The Relationship between Household Income and Volunteerism in Relation to Relatives / Non-Household Relationships

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The balance of gaining wealth and yet giving back is a common trouble for many people in the workforce, and especially so within the rise in new college graduates now exposed to work hours, labor force participation, a need for productivity at work, attractiveness of a career mindset, and a steady income (Hamilton, 2012). Often, a higher income stems from time spent toiling away at work--thus, less time is spent elsewhere and therefore, a cutback in personal life in relationships and serving others. In addition, the possession of wealth can produce either a greedy or giving personality. Because wealth and income can influence altruism, and with the relevance to the millions people working within the United States, within this paper I aim to see the relationship between household income and volunteering for relatives / non-household members.

Various studies show of how the demands of a higher income, resulting from a high amount of hours required to be a productive and high ranking employee, entails a cutback in generosity, altruism, and overall social and personal lives. With more time at work comes with a greater work-life conflict, as less time is spent in developing relationships and volunteering time to serve others in the community. One study, specifically targeting working dads and their work-life balance, revealed that approximately a majority of working dads agree to the assumption that the most productive employees in the workforce are those who put work ahead of personal and family lives, as well as the assumption that most employees are expected to work a minimum of 50 hours/week (Harrington, Fraone & Lee, 2017).

However, many studies have also shown of how an increase in income comes with an increase in volunteerism, giving a contrary claim to the one above. This relates to the age old question of whether money increases happiness--and thus, often a greater heart to serve and aid

others. For example, a higher income gives higher amounts of comfort and flexibility in way of life and thus, greater life satisfaction overall; there is enough to support own needs as well as give to others who are in need. This is expressed in that participation in volunteer deeds increases with income, even after controlling for observables (Pho, 2008). In relation to the greater work hours associated with higher income, one study argues of how although the rising demands of work raises concerns of time devoted to interpersonal relationships and volunteerism, participants were able to create strategies for connecting the bridge between friends / family and work as a result of flexible employer-employee working relationships and easy communication through technology (Moen & Flood, 2013). Lastly, volunteerism is seen as a psychosocial resource contributing to a greater sense of work-life balance for people in the workforce--that those working in high-paying jobs still volunteer a generous amount, for giving back is associated to less work-life conflict, burnout and stress, and a better positive mental health (Ramos et al., 2016). Because of these differing conclusions in studies, instead of hypothesizing a relationship that is directional, I hypothesize that there is a difference in household income of those who did not volunteer time to help non-household relatives / members compared to those who did volunteer time to help non-household relatives / members.

Method

Participants

4,178 participants were surveyed in this study, with all participants responding to both the question of helping non-household members in the past month and 1,187 of participants (with 2,991 missing data) responding to the question of household income (Figure 1). Ages ranged between a minimum of 21 to a maximum of 85 years. The distribution of respondents were relatively equal in gender, with 56.9% females and 43.1% males. Similarly, 45.9% were divorced, seperated, widowed, single, or living with partner, while 54.1% were married. Most

participants worked for a private, for-profit company, and 42.0% did not attend college while 58.0% attended college. Lastly, most participants, of those who answered, gave between $100 to $199 to non-household relatives, although this collection had 4,137 missing data (Figure 4).

Procedure

From March to May 2000, data for this study was collected for 4,178 American adults through telephone interviews, conducted with the person who answered the phone given the receiver was a person 18 years of age or older. Participants were kept anonymous (did not disclose name) in order to control for response bias as well as keep information, such as income, confidential. The sample was designed to reach all US adults yet provide a representative sample of all household income levels--this was done through the stratification of geographic location in relation to household income. Stratas were: 1) cities with a median household income of over $200,000 2) cities with a median household income between $150,000 to $199,999 3) cities with a median household income between $100,000 to $149,999 4) cities with a median household income between $75,000 to $99,999 5) cities with a median household income between $50,000 to $74,999 and 6) cities with an median household income of below $49,999. Participants were asked over the phone, “In the past month, did you volunteer some time to help relatives who didn’t live with you, including children and parents, neighbors, friends or strangers?” for the volunteerism variable and “What was the total annual income before taxes, of all members of your household in 2000?” for the household income variable. Only two choices, “Yes” or “No” were given for the categorical variable “Helping Non-Household Members”, while choices for the continuous variable “Household Income” ranged from 0.00 to 500,000.00 dollars.

