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Why Volunteer and is Volunteering Worth the Effort?

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Division of Cross-Disciplinary Studies
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by
Patricia A. Bellamy
August 2001

Dr. Jean Haskell, Chair
Dr. Margaret Hougland
Dr. Marian Whitson

Keywords: Volunteerism, NE Tennessee, Carter County,
Washington County

ABSTRACT

Why Volunteer and is Volunteering Worth the Effort?

by

Patricia A. Bellamy

This thesis analyzes why people volunteer in two counties of East Tennessee. The study describes the concept of volunteering and its positive impact upon society on a regional and national level. The characteristics of people who volunteer, why people choose to volunteer, and the significance of their volunteering were assessed through a survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was administered in Carter County (Elizabethton) and Washington County (Johnson City) Tennessee to 13 charitable and non-charitable agencies that utilize volunteers aged 18 years and over. Out of 243 survey questionnaires distributed in Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee, 124 individuals responded. Data collected in the areas were analyzed to determine how the region related to national profiles of those who volunteer. The data collected revealed reasons why people in this section of the mountains of East Tennessee volunteer and helped identify the characteristics of those who volunteer.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the American way of life, there is an implicit relationship between self and society that results in individuals getting involved in their communities through volunteerism. Individuals who volunteer convey a message that there is a sincere interest in the good of their community and a concern for its enrichment. This involvement generates a willingness and sense of social responsibility to commit time and effort to help others without financial compensation. The individual social responsibility of volunteering is the willingness to commit to the caring for others in order to connect and unify the community. Volunteering can bridge diversity in communities. The decision to volunteer is an important life-changing commitment for many individuals. It is a commitment in which only the individual knows what is right for him/her to do.

Volunteering affects one of the scarcest commodities individuals claim they do not have: discretionary time. Once individuals find the time to volunteer, the motivation, worth, or significance of volunteering become clearer to them. The significance of volunteering and volunteer motivation has led to numerous studies of this behavior.

A wide breadth of studies on volunteering can be found in social psychology, sociology, leisure research, and other social sciences (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). Some of the studies were

conducted in the Silicon Valley in California, and others in Arizona, New Jersey, New York City, and throughout the United States and Canada. A study by Bagozzi in 1981 examined the effects of volunteers who donated blood to the American Red Cross and volunteers who donated organs for scientific medical reasons. The American Red Cross establishes specific targets for their blood donation goals. The degree to which their objective is attained is a direct measure of their campaign success for blood donations. Volunteer support is critical to the organization's objective of obtaining specific amounts of blood. Without volunteer support, the organization would be unable to accomplish its goals. The study (Bagozzi, 1981) revealed one mechanism that was helpful in motivating individuals to donate blood. Special dinners, plaques, t-shirts, certificates, pins, and special events were used to recognize those who contributed through volunteering and donating blood. Recognition was the strategy used for recruitment and motivation of volunteers.

Another study by Fisher and Ackerman in 1998 examined a sample of parents who volunteered for a youth sports league. As parents were registering their children for a youth soccer league, a flyer was circulated requesting volunteers to help in the league program. Volunteer need and recognition were contained in the flyer, and t-shirts were promised to all volunteers. The purpose of the experiment was to recruit commitments to volunteer. The experiment measured need, social visibility, personal feelings, expectation of social approval,

number of hours donated, and volunteer commitment. The study found that participants felt more positive about volunteering when the need was high and no recognition was promised.

Studies in the Silicon Valley (Kenney, 1991) examined the stereotypical views of its residents concerning their self-centered, uncaring, and materialistic lifestyles. Residents in the Silicon Valley were business people who led busy lives. Corporate volunteerism in the Silicon Valley was hidden but began to emerge when the Volunteer Exchange, a non-profit agency, was established to promote volunteerism. The study revealed that more businesses and individuals were discovering that through volunteerism they could help with needs in their community and assist non-profit organizations in achieving their goals. The study also revealed the residents made commitments to give their expertise and time in order to gain exposure to new people and issues while working to enhance their communities. The stereotypical views of Silicon Valley residents were contradicted by the study. Volunteer programs can enhance morale, build teamwork among employees, and demonstrate a corporation's commitment to the community (Kenney, 1991).

These studies pointed out that the results and worth derived from volunteering are very rewarding and indicate that volunteering is a contributor to a healthy community. The studies also confirm that volunteers who donate time and service to families, schools, and businesses and to the social and economic context of their communities contribute to the enrichment of

society.

