Harnessing the Power of Volunteer Labor

By

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

April 2014

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Rebecca C. Langham for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management to be taken June 2014

Title: HARNESSING THE POWER OF VOLUNTEER LABOR

Approved: _____

Professor Laura Leete

In 2012, about one in every four adults in the United States volunteered at least once, totaling 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service. This abundance of unpaid labor is an incredibly valuable resource that many nonprofit organizations utilize in order to operate programming and provide services, but it also dictates a need for a volunteer management program within organizations to coordinate all of the volunteer functions. The amount of people who choose to volunteer and the number of organizations who utilize this volunteer labor has made volunteerism and volunteer management a compelling research topic. Thousands of articles have been published in academic journals in a variety of disciplines. This thesis examines volunteer management by researching the findings of academia and discovering the practices nonprofit organizations use through interviews and case studies. I hypothesize that there is a disconnect between the academic and professional sphere, and found that all of the volunteer management professionals who were interviewed do not use academic research as a resource when seeking to improve their volunteer programs. I call for a better integration of the extensive knowledge to bridge the gap between the academic and professional spheres.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the late Ilse Neugarten and to the late Richard and Inge

Langham whose foresight and generosity gave me the opportunity to pursue a college

degree and receive a quality education.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Leete for aiding me through the thesis process for over a

year, Erin Barnhart for being a valuable resource and a huge supporter of this project

even in its infant stages, and Professor Fracchia, whose door was always open

throughout my entire college career. I am thankful for all of the individuals who took

the time to participate in an interview and were willing to be so open with me. I was

able to complete this project because of your time and support.

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), in 2012, 64.5 million people in the United States (26.5 percent of the adult population) volunteered for an organization. This totaled to 7.9 billion hours given to volunteer service and the value of this unpaid labor is estimated to be worth $175 billion ("Value of Volunteer Time," 2013). This pool of volunteer labor has proven to be incredibly valuable to nonprofit organizations as 80% of nonprofits use volunteers to meet their administrative and program needs and provide services (Hager and Brudney, 2004, p. 12).

This abundance of volunteer labor dictates a need for a volunteer management program within organizations to coordinate all of the volunteer functions. Brudney and Gazely (2004) recommend nine practices of volunteer management for nonprofit organizations to adopt:

1) Regular supervision and communication with volunteers

2) Liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers

3) Regular collection of information on volunteer numbers and hours

4) Screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers

5) Written policies and job descriptions for volunteer involvement

6) Recognition activities for volunteers

7) Annual measurement of the impacts of volunteers

8) Training and professional development opportunities for volunteers

9) Training for paid staff in working with volunteers (p. 4)

They also found that nonprofit organizations "are receptive to best practices in volunteer management, but commonly only adopt them to some degree" (p. 4). I sought

to know if Hager and Brudney's findings held true in the eyes of volunteer management professionals currently working for nonprofit organizations. If so, which best practices are organizations choosing to implement?

Because volunteers are heavily relied on resources in the nonprofit sector, academia in a multitude of disciplines is researching and writing about volunteerism and volunteer management. A simple Google Scholar search of "volunteer management" returns almost 600,000 results, and there are many more books, journals, and articles beyond that single independent search, including, and perhaps most notably, the peer-reviewed journal *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations.*

There is an ever-growing abundance of literature about volunteerism in the nonprofit sector, but are volunteer management professionals actually using these academic resources? I hypothesize that there exists a disconnect between the academic sphere and the professional sphere and that professionals are not looking to academia to help implement or improve volunteer management practices. If that is true, what resources are nonprofit organizations referencing when building and improving their volunteer programs? Furthermore, how can we bridge this disconnect so the wealth of knowledge can be used to better volunteer management programs, thus improving organization's provision of services and creating a greater social impact?

II. BACKGROUND

What is a nonprofit?

The term "nonprofit" is one that is often misunderstood by a large portion of society. Part of the problem may be that the name of the sector describes what it *is not* rather than what it *is* (Pallotta, 2008). However, if an organization is classified as a "nonprofit," that does not mean that it cannot make a profit or that it must spend every dollar of its revenue during the year. Rather, as dictated in the IRS tax code, any of an organization's surplus revenues must be used to continue its work towards its mission. This profit must stay within the organization and cannot be distributed to board members, employees, shareholders, or other stakeholders (Anheier, 2005).

The IRS determines whether or not an organization is eligible to be classified as a nonprofit organization. If an organization is deemed eligible, it will fall under Section 501(c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code and will be exempt from federal income taxes. There are more than twenty-five categories of tax-exempt organizations in the Internal Revenue Code, but the category most associated with the term "nonprofit" is 501(c)(3) organizations (also known as "charitable" organizations or "tax-deductible" organizations) ("What is a Nonprofit Organization?", n.d.). Because when most individuals hear the term "nonprofit organization" they automatically think of an organization that is classified as a 501(c)(3) organization, when I use the word "nonprofit" or "nonprofit organization," I will be referring to a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. This is not to say that this research does not apply to other 501(c) tax-

exempt organizations, such as political advocacy organizations or an agricultural organization, but it will not be the focus of this thesis.

The 501(c)(3) classification includes public charities and private foundations. A 501(c)(3) organization "must benefit the broad public interest, not just the interests of its members. It must serve one or more of the following purposes… charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, or the prevention of cruelty to children or animals" ("What is a Nonprofit Organization?", n.d.). Most organizations must apply to the IRS with proof that the organization qualifies for 501(c)(3) status. Religious congregations, however, automatically receive 501(c)(3) status, to maintain the constitutional protection of separation of church and state (Aheier, 2005).

In addition to being exempt from federal income taxes, gifts to an organization are tax deductible. If an individual donates to a 501(c)(3) organization, that donation can be deducted when filing their income taxes; this serves as an incentive to give to charitable organizations (Anheier, 2005).

Instead of or in addition to funds, many individuals choose to donate their time to charitable organizations and serve as volunteers. Although this donation of time is not tax deductible (there is a continuing debate about how to value volunteer labor in terms of dollar amounts), it can be just as valuable, and in some cases more valuable, to an organization. Every organization utilizes volunteers differently. Some organizations rely entirely or almost entirely on volunteer labor, while others have volunteers work side-by-side with paid staff, while others, still, utilize very little volunteer labor (Worth, 2009).

What is a volunteer?

The definition of "volunteer" enters into somewhat of a grey area as high schools require students to perform community service in order to graduate and as judges sentence community service hours. If an individual is coerced to volunteer, is it really volunteering? Rather than entering a debate about whether or not motivation affects the definition of volunteering (though motivation is a factor in categorizing types of volunteers, as discussed below), I will adopt the dominant economic definition of volunteering as stated by Robert A. Stebbins (2009): "it is a form of unpaid labor and that volunteers perform such labor…there is, in proper volunteering, an absence of payment as livelihood, whether in money or in kind" (p. 155). This definition defines a volunteer by *what* they do and *how* they do it, but does not suggest any implications for *why* they do it. Since individuals' motivations for volunteering have significant impacts on recruitment, placement, and retention, I am using this definition because it is inclusive and has no suggestions about an individual's personal motivations.

Often people refer to volunteers as free labor, but this term is misleading. Although volunteers are unpaid labor, they are not free (Leete, 2006). Training and managing volunteers and other fees (background checks, etcetera) are all organizational expenses. Operating an effective volunteer management program also requires a significant amount of staff time.

What are the types of volunteers?

Although there is no general consensus about the different types of volunteers and the definitions of these categories, Worth (2009) synthesized the existing literature

on types of volunteers into one list: spot volunteer, episodic volunteer, regular volunteer, marginal volunteer, and virtual volunteer. As some of the names imply, these categories are determined by patterns of participation, level of commitment, and motivation. This categorization of volunteers can help with understanding the motivation and commitment of a volunteer and thus aid an organization with volunteer job placement and determining how many resources to commit to a particular volunteer. It also has implications about what pools of people to recruit from when an organization needs certain positions filled or tasks completed.

A spot volunteer participates with the organization casually. They may help with a park clean-up day or a single-day fundraising event. The commitment is usually one day and usually is not repeated. Additionally, there is no special skill necessary to participate.

