

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY & MANAGING ROLES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

Disraelly Cruz

Dr. Rebecca Meisenbach, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Among the multiple frames used to view volunteering, many have described volunteerism as a staple of democracy, a valuable source of labor for the nonprofit sector, and a source of personal and work related benefits (Musick & Wilson, 2008; Salamon & Dewees, 2002). Without this voluntary work force, a number of nonprofit organizations would need to find alternative means of providing services. To date, much of the scholarship dedicated to understanding this phenomenon has sought to uncover predictors of volunteer behavior or determine causes for the decline in volunteerism (for review see Musick & Wilson, 2008). Absent from volunteer scholarship is a discussion of how volunteerism impacts overall social identity. This manuscript takes an alternative approach to understanding this phenomenon by focusing on issues of identity. Specifically, this paper focuses on the ways in which individuals discursively discuss the volunteer role in light of additional life demands.

By focusing in on the lived experiences of volunteers, this study sought to ameliorate the gaps present in volunteer research and work-life scholarship by developing scholarship on multiple role engagement. The focus of study was to explore a number of the currently unanswered questions including a) the ways individuals discursively frame their volunteer work in relation to other roles, b) the ways individuals managed multiple roles, and c) the implications of multiple role engagement on individual identity.