Data Analysis

Two variables were studied and compared in this study--the continuous variable was the reported household income, while the categorical variable, given two levels, was whether the

participant had volunteered time to help non-household members. The continuous variable was normally distributed around a bell-shaped curve, with a center of 100 (Figure 2). An independent samples t-test was used, as 1) the analysis was to compare and test for a significant difference in the mean household incomes between participants who did volunteer time to help non-household members and those who did not, and 2) one variable was categorial with two levels while the other was continuous. As the hypothesis was non-directional (focused on a difference between the two variables) this implied a two-tailed t-test. Three assumptions of this independent t-test can be made. 1) The two groups are independent; the group of participants who did volunteer time is independent of those who did not volunteer time. 2) The dependent variable must be approximately normally distributed; the sampling procedure allows for household income to be normally distributed in this study. 3) We assume homogeneity of variance of the two unrelated groups; the variance for people who did volunteer time and people who did not is approximately equal in the population. In order to conduct the t-test, the following are information used. 1) Null hypothesis / H_0 : there is no difference in household income for those who did not volunteer time to help non-household members compared to those who did volunteer time to help non-household members. 2) Alternative hypothesis / H_1 : there is difference in household income for those who did not volunteer time to help non-household members compared to those who did volunteer time to help non-household members. 3) Statistical significance level: $\alpha = .05$; p-values lower than .05 indicate that there is a significant difference in means. Overall, the independent samples t-test was used to analyze the difference in mean household income for those who did volunteer time to help non-household members compared to those who did not volunteer time, in order to seek out a statistical significance to reject the null hypothesis.

Results

This independent samples t-test showed a significant effect of participation in volunteering for non-household members on household income, $t(2978) = 5.5054$, $p < .0001$, $CI_{95} = (5.675056,\ 11.953563)$ (Figure 3). With the p-value less than .05, this test showed that the result was statistically significant. Thus, we can reject the null hypothesis, or the fact that there is no difference in household income for those who did not volunteer time to help non-household members (M = 103.3261) compared to those who did volunteer time to help non-household members (M = 112.1404).

Discussion

We can see that there is a statistically significant difference in household income between those who do volunteer time to help non-household members and those who do not volunteer time. This is notable to see, as we can see how income affects traits such as volunteerism, generosity, and overall willingness to help others close by. Overall, this contrast in volunteerism can relate to many other differences in income disparity; for example, the contribution of volunteering develops social connections, safer and stronger communities, and helps foster civic engagement. With our world working towards connection and unity, the effects of income on volunteer engagement can lead to future research.

Going forward, we can further conduct this study to test for a statistically significant result in a directional hypothesis, such as whether a rise in income predicts a rise in volunteerism to non-household members. In addition, as there was a high non-response rate to the household income variable in this current study (2,991 missing data) it would be beneficial to change the way this test is conducted in order to lower the non-response rate. This could possibly be done through choosing participants based on household income from the 2000 Census, so that the household income variable is always accounted for. All this taken into account would further a more specialized hypothesis about the relationship between household income and volunteerism.