Purpose of the Study

This study is concerned with understanding why people volunteer. The purpose of this study is multifaceted. The main purpose is to understand reasons why people choose to volunteer. The second purpose of the study is to see if people perceive volunteering to be worth their time; thirdly, to survey or canvass the characteristics of individuals who volunteer in Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee; and fourthly, to see if studies on volunteering nationally are consistent with volunteering in Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

The method used to assess why people volunteer, whether they perceive volunteering to be worth their efforts and to help identify their characteristics as volunteers was done through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was in the form of a Likert scale with strongly agree and strongly disagree answers which were rated on a 1 to 5 point scale.

The use of a questionnaire for canvassing participant attitudes about volunteering was a channel to help identify their reasons for volunteering. The participant responses served as indicators of their behavioral attitudes about volunteering. The questionnaire was designed in two parts. Part 1 contained sixteen questions designed to allow individual responses about why those surveyed volunteer. Part 2 contained seven demographic questions designed to identify characteristics of participants such as sex, age, income, and level of education. Participants completing the questionnaire were not asked to reveal their names, assuring confidentiality and anonymity. The questionnaire was given to persons 18 years of age or older who volunteered at selected charitable or non-charitable agencies in Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee.

Data collected were analyzed for frequencies and percentages using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. Results of the data led to conclusions about

participant reasons for volunteering, and collected data revealed characteristics of the volunteer population in the selected region. This helped develop a profile of volunteers in the two county areas of Northeast Tennessee to compare against national norms.

The agencies selected in the two counties for distribution of the questionnaire were chosen because of prior association with them and their dedication to enriching the communities. Questions asked on the survey were chosen or selected because of the researcher's experience as a volunteer. The agencies selected utilize volunteers in many capacities. Volunteers may plan activities for girls/boys clubs, assist in disaster areas, help adults learn to read, take meals to sick and shut-ins, administer to terminally ill patients, give food to the hungry, perform clerical duties, and many other caring ways that enrich the community. The questionnaire was distributed to the following agencies in Carter and Washington counties of Northeast Tennessee:

Appalachian Girl Scout Council - Johnson City, TN

American Red Cross - Elizabethton, TN

Carter County Adult Reading

Carter County Rescue Squad

Elizabethton Senior Citizens

Hales Ministries - Elizabethton, TN

Johnson City Boys/Girls Club

Johnson City Senior Citizens Center

Neighborhood Service Center - Elizabethton, TN

Ronald McDonald House - Johnson City, TN

Salvation Army - Johnson City, TN

Sycamore Shoals Hospital - Elizabethton, TN

United Way - Elizabethton, TN

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The need to help others is deeply ingrained in the American character. Americans spend more of their time volunteering than people of any other nation. Volunteering is behavior, once established, that continues through life (Powers, 1998).

Public life in America is rooted in individuals who build communities and pursue shared goals. American life has always been characterized by individuals who were closely bound to one another by strong families and tightly knit neighborhoods. But complex issues facing our nation today and community problems are breaking up families and neighborhoods. Some of these complex problems confronting communities include violence, changing family patterns, poverty, teen pregnancy, unemployment, homelessness, and availability of drugs and alcohol. Americans tackle their social and human problems by organizing volunteer groups to achieve their goals, and volunteer in schools, social agencies, and profit/non-profit agencies to help alleviate these community problems. According to Arai and Pedler (1997), volunteering can provide a structure for individual empowerment and build channels to improve social, economic, and cultural well-being of community residents.

Volunteerism had its beginning during America's struggle for independence from Britain and in the 1800s during the Civil War period. As a result of the American Revolution and debates over

the constitution, early Americans organized various volunteer groups (Brown, 1974). Residents volunteered in organized movements such as antislavery crusades, farmers groups, and women's groups to shape public opinion. These volunteer movements served as a bridge between the citizens and elected officials to influence legislators and Congress (Skocpol et al, 2000). In 1860, the U. S. relied on civilians to gather volunteers for army units. The Civil War inspired women to be civic-minded. Clara Barton and many other women who were volunteer nurses during wartime help set the mold for chartering the American Red Cross. Individuals volunteered to form groups to help others and to influence legislation. Some volunteer groups that sprang up during these times were the Masons (1733), the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833), the American Red Cross (1881), and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC-1890). The forming of these volunteer groups is strong evidence that they were important to the growth of volunteerism in American. Historians often report that early Americans created and relied upon volunteers to accomplish tasks (Brown, 1974; Mathews, 1969).

