

Assessing the Motivations of Urban Ministry Workers: An Exploratory Study

Hanna Lee, Hana Shin, Jean Min, Sean M. Love, Bikat S. Tilahun, Phillip Gable, & Cynthia B. Eriksson
 Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT

Urban workers provide invaluable service amidst the reality of poverty, discrimination, and violence existing within their communities. Though working in multiple capacities, such as education, skills training, and community development, these workers often go without recognition or reward. The authors of this study sought to investigate the various motivations underlying this altruistic choice to work in urban ministry. Drawing upon previous theories of motivation and the participation of an urban ministry focus group, a measure of motivation was designed specifically for this study. Two-hundred and eighty-four urban ministry workers affiliated with faith-based agencies in five different U.S. cities completed a paper survey. The exploratory factor analysis yielded a factor solution consistent with construct theorizing. Results showed the scale as composed of distinct factors, represented by experiential, spiritual, intrinsic, and value-oriented motivation. As expected, spirituality was a significant factor in this population's paradigm of motivation. Frequently endorsed items included: fulfilling God's calling, living life differently, and seeing lives transformed. Practical implications of motivation are given for future recruitment and training, and theoretical justifications are presented for continued research.

WHO ARE URBAN MINISTRY WORKERS?

Urban ministry workers are paid missionary staff or volunteers affiliated with faith-based organizations who choose to work and/or live in the most impoverished neighborhoods in the United States. Their work may include after-school tutoring, mentoring, leadership development programs, sports camps, violence prevention education, computer training, mentoring, religious meetings, employment preparation training, and informal friendships (retrieved April 10, 2005 from www.uvwi.org).

WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

Motivation is a concept of great study in the field of career assessment, organizational and professional psychology, as well as sociology (Latham & Pinder, 2005). In studying motivation, researchers have attempted to understand the driving force behind people's behaviors and decision making processes. Through research on professionals of underserved populations and religious associations, motivations of personal history, empathy, value-orientation, and spirituality were also implicated (Krous & Nauta, 2005; Zondag, 2000). Clary et al. (1998) studied motivation in a population of volunteers and proposed that there were distinct factors that comprised the construct of motivation.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

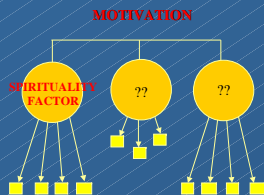
The lack of a motivation theory that paralleled spiritual commitment as well as societal/political/personal motives necessitated a study that attempted to explore the various factors of motivation.

The current study will analyze a motivation measure focused primarily on urban ministry workers. The following questions will be relevant:

- 1) What motivations do urban ministry workers most frequently endorse?
- 2) How do the different items in the measure relate to one another?

PRELIMINARY HYPOTHESES

- 1) Spirituality will be notably endorsed by participants of the sample
- 2) Spirituality will be a distinct factor within the motivation measure



METHODS

PART I: DEVELOPING ITEMS

1. A group of urban ministry workers in Los Angeles were asked to generate 3 responses to the "reasons" why people might choose to participate in urban ministry.
2. The 57 resulting responses were sorted based on same responses or similar themes.
3. Each individual theme was written into a phrase which resulted in 16 sample items.
4. These items were then reviewed by an urban ministry committee for applicability and accuracy of language.

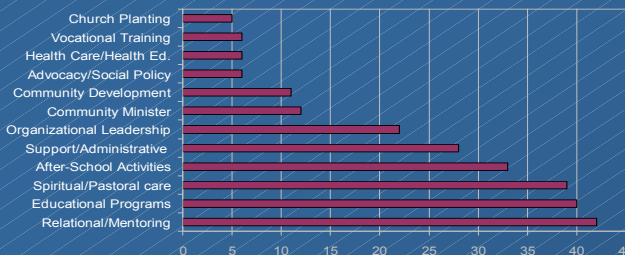
PART II: MOTIVATION MEASURE

1. Participants responded to 16 motivation items using a 6-point scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."
2. Example items are as follows: "I want to fulfill God's calling in my life," "I have been inspired by others," "I enjoy the work, and I find it rewarding."

