

The Role of Place Attachment on Appalachian Trail Conservancy Volunteer Involvement

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Abstract

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is a non-profit organization established to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail (AT). The ATC relies heavily on thousands of volunteers to maintain and care for the 2,180 miles of trail. In each of the 14 states that the AT runs through, trail crew volunteers are the primary caretakers. These volunteers do challenging, physical labor for eight to ten hour days, rain or shine. This study of ATC trail crew volunteers used the framework of Omoto and Snyder's (2002) Volunteer Process Model (VPM) to explore the relationships between (1) volunteer motivations and level of involvement (2) volunteer satisfactions and level of involvement and (3) place attachment and level of involvement. Data were collected from active trail crew volunteers (N = 115) from 2010-2012. Results showed that several motivation and satisfaction functions were related to volunteers' levels of involvement. Additionally, place attachment was directly related to continued service. These findings support management efforts aimed at improving overall volunteer programs and opportunities with the ATC, and imply that trail crew volunteers are generally motivated and satisfied by social reasons.

Key Words: volunteer, retention, motivation, place attachment

“The mountains are calling, and I must go.” - John Muir

Place attachment is like a calling, a continuous feeling that calls an individual back to a place that holds special meaning. From the works of John Muir, we know of his attachment to the mountains, and to much of the American wilderness. For many people, similar attachments lead them to the same meaningful places, time and time again. Place attachment is most frequently seen with regards to leisure, as these places are freely chosen by the individuals who frequent them. However, often overlooked in place attachment research, volunteering is an important component of the leisure time of many people.

In 2015, in the United States alone, 62.6 million people volunteered in some form (Volunteering in America, 2015). Volunteering is characterized by unpaid, freely chosen work which occurs in one's leisure time and often results in satisfying experiences (Stebbins, 1996). A common way in which individuals donate their time is through volunteering with environmental recreation organizations, such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) which utilizes over 6,000 volunteers each year.

The ATC is a non-profit organization that was established in 1925 with a mission to ensure that the Appalachian Trail's natural beauty and cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed for centuries to come (Appalachian Trail Conservancy, 2011). The ATC has volunteer clubs in each of the 14 states which contain a portion of the trail. The ATC utilizes volunteers in a variety of capacities including community engagement, conservation, and youth education; however, trail management volunteers have the most direct impact and connection with the trail itself. Trail crew volunteers that work on the Appalachian Trail (AT) are a diverse group of individuals in terms of place of origin, age, and skill sets. Trail crew volunteers from this study

were well educated (71% had a college degree or higher, and 22% were currently attending college), represented the employed, unemployed, and retired workers, and came from a variety of economic backgrounds. Trail crew volunteers are a dedicated workforce who perform hard, physical labor for eight to ten hours each day. Often times, they hike into their work sites with loaded packs containing food and equipment which can weigh as much as 100 pounds. But what motivates these volunteers to engage in these challenging experiences, and furthermore, why do some trail crew volunteers return year after year?

In order to understand why volunteers donate their time to the ATC, research must examine the volunteers' initial motivations as well as their satisfaction with their experience. Not only can this information increase understanding of volunteer motivations in general, but it could also be applied to assist the ATC with their recruitment and retention efforts. For example, if trail crew volunteers are motivated by learning new skills, the ATC can create training programs to best target motivational interests. This study used the Volunteer Process Model (VPM) to investigate the antecedents and experiences which lead to continued volunteer service with the ATC.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the involvement of ATC volunteers within the broad framework of the Volunteer Process Model. This study examined how volunteer antecedents (motivation and place attachment) and experiences (satisfaction) related to volunteer consequences including years of service and time spent volunteering.

Research Questions

1. Within the Volunteer Process Model framework, what are the strongest volunteer antecedents and experiences for ATC trail crew volunteers?

- a. How does volunteer motivation relate to trail crew volunteer consequences (i.e., years of service, time spent volunteering)?
- b. How does volunteer place attachment to the AT relate to trail crew volunteer consequences (i.e., years of service, time spent volunteering)?
- c. How does volunteer satisfaction relate to trail crew volunteer consequences (i.e., years of service, time spent volunteering)?