Episodic volunteers may volunteer more than once, but is it not a continuous commitment, as they usually volunteer for a short period of time or during a particular time of year. Examples of episodic volunteers are those who work in a soup kitchen only around the holidays or students who volunteer only during summer vacation.

Regular volunteers make a commitment to an organization and gain a sense of accomplishment from their work. These positions could have some of the formalities of a paying job, including job descriptions and responsibilities. When interviewing volunteer management professionals for this thesis, the interviewees spoke predominantly of their regular volunteers.

Marginal volunteers are those who are pressured or "strongly encouraged" to volunteer. Other names for this category of volunteers are "encouraged" or "mandated

volunteers." For example, some high school students are required to volunteer for a certain number of hours in order to graduate. Some corporations strongly encourage their employees to volunteer; there even are examples of corporations that pay their employees a wage when they volunteer at a nonprofit organization. Other marginal volunteers may volunteer after succumbing to peer pressure or the community service may be court-mandated.

With the recent social media boom, a new type of volunteers emerged: the virtual volunteer. This volunteer utilizes technology, such as email, Skype, Twitter, or Facebook to serve the organization. Many virtual volunteers complete this work at a distance from the physical location of the nonprofit organization (Worth, 2009).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Why use volunteers?

A well-managed volunteer program can prove to be very valuable and cost-effective for nonprofit organizations (Brudney and Gazley, 2002; Vinton, 2012). Brudney and Gazley (2002) reject the notion that utilizing volunteer labor threatens the positions of paid staff. Instead, utilizing volunteers frees up staff to focus on specialized tasks, activities that they have specific training for, or to expand their responsibilities. This can raise the cost-effectiveness, improve efficiency, and better the quality of services the organizations provides. It can also produce programs that are effectively operated by both volunteers and paid staff, and even during economic downturns and recessions, organizations can avoid cutting services and programs (Vinton, 2012). A robust volunteer program can benefit and strengthen an organization in other ways including community relations and fundraising (Brudney and Gazley, 2002). Beyond donating their time, volunteers can serve as ambassadors for the organization.

Why have a volunteer management program?

Investing in a volunteer management program, often led by a volunteer management professional, is necessary in order to build a robust volunteer program, but this investment can have lasting benefits for an organization. Volunteer management is also vital to ensure the satisfaction of and retain volunteers. According to a 1998 study commissioned by the UPS Foundation, "two-fifths of volunteers have stopped

volunteering at an organization at some time because of one or more poor volunteer management practices" (Hager and Brudney, 2004)

Of their nine recommended practices, Hager and Brudney (2004) found that only the practices that center on creating a worthwhile experience for the volunteer improve retention rates. These practices include: screening processes to find appropriate volunteers, matching volunteers to suitable roles, recognizing volunteers, and providing training and professional development to volunteers (p. 9). Volunteer retention is a product of what the nonprofit does directly for the volunteer to benefit the individual or enhance the volunteer experience.

Well established and well-organized volunteer management programs will help ensure that nonprofits get the right people volunteering for their organization and that these volunteers will continue to work with the nonprofit longer than if the organization lacked a volunteer management program. Successful volunteer management programs foster environments and relationships that are mutually beneficial to the volunteers, the nonprofit organization, and society (Studer and Schnurbein, 2013).

Why do people volunteer?

Understanding an individual's motivation for volunteering for an organization can lead to a more beneficial experience as an organization can tailor the recruitment, placement, and acknowledgment of the volunteer to improve personal satisfaction and thus increase retention. Motivations for volunteering can be looked at through the lenses of three different disciplines: economic, sociological, and psychological. Lockstone-Binney et al. (2010) aptly describe the differing viewpoints among disciplines:

> The sociological view focuses upon the conceptualization of volunteering as leisure, the psychological view seeks to understand motivations driving volunteering, while the perspective of economists supplements these standpoints in terms of why people volunteer and further examines the value of volunteer contributions (p. 435).

The literature from the psychology discipline produces less tangibles than that from economics and sociology, so I will emphasize the latter two viewpoints.

Much of the literature from the economic perspective examines the benefits accrued to the individual when he or she volunteers. These benefits are usually defined either as an extrinsic benefit (accumulated as a result of the work) or an intrinsic benefit (exists within the individual). Leete (2006) proposes four categories of extrinsic explanations for volunteering:

> Those that emphasize the desire on the part of the volunteers to accomplish certain outcomes; those that rely on psychological motivations or self-understanding; those that emphasize human capital and individual and household utility maximizations; and those that focus on organization connection and social capital (p. 171).

The first category focuses on instrumentalism. For example, individuals may volunteer to increase a public good or donors may volunteer to receive more information about an organization before giving a monetary donation; the ultimate purpose is to accomplish a specific outcome. The second category focuses more on psychological effects. Volunteering may be an expression of values or an effort to understand the world better. Category three uses a cost benefit model to explain volunteering. Cost could be determined as the amount of wage a volunteer would be making if they were working. A common benefit is increasing one's skills in order to advance in the workforce. The fourth category focuses on utilizing volunteering as a way to "[develop] and [maintain] social resources and connections" (p. 171).

Meier and Stutzer (2004) categorize intrinsic motivations into three groups: work enjoyment, warm glow, and social preference. Volunteers choose to help because (1) the work itself is enjoyable, (2) they feel good about the fact that they did the work, or (3) they want to improve not only their own welfare, but also the welfare of others. Both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits are acquired as an outcome of the work done. Nonprofits could use the knowledge of these desired benefits to their advantage by offering volunteer positions that would lead to the accumulation of these benefits or by offering some of these benefits as a reward for helping.

Although economists classify benefits within one of two distinct categories, this does not denote that an individual can only accrue one type of benefits. Bruno and Fiorillo (2012) place intrinsic and extrinsic benefits within the consumption and investment models to examine volunteer motivation. Extrinsic motivation characterize an investment model and intrinsic correspond to a consumption model. Their findings reject that people act only within the pure consumption or the pure investment model and conclude that mixed models are the most prevalent, but "in a mixed model of consumption and investment, consumption purposes prevail" (p. 665). People are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, though intrinsic motivations are more common. Thus, organizations may want volunteers to do work that is enjoyable or can be directly linked to the mission or population served in order to maximize the intrinsic benefits that the volunteers receive.

Much of the literature from the sociology discipline views volunteering as a leisure activity which people choose to participate in as they please (Stebbins ,2009; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2010). Stebbins (2009) argues that there are two main

motivations for volunteering: altruism and self-interestedness (or egoism). Individuals

volunteer because they want to help the cause and are not coerced to do so. Altruism is

often viewed as "selfless." However individuals are drawn to selfless opportunities

where they will also receive some benefit, such as the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits

described by the economists. Clary and Snyder (1999) propose that there are six

personal and social functions that serve as volunteer motivations: values, understanding,

enhancement, career, social, and protective (p. 157). Shye (2010) critiques these six

categories, claiming "it is unclear whether the list of categories is indeed exhaustive

(categories cover the domain intended), whether they are exclusive (conceptually

distinct), nor does the model specify how the categories interrelate (i.e., what is the

conceptual affinity between them)" (p. 185). In response, Shye proposes a new

framework for researching volunteer motivation: a Systemic Quality of Life. This

model has sixteen points and in many ways is too exhaustive. Clary and Snyder's six

categories are much more manageable to understand and define than Shye's complex

framework.

Clary and Snyder (1999) found that two-thirds of survey respondents indicated

having two or more motivations when deciding to volunteer (p. 157). This parallels with

Bruno and Fiorillo's (2012) mixed consumption and investment models. Most

volunteers are not motivated by one sole factor. There are multiple motivations and

these motivations are likely to be both intrinsic and extrinsic or both altruistic and

egoistic.

What can a nonprofit learn from these motivations?

The most common theme in improving volunteer satisfaction and retention is effectively matching a volunteer to a job that align with the volunteer's motivations (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Garner and Garner, 2011). Screening volunteers and understanding their motivations, objectives, and desired benefits can lead to more successful job matching and ultimately more satisfied volunteers. Garner and Garner (2011) also suggest placing volunteers in positions where they can be engaged and make relationships with people, including staff, clients, and other volunteers. These conclusions suggest that when developing a volunteer management proposal, job matching and selection must be a key element for success.