East Tennesseans Volunteer

The U.S. Civil War was the pivotal event in American history in which volunteers were relied upon, and this willingness to volunteer to fight for a cause was continued into other wars. East Tennesseans have a reputation and long-standing history of volunteering, especially for war-time service. Tennessee had more

men enlist in the Civil War than any of the southern states except North Carolina. In the battle of Kings Mountain in 1780, so many East Tennesseans volunteered to fight with John Sevier that straws had to be drawn to see who would have to return home (Volunteer Landing Main Pavilion: The Volunteer Spirit, January 28, 2001). This example of volunteerism continues to be an integral part of life in East Tennessee. Volunteers in Carter and Washington counties perform many different tasks such as coaching, assisting the elderly or disabled, helping with church or school activities, serving as board members, and providing staff assistance for political or other organizations. The spirit of giving of oneself in terms of time and efforts was evidenced in this study and reveals that volunteerism continues to be woven into Tennessee's rich heritage.

Who Volunteers

A Gallup survey sponsored by the Independent Sector, an organization composed of associations of non-profit organizations that monitors volunteerism, reported in 1987 that 80 million individuals volunteered, and in 1995, 93 million individuals volunteered. The 1995 study also revealed that volunteers worked an averaged of four hours a week (Ladd, 1999). As cited in Powers, 1998, more persons age 40 to 60 as compared to 10 years ago were beginning to volunteer their time and talents. This age group includes the baby boomers that represent large numbers of people who are educated, affluent, and skillful. The 40 to 60

year age group with a college degree were more likely to volunteer than those with fewer years of schooling, and despite the demands of their jobs, the employed persons in this age group were more likely to volunteer than those who were unemployed.

White women comprise a large portion of the volunteer population. In 1990, 56% of the volunteer population were white women (women in America out-number men in the population). Women were more likely to volunteer if they have children. Women volunteer in schools, churches, sports, and community or wherever their children are involved (Hayghe, 1991). In 1996 less than 40% of the black population volunteered compared to 50% of the white population. Hispanics are third in the number of volunteers after whites and blacks but rank first in the number of hours volunteered per person (as cited in Powers, 1998). Racial/ethnic groups are rapidly increasing in America from the arrival of millions of immigrants which could account for the increase in diversity of faces of volunteers. By 2050 half of the U. S. population will be non-white (The Current Population Survey (CPS), 1989).

Types of Volunteers

For the purpose of this study, a volunteer is defined as a person who does unpaid work for organizations such as schools, churches, hospitals, and civic organizations. Volunteer work is not considered to be employment for the purpose of labor measurement.

As cited in Powers (1998), there are three types of volunteers. The first type is called a spot volunteer. The spot volunteer responds to specific needs and maintains a casual relationship with the volunteer organization and volunteers by choice, i.e., volunteering to coach a little league team. The second type of volunteer becomes involved out of personal commitment, gains a sense of gratification, and maintains an ongoing relationship with the volunteer organization, i.e., volunteering to teach adults to read. The third type is pressured to volunteer by an employer or entity, i.e., forced by employer to distribute company flyers. This type of volunteer may feel resentment and a lack of commitment to the volunteer organization.

Barriers to Volunteering

Petrick (1995) pointed out the most common barrier or reason that individuals stated for not volunteering is their lack of time. Petrick emphasized there are other barriers that can affect people's reasons for not volunteering. Among those barriers are training and orientation issues when agencies and organizations do not explain to volunteers what is expected of them, the length of the activity, and kind of result being sought. When agencies are seeking results from their volunteers, procedures must be explained about programs and expected program outcomes. This is especially essential to do when a report or new program is implemented. Other barriers to volunteering include a

lack of awareness of jobs available and failure of organizations to follow-up on individuals who offer to volunteer. In another study by Bova (1999), other barriers such as a non-supportive employer, multiple volunteer commitments, or family demands can limit volunteer participation. When organizations are seeking or selecting volunteers, they must consider these barriers as reasons why individuals do not volunteer.

