nurtured during childhood and young adult stages can have long-lasting impacts into adulthood (Smith, 1974; Waugh et al., 2015). Parents that model prosocial behavior demonstrate the importance of service and the impact of volunteering (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Janoski et al., 1998; Mustillo et al., 2004; Weiss, 2012; Yates & Youniss, 1996). Children learn to identify needs around them and recognize their ability to serve.

Several studies suggest that volunteering habits are also passed down from parents to children (Eisenberg et al., 2009; Janoski et al., 1998; Mustillo et al., 2004; Schmid et al., 2024; Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994). While this knowledge base in an important first step in establishing whether parental volunteering establishes a "legacy" effect in their families, certain design choices, such as relying on long-term participant recall (Janoski et al, 1998; Sundeen & Raskoff, 1994; Schmid et al., 2024) and nonrepresentative samples (Bekker, 2007; Mustillo et al., 2004; White, 2021) prevent further characterization of the parental role-modeling effect on young adults' volunteering. Establishing an intergenerational effect is challenging given the many possible influences affecting volunteering decisions throughout the life course. Yet, a primary aim of this research is to test whether we observe a positive association between parent and young adult children volunteerism when using a much shorter participant recall period, actual behaviors, and nationally representative data. Therefore, the first hypothesis is: *Parent role-modeling has a significant effect on volunteering as children age into adulthood.*

As an extension of this hypothesis, we explore the role of organization type on the likelihood of a young adult volunteering. Research on religious organization volunteering shows that most often volunteers are shaped from the needs or requirements of their nonsecular communities (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Jackson et al., 1995; Park & Smith, 2000; Vermeer & Scheepers, 2012; Wuthnow, 1990, 1991). Yet, scholarship has not yet characterized whether other types of organizations (e.g., those serving youth, those assisting marginalized populations, health-serving)

also elicit long-standing dedication. Drawing from this, our second hypothesis is: *Young adults are more likely to volunteer in the same type of organization their parents volunteered.*
Socioeconomic influences on volunteering behavior

Over the last 30 years, the tenants of dominant status theory match the strategies that organizations use to identify volunteers (Selbee, 2001; Smith, 1994). Dominant status theory suggests that volunteers are recruited with their social status in mind because individuals with higher socioeconomic status (SES) are most likely to volunteer (Brown & Lichter, 2006; Hustinx et al., 2022; Mustillo et al., 2004; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Higher SES typically allows for more discretionary time to participate in volunteering (Caro & Bass, 1995; Fisher et al., 1991; Fisher & Schaffer, 1993; Herzog & Morgan, 1993; Musick et al., 1999; Selbee, 2001). Education level similarly indicates volunteer willingness (Brown & Lichter, 2006; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Hustinx et al., 2022; McPherson & Rotolo, 1996; Schmid et al., 2024; Smith, 1994; Wilson, 2000) and is often the most consistent predictor of volunteering (Smith, 1994). Smith (1994) provides a thorough variable review in support of dominant status theory and suggests that variables like education, SES, marital status, and to a lesser extent, gender predict both organizations' requests for volunteers as well as people feeling able to contribute their time and talents.

Bourdieu's (1977) Habitus and Cultural Capital theory suggests persistent social and economic intergenerational transfers from parents to children. For example, parents with more formalized education pass on opportunities and values that result in their children acquiring more education and higher-status positions. Volunteering, as a field-specific form of capital, is also likely transmitted from parent to child (Dean, 2016; Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2010). The transmission of not only the prosocial values but various forms of capital from parents to children suggest that youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds will grow into community members with the capacity, desire, and knowledge to volunteer (Mustillo et al., 2004; Smith, 1994; Weiss, 2012).

The theoretical review of dominant status suggests that individuals pursue volunteering decisions when socioeconomic status, such as education, income, and assets or wealth allow them to do so (Hustinx, et al., 2022; Mustillo et al., 2004; Schmid et al., 2024; Smith, 1994; Weiss, 2012; Wilson & Musick, 1997) and that those SES characteristics are passed down to future generations.

We test the dominant status theory among our sample using our third hypothesis: *The persistence to volunteer in adulthood is stronger for individuals raised in higher income households.*

Method

Data

Our goal is to estimate Parental Role Modeling of Volunteering's (PRMV) association with young adult volunteering. This life-course perspective requires data that follows individuals from childhood into young adulthood. We use data from several different modules of the long-running Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) that provide key volunteering information at different points in the life course. The full PSID family file provides information on the respondents' childhood circumstances, including parents' income, marital status, parental education levels, and volunteering behaviors; the Child Development Supplement (CDS) supplies data on respondents' adolescent volunteering behavior (ages 10-12); parental volunteering during the respondents' adolescence (ages 10-12) comes from the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS); and the Transition into Adulthood (TA) provides data on the young adults' volunteering behavior and their income.