Literature Review

Introduction to Volunteering

Volunteering differs greatly from paid work because volunteering is a form of leisure (Stebbins, 1996). Motivations are the driving force behind volunteer's actions, while satisfactions are the pleasures received from volunteering opportunities (Musick & Wilson, 2008). Studies have shown that recreationists develop attachments to specific places and that these attachments influence their participation; for example, hikers along the AT have been shown to develop attachments to the trail (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2004; Pitas et al, 2018). Those hikers who are highly attached return time and time again (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2004). This concept may extend to trail crew volunteers as well. If such an attachment exists, then it can be assumed that it will play a role in these volunteers' levels of involvement with the ATC, suggesting that volunteers who display strong levels of place attachment to the AT may also commit to volunteer for longer periods of time.

Volunteer Process Model

The purpose of this study was to better understand the factors that contribute to continued service and involvement of ATC trail crew volunteers through the framework of the Volunteer Process Model. Within the VPM, there are three stages of the volunteering process (Omoto &

Snyder, 2002). The first stage, antecedents, represents the characteristics or motivations that drive a person to volunteer. The second stage, experience, represents the volunteer experience itself and the volunteer's satisfaction with the experience. The third and final stage, consequences, focuses on the outcomes of the volunteer experience such as the impact on the organization being served (Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Omoto & Snyder, 2002). For the purposes of this study, consequences were measured through the variable of continued service.

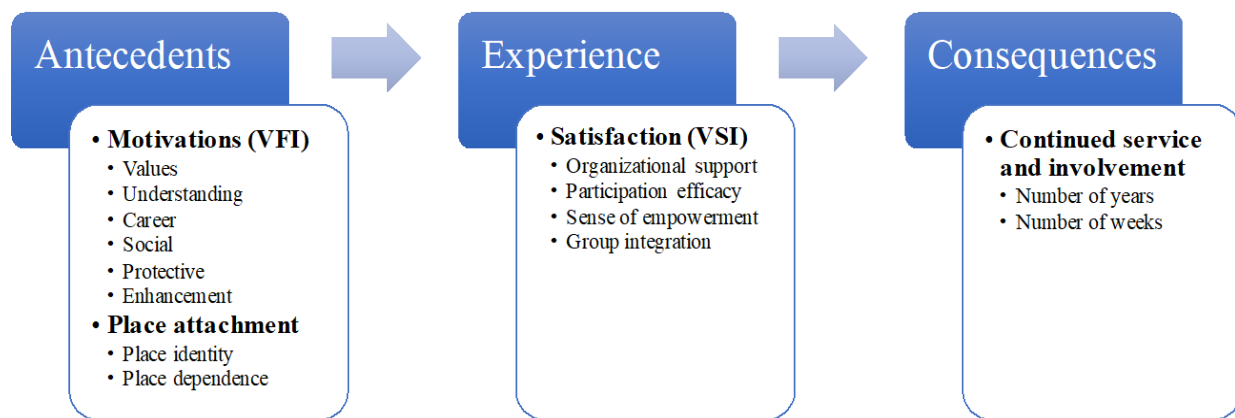


Figure 1. The Volunteer Process Model

Antecedents

Antecedents represent the first stage of the VPM and are established prior to the individual's volunteer experience. Volunteer motivations are a key component of the antecedent stage and were an important focus of this study. Place attachment was also examined.

Volunteer Motivation.

Volunteer motivations are most frequently examined using a functional approach which addresses the reasons and purposes that generate beliefs as to why people volunteer. Clary and Snyder (1996) developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) to assess typical motivations or functions of volunteers. The motivational categories which they identified are as follows: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement (Clary & Snyder, 1996).

By learning which functions motivate trail crew volunteers, the ATC can improve their recruiting and retention efforts as well as set up programs to ensure that volunteer's motivations are being met. Previous research has shown that if volunteers' motivations are met, they are more likely to remain with the organization, thus demonstrating a higher level of long-term involvement (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Clary et al., 1998). The researchers will be able to evaluate how volunteer functions relate to the place attachment and volunteer satisfaction, thus expanding the body of knowledge around place attachment and volunteer functions.

Place Attachment.