Reasons People Volunteer

Another critical aspect of understanding volunteerism is to know reasons why people choose to volunteer. During holiday seasons, the spirit of volunteering increases, and many organizations take this time to promote volunteerism by encouraging individuals and agencies to donate time, money, and resources to those less fortunate. Costello (1999) emphasized holidays motivate people to want to get connected to their communities by helping others in ways that they would not do any other time of the year. The spirit of giving seems to be exemplified more at Christmas and Thanksgiving than any other time during the year. People tend to care more for the hungry, the lonely, and the homeless during these specific holiday seasons. These situations are year-long problems that are sometime neglected because people are too busy to care.

People are inspired to volunteer because they want to make a difference in someone's life. Clarke (1999) pointed out that people volunteer to reap a benefit that may be real and

significant. Clarke talked with volunteers who gave such reasons as (a) the need to give something back, (b) to be a part of something larger than themselves, (c) to help develop their leadership skills, and (d) to gain important and lasting professional and social contacts.

Clarke emphasized that whatever the reason may be for volunteering, the tasks can be challenging. These challenges affect the kind of service needed, how the service will get done, and the amount of time each volunteer has to give.

CHAPTER 4

CHALLENGES OF VOLUNTEERING

The challenge of volunteering raises the questions of why an individual chooses to do so and what is expected from volunteering. Hart (2000) emphasized that as a volunteer for a school environmental fair, her paycheck came, without thought of pay, in the form of helping students recognize the value of a clean environment and of showing children that together they can help to enhance the environment. Hart stressed that meaningful relationships derived from volunteering are as good as money. Relationships are derived from a friend picking up a sick child from school, a neighbor bathing a sick elderly person, or a group who feeds the homeless. These relationships are a measure of one's values without thought of financial gain and the end result is why an individual really volunteers.

Companies such as CitiBank and Warner-Lambert encourage their employees to volunteer for charitable projects such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, an organization that matches employees with disadvantaged children, and spending their vacation in places such as Ecuador and Kenya translating and repairing facial deformities of children. It is a chance for workers to come from behind their desks to help others who do not have many of the things that most people take for granted. Employees reported they are much happier and more confident in their work and have a continuous good feeling and better health (Finney, 1997).

With more awareness to volunteering and opportunities to commit to the challenges, the participant population has changed to include more racial/ethnic diversity. Racial/ethnic diversity is rapidly changing in America, and people from all realms of life are volunteering. Schools and organizations that use volunteers will need to restructure and prepare people to interact and work with volunteers who are different from themselves.

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

The National Center for Education Statistics in 1995 revealed that 67% of U.S. children aged 5-17 are white, 15% were black, 13% were Hispanic, and 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaskan Native. Between 1998 and 2003, the total number of elementary school-age children is expected to increase by two percent, with the number of white children falling by three percent while the number of black children will increase by three percent. The largest increase will be among Hispanic children, whose population is expected to increase by 15% (as cited in Lumsden, 1998).

Volunteer-based programs with English as the Second Language (ESL) provide instruction that reflects diversity in the population. With proposed state and federal budget cuts, agencies that provide needed services to implement racial/ethnic diversity rely on volunteer-based programs. National organizations that support volunteer-based programs include the National Southern

Baptist Convention, and the Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education (SCALE), which uses college students to provide volunteer instruction. Other volunteer ESL programs are provided by housing projects, community centers, and social service agencies (Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995).

Many national organizations and groups rely on volunteer services. They need volunteers to talk to schools and community groups, help run blood screening, staff information booths at medical conferences, visit nursing homes, give encouragement to a child, teach English to immigrants, mentor at-risk teens, deliver goods during holidays, and help in crisis.

Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

Volunteer challenges can lead to problems of liability. The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 was intended to encourage volunteerism and facilitate volunteer recruiting by reducing the legal liability and risks to individuals who choose to serve (Jacobs, 1997). The Act was first presented to Congress in 1987 by Representative John Porter from Illinois. The first version of this volunteer protection legislation was signed into law by President Clinton on June 18, 1997 (Constantine, 1997).

A coalition was formed in 1987 to address problems among organizations that relied on volunteers who were withholding their services out of fear of liability lawsuits. Constantine (1997) pointed out two studies (late 1980s) that confirmed the decline in volunteerism because of the fear of lawsuits. A 1986

study by Peat Marwick surveyed non-profit agencies to see whether the problem had negative effects on their organizations; 38% described the problem as a crisis. The 1988 study by the Gallup Organization found that one in 10 nonprofit agencies had volunteers resign because of liability concerns, and one in six volunteers withheld their services from fear of exposure to liabilities.