What are the different models of volunteer management?

Researchers suggest multiple models of volunteer management from different lenses including traditional models, a human resources model, a vocational model, a natural resource model, and a Volunteering Stages and Transitions Model (Barnes and Sharpe, 2009; Cuskelly et al., 2006; Brudney and Meiji, 2009; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008).

The traditional model is based on a workplace analogy where volunteer management principles are borrowed from business management and applied to volunteers (Paull, 2002). Volunteers are viewed as part-time employees and the program is a "systematic effort to involve volunteers in the work, outputs, and outcomes of an organization" (Brudney and Lee, 2008). This model emerged because much of the research on volunteer management focused on organizations that operate on a service-

delivery model and are dominated by paid staff (Smith, 2000; Brudney and Meijs, 2009). Others view volunteer management through a human resource lens, where again volunteers are viewed as analogous to staff (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

Emerging models shift away from the idea that volunteers are unpaid part-time employees and recognize volunteers as a different type of resource. Barnes and Sharpe (2009) argue that the traditional model is hindering volunteerism and call for "a more vocation-based, networked, and collaborative approach which affords greater autonomy to the volunteer and sees power being shared between agencies and volunteers" (p. 169). This model encourages volunteer buy-in where they feel like they have a stake in the organization, furthering the commitment of the volunteers to the organization.

Brudney and Meijs's (2009) regenerative approach views volunteers as a natural resource. Volunteer energy is a human-made, renewable, recyclable resource that can be exhausted. The goal of volunteer management programs should be to renew this resource by reinvigorating volunteers and focusing on retention efforts. Prospective volunteers are not limitless, so organizations should focus efforts on retaining volunteers for long periods of time.

The Volunteer Stages and Transitions Model emphasizes the socialization and emotions that volunteers experience during their time with an organization. The socialization process includes five different phases: nominee, newcomer, emotional involvement, established volunteering, and retiring (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). The volunteer management program is established to guide volunteers through the organizational socialization process, which is the "process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume and organizational role"

(Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p. 211). This model focuses on the experiences of individuals during their lifetime as a volunteer. These experiences include four distinct transitions: entrance, accommodation, affiliation, and exit (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008). The Volunteer Stages and Transitions Model places volunteer motivation, satisfaction, rewards, and costs into the distinct phases of volunteering (Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008).

These models emphasize the importance of the volunteer experience and encourage organizations to focus efforts on retaining volunteers as opposed to continuously recruiting new volunteers.

IV. METHODS

During January 2014, I conducted six in-person interviews with volunteer management professionals at a variety of nonprofit organizations. Topics covered in these interviews included structure of their use of volunteers, how they/their organization manages volunteer labor, the effectiveness of their program, areas for improvement, and the resources they use to make changes and improvements to their volunteer management program (see Appendix for list of sample questions.) I received approval from the University of Oregon's Internal Review Board to interview human subjects in December 2013.

All interview participants were volunteer management professionals working for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This was defined as someone whose job description included the management and coordination of the majority or all of the volunteers for the organization. Sample job titles of acceptable participants included Volunteer Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, and Community Engagement Coordinator, though other titles such as Executive Director or Development Director were also acceptable if the organization did not have a staff member solely devoted to volunteer management and that responsibility fell to them. These professionals have the best insight into what volunteer management practices are used and are effective because they are the individuals who put these practices into use on a daily basis.

I initially contacted all potential interview participants by sending an email explaining the project and requesting an interview (see Appendix for sample email). Interview times and locations were finalized either over email or on the phone, depending on the interviewees' preference. All interviews were conducted in person and

all interviewees signed an informed consent form before the interview began. This form explained the purpose of the research, the purpose of the interview, how the interview fits into the research, and explained the confidentiality procedures and the efforts I took to minimize personal risk (see Appendix for informed consent form). On this form, the participant had the option to state if I was allowed to record the interview; I recorded four out of the six interviews using a recording application on a mobile phone.

To protect the identity of the interview participants, I transferred the recording of the interview to an external drive and then I deleted it from the cell phone immediately following the interview. After this, the recording of the interview only remained on the flash drive. Transcriptions of the interviews were saved on a separate flash drive, as opposed to a personal computer. The external hard drive, flash drive, and print copies of transcriptions were kept in a secure location located in my house, and only I had access to this data. All files were saved with an alias, rather than the interviewee's name.

I began the interview process by using a current contact at a nonprofit organization. I selected the first organization that I approached because the nonprofit is known in its community as an organization that people want to volunteer for and that many volunteers give their time to the organization for years. From there, I created a snowball sample. During each interview, I asked the interviewee which nonprofits he or she believes uses exemplary volunteer management practices. I used these responses to determine which organization to approach next about interviewing. I continued interviewing volunteer management professionals until I reached saturation, meaning I was not receiving new information from my interviews (other than organization specific

details) and I had already contacted or interviewed the organizations that the volunteer management professionals recommended.

Although using a snowball sample was the best way to ensure that I spoke with individuals who managed an exemplary and well-run volunteer management program, this type of sample does lead to some potential biases. The organizations represented in this sample are established organizations that are well known and have a good reputation within their community. There is a potential for a geographically based bias as the volunteer management professionals who were interviewed suggested other nonprofits located in the same area as the organization they worked for. Conducting in-person interviews as opposed to some other form of data collection (i.e. survey) may have also affected the responses as respondents may have felt less comfortable disclosing information about their problems and struggles due to the nature of the interview. These volunteer management programs are considered exemplary in their community; however, due to the very nature of the interviews, responses painted these programs in a very positive light and gave little insight into program troubles.

From these interviews, I created case studies, which provide a narrative about each organization's volunteer management program. The creation of these case studies as a narrative allowed me to compare across organizations and find commonalities among practices and the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the volunteer management practices. The interviews and case studies were then analyzed qualitatively using a coding system that then led to the creation of broader categories. From this information, I could examine if the volunteer management programs aligned with existing theoretical models, what "best practices" they utilized, or if they looked to academic resources.

V. CASE STUDIES

Note: All individuals who were interviewed are referred to as "volunteer management professionals" as opposed to their actual title in order to protect their identity.

Case Study A

Organization A is a food bank. During 2013, community members volunteered 70,000 hours of their time to this organization and 26,000 times during the year, someone showed up to volunteer for this organization. Volunteers are utilized the most in assisting staff with the organization's programs and services, administration, and event planning. The volunteer management professional's job is to screen and match volunteers for all of these roles within the organization.

There is another volunteer management professional whose works exclusively with volunteers who work in a specific program. Since these volunteers work and interact with the population they are serving, there is a separate volunteer management procedure that includes an orientation, a much more rigorous screening process, and more extensive training than other volunteer roles at the organization. They provide more training to these volunteers on how to effectively handle the many situations that arise while interacting with vulnerable populations.

The organization puts very little effort into recruiting volunteers because it is so well known in the community. As the major food bank in the area, it receives a lot of media coverage that highlights the organization's programs, which in turn encourages people to volunteer. This organization was established thirty years ago and during its life, it created several connections with schools, services organization, businesses, and

other community groups. These relationships have led to a rather constant stream of new volunteers.

When a potential volunteer reaches out to the organization, the volunteer management professional stresses the importance of responding to this individual or group promptly. This is vital for two reasons: (1) it is best if all of the volunteers are happy and one way to ensure satisfaction is to respond to all communication quickly and (2) some feeling, event, or person motivated the prospective volunteer to contact the organization and it is best to respond while the volunteer is still motivated and be able to tap into that drive, otherwise there is the risk that the person may lose interest and no longer wish to volunteer for the organization.

When responding to volunteers, the volunteer management professional at this organization conducts an informal "interview," though not usually in person. She seeks to make a personal connection each of the prospective volunteers and she does this by asking them questions about themselves, their interests, and which food bank programs interest them. She also asks about their availability. By establishing a connection with the potential volunteers, she can match them to a role that fits both their interest and schedule, and she has found significant success with this process.

