Modeling volunteer retention in professional membership associations through targeting specific

motivations and satisfying certain aspects of volunteer experience

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Abstract

Despite the abundance of the literature on volunteer motivation, satisfaction, retention, and the logical connection between the three concepts, the idea that certain types of motivation and satisfaction can sustain volunteer retention better than others has not been studied extensively. Furthermore, nonprofit research literature abounds with studies of charitable 501(c)(3) organizations, when far less is known about other kinds of nonprofits such as 501(c)(6) professional membership associations. Applying existing theories in another setting can reveal new patterns of volunteering and expand our understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, focusing on professional membership associations, this study reported here seeks to understand what motivations positively affect sustained volunteerism and whether satisfaction derived from different types of motivations has any effect on sustained volunteerism? The findings suggest that one type of satisfaction and two types of motivations are more influential in retaining association members as volunteers.

Key Words: Professional membership associations, volunteerism, motivation, satisfaction, retention.

Introduction

One of the distinct features in the nonprofit sector is the extensive use of volunteer labor. Many scholars have asserted the significance of learning volunteer motivations for their successful recruitment and retention within an organization (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Jimenez, Fuertes, & Abad, 2010). Volunteer motivations are known to be multidimensional, with altruism being one of the central elements, where the selfless nature of an individual supersedes other egoistic reasons (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Bussell, & Forbes, 2001). The central position of altruism does not disregard the presence of other motives in volunteering. However, it suggests, among others, that there are personal or egoistic reasons to volunteer and reasons of tangible gain like a useful experience. Ultimately, it is a combination of motives that drives people to volunteer, with some carrying more weight than others.

The importance of volunteer satisfaction is another thoroughly studied topic in volunteer management literature. Dissatisfied volunteers are more likely to abandon an organization; therefore, many nonprofits are highly vested in keeping their volunteers satisfied (Galindo-Kuhn, & Guzley, 2001). Among the factors that affect volunteer satisfaction, researchers cite feeling appreciated and valuable, being a member of a distinct group, receiving feedback, and performing activities that meet one's motivations (Chevrier, Steuer, & MacKenzie, 1994).

Volunteer retention is also a focus of volunteer management practice and research (Brudney, & Mejis, 2009). It is tied in a significant way to the stability of nonprofit organizations. Evidence like high organizational commitment and involvement, satisfaction with performed activities, and sense of personal accomplishment all positively contribute to volunteer retention (Nelson, Pratt, Carpenter, & Walter, 1995).

Despite the abundance of literature on volunteer motivation, satisfaction, retention, and the logical connection between the three, the proposition that different types of motivation and satisfaction can differently influence volunteer retention has not been studied extensively. And among the research that has investigated the topic, there is no consensus on findings (Sherraden, Lough, & McBride, 2008). For example, Rubin and Thorelli (1984) contended that egoistic volunteer motives are more transitory compared to altruistic motivations. Egoistically motivated volunteers are more likely to leave

organization sooner than those with more altruistic motives. On the contrary, the study of Green (1984) asserted that egoistic and instrumental motives were stronger predictors of higher satisfaction and a higher likelihood of continued volunteering. These volunteers were less likely to be discouraged and unsatisfied because they knew exactly what benefits they were looking for (i.e. tangible considerations). And altruistic motivations, as opposed to tangible motivations, are more diffused and vaguer (i.e. intangible values). Per this logic, it is hard for volunteer management staff to shape altruistic motivations in specific forms of activity in order to meet them.

The topic of professional volunteering is also gaining momentum both in the empirical research literature and in the practical field of volunteer management (Ganesh, & MacAllum, 2012). Nonprofit research literature abounds with studies of charitable organizations when far less is known about other types of nonprofit organizations. Applying existing theories in another setting can reveal new patterns of volunteering and expand our understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, the nonprofit subsector that encompasses professional membership associations is one of the fastest growing according to the Center of Association Leadership (ASAE, 2017). Professional membership associations are preoccupied with the issue of volunteer retention as much as charitable nonprofits. The fact that their volunteers are also their members makes these organizations appreciate their volunteers even more because their survival is dependent on maintaining their membership.