According to Constantine, an article in the Wall Street Journal in 1989 reported a lawsuit involving a volunteer umpire who was sued by the catcher who was hit in the eye by a softball while playing without a mask. The lawsuit claimed that the umpire should have lent his mask to the catcher. Another lawsuit in the article involved a mountain climber who sued his volunteer rescuers for \$12 million on the grounds that their rescue methods were negligent and reckless. These lawsuits gained attention of those who volunteered and made volunteers aware that they could end up in court.

Passage of the volunteer protection legislation means a great deal to agencies that rely on volunteer involvement and represents the importance of work done by volunteers. The legislation contains provisions with exceptions and qualifications and has its limitations. It does not prohibit the filing of lawsuits against volunteers; it outlines specific conditions that would exempt them from responsibility for unfortunate incidents. The legislation covers volunteers of organizations exempt from federal income tax under Section 501

(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It also covers volunteers of " any non-profit organization that is organized and conducted for public benefit and operated primarily for charitable, civic, educational, religious, welfare or health purposes." The legislation does not allow punitive damages to be awarded against a volunteer unless the harm was caused by willful or criminal misconduct to the rights or safety of the claimant. It grants immunity from personal and individual liability only for volunteers of nonprofit organizations (Jacobs, 1997).

President Clinton in 1998 declared April 19 through April 25 as National Volunteer week. This special time allows people to show their appreciation for their volunteers and to promote enthusiasm for volunteerism in families and communities.

CHAPTER 5

DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was hand-carried to 13 agencies the first two weeks in September 2000. There were 243 questionnaires distributed. The questionnaire was either handed directly to volunteers or left at the agency with their volunteer coordinator. An explanation was given orally to the agencies and to volunteers explaining how to complete the questionnaire. At two of the agencies, as part of their regular monthly/weekly meeting, a 10 minute presentation was allowed to present the questionnaire and answer questions concerning it. The number of questionnaires left at each agency for volunteers to complete was dependent upon the number of volunteers the agency used. By the first week in October 2000, responses from the questionnaire were picked up from the 13 agencies. All of the agencies were cooperative. Of the 243 questionnaires distributed, 124 were returned, indicating a 51% return rate.

Summary of Findings

Table 1 shows the overall breakdown of frequency and percentage of responses to Part 1 of the questionnaire. The statements were aimed at determining reasons people volunteer in the two counties. Table 2 shows the overall breakdown of frequency and percentage of responses to Part 2 of the questionnaire. The statements were aimed at determining the

characteristics of those who volunteer in the two counties.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Volunteering

Agree = Strongly Agree (SA) & Agree (A); Neutral = N; Disagree = Strongly Disagree (SD) & Disagree (D); Total Number = N

Reason	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		N
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Q1 Social responsibility	56	47	34	28	30	25	120
Q2 Linkage	70	58	36	30	13	11	119
Q3 Desire	86	70	19	15	17	14	122
Q4 Enhance life and work	94	81	10	09	12	10	116
Q5 Guilt	11	10	03	02	100	88	114
Q6 Connected	85	70	17	14	19	16	121
Q7 Leisure	20	18	06	05	85	77	111
Q8 Holidays	22	19	16	14	78	67	116
Q9 Off from work	15	13	16	14	81	72	112
Q10 Self-worth	53	46	30	26	33	28	116
Q11 Money	16	14	10	09	89	77	115
Q12 Rewarding	98	82	03	02	18	15	119
Q13 Need in community	87	72	18	15	16	13	121
Q14 Fulfillment	95	78	10	08	16	14	121
Q15 Protection from Liabilities	13	11	33	29	68	60	112
Q16 Career	10	08	19	17	86	75	115

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Demographics			
Total number = N, Number of responses = #, Number of responses to total N = %			
	N	#	%
Education			
Jr. High/HS/Technical		86	71
BS		24	20
MS & above		11	09
Total	121		100
Income			
Less than \$15,000		31	30
\$15,500-\$24,999		25	24
\$25,000-\$49,999		22	22
\$50,000 or more		25	24
Total	103		100
Marital Status			
Married		61	49
Single/Separated/Divorced/Widowed		62	51
Total	123		100
Race			
White		109	89
Black		04	03
Hispanic		02	02
Other		07	06
Total	122		100
Age			
18 yrs-20 yrs		06	05
21 yrs-39 yrs		28	23
40 yrs-60 yrs		30	24
61 yrs & over		58	48
Total	122		100
Employment Status			
Full-time		37	31
Part-time		10	08
Unemployed		13	11
Retired		61	50
Total	121		100
Volunteer hrs. per week			
1-4 hrs		66	55
5 or more hrs		53	45
Total	119		100