Organization A also provides volunteers roles to individuals who must complete court-mandated community service hours. These individuals go through a more thorough screening and matching process that include an in-person interview and conversations with people from the courts who are supervising these individuals.

Once "working" for the organization, the volunteer has a supervisor that they report to and can go to with questions. This supervisor is responsible for overseeing the

volunteer, creating jobs and tasks, ensuring there is work for the volunteer to do, and being available to answer questions or help the volunteer when necessary. This allows volunteers to feel supported, productive, and efficient while giving their time to the organization. The volunteer management professional emphasized that the nonprofit must be organized for volunteers to feel appreciated because volunteers feel valued when they feel that they are productive and efficient.

This organization effectively manages volunteers by utilizing their time to the maximum. Everything is already set up and organized before the volunteer arrives, so that they can be and feel most productive during the time they spend volunteering. The nonprofit is also able to accommodate a large capacity of volunteers because of its flexibility and ability to work around individuals' schedules. They have volunteer shifts in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, and on the weekends. Those who work in the kitchen are allowed to set their own volunteer schedule that works best for them. Volunteers who wish to help out in the garden can simply show up on Saturdays when staff members are also working in the gardens. This availability and flexibility allows the organization to accommodate a wide range of people and is not limited to those who are available during normal work hours. They also provide episodic volunteer opportunities for groups (such as student groups or businesses) who wish to work on a project for a single day.

An area that the organization wishes to improve upon is volunteer recognition. This is a difficult obstacle to overcome because they have very limited resources to recognize volunteers. Furthermore, because this organization is able to provide volunteer opportunities to a variety of people, it is difficult to recognize all of these

people in a way that is appealing to the different types of people who volunteer. To find a method of recognition that effectively says thank you to people of all ages, individuals and groups, businesses and service organizations, high school groups and church groups has proven to be difficult, even more so with a lack of resources to devote to recognition and thanking. They hope that improved recognition efforts will also increase retention of volunteers. Currently, each program recognizes volunteers differently. As a whole, the organization relies on the personal connections that staff members strive to make with the volunteers they work with. Staff members are encouraged to constantly acknowledge the time and work of the volunteers and sincerely thank these people.

The volunteer management professional found that continuing to build a personal connection and relationship with volunteers helps improve retention. Remembering a volunteer's name and asking them how they are doing can make a volunteer feel valued within the organization. Additionally, placing trust in the volunteers and allowing them to grow in their roles can also improve retention and significantly increase the value the organization receives from these volunteers. The volunteer management professional for the food bank provided an example of a time when she was unable to attend the organization's biggest fundraising event of the year, but was able to delegate her duties to two of their long-time volunteers. By building a relationship with these volunteers and allowing them to take on greater responsibilities, she was able to rely on them during a time of need and in return, they felt like valued individuals within the organization.

When seeking information to improve the existing volunteer management practices, the food bank's volunteer management professional does not look to academic research for guidance, but rather to an existing network. This organization belongs to a "mother" food bank, which provides information to the state-wise network of food banks. She prefers using this resource because it is easily accessible to her, the information is specific to food banks, and it is presented in a way that is implementable.

Case Study B

Organization B provides services to parents and children to reduce child abuse and neglect. This organization utilizes 13,000-15,000 volunteer hours a year. 400-500 people volunteer with the organization annually, sixty of which are regular volunteers that provide direct support services. Volunteers and interns also provide administrative assistance and help with events.

This organization is well established and highly regarded within the community and therefore does not have to spend much time or effort recruiting new volunteers as a sufficient number of volunteers approach them without recruitment or solicitation. They have established a strong relationship with the local university, which sends students seeking experience to the organization to volunteer or serve as an intern. Recruitment efforts are focused on finding interns (usually from local universities or community colleges) because there is a specific skill set that they are looking for to fill these roles. The organization's existing network of donors, staff, and others connected to the nonprofit help refer potential volunteers to the organization.

When a prospective volunteer contacts the organization, the volunteer management professional tries to also return this contact with a phone call. She prefers phone calls over other forms of communication so she can begin to establish a personal connection with the prospective volunteer. It is also a form of communication that easily allows for conversation and questions.

All interested potential volunteers must fill out a volunteer application that is published on the organization's website. This form allows potential volunteers to get information specific to their interests but also displays what kind of opportunities are available and then the individual can self-select and determine whether or not the opportunities are a good fit for them. Once the volunteer management professional receives a volunteer application, she sets up a face-to-face meeting with that individual, which serves both as a time to become acquainted with the prospective volunteer and as an orientation for the volunteer. The volunteer management professional gives and overview of the organization, discusses its programming, and highlights the sensitivity and therapeutic models that are essential to the organization's mission. She also uses the time to get to know the volunteer and find out what they are looking for in a volunteer experience. This conversation allows the volunteer management professional to evaluate whether or not the prospective volunteer is a good match for the organization, and if so, what role is a best fit for that individual. Because the organization serves children, all volunteers are required to conduct and clear a background check.

Once accepted, the organization provides training to the volunteers, based on their roles. Trainings are offered once a quarter and provide volunteers with important information and written materials that they can reference in the future. The volunteer

management professional, in tandem with a program manager, leads the trainings. Topics discussed in these trainings include confidentiality, personal boundaries, and the organization's therapeutic model. The volunteer management professional hopes to one day offer secondary trainings to volunteers, but currently resource limitations restrict that from being established.

The volunteer management professional and the rest of the staff at Organization B work to make sure that volunteers feel valued by thanking the volunteers for their time, checking in with volunteers to make sure they are satisfied, and asking volunteers if they need additional support. Teachers write thank you cards to the volunteers who help in their classrooms and some use their personal funds to purchase gift cards as a thank you to the volunteers they work with. The nonprofit records when volunteers start with the organization and sends cards signed by high-level staff on individual's "volunteer anniversaries." The nonprofit started using social media posts as a well to publically acknowledge and thank exemplary volunteers. As an organization, they try to incorporate volunteers into everything so that volunteers feel valued and to build strong volunteer-staff relations.

In addition to recognizing volunteers, the organization works to provide opportunities for volunteers to learn, grow, and evolve. They now invite current volunteers to attend trainings to speak to new volunteers about experiences in the programs, their personal experiences as a volunteer, and to serve as a mentor to new volunteers. At times, the organization hires staff from its pool of current volunteers. All of these efforts help the organization retain volunteers, but the most effective retention tool is the population the organization serves: children. Volunteers can witness children

progress, learn, and grow, which proves to be very rewarding to most of the volunteers. Being an aid in the development of a child's life is what encourages most people to continue a volunteer relationship with the organization.

Paid staff always supervises volunteers while they are working at the organization. This organization-wide policy was implemented to protect both the children and the volunteers. When an issue arises with a volunteer, staff members are encouraged to address the issue when it occurs, but in a manner that does not embarrass the volunteer. For example, a staff would pull a volunteer off to the side to have a conversation about the issue as opposed to admonishing the volunteer publically. If issues persist, the volunteer management professional will often observe the volunteer while they are working and then meet with the volunteer to discuss the issues and try to remedy them.

Organization B's volunteer management professional believes all organizations that utilize volunteers should have a defined intake process that is consistent for all prospective volunteers. This process should include a fact-to-face interaction that familiarizes the staff member with the volunteer to aid in the placement of the volunteer. Another best practice is to offer trainings to volunteers so they feel knowledgeable and confident when beginning a new volunteer role. While a volunteer is working with an organization, there should be constant and open communication among staff and volunteers and this communication should also include acknowledgment of the volunteers and of their donation of time. When possible and appropriate, she recommends conducting an exit interviews with volunteers when they decide to stop volunteering for the organization (although this is something she has not

been able to implement in her own volunteer program). This interview can provide a lot of insight into the volunteer experience and the organization can make adjustments, if necessary, based on the feedback from these exit interviews.

When looking for best practices or suggestions to improve the volunteer management program, the volunteer management professional talks with other volunteer management professionals in the area or those who work for similar organizations for suggestions and ideas. She has found these conversations to be more applicable and helpful than academic literature. She references academia very little and feels that utilizing her network has led to better results.