Place attachment is a positive bond between a person and a place. The main characteristic is that the person wants to maintain closeness to such a place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). Past research has indicated that place attachment cannot be determined solely by its functional properties. It is a two-dimensional construct consisting of place identity and place dependence. Place dependence is a functional attachment; it means an individual is drawn to a place because of its functions or the specific characteristics it has to offer, such as hiking trails or rock-climbing routes. (Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989).

Unlike place dependence, place identity is the emotional attachment the user develops with a setting over time, possibly increasing the user's dedication and desire to preserve the setting. The development of place identity is closely tied to memories and relationships that one has formed within a certain place (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) found that place dependence is the precursor to place identity; once an individual has developed a functional attachment they will almost always develop an emotional attachment. While current research has shown that place attachment is particularly relevant for AT hikers and influences their level of participation (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2004), it's not clear how it

might influence trail crew volunteers. Once a volunteer develops a place attachment to the AT, this could influence their level of involvement. Understanding how place attachment influences the antecedents of trail crew volunteers will allow the ATC to assign volunteers to their optimal locations. This information is also useful for the ATC in identifying potential volunteers who will commit for longer periods and express an increased level of involvement.

Experience

The second stage of the VPM, experience, represents an individual's time spent volunteering with the ATC. This stage is the experience itself and is generally represented through an analysis of volunteer satisfaction.

Volunteer Satisfaction.

Volunteer satisfaction is not only an important part of the volunteer experience, but it is also directly linked to retention. Galindo-Kuhn and Guzzly (2001) developed the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) which identifies the following four dimensions of volunteer satisfaction: organizational support, participation efficacy, sense of empowerment, and group integration. The authors developed the VSI out of paid job satisfaction scales; this is particularly pertinent for trail crew volunteers because they are treated much like paid employees. While trail crew volunteers have paid supervisors, they are allowed a certain amount of autonomy and self-regulation while working, partially due the remote locations they where they often work.

Organizational support addresses performance feedback, clear goals, and objectives. Participation efficacy looks at the satisfaction a trail crew volunteer receives from using their own skills and abilities to make a difference. Sense of empowerment and group integration are the bonds that volunteers develop with other trail crew volunteers or with paid staff such as the

trail crew. Satisfaction with the volunteer experience provides the greatest influence for the next stage, consequences (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzzley, 2001).

Consequences

Consequences, the third and final stage of the VPM, are the results of the volunteer's experience. For ATC volunteers, a frequent and important consequence is continued service or involvement in the organization. Some ATC trail volunteers return to the AT year after year. Because of the distance of the AT from many of volunteers homes, those volunteers who do not return year after year, often strive to return when they are able. Continued service with the ATC was measured in this study as both number of years and number of weeks served.

Methods

This study used a quantitative design which included the distribution of a web-based survey to all 261 ATC trail crew volunteers. The participants in this study were trail crew volunteers who donated their time to maintain and repair hiking sections along the AT during the time frame of 2010-2012. Along the 2,000-mile trail which spans from Georgia to Maine, there are six crews of trail maintenance volunteers, all of which were included in this study. Volunteers were permitted to work on any of the crews for as little as a weekend or as long as six months at a time. The trail crew volunteers in this study came from various locations within the United States and around the world and were adults 18 years or older.

The survey was administered by the ATC Conservation Coordinator in the spring of 2012. A total of 115 surveys were completed. Using a modified Dillman method, volunteers were contacted three times via email (Dillman, 2009). The initial email to participants resulted in 33.7% of the responses, and the two reminder emails at one week intervals produced 9% and 7% of the responses for a total response rate of 44%.

Instrumentation

A modified volunteer functions inventory (VFI) was used to measure the following six volunteer functions described by Clary and Snyder: volunteer behaviors, place attachment, volunteer motivations, barriers to volunteering, volunteer satisfactions, and demographics. The VFI has been used to understand the motivations of a various types of volunteers, including, but not limited to older adults, episodic skilled volunteers, hospital based volunteers, and faith based volunteers (Brayley, Obst, White, Lewis, et al., 2013; Clary, Snyder, Ridge, et al., 1998; Erasmus & Morey, 2016; Greenslade & White, 2005). This web-based survey took participants approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

The first section of the survey looked at the trail crew volunteers' behaviors and levels of involvement. Level of involvement was measured using the following dimensions: years spent volunteering for the ATC, weeks spent at the ATC in the most recent year, as well as future intentions to return to ATC. Next, measures of place attachment were adapted from Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) and divided into two subdomains to represent both place dependence and place identity. These Likert scale questions (scale of 1 to 5, strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively) sought to investigate volunteers' connections with the AT through concepts of both emotional and functional attachment.