Therefore, this study proposes the following research question: What sustains membership volunteering in professional associations? Specifically, what motivations positively affect sustained volunteerism, and whether satisfaction derived from different types of motivations has any effect on sustained volunteerism?

Literature Review

Volunteer motivation, satisfaction, and retention

The altruistic motivation of helping others as a primary starting point of volunteering is found to be a common motivation for most people (Bussell, & Forbes, 2001; Marta, & Pozzi 2008; Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000; Zweigenhaft, Armstrong, & Quintis, 1996). In the cross-national study of Handy, et al. (2010) the authors confirmed a negative correlation of egoistic motives and consistency of

volunteer work. They found that volunteers motivated by tangible interests such as career pursuits and gaining new skills and experience were more inclined to participate in episodic rather than regular volunteering. Nonetheless, it is not just the altruistic-egoistic duality that defines volunteer motivations. For example, Shye (2010) found that social factors of belonging, new connections, friendship, and personal expression in a community were very influential for the general population to volunteer. Handy, et al. (2010) also indicated the presence of a social category of motives akin to the one described in the study of Shye (2010). Moreover, the authors found that when only one of the three dimensions—altruistic, egoistic, and social—is present in the motivation to volunteer, it has a diminished effect on one's retention compared to when all three motivations are present.

It is vital not only to know volunteer motivations but also to connect it with volunteer satisfaction. Gazley (2012) and other scholars contend that higher levels of satisfaction result in more sustained retention of volunteers. Nonprofit organizations should meet the motivations of their volunteers to keep them interested and satisfied. Furthermore, different motivations affect volunteer satisfaction differently (Nencini, Romaioli, and Meneghini, 2015).

Other studies have sought to understand not only what draws volunteers to an organization, but what keeps them interested in staying (Chacon et al., 2007; Jimenez et al., 2010). Chacon et al. (2007) found that at different stages of service duration, motivations to remain as a social worker volunteer varied. In the early stage of volunteering (6 months or less) satisfaction of instrumental needs mattered the most. In the medium duration stage (at least 1 year but less than two) the volunteer's level of organizational commitment affects the decision to stay or leave. In the long-term stage (2 years or more) role identity as a volunteer affected a decision to remain.

Overall, the literature about volunteer motivation, satisfaction, and retention suggests that several factors are essential in volunteering. The primary concern is to satisfy volunteer motivations. Further, satisfaction levels should be sustained to create an attachment of a person to an organization. However, far less is known about what types of motivations and, more importantly, what types of satisfactions contribute the most to volunteer retention.

Volunteering in professional membership associations

An exchange theory proposed by Olson (1971), based on cost-benefit analysis, has conventionally been used to explain why people join professional membership associations. To put it simply, an individual will be less likely to join a professional association if the costs of joining outweigh benefits; in the reverse situation, an individual will be more inclined to join. The benefits offered by professional membership associations usually include improvement of professional practices, information sharing, continued education, social activities and programs, and networking opportunities (Alotaibi, 2007; Mook, Handy, Ginieniewicz, & Quarter, 2007).

Members join professional associations because of "some combination of common interests, personal interest, and sense of professional responsibility" (Svara & Terry, 2009, 1055). They found that the goals and values of an association are an important consideration for an individual seeking to join one organization over another. Specific factors that affect retention include the association's policies and procedures, types of other members involved, and functions of the association.

The decision to join an association does not mean that one will automatically serve as a volunteer. Volunteering in charitable organizations is more widespread than it is in professional associations. If previous research can be applied to association volunteers, then professional membership associations can meet both altruistic and egoistic expectations through volunteering activities.

Methodology

The study utilizes secondary data source obtained from a survey designed and implemented by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Foundation with the assistance of the Center for Association Leadership. The ASAE represents over 7,400 trade and professional associations across the globe (ASAE, 2017). The survey provides information about community volunteering, membership volunteering in professional associations, reasons for volunteering or not volunteering, type of volunteer work performed, the average number of hours volunteered, satisfaction with volunteering experience, likelihood of future volunteering, and a series of demographic questions, including employment, education, age, gender, race, and marital status (Gazley & Dignam, 2008). For the purpose of this study, only questions about membership volunteering for professional associations were used.