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics

The PSID is the longest-running panel survey in the US. It contains detailed data on the circumstances affecting US families, including employment, income, health, childbearing, education, and other conditions. These data were collected on an annual basis from a representative sample of nearly 3,000 families and their children beginning in 1968 and have been collected biennially since 1997 (PSID; http:// psidonline.isr.umich.edu).

Center on Philanthropy Panel Study

The PPS, a PSID module, is the longest-running panel study on charitable giving, volunteering behaviors, and religious attendance in the United States. The first wave of PPS data was collected in 2001 from a sample of 14,849 households (Ottoni-Wilhelm, 2007) with subsequent waves collected biennially. Of particular interest to this study, the 2003 and 2005 PPS waves ask household heads (or the "spouse") if they volunteered during the previous year, and if so, to indicate the approximate hours and organizational type in which they completed their volunteer activities (Nesbit, 2010). We created parental volunteering measures using the information collected from these questions.

The Child Development Supplement

To better understand child development outcomes, the PSID began collecting data for respondents' children in 1997 with the Child Development Supplement (CDS) (CDS-III, 2012). The first CDS wave provides information on 3,563 children, ages 0-12, with additional waves of CDS collected in 2002-2003 and 2007-2008. Importantly, children who were at least 10 years old in the second (2002/2003) were asked about their volunteering activities. These data were collected in roughly the same period as the parents' volunteering behavior, so they allow us to study the concurrent effects of parental volunteering behavior on adolescent volunteering behavior.

The Transition into Adulthood Supplement

The CDS and PSID collect extensive information on their main respondents. However, when a child turned 18, they were no longer part of the CDS. They returned to the PSID family survey, where the primary focus is on the household heads and their spouses. There would be little information gathered on these children as they transitioned into their adult years. The TA supplement remedied the potential information gap and was first collected in 2005, with additional waves collected biennially.

The TA survey provides the information for our dependent variable, which measures the volunteering activities of young adults from ages 18 until roughly their late- twenties. These data allow us to study the lingering effects of parental volunteering behavior (when the respondents were children) on young adult respondents' volunteering behavior.

Analytic Sample

The full analytic sample is comprised of TA participants (ages 19-36 in any of the TA waves) who have complete information on adolescent volunteering, parental volunteering, socioeconomic circumstances during childhood, and young adult volunteering. Our fully merged, pooled cross-

sectional dataset (PSID, PPS, CDS and TA) contains 5,095 respondents. Seventy-six percent had complete information, for a total of 3,894 observations in the analytic sample.
We conducted two-sample t-tests for mean differences to understand the ways in which the respondents in our analytical sample differed from those with incomplete information. Our analytical sample has slight, albeit statistically significant, differences when compared to the full sample. Our sample seems to be slightly more privileged in terms of income (both in childhood and young adulthood) and has more educated parents. It has a slightly higher representation of European American and Latin/x respondents. While the selection bias is substantively small, these differences lean toward dominant status characteristics. We urge cautious interpretation of these results, as this sample may slightly overestimate parental role-modeling's influence on young adult volunteering.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Following the work of Son and Wilson (2012) and Morrow-Howell et al. (2003) we measure young adult volunteering using a count variable equal to the number of years the respondent volunteered during their participation in the TA survey. The count variable captures a "dosage" effect where exposure to more/less volunteering early in life is associated with more/less volunteering in early adulthood. This modeling choice helps distinguish consistent, annual volunteer work (such as belonging to a group) from one-time volunteering. However, as Son and Wilson (2012) note, a binary volunteering variable captures a different aspect whereby young adults volunteer because their parent identified as a volunteer (regardless of regularity). We employed both modeling strategies and the results are largely consistent across both. We present results using the count dependent variable in this work.

Some models use dependent variables to count the number of years in which the respondent volunteered in a specific type of organization (organizations for children and youth, health organizations/hospitals, religious groups, and other organizations).

Independent Variables

The primary independent variable of interest is a count variable measuring the number of years the parent(s) volunteered during the respondents' childhood. The 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2008 PPS surveys ask whether the head of household or wife/spouse did any volunteer work through organizations totaling 10 or more hours. The "Family Unit" is the PPS's unit of analysis, which is defined in two ways: (a) a legally married or cohabitating couple, plus the people living together in the same household as a family (e.g., related by blood, marriage, or romantic relationship and economically interdependent), or (b) a single person, plus the people living together in the same household as a family.