References

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Appendix

Figure 1

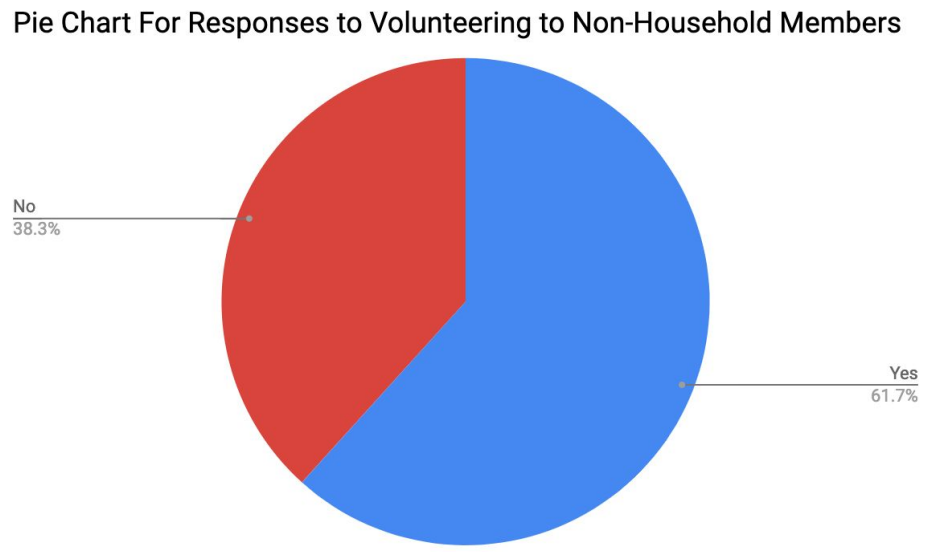

Figure 2

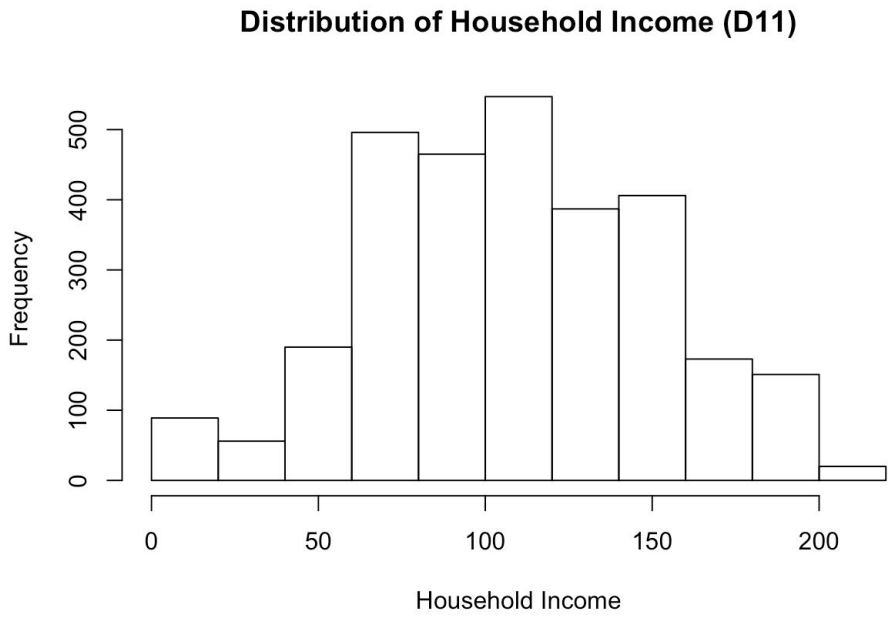

Figure 3

Summary Statistics

Data:	newdata$D11 by newdata$V6

t-value:	5.5054
df:	2978
p-value:	3.997e-08
Null Hypothesis:	True difference in means is equal to 0
Alt. Hypothesis:	True difference in means is not equal to 0
95% Confidence Interval:	(5.675056, 11.953563)
Mean for (1) Yes:	112.1404
Mean for (2) No (Skip to V8):	103.3261
Significance Level (α):	.05

Figure 4

Demographic Variables

Measure	n	%
Gender		
Female	2376	56.9%
Male	1802	43.1%
Total	4178	100%
Married		
Divorced, seperated, widowed, single, or living with partner	1918	45.9%
Married	2260	54.1%
Total	4178	100%
Type of Employer		
Private, for-profit company	1470	35.2%
Private, nonprofit, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	325	7.8%
Government organization	496	11.9%
Self-employed	364	8.7%
Missing data	1523	36.5%
Total	4178	100%
Attended College		
Did not attend college	1753	42.0%
Attended college	2425	58.0%
Total	4178	100%
Estimate under $400 - Relatives		

Less than $50	10	0.2%
$50 to $99	6	0.1%
$100 to $199	11	0.3%
$200 to $299	8	0.2%
$300 to $399	7	0.2%
Missing data	4136	99.0%
Total	4178	100%
Respondent's Age		
Not available	38	0.9%
18-24	228	5.5%
25-34	711	17.0%
35-44	931	22.3%
45-54	884	21.2%
55-64	607	14.5%
65+	779	18.6%