Case Study C

Organization C is a human services nonprofit organization whose programs assist the poor and others in need. It is a large organization with over 400 employees, but it hired its first volunteer management professional in 2012. Before this role was created, there was no official volunteer manager or management process, and volunteers were coordinated based on who was able to step up and take on the role of volunteer manager on a given day.

In her job, Organization C's volunteer management professional created policies and procedures for working with volunteers. She relied mostly on information from other human service organizations when developing these policies. She referred to these other organizations to learn about their policies and procedures, recruitment tactics, application processes, and retention strategies. Many of the organizations she referred to were not only other human services agencies, but also nonprofits located in the same

community as Organization C to determine what worked well within the industry and what practices were effective within the context of the community. For example, the local high schools recently established a new graduation requirement in which all students must complete a certain number of community service hours in order to graduate. This meant that the volunteer management professional needed to identify roles that were appropriate for students under the age of 18 and could survive a relatively high turnover rate.

She created a system to track incoming volunteer applications. On the application, there is a question that asks what the prospective volunteer's interests are. This gives the volunteer management professional a sense of what type of people she has in her applicant pool, so when a project arises, she knows who might be most interested in helping out with that projects or task. She stressed the importance of promptly acknowledging the receipt of a new volunteer application or inquiry.

After receiving an application, she conducts interviews with all volunteers, either in person or over the phone, which helps her identify the volunteer's motivations, interests, and what the prospective volunteers hopes to get out of the experience. This information helps with placing volunteers in a role that is a good fit for the individual and that benefits the volunteers in addition to the organization. When getting to know a prospective volunteer, the volunteer management professional finds it helpful to understand their motivations for volunteering. She hopes to learn what their objectives are and what they want to gain from the experiences. If she understands their goals, she can seek the most gratifying role for them. Sometimes, understanding the volunteer's motivations can help her gauge how long their commitment to the organization will be.

For example, if a student who needs a certain amount of hours to receive college credit approaches her about volunteering, she can predict that they will most likely only volunteer for the organization for that single term.

For certain roles, she also gives an on-site tour to give the potential volunteer a clearer idea of what the volunteer experience and expectations are. Depending on their placement, the volunteer may receive some hands-on training from a staff member; a supervisor, not the volunteer management professional, always provides this training.

To help recruit volunteers, the volunteer management professional reaches out to local organizations and establishes relationships with these groups, including the local business chambers, other nonprofits, church groups, the career center at the local universities, and the employment office. She also strives to have up-to-date information on the organization's website that lists available volunteer roles and demonstrates what volunteering for the organization is like. The nonprofit also publishes an interest form on its website as a way for prospective volunteers to self-select and determine if a volunteer role with this organization is what they are looking for. This interest form allows potential volunteers to get in contact with the organization, express an interest in volunteering, and either get more information or begin the application process. The organization's existing network of donors, staff, and others connected to the nonprofit help refer potential volunteers to the organization. Public relations efforts also further recruitment as the organization tends to be in the media at least once a week, enticing people to visit the organization's website and learn more about getting involved and volunteering.

When discussing all aspects of working with volunteers, this volunteer management professional stressed the importance of building and maintaining good relationships, not only just with the volunteers, but also with staff and other groups within the community. She strives to keep consistent and open communication with staff in order to best understand their volunteer needs, what skill sets volunteers may need to possess in order to work in certain volunteer roles, and to determine what type of support she can provide the staff members when they are working with volunteers. She also talks with staff members about their needs before placing a volunteer in a role to ensure that placement will be beneficial to the staff member, volunteer, and organization. Through relationships with the career centers at local universities and community colleges and with the local Employment Office, the volunteer management professional can utilize their knowledge and assistance when developing volunteer or intern "job descriptions," helping focus her recruitment efforts.

The hiring of a volunteer management professional and the implementation of a formal volunteer management process has been very well received by much of the staff of this organization. Staff members know that when a volunteer is sent to them, that individual has been properly vetted by the volunteer management professional and that he or she should be a good fit both for the organization and for that volunteer role. The staff now knows that there is a readily available pool of volunteers that they can tap into when needed and many staff members have come to rely on that.

A problem the volunteer management professional is looking to overcome is how to convert an episodic volunteer into a person who is more connected with the nonprofit. If someone approaches the organization hoping to volunteer a single day, is it

worth her efforts to try to reconnect with that individual and cultivate him or her as a regular volunteer or potential donor?

The volunteer management professional relies mostly on her relationships and connections with individuals and other organizations when improving the volunteer management plan. People and existing programs are her primary sources of information and she does not look to the academic literature for ideas or suggestions.

Case Study D

Organization D is an animal shelter and volunteers are utilized in almost every aspect of the organization including working directly with animals, providing administrative support, and training other volunteers. About 350 people a month volunteer with the organization and they volunteer for approximately 3200-3500 hours per month.

As the nonprofit organization that operates the largest shelters in the county, Organization D is well known and respected throughout the community and therefore has to put in little effort to recruit volunteers. However, the community outreach team does do some recruiting by attending volunteer fairs and putting out requests for volunteers to community groups and local schools and universities. Current volunteers also do a bulk of recruiting by talking with prospective volunteers about their experiences working at the shelter and encouraging others to volunteer.

When a prospective volunteer approaches the organization about donating some of their time, they must first complete an online volunteer application that includes a criminal background check. The purpose of the volunteer application is to look for

glaring issues and weed out candidates who would not be appropriate volunteers for the organization. After reviewing the application, if staff members have any questions about the application, they call the prospective volunteer to discuss these questions or issues. If there are no issues with the application or if the issues are resolved over the phone, the prospective volunteer is sent an email that contains a link to sign up for a volunteer orientation session. The organization changed to an electronic system to sign up for orientations and interviews to simplify the process and preserve staff time. This orientation gives an overview of the organization, discusses the available volunteer opportunities, describes the commitment level (volunteers are expected to volunteer at least two hours a week for at least three months), and explains the rest of the process to become a volunteer.

    If prospective volunteers still wish to become a volunteer after the orientation, they then sign up for a group interview. The purpose of this five to ten person interview is for staff to become acquainted with the volunteers and for volunteers to meet other volunteers. During this interview, the staff explains the volunteer manual, volunteer expectations, and the training programs required for certain roles. If required for the role, the volunteers will then go through the necessary trainings. This process provides a good overview of what the organization offers to all prospective volunteers. The multi-step process also establishes early on the commitment needed to be a volunteer with the shelter.

    In 2014, this organization began to change and simplify this process because it was becoming too cumbersome. To expedite the process for prospective volunteers, it will change the orientation into an optional information session for those who wish to

learn more about the variety of volunteer opportunities. If a prospective volunteer

knows exactly what role he or she wants, he or she can forgo the orientation and attend

a group interview after submitting an application.

The organization works to retain volunteers by making all volunteers feel

appreciated for giving their time and effort to the nonprofit. The organization

recognizes a volunteer a month and highlights the good work that individual does for

the shelter. Staff members also send out birthday cards and thank you notes to

volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to speak with staff about issues, concerns, and

ideas. When appropriate, staff acts on these conversations so that volunteers feel heard

and in turn, feel more invested in the organization.

The volunteer management professional for this organization believes that the

best practices in volunteer management are constantly showing appreciation towards

and thanking volunteers; ensuring that volunteers feel engaged and useful by having

jobs ready to be completed by volunteers; and establishing and maintaining clear

communications with volunteers and within the shelter.

She relies on Internet searches and speaking with other volunteer management

professionals to access information to improve the volunteer program.

Case Study E

Organization E is a religiously affiliated human services organization that seeks

to eradicate poverty in its community. In the 2013 fiscal year, the organization had 280

volunteers that provided 16,000 hours of service. Volunteers are instrumental in

providing services to the people the organization helps and supports. The people at the

top of the organization established a culture where volunteers are recognized as key to the functions of the organization and this tone resonates throughout the entire organization.

Volunteers are used most in the organization's direct provision of services. Volunteers also provide administrative assistance including data entry and filing, tend to the organization's community garden, and at one point, there was a volunteer who served as the organization's volunteer coordinator. This particular individual volunteered twenty hours a week and coordinated all of the volunteers.