Some models identify the type of organization where the parent(s) volunteered during the young adult's childhood. Four of the organization types overlapped with the TA organization types asked of the young adults – organizations for children and youth, religious groups, health organizations/hospitals, and other organizations. We created count variables that measure the number of years in which the respondent volunteered in that specific type of organization.

We control for home environment and dominant status characteristics using three variables. First, we created a measure of permanent household income using the PSID's annual total family

income (pre-tax) for each of the years in which the child was 0-18 years old and adjusted to constant 2013 dollars. Then, we create an average annual income level variable across childhood for each young adult respondent. We used the permanent income measure instead of annual income because it is a better approximation of families' long-term consumption habits and has substantially less measurement error in population surveys (Friedman, 1957; Modigliani & Brumberg, 1954).

The second home environment control accounts for the parents' marital status. The measure is equal to 1 if the parents were married or permanently cohabitating for the majority of the young adult's childhood years, and equal to 0 if the respondent resided in a single-parent household in the majority of their childhood years. Finally, we control for the respondents' parental education level using the highest reported years of education for either parent.

We also control for the young adult respondents' current financial circumstances and socio-demographic characteristics. The TA survey collects information on the respondents' young adult annual taxable income and cash transfers. We use the same methodology as described above by calculating observed young adult income in constant dollars and then creating an average annual income level variable. All models also include the respondents' own number of dependent children, sex and racial/ethnic identity, which we drew from TA data.

Finally, some models control for respondents' volunteering behavior during adolescence. If a child was 10-12 years old in 2002, the CDS asks, "Were you involved in any volunteer service activities or service clubs in the last 12 months?" The adolescent volunteering variable is equal to 1 if the respondent volunteered in at least one of the observable years; 0, otherwise.

Empirical Approach

Parental volunteering is associated with children's volunteering (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2014). Our goal is to understand whether PRMV continues to be associated with respondents' volunteering behavior into young adulthood. Using pooled cross-sectional data, we estimate young adult volunteering behavior *(YAV)* for individual *i* using the following equation:

(1) $YAV_i = \beta_0 + \gamma PRMV_i + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 AV_{2i} + e_i$

PRMV, is a count variable indicating the number of years the parent(s) *i* volunteered during the young adult's adolescence (provided by 2003 and 2005 PPS waves). The estimated parameter on γ captures our relationship of interest. In all estimates the X_1-vector controls for demographics (race/ethnicity and gender), childhood home environment (average permanent household income, whether the young adult's parent(s) were married in most of their childhood, and the highest level of education completed by either parent), and circumstances in young adulthood that could impact volunteering behavior (average permanent young adult income and number of children) (provided by available PSID full family waves from 1990 through 2010). In some models, we include the X_2-vector, which introduces the adolescent volunteering variable (AV) and controls for the young adult's previous volunteering behavior (provided by the 2003 CDS).

Our analytical models use count data as outcomes (e.g., the number of years the young adult volunteered in the observable TA years). Negative binomial regression appropriately estimates count variables with non-negative integers. We employ this modeling strategy and report incidence rate ratios (IRRs). IRR interpretations are intuitive and illustrate the percent change in the incidence rate of the outcome variable for every one-unit increase in the independent variable. We interpret γ as the percent change in young adult volunteering behavior for every one-year increase in PRMV.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

As a first step in understanding whether PRMV has a lasting correlation with young adult volunteering, we look at the observable differences in our sample. Table 1 provides means and standard deviations for the full analytical sample (results presented in column 2); the subsample of young adult respondents whose parent(s) volunteered when the respondent was a child (results presented in column 3); and the subsample of young adult respondents whose parent(s) did NOT volunteer during their childhood (results presented in column 4). Column five provides t-test results indicating whether the two-subsample means are statistically different.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and comparisons describing young adult respondents' volunteerism (ages 18+), their parents' volunteerism during their childhood (ages 0-18), and important socio-demographics.