The survey additionally included items from the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) to measure volunteers' motivations in the following six categories: values, understanding, social, career, protective and enhancement (Clary & Snyder, 1999). Each function represented a sub-domain consisting of three Likert scale questions ranging from 1 to 5, extremely unimportant to extremely important, respectively. The survey instrument also included measures of volunteer satisfaction based upon four dimensions of volunteer job satisfaction: organizational support,

participation efficacy, sense of empowerment, and group integration. These were adapted using the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) developed by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001). All questions are asked to determine participant's satisfaction with the ATC. Finally, the survey concluded with volunteer's demographics and characteristics including items such as gender, age, education, income levels, and employment status. All data were analyzed in SPSS version 24. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regressions were used to answer the research questions.

VPM Categories

Antecedents: volunteer motivation (values, career, enhancement, protective, social, and understanding), place attachment (place identity and place dependence)

Experience: volunteer satisfaction (organizational support, participation efficacy, sense of empowerment, and group integration)

Consequences: continued service and involvement with ATC (operationalized through volunteer longevity, time spent at ATC each year, and future intentions to return to ATC)

Results

Demographics

Of the 108 respondents, 65 (60.7%) were male and 42 (39.3%) were female. The average age for respondents was 44 years old. The respondents were fairly homogenous in terms of race (96.3% identified as white) and a majority of people were employed either part time or full time (more than 64%). Furthermore, the respondent population was highly educated, with at least 71% having a Bachelor's degree or higher. Respondents had spent an average of nearly four years volunteering with the ATC and averaged approximately three weeks per year.

Table 1
Demographics of ATC Trail Crew Volunteers

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>% or M (SD)</i>
Age	108	<i>M 44 years (18.3)</i>
Gender		
Male	65	60.7%
Female	42	39.3%
Race		
White	103	96.3%
Non-white	4	3.7%
Income		
\$0-\$39,999	30	34.5%
\$40,000-\$59,999	17	19.5%
\$60,000-\$99,999	23	26.4%
\$100,000 or more	17	19.4%
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	52	50%
Employed part-time (less than 32 hours)	15	14.4%
Unemployed	13	12.5%
Retired	24	23.1%
Education		
High school	18	16.4%
Technical school or associates degree	14	12.7%
College degree	42	38.2%
Master's degree	29	26.4%
Doctorate or beyond	7	6.4%
Currently attending college		
Yes	25	22.9%
No	84	77.1%
Country of Origin		
USA	103	96.3%
Outside of USA	4	3.7%

Table 2
Characteristics of ATC Trail Crew Volunteers

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>% or M (SD)</i>
Regions where volunteers worked		
Southern Region	80	75.5%
Mid-Atlantic Region	10	15.1%
New England Region	16	9.4%
Number of years with ATC		
1-5 years	85	73.9%
6-10 years	18	15.7%
11-15 years	9	7.8%
16-20 years	3	2.6%
Time spent volunteering		
1 week or less	67	58.3%
2 weeks	20	18.9%
3 weeks or more	19	17.9%
Thru-hiker status		
Thru-hiked	27	23.5%
Never thru-hiked	67	58.3%
Still section thru-hiking	16	13.9%

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3
Modified Volunteer Functions (Motivations) Inventory Factor Analysis and Descriptive Results