Organization E's strategy is to use volunteers to coordinate other volunteers, which has proven to be successful at times, but paid staff have to fill the gaps when no volunteer is able to fill that role. They are currently seeking to fill that role with multiple volunteers, who can give a few hours a week and under the supervision of paid staff, coordinate all of the volunteer functions.

When a prospective volunteer approaches the organization, they are given two forms to fill out: an application where they provide basic information and a form authorizing the organization to conduct a background check. Because the organization serves a vulnerable population, the purpose of this background check is to eliminate prospective volunteers who have a criminal history that may be problematic or inappropriate for someone to interact with the clients. The volunteers are then invited to a one-hour volunteer orientation. The organization created a slideshow presentation for the orientation to ensure that the information they give to all prospective volunteers is consistent. This presentation gives an overview of the organization and describes the volunteer opportunities available. The volunteer management professional also

addresses key issues during this presentation, such as the organization's discrimination policy, confidentiality, and health and safety. Then he speaks with individual prospective volunteers to discuss the volunteer's interest, which volunteer roles meet these interests, and what his or her availability is.

After the volunteer management professional speaks to all of the prospective volunteers at the orientation, he speaks with the supervisors about the new volunteers who want to work in their program. The purpose of this conversation is to determine the program's needs for new volunteers and to find the best role that meets the volunteer's interests and schedule and benefits the organization.

From experience, the volunteer management professional for Organization E has found that "if you set higher standards for your volunteers, you get higher quality volunteers." This mindset led to a large shift in the organization's utilization of volunteer labor. Prior to the hiring of the current volunteer management professional, a large portion of their volunteer pool was people who needed to complete court-mandated community service. Now, the volunteer management professional considers the motivations of these potential volunteers before accepting them as a regular volunteer. If the individual's only motivation is to complete his or her hours, the volunteer management professional usually does not pursue that volunteer relationship. If, however, the individual is motivated by the organization's mission or is seeking job skills, the volunteer management professional will continue a conversation and perhaps take on that individual as a volunteer. Overall, they prefer to work with volunteers who are motivated by altruism, the organization's mission, or a desire to learn new skills. They have found that these volunteers produce higher quality work and that the

organization benefits more from these volunteer relationships. He has found that the "take whoever you can get" school of thought is not as beneficial.

The organization has created a culture where volunteers are treated as equal members of the work team. This culture was established through staff recognition and encouragement of volunteers and through open communication among volunteers and staff. The communication between staff and volunteers must be two-way though. In order to feel like equals, volunteers must feel comfortable speaking with a supervisor or staff person higher up, if they are experiencing issues with other individuals. Staff must work to foster and facilitate this communication so that volunteers know they are able to and encouraged to speak up and share their thoughts and opinions.

Although they have established an open communication with volunteers when they are working in their role, the organization seeks to create ongoing communication with volunteers beyond their jobs. They want this communication to come from a staff member high up in the organization and the purpose of it is to demonstrates how volunteers are a part of the larger mission of the organization and that as a collective they are making an impact.

The organization also hopes to provide opportunities for volunteers to grow and take on greater roles within the organization. Currently, most volunteers are matched with a role, stay in that role for a while, and then leave because they want something new. The volunteer management professional would like to create new roles, such a managerial or mentorship roles, which established volunteers could work up to. They hope these opportunities and communication that connects volunteers to the impact will improve retention of volunteers.

The organization does not have a formal volunteer recognition system. The staff thanks and encourages volunteers when they give time to the organization. The nonprofit holds an annual volunteer recognition dinner, but beyond that, they lack the resources for a more formal program. The volunteer management professional, however, has found from his experiences that formal recognition is not necessary to have, because being recognized is not volunteers' primary motivation. Though they appreciate the recognition, something else (altruism, the mission, giving back, gaining skills, etcetera) is what drives them to give their time to an organization.

This organization is visible within the population that is serves, the low-income population, but is not as well known within the entire community. Because of that, they hope to improve their recruiting efforts. Currently, efforts are focused on recruiting volunteers from local churches. The volunteer management professional feels that the biggest recruitment resource is their existing volunteers. By establishing a broader level of communication, they would like to share their volunteer needs to current volunteers and then have these volunteers advocate for the organization and refer their friends and family to volunteer.

The volunteer management professional lists having a defined application process and a consistent orientation as some best practices all organizations should adopt in their volunteer management programs. This ensures that all prospective volunteers receive the same information and that the organization receives important information about the volunteers. Staff should also recognize volunteers for their time and efforts and be supportive and encouraging of the volunteers. Volunteers should be treated as an equal member of the work team so that they feel supported and that their

work is valued. He recommends that organizations track volunteers and their hours. This requires a system where volunteers document their hours and the creation of an organizational culture where volunteers are encouraged to track their hours. Other processes, including the entry of this data and the keeping of these records, need to be established so that this information is useful to the organization.

When looking to improve Organization E's volunteer management practices, the volunteer management professional conducts online searches and looks to similar organizations within his existing networks as resources. Due to limited resources, he feels that he does not have the time to do the research and analysis necessary to utilize academic research, and instead would prefer to implement practices others have used and have proven to be effective in other organizations.

Case Study F

Organization F is a nonprofit that offers free electronic recycling to the community. Established 14 years ago, part of the organization's mission is to provide job-training opportunities to community members and it has been able to a build a robust volunteer program that embodies that vision. Every year, 800 people volunteer with Organization F. Volunteers serve a role in every aspect of the organization and are involved with the electronic intake, the initial sorting of electronics, the deconstruction and repair of electronics, the retail store, community outreach, and administration. Many of these roles offer job training or other technical skills to the volunteers.

The volunteer management professional for Organization F is constantly recruiting to find more volunteers. She attends recruitment events and volunteer fairs at local schools, presents to local community groups and organizations, and posts on volunteer websites.

Every Saturday, Organization F holds a general orientation that is open to anyone who is interested in volunteering. This orientation provides an overview of the organization, includes a tour of the facility, and shows the volunteer opportunities available. The prospective volunteers can see what opportunities are available and what roles will meet their wants and needs. The volunteer management professional also speaks to each individual to learn why he or she wants to volunteer and what he or she hopes to get out of the experience, so she can have a better idea of where a good placement may be. On average, five to twenty-five people attend these orientations. There is an application that all prospective volunteers fill out during the orientation session. If the individuals choose to volunteer with the organization, they schedule a day to come back to the organization and start a ten-hour trial. This trial period allows volunteers to "shop around" and try several different jobs, so that they can find the one that is best for them.

This organization has a special incentive for all of its volunteers. Once an individual completes sixty hours of volunteering with the organization, he or she receives a technological package, which includes a functioning computer. This package entices many people to commit to Organization F for sixty hours, but the nonprofit has found that many volunteers leave once they complete their sixty hours and receive their computer.

To improve retention beyond sixty hours, the volunteer management professional strives to get to know the volunteers on an individual and personal basis so they feel welcomed and valued. During these one-on-one conversations, she wants to find out if the volunteer is happy in his or her role. If not, they work together to find a more satisfying job. They hold volunteer appreciation days to thank the volunteers and show their gratitude for the volunteers' donation of time and work. The volunteer management professional also publically recognizes a volunteer a month and acknowledges their exceptional work. Despite these efforts, the volunteer management professional always wants volunteers to stay longer. She finds building a pool of long-term of volunteers that have been with the organization for three years or longer to be a challenge.

The volunteer management professional for Organization F believes that best volunteer management practices include having a volunteer intake process that is clear and consistent. Organizations should publish up-to-date information about volunteering on their websites. This information should include a list of basic jobs or tasks volunteers will be completing so that potential volunteers can self-select and decide themselves if these roles are a good fit for them. All staff should make volunteers feel appreciated and thank volunteers every single day. Organizations should also be sure to connect the work of the volunteers back to the mission of the organization. Nonprofits should share the social impacts the organization is making and also connect the volunteers' work to that impact. Make the volunteers feel like a part of the team and a part of the accomplishments.