	Full Analytical Sample	Subsample: Parents Volunteered during Respondents' Childhood	Subsample: Parents Did Not Volunteer during Respondents' Childhood	Subsample Differences (t-tests for mean differences)
Dependent Variable				
# Yrs YA Volunteered (ages 18+)	1.39	1.84	0.64	***
	(1.29)	(1.30)	(0.96)	
Independent Variable				
# Yrs Parents volunteered (0-18)[a]	0.91	2.85	---	
	(1.15)	(0.82)		
Socio-demographic Controls				
YA Earnings in $000s (18+)	6.57	8.05	5.52	***
	(10.12)	(11.80)	(8.59)	
Avg. family income (0-18)	61.48	86.31	44.01	***
	(52.59)	(63.44)	(33.80)	
Latin/x[a]	9.60%	6.47%	11.81%	***
	(29.47)	(24.60)	(32.28)	
African American[a]	31.28%	21.77%	37.97%	***
	(46.37)	(41.28)	(48.54)	
European American[a]	43.50%	62.25%	30.31%	***
	(49.58)	(48.49)	(45.97)	
Other racial/ethnic identity[a]	17.05%	11.01%	21.30%	***
	(37.61)	(31.31)	(40.95)	
Female[a]	50.72%	48.45%	52.32%	**
	(50.00)	(50.00)	(49.96)	
Parents married (0-18)[a]	64.59%	80.91%	53.11%	***
	(47.83)	(39.31)	(49.91)	
Parental education (Yrs.)	13.76	14.95	12.92	***
	(2.65)	(2.30)	(2.56)	
YA number of children	0.68	0.42	0.86	***
	(1.25)	(1.00)	(1.37)	
Number of Observations	3,894	1,608	2,286	

Note: [a] Indicator variable

Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

Column 2 indicates that young adults in the full sample volunteered for about 1.39 years (out of a maximum of six years). Their parents volunteered for 0.91 years, on average (out of a maximum of two years). Families overall had an average income of about $61,480, nearly 65% of families were married or permanently cohabiting during the respondents' childhood, and parents obtained, on average, nearly 14 years of education. The sample is racially diverse – 31% of respondents identify as Black or African American, 43.5% as white or European American, nearly 10& as Latin/x, and 17% as another racial category or ethnic identity. Finally, respondents are responsible for caretaking for 0.68 children, on average.

Clear differences emerge when we split young adults by parental volunteerism. Young adult respondents exposed to PRMV volunteered for 1.84 years, while those who were not exposed to PRMV volunteered for only 0.64 years. Unsurprisingly, the group exposed to PRMV had higher permanent family income ($86K vs. $44K), is more likely to be European American (62% European American vs. 30%), parents are more highly educated (14.95 vs. 12.92 years) and were more likely to grow up in a two-parent household (81% vs. 53%). All these differences are statistically significant.

Table 2 provides correlations for all possible pairs of analytical variables. There is a 0.32 correlation between young adult volunteerism and PRMV, indicating a small to moderate (and statistically significant) correlation for this study's primary correlation of interest. The correlations range from a low of 0.001 to a high of -0.592. Since all correlation coefficients are smaller than 0.7 (and confirmed with variance inflation factors smaller than 2), multicollinearity is not a concern (Wooldridge, 2015).

Table 2. Correlations between respondents' volunteerism during young adulthood (ages 18+), parental role-modeling (ages 0-18), and important socio-demographics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. # Yrs. YA Vol.[a]	1.00											
2. # Yrs. Parents Vol.[a]	0.32*	1.00										
3. YA Earnings (18+)	0.11*	0.15*	1.00									
4. Perm income (0-18)	0.23*	0.43*	0.16*	1.00								
5. Latin/x[a]	0.03*	-0.10*	0.03	-0.12*	1.00							
6. African American[a]	-0.04*	-0.19*	-0.07*	-0.25*	-0.14*	1.00						
7. Euro. American[a]	0.12*	0.36*	0.10*	0.44*	-0.29*	-0.59*	1.00					
8. Other racial/ethnic[a]	-0.12*	-0.16*	-0.06*	-0.20*	-0.12*	-0.31*	-0.39*	1.00				
9. Female[a]	0.05*	-0.05*	-0.07*	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	0.01	1.00			
10. Parents married[a]	0.15*	0.31*	0.10*	0.40*	0.07*	-0.33*	0.41*	-0.21*	-0.01	1.00		
11. Parent Yrs. Ed.	0.24*	0.42*	0.09*	0.42*	-0.17*	-0.11*	0.28*	-0.09*	-0.01	0.21*	1.00	
12. YA # Children	-0.13*	-0.19*	-0.06*	-0.228	0.00	0.20*	-0.17*	-0.01	0.07*	-0.16*	-0.17*	1.00