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

A large number of Americans do volunteer work. In Carter and Washington counties of Northeast Tennessee, 124 volunteers responded to the attitudinal questionnaire. Table 1 revealed their attitudes about why they volunteer, and Table 2 revealed their demographic characteristics. Research reveals that individuals who volunteer in the region surveyed do so for various reasons, and because of these different reasons, the rewards or benefits of volunteering are difficult to measure.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents agreed (A) that their experiences from volunteering enhanced their life and work (Q4). Volunteers choose their challenge and when the challenge is fulfilling, it adds meaning to their lives. Seventy percent of the respondents agreed (A) that they felt connected to their community after volunteering (Q6). When citizens volunteer to participate in their communities in ways that help others, it promotes a bond with others in the community.

Involvement or participation in community activities can bring about a sense of responsibility. Volunteering can be an individual's social responsibility. Forty-seven percent of participants in the two counties agreed (A) that it was their social responsibility to volunteer (Q1). A social responsibility such as volunteering is often fulfilling and rewarding, and link individuals to their communities. Question 2 generated 58% of the

participants agreeing (A) that volunteering links them to their communities.

The main reason cited that most people do not volunteer is lack of time. Eighty-two percent agreed (A) that they were busy but volunteered because it was rewarding (Q12), compared to 77% who stated they disagreed (D) that they volunteered because they do not have anything else to do (Q7). The respondents from the two counties in the study evidently led busy lives but found time to volunteer. Fifty percent of the volunteers were retired (Table 2).

Retirement can free up large amounts of time and can be an indicator that older adults are seeking challenges to meet. They are experienced workers and bring dependability and discipline to their volunteer work. Thirty percent of the respondents had incomes of less than \$15,000 (Table 2). The low income may relate to the 50% who were retirees. In general, the higher the income the more likely individuals are to engage in volunteer work. Another link between volunteering and income may be a reflection of the relationship between education and volunteering. Persons who have completed college generally have higher incomes than those with fewer years of schooling. Seventy-one percent of the respondent's education did not go beyond junior high school/high school/technical school (Table 2). The educational level of the respondents may reflect that they had various reasons for not acquiring a higher education.

Volunteers were evidently choosing to do so without

receiving money for their efforts. Seventy-seven percent disagreed (D) that they volunteered to gain money for their efforts (Q11). Volunteer challenges result in gratification and a continuous good feeling. Forty-six percent of participants agreed (A) they volunteered out of a sense of self-worth (Q10). Self-worth is not measured by how much money an individual is worth but is measured by how fulfilled an individual is after sharing their time and efforts for others (Q14). Seventy-eight percent agreed (A) to question 14.

Question 8 and Question 9 generated 70% of the participants disagreeing (D) that they did not volunteer during holiday seasons because they felt more charitable or volunteered at this specific time because they were off from work. The participant's response rate to these questions is an indicator that two thirds of them volunteer year-round and not just during holiday seasons.

The 2000 U. S. Census data revealed an overall population for Carter and Washington counties of 128,984 residents, 18 years and older. Ninety-six percent of the census population for the two counties, 18 years and older, were white. Other ethnic groups from the census 2000, 18 years and older from the two counties were 4%. Of the 122 respondents to the race variable, 89% were white, and 11% were other ethnic groups (Table 2). The 11% other ethnic groups is 5% of the total population for the two counties. The low percentage of other ethnic group participation in volunteering may be attributed to the low population, awareness of volunteer opportunities, culture, economic status, non-

supportive employers, or family demands. Ethnicity and culture can have an impact on outcome variables as well as can add richness to the interpretation of the data.

Question 5 generated the largest overall frequency response. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents disagreed (D) that their efforts to help non-profit agencies were done out of guilt. Research supported that 72% of the respondents volunteered because of needs in their community. Some of these needs include mentoring, helping the Red Cross in crises, helping the sick, coaching little league, helping individuals learn to read, and passing out commodities to the needy (Q13). The ultimate responsibility to help those in need lies with individuals, families, and communities. A sense of caring and compassion requires personal commitment of those who volunteer because of the needs in their communities.