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 284 US-based urban ministry workers from five US cities:
 Gender: 65% Women (n = 184); 41% Men (n = 17)
 Age: M=35.5, SD = 12; range: 18-70 yrs
 Ethnicity: 46% Caucasian; 34% African American; 12% Latino/a; 8% Multi-racial & Other
 Length of Time in Urban Ministry: M = 7 yrs; range: <1yr - >30 yrs
 Work Status: 62% Paid Staff, 34% Volunteers

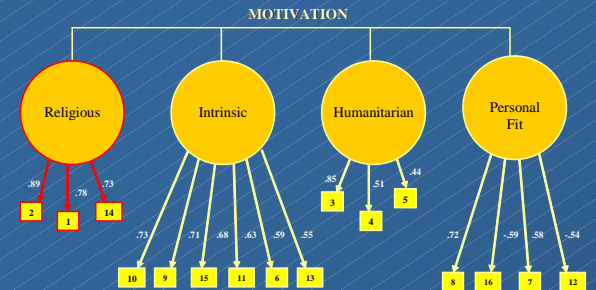
% OF WORK ACTIVITY



OVERALL MOTIVATION ENDORSEMENTS

Item	Motivation Item	% Strongly Agree
2	"I want to be obedient to God's leading."	74%
1	"I want to fulfill God's calling on my life."	71%
14	"I desire to see peoples' lives transformed by the gospel."	68%
5	"I want to live my life differently and make it count."	59%
6	"I want to give back to others what I have received."	57%
4	"I have compassion for those who are suffering."	55%
9	"I want to develop personally, become a stronger, better person."	55%
8	"I enjoy the work that I do, and find it rewarding."	50%
7	"The work fits my gifts, skills, and personality."	47%
10	"I have been inspired by others."	46%
15	"Doing this work makes me feel good about myself."	35%
13	"I desire to live/work with people who share my values/beliefs."	31%
11	"I want to have an adventure, challenge, and/or experience other cultures."	30%
3	"I've been exposed to social injustice, and I feel compelled to do something."	23%
12	"I need to get away from something, someone, or someplace."	5%
16	"I have felt pressure from others to do this work."	4%

GENERAL FINDINGS



Motivation Measure factor structure. Large circles designate latent constructs. Small boxes are items variables under constructs, with arrows representing factor loadings.

HYPOTHESIS 1: SPIRITUAL ITEMS ARE HIGHLY ENDORSED BY SAMPLE

Top 3 motivation items with the highest percentage of 'Strongly Agree' indications are the variables under the factor construct of 'Religious Motivation'

HYPOTHESIS 2: SPIRITUALITY AS 'RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION' IS A DISTINCT FACTOR IN THE MEASURE

1. Intrinsic Motivation: Eigen value 3.37, $\alpha = .77$ (accounts for 21.06% variance)
2. Religious Motivation: Eigen value 2.35, $\alpha = .79$ (accounts for 14.68% variance)
3. Personal Fit Motivation: Eigen value 1.65, $\alpha = .43$ (accounts for 10.28% variance)
4. Humanitarian Motivation: Eigen value 1.46, $\alpha = .43$ (accounts for 9.15% variance)

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Given the multi-dimensional nature of motivation:

- Further research is needed to better understand the relationship of the various factors of motivation with staff continuance, satisfaction, and perception of efficacy. → This will better educate organizations to appropriately address such issues in recruitment, training, and staff maintenance.
- Further research is needed to confirm reliability and validity using other measures of motivation that are currently available in the psychological literature.

Given the frequency of religious motivation endorsements:

- Spirituality motivation may be a critical factor for sustaining a healthy lifestyle as well as preventing disillusionment in the ministry field. Further research is needed to assess the impact of motivation on stress or positive coping.
- Urban ministry organizations should be informed by results to develop methods to effectively motivate staff.

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