Note: *p<0.05

Regression Results – Effects of PRMV on Young Adult Volunteering

Table 3 lists the results of the negative binomial regression models, which support our hypothesis that PRMV is associated with an increased likelihood that a young adult will volunteer. The results indicate that each additional year of PRMV is associated with an increased likelihood of young adult volunteering by 21.5 percentage points.[i] Permanent family income and permanent young adult income both indicate positive and statistically significant correlations, such that higher income is associated with higher young adult volunteering. This is consistent with our expectations and in alignment with dominant status trait theory. The largest IRR is associated with identifying as Latin/x. Compared to European Americans, each year of PRMV is associated with an increased likelihood of Latin/x young adults volunteering by 45.8 percentage points. The IRRs for identifying as African American and Female are also substantively large – compared to European Americans, each year of PRMV is associated with an increase in African American young adult volunteering by 18.9 percentage points (for females, 22.1 percentage points). Parental education has a smaller association with young adult volunteering, although it is still a positive and statistically significant (6.7 percentage points). While education levels are often the largest and most consistent predictors of volunteering (Smith, 1994; Mustillo et al., 2004), the substantive size of the education effect is typically smaller in models that control for permanent income, rather than annual income (Fryer & Levitt, 2006). Parental marriage/permanent cohabitation is not statistically significant. The only two variables indicating a negative association with young adult volunteering are identifying as another race/ethnicity (-13.4 percentage points) and having children (-7.9 percentage points.)

Isolating Effects of Parents and Previous Volunteering Behavior

The findings described above provide additional insight on the potential relationship between PRMV and a young adult's likelihood of volunteering. Previous research indicates that adolescents whose parents volunteer will themselves volunteer at higher rates than their peers (Ottoni-Wilhelm et al., 2014). An exploratory research extension in light of these two findings is to identify whether PRMV and the young adults' previous volunteer behavior are independently associated with young adult volunteering.

First, we predict adolescent volunteering behavior using PRMV as the primary variable of interest and our standard set of control variables. This is essentially a replication of the Ottoni-Wilhelm et al. (2014) results and necessary to establish a base association between adolescent volunteering and PRMV. Table 4 lists the IRRs of PRMV on adolescents' volunteering behavior.

The association of PRMV with concurrent adolescent volunteering is positive and statistically significant, thus confirming the relationship described in Ottoni-Wilhelm et al. (2014). However, the IRR for PRMV is substantially smaller than the long-term effect of PRMV on young adult volunteering (listed in Table 3).

Next, we estimate additional models predicting young adult volunteerism using the following as predictors in separate models: (1) PRMV; (2) childhood/adolescent volunteering behavior; and (3) adolescent/childhood volunteering behavior AND PRMV, along with the standard set of controls. Taken as a whole, these three models provide evidence for whether PRMV and respondents' previous volunteering coefficients have independent associations with young adult volunteering behavior. Table 5 lists selected IRRs of three regression models.

Table 3. Effects of PRMV on Young Adult Volunteering: IRRs (Standard Errors in Parenthesis.)

Independent Variable	
# Yrs. Parents volunteered (0-18)	1.215***
	(0.019)
Socio-demographic Controls	
YA Earnings in $000s (18+)	1.006***
	(0.002)
Avg. yr. family income (0-18)	1.001***
	(0.000)
Latin/x[a, b]	1.458***
	(0.096)
African American[a, b]	1.189***
	(0.060)
Other race/ethnicity[a,b]	0.866**
	(0.057)
Female[a]	1.221***
	(0.047)
Parents married (0-18)[a, c]	1.059
	(0.053)
Parental education (yrs)	1.067***
	(0.010)
YA number of children	0.921***
	(0.018)
Number of Observations	3,870

Note: [a] Indicator variable; [b] European American is comparison category; [c] Single/Divorced/Widowed is comparison category
Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

The results in table 5, Model 2 show that a respondent's previous volunteering (e.g. adolescent volunteering) has a large, meaningful, and statistically significant association with young adult volunteering. The magnitude of the IRR is much larger than that of PRMV. For instance, in the overall sample, those who volunteered during adolescence are 69.3 percentage points more likely to volunteer in young adulthood. This is over three times the magnitude of the PRMV coefficient (21.5 percentage points) in Model 1.

Finally, Model 3 shows that both PRMV and previous adolescent volunteering remain positive and statistically significant when the model includes both factors, indicating that each has a unique association with young adult volunteering. Their effects are attenuated slightly from Models 1 and 2, respectively, but maintain their substantive importance. In the overall sample, each year of PRMV is associated with an increased likelihood of young adult volunteering by 19.2 percentage points and those who volunteered in adolescence are 56.9 percentage points more likely to volunteer in young adulthood.

A Wald test of the point estimates indicates that the PRMV and adolescent volunteering coefficients are statistically different. This provides additional evidence that a respondent's previous volunteering behavior is a strong predictor of their future volunteering behavior, even though PRMV is an important predictor, itself.