Factor	Scale Mean/Item Mean	Factor Load	α if Item Deleted	Std Dev	α
Values	Sub Domain M = 4.28			.599	.886
I volunteer on the AT because I feel it is important to maintain the trail for other users.	4.36	.848	.85	.68	
I volunteer on the AT because I can do something for a cause that is important to me.	4.34	.881	.86	.61	
I am genuinely concerned about maintaining the AT	4.13	.867	.81	.69	
Understanding	Sub Domain M = 3.89			.701	.723
Volunteering on the AT lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience.	4.11	.827	.52	.87	
Volunteering on the AT allows me to gain a new perspective on things.	4.00	.770	.58	.75	
I volunteer on the AT because I can learn more about the AT.	3.57	.690	.80	.98	
Enhancement	Sub Domain M = 3.38			.817	.854
Volunteering on the AT makes me feel better about myself.	3.71	.829	.79	.91	
Volunteering on the AT makes me feel needed.	3.25	.744	.81	.94	
Volunteering on the AT makes me feel important.	3.17	.874	.79	.94	
Protective	Sub Domain M = 3.15			.958	.881
No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering on the AT helps me forget about it.	3.30	.850	.85	1.00	
Volunteering on the AT is a good escape from my own troubles.	3.12	.811	.85	1.11	
Volunteering on the AT helps me work through some of my own problems.	3.02	.834	.79	1.05	
Career	Sub Domain M = 2.40			1.01	.906
The Volunteer experience I gain on the AT will look good on my resume.	2.5	.838	.91	1.09	
Volunteering on the AT may help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.	2.36	.883	.87	1.14	
Volunteering on the AT allows me to explore different career options.	2.35	.926	.81	1.09	
Social	Sub Domain M = 2.38			.965	.819
I volunteer on the AT because people I know share an interest in the AT.	2.91	.858	.82	1.23	
I volunteer on the AT because my friends volunteer on the AT.	2.23	.866	.65	1.14	
I volunteer on the AT because people I'm close to want me to volunteer on the AT.	2.00	.734	.78	1.01	

*Respondents were asked to scale each item's importance in regards to their motivation for patrolling for the NSP 1 – not at all important 2 – very unimportant, 3 – Neutral, 4 – somewhat important, 5- very important

Antecedents.

Survey respondents identified several antecedents which led them to volunteer with the ATC. The values function was the most important antecedent, while the social function was the least important for volunteer motivation ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .599$; $M = 2.38$; $SD = .965$, respectively).

Table 4
Modified Volunteer Satisfaction Inventory Factor Analysis and Descriptive Results

Factor	Scale Mean/ Item Mean	Factor Loading	α if Item Deleted	Std Dev/	α
Satisfaction Social	Sub Domain M = 4.261			.657	.878
The amount of interactions I have with other volunteers in the ATC	4.19	.883	.83	.80	
The amount of time I spend with other volunteers in the ATC	4.08	.862	.84	.75	
My relationship with other volunteers in the ATC	4.36	.826	.83	.68	
The friendships I have made while volunteering with the ATC	4.28	.773	.85	.75	
My relationship with paid staff	4.40	.490	.90	.72	
Satisfaction Efficacy	Sub Domain M = 4.175			.51	.851
How worthwhile my contribution is	4.25	.709	.81	.59	
The difference my volunteer work is making	4.25	.701	.82	.62	
The opportunities I have to learn new skills	4.23	.726	.84	.64	
The chance I have to utilize my knowledge and skills in my volunteer work	4.09	.598	.82	.71	
The fit of the volunteer work to my skills	4.06	.819	.82	.67	
Satisfaction ATP	Sub Domain M = 3.97			.58	.882
The support I receive from people in the ATC	4.16	.774	.86	.74	
The access I have to information concerning the ATC	4.04	.607	.87	.64	
The freedom I have in deciding how to carry out my volunteer assignment	4.03	.539	.87	.73	
The amount of communication coming to me from paid staff and/or board members	4.00	.618	.87	.74	
The amount of information I receive about what the ATC is doing	4.00	.788	.87	.83	
How often the ATC acknowledges the work I do	3.83	.781	.86	.80	
The way in which the ATC provides me with performance feedback	3.71	.579	.87	.89	
The amount of permission I need before I can do the things I do on this job	3.65	.490	.87	.76	

*Respondents were asked to report how satisfied they were from 1 – extremely unsatisfied 2 – unsatisfied, 3 – Neutral, 4 – satisfied, 5- extremely satisfied

Experiences.