The volunteer management professional does not use academic research and writings to improve her volunteer management practices. Instead, she relies on local resources, including her professional network. She facilitates a class through the local community college, which is designed for other volunteer management professionals to attend and discuss different volunteer management issues, such as recruitment, intake processes, appreciation, etcetera. She relies on her personal experience and is involved in volunteer management networks where she can ask other professionals for advice and suggestions. She has found that is easiest to ask another person what practices they implement and what they have found to be effective.

VI. RESULTS

Interviews and case studies were analyzed qualitatively and two major themes emerged from the conversations: best practices and resources. Common types of best practices of volunteer management that were discussed during these interviews include intake processes, open communication, appreciation and acknowledgement, and making volunteers feel valued.

All of the volunteer management professionals who were interviewed spoke of their organization's intake process and many cited this process as a best practice that all nonprofits that work with volunteers should implement. This process should be clear, defined, consistent, and the same for all individuals who want to volunteer for the organization. Most organizations utilize an application to screen and get basic information about prospective volunteers, however this varies from organization to organization and industry to industry. For organizations serving vulnerable populations, this application also included a background check.

All of the organizations except one included some type of face-to-face contact with all of the volunteers during the intake process, either an orientation, group or individual interview, trainings, or some combination of these. This contact allows volunteer management professionals to establish a personal connection with volunteers and begin to form a relationship with them. By establishing a personal connection with volunteers, the organization can create a culture where volunteers are acknowledged as people and as vital members of the work team. The volunteer management professional that did not have a face-to-face encounter as a part of their intake process may not include this step due to the sheer number of volunteers they work with or because this

additional layer of screening is not as vital for that organization's programming and services.

Building a personal connection with volunteers aligns with Haski-Leventhal and Bargal's (2008) "Volunteer Stages and Transitions" model, which focuses on volunteer socialization. It is important that during the "entrance" stage, volunteers become acquainted both with the organization and with the people involved with the organization so they can begin to establish relationships and feel a meaningful connection to the people they will be working with. They argue that the role of the volunteer management professional is to aid volunteers through transitions and this desire to establish personal connections demonstrates that many volunteer management professionals do just that, at least at the beginning of the organization's relationship with the volunteer.

This in-person contact is also an effective way to start an open communication with volunteers and get to know them to determine if they truly are a good fit for the organization. They could gauge the individual's interests and motivations for volunteering. The volunteer management professionals are most interested in learning what the prospective volunteers' interests are and what they hope to get out of the volunteer experience. This knowledge helps volunteer management professionals match volunteers with a role that aligns well with the volunteers' interests and will be mutually beneficial for both the organization and the volunteer. If the volunteer is hoping to learn a certain skill, the volunteer management professional can place them in a role where they will be able to develop this skill. If a student is volunteering to fulfill a requirement, they can be matched with a role that requires the sufficient number of

hours the volunteer needs to complete. If the volunteer is most interested in giving back to the population the organization serves, they can be placed in a role where they interact directly with the clients.

The academic literature, on the other hand, examines motivations at a much deeper level than do practitioners. Academics seek to understand the internal and external factors that push an individual to volunteer in the first place, whereas practitioners seek to understand the volunteers' interests and their motivations for choosing to volunteer with that specific organization. It is not necessary for a practitioner to identify what combination of extrinsic and intrinsic benefits the volunteer hopes to gain, but it is important for them to understand what skills the volunteer hopes to acquire or what kind of experience they hope to have.

Another best practice to implement when working with volunteers is establishing and encouraging open communication between volunteers and staff. Staff, either the volunteer management professional of the staff responsible for supervising the volunteer or both, should consistently and openly communicate with volunteers. This communication includes being clear about expectations and listening to volunteers' questions and concerns. Communication needs to be two-way: from staff to volunteers and from volunteers to staff. Staff should work to create an environment where volunteers feel comfortable talking to and approaching staff with any questions, issues, or concerns they may have.

The organization should also share its progress with all of the volunteers. It should share their results and their impact in the community (i.e. 100,000 people fed; 50,000 trees saved, etcetera). Beyond simply telling volunteers what the organization

did, they should connect the work the volunteers are doing with the impact the organization is making as a whole (i.e. with the help of our 200 volunteers, we fed 100,000 people). This connects the volunteers with the mission and can serve as motivation to continue to give their time and energy to the organization.

The majority of interviewees were able to provide information about how many people volunteered and/or how many hours people volunteered with the organization. This demonstrates another best practice: tracking volunteers. This requires creating a system and an environment in which volunteers track and record their hours consistently and with ease. Another individual (staff or volunteer) then needs to manage this data to produce summaries of volunteer information. This can aid in the evaluation of volunteer programs and the organization as a whole.

All interview participants spoke of the great importance of acknowledging and showing appreciation towards all volunteers. Volunteers are donating their time to the organization and staff members should acknowledge every gift of time with a thank you. A good practice to incorporate is to verbally thank people every time they volunteer for the organization and to periodically incorporate other displays of appreciation. These displays can be hand-written thank you notes, gifts, volunteer appreciation dinners, or additional training opportunities only available to volunteers. Appreciation does not have to be resource intensive or grandiose, but it should be consistent and sincere.

Appreciating volunteers is one important facet of an overall theme: making volunteers feel valued. This is more than a thank you; it also involves volunteer processes and organizational culture. Organizations must be organized and prepared to

take on the responsibility of utilizing volunteers. They need to have engaging projects or tasks ready for volunteers to work on and have a structure in place so volunteers can ask questions or get assistance when needed. Volunteers should feel that they are important members of the organization's work team. This is related to the organizational culture and the precedent that volunteers are valued members of the team can be and often is set by those in the highest authority. If this tone is set and the expectations of staff-volunteer relationships are explicitly outlined, staff members will follow. Furthermore, if the organization provides opportunities for volunteers to grow and develop in to larger roles (such as positions with more responsibilities or mentorship roles), it will demonstrate to longer-term volunteers that their work and commitment is both valued by and vital to the organization. These efforts to make volunteers feel valued are also often the same efforts used to retain volunteers.

The volunteer management professionals listed many different resources that they refer to when looking to improve their volunteer management professional, but a notable resource that was lacking from the list was academic literature or research. All interviewees were explicitly asked if they used academia as a resource and all said no. Instead, they utilize their network and ask other volunteer management professionals or look to the practices of organizations similar to their own. If their organization was a member of a larger network or organization, the volunteer management professionals accessed resources from these networks. Most also used the Internet and search engines to research and access professional resources and articles.

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VII. CONCLUSIONS

The best practices of volunteer management that emerged from the case studies – establishing a defined intake process to screen volunteers, communicating with volunteers, appreciating and acknowledging volunteers, and making volunteers feel valued -- align with Hager and Brudney's (2004) list of nine recommended volunteer management practices, though not all nine are included. This is consistent with their finding that most organizations incorporate best practices of volunteer management, but usually only adopt some of them and rarely implement all nine.

Established organizations with well-run volunteer programs typically are well known and respected within their community. Because of this, the volunteer management professionals do not have to devote their time to recruiting volunteers. Instead, they can focus their efforts on screening, matching, communicating with, and recognizing volunteer that are connected with the organization. These practices are indentified to improve retention (Hager and Brundey, 2004) and thus most volunteer management professionals can devote their time, energy, and other resources to retaining volunteers by building a strong relationship and experiences that benefit the volunteer and the organization, as many of the "non-traditional" volunteer management models suggest (Brudney and Meijs, 2009; Haski-Leventhal and Bargal, 2008; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

A few of the interview participants also listed recognition as an area of improvement for their volunteer management program. Many cited a lack of resources as the main reason for not providing adequate formal recognition to its volunteers. Although it does not address the concern about limited resources, looking to academia

about motivations could help practitioners develop focused recognition and appreciation practices that feed volunteer motivations. This means knowing more than the volunteers' interest, but truly understanding the psychology, emotions, and social pressures that drive people to volunteer. Developing recognition that aligns with these motivations can then build upon and deepen the motivations for people to continue to volunteer.

However, it is evident that few volunteer management professionals use academic research and literature as a reference to improve their volunteer programs. The most prominent reason why is access. Subscriptions to academic journals are rather expensive and most volunteer management professionals are already working under a rather constrained budget. Instead, they rely on Internet searches where they can access information at no cost and with relative ease.