Table 4. Effects of Concurrent Parental Volunteering on Adolescent Volunteering

# Yrs. Parents volunteered (0-18)	1.158***
	(0.031)
Socio-demographic Controls	
Avg. yr. family income (0-18)	1.000
	(0.001)
Latin/x[a, b]	0.991
	(0.108)
African American[a, b]	1.088
	(0.089)
Other race/ethnicity[a,b]	1.241
	(0.214)
Female[a]	1.338***
	(0.088)
Parents married (0-18)[a, c]	0.996
	(0.084)
Parental education (yrs)	1.028*
	(0.015)
Number of Observations	2,424

Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10; IRRs (Standard Errors in Parenthesis.)

Table 5. Comparing effects of prior volunteering behavior and parental role-modeling.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Parents volunteered (when respondent aged 0-18)[a]	1.215*** (0.019		1.192*** (0.022)
Respondent volunteered (ages 10-12) [a]		1.693*** (0.084)	1.569*** (0.077)
Wald test of Equality of Coefficients			24.48***
Number of Observations	2,424	2,424	2,424

Note: [a] Indicator variable

Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

The Influence of Organization Type on Young Adult Volunteering

The final questions we explore, ask whether the type of organization in which the parent volunteered (youth serving, health, religious, serving the economically disadvantaged, or social change) is associated with: (1) the young adult volunteering behavior, overall; and (2) the type of organization in which the respondent eventually volunteers, specifically. This exploratory extension can add to the research base because much of the literature focuses on religious organizations only (Caputo, 2009; Johnston, 2013; Kim & Dew, 2019; Lim & MacGregor, 2012).

The merged PSID dataset allows us to explore these questions. The PPS module in 2003 and 2005 asked heads of household and spouses to report their annual volunteer hours at different types of organizations – religious, youth-serving, senior-serving, health/hospitals, serving people in need, organizations that bring about social change, and any other types of organizations.

The TA survey asked a similar set of questions to young adult respondents in each survey wave. Four organizational types overlap in the two surveys – youth-serving (such as schools and community youth programs), hospital/health, religious, and organizations that assist people in need (shelters, soup kitchens, and Habitat for Humanity.) We explore the effects of organization type in two ways. In the first model we use our previous young adult volunteering outcome variable, which measures the years the young adult volunteered in any organization and use all six of the PRMV organization-specific count variables predictors (see table 6). In the second through fifth models, we look at the organizational match between the young adult volunteering and the parental volunteering. For instance, we explore whether parental volunteering at a youth-serving organization predicts young adult volunteering at a youth-serving organization.

Table 6 lists the results from the organizational match analysis. The results in column A indicate that parental volunteering at youth-serving and religious organizations have positive and statistically significant associations with young adult volunteering, in general. Each additional year of PRMV at youth serving organizations is associated with a 14.6 percentage point increase in the likelihood that the young adult respondent will volunteer. The corresponding IRR for religious organization match is 13.3 percentage points. None of the IRRs for the other parental organizational types (health/hospitals, serving people in need, organizations that bring about social change, and any other types of organizations) are statistically significant.

While Column A indicates that PRMV at Youth-Serving and Religious organizations may predict adult volunteering at any organization, Columns B-E demonstrate that only PRMV in youth-serving organizations is associated with young adult volunteering in the same type of organization. The IRR is substantively large (40.5 percentage points) and statistically significant.

This indicates that only youth-serving organizations have an intergenerational volunteering effect. Research consistently identifies strong volunteer roles among religious organizations, so this finding is somewhat surprising. However, younger Americans hold fewer religious affiliations than previous generations and as of 2019, nearly 17% of teenagers do not hold the same religious affiliation as their mothers (Kramer et al., 2022).

Table 6. Marginal effects of organization type.