Survey respondents were most satisfied with the social opportunities which they gained from volunteering on the AT ($M = 4.261$, $SD = .657$). Satisfaction with efficacy, their ability to feel as if they are making a notable contribution to the ATC, was also very important for volunteers ($M = 4.175$, $SD = .51$).

To analyze the results of this study, two multilinear regression models were used, both of which adhere to the framework of the VPM. The first model examined the consequence of number of weeks spent volunteering with the ATC and the later examined that of number of years spend volunteering with the ATC.

Multiple Linear Regression of Number of Weeks Spent Volunteering with the ATC

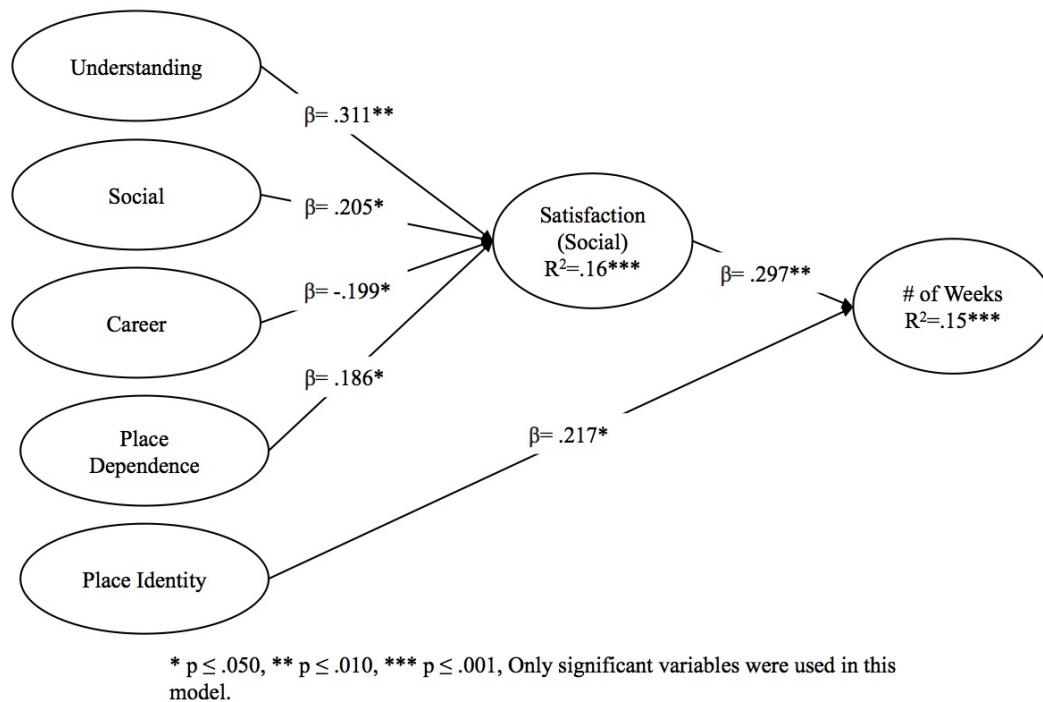


Figure 2. Final Model for Number of Weeks Served: Volunteer Process Model with understanding, social, career, place dependence, and place identity as antecedents, satisfaction with social opportunities as the experience, and number of weeks served as the consequence.

The final stepwise regression model for the number of weeks volunteered revealed that two dimensions of the VPM explained a modest amount ($R^2 = .154, p = .000$) of the variance in the number of weeks that respondents spent volunteering with the ATC. Satisfaction with social opportunities, part of the experience stage of the VPM, had the strongest positive relationship with number of weeks spent volunteering ($\beta = .297, p = .002$). Place identity, an antecedent in the VPM, also had a significant positive relationship with number of weeks spent volunteering ($\beta = .217, p = .019$). A second linear regression explored the significant antecedents which corresponded to satisfaction with social opportunities; four constructs of the antecedent stage

explained a modest portion of the variance ($R^2 = .163, p = .001$). The understanding function had the strongest relationship with satisfaction with social opportunities ($\beta = .311, p = .002$).