Furthermore, volunteer management professionals want information that is specific to their industry and could be easily implemented. They do not want to translate a model or theory into practice; they prefer to incorporate current practices that others use. Current practices can be concrete, unambiguous, and known to be effective at other organizations. They want to incorporate successful practices and it is easiest to look to others to identify which practices work and which are ineffective.

Being a volunteer management professional is a very relationship-focused profession. They are constantly establishing personal connections and relationships with volunteers and managing staff-volunteer relationships. The type of people who work in this profession are likely to be personable and a "people person." It would be natural for them to network and talk with other volunteer management professionals. These

established relationships allow volunteer management professionals to share information with ease and in a way that is likely more comfortable than research. Since many networks already exist for nonprofit organizations and volunteer management professionals, these people and information are easily accessible.

Because the biggest obstacles for volunteer management professionals is accessing academic research and then conducting the analysis to transfer the findings into practice, an integration of the two will likely need some sort of intermediary or "middle-man." Organizations could utilize a volunteer (particularly someone with access to academic journals and databases, such as a student) to serve as a consultant. This specialized volunteer can look to the research, conduct an analysis, and present his or her findings and suggestions to the organization.

Existing networks, such as academic journals and larger nonprofit networks or organizations, could partner and work together to discuss what each side in finding and look for ways to integrate findings and translate theory into practice. Although lofty, a partnership would likely produce the best results, as it would bring knowledge and experience from both spheres to work together collaboratively. Researchers could team up with professionals to discuss the academic findings and discover ways to translate these into practice that the professionals could then implement. Rather than simply creating a theoretical model, researchers could work with practitioners to develop concrete intake and matching practices, methods of appreciation, and steps to build solid relations that align with the model. The more concrete and tangible, the easier it will be for volunteer management professionals to implement (and thus, the more likely they will implement such a model).

This collaboration model would most likely be most successful if researchers teamed up with a large national nonprofit organization. This is for two reasons: (1) larger organizations will likely have the resources to allow its staff to work on a collaborative project like this and (2) if a larger organization implements these theories and practices successfully, it will set an example that many nonprofits throughout the nation can follow.

Ultimately, it appears that nonprofit organizations that utilize volunteers and academics that research about volunteerism are not communicating with each other about their findings. If some sort of collaborative project where conducted, the project and its success would need to be publicized to serve as an example for the rest of the academic and nonprofit communities.

Suggestions for further research

The picture that these six case studies offer provides a limited view of the volunteer management professional. These likely do not accurately reflect the experiences and practices of all nonprofit organizations, especially those that struggle with volunteer management or lack organizational support for a volunteer management program. A larger sample, such as a national survey of a random sample of nonprofit organizations, would strengthen support (or potentially disprove) the arguments made in this thesis. A larger sample would eliminate some biases (such as geography, industry, and success of the volunteer management program). The anonymity of a survey would likely allow for more candor and honest responses about organizational struggles surrounding volunteer management and offer areas for improvement. Respondents may

feel more comfortable disclosing this type of information in a survey as opposed to an in-person interview.

As a result of using a snowball sample for interviews, I only spoke with volunteer management professionals that work for nonprofits that are well respected within their community and are organizations that people want to volunteer for. They are organizations that have solid volunteer management programs. Although this was helpful for determining the practices that work, it did not reveal needed areas for improvement in the practice of volunteer management. Further research should expand upon these case studies and interview organizations with newer or less well-run volunteer management programs. This would give insight to the struggles the field is currently facing and what practices are not working well. It could also highlight the struggles of newer nonprofit organizations that seek to utilize volunteer labor effectively and how organizational culture or operations can affect successful volunteer management. All of this could serve as a roadmap for academia and provide suggestions as to how to direct future research to best benefit the field of practice.

VIII. APPENDIX

Sample Interview Questions

- Please describe your organization's utilization of volunteer labor.

- What is the process for involving a volunteer, starting at initial interest for getting involved with the organization? In other words, if I am an interested potential volunteer and I reach out to you, what do all of the next steps look like?

- What do you consider as the "best practices" in volunteer management?

- What types of volunteers make up your volunteer pool?

- Do you view volunteers based on the type of volunteer that they are? (Episodic, regular, etcetera)

- Do you consider volunteers' motivations when matching them with a role or project? If yes, how so?

- Do you look to academic research when considering/evaluating/improving your volunteer program? If yes, how so? If not, what resources do you use?

- Do you find research and academic literature about volunteer management applicable?

- How do you view volunteers in relation to paid staff? How do you manage staff/volunteer relationships?

- What is the biggest problem/struggle/challenge in your volunteer program?

- What do you think your organization does especially well or effectively in your use of volunteers? Do you think there are areas for improvement?

- What other organizations do you think have an exemplary volunteer management program?

Sample Email Requesting Interview

Dear _____,

I am a student at the University of Oregon and am conducting research about volunteer management for my Undergraduate Honors Thesis. For my project, I am examining the academic literature about volunteer management and evaluating whether or not these finding are actually used and/or used effectively in the real-world setting of a nonprofit organization. A major component of this project is to interview local volunteer management professionals that work with organizations with a reputation for exemplary volunteer management practices about the practices that their organization utilizes.

I would like to request an interview with you to understand your organization's utilization and management of volunteers. This interview will be used to create a case study that will be incorporated into my project. Your confidentiality is very important to me and I will not use or reveal your name to anyone or in my final project. Your participation in this interview is 100% voluntary. If you are interested in participating, I would like to set up a time with you for the interview at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me either by email or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Laura Leete, at leete@uoregon.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Rebecca Langham

Informed Consent Form

        This research project examines the academic literature and theoretical models about volunteer management and evaluates whether or not these models are actually used and/or used effectively in the real-world setting of a nonprofit organization. The purpose of this research project is to examine whether or not the practices used by volunteer management professionals aligns with the knowledge and research presented in academia and whether or not volunteer management professionals incorporate the knowledge presented by academia in their professional practices. The goal of this research project is to design a new set of volunteer management practices for nonprofit organizations that integrates academic knowledge with professional best practices. The objective is to create a model that can serve a bridge between the academic sphere and the professional sphere and that could be used by many nonprofit organizations as a model for their utilization of volunteer labor.
        The purpose of this interview is to learn about the volunteer management practices that nonprofit organization that you work for utilizes. The information gathered from this interview will be used to develop case studies. These case studies

will be used to compare the volunteer management practices utilized across different nonprofit organizations and with existing research around volunteers and volunteer management.

You are free to not discuss anything that you do not wish to discuss. You do not have to answer any questions that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you would prefer not to answer. You may end the interview at any time.

Neither your name nor the name of the organization you work for will be released or disclosed at any portion during and after this research project. The mission statement and location of your organization will not be disclosed. However, a brief but vague description of the work that your organization does will be included. For example, an organization whose mission is to "enhance the lives of adults with developmental disabilities through person-centered residential, supported living and vocation programs with emphasis on community integration and the arts" will be described as an organization that "supports people with disabilities." Furthermore, you and all other interviewees will be identified as "Volunteer Management Professionals" rather than by your specific job title. Any notes, transcriptions, or recordings of this interview will not be labeled with your name or the name of the organization you work for. Only Rebecca Langham (primary researcher) and Laura Leete (research advisor) will have access to the list of names of research participants. This list of names will not be disclosed at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the faculty advisor, Laura Leete at leete@uoregon.edu or (XXX) XXX-XXXX at any time.

I, _____, voluntarily agree to be a participant in Rebecca Langham's research for her Undergraduate Thesis project. I understand that my role in this project is to be interviewed by Rebecca Langham and the topic of this interview is volunteer management. I understand that I do not have to discuss anything that I do not wish to discuss and that I can end the interview at any time that I wish. I understand that measures will be taken to protect my confidentiality and the confidentiality of the nonprofit organization that I work for.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

I, _____, grant Rebecca Langham permission to record the interview. I understand that this voice recording will never be disseminated and will only be used for the purposes of the research project.

Signed: _____

Please check one below:
_____ I wish to see a copy of Rebecca Langham's final research project.
_____ I do not wish to see a copy of Rebecca Langham's final research project

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