	Dependent Variable: Young Adult Volunteered at [type of Organization]				
	A. Any	B. Youth-Serving	C. Hospital or Health	D. Religious	E. People in Need
<u>Parental Volunteering</u>					
Youth-Serving Organization	1.146***	1.405***	---	---	---
	(0.041)	(0.129)			
Hospital/Health Org.	1.091	---	0.975	---	---
	(0.069)		(0.264)		
Religious Organization	1.133***	---	---	1.171	---
	(0.038)			(0.184)	
Org. for People in Need	0.938	---	---	---	1.068
	(0.062)				(0.198)
Org. for Social Change	0.907	---	---	---	---
	(0.077)				
Other Organization	1.005	---	---	---	---
	(0.070)				
<u>Socio-demographic Controls</u>					
Respondent volunteered	1.619***	1.315**	1.559	1.600*	1.424**
(ages 10-12) [a]	(0.081)	(0.174)	(0.467)	(0.430)	(0.251)
YA Earnings in $000s (18+)	1.014***	1.025***	1.031	1.026	1.030***
	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.011)
Avg. yr. family income (0-18)	1.001**	1.001	0.997	1.026	0.999
Latin/x[a, b]	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.017)	(0.003)
	1.270***	2.347***	2.723***	2.676***	2.445***
African American[a, b]	(0.092)	(0.419)	(1.045)	(0.890)	(0.573)
	1.010	0.865	0.566	0.596*	0.701*
Other race/ethnicity[a,b]	(0.059)	(0.141)	(0.203)	(0.183)	(0.149)
	1.162	0.904	0.526	0.477	0.563
Female[a]	(0.143)	(0.301)	(0.370)	(0.290)	(0.251)
	1.216***	1.041	0.712	0.637**	0.868
Parents married (0-18)[a,c]	(0.057)	(0.125)	(0.189)	(0.143)	(0.139)
	1.069	0.968	1.199	1.555	1.020
Parental education (yrs)	(0.065)	(0.173)	(0.505)	(0.560)	(0.243)
	1.068***	1.164***	1.271***	1.287***	1.235***
YA number of children	(0.012)	(0.032)	(0.069)	(0.065)	(0.046)
	0.934***	0.996	0.978	0.978	1.003
	(0.021)	(0.054)	(0.133)	(0.122)	(0.070)
Number of Observations	2,424	2,424	2,424	2,424	2,424

Note: [a] Indicator variable; [b] European American is comparison category; [c] Single/Divorced/Widowed is comparison category; Models run using the full analytical sample.

Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

Discussion and Implications

This paper provides an exploratory analysis of the association between parental role-modeling of volunteerism with the volunteering behavior of their young adult children. The questions posed in this study are motivated by socialization theory, which suggests the importance of parents in developing their children's prosocial behaviors. We began the exploration by asking, "Do young adults who grew up in households where their parents' volunteered, volunteer more themselves?".

We found evidence for the theory. Specifically, parental role-modeling during an individual's adolescent years is associated with higher rates of young adult volunteering. It may be that the parental role modeling influence persists into young adulthood, such that young adults whose parents volunteered exhibit higher rates of volunteering themselves. In our preferred specification that controls also for respondents' previous volunteering, for each additional year that the parents volunteered, young adults were 19.2 percentage points more likely to volunteer.

We also find support for dominant status theory, which motivated our third hypothesis. The results suggest that individuals with more socioeconomic privilege volunteer at higher rates than those from lower privilege. Permanent family income, permanent young adult income, and parental education levels all have positive and statistically significant associations with young adult volunteering. Simple demands on time provide a plausible mechanism through which the dominant status theory may be operating (although this work did not test such a mechanism). Individuals with lower incomes (which is often correlated with lower education levels) must often rely on second (or third jobs) to make ends meet thus decreasing their opportunity to volunteer. Dean (2016) similarly found support for Bourdieu's Habitus and Cultural Capital theory. These qualitative results suggest that recruiting structures focus on upper-class volunteers, schools, and communities, which explains the lack of diversity in volunteer recruitment.

While these theories help understand volunteer recruitment behaviors, it begs the question, should volunteer-reliant organizations use these dominant status variables to select "good" volunteers for recruiting? There is a high need for volunteers and discarding many community members from recruiting efforts does a disservice to the organization as well as the community causes that require numerous and representative volunteers. Future work should parse out dominant status and cultural transmission theories to build models of volunteer recruitment and retention that encourage diversity and equity in volunteer pools.

This study also explores whether PRMV and young adults' previous volunteering behavior (during adolescence) are independently associated with young adult volunteering. As expected, respondents' previous volunteering behavior is positively associated with young adult volunteering and the IRR for adolescent volunteering is large (an adolescent that volunteers may be 56.9% more likely to volunteer as an adult). Perhaps more surprising is that the two factors exhibit statistically significant associations with young adult volunteering. This suggests two possible pathways to encourage and replicate volunteering behavior – through the adolescent volunteers, themselves, and through their parents. Understanding this as a recruitment outlet is vital for organizations seeking volunteers. Given that only 23% of Americans volunteer (Schneider & Marshall, 2023), it is possible that many potential volunteers are not being considered, simply due to their predetermined variables, per dominant status theory. Some caution should be urged when interpreting these results, however, because parental influence is likely to be exerted in adolescent volunteering decisions. For example, adolescents will need parental permission to volunteer, and parents often transport their adolescent children to/from the site. In other words, adolescent volunteering may be another form of PRMV.