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 is legislation designed to help organizations and their volunteers in the event of a lawsuit. Sixty percent of the participants, evidently, would volunteer whether or not they were protected by this legislation. Seventy-five percent disagreed (D) that they volunteered to help them decide on a career. Because 50% of the participants were retired (Table 2), choosing a career was irrelevant to them.

Based on the results from this study, individuals volunteer because of needs in their community and benefit from their efforts in ways other than financial means. This suggests that there is a significant relationship between self and community,

and that individuals who volunteer seem to apply meaning and purpose to their efforts.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

We are living in a time when there is a need to care for the sick, the young, the older generation, the abused, and the environment. Based on this study of why people volunteer and if their volunteering is worth their efforts, the role of volunteers was exhibited in many ways and demonstrated that the rewards or benefits from volunteering were fulfilling. Citizens of communities unite to donate their time and efforts wherever there is a need. Through volunteering, individuals learn about the experiences, needs, and opinions of others in the community. Research revealed that volunteering connects families and communities.

Having volunteered at agencies in roles such as secretary, coach, mentor, and board member has added more meaning in my life and enabled me to better understand others as well as myself. Because of my caring attitude and my availability, I chose to accept these challenges and as a result received personal satisfaction as my reward.

The main purpose of the study was to understand reasons why people choose to volunteer. Based on the results of the questionnaire, assessing of responses from participants revealed their attitudes about volunteering to be a manifestation of why they volunteer.

Participants in the study clearly articulated that

volunteering was worth their time because of the benefits received from their challenges. It was evident that volunteers benefited from their efforts through their continued acts of altruism.

Characteristics of the surveyed population revealed that the majority of the volunteers, (1) had no education beyond technical school, (2) had incomes of less than \$15,000, (3) were without a spouse, (4) were of the white race, (5) were 61 years or older, (6) were retired, and (7) volunteered 1-4 hours per week.

Benefits or rewards received from volunteering on a national level were no different from those who volunteered in the study. The benefits received from volunteering builds a sense of community, breaks down barriers between people, and raises the quality of life. There was consistency in the number of hours that volunteers worked nationally to those worked by volunteers in the study. The literature reported the age group of baby boomers being more likely to volunteer than any age group. The study revealed that retirees, 61 years and older, made up the largest group of volunteers.

The literature revealed that the baby boomers age group were educated, affluent, and skillful. The study reported that two thirds of the volunteers had no education beyond technical school, and had incomes of less than \$15,000. Generally, most residents who live in the Appalachian Region and East Tennessee area lag behind the national level average in educational and income norms. More of the white race than the black race volunteer

nationally, and as well as the participants in the study. Hispanics and others in the study make up the third group of volunteers. Nationally, Hispanics and other ethnic groups are ranked third and are rapidly increasing in America.

The most common barrier reported in the literature from people who do not volunteer is their lack of time. According to the Assistant Director of the Elizabethton Senior Citizens Center, people do not commit to volunteer because of their lack of time. She mentioned that the most common barrier given by those not volunteering was the lack of transportation. Those volunteering need transportation to deliver the agency's "Meals on Wheels", since the agency cannot provide transportation. The Assistant Director also said that because most of their volunteers were retirees and that they never mentioned family demands or non-supportive employers as a reason for not volunteering (Personal Communication, June 18, 2001).

According to the Administrative Assistant of the Boys Club of Johnson City/Washington County, their most common reason for people not volunteering is that they are not paid. She said most of their volunteers will work two hours and leave but would probably work more hours if they were paid. Those volunteering for only two hours cannot afford to work any longer without pay. Volunteers for the agency never mentioned barriers such as lack of time, other commitments, or family demands as reasons for not volunteering (Personal Communication, June 18, 2001).

Barriers for not volunteering reported by the two agencies

contacted in the study are consistent with those reported in the literature except for the barriers of transportation and volunteers wanting to be paid. East Tennessee's per capita income is lower than the national average and residents in small rural communities have no access to transportation. The study revealed that people in Elizabethton and Johnson City, Tennessee volunteer for the same reasons as was reported nationally. Volunteers nationally and locally use their time and talents to help others in ways that enrich their communities.

