

The Volunteer Experience of Chinese Immigrants in Canada

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Abstract

Volunteering is one of the most common, yet least studied social behaviours in Western society. Even less is known about volunteering among immigrants. Knowledge about volunteering among Chinese Canadians is largely based on anecdotes. Using secondary analysis of a Chinese-community-based age-stratified sample, the study reported here examined the meaning of, and factors influencing, volunteer activity in the community. Information collected from 289 Chinese immigrant participants from the Greater Toronto Area was included in the analysis. Descriptive and multivariate statistical methods were used to analyze the data. The results suggest 17.3% of the participants reported current volunteer activity and 34.9% of all participants have volunteered at some time in the past. "Helping others and enriching own life" (49.5%) was the most frequently reported reason for volunteering. The leading reason for not volunteering was "no time" at 45.7%. Logistic regression analysis found that individuals who were not married and those who lived in Canada for 5 or more years were more likely to have volunteered or be a current volunteer. The results suggest volunteer activity is not well predicted by sociodemographic (e.g. age, sex, education) characteristics. This study contributes to a new understanding of volunteer participation among Chinese immigrants in Canada.

Key Words: volunteer, Chinese immigrant, Canada

Introduction

In many societies, volunteering is an important resource for social and economic development (Flanagan et al., 1999; Abraham & Mackie, 2005). Volunteers selflessly commit their skills, energy and time benefiting society (Hall, Lasby, Ayer & Gibbons, 2009; Grimm et al., 2007). Volunteerism is a form of civic participation that produces goods and services to benefit individuals and their families, thus making volunteering an important component of economic activity (Wiener, Toppe,

Jalandoni, Kirsch, & Weitzman, 2001). In 2010, more than 13.3 million people (over 47% of all the population aged 15 and over) in Canada served as volunteers, providing approximately 2.07 billion hours of service, the equivalent of 1.1 million full-time jobs (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). According to earlier data, volunteering in Canada accounts for 11% of the whole labor contribution and creates \$13 billion for the economy, equivalent to 1.4% of Canadian GDP each year (Schugurensky & Mundel, 2005).

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between volunteering and good health. Volunteers may benefit directly and indirectly from volunteer activity in terms of improved physical and mental well-being and social connectedness (Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008; Grimm, Spring, & Dietz, 2007; Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Morrow-Howell, Hong, & Tang, 2009; Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; Warburton, Terry, Rosenman, & Shapiro, 2001; Windsor, Anstey, & Rodgers, 2008). Elderly volunteers, when compared to elderly non-volunteers reported a higher quality of life and lower mortality rates (Erlinghagen & Hank, 2006; Gottlieb & Gillespie, 2008; Hank & Stuck, 2008; Harris & Thoresen, 2005; Wheeler, Gorey, & Greenblatt, 1998). The reasons for this improved well-being are numerous. Volunteering may act as a buffer against depression (Li & Ferraro, 2005; Musick & Wilson, 2003) and increase job skills and their general satisfaction with life (Harlow & Cantor, 1996; Willigen, 2000). In addition, volunteering may help build civic skills, improve interpersonal skills and expand social networks (Brown, Nesse, Vonokur, & Smith, 2003; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

Many immigrants contribute to Canadian society by volunteering. Though immigrants are less likely to volunteer compared to native-born Canadians, they devote slightly more than the average

number of hours (171 vs. 168 hours) (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, & Gibbons, 2009). Moreover, immigrant volunteers devoted a total of 357 million hours to their volunteer activity in 2003, the equivalent of almost 200,000 full-time jobs (Ashton, Baker, & Parandeh, 2006).

According to Statistics Canada (2001), Chinese Canadians constitute the largest population of non-European origin, with over 1 million in 2001. This report also suggests that 72% of Chinese immigrants were born outside Canada and over half of them (52%) landed in Canada after 1990. Among the more than 1.1 million recent immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006, 14% came from the People's Republic of China (Statistics Canada, 2006). Chinese people account for 20% of Canada's current immigration intake, and Chinese has become the third most commonly spoken language after English and French (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2007).

There remains a lack of consistent and comprehensive data and research on volunteering. This contributes to an underestimation of the value of this social activity. Chinese immigrants exhibit unique cultural beliefs and practices and little is known about their volunteer activities.

Methodology

In 2005 The North Chinese Community of Canada in Toronto, Canada sponsored and conducted a community-based survey of

Chinese immigrants in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to explore their attitudes towards, and involvement in volunteer activities. This current study consists of a re-examination (secondary analysis) of the original data from the 2005 study. The methods, including sampling scheme, questionnaire design and data collection described below represent those used in the original survey. Description of the analysis represents those processes used in the secondary data analysis.

Sampling scheme

In the original data collection, a cross-sectional study method with a convenience sampling approach was adopted. While a large completely random probability sample would elicit higher validity and generalizability, it was deemed to be impractical for this study due to costs. Conducting a random probability sample is also technically challenging as there is no easy way to identify and enlist all people of Chinese origin from which to draw a random sample. To reflect the wide spectrum of the Chinese immigrant population and their views on volunteering, a quasi-stratified convenience sampling approach, with age as a primary stratifying variable was used.

Questionnaire design

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the original data collection. The majority of the survey questions were closed-ended, i.e. participants chose their

response from the list provided. Open-ended questions were included to seek participant's opinions on the concept of volunteering. The questionnaire was designed and distributed to the participants in Chinese. By using Chinese, rather than English as the language of the questionnaire, possible misunderstandings were minimized and thus, the overall quality of the study was enhanced.

Data collection

In the original data collection the questionnaire was expected to be directly distributed to, and completed by, the participants independently. An online survey was included and telephone interviews were conducted during the latter part of the study to increase the number of participants. Consequently, the questionnaire was administered by three means: 1) self-completed paper version (over 85%); 2) self-completed online version; and, 3) interviewer-administered telephone interview. See Appendix A.

Data management and analyses

As part of the secondary analysis, all original data were entered into a database and SAS 9.1 statistical software was used for analysis. Univariate and bivariate analysis methods were employed for descriptive analyses. Logistic regression analyses were conducted to assess the independent associations between volunteer participation and an array of predictor variables (e.g. age, sex, and level of

education). To ensure accuracy of Chinese-to-English translation for the presentation of results, the translation of key information was carried out independently by two bilingual individuals. No major inconsistencies were found.

Results

In total, 312 people from all three inclusion methods participated in the survey. Data collected from 289 participants (92.63%) were used in the analysis. 17.3% of the participants reported current volunteering and 34.9% of all participants reported volunteering in the past.

Slightly more females (55.0%) than males (42.6%) responded to the survey. The age distribution largely reflects the nature of the sampling scheme: when dichotomized, a slight majority (63.7%) of the participants were younger than 44 years. The Educational Portrait of Canada, 2006 Census revealed just over half (51%) of recent immigrants to Canada between 2001 and 2006 held a university degree. This was more than twice the proportion of university

degree holders among the Canadian-born population (20%) and also higher than the proportion of 28% among immigrants who arrived before 2001. Also, a high proportion (76%) of the participants reported having an undergraduate university education or higher. However, only 26.3% of the participants reported having full-time employment. Most of the participants (77.7%) were either Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. While 60% of the participants had lived in Canada less than 5 years, the average length of time spent in Canada was 5.2 years. 35.3% of the participants reported their family annual income was over \$40,000.

In summary, socio-demographic characteristics showed that volunteers in this sample were more likely to be female (54.7%), younger (≤ 44 , 66.7%), educated (university or higher, 72.6%), married (67.5%), employed full-time (35.9%), of lower income ($< \$40,000$, 47.9%), and a Canadian citizen (46.2%). Detailed information on socio-demographic characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Socio-demographic characteristics of the survey participants

		participants		volunteers		non-volunteers	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex	Male	123	42.6	53	45.3	66	41.0
	Female	159	55.0	64	54.7	89	55.3
Age	34 and below	105	35.3	45	38.5	60	37.3
	35-54	113	39.1	51	43.6	58	36.1
	55 and above	66	22.8	21	17.9	38	23.6

Level of education	College or below	84	28.0	31	26.5	46	28.6
	University or above	207	71.6	85	72.6	115	71.4
Marital status	Married	208	72.0	79	67.5	119	73.9
	All others	81	28.0	38	32.5	42	26.1
Employment	Full time job	76	26.3	42	35.9	33	20.5
	Part time job	15	5.2	8	6.8	7	4.3
	Retired	46	15.9	11	9.4	29	18.0
	All others	152	52.6	56	47.8	92	57.1
Family annual income (in Canadian dollar)	\$40,000 and below	152	52.6	56	47.9	90	55.9
	\$40,000 and above	102	35.3	48	41.0	50	31.1
Canadian citizenship status	Citizen	97	33.4	54	46.2	37	23.0
	Landed immigrant	125	44.3	37	31.6	84	52.2
	Other and unknown	67	22.3	26	22.2	40	24.8
Years lived in Canada	Less than 5	175	60.6	59	50.4	112	69.6
	5 or more	111	38.4	57	48.7	48	29.8

Among total volunteers (including current and those having volunteered in the past), “self-motivation” (44.4%) was the main reason for them to start volunteering, followed by “introduced by a friend or a family member” (35.9%). “Helping others and enriching own life” (49.5%) was the most frequently stated reason for volunteering. Others cited “gaining experience for employment” and “building social network” as the reasons for volunteering. Only 18.7% of the volunteers chose “using spare time” as the reason for volunteering. The majority of all volunteers (86.6%) indicated they would continue to volunteer in the future. For non-volunteers, the leading reason cited for not volunteering was “no time” at 45.7%. 31.9% attributed “lack of relevant information” as the reason

for not volunteering. Finally, 13.0% and 4.3% reported “never thought about it” and “not interested in it”, respectively and 63.8% non-volunteers plan to volunteer at some point in the future.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize participant’s opinions toward volunteering. In general, most people agree or strongly agree volunteer experiences would increase employment opportunities (70.8%), enhance social networking (88.9%), and enrich one’s life (85.6%). Only 4.0% of all participants believed it was not worthwhile to volunteer. Most people did not regard helping friends and working overtime at their workplace as volunteering, with the corresponding percentages of 84.2% and 81.2%, respectively.

Table 2

Self-perceived meaning towards the concept of volunteering work

Value of		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Volunteering experience increases employment opportunities	N	67	125	67	12	0
	%	24.7	46.1	24.7	4.4	0
Volunteering work helps social net-working	N	112	135	29	2	0
	%	40.3	48.6	10.4	0.7	0.0
Volunteering work enriches one's life	N	106	132	37	3	0
	%	38.1	47.5	13.3	1.1	0.0
It is not worth it doing volunteering work	N	6	5	49	139	75
	%	2.2	1.8	17.9	50.7	27.4

*: Missing values were not counted in this table. Percentages were calculated according to available data only.

Table 3

Self-perceived meaning towards the concept of volunteering work

		N	%
Do you regard helping your friend as volunteering?	Yes	43	15.8
	No	229	84.2
Do you regard unpaid workplace overtime as volunteering?	Yes	50	18.2
	No	216	81.2

*: Missing values were not counted in this table; percentages were calculated according to available data only.

In one open-ended question, participants were asked to define the concept of “volunteer work”. As anticipated, there was considerable variation in their responses. Table 4 lists some examples. Most of the definitions were straight-forward, such as “*helping others selflessly*”. Others defined volunteering as, “*unpaid work to help others performed in a willingly manner that is not normally done by a government through hiring people*”.

Moreover, participants regard volunteer work as “meaningful and pleasant” and it is a way to “contribute the society” and meanwhile “enrich individual experiences and life”. From these respondent's descriptions, volunteering consists of several basic elements including, volunteering: 1) is unpaid service; 2) helps others; 3) benefits society; and, 4) is performed willingly. In summary, Chinese immigrants perceive the meaning of volunteering work as willingly

offering help to others that not only benefits others but also achieves personal fulfillment, and thereby contributing to the whole society.

Table 4

The meaning of volunteering work as expressed in participants own words.

Subject	Definition
1.	Un-paid work that benefits individuals and society
2	Meaningful act that contributes to society and enrich individual experiences
3	A pleasant activity that helps others and enriches individual experience.
4	An obligation to contribute society
5	Unpaid work that makes our society and individuals' life better
6	Devote one's love and skills to help those in need.
7	Unpaid work to help other performed willingly that is not normally done by a government through hiring people
8	Offering pleasure to other people through unpaid work
9	Helping others and enriching individual life, and making friends
10	Helping others selflessly
11	An unpaid activity conducted during leisure time that benefits others.
12	Willingly repay society and make friends, sense pleasure, and enrich life at the same time.

To assess how each individual factor affects volunteer participation, we used a logistic regression model, with “volunteer” as the outcome variable and sociodemographic factors as predictor variables. As shown in Table 5, the two significant predictors were marital status and years lived in Canada. Compared with participants with all other marital statuses, participants who were married were less likely to become volunteers (married: $OR=0.422$, $95\%CI$ 0.192-0.932). By

comparison to participants living in Canada less than 5 years, those who had lived in Canada for 5 or more years were more likely to become volunteers ($OR=2.424$, $95\%CI$ 1.224-4.108). The results of the logistic regression analyses suggest a “volunteer act” is largely a personal choice not influenced by known factors such as age, gender and level of education. In other words, anyone can be a volunteer when the time and personal and family circumstances are right.

Table 5

Logistic regression model examining the factors associated with volunteering participation

Variable	OR	95% CI	
		Low	High
Sex			
Male	1		
Female	0.932	0.527	1.649
Age			
34 and below	1		
35-54	1.752	0.565	5.433
55 or above	1.175	0.407	3.393
Level of Education			
College or lower	1		
University or higher	0.957	0.499	1.836
Marital status			
All others	1		
Married	0.422	0.192	0.932
Employment			
All others	1		
Full time	0.555	0.163	1.893
Part time	0.358	0.092	1.391
Retired	0.238	0.046	1.240
Family annual income			
Less than \$40,000	1		
\$40,000 or higher	1.475	0.781	2.785
Years lived in Canada			
Less than 5	1		
5 or more	*2.242	1.224	4.108

Discussion

The concept of volunteering is in part based on the way people view their relationship with society. In Canada for example, volunteer activity is one of the cornerstones of civic participation and building social capital. Moreover, volunteer participation has long been viewed as an accepted measure of community vitality and cohesiveness. Giving personal time and

energy to one's community through volunteer activity has many personal and societal benefits and is the engine that sustains many charitable and non-profit organizations.

The sense of duty to consider and attend to the needs of the community has always been an integral feature of Chinese culture. Whereas in Western culture volunteering is perceived as giving freely of

one's personal time and energy (separate from paid work), in Chinese culture giving personal time and energy to the community is part of the social fabric and thus not easily separated from activities of community living. Thus formal "volunteering", in the Western sense of the word, began later in China. For example, in 1989, the first volunteering project set up to help the elderly in the community was founded in Heping District, Tianjin City (United Nations Development Program & United Nations Volunteers Program, 2011). Therefore, most Chinese people know little about the culture and norms of volunteering.

The 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) (Hall, Lasby, Ayer, & Gibbons, 2009) reported immigrants were less likely to become volunteers compared with native-born Canadians, with corresponding rates of 40% and 49%, respectively. Immigrants who have been in Canada for a longer period of time tend to volunteer more hours than those who arrived more recently. Among the participants of our study, the proportions of current volunteers (17.3%) and people who have volunteered at some point in the past (34.9%) are low. As previously noted, about 60% of survey participants have lived in Canada less than 5 years and the average length of time spent in Canada was 5.2 years, so most survey participants were new immigrants. Perhaps this is one of the reasons participants reported lower rates of

volunteering. For example, according to the United States Department of Labor (2009), Caucasians continued to volunteer at a higher rate (27.9%) than African-Americans (19.1%) and Asians (18.7%). Another report in England suggested Chinese/other ethnicities volunteered informally (28%), formal volunteering (18%) and any volunteering (37%) in 2007, while the volunteer rates for Caucasians were 35%, 28% and 49%, respectively (National Statistics, 2008).

There are many reasons why people volunteer, and undoubtedly motivation plays a key role in volunteerism (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996). In the present study, self-motivated initiation was cited as the main reason (44.4%) for individuals to start volunteering. Volunteers in this study hoped to achieve three main objectives through volunteering: 1) helping others and enrich own life (49.5%), 2) gaining experience for employment (40.7%), and 3) building social networks (36.7%). The findings are inconsistent with a previous national study in which the dominant volunteers were Caucasians. In the 2007 CSGVP, a similar proportion (45%) of volunteers expressed they approached an organization on their own initiative to become involved as a volunteer. More volunteers (93%) agreed that the desire to make a contribution to their community was an important reason for their volunteering

and more participants (48%) reported that they volunteered to network or meet people. However, improving job opportunities (23%) was less frequently cited as a reason in the CSGVP study (Hall et al., 2009). The results of this study also show discrepancy with studies in other countries. A study in Australia suggested the primary reason why one first began volunteering was because “someone asked (35.4%)” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007, p.31). The survey also found 56.6% of volunteers noted helping others/community was the main reason for being a volunteer; this proportion is similar to results found in this study. However, volunteers wishing to gain social contact and learn new skills/gain experience through volunteering in Australia were very low compared to this study: 22.1% and 11.0%, respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Therefore, the reasons and goals for commencing volunteering differ not only among races but also among countries.

In our survey, the main reasons for not volunteering were “no time” (46.6%) and lack of relevant information (32.1%). These findings are supported by other research. In the 2007 CSGVP, non-volunteers stated they did not have the time (68%) and lacked relevant information (24%) (Hall et al., 2009). In England (National Statistics, 2008), the barriers to formal volunteering were work commitments (59%), doing other things in their spare time (31%), looking

after children or the home (29%), and lack of awareness (15%). The former three barriers can be seen as having no time. Thus, from these studies, it can be concluded that the two major reasons preventing volunteering are the lack of time and information.

Although people view the concept and interpret the meaning of ‘volunteering’ differently, participant responses shared many common aspects. First, almost all people perceive volunteering as an unpaid activity. Second, most people believe that the concept of volunteering exists within the context of the society in question. Third, volunteering is generally believed to be mutually beneficial for both society as well as the volunteers since many people described volunteering as a way to enrich volunteers’ own lives and make them feel valued. Thus, the definitions of ‘volunteer’ offered by different researchers and populations have common components (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Hall et al., 2009; European Volunteer Centre, 2006).

According to the literature on volunteering, many researchers confirm there are significant differences in the socio-demographic characteristics between volunteers and non-volunteers. Compared with non-volunteers, volunteers tend to be married, female, employed part-time, have higher education, and higher incomes (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2008; Lie,

Baines, & Wheelock, 2009; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004; Suanet, Broese van Groenou, & Braam, 2009; Sundeen, 1990; Uslaner, 2002). However, inverse relationships between variables of sociodemographic characteristics and volunteering have been observed in other studies. Freeman (1997) found among women the proportion volunteering and the hours volunteered had a rough U-shaped relationship to hours worked. A recent survey in Canada shows the unmarried are most likely to be involved in volunteering (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). Musick and Wilson (2003) found that although the effects of education and income in Caucasian volunteers are exactly as predicted by the conventional resource theory of volunteering, among black people, there are no significant socioeconomic differences in volunteering.

In the present research, logistic regression analysis showed that not being married and living in Canada for 5 or more years were associated with increased volunteer activity. Compared with previous studies, the results of the present study partially explain the overall observed variation for the different associations between marital status among volunteers. Therefore, these findings suggest volunteering is largely a self-motivated social behaviour not dependent on sociodemographic factors, such as age, gender, and education, but may be more

dependent on the individual's ability, energy and experience.

In general, the proportions of current volunteers (17.3%) and those who have volunteered at some point in the past (34.9%) are low in comparison with the general Canadian population. Since the study sample was drawn from a number of Chinese organizations that are more likely to have volunteers, the true proportion of volunteers in the general population is likely to be lower. We believe the main contributing reasons for the low volunteering participation among the Chinese Canadian population are likely caused by cultural barriers and a lack of social assimilation. Many new immigrants have not fully adapted to Canadian culture and thus volunteer opportunities may not be pursued. Individuals who have recently immigrated to Canada may also be more focused on settlement related issues; for example, establishing themselves and their families in home, work and school settings, as opposed to devoting time to volunteer activity. Survival related activities will likely be a higher priority for new immigrants. Limited English language skills are a common barrier to mainstream volunteer participation (Randle & Dolnicar, 2009). These explanations are supported by the finding that 54% of volunteers provided service in Chinese organizations.

This study has a number of limitations. The data collected from the original study

was collected in 2005. The study did not use a population-based random probability sample and it only included a moderate sample size in Toronto. Thus, caution should be exercised when generalizing the results to other Chinese immigrant populations in Canada. As noted, the true proportion of Chinese immigrant volunteers in Canada could be lower than was found by this study. However, as the study population consists of people with various backgrounds and socioeconomic characteristics, the findings are believed to have good validity. Another limitation is that this study was conducted in Chinese and the back-and-forth language translation might bring a certain degree of ambiguity. Nevertheless, the translation tasks involved a number of people in this research team. We believe potential errors associated with language translation are unlikely to threaten the overall validity of this study. Finally, due to time and financial constraints, we were unable to collect some potentially valuable information such as types of volunteer activity and how volunteering benefitted the volunteers. Similarly, we were unable to fully utilize and explore the complete data set collected for this study. While we surveyed more than 300 people in this study, we only analyzed 289 subjects and, therefore, some of the data was not processed. However, we do not believe any additional sample size contribution would distort the overall results.

In conclusion, based on a relatively representative sample of immigrants from mainland China, this study provides a comprehensive picture with respect to the pattern and characteristics associated with volunteering. The benefits associated with volunteering to the individual and society are well documented. The findings suggest there is a potential pool of volunteers that have yet to be mobilized to provide service to Canadian society. Moreover, this untapped pool of volunteers can also improve the health and social benefits associated with volunteering.

Although this study cannot offer definitive explanations for the determinants of volunteer participation, the findings offer new insights in terms of how Chinese immigrants perceive the meaning of volunteering. Several opportunities for future research arise from this current study including research into the benefits of volunteering as a means of positively integrating into Canadian society and the potential of volunteering to ameliorate the stress associated with settlement in a new country.

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The New Chinese Community of Canada is a non-profit organization whose mission is: To help new immigrants assimilate into the Canadian society and improve their quality of life with primary focus on new immigrants from China by means of social networking and advocacy, lobbying Canadian government at all levels, public campaign, settlement and counseling service, workshops, and education and vocational training.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Questions on Chinese immigrants volunteering

Q1. Are you currently a volunteer? 1. Yes 2. No

Q2. Have you ever served as a volunteer? 1. Yes 2. No

Q3. If you have ever served as a volunteer,

a. How did you start?

1. self-motivated search

2. introduced by a friend or relative

3. other (please specify) _____

b. Why did you want to do volunteer work? (check all applicable)

1. to gain useful experience for employment;

2. increase social network and enrich personal life;

3. help others;

4. fill spare time;

5. other (please specify) _____

c. Where did you serve as a volunteer?

1. Chinese organization

2. other (please specify) _____

d. How long have you been serving as a volunteer?

_____ years _____ months _____ days

Demographics and Perceptions of Master Gardener Volunteers in Oregon

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Abstract

Master Gardener is a university-sponsored program, where trained volunteers expand the outreach of faculty members by delivering research-based education and advice to home and community gardeners. It requires substantial resources to effectively train Master Gardener volunteers. Thus, volunteer resource managers can maximize this initial investment by retaining high quality volunteers after they have completed their initial training and service obligation.

To understand the best ways to recruit and retain high quality volunteers, we conducted a statewide survey of the Oregon State University Extension Master Gardener program to assess the benefits that Master Gardener volunteers receive from their participation in the program. The survey also focused on volunteer demographics. The majority of the 781 individuals who responded to the survey were Caucasian, female and between the ages of 56 and 85. Volunteers identified access to information about horticulture, as well as understanding and knowledge, as the strongest benefits of volunteering. Survey results suggest that recruitment and retention of volunteers will work best when programs offer a variety of high-quality training opportunities for both new and continuing volunteers, and when trainings, service requirements and plant clinics can be offered evenings and weekends as well as during weekday hours. Future studies will assess whether or not alternative offerings significantly broaden the demographics of Master Gardener volunteers in Oregon.

Key Words: Master Gardener, volunteer retention, volunteer demographics

Introduction

Since 1976, the Oregon State University Extension Master Gardener program has trained and certified volunteers to provide information and technical assistance to the public about horticulture and sustainable gardening. To become a Master Gardener volunteer, individuals complete a 48–66 hour training program, pass a comprehensive exam, and volunteer

in their community through their local University Extension office. Master Gardener volunteers broaden the educational reach of Extension faculty and staff (Bobbitt, 1997; Finch, 1997; Ruppert, Bradshaw & Stewart, 1997; Mechling & Schumacher, 2001; Swackhammer & Kiernan, 2005) and greatly affect their communities (Braker, Leno, Pratt & Grobe, 2000). However, the substantial resources associated with

training Master Gardener volunteers means that volunteer administrators won't recoup expended costs if volunteers leave shortly after they are trained (Meyer & Hanchek, 1997). By collecting contemporary data on factors that influence volunteers, volunteer resource managers can more effectively plan their programming to engage and retain high quality volunteers (Rohs, Striblint, & Westerfield, 2002).

We conducted a statewide survey to assess what volunteers perceive to be the benefit(s) of the Oregon State University Master Gardener program. Via this survey,

we also characterized the demographics of Oregon's Master Gardener volunteers. Surveys of Oregon Master Gardener volunteers were conducted in 1992 (McNeilan, 1993) and 2001 (Kirsh and VanDerZanden, 2002). However, the program has grown substantially since that time (Table. 1), despite diminishing programmatic resources in Oregon and nationwide (McDowell, 2004).

Understanding the contemporary factors that motivate participation in this increasing volunteer base is critical to the continued success of the program.

Table 1

Total number of active volunteers and cumulative hours volunteered by Oregon Master Gardeners, from 1992 to 2011.

Year	Number of	
	Volunteers	Hours Volunteered
1992	2,137	73,844
2000	2,759	115,176
2008	3,504	173,270
2011	4,009	181,163

Materials and Methods

Survey questions and materials (e.g. postcards, invitation letters, informed consent documents) were submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved in February 2008. The study was exempt from full IRB review, as it posed minimal risks to participants.

The survey was mailed March 4, 2008 to 3,000 volunteers who were active in the program in 2007. Participation was optional. Participants could complete the survey online or call to request a paper copy. The survey remained online until April 8, 2008.

The survey consisted of 22 questions. The first six questions assessed the demographic make-up of the program, by asking for information on race, gender, age, years as a Master Gardener volunteer, hours volunteered in 2007, and county of residence. An additional 16 questions were

adopted from Schrock, Meyer, Ascher, and Snyder. (2000). Volunteers were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with statements about benefits of the Master Gardener program.

Statistical Analyses

Descriptive statistics (sample size, mean, standard error, 95% confidence limits) were computed for each survey statement. For comparison, means from Schrock et al. (2000) are presented next to the means and 95% confidence limits computed from this survey. Where the means from this comparison study fall outside of the 95% confidence limits computed for this study, the means can be considered significantly different at the 5% protection level (Fernandez-Duque, 1997; Brandstätter, 1999).

Analyses of variance were conducted to assess the effects of demographic characteristics on Likert rankings. To guard against Type I error, a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons was used. Because we tested the significance of each question as a function of six demographic characteristics, alpha was set to 0.008 for the rejection of the null hypothesis. Where a significant effect was found, Tukey's HSD was used to test for differences among means.

Results

A total of 781 individuals completed the survey, for a response rate of 26%. This is a lower response rate than the 46% (McNeilan, 1993) and 51% (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002) response rates of previous surveys of Oregon Master Gardener volunteers. However, the total number of responses received was larger for

this survey, relative to the 1992 (n=276) and 2001 (n=132) surveys.

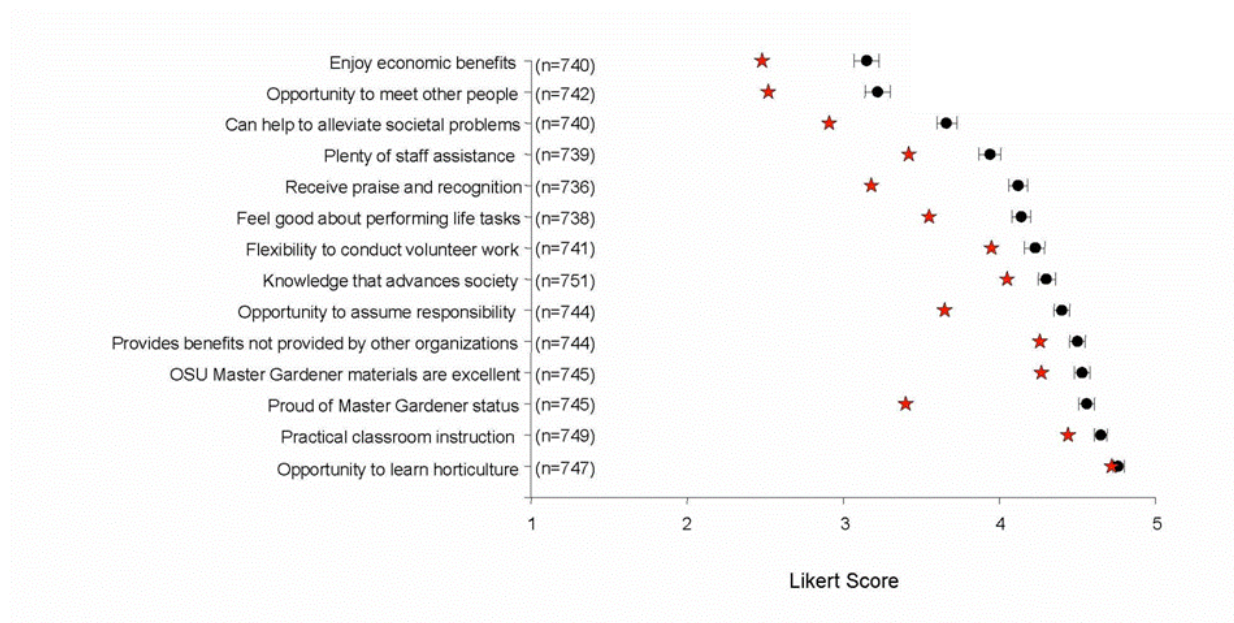
The majority of the respondents were Caucasian (95.2% of individuals who answered this question, n=754), female (73%, n = 765), and between the ages of 56 and 85 (74%, n=770). Most respondents had been a Master Gardener for three to four years (27.5%) and volunteered 50 or fewer hours during 2007 (52%).

Perceived Benefits of Volunteering

The mean Likert value of statements used to examine the perceived benefits of being an OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer varied from 3.15 (equivalent to 'neither agree or disagree') to 4.76 (equivalent to 'strongly agree') (Fig 1). Notably, for all statements, the mean from Schrock et al. (2000) falls outside of and below the 95% confidence limits for Likert rankings of statements in this study (Fig. 1).

Figure 1.

Mean Likert scores of responses to questions from our 2008 survey (black circles) and Schrock et al.'s 2000 survey (red stars), on the benefits of being an Extension Master Gardener volunteer.



Respondents identified access to information or knowledge and understanding as the greatest benefits of being an OSU Master Gardener volunteer (range of means = 4.25 to 4.76). Secondary benefits included opportunities for personal growth (range of means = 3.66 to 4.56). Statements about career, protective, and social benefits were ranked lower (mean of 3.15, 3.42 and 3.43, respectively) than statements about knowledge or personal growth. However, it is important to note that only a single statement was used to assess respondents' perception of the benefits.

Effects of demographic characteristics on survey replies

Neither race nor age significantly influenced the Likert scores of the 16 survey statements. However, the lack of a race effect is likely due (at least in part) to the lack of variation in race (92% Caucasian) among Master Gardener volunteers.

Gender had an influence on two of the Likert rankings of statements about the benefits of the Master Gardener program. Specifically, females were more likely to agree that the Master Gardener program teaches knowledge (mean Likert score = 4.34) and skills (mean Likert score = 4.30) that advance society, relative to males (mean scores = 4.18 and 4.10, respectively). These

differences were significantly different for the knowledge ($F_{1,739} = 6.99$, $P = 0.008$) and skills ($F_{1,726} = 10.38$, $P = 0.001$) questions.

Years as a Master Gardener Volunteer

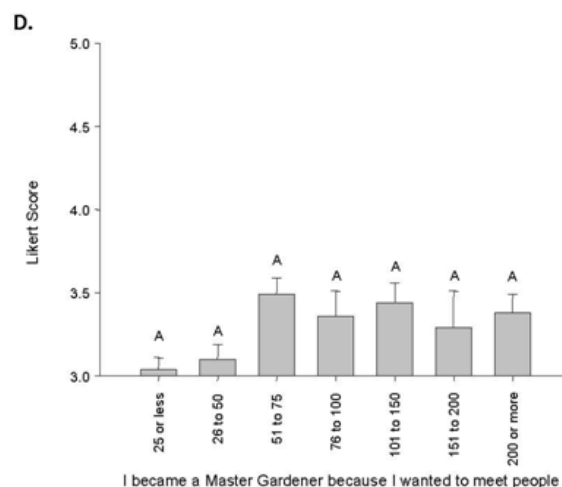
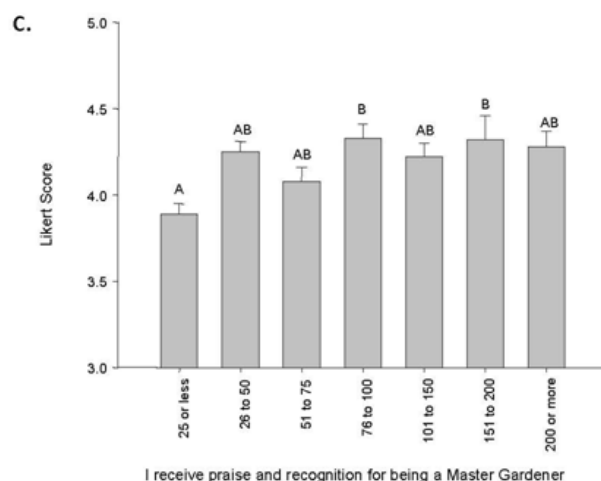
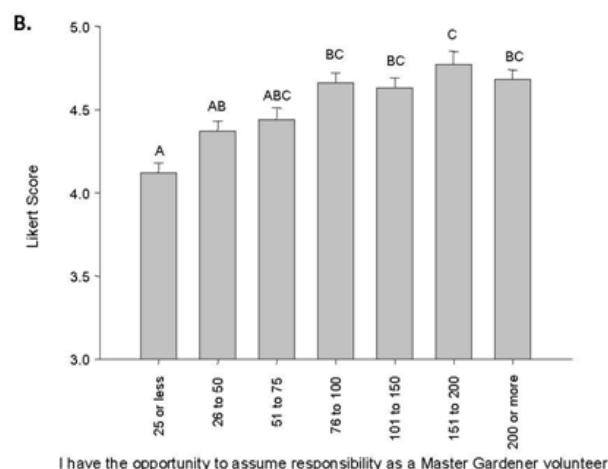
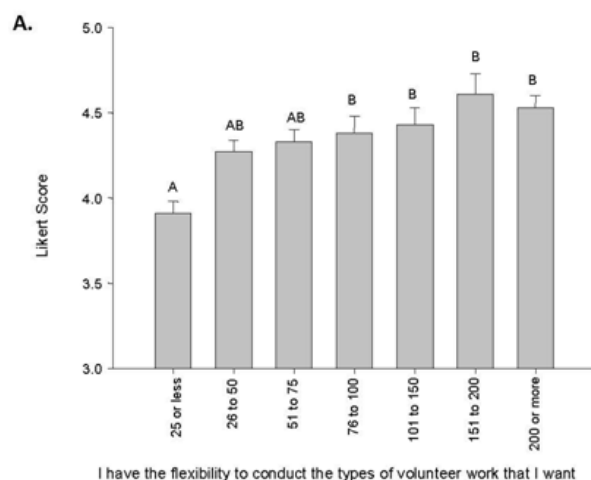
The number of years an individual has been a Master Gardener volunteer did not significantly influence the Likert scores of the 16 survey statements.

Hours volunteered

Those volunteering 25 or fewer hours in 2007 (less than the minimum payback required by most Oregon counties) were significantly less likely to feel they had the flexibility to conduct the type of service that they wanted (Likert Mean = 3.91; Fig. 2A) or to assume responsibility (Likert Mean = 4.12; Figure 2B). In addition, although these same individuals agree that they receive praise for their work as a volunteer (Likert Mean = 3.89), their response was once again less enthusiastic than those volunteering more hours (Fig. 2C). Those volunteering less than 25 or fewer hours in 2007 were among the most ambivalent when asked if they joined the program to meet people (Likert Mean = 3.04), although their reply was not significantly different from those volunteering more hours (Fig. 2D).

Figure 2.

Mean Likert scores (and associated standard errors)) for answers to questions that address the flexibility of the Master Gardener program (A), responsibility assumed by volunteers (B), recognition received by volunteers (C) and importance of the social aspects of Master Gardening to volunteer recruitment (D). Responses on the y axis are grouped according to the number of hours volunteered in 2007. For each graph, unique letters above bars indicate those means that were significantly different from one another.



Discussion

The Master Gardener program continues to grow in Oregon. More individuals are collectively donating more hours of service to their local communities as OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers. Volunteer resource managers are thus challenged to effectively train and manage more volunteers, often in the face of diminishing resources.

Racially, the program is relatively homogenous, consistent with previous surveys of OSU Master Gardeners. Both McNeilan (unpublished data) and Kirsch and VanDerZanden (2002) found that 95% of respondents were Caucasian. Even when

adjusted for numbers of minorities within Oregon (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), there are relatively few Hispanic (0.66%), African American (0.40%) or Asian (0.53%) OSU Master Gardeners. This lack of diversity in volunteers likely impacts the program's ability to provide educational opportunities for a broad array of Oregonians.

Women and individuals who are 56 years of age or older currently constitute the majority of Master Gardener volunteers. Although the proportion of male Master Gardeners has decreased from 42% in 2002 (McNeilan, 1993) to 26% in 2001 (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002), the proportion of

male volunteers remained steady at 26% in the present study.

Because of categorical differences, it was not possible to directly compare age distributions between surveys. However, several noteworthy qualitative comparisons can be made. For example, individuals aged 50 and older represented 65% and 71% of respondents in 1992 and 2001, respectively (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002; McNeilan, 1993). In the present study, individuals aged 56 and older represented 74% of respondents. Similarly, individuals aged 40 and under represented 16%, 7% and 3% of respondents in 1992, 2001 and 2007, respectively (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002; McNeilan, 1993). This shift towards older and away from younger Master Gardener volunteers cannot be attributed to a demographic shift in Oregon's population. Individuals aged 65 and older comprised roughly 13% of Oregon's population in 1990, 2000 and 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2009).

Although we cannot be sure of the mechanism underlying this gender and age bias, it is possible that women and/or older individuals have schedules that allow them to pursue Master Gardener training and volunteer opportunities. An alternative hypothesis is that women and older individuals have greater interest in gardening and/or service relative to their counterparts. These two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive.

As with previous surveys conducted in Oregon (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002), Virginia (Relf & McDaniel, 1994) Missouri (Schrock et al., 2000) and Mississippi (Wilson and Newman, 2011), Master Gardeners in Oregon most valued the opportunity to learn through their training and volunteerism. A broader survey of Extension volunteers within Oregon (i.e. Master Gardeners, 4-H, Master Food Preservers, Extension Advisory Council,

etc.) also found that opportunities for personal growth and gains in knowledge and skills were rated highest among benefits of the Oregon Extension volunteer programs (Braker et al., 2000). Although we included statements addressing potential benefits associated with personal growth and community involvement, such benefits were not ranked high in this survey (Fig. 1).

Together, these results suggest that training programs should be primarily focused on developing and improving volunteers' skills and knowledge. Although friendships may naturally form among volunteers, results from our own study, as well as past surveys conducted in Oregon (Kirsch and VanDerZanden, 2002), Virginia (Relf & McDaniel, 1994) Missouri (Schrock et al., 2000) and Mississippi (Wilson and Newman, 2011) all suggest that individuals are not volunteering to meet people or expand their social network. Volunteer administrators should thus concentrate efforts on developing high quality educational programs, rather than arranging social activities.

A primary impediment to recruiting and retention of a diverse population of volunteers might be scheduling of training, service hours and recognition events. In most Oregon counties, these are predominantly scheduled during the workday hours of the week. This set-up prevents potential volunteers from participating in the program, and it also prevents current volunteers from being fully utilized and appreciated (Braker et al., 2000). In fact, our results found that individuals volunteering the least in 2007 (25 hours or less) were least likely to feel as if they had the flexibility to volunteer as they liked (Fig. 2A) or the opportunity to assume responsibility within the program (Fig. 2B). These volunteers were also the least likely to feel appreciated (Fig. 2C).

Increased adoption of alternative training models (e.g. weekend/evening trainings, online/hybrid trainings), service options (e.g. online Master Gardener clinics or hotlines) and social/recognition events might help broaden recruitment and increase retention of current volunteers. In 2008, two of 26 counties in Oregon offered Master Gardener training classes Saturdays and/or weekends. In 2009-2010, three of 29 counties offered Saturday training classes. Another county has offered a hybrid training, consisting of online and in person lessons, since 2008. An online Master Gardener training has also been made available since 2008, statewide, and plans are in the works to make online recertification available to current volunteers. Whether or not these programmatic additions broaden the diversity of volunteers remains to be seen, and will be the focus of a future study.

Survey results suggest that recruitment and retention of volunteers will work best when programs offer a variety of high-quality training and when opportunities for training and fulfilling service requirements can accommodate those who cannot take advantage of weekday classes and plant clinics. As technology becomes more available and acceptable to volunteers, many of whom are senior citizens, options for more access also should increase.

In addition, concerted and specific efforts should be made to recruit and train individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. One way to do this might be to increase outreach and educational events in ethnic neighborhoods, gardens or community groups, and to specifically include information on volunteer opportunities. By recruiting diverse individuals into the volunteer corps, opportunities for broadening outreach and education may also increase.

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Services Offered by Voluntary Associations: Do Citizens Trust in Them or Not? A Survey in an Italian Sample

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Abstract

Voluntary associations are an example of a relationship based on trust and are indicators of a civil, participative, and democratic society. However, do citizens, as those who make use of voluntary associations, trust in the services provided by volunteers? In an attempt to answer this question we conducted a descriptive research study in Italy involving 120 citizens who had or had not experienced the services offered by voluntary associations: the goal was to describe and analyze the trust in those services and the perception of volunteers' skills and abilities to meet citizens' needs. Suggestions are also provided to voluntary associations regarding strategies for responding to citizens' needs.

Key Words: citizen, trust, volunteerism, association, Italy

Introduction

Over the last decade, the social sciences have questioned the concept of trust with respect to volunteering. This interest has been determined, inter alia, by the analysis of the progressive increase of trust in volunteering and the erosion of trust in others, in institutions, the media, and organizations in general, as highlighted by recent opinion polls in Italy (Eurispes, 2011). The progressive erosion of trust in institutions is a phenomenon that is not exclusive to Italy: in the 1990s, in the US and Britain, mutual trust in government, in the press, and in for-profit organizations was lower than in the previous decade (Pharr & Putnam, 2000). In the EU, distrust in for-profit, political, and government organizations stems not only from their failure to achieve goals or implement methods, but also from the lack of transparency that has characterized their activities. This interesting concept has been the subject of a number of studies. Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1993) investigated

the potential presence of a large network of volunteers for helping to describe the determinants of the difference in terms of socioeconomic welfare in Southern and Northern Italy. The volunteer network is, therefore, an infrastructure that helps to develop a civil society (Dekker, 2008) and fosters a sense of trust that supports and contributes to the accomplishment of a nation's socioeconomic objectives. These data were confirmed by a study by Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti (1993) that involved 32,261 volunteers from European countries: volunteers are more trust-oriented than non-volunteers. Belonging to an association seems to determine a propensity for the interpersonal dimension, a propensity that increases if the subject is a member of multiple groups or has experimented with various volunteer activities (Halman, 2001).

Anheier and Kendall (2002) investigated trust in voluntary work, adopting a social approach that considers the volunteer as a resource of social capital. The term social capital refers to a network of

people and organizations in which one of the values is trust. In social capital, contacts and relational networks are not only considered as resources that are useful in the short term, for instance to obtain funding or achieve a goal, but they are also deemed useful from a long-term perspective in order to maintain a status that contributes to the social perception of those groups by others (Coleman, 1993). It is, as proposed by Bourdieu (1979), a sort of competitive strategy: voluntary associations competing in the territory not only economically but also socially. Status is also a fundamental value. Therefore, associations, in order to promote their social status, facilitate connections and they establish cooperation: if the interaction between the volunteers' actions and a positive response by the community increases the association's status, then it generates trust among its members. Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti (1993) argued that associations, by their nature, serve to rebalance the broader social system: if volunteer associations are set up in response to the needs of citizens, of which the State fails to meet, their existence is a statement of duties (mission) and expectations (vision). Furthermore, scholars have noted that the likelihood of solving civil and social issues increases in countries with a larger number of voluntary associations: these forms of association have been cited as an example of the kinds of trust-based relations in civil society (Tonkiss & Passey, 1999). In his investigation, Putnam (1993) noted that the density of association membership is one indicator of regional social capital (composed of networks of civic engagement, reciprocity norms, and trust), and showed this to be linked to several societal outcomes and to the effectiveness of government performance (Stolle, 1998). There are two reasons for this higher probability: voluntary associations build a social network that

provides all citizens with access to services (e.g., social and cultural), and enables volunteers to enter into direct contact with a portion of society and to recognize its needs (Edwards, Foley & Diani, 2001). This contact is – as Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth found (1996) – one of the four dimensions of volunteerism, as the establishment of rules of reciprocity founded on trust between donors and receivers. Authors such as Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti (1993) have emphasized that voluntary associations and volunteerism form a kind of horizontal democracy: rules and principles are the result of a shared social construction based on trust and participation (Musick & Wilson, 2008) and this creates a virtuous circle. Therefore, trusting people are more likely to offer their time as volunteers (Rothstein & Uslander, 2006).

The findings of the study by Tonkiss and Passey (1999) on trust perception among the beneficiaries of voluntary associations show that 'rather than being positioned in a relation of trust with service providers, users articulate definite claims which may be formally pursued, creating a relation based on confidence in organisational systems' (p. 271). As suggested by Anheier and Kendall (2002), the reasons are linked to a mission or benefits or to a real or perceived goal. Moreover, if a beneficiary perceives that the service offered by a voluntary association provides an appropriate response to his/her needs, the voluntary association confirms its organizational meaning, and that clearly shows the reason as to why the association was established by the founders and is continued by members (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

Other research on trust in volunteer services involving beneficiaries has revealed different and contrasting data. For example, Pearce (1993) conducted a survey of seven for-profit organizations and seven voluntary

associations operating in the same sector (educational, cultural, artistic, and so on) in the same geographical setting, and found that people doubt volunteers' skills and prefer paid workers who are required to comply with organizational standards. As suggested by Lawler and Rhode (1976), and later by Snyder, Omoto, and Crain (1999), citizens may perceive a lack of professional behavior control for volunteers. However, for paid workers in for-profit organizations, maintaining higher quality standards is essential for organizational survival. Another obstacle to trust in voluntary associations seems to be job attendance (Smith, 1981): as citizens may have doubts about a service managed by unpaid volunteers with no clear organizational role, the service may be perceived as uncertain and of poorer quality. At the same time, volunteers are credited with relational competence in terms of involvement, enthusiasm, empathy, and intrinsic motivation (Organ, 1988) that also enhances the association's value and is perceived as absent in professional relationships with for-profit organizations and paid workers.

How can such differences be explained? Is trust in services offered by voluntary associations linked to the experience of these services? Could this experience be the cause – as suggested in the literature (Currall & Epstein, 2003) – of the difference in the perception of abilities and skills? Is there a relationship with expectations being met/not met? This study aims to answer these questions by investigating the perceived trust shown by a sample of Italian citizens. According to Newton (2001), trust is defined as 'the actor's belief that, at worst, others will not knowingly or willingly do him harm, and at best, that they will act in his interests' (p. 202). As suggested by Wilson and Musick (1999), the hypothesis is that there is a difference between citizens who have

previous experience with services offered by volunteers (CE) and those who have not (CNE): the perception of efficacy is inevitably vitiated by experience (Stolle, 1998). And, as suggested by Pearce (1993), there is a difference in how services are perceived:

- CE have less trust in volunteers' specific skills and abilities (ad hoc for the service offered) than in those of paid workers, and more trust in volunteers' relational competence.
- CNE have the same trust in the services offered by paid workers and volunteers; trust is linked to other factors such as organizational standards.

Method

The investigation was conducted in several stages. The first consisted of a review of the literature dealing with trust in volunteerism in order to draw up working plans for the investigation and to select the interview questions and data analysis methods. In the second stage, both the group of citizens who had experience with the services offered by voluntary associations (CE) and the group of citizens who had no experience of the services offered by voluntary associations (CNE) were interviewed. In the third stage, the findings were analyzed.

Data were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews that addressed the following topics:

- Type of experience (personal or not) and satisfaction with the services offered by volunteers (CE)
- Volunteers' skills and abilities (CNE-CE)
- Priority area of volunteer activity (CNE-CE).

Content and order of questions were verified in a pre-test phase.

Participants

Each group comprised 60 (CE and CNE) subjects. The inclusion criteria for all the subjects were age (≥ 18 years) and no previous participation in volunteer work. Previous participation in associations as volunteers could, in fact, vitiate the perception of volunteers' performance and the services offered (Halman, 2001). The average age was 39.83 years ($sd=5.72$), and half of the subjects were male.

Procedure

A total of 120 interviews were conducted in 2010. The interviewers (three) were students trained for the purpose. They applied for and received academic credit for their participation. The same procedure was used for each group of subjects: in outdoor areas (such as public squares and shopping center parking lots), interviewers explained the goal of the investigation to adult citizens and, for those who were interested, they read the privacy statement and anonymity guarantee. The interviewers then asked the subjects if they were volunteers (currently or

in the past). Those who said no were included in the study. Each interview (lasting 20 minutes) was taped and subsequently transcribed so that it could be processed, thereby obtaining two text corpora (CE and CNE).

The Content Analysis methodology was used (Weber, 1990) in order to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner. Text corpora were analyzed statistically with the Alceste 4.6 program. This program is used in the social sciences to study the distribution of words and how they are associated in a text (Matteucci & Tomasetto, 2002). It supports content analysis, and makes it possible to identify the most characteristic words in textual units or chunks. It consists in different stages producing different data processing and output, as shown in table 1.

Table 1

Alceste 4.6 stages, stages description, and output

Stages	Description	Output
Descending hierarchical classification	The corpus is subjected to a descending hierarchical classification procedure (Reinert, 1993) that partitions the subjects of the analysis, i.e., the statements or "contextual units" that make up the corpus, into classes that use a characteristic vocabulary. If a specific word is used frequently, this means that a particular importance is assigned to the concept underlying it.	Dendrogram of the stable classes
Association between words and classes	The χ^2 test is performed on the association between words and classes. This identifies the typical vocabulary of each cluster, which consists of those words that occur more frequently in it than in the rest of the corpus (Matteucci & Tomasetto, 2002). The program also shows parts of text from which the words were taken.	Vocabulary of each class

As suggested by Mazzara (2002) in order to understand the value of classes and words associated with them, the author and students worked separately to describe and understand the lexical worlds (Reinert,

1993). Notes were then exchanged, read, and collective decisions about classes were made in the course of several thoughtful conversations. This procedure helped to increase the accuracy and consistency of the

analysis. Consistency was, therefore, guaranteed by its reproducibility (or inter-code reliability).

Results

Findings from the CE group

More than a third had experience with the services offered by voluntary associations in health care (33.3%), one-quarter in social work, 21.7% in environmental protection, 8.3% in the services offered during emergency situations (e.g., after flooding), and 11.7% had experience of social and cultural services (e.g., tour guides). Most subjects (56.7%) were moderately satisfied with the services offered, 26.7% were highly satisfied, and 16.6% were not satisfied. Almost half of CE (53.3%) had experienced the services directly.

The interview text corpus showed a total word count of 27,463, of which 1,215 were reduced forms. The average frequency of occurrence was 13. Of the 646 elementary context units or ECUs that were classified, the program analyzed 395, or 61.1%. On the basis of the co-occurrence of forms and context units, the statements making up the corpus were divided by means of a descending hierarchical classification into three classes. Figure 1 shows the dendrogram of stable classes that enabled us to determine the homogeneity and diversity of the classes. For each class, the first five words (presented in reduced form) were identified and ranked by χ^2 association and a sample from the interviews were inserted (Table 2).

Figure 1

CE group - Dendrogram of stable classes.

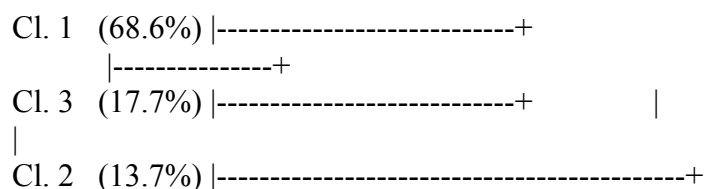


Table 2

CE group - Text corpus analysis.

Words	Class I		
	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Volunt<	75	79	31.78
Experience	89	99	27.81
Work<	41	41	20.93
Profession+	36	50	18.12
Practice	33	33	16.48

From Interviews:

“Volunteers often have no training and no experience. Some years ago, my family and I were flooded. While civil protection workers were well prepared, the volunteers didn’t know what they were supposed to do. In my opinion, paid workers should be the first to intervene in emergencies, while volunteers could step in later, supervised by paid workers.” (female, age 23, student).

“In hospitals, paid workers are more professional. I think that volunteers choose that context to socialize, and they don’t have any practical grounding in medicine. I prefer a paid worker. It doesn’t matter whether or not he or she is kind. I want him or her to take effective action.” (female, age 40, entrepreneur).

“I prefer paid workers, ‘cause it’s their job. I don’t trust in the services offered by volunteers. Some friends of mine are volunteers in health services and they are not well trained.” (female, age 20, student).

Class II

Words	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Skill+	30	33	182.02
Organiz<	30	39	146.69
Interest<	30	42	132.84
Time	27	53	72.06
Help<	9	9	58.16

From Interviews:

“Volunteers have great sensitivity because they feel other people’s problems as they do their own. Certainly this activity requires time and isn’t simple to organize, as there are a lot of commitments in a week when you have a job, a family, friends. So I think that they have managerial skills, for themselves and others.” (female, age 31, clerical worker).

“Someone who decides to become a volunteer has a lot of free time, and I think that volunteers are people who need to do something, and maybe they are not satisfied with their job. Maybe they would like to change it and volunteerism is an opportunity... It is also a chance to learn something else and to improve a skill for example.” (male, age 18, student).

Class III

Words	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Support<	29	41	88.17
Cultur<	23	33	66.71
Social<	10	10	47.63
Association+	9	9	42.76
Institution+	9	9	42.76

From Interviews:

“Volunteers should help people, supporting them when they have to cope with institutions. Paid workers can’t do everything, such as pay attention to every single problem faced by every single person. With immigrants, for example, volunteers could explain our laws, our rules, our social context, while paid workers have to enforce the laws.” (male, age 70, retired)

Figure 1 illustrates how the words that were grouped in classes I and III were more homogeneous than those in class II. Class I refers to trust in the services offered by voluntary associations as experienced by subjects and class III refers to the operative intervention ascribed to volunteers. Class II refers to the skills and abilities perceived as characterizing volunteers’ motivation to spend their time in carrying out a project to change society or part of it or to improve a system, for example.

The data that emerged from the interviews (table 2, class I) show the presence of words relating to volunteers’ motivation (volunt<, χ^2 31.78), work (χ^2 20.93), training in practical situation (practice χ^2 16.48; experience χ^2 27.81). Sentences associated with them shed light on the differences between the types of service offered: while volunteers were well regarded in social and cultural promotion services, in cooperative projects and in safeguarding human and civil rights, CE preferred paid workers in health care and emergency situations. As described by the interviewees, volunteers’ motivations could be unclear and their training could be less thorough than that of paid workers. The impact of this lack of preparation could be dangerous in health care and emergency situations.

From the interviews, it also emerged that 43.3% of CE do not trust the health and emergency services provided by voluntary associations. Interviewees ascribed different motivations. One person in the CE group, when referring to volunteers’ personal

knowledge, stated that she prefers paid workers (see sample from the interviews).

Interviewees suggested that volunteers and their associations (class III; χ^2 42.76) should work in other contexts, offering cultural (χ^2 66.71) and social (χ^2 47.63) services in order to give relational and emotive support (χ^2 88.17) alongside paid workers (institution+, χ^2 42.76) with other roles, responsibilities, and goals (see part of interviews in table 2, class III).

Class II lists the words used by interviewees to describe the skills (χ^2 182.02) and abilities attributed to volunteers. From the data we gathered, it is noteworthy that the interviewees perceived volunteers as people with organizational abilities (in work and family management; organiz<, χ^2 146.69; time, χ^2 72.06) and an attitude of solidarity (in helping others; help<, χ^2 58.16) who seek to learn and improve themselves (interest<, χ^2 132.84). However, they did not consider these skills and abilities enough in order to trust in the services offered, as emerged from the interviews.

Findings from the CNE group

The text corpus showed a total word count of 25,596, of which 1,547 were reduced forms. The average frequency of occurrence was 17. Of the 636 ECUs that were classified, the program analyzed 538, or 84.6%. Figure 2 shows the dendrogram of the three stable classes. For each class, the first five words were identified and ranked by χ^2 association with a sample from the interviews (Table 3).

Figure 2.

CNE group - Dendogram of stable classes

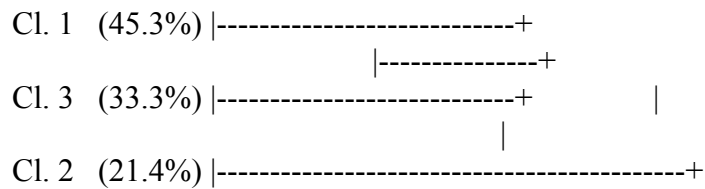


Table 3.

CNE group - Text corpus analysis.

Class I			
Words	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Volunt<	64	84	38.19
Work<	22	22	27.64
Pai+	20	20	25.03
Train<	23	25	23.02
Difference	18	18	22.44

From Interviews:

“I think that both paid workers and volunteers have skills and ability. Health care is so important, and people who are a part of that system must have the same training. In addition, volunteers receive no payment, and so they have a lot of motivation.” (female, age 54, housewife)

“In my opinion, paid workers and volunteers have the same responsibilities in emergencies. If an institution or a voluntary association does wrong, they face justice and public opinion, and people refuse to utilize their services in all fields.” (female, age 24, student)

Class II			
Words	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Red Cross	33	34	123.70
Avis	33	36	113.43
Emergency	27	28	99.00
Child+	18	21	53.82
Ill<	16	19	46.27

From Interviews:

“Helping children and the sick is a priority not only in Italy but also worldwide. In some places there is a lot of degradation. Voluntary associations could make the difference, not only with fundraising, but also with their work.” (female, age 26, freelance)

Class III			
Words	Occurrence inside cluster	Total occurrence	χ^2
Time	40	49	56.79
Free	44	62	44.85
Compet<	24	28	36.59
Do	14	17	19.05
Problem+	9	9	18.36

From Interviews:

“Maybe volunteers are more competent than paid workers. Paid workers don’t care about people’s problems and whether or not they solve them is all the same to them. They only do their job. Volunteers choose to do something else and they devote their time to caring and really solving problems.” (male, age 33, freelance)

As Figure 2 indicates, these words are grouped in classes I and III and are more homogeneous than class II. Class I refers to trust in the services offered by voluntary associations, the perceived difference between volunteers and paid workers, while class III refers to the skills and abilities attributed to volunteers. Class II refers to the priority activities that citizens ascribed to volunteer intervention.

The data that emerged from the interviews (table 3, class I) indicated that there is no difference in trust between the services offered by volunteers and paid workers, as evidenced by the presence of the following words: volunt< (χ^2 38.19), work< (χ^2 27.64), pai+ (χ^2 25.03), difference (χ^2 22.44). Interviewees perceived that the services offered by volunteers – as they are performed gratuitously – contain a sort of guarantee of a high level of attention to people. Organizational recruitment and training (train<, χ^2 23.02) are the mainstays of the trust in services offered by volunteers. If voluntary associations do wrong, they face justice just like other organizations (see sample from the interviews).

As volunteers join a mission of their own free will (to change society or improve the health care system, for instance), interviewees attribute social and relational competences to them that are often not perceived in paid workers (table I, class III; free, χ^2 44.85; problem+, χ^2 18.36; compet<, χ^2 36.59), who ‘just’ do their job (do, χ^2 19.05). Thus, the skills attributed to volunteers are linked to their ability to care for and support others with their presence.

The words listed in class II refer to priority activities that are ascribed to volunteer work. Interviewees mentioned major national and international associations in which all of them trust. Other priority activities are the need to help the weak, such as children (χ^2 53.82) and the sick (ill<, χ^2 46.27). In these activities, CNE believe that the services offered by voluntary associations could make a difference.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate citizens’ trust in the services offered by voluntary associations in relation to their experience or lack of experience with these services.

The data collected showed that CE and CNE have different degrees of trust in the services offered by voluntary associations. CE identify a significant difference in these services, as in how they are linked to their mission: CE do not trust volunteers' skills and abilities in health care and emergency situations, in which they prefer paid workers (table 2 – class I). Consistent with these findings, most of these interviewees had experience with the services offered by voluntary associations in health care and emergency situations, and only 26.7% were highly satisfied with those services. CE perceived volunteers' recruitment and training as less thorough than that of paid workers, and thus prefer volunteers to focus on social and cultural work, alongside and under the supervision of a paid worker (table 2 – class III).

Volunteers are perceived as people who have time to devote to services that are dedicated to others, but with unclear motivations correlated with the ability to organize their time to satisfy personal interests (to better themselves, for example; table 2 – class II), or to meet other people and socialize. At the same time, as regards volunteers' skills, CE do not ascribe relational competences to volunteers or they see these competences as not so important. Above all, these competences are not enough to place equal or more trust in the services offered by voluntary associations than in those offered by institutional organizations. The CE dendrogram of stable classes (figure 1) shows that interviewees' words about volunteers' skills and abilities are more consistent with the priority areas of volunteer activity (identified in the social and cultural context, rather than in health care and emergency situations) and less with volunteers' perceived characteristics. The CNE dendrogram (figure 2) shows greater consistency between trust in volunteers' services as well as perceived skills and abilities and volunteers' characteristics, as

these are more different from the priority areas of volunteer activity. CNE, in fact, perceived volunteers as having the same capabilities as paid workers because institutions and/or voluntary associations must pay the same attention to screening people, recruiting and training them in order to maintain organizational standards (as suggested in the literature; see Brudney, 2000). Furthermore, volunteers are perceived as more motivated to help and solve problems (table 3 – class I), and to pay more attention to people than paid workers (class III): so CNE perceived that the services offered by voluntary associations could earn the same or more trust than those provided by institutional organizations. The data indicate that CNE are not well informed about the services offered by voluntary associations, since they only mentioned major associations. The operative sectors indicated by CNE are varied and vague, while interviewees' words referred to weakness, children, and illness (table 3 – class II). The risk is that CNE could have expectations that could fail to be met: as suggested by the literature and data, the rejection of expectations determines a variation in the perception of skills and abilities so that trust in the services offered by voluntary associations decreases.

Several suggestions for voluntary associations emerge from these results and an analysis of the literature: citizens are well disposed toward services offered by volunteers – as borne out by the 6.8 million Italians who benefit from their services – but when they are faced with a health problem or an emergency, they perceive paid workers as more competent (Pearce, 1993). At the same time, volunteers are perceived as more motivated (Organ, 1988) and capable of paying attention to relational needs by citizens with no experience of the services offered by voluntary associations. However, citizens are not as familiar with these services as with volunteers' roles in certain circumstances,

such as health care and emergencies. Above all, ensuring trust in the services offered by voluntary associations calls for: a) guaranteeing volunteers' skills and abilities, transparent recruitment and training procedures, and their compliance with organizational and/or association standards and b) promoting the association's presence in the area, the services offered (e.g., mission and goal), and the volunteers' role in relation to the institutional organization.

For the first point, communication (folders and posters, for example) could be used in order to present: how volunteers are recruited and selected, how they are committed, what kinds of roles, functions, and responsibilities they have; how and who provides for their training; the presence (if any) of tools to mark out the information, placement, assignment, and performance; for who and when the volunteers' work evaluation is performed, who controls their work. In order to have more chance of visibility (b), the strategies are the same that are used to recruit new volunteers: folders, article in local newspapers, campaigns, information point, calendars, public events, institutions' meeting (schools and hospitals, for example). For the public, communication could be useful to declare what the goals, projects, and activities are where the association is involved, the institutional network in which the association is placed, and the type of associations' users and to whom it is not directed.

These suggestions could enable voluntary associations to improve their public visibility, increase their contacts in order to improve fundraising, for example, and permit citizens to choose services that are offered by voluntary associations with a fuller knowledge of their limits and potential.

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Volunteers as a unique organizational resource: Conceptualizations in practice and management responses - Lessons from Switzerland

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Abstract

Volunteers' contribution to non-profit organizations (NPO) is immense, and it is often argued that they provide complementary, rather than substitute services. Exploring in as far as volunteers are perceived as a unique organizational resource, this article discusses literature and qualitative data of 22 interviews with 3 expert groups: volunteer resource managers, volunteer researchers, and representatives of Benevol Switzerland, Association of Competence Centers for Volunteering. The data shows that volunteers are perceived as a unique resource, whereas the explicitness with respect to the volunteers' role and position in the organization varies. Our interviewees highlight the uniqueness of volunteers' in moments of reflection about the added values of volunteers such as 'heart competence', ambassadorial representation, critical inputs and spirit. Volunteer resource managers respond to the uniqueness of volunteers by persuasion, multilingualism, empathy, framing boundedness and feedback. These alternative volunteer resource management strategies focus on emotion, interaction and negotiation in order to create a dialog between the organization and the volunteers, appreciating the distinctive features of volunteers. The findings show that reflection about the uniqueness of the volunteer resource reveal management responses which have a high potential to complement traditional human resource management (HRM) instruments. Further research is needed on how these two approaches - HRM and management responses to the uniqueness of volunteers' - can be effectively combined.

Key Words: added value, volunteer resource, volunteer management

Introduction

Volunteering is one of the main characteristics that distinguish non-profit organizations (NPO) from other organizational forms (Salamon & Anheier, 1992). Statistics show the importance of volunteers' contribution to NPO, e.g. the data provided by Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. It is

often argued that volunteering not only substitutes, but also complements the work of paid staff (Handy, Mook, & Quarter, 2008; Preston, 2006). This implies that volunteering is distinct from paid work, but little is known about the unique value of volunteering so far (Metz, Roza, van Baren, Meijs, & Hoogervost, 2011).

This article explores in as far volunteers are perceived as unique resource in the field of volunteer resource management. This main research question is divided into two sub-questions: What are the added values volunteers contribute to the activities of non-profit organizations (NPO), compared to paid staff? And how can management respond to the uniqueness of volunteers? In order to answer these questions, we first briefly review literature and then go into qualitative data from expert interviews.

The uniqueness of volunteers in volunteer resource management – Literature review

The distinctive nature of volunteers is revealed in various discussions about similarities and differences between volunteers and paid staff. Based on a literature review, Studer & von Schnurbein (2012) argue that the majority of publications on volunteering in organizational contexts emphasizes the differences, rather than the similarities, between volunteers and paid staff. Volunteers and paid staff differ with respect to motivation, compliance, resources and expectations. Several authors highlight aspects which make volunteers unique: their potential for sense production (Wehner, Mieg, & Güntert, 2006) by “emotional and value-based activity” (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008, p. 94) and the distinctive effect of a voluntary service on the client compared to a paid service (Metz, et al., 2011). Thus, volunteers generally are perceived to be distinctive from paid staff in literature on volunteering.

In literature on volunteer resource management the uniqueness of the volunteer resource is reflected to a lesser extent. Volunteer resource management literature is strongly informed by the human resource management (HRM), following the process going from planning to recruiting onto

orientation to performance assurance. While this ‘workplace model’ is prominent, some research differentiates between volunteers and paid staff (Rochester, Paine, Howlett, & Zimmeck, 2010). For example, Rice & Fallon (2011) show that three organizational care variables – recognition, respect, and welfare – have a higher explanation power for volunteers’ satisfaction and retention compared to the satisfaction and retention of paid staff. Also, research contrasts alternative management orientations against the traditional HRM approach, e.g. the ‘regenerative volunteer management’ (Brudney & Meijs, 2009) or the ‘homegrown model’ (Rochester, et al., 2010). It should be mentioned that the HRM approach transferred onto the volunteer resource management is a rather orthodox one (Smith, 1996). Only a few efforts have been taken to transfer newer HRM approaches onto the volunteer resource management context (Graf & Gmür, 2010; Merrill, 2010 [2003]). How to break these orientations down to concrete management practice remains largely unexplored. Hence, literature highlighting the uniqueness of volunteers supports the often-stated argument that the transfer of HRM onto volunteer resource management is not enough (e.g. Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010), while implications of alternative management orientations for concrete management practice need further exploration.

To sum up, there is a certain consensus in literature on perceiving volunteers as distinct from paid staff, calling for interventions distinct from HRM. Still, HRM is the main theoretical framing used for volunteer resource management. In the following sections we explore the added values attributed to volunteers in the field and how management responds to the uniqueness of volunteers in practice.

The uniqueness of volunteers – insights from expert interviews

Research design

Research focus. This article is based on data collected for a research project, which aims at enhancing the understanding of volunteer resource management from an organizational perspective. The interview guide consists of a collection of research gaps identified by the authors, such as indicators of volunteer resource management quality, current challenges and central issues of volunteer resource management and the extent to which volunteers are perceived as a unique resource. This article mainly focuses on the latter: exploring conceptualizations of the uniqueness of volunteers and responses to them.

Sample. In order to obtain information on volunteer resource management from an organizational perspective, we chose to

interview three expert groups having a broad overview over organizational structures and representing the heterogeneous NPO population (see Table 1 and Figures 1&2): 12 volunteer resource managers* (VRMs) of NPO with different principal activities and size, 5 executive directors of the regional offices of BENEVOL Switzerland, Association of Competence Centers for Volunteering, who consult NPO in the collaboration with volunteers and help persons to find volunteering assignments, and 5 academics from different disciplines doing research on volunteering and seeing into various NPO. The interviews took 30 to 120 minutes.

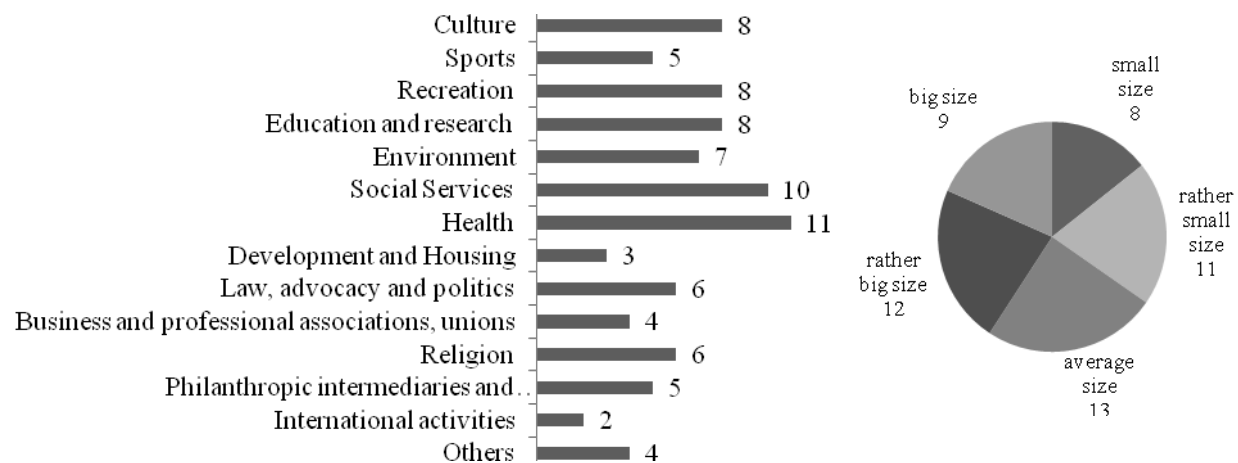
*Please note, we use this term as defined by IJOVA. In the Swiss context, many organizations do not have a formal volunteer resource management position. This position is often held by the executive director.

Table 1
Characteristics of the interviewees

	Min	Max	Average	Total
Age	28	70	46	
Years of experience in volunteering	0	60	16	355
Years of experience in honorary posts (boards)	0	40	12	253
Female				9
Male				13

Figure 1 and 2

Number of interviewees working with organizations of different principal activities and size (multiple answers were allowed). We used the following question for size classes: "Your experience on volunteer management is based on experiences in organizations of which size, in relation to other NPO in Switzerland?"



Methods. Twenty-two problem-centered interviews were conducted (Witzel, 2000; Witzel & Reiter, 2012). The interviews started with an introduction about the interviewer's cognitive interests and were followed by opening questions about the concrete context within which each individual interviewee interacts with volunteers. Next, open questions from the interview guide were used to generate narratives for a general exploration and a list of ad-hoc questions served to intensify answers on problematic issues. Additionally, techniques for specific exploration were applied, such as discursive validation and confrontation (Witzel, 2000; Witzel & Reiter, 2012). After each interview, a postscript was written on the focus and priorities emphasized by the interviewee and on the researcher's reflections on core categories. While the open questions asked remained the same during the whole research process, the postscripts informed the list of ad-hoc questions in order to intensify answers referring to emergent core categories in future interviews. The interview data were analyzed applying open coding in the beginning and selective coding in the later stages of analysis, which were informed by the postscript of the interviews

(Strauss, 1998). Additionally, the strategy of maximizing and minimizing differences was applied on the level of interview questions and expert groups in order to explore the usability, characteristics and scope of the emergent core categories (Glaser & Strauss, 2010). In the next sections, we present some core categories derived from data analysis.

Findings - volunteers' added values

In our attempt to understand the uniqueness of volunteers, we found many stories about added values of volunteers, which can be categorized around the following issues:

Heart competence. Interviewees from all expert groups tell stories about how the quality of a service changes when the service is based on the expression of free will of volunteers rather than based on the duty of paid staff. This seems to be especially important in care services, where the acceptance of help is crucial for the recovery of the client. Interviewees value the way volunteers naturally engage in relationships. A representative of Benevol describes this unique quality of volunteers as 'heart competence', in contrast to social and intellectual competences.

Critical thinking from different backgrounds. Interviewees from all expert groups appreciate the various skills and experiences from volunteers of different socio-economic backgrounds, even though this heterogeneity is also perceived as challenge (especially by VRMs). Bringing in a view from the outside, volunteers are highly regarded for their potential to identify blind spots in organizational behavior. One VRM reports that volunteers ask about the “why?” of activities far more often than paid staff do. Working with volunteers demands from VRMs to challenge existing procedures and own habits. Another VRM elaborates how helpful volunteers are to avoid ‘business myopia’ (*Betriebsblindheit*). Hence, the variety in resources and the sense-seeking qualities of volunteers are perceived as unique assets for organizational development.

Ambassadors. Several interviewees – especially the representatives of Benevol – mention the role of volunteers as ‘ambassadors’ of the organization. An enthusiastic volunteer telling stories about the impact of an organization’s activities constitute an invaluable promotion which could not be provided with the same effects by paid staff. Accordingly, volunteers contribute in a unique way to the spread of word and reputation of an organization.

Spirit. All three expert groups praise the dynamism, joy and good mood volunteers bring into the organization. One VRM perceives volunteers as role model for the (young) employees showing them that people are successfully engaged in areas other than the one they are trained for. Others stress the exceptional intrinsic motivation and dedication of volunteers. Hence, volunteers contribute to a good organizational climate and provide unique role models.

While interviewees generally agree on added values of volunteers, variation exist in

the extent to which this leads to reflect the uniqueness of volunteers in the volunteers’ role and position in the organization, as outlined in the following.

Role – cost saving vs. priceless quality enhancement. The interviewees vary in the extent to which they define the volunteers’ main role as providing costless services (helping to save money in core services) versus providing priceless services (helping to top core services with additional quality). Asking our interviewees about the added value of volunteers, a common answer was that volunteers enable to provide services the organization could not pay for. When intensifying the answers to this topic, we found that some interviewees from all three expert groups did not talk about cost savings, but about services which there would never be a source of funding for. The following account of a café a nursing home – conjointly run by paid staff and volunteers – exemplifies this: When volunteers support to provide the service, more persons are scheduled, based on the reasoning that volunteers should have time to sit down, talk to the clients and spread a social atmosphere. It would be difficult to find a donor giving money to employ staff for this extra service. The same is true for much extra services in palliative care. Hence, while volunteers are at times perceived as mean for cost saving, the reasoning of ‘providing services we cannot pay for’ also refers to services which cannot be legitimized to pay for, but enhance service quality. This is in line with the argumentation of the representatives of Benevol, who demand that volunteers should never be used to cover a deficit in the core service provision of an organization, but to add quality at same costs. Accordingly, while perceptions of volunteers as means to save costs prevail in the forefront, interviewees vary in their explicitness of the quality enhancement and

extra services enabled uniquely by volunteers.

Position –volunteers as means vs. ends. Linked to the volunteers' role, the position attributed to volunteers with respect to the organizational aim varies. The majority of quotes contains wordings which indicate that volunteers are perceived as means to achieve the organizational aim, such as the volunteers contribute to, assist, provide etc. But when we asked for indicators for the quality and success of VRMs, the top answer across all three expert groups is 'when the volunteers are satisfied'. The augmentation of the volunteers' contribution to the organizational aim is rarely rated higher as performance indicator of VRMs than the volunteers' satisfaction. This implies that the well-being of the volunteer is judged highly important in relation to the organizations aim and therefore volunteers might also be perceived as part of the organizational aim. As one of the VRMs explains, he does not perceive volunteers as an added value, but as the main value of the organization. Only a minority of VRMs explicitly names volunteers as being part of the organizational aim. One VRM perceives the strategic body – including the VRM – as 'service providers' to the volunteers. Thus, while the perception of volunteers as a mean to achieve organizational goals is broadly accepted, volunteer satisfaction is of high priority for volunteer resource management; but volunteers are rarely explicitly conceptualized as organizational end.

To sum up, we identified several added values which demonstrate the uniqueness of volunteers. The extent to which the uniqueness of volunteers is reflected in the volunteers' main role and position in the organization varies. In the following section, management responses to the uniqueness of volunteer are explored.

Findings - management responses to the uniqueness of volunteers

By having conversations on the added values of volunteers, volunteer resource management quality and current challenges, we identified the following strategies used by VRMs in order to handle the uniqueness of volunteers in the organization.

Persuasion. All three expert groups call it a main task of VRM to clarify the perceptions of the volunteers' role in order to avoid feelings of competition or existential anxiety in paid staff. One VRM explains that her first priority is to create in the organization a consensus, that 'volunteers are useful, desirable and a joy'. Another VRM talks about 'cultivating an attitude in favor of the volunteers' and about 'awareness raising' for the importance and value of volunteering. Some VRMs utilize team meetings of paid staff in order to clarify roles and assure that paid staff are willing to collaborate with volunteers. Others engage volunteers in the same functions as paid staff, but frame it differently: E.g. one VRM 'enlists' volunteers to tasks, while paid staff are 'scheduled'. So the 'enlisted' volunteers are allowed to cancel their commitment at any time, while the 'scheduled' paid staff are expected to deliver the core services. When volunteers show up, they take the core services over so that paid staff have time to work on tasks they do not find time for when providing core services. Furthermore, all three expert groups stress the need for support by the strategic body in order to gain internal stakeholders for the volunteers' cause. VRMs highlight the utility of a written commitment to volunteers of the strategic body – e.g. by a concept or mission statement – in order to 'advocate' for the volunteers within the organization. Another VRM emphasizes the importance of continuity in the persuasion work when he states that he has to stress the importance of volunteer engagement over and over again,

especially in front of the members of the organization. Hence, volunteer coordinators do persuasion work in front of paid staff and other internal stakeholders in order to clarify the perception and the role of the volunteer resource, which seems to be in continuous redefinition and negotiation.

Multilinguism. All three expert groups underline the importance of continuous and target group-sensitive communication with and about volunteers. A VRM terms the challenge to provide an ‘interface’ between the volunteers and the organization, which includes a process monitoring in order to assure that work is clearly delegated, well understood by the volunteers and delivered in a way it can be integrated in the work processes of paid staff. Another interviewee states that ‘you need to learn their [the volunteers’] language first’, explaining that he deploys a different wording, but also a different communication style and rationale when talking to volunteers as when talking to other stakeholders in the organization. For example, a simple but new schedule sheet was not introduced by an email as one would send to paid staff, but by a presentation and discussion on a regional gathering of volunteers followed by a several months’ process in order to get it accepted. Additionally, several interviewees call it a challenge to find a common basis for communication between and with volunteers who constitute a very heterogeneous group of people. In contexts where persons with different professional and institutional backgrounds interact, the term ‘multilinguism’ was used, a term recently referred to by Wehner & Gentile (2012). Multilinguism demands high time investments and competences in communication, as interviewees of all three expert groups assert. Thus, interviewees acknowledge that a distinct language and rationale is needed to communicate with volunteers and that VRM should provide an

‘interface’ between different organizational stakeholders, which demands an investment of time and high communication skills.

Expressing empathy, balancing and framing boundedness. Interviewees of all three expert groups emphasize the importance to simultaneously consider both, expressing empathy for the volunteers and showing responsibility for the organizations’ needs. VRMs report that volunteers expect high personal engagement from VRMs, that VRMs are asked to perceive volunteers as human beings in its entirety (not only as service providers) and to consider their reflections about the volunteer assignment in order to avoid volunteers’ demotivation. Meanwhile, VRMs have to deal with suggestions of volunteers which are sometimes based on a ‘limited view shaped by the moment’ which does not correspond to the organizational structures or historical development. One VRM resumes aptly ‘it is important, that they [the volunteers] experience appreciation, that they can express themselves and can get involved (*‘sich einbringen’*) and at the same time they have to integrate themselves into existing structures. You cannot do everything they want’. One way to deal with this challenge is to involve volunteers in the development of work procedures and new projects, where volunteers can contribute their ideas but also learn to consider the view of different organizational stakeholders on the organization.

Interviewees of all three expert groups mention the challenge of ‘leading without power’ and that it is especially difficult to say ‘no’ to a volunteer in comparison to paid staff. One way to deal with this is to be very clear about expectations. While it is considered to be difficult to say ‘no’ to volunteers, it seems to be essential to do so. We found calls for setting volunteers limits in the narratives of practically all the interviewees. When it comes to over-

identification with the task or work overload, unauthorized actions (e.g. acting against the organizational working method) or misleading communication in the name of the organization (e.g. to personal or religiously-motivated communication), VRMs are asked to step into dialog with the volunteer, to induce reflection in volunteers about the limits of volunteering and to stop the volunteer's activity in order to prevent harm to the client, the volunteers and the organization. Accordingly, the uniqueness of the volunteer resource asks for empathy and balancing acts (Jäger, Beyes, & Kreutzer, 2009), which also include to frame the boundedness of volunteering and to assure that the limits of what volunteering is able to provide without doing harm are not crossed

Performance feedback vs.

performance assessment. Interviewees of all three expert groups express a critical attitude towards the performance assessment of volunteers arguing as following: Defining objective, 'professional' criteria for volunteer performance equalizes volunteering with paid work and therefore puts the unique quality of the volunteers' activity – based on individual expression of free will and emotional engagement – at risk. Quantitative measurements are perceived to be inadequate for measuring the volunteers' contribution to the organizational aim. Instead, interviewees propose feedback rounds, regular appraisal interviews, self-evaluation, and satisfaction measurements (the latter mostly mentioned by academics). A concrete example is illustrated by a VRM who collects 'echoes' from volunteers in conversations and emails and includes them into the social balance sheet. Hence, the valuation of the volunteers' unique quality leads to the rejection of objective performance assessment with quantitative indicators, but to the appreciation of feedback loops and satisfaction assurance.

To sum up, several management responses to the uniqueness of volunteers were identified which are oriented towards emotion, interaction and negotiation (in the sense of balancing and mediating conflict). In the following discussion, we are combining our findings on added values and management responses.

Discussion & Implications

The study reviewed by this article primarily focuses on the perception of volunteers as unique organizational resource. While the literature review supports our assumption that volunteers constitute a resource distinctive from paid staff, our findings inform little about the circumstances under which the similarities of volunteers and paid staff are highlighted or about the importance given to these. Additionally, the sample was a purposive one and the majority of the experts we selected as interviewees are deeply interested in the development of a function or even a profession for volunteer management. This selection might have influenced the sample in a way that our analysis depicts a rather homogenous opinion. A sample including 'outliers' – e.g. personnel managers explicitly integrating volunteers in their HRM – would probably have revealed a more heterogenous picture. So with the sample, we intended to cover volunteer management in NPO of different size and different principal activities, but the scope of our analysis is limited by the initial focus on volunteers as a distinct resource compared to paid staff and the selection of interviewees with a high interest in the development of a volunteer management function.

While we focused on the uniqueness of volunteers in this article, we do not intent to deny that volunteers are perceived as a category of personnel at times. Interestingly, when interviewees use the term personnel

with respect to volunteers, they mostly refer to a concrete situation. For example, interviewees argue that volunteers are treated with the same respect as paid staff or that the complaints of volunteers are taken as serious as the one of paid staff. In the case of the nursing home café it was shown that volunteers and paid staff can hold the same

function, but be distinctive in the quality of service they provide. We assume that VRMs are challenged to handle differences and similarities between volunteers and paid staff simultaneously, depicting volunteers situationally as unique or as personnel category, which is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

Core categories used for analyzing volunteers as a unique organizational resource

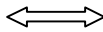
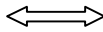
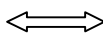
	Uniqueness of Volunteers		Volunteers as Personnel Category
Volunteers' Role	Quality enhancement		Cost effectiveness (in core service)
Volunteers' Position	Mean and end		Mean
Volunteers' added value	Heart competence Spirit	Critical thinking Ambassadors	Cost saving
Management Responses	Expressing empathy Performance feedback	Multilingualism Persuasion framing boundedness	HRM instruments
Outcome Perspective	Service quality	Organizational climate/culture Organizational development Reputation	Core service delivery
Modes of Action	Emotion	Negotiation/interaction/ cognition	Efficiency

Table 2 shows categories spanning up a space for variation in volunteer resource management. Row 1 illustrates a continuum between highlighting volunteers as unique or as personnel category. Additionally, we identified continua with respect to the main role (row 2) and position (row 3) interviewees' attributes to volunteers, related to the different added values of volunteers emphasized. Interviewees vary in the extent to which they appreciate the volunteers' contribution to quality enhancement topping the core services (in contrast to cost savings

in core services) and in the extent to which volunteers are perceived as being part of the organizational aim (in contrast to being a mean to an end, see also Rochester, et al., 2010). With respect to the volunteers' role in quality enhancement, the volunteers' quality in the relationship with clients in direct services is well established ('heart competence', see also Metz, et al., 2011). We see further potential in volunteers' contribution to quality enhancement in indirect services, whereby the added values of volunteers as ambassador and 'critical

input giver' could provide interesting starting points for further exploration.

In the second part of table 2 we provide an overview on how the added values of volunteers (row 4) and the management responses (row 5) can be further specified in respect to the outcome perspective (row 6) and modes of action (row 7). Depending on the added value of volunteers' emphasized, volunteers are engaged in strengthening service quality, organizational climate, organizational development, reputation or core service delivery. Additionally, we argue that the management responses to the added values of volunteers express modes of action focusing on emotion, interaction and negotiation. One could argue that these management responses compromise classical leadership competences. We suggest that it is not only about (top-down or bottom-up) leadership of volunteers, but about (horizontally) moderating interactions and providing an interface between different stakeholders of the organization. It would be interesting to further explore which role and position VRMs is given in the organizational structure and how this affects their capacity to effectively manage interfaces and group interactions.

Concluding remarks

Data show that volunteers are perceived as unique organizational resource. The uniqueness of volunteers is demonstrated in the added values contributed by volunteers, such as heart competence, ambassadorial representation, spirit, critical thinking, and also cost savings. But the extent to which the uniqueness of volunteers is reflected in the volunteers' main role and position in the organization varies.

Management responds to the uniqueness of volunteers by persuasion, multilinguism, empathy, framing

boundedness and feedback; all of which focus on emotion, interaction and negotiation. They not only aim at volunteers, but at all internal stakeholders of the organization. Further research is needed on how management responses to the uniqueness of volunteers and traditional HRM instruments treating volunteers as personnel category can be effectively combined.

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Cognitive Apprenticeship as a Pathway to Building Capacity in Not-for-Profit Committees

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Abstract

This article presents a specific problem in regard to building the governance and managerial capacity of volunteers within not-for-profit clubs. Developing “fit for purpose” training and development to meet the needs of volunteers is an on-going challenge for educators and volunteer club support organisations particularly within a context of resource constraints and a dynamic environment. Given the governance and managerial expectations of volunteer committees there exists a need to improve the capacity of such committees in order to enable “sustained effectiveness” in terms of financial and human capital within the clubs. Within this context, social learning methods have a long history in providing frameworks to help novices become experts, which is congruent with the preferred methods of skill building for these volunteers. Cognitive apprenticeship in educational practice is well founded in social learning methods and can become the “scaffold” by which building and sustaining capacity for these volunteers can be achieved. The solution involves using a model of training and development that incorporates scaffolding and mentoring as instructional strategies with coaching being used to integrate the elements.

Key Words: capacity building, mentoring, cognitive apprenticeship

Introduction

Despite an increasing investment in sport from governmental agencies (territorial and national) within New Zealand there is a lack of research into the capacity of clubs to deal with the requirements of an increasingly professional world. Moreover, there is even less of an understanding of how best to achieve a sustained increase in the capacity of not-for-profit sport club committees who play an integral role in facilitating the operations of clubs. The challenge for adult educators and volunteer training organisations is how to provide training and development that is accessible and effective for these individuals.

Not-for-profit sports clubs form a large part of the volunteer landscape within New Zealand. According to Sport and

Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) (2011), there are more than 15,000 sport and recreation clubs in New Zealand. These are supported by over three-quarters of a million (776,000) volunteers. This equates to 25.3% of the adult population being involved as sport and recreation volunteers (although some of this number are likely to be active in more than one club). The report also suggests that “volunteers contributed over 50 million (51.3 million) hours to sport and recreation in 2007/08 and the estimated market value of these volunteered services is over \$700 million” (SPARC, 2011, p. 5). Given these statistics and the clear community investment in both time and resources, it becomes readily apparent that there is a need for an appropriate process to provide the requisite skills to those who

make up a large and important part of the 'informal economy'.

Many of these volunteers, who begin volunteering to support family members are suddenly required to have an understanding of administration practice, accounting, funding applications, meeting procedures, and communication which are the staple skill sets needed for these clubs. The need for capacity development is clearly recognised by SPARC who invest substantial funds in supporting *grass roots* sports clubs – up to \$70 million each year with the provision of financial assistance to support organisations as well as funding research and the development of resources (SPARC, 2009, p. 13). In particular, SPARC also provide seminars and other online tools to support capacity building for sports club committees. The efficacy of these tools, given the amounts invested, is not necessarily optimal thereby giving rise to considerations of how such capacity building initiatives may be improved and built upon in order to ensure the highest return on investment.

A lucid example of the issues surrounding building capacity for New Zealand not-for-profit clubs is the outcome of research commissioned by Manukau City Council on the "Future of Sport in Manukau City" (one of the largest cities in New Zealand at that time). This research indicated that 80% of clubs within the region struggled to fill positions on their committees and 65% reported they sometimes had people without the necessary skills and knowledge filling positions (Longdill and Associates, 2005). The outcomes of the 2005 research are supported by the findings of the research conducted for this article that it indicates that 46% of clubs struggle to fill positions on their committees and 51% indicated that their club is not well resourced financially. Given such a situation there is an evident need for some

form of sustained and effective capacity building process in order to provide the cornerstone for the recruitment and development of human capital associated with these clubs combined with associated initiatives to enhance their structural and financial viability.

Capacity

In order to further investigate the concept of capacity within this particular context it is important to determine what exactly is actually meant when referring to 'not-for-profit clubs' such as those exemplified by sports clubs and the like. Smith (as cited in Sharpe, 2006) defines grassroots associations as "volunteer-led, and informally structured organisations that operate at the level of the local community" (p. 385). In contrast Cuskelly and Boag state that "the committees of sport organisations are formal groups entrusted with the responsibility of acting on behalf of the members of that organisation" (2001, p. 72). Many of these organisations are by virtue of their role and function small, yet often loosely affiliated with, but relatively autonomous from, larger organisations. Consequently, the challenge for these clubs is their dependency on the ability to self sustain when they often hold very little power in their external environment and are on occasion susceptible to internal struggles around resourcing – both human and financial (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; Sharpe, 2006).

Organisations that wish to survive and thrive in the contemporary environment are faced with capacity challenges on an ongoing basis and must have a clear *raison d'être* in order to provide a clear focus for their operations. According to Hall et al. (2003) the capacity of an organisation to work toward a particular objective depends upon the capital it is able to deploy, residing predominantly within the spheres of

financial, human resources and structural capacity. “**Financial Capacity** – the ability to develop and deploy financial capital (i.e. the revenues, expenses, assets, and liabilities of the organization); **Human Resources Capacity** – the ability to deploy human capital (i.e. paid staff and volunteers) within the organization, and the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and behaviours of these people. Human capital is considered to be the key element that leads to the development of all other capacities; **Structural Capacity** – the ability to deploy the non-financial capital that remains when the people from an organisation have gone home” (p. 5). Considering Hall’s typology, it is clear that an argument can be made for the primary focus residing with the development of human resource capacity given that such development can be used as a springboard from which to develop both financial and structural capacity.

Having such a clear focus, would also ameliorate the risk associated with the *haphazard* nature of capacity building within not-for-profit organisations as mentioned by Boris (2001) who although mindful of the fact that “capacity building for non-profit organizations is finally drawing the attention it deserves” (p. 85), there is nevertheless a need to “sift” through the body of experience to identify the enduring lessons as well as take a “more broad and integrated approach to non-profit capacity building, [so that] a more coordinated and effective response can be developed” (p. 91).

Framework for practice

Dennen (2003) links scaffolding, modelling, mentoring and coaching within the context of cognitive apprenticeship which in simple terms relates to the study of the process of ‘hands on’ learning and knowledge sharing between two or more

persons usually by means of a mentor – mentee/s relationship that can manifest itself in both informal and formal means. The process itself is one that has been part and parcel of human development since time immemorial and has proven itself as being one that is both suitable and appropriate in a number of circumstances especially those where transfer of specific knowledge and skills are required. Relating to this is scaffolding that comprises two main processes – the first is providing support by a *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) and the second involves gradual removal of the support system. Rogoff (1990) introduces the concept of scaffolding being an adult structure of child’s learning activities akin to that which occurs in the parent child relationship. Central to scaffolding is what Vygotsky (1978) defined as the Zone of Proximal Development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). He suggested that learning activities should provide adequate challenges to the learner based on his or her current knowledge state but at the same time not be so challenging as to be unattainable. In addition, Wertsch (as cited in Rowlands, 2000) suggests that development of change is in the *process* capability which is more important than the end-product produced, bringing to mind the oft used adage of teaching someone to fish being of greater long term consequence and use than just providing them with fish. By understanding and learning the *process* it becomes embedded in the capability – this process can be learned through scaffolding knowledge. Scaffolding in adult education practice is explained by Dennen (2003) as “a learner-centred strategy whose success is dependent on its adaptability to the learners

needs” (p. 815). This is particularly important as there is no ‘one size fits all approach’ and, in practice, care needs to be taken to find the right balance between the myriad variables that impact upon a particular teaching/mentoring-learning relationship. Consequently, there is a need to provide support within a specific learning context, addressing student learning of concepts, procedures, strategies, and metacognitive skills (McLoughlin, 2002).

It is suggested that support by a MKO need not be a teacher, but a mentor where the mentor helps the protégé achieve longer term, broader goals. Furthermore the mentor does not necessarily carry the formal authority of a supervisor or teacher (Jacobi, 1991). Zachary (2005) suggests that a *learning partnership* should be established that is congruent with the learner centred mentoring paradigm, which is a shift from the mentor-driven paradigm; the mentor has become more of a facilitator or a guide *on the side* rather than a *teacher of the student*. The concept of a guide or mediator of knowledge provides a link to the development of process rather than the production of an end-product – much like the link between outputs and outcomes. Dennen and Burner (2004) introduce integrative teaching as a mentor strategy whereby the “mentor combines theory and practice in their explanation to the mentee” and that mentor’s stories and experiences “made the learning more concrete and authentic” (p. 431). Cognitive modelling is effective when it is an explicit and active process of expert observation, reflection, and practice rather than a passive model of learning thereby making it congruent with the concept of mentoring and coaching (Dennen, 2003)

Coaching, mentoring, modelling and scaffolding can be deemed as being critical components of the cognitive apprenticeship model, with coaching itself being seen as the

integral thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience (Brill, Kim, and Galloway, 2001; Collins, Brown and Holum, 1991). The adult learning approach to coaching is used to stimulate deep learning. It draws from a range of adult-learning theories, such as andragogy reflective practice and experiential learning which collectively argue that adults learn by reflecting on experiences (Ives, 2008). Gray (as cited in Ives 2008) advocates a transformative learning coaching model that seeks to raise the coachee’s critical reflection to question assumptions. He suggests that coaching has become a tool in the increasing shift towards informal, self-directed learning in organisations. Parsloe and Wray (2000) distinguish coaching and mentoring by indicating that a mentor provides support of a generic nature and a coach is typically focussed on assisting to meet a particular goal. Mentoring is seen as a longer term relationship than coaching. This view is perhaps more clearly illustrated within a sports context where a ‘coach’ may be focussed on getting results for a particular season or event that has an end goal or envisaged outcome in sight whereas the role of mentoring is likely to be longer term and developmental, looking at future potential outcomes for a particular individual (although a coach can potentially also play the role of being a mentor to a particular individual this role is likely to be more appropriately filled by someone else).

Within the context of the volunteer committee sector, the pathway to building capacity is therefore, as previously mentioned, not one size fits all and may well be a paradigm shift in building capacity in the volunteer sector. In summarising cognitive apprenticeship research, Dennen and Burner (2004) suggest that empirical studies have confirmed much of what theories have suggested:

That the cognitive apprenticeship model is an accurate description of how learning occurs naturally as part of everyday life and social interaction, and (2) that the instructional strategies that have been extracted from these observation of everyday life can be designed into more formal learning context with positive effect. (p. 436)

Although mentoring and coaching should continue on an ongoing basis, it is essential that communities of practice be developed for purposes of achieving an appropriate level of sustained capacity in order to provide a core network of support that is self-sustaining. Dennen and Burner, (2004) define community of practice as “a group of people bound by participation in an activity common to them all” (p. 426). Relating to this is the view of Samarawickrema, Benson and Brack (2009) who assert that peer learning and online communities are effective for professional development. This implies that “peer learning and online communities” become ‘communities of practice’ in their own right. Similarly, Sturko and Gregson (2009) also found that peers’ reflection, collaboration and sharing improves practice and fosters professional growth.

Accordingly, supporting professional learning through communities of practice is not new. However, within the context of volunteers and not-for-profit club committees it is not apparent or formally supported. The question therefore arises as to the most appropriate approach for bringing about outcomes such as those envisaged in the preceding paragraphs and which this research study seeks to identify and explain.

Method

This study used a mixed method design. Firstly a survey method (questionnaire) was used to establish views of a group and secondly a focus group was included to follow the questionnaires as they are ideal for exploring people’s experience, opinions and concerns (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). Prior to commencing this research project approval was granted by the Manukau Institute of Technology Ethics Committee.

The survey collected data from committee members responsible for the administration of more than 100 different grass-roots sports organisations representing over 20 sporting codes within the Counties Manukau Region. The sampling frame was drawn from the Counties Manukau Sports (CMS) database of sports clubs, which included 519 grass roots sports clubs. Four hundred and twenty six club participants were invited by email to complete an online questionnaire using Survey Monkey. Two email reminders were sent to all participants to encourage a higher response rate. There were 157 respondents (36.17%) to the survey. Thirty-one respondents did not complete all the sections leaving a minimum usable sample of 126 (29.03%) responses. The participants are volunteer sports administrators defined as individuals who were formally elected or appointed to an honorary position on the committee responsible for the administration of a not-for-profit ‘grassroots’ sports organisation or association. This excludes coaches and managers of sports teams. It does include but is not limited to roles such as club president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, club convenors and coordinator roles such as grants, communication and others.

The sample group for the focus group was drawn from a stratified random sample comprising of one committee

member from each of the 66 sporting codes/activities represented in the CMS database. The focus group was small comprising three participants from different sports clubs. NVivo software was used to undertake a qualitative analysis of the focus group feedback. NVivo recognises that qualitative research is varied, and that different qualitative methodologies have very different goals. The nodes system was used, which is the container for themes or categories and coding into a hierarchy - called tree nodes (Richards, as cited in Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2000). The three nodes used were: challenges, strengths and support agencies.

The sample group for the focus group was drawn from a stratified random sample comprising of one committee member from each of the 66 sporting codes/activities represented in the CMS database. The focus group met for two hours and comprised of three participants each having experience volunteering for more than one club and having a range of experience from 5 to 20 years. The focus group process followed the seven step structure proposed by Maylor and Blackmon, 2005 with a combination of pre-structured and discussion lead questions focussing on volunteer challenges, strengthening their organisation, reasons for continuing to volunteer and committee functioning.

The transcription of the focus group recordings was carried out independently and was analysed using NVivo software to undertake qualitative analysis of the focus group feedback. NVivo recognises that qualitative research is varied, and that different qualitative methodologies have very different goals. Open coding was used to highlight key ideas that emerged in the

data (Jones, 2006; Maylor & Blackmon, 2005). The final stage of coding involved selective coding whereby a storyline was developed to capture the essence of what was happening in the study (Jones, 2006). The nodes system was used, which is the container for themes or categories and coding into a hierarchy (Richards, as cited in Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2000). The three nodes used to draw together the qualitative data from the online surveys and the focus groups were: challenges, strengths and support agencies.

Survey Data

The respondents represented clubs which varied in size from less than 20 members (2% of responses) to clubs with more than 200 members (40% of responses). 82.1% of respondents held direct roles (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, General Committee) within their committee. There was a broad range of committee experience (22% were committee members for less than 2 years; 43% between 3 to 6 years; and 35% greater than 7 years).

The first series of questions related to the access of committee members to training, which are presented in Table 1. Respondents were asked to select the nature of training opportunities available to them. Just over 61% were not aware of, or thought that training was not available for them. Only half of the 38.8% of volunteers that were aware of training being available actually accessed that training showing a large gap between awareness and action. This indicates both a structural and motivational challenge and opportunity for future development initiatives and also serves as a 'red flag' where appropriate intervention may lead to successful outcomes.

Table 1: Training opportunities

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Available and accessed by me	25	19.8
Available and NOT accessed by me	24	19.1
Not available to me	8	6.3
I don't know about any training opportunities	69	54.8
Total	126	100.0

The next series of questions used a Seven Point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree 4 = Neutral; 7 = strongly agree) to assess the support provided by various named support agencies. Results are presented in Table 2. The clubs' regional governing bodies appeared to provide the best support (just

under 4), but most respondents felt that they received less support (less than the neutral score of 4) from the identified bodies than they expected. Local councils scored lowest despite the fact that many resources (fields, facilities and developmental funding) comes directly from council.

Table 2: Assessment of support provided by various named support agencies.

	Mean	Std Deviation
Our clubs National Governing Body provides me with the support I need to make my job as a volunteer easier.	3.4762	1.6527
Our clubs Regional Governing Body provides me with the support I need to make my job as a volunteer easier.	3.9677	1.75275
Our clubs Local Council or its representatives provide me with the support I need to make my job as a volunteer easier.	3.6	1.93441
Sports Development Officers provide me with the support I need to make my job as a volunteer easier.	3.736	1.77865

The final group of questions provided a range of alternative methods of skills training and development and asked respondents to select those which they felt would be most appropriate. More than one choice was allowed, but ranking was not required. Results are presented in Table 3. Mentoring and networking were clearly the preferred methods for skills training and development and can be related to the adult

education nature of skills development requirements for this particular volunteer group. Formalised training opportunities (Workshops, particularly the longer ones) scored quite low, perhaps reflecting the time conflicts felt by many of the volunteers interviewed for whom volunteering was in addition to their other responsibilities and commitments of a professional, work or family nature.

Table 3: Preferred training and development methods – participants could choose more than one.

		Percent of choices	Percent of cases
Options ^a	Group Workshop 1 day - your clubrooms	2.70%	6.30%
	Group Workshop 1 day - specified venue	3.00%	7.10%
	Group Workshop 1 - 4 hours - your clubrooms	7.00%	16.70%
	Networking (With other volunteers - general)	13.00%	31.00%
	Group Workshop 1 - 4 hours - specified venue	14.00%	33.30%
	One to one coaching by experienced volunteers	14.00%	33.30%
	Networking (With other volunteers with similar role)	19.00%	45.20%
	Mentoring	25.70%	61.10%
	Other	1.70%	4.00%
Total		100.00%	238.10%

Discussion

The investment in supporting sports clubs within New Zealand is substantial with the guiding organisation now being Sport New Zealand (formally SPARC). Sport and recreation development organisations within New Zealand offer online and face to face support to sports club committees and are continually facing the challenges in building governance and managerial capacity in sports clubs. This is acknowledged by the inclusion of club committees in two of the five priority areas targeted by SPARC (2009). In particular, developing capacity within these clubs is clearly acknowledged as a priority although the manner of doing so indicates a potential gap between priority and actual outcomes that requires closer attention to the manner in which capacity development initiatives are planned and implemented. Although, the volunteer feedback indicates that this area has drawn attention it is not yet the case that *all is well*. Volunteers are not engaging in training to the level that would provide confidence that capacity building is enduring. The majority

(more than 80%) of volunteers did not engage in training for their volunteer roles.

It is therefore evident that further attention needs to be given to developing and providing suitable capacity related mechanisms that allow volunteer organisations to undertake, on an ongoing basis, a gap analysis of their volunteers measured against their particular governance and managerial requirements. Such mechanisms may be provided in a potentially formal and central 'template' structure e.g. via online means, with a relatively informal means of implementation. Given the diversity surrounding skill requirements for volunteer organisations and their respective volunteers it would be necessary to ensure that any such developments or initiatives be highly flexible and adaptable to ensure that 'form follows function'.

Also, the ambivalence towards the level of support offered by governing bodies and sports development officers needs to be addressed. Clubs' governing bodies appear to provide the best support (slightly less than the midpoint of the scale) but most

respondents felt that the support provided by the agencies was less than the *neutral* point. There is certainly commitment to build capacity in the sports clubs and there are an abundance of resources provided both financially and physically - but, it may be a case of overload in some areas and under load in others indicating a breakdown in the mechanisms used to evaluate and allocate appropriate resources that are fit for purpose. Comments from focus group members provided some insights into the link between the support agencies and the sports club committees:

[Support agencies] concentrate on coaching the player type roles and so there's very little, pretty much no support given to actual like secretary, treasurer and that.

But it's more sort of like around the coaching and things like that, not so much committee roles or committee members

It's mainly just for the coaching, just the coaching and pretty much the game officials as opposed to the committee members

Probably if anything would be really good would be for the president or chairperson if they had training for that person.

Such comments are indicative of an approach that is somewhat simplistic insofar it favours the 'explicit' outcome (e.g. sports team capability) without due attention being given to the critical but less glamorous logistics and support functions that reside in the background or 'beneath the surface'.

As indicated by Petriwskyj and Warburton (2007) "volunteering is generally treated as one normalised category of

activity, without recognition of the wide variety of activities that could potentially comprise volunteering" (p.7). Support agencies dealing with sports clubs across various sporting codes; administration requirements; levels of sporting achievement and socio-economic conditions makes it difficult to tease out the unique needs and requirements of clubs and their committees.

Essentially, findings indicate that the nature of *fit for purpose* training and development in this not-for-profit sector still gives a sense of the *haphazard*. Just over 61% of respondents were not aware of, or thought that training was not available for them with only 38.8% of them who were aware of training actually accessing it. Notwithstanding the lack of awareness, there are additional challenges for committee members that impact on their ability to access training. Consequently, planning and scheduling the right development mix to reach sustainable capacity is important as it must consider these other challenges and demands facing such volunteers. Some focus group comments regarding challenges were:

To actually get quality people to volunteer is really hard. As soon as you say 'Hey, well why don't you get involved' 'Oh no – I'm too busy'

Ours is probably is getting new people to come on the committee. Usually you get someone in and you throw them in the deep end. And that's scary for people.

In reality you know like we have a reasonable large committee but in fact most you know like 80% of the work is done by three people

[Meetings] Boy you can really quickly just end up talking about a load of rubbish.

The focus group members did provide some insight into what they perceived as success for their committees. It tended to be wrapped around the experience of other individuals and the implementation of a structured approach to the committee functioning. This reinforces the view of the role that can be played using experiential processes related to cognitive apprenticeships such as mentoring and coaching. Indicative comments included:

We used to ramble and were there all night, and achieved nothing you know, it was just... And then when [name] comes on, the new chairman, he just said 'right if it's not on the agenda we're not discussing it.

When I first joined the committee we had no structure and I think it was like kind of free for all, but probably within the last three years we've run to an agenda, we've got the year planned even on the off season.

There is an apparent need to follow the advice provided in the surveys that indicates support for including a broader and integrated approach to capacity building in this particular sector. The notion of a *cognitive apprenticeship* whereby not-for-profit volunteers are coached and mentored within their *authentic* environment represents both a challenge and an opportunity for organisations that support the clubs. Mentoring and coaching are recommended as being the preferred training methods for volunteers in this particular environment and also dovetails within the framework of cognitive apprenticeship that is contingent upon using an appropriate

blend of tools to build capacity.

Consequently, it is deemed appropriate that workshops (both face to face and online) should also be weaved into the scaffold to meet the contemporary needs of capacity building.

Although this survey did not specifically target online training – it should be noted that many of the resources provided by the support agencies were online templates, case studies, checklists and publications rather than training resources *per se*. Further research to establish the level of engagement with online resources would enrich the findings of this research and provide the basis for a 'stock take' of what support is currently available to bridge the real gap that exists between perceived needs and real needs of volunteers and their respective organisations.

There is currently little or no research into the concept of embedding cognitive apprenticeship theory and practice into the not-for-profit and volunteer sector to develop sustained governance and managerial capacity building. Therefore, there is a requirement for initiatives that can bring about a paradigm shift to align development of financial, human and structural capital through the lens of social learning practices. This would include, among others greater emphasis on the sustainable and efficient delivery of appropriate mentoring, modelling, coaching, cognitive apprenticeship and communities of practice that would fit well with the nature of the volunteer sector and could provide the requisite 'fit for purpose' context support agencies and educators could embrace.

It is not so much the lack of resources or opportunities that hinder capacity building in this sector. Dedicated and concerted effort is required to establish greater awareness and recognition of the nature and impact of the problem, followed by a coordinated response directed at its

resolution. Although, not directly quantifiable, capacity building initiatives directed at volunteers and their organisations will have larger positive consequences for society as a whole. Not only will such initiatives contribute to an increased sense of well being and achievement at the cultural and societal levels but it would have the added benefit of contributing towards the building of similar capacity in both public and private spheres of activity where individuals find themselves outside of their volunteer role.

Resolving the challenges posed in this article need not be an onerous or overly complicated undertaking. Rather, the recommended path forward relies heavily on tried and tested approaches that have been followed in one form or another for millennia. The key resides with the capacity of individuals to recognise and champion the use of such methods irrespective of the level at which they find themselves in relation to their governance and managerial responsibilities. The way of achieving this is through a concerted and systematic approach that recognises knowledge sharing and associated processes such as cognitive apprenticeship as being crucial components of both individual and organisational development from strategic policy level all the way through to grassroots implementation.

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**Identifying and Learning from Exemplary Volunteer Resource Managers:
A Look at Best Practices in Managing Volunteer Resources**

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Abstract

Nonprofit organizations thrive to the extent that their volunteer resource manager follows best practices for hiring, training, and managing volunteers. In an effort to identify some of the best practices in volunteer management, exemplary volunteer resources managers were identified from a consulting outreach program. These managers were then interviewed and the results from these interviews are presented here. Volunteer resource managers shared their best practices for improving volunteer organizational commitment, organizational recognition of volunteers, volunteer satisfaction with communication, volunteer perception of voice, volunteer competence & volunteer contribution, and volunteer burnouts & intentions to quit. In addition to presenting these practices, commentary includes ideas on implementation in general.

Key Words: volunteer resource management, best practices, nonprofit organizations, commitment, burnout

Managing volunteer resources is an essential part of most successful nonprofit organizations (Taylor, Darcy, Hoye & Cuskelly, 2006). Much research is devoted to improving both volunteer experiences and outcomes for nonprofit organizations (Taylor et. al, 2006). However, relatively little research actually focuses on best practices as identified and used by exemplary volunteer resource managers. The purpose of this paper is to identify and

learn from exemplary volunteer resource managers. To identify exemplary volunteer resource managers, the authors used a panel of volunteer resource managers who participated in a nonprofit consulting initiative led by students and faculty at a Southeastern United States University and a Mid-Western United States University. Specifically, researchers and students from these universities administered a climate survey to over 10,000 volunteers from more

than 100 nonprofit organizations across the United States. Program directors at these institutions identified volunteer resource managers whose organizations scored in the top 5% on a number of key volunteer work climate conditions (e.g. volunteer organizational commitment, organizational recognition of volunteers, volunteer satisfaction with communication, volunteer perception of voice, volunteer competence & volunteer contribution, and volunteer burnouts and intentions to quit). The authors then contacted the volunteer resource managers from each organization and interviewed them concerning their management practices. The interview data were then analyzed in order to identify the common best practices regarding volunteer program policies, procedures, and practices. The common best practices are presented in this report and are presented according to which volunteer work climate condition they address.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the attachment that an individual has to their job (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). If a volunteer is committed to the organization, they will be more satisfied, experience less role ambiguity and they will be less likely to leave the organization (i.e. turnover) (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Of the volunteer managers interviewed, two best practices were identified:

Best Practice 1: Clarify and communicate the connection between volunteer work and the goals, mission, and values of the larger organization.

Best Practice 2: Provide opportunities for volunteers to learn and grow within the volunteer program.

The first practice suggests the importance of volunteers understanding how their respective tasks contribute to the

overall success of the organization. Continually reminding volunteers of the mission and having a leader speak to volunteers at orientation about the mission of the organization seems a natural step in providing this connection. Volunteer resource managers and other leaders in the organization should consider providing feedback to the volunteers about how their efforts directly benefit the constituents of the nonprofit organization. Examples of this include letting volunteers know how many hours they contributed to the organization in a given week/month/year, or perhaps even specific task outcomes (e.g. number of animals rescued or number of meals delivered).

The second practice suggests providing learning opportunities for every volunteer position within the organization. These learning opportunities could include volunteer job specific training or education opportunities concerning what the nonprofit organization accomplishes with their help. Another way to include volunteers is to send a weekly communication (newsletter or email) to the volunteers with opportunities concerning additional training.

Organizational Recognition

Organizational recognition is what the organization does to show volunteers appreciation (McFarland 2005). Recognition can come from management as well as from clients of the organization where appropriate. When volunteers feel appreciated, they also feel more committed to the organization. One overarching best practice for organizational recognition was identified:

Best Practice 1: Say “thank you” as often, genuinely, and in as many ways as possible.

To put it simply, a great way to recognize volunteer efforts is to say “thank you.” Face-to-face “thank you’s” provide a

personal touch and also gives volunteers a chance to interact more with management. In addition to face-to-face recognition, volunteer resource managers should send volunteers thank you notes by mail or email and let them know how appreciated they are. When possible, provide testimonials and thank you's from clients they served or tell them how impressed management was when they observed them performing a duty.

Satisfaction with Communication

Satisfaction with communication refers to how satisfied volunteers are with the flow of information within the organization that directly impacts them (Hecht, 2006). Communication can be from the organization to the volunteers, communication between volunteers and employees, or communication between volunteers and the clients they are serving. Satisfying communication is essential because it is the mechanism by which volunteers remain in touch with the rules, policies, processes, outcomes, mission, and so on of the organization. Best practices for improving satisfaction with communication were identified as the following:

Best Practice 1: Communicate as many volunteer changes as possible.

Best Practice 2: Create a consistent flow of communication.

For the first practice, if something changes within the organization, no matter how small the change, communicate it to the volunteers to keep them in the loop. This helps volunteers feel like they are a part of the organization and they feel important knowing that they are being kept up to date on policy changes. Make sure to provide reasoning for *why* the change was made and how it affects the volunteers and the organization. If there is a rule change that affects volunteers, they should know all the

details so they can affectively follow the rule but also effectively live out the mission of the organization.

For the second practice, every volunteer program should have an established and consistent flow of communication. One way to communicate with volunteers is through organization newsletters and emails. The emails and newsletters can talk about new policy changes, highlight the volunteer of the month or provide a testimonial from a client affected by the organization.

Perception of Voice

Volunteers' perception of voice refers to whether volunteers feel they are being heard and listened to by management in the organization (Spencer, 1986). Whether volunteers actually share their opinions or ideas is not as important as whether they have the opportunity and feel comfortable doing so in multiple environments. They need to believe the environment of the organization is receptive to their feedback. The volunteer resource managers identified two best practices as follows:

Best Practice 1: Create multiple ways to listen to volunteers.

Best Practice 2: Follow up with volunteers to "close the loop."

Volunteers should have multiple ways they can provide feedback to the organization. To name a few, management might consider providing a suggestion box, emails, monthly feedback meetings and an open door policy as ways to provide volunteers a chance to provide their feedback and opinions. By providing a variety of ways that volunteers can provide feedback, volunteers should never feel that they cannot or should not express their concerns.

Additionally, “closing the loop” concerns following up after communicating an organizational change and ensuring that volunteers understand the change and the reasons behind it. When a volunteer voices their opinion, it is essential that follow-up communication that explains what action was taken or not taken is received (e.g. email, phone, or face-to-face visit). The key is to make certain volunteers who voice their ideas, opinions, or concerns continue to feel supported and willing to voice those concerns in the future.

Volunteer Competence & Volunteer Contribution

Volunteer competence refers to one being able to successfully carry out tasks and meet performance standards (Deci et al., 2006). Ideally, volunteers should feel able to complete any and all tasks they are assigned. Volunteer contribution refers to the extent to which a volunteer feels that what they do for the organization and its clients makes a positive difference for others. When volunteers feel that they are contributing to the organization and the clients being served then they will feel more connected to the organization. The volunteer resource managers identified the following best practices for improving volunteer competence and contribution:

Best Practice 1: Provide excellent volunteer training.

Best Practice 2: Provide autonomy and responsibility.

Adequate training may be an obvious “best practice” for improving competence, however, it was frequently cited as important but underused. Volunteer resource managers should require training for the volunteers before they ever volunteer in the organization. Volunteers should be provided extensive orientation training as

well as a job-specific training followed by job shadowing with senior volunteers where possible. Additionally, volunteers typically prefer jobs where they have increased autonomy and responsibility. In order to accomplish this, volunteer resource managers need to give volunteers an opportunity to work independently within the organization. One possibility would be to take a job previously held by paid staff and break it up into jobs for volunteers.

Burnout & Intentions to Quit

Burnout and intentions to quit among volunteers are not positive for the organization, the management, employees or the volunteers. Burnout is an emotional state characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Volunteer intention to quit is the extent to which the volunteer is thinking of terminating their volunteer service with the organization (Leiter, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2009). Burnout and intentions to quit are related in that high levels of burnout are associated with intentions to quit and are also negatively associated with job satisfaction (Leiter, Jackson, & Shaughnessy, 2009). Four best practices were identified to address burnout and reduce intentions to quit:

Best Practice 1: Prevent over-commitment by volunteers.

Best Practice 2: Listen to volunteers.

Best Practice 3: Hold frequent appreciation events for volunteers.

Best Practice 4: Conduct exit interviews.

Although these are mostly self-explanatory, the key is to incorporate the practices in a practical fashion that does not also over-burden paid staff or the volunteer resource manager. First, volunteer resource managers should encourage volunteers to

start off slowly with volunteer hours. If the volunteer manager sets a maximum number of hours at the beginning that is low and gradually increase it, then volunteers will not take on more than they can handle. Second, volunteer resource managers should consider asking volunteers how they feel and then listen to what they say. By being a sounding board for volunteers, volunteer resource managers may learn important information that could allow them to better utilize their volunteer resources. Third, holding frequent volunteer appreciation events is yet another way to say “thank you”. Volunteers will feel appreciated by the fact that the volunteer manager took the time to create a separate event just to thank them. Fourth, though turnover is inevitable, volunteer resource managers can gain important insights by interviewing volunteers who quit. This is a great opportunity for feedback about the organization and a great way to find out growth areas within the organization.

Implications for Volunteer Resource Managers and Limitations

Because the climate dimensions used for this study are strongly related to each other, any given best practice ought to have broad impact across dimensions. For example, if a best practice is implemented for perception of voice it is likely that satisfaction with communication will also improve. This has important implications for implementing these practices. Focusing on one to three areas and implementing those practices well will have a stronger impact on the organization than attempting to implement every practice.

We recommend conducting a simple (and honest) assessment of your own organization. Is communication an issue? Perhaps turnover or training are the most pressing problems? Focus specifically on implementing around your organization’s

weakest point and making it a strength. Once in practice check back in with volunteers to assess effectiveness. Simply communicating more with volunteers and asking them about the effectiveness of newly implemented best practices will have a positive effect on volunteer attitudes.

Ultimately, volunteers want to feel appreciated. Remember that they have taken time to work without monetary compensation. They do not, however, work for free. Attention, thanks and identification with a mission are some of the forms of compensation they receive. By focusing on these best practices, you can make sure your volunteers are adequately “paid”.

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About the Authors

Amanda Backer is an undergraduate student at Creighton University studying Psychology. She currently serves as the coordinator for the Volunteer Management Lab and enjoys working with clients on ways to improve their nonprofit organizations. She enjoys researching burnout, intentions to quit and satisfaction among volunteers.

Dr. Joseph A. Allen is an Assistant Professor in Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology at Creighton University, Omaha. He has 18 publications in academic outlets, another 5 under review, and many works in progress for a number of journals. He has presented 40 papers/posters at regional and national conferences and given more than 10 invited presentations on his research. He currently serves on the editorial board of several journals including the *Journal of Business and Psychology*.

Daniel Bonilla is a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in the Organizational Science program. He helped start the Volunteer Program Assessment, a free consulting and outreach program for volunteer managers. He conducts research on volunteer motivation and frequently volunteers in his local community.

Table 1

Recommended Best Practices for Volunteer Management

Constructs	Best Practice Themes
Organizational Commitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Clarify and communicate the connection between volunteer work and the goals, mission and values of the larger organization.2. Provide opportunities for volunteers to learn and grow within the volunteer program.
Organizational Recognition	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Say “thank you” as often, genuinely, and in as many ways as possible.
Satisfaction with Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Communicate as many volunteer changes as possible.2. Create a consistent flow of communication
Perception of Voice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create multiple ways to listen to volunteers.2. Follow up with volunteers to “close the loop.”
Volunteer Competence and Volunteer Contribution	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide excellent volunteer training.2. Provide autonomy and responsibility.
Burnout and Intentions to Quit	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prevent over-commitment by volunteers2. Listen to volunteers3. Hold frequent appreciation events for volunteers.4. Conduct exit interviews.

Appendix A

Sample Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a member of the Volunteer Program Assessment through the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Creighton. I am contacting you because your organization completed the VPA in the past year and your volunteers scored exceptionally high in a number of the test dimensions. We are interested in compiling a best practices list and we were hoping you could tell us about some of the practices and behaviors you engage in to maintain such high dimension scores. Specifically, you scored in the top 5% for Perception of Voice, Engagement, and Satisfaction with Paid Staff. Would you mind answering a few questions about these dimensions? I only need 15-20 minutes of your time.

1. Your volunteers scored exceptionally well in the dimension called Perception of Voice. A sample item is *the organization where I volunteer gives me a chance to express my concerns on volunteer related issues*. What policies, procedures, and behaviors do you or others engage in to maintain such high levels of this dimension?
2. Your volunteers scored exceptionally well in the dimension called Engagement. A sample item is *I am proud of the volunteer work that I do*. What policies, procedures, and behaviors do you or others engage in to maintain such high levels of this dimension?
3. Your volunteers scored exceptionally well in the dimension called Satisfaction with Paid Staff. A sample item is *I enjoy working with paid staff*. What policies, procedures, and behaviors do you or others engage in to maintain such high levels of this dimension?
4. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding volunteer management best practices?