The richness of the PPS data and the PSID's long panel enable us to explore whether the type of volunteering persists from childhood into young adulthood. The results suggest that parental volunteering at youth-serving and religious organizations may be replicated by their young adult children. Parental volunteering at these types of organizations is associated with a higher likelihood of young adult children volunteering at any organization. Further, young adults whose parents volunteered at youth-serving organizations may be more likely to volunteer at youth-serving organizations themselves. None of the other organizational types seem to have this volunteering effect that persists into adulthood. This suggests that youth-serving organizations may be especially effective at cultivating commitment, meaning, or a sense of identity/community among their volunteers.

This study contributes to the literature on role-modeling and volunteerism by providing evidence that, not only does contemporaneous parental role-modeling affect adolescent volunteering, but that the childhood exposure to volunteering may be associated with prosocial development that persists into young adulthood. Previously, persistence was only assumed.

This work's limitations warrant discussion, however. This descriptive study does not provide conclusive evidence that parental role-modeling is causally related to young adult volunteering. The primary concern is that SES often explains volunteering behavior. While we carefully controlled for family advantages in a longitudinal manner, there are undoubtedly observed and unobserved omitted factors in these models (e.g., measures of debt or wealth), limiting our ability to speak causally about the role of parental role-modeling on young adult volunteering.

Related, while the modeling strategy incorporates variables that measure individual and family privilege (e.g., income), it does not account for broader structural (dis)advantage that may affect volunteerism (e.g., neighborhood or school district characteristics). Schools and communities facing economic hardship are less likely to encourage volunteering because of greater stressors placed on individuals' and families' time and resources (CNCS, 2010). Additional barriers may also exist in disadvantaged neighborhoods, such as fewer opportunities to formally participate in voluntary associations (Wilson, 2012). The literature could be strengthened by additional studies designed to identify the causal relationship between parental role-modeling and young adult volunteering. Doing so would answer the question definitively whether the parental effect is simply due to economic/social advantage (as dominant status theory might suggest), or to the exposure, itself.

Lastly, it is possible that volunteering goes under-reported in these data. However, this imprecision leads to a more conservative estimate of the parental role-modeling effect. Regardless, care should be taken when interpreting these results.

Conclusion

This research suggests two important and independent influences on young adults' decision to volunteer – their own early volunteering experiences and parents modeling volunteering behaviors during childhood. Since these early influences persist into adulthood, organizations may be well-served by engaging families with younger children and maintaining those social connections over time - ideally, honing the socialization-mindset to cultivate young adults who could be volunteers.

Future work may focus on the social inequalities that plague our communities and how those with less may be proportionately less able to engage in volunteering. Additionally, future research

should identify best practices of volunteer retention and commitment by both youth-serving and religious organizations. We extrapolate that these types of organizations may be especially effective at developing relationships and/or demonstrating meaning in their work that persists with their volunteers through a generation. Much of the volunteer research identifies this relationship in religious organizations. Our study findings indicate that youth-serving organizations may be worthy of this attention, as well.

These research findings have both practical applications for the sector and implications that future research may address. First, volunteers are foundational to nonprofit organizations' ability to provide needed services and innovate within organizations (Shin & Kleiner, 2003). Despite their importance, securing a consistent, reliable, and qualified roster of volunteers remains elusive for many organizations. Organizations seeking volunteers often look to outward social status and human capital qualifications to determine capacity to serve (Tang, 2008; Wilson & Musick, 2003). As Dominant Status Theory supports, the more resources attached to a person the more attractive they are to the organization. Thus, we see income and social networks as key recruiting variables that organizations tend to fall back on (Coleman, 1994; Smith, 1994; Wilson & Musick, 1997). This is a practical approach to volunteer recruitment. However, according to this study, the nonprofit sector may be missing a key recruitment tool by limiting the volunteer outreach to SES related indicators. Through this research we suggest organizations seek out opportunities to develop youth-focused or family-centered volunteering initiatives; providing moments for parents to role-model vital prosocial behaviors designed to build a pipeline of next generation volunteers.

Notes

[i] The TA respondents' age range allows for more opportunities for older respondents to volunteer than younger respondents. We conducted a sensitivity analysis by adding age as a variable in the regression models to ensure that age does not overly account for the results of the count outcomes. The model results were robust to the inclusion of age, suggesting the appropriateness and consistency of the model.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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