The survey adopted the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) tool proposed by Clary and Snyder (1991) to capture volunteering motivations as it was used by Gazley and Dignam (2008) in their study. This typology includes six types of motivations: values (intangible valuables), understanding (knowledge learning), social (relations), career (professional rewards), protective (personal issue resolution), enhancement (self-development).

Associations participating in the survey included health care, occupational and environmental health, education, manufacturing and engineering, accounting, and management fields, as well as a variety of IRS tax-exemptions, such as 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) and 501(c)(6) organizations. The survey was initially sent to 185,975 individual members of professional associations with 26,305 surveys returned at the 14 percent response rate. Although low response rates are prevalent in internet-based surveys, the ASAE survey compensated for the low response rate by sending out many initial surveys (Gazley & Dignam, 2008). The focus of the survey, which is not directly related to membership may also have contributed to the low response rate.

Although the survey was conducted in 2007-08, no survey, to date, has looked at volunteering among members of professional associations. This data also provides a comprehensive and diverse outlook on reasons to continue or terminate volunteering, satisfaction with offered volunteer opportunities, and suggestions for better volunteer engagement.

The questions used in the study conducted by Gazley and Dignam (2008) ask about volunteering for membership associations, including motivations to volunteer, reasons for not volunteering, satisfaction with volunteering experience, and considerations to continue volunteering with professional associations (see Table 1). The survey respondents represent a diverse population; however, it is slightly different from the national representation of volunteers for charitable nonprofits. Most of the respondents were men (57.3%), between the age of 44 and 61 (85%), primarily Caucasian (93.6%), having a graduate school degree (54.9%), and occupying mid-level positions (50.9%).

Table 1. Survey questions used for operationalization of the model constructs

| Variable	Question	Answer choices	Measurement
Motivations	How important are each of the following reasons to you in doing volunteer work for your professional membership association?	1. Volunteering brings me satisfaction or recognition that I do not get at work 2. Volunteering is important to the people I respect 3. I can learn new skills through direct, hands-on experience 4. Volunteering helps me deal with some of my own problems 5. Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things 6. Volunteering makes me feel needed 7. I can explore my own strengths 8. I feel it is important to help others 9. I can do something for a profession or cause that is important to me 10. Volunteering gives a competitive advantage to my business 11. I feel compassion toward people in need 12. I can make new contacts that might help my business or career 13. Volunteering helps me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work 14. Volunteer experience looks good on my resume 15. Volunteering helps me to explore different career options	Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "Not at all important" and 5 is "Very important"
Satisfaction	How satisfied are you with the following aspect of your volunteer experience with your professional membership association?	1. Receiving feedback about your performance 2. Receiving incentives like stipends, transportation, and/or meals 3. Learning new skills 4. Helping you to connect with the mission of the organization 5. Receiving training needed to be effective 6. Having opportunities to meet, work and socialize with others in your field or profession 7. Ability to make choices about what you want to do as a volunteer 8. Feeling respected, appreciated and values 9. Helping you to feel that you are giving back to your profession 10. Opportunity to take a leadership role 11. Working with others toward a common goal 12. Ability to make choices about when you volunteer 13. Using your existing skills	Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "Very dissatisfied" and 5 is "Very satisfied"
Retention	How likely is that you will be a volunteer for your professional membership association within the next 12 months?		Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "Very unlikely" and 5 is "Very likely"

Results

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the results of the survey. SEM is used to analyze relationships between measured variables and latent constructs. It utilizes a two-step approach that analyzes two conceptually distinct models: measurement model and structural model. Each model assessment provides support for different types of validity: convergent and discriminant for the measurement model, and predictive for the structural model. Moreover, testing the measurement model should precede the analysis of the structural model to ensure that the initially specified model and its constructs are measured with the appropriate indicators (Schumacker, & Lomax, 2010).

Measurement model

Our measurement model depicts the development of our latent variables using observed variables. It specifies the relationship between the latent variable and the observed variables. It takes into consideration the possibility of having some measurement errors in the observed variables. First, we conducted the explanatory factor analysis (EFA) of the latent variables of motivation and satisfaction. Individual survey items were used to create latent constructs for this study. EFA of motivation questions yielded four factors that contribute to professional membership volunteering. We grouped them as follows: Social/altruistic (SA) dimension encompasses motivations of social acceptance, altruism, and compassion; personal/egoistic (PE) dimension covers motivations of recognition, need for belonging, and solving personal problems with volunteering; tangible/instrumental (TI) dimension is career-focused, gaining advancements, and resume-building; and exploring/growing (EG) dimension focuses on personal growth and self-improvement (see Figure 1). Five observed variables loaded on social/altruistic latent variable measuring volunteer motivations. Three observed variables measure personal/egoistic latent variable. Five observed variables measure tangible/instrumental volunteer motivations. And three observed variables loaded on exploring/growing latent construct.

Figure 1. LISREL path diagram - standardized model of volunteer motivation

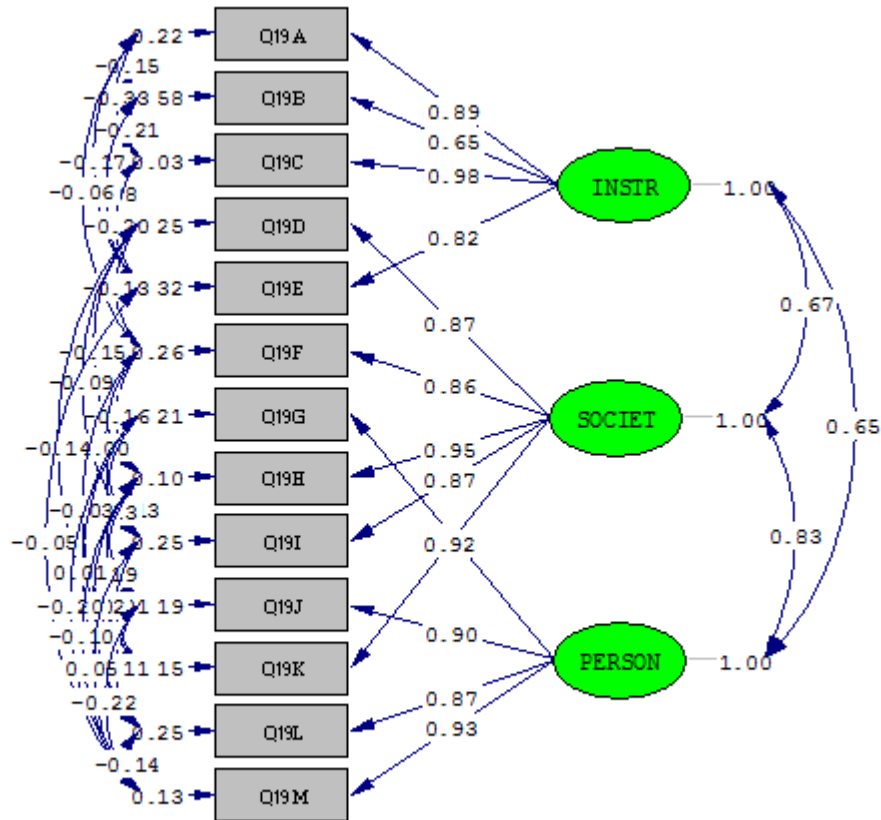Chi-Square=1036.11, df=36, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.053
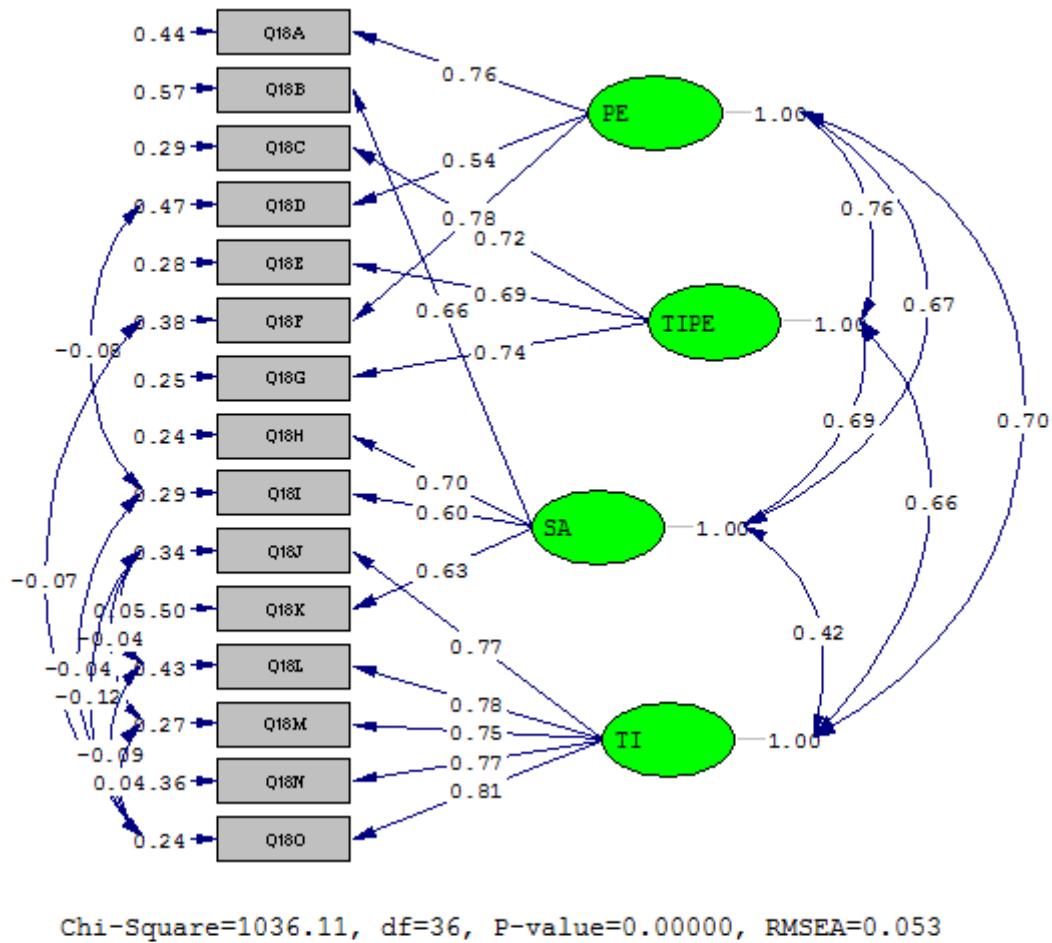
Note: Exploring/Growing latent construct is depicted as TIPE.

Three latent constructs shaped the responses of volunteers to the question about how satisfied they are with different aspects of volunteer experience. The three latent variables of satisfaction were constructed using thirteen statements from the survey. Personal satisfaction – addresses self-worth, making choices and leadership opportunities; societal satisfaction – relates to socialization, giving back, and working on common goals; and instrumental satisfaction – meets needs for new skills, incentives, and training (see Figure 2). Instrumental and personal satisfaction variables are loaded with four observed variables each, and societal latent variable is loaded with five observed variables. The

reliability scores of all the constructs was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. All seven constructs

reached an acceptable level of reliability (see Table 2).

Figure 2. LISREL path diagram - standardized model of volunteer satisfaction

Table 2. Reliability of the latent constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
Motivation	
Social/altruistic (Items 2, 8-9, 11)	.759
Personal/egoistic (Items 1, 4, 6)	.745
Tangible/instrumental (Items 10, 12-15)	.893
Exploring/growing (Items 3, 5, 7)	.836
Satisfaction	
Instrumental (Items 1-3, 5)	.792
Societal (Items 4, 6, 8-9, 11)	.890
Personal (Items 7, 10, 12-13)	.833

Our dependent variable of interest is an observed variable, measured by a survey question, asking how likely they are to continue volunteering within the next twelve months (see Table 1). All variables of interest for this study are measured using Likert scale responses ranging from 1 to 5, "1" being "Completely Disagree" and "5" corresponding with "Completely Agree."

Structural model

The structural model specifies how our latent variables are related. We hypothesized that volunteer retention will be explained by levels of satisfaction with volunteer activity, which in turn will be predicted by initial volunteer motivations. Therefore, we have a second-order structural model with seven latent variables: four independent latent variables (SA, PE, TI, EG) and three dependent latent variables (societal, personal, instrumental), and one observed dependent variable of retention. The hypothesized structural equation model is specified in Figure 3. Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square is used for the model estimation instead of a widely accepted maximum likelihood estimation method, because of the non-normal data distribution.

Figure 3. LISREL Path Diagram - Standardized model of volunteer retention
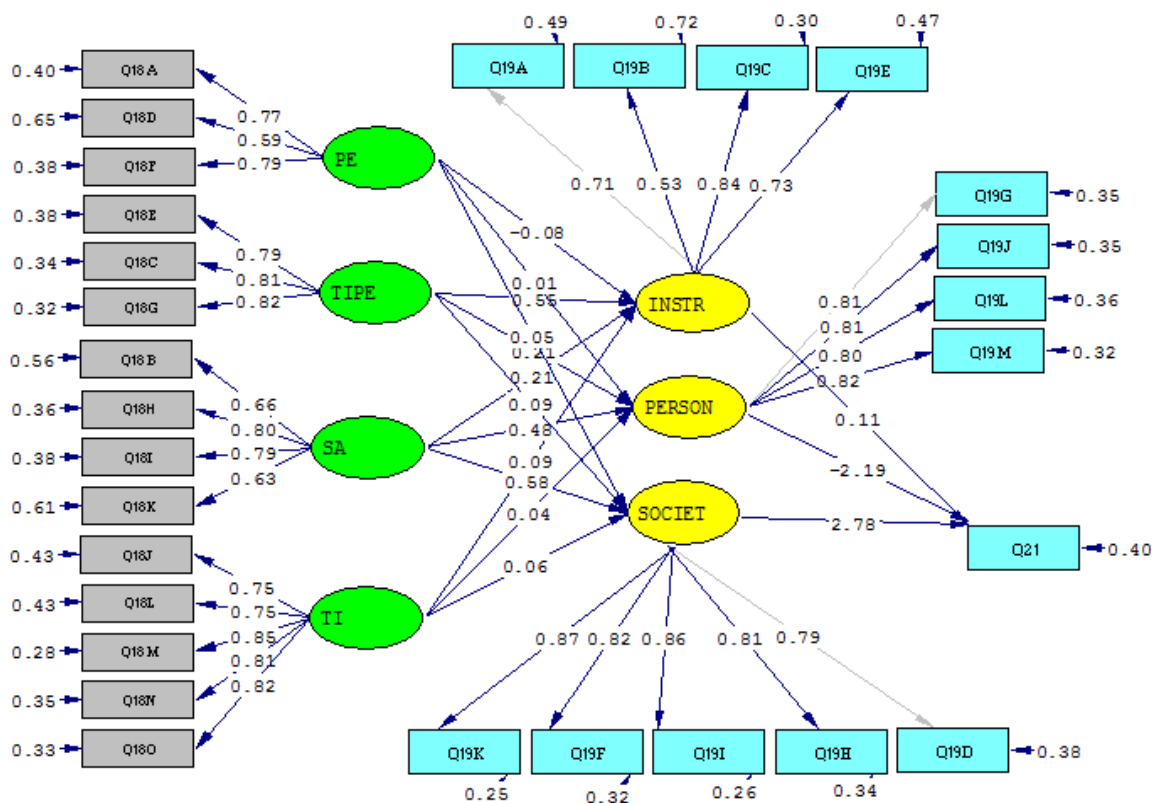
Note: Exploring/Growing latent construct is depicted as TIPE.

The model specification was assessed by looking at the variance-covariance terms among the latent independent and latent and observed dependent variables, among the prediction errors, and among the measurement errors. The model estimation stage assessed the significance of parameter estimates, which in our case all yielded significant results.

Given the sample size of 26,305 responses the overestimation of the chi-square coefficient was expected, therefore, it was not taken into consideration as a measure of model fit. The other conventional fit indices yielded an overall good model fit (see Table 3). In particular, RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), as the measure of model parsimoniousness is reported at the appropriate .035 level. The Goodness-of-fit statistic (GFI) is at an acceptable level of .90. SRMR (standard root mean square

residual) index measuring the difference between residuals of the sample covariance matrix and

hypothesized covariance model also exhibited a good level of fit (.051). Finally, the comparative fit

index (CFI) accounting for the sample size indicated perfect fit (1.0).

Table 3. Parameters and fit indices of the models

Indices	Model
Motivation → Satisfaction	
Personal/egoistic → Instrumental	-.08
Social/altruistic → Instrumental	.21
Tangible/instrumental → Instrumental	.09
Exploring/growing → Instrumental	.55
Personal/egoistic → Personal	.01
Social/altruistic → Personal	.48
Tangible/instrumental → Personal	.04
Exploring/growing → Personal	.21
Personal/egoistic → Societal	.06
Social/altruistic → Societal	.58
Tangible/instrumental → Societal	.06
Exploring/growing → Societal	.09
Satisfaction → Retention	
Instrumental → Retention	.11
Personal → Retention	-2.19
Societal → Retention	2.78
χ^2	3904.46
df	296
GFI	.90
CFI	1.00
RMSEA	.035
SRMR	.051

All coefficients significant at *p* < .001. Modified using Satorra-Bentler method

Social/altruistic motivation of volunteers had a significant positive effect on all types of

satisfaction with volunteering – instrumental (.21), personal (.48), societal (.58), suggesting that

altruistically and socially oriented volunteers find more satisfaction in their volunteer activity.

Personal/egoistic motivations, however, had significantly lower and in some cases even negative effect

on the three levels of satisfaction (-.08; .01; .06 respectively). The same effect was found in the presence

of tangible/instrumental motivations – it created a significant positive but incremental change in all types

of satisfaction (.09; .04; .06 respectively). Finally, exploring/growing motivations had a higher impact on instrumental (.55) and personal (.21) satisfaction levels, but not on societal satisfaction (.09).

The types of satisfaction yielded close to expected influence on retention. Namely, instrumental type of satisfaction had a significantly lower effect on retention (.11) compared to the societal type of satisfaction (2.78), whereas personal satisfaction changed the sign of influence to a negative (-2.19).

Discussion and conclusion

This study sought to understand and explain possible variations of effect on sustained volunteering for members of professional associations. Many agree that satisfying volunteer motivations has a positive effect on retention, our findings show that this conclusion is more nuanced. The review of the research recognized that there are problems associated with unraveling the complex concept of volunteerism (Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010; Penner, 2002). Although the nonprofit literature is abundant with studies explaining relations between motivation, satisfaction, and retention, there is no study, to the best of our knowledge, that has looked at different types of satisfaction. We found that simply addressing volunteer motivations and keeping them satisfied does not directly translate into sustainable volunteerism.

These findings indicate that the most sustainable types of motivations are social/altruistic and exploring/growing, indicating that volunteers of professional associations that are motivated by wanting to help others, out of social acceptance, or for personal self-improvement are more likely to be satisfied with their volunteer experience. Even more interesting, only one type of satisfaction—societal, which reflects satisfaction with giving back, socializing, and working together with others towards common goals and mission—had a strong and positive effect on a volunteer's intention to continue volunteering.

Sustained volunteerism is of paramount importance to the nonprofit sector. This paper contributes to this important topic by unraveling what types of volunteer motivations and what types of satisfaction have the highest likelihood of volunteers staying and continuing to volunteer with their professional associations. Our findings suggest that social/altruistic as well as exploring/growth directions of volunteer motivations result in an increase of all kinds of satisfaction types, but only one 15

type of satisfaction carries over to retention. Therefore, we observed an indirect effect between volunteer motivation and retention mediated by satisfaction. The congruence between the motives for which individuals volunteer their time, the activities that they engage in, and certain kinds of satisfaction all represent conditions that are ripe for a high level of intra-association volunteer capacity.

By addressing questions of volunteer motivation and