Additionally, the social and place dependence functions had significant positive relationships with social satisfaction ($\beta = .205, p = .035; \beta = .186, p = .040$, respectively). It is also interesting to note that the career construct had a significant negative relationship with social satisfaction ($\beta = -.199, p = .051$).

Table 5

Final Regression Model for the Number of Weeks Volunteers Have Volunteer on the AT

Model	R^2	VPM Domain	β	Sig
Number of Weeks	.154*	Satisfaction (Social Support)	.297	.002
		Place Identity	.217	.019
Satisfaction (Social Support)	.163*	Understanding	.311	.002
		Social	.205	.035
		Career	-.199	.051
		Place Dependence	.186	.040

* $p \leq .050$, ** $p \leq .010$, *** $p \leq .001$, Only significant variables were used in this model.

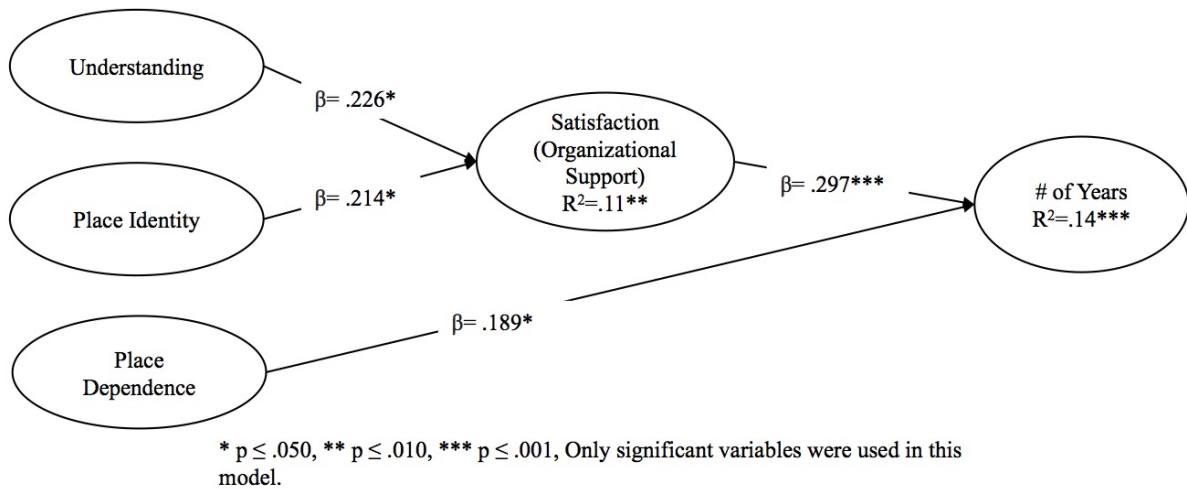
Multiple Linear Regression of Number of Years Spent Volunteering with the ATC

Figure 3. Final Model for Number of Years Served: Volunteer Process Model with understanding, place identity, and place dependence as antecedents, satisfaction with organizational support as the experience, and number of years served as the consequence.

The final stepwise linear regression model for the number of years volunteered revealed that two dimensions of the VPM explained a modest amount of the variance in the number of years that respondents spent volunteering with the ATC ($R^2 = .138, p = .000$). The strongest relationship was explained by satisfaction with organizational support, followed by place dependence, an antecedent in the VPM ($\beta = .297, p = .001$; $\beta = .189, p = .039$, respectively). A second linear regression investigated the dimensions of the VPM which explained the variance in satisfaction with organization support; two functions, place identity and understanding, explained a small portion of the variance in satisfaction with organizational support ($R^2 = .110, p = .002$). Understanding had the strongest significant relationship, followed closely by place identity ($\beta = .226, p = .015$; $\beta = .214, p = .021$, respectively).

Table 6
Final Regression Model for the Number of Years Volunteers Have Volunteered on the AT

Model	R ²	VPM Domain	β	Sig
Number of Years	.138*	Satisfaction (Organizational Support)	.297	.001
	**	Place Dependence	.189	.039
Satisfaction	.11**	Understanding	.226	.015
(Organizational Support)		Place Identity	.214	.021

* $p \leq .050$, ** $p \leq .010$, *** $p \leq .001$, Only significant variables were used in this model.

Discussion

Though data for this study was collected in 2012, the findings are relevant for many volunteer organizations today. Across the United States, non-profit and public organizations find themselves in competing for a shrinking number of volunteers (Volunteering and Civic Life in America, 2018). In fact, given the increased competition for recruiting reliable volunteers early in this decade, the finding of this study have only gained relevance for the ATC, and organizations similar to the ATC.

While this study investigated only one volunteer organization, the results can be applied in a more general sense to explain volunteer experiences as a whole. A number of recommendations emerge from these findings relating to potential management actions, specifically with recruitment and retention. As Terry, et al. (2013) suggests, volunteer retention shares quite a few similarities with consumer retention. For instance, satisfaction with a volunteer experience often leads a person to volunteer with that organization again, just as satisfaction with a product leads to purchasing it again. Volunteers perceptions of their experiences are crucial to understanding whether or not they will return to the organization such

that those who are satisfied will return, and those who are not satisfied will seek other opportunities (Clary & Snyder, 1999).

The results of this study support those of Clary and Snyder (1999) and suggest that there are strong relationships between satisfaction with the volunteer experience and continued service with the organization. Satisfaction with social opportunities was the strongest and most significant predictor of the number of weeks spent volunteering, while satisfaction with organization support was the strongest and most significant predictor of the number of years spent volunteering. These domains suggest a need for managerial attention to focus on providing a positive social experience as well as a strong support network for volunteers. In the case of ATC volunteers, they from geographically diverse areas, ranging from Europe to California. Managers should consider utilizing popular social media platforms to engage volunteers outside of the times they volunteer with the organization (Briones et al., 2011; Reuter, Heger, & Pipek, 2013). Connecting volunteers via social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can maintain and develop relationships within the volunteers workers, between the volunteers and the organization, and when there is a place of special importance, it can strengthen the attachment to that place.

Satisfaction is not the only important facet of the volunteer experience. Organizations must also consider volunteer antecedents in both recruitment and retention. A desire to understand the work of the organization appears to be important for retention, both in terms of number of weeks and number of years spent with the organization. From a management perspective, organizations must provide volunteer experiences which support volunteer learning and understanding; this is also a key dimension of organizational support, which, as previously mentioned, is an important predictor of continued service. Furthermore, a desire for social

opportunities is important to the duration of the volunteer experience (See table 5). If volunteers are motivated because their friends volunteer, or because people they know share an interest in the organization or cause, the organization can extend invitations to the friends and family of their current volunteers. Within the experience itself, volunteer coordinators should monitor and manage social interactions so as to provide a welcoming and friendly environment for all. It could be detrimental if coordinators do not provide a supportive environment for their volunteer crew. Volunteers start volunteering to meet their values motivation, and continue to volunteer because of the opportunities they have for social interactions they experience.

The results of this study suggest that place attachment to the AT does in fact transcend to volunteers and corresponds to increased participation within the organization; furthermore, place attachment was significantly related with continued service. Most volunteers in this study expressed high levels of place attachment, and both place identity and place dependence were significant in each of the final regression models, suggesting their importance in regard to number of weeks and number of years spent with the volunteer organization. Organizations that maintain and protect areas that elicit a strong sense of place attachment should not only seek to satisfy their volunteer's basic needs, but when possible, should provide opportunities for volunteers to connect to the surrounding environment and setting. In the case of the ATC, this may be providing time before, during, and after the volunteer experience to hike on the trail. In the case of a museum or performance venue, volunteers could be given unique opportunities to view exhibits or performance outside of their volunteer work.

While the VPM treats place attachment as an antecedent, it is also possible that place attachment could be considered a consequence of the volunteer experience, especially given the number of respondents who expressed high levels of place attachment to the AT. In this sense,

the VPM may be more of cyclical model, with the consequence of place attachment leading a person to volunteer again (hence acting once again as the antecedent). It would be interesting for future research to examine the possibility of a more cyclical model of the volunteer experience. Furthermore, it is recommended that this study be replicated in other volunteer organizations, specifically those whose sites may elicit a strong sense of place attachment for recreational visitors.

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