It is evident that volunteers nationally and locally use their time and talents to help others for different reasons. This study represented a portion of individuals in two counties of Northeast Tennessee that volunteer. A sense of community exists in the two counties as a result of volunteer activities. The respondents have different reasons for their commitments. Based on the research, the two counties exemplified community pride and motivation to work without pay for the benefit of others. The results received from the participants' challenges could be passed on to inspire others to volunteer. The social interaction within the two counties seemed to have left the volunteers with a good feeling of knowing that they helped someone even if it was in a small way.

Overall frequency of responses to the questionnaire suggest that individuals were motivated to volunteer because of caring attitudes. This study contributed to our understanding of who volunteers and why, as well as understanding the impact

volunteering had upon communities. Despite being busy, volunteers participated in challenges that were fulfilling and reflected their individual responsibility. Whether on a national level or from counties in Northeast Tennessee, individuals volunteer in roles that are rewarding and benefiting to their communities.

Further Research

Further research is needed to understand other factors that contribute to the benefits of volunteering and the effects volunteering has upon the individual. Specifically, future research should examine attitudes and behaviors of volunteers before and after volunteering. Other aspects of further research would be to examine any negative results of volunteering. In the specific region studied, residents in Northeast Tennessee should be questioned about their awareness of Tennessee's volunteer image in American history. The term Tennessee "volunteers" refers to the state's history and reputation. It would be interesting to know how many Tennesseans know their history. More research is needed to examine the factors that may have contributed to the low volunteer participation of ethnic groups in Northeast Tennessee. Comparing volunteerism throughout the Appalachian region with national norms might provide some fascinating insights into regional values and traditions.

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APPENDIX

Attitudinal Questionnaire for Volunteers

PART 1

Please circle your preference to each of these statements with:

1=Strongly Agree

2=Agree

3=Neutral

4=Disagree

5=Strongly Disagree

1. I feel obligated to volunteer because it is my social responsibility. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I volunteer because it creates a vital link between charitable and non-profit agencies and the community. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I volunteer because I have the desire to be involved in charitable activities. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I volunteer because the experience I get enhances my life and my work. 1 2 3 4 5
5. My volunteer efforts to help non-profit agencies are done out of guilt. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I feel connected to my community after volunteering. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I volunteer because I do not have anything else to do. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I volunteer more during holiday seasons because I feel more charitable. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I volunteer more during holiday seasons because I am off from work. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I volunteer out of a sense of self-worth. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I volunteer because I know I will eventually gain monetarily from my efforts. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I am busy but I volunteer my spare time for others because it is rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I volunteer because of the needs in my community. 1 2 3 4 5
14. As I volunteer, my worth is not measured in dollars but measured by how it makes me feel. 1 2 3 4 5
15. I volunteer because the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 protects me from liabilities. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I volunteer to help me decide on a career. 1 2 3 4 5

PART 2

Please CIRCLE your level of education:

elementary	bachelors degree
jr. high/middle school	masters degree
high school	doctoral degree
technical or college training	

Please CIRCLE your family's level of income:

Less than \$15,000	\$25,000 - \$49,999
\$15, 500 - \$24,999	\$50,000 or more

Please CIRCLE your marital status:

married	separated/divorced
single	widowed

Please CIRCLE your race:

white

hispanic

black

other

Please CIRCLE your age:

18-20 yrs.

40-60 yrs.

21-39 yrs.

61 yrs & over

Please CIRCLE your employment status:

full time employed

part time employed

unemployed

retired

Please CIRCLE hours volunteered per week:

1 - 2 hours

3 - 4 hours

5 or more hours

VITA

PATRICIA A. BELLAMY

Personal Data: Date of Birth: June 9, 1947
Place of Birth: Carter County, Tennessee
Marital Status: Married

Education: Public schools, Elizabethton, Tennessee

A.S., 1991, Office Administration, Milligan College

B.S., 1993, Organizational Management, Milligan College

M.S., 2001, Liberal Studies (Community Relations), ETSU

Professional Experience: GS-5 Resource Clerk, USDA Forest Service, Cherokee National Forest, 1977-1990

Personnel Assistant, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 1993 to 2000

Personnel Records Supvr., ETSU, Johnson City, TN 12/2000 to present

Awards and Honors: Valedictorian of 1965 graduating class

Scholastic Award (Office Administration), 1991, Milligan College

Certified Professional Secretary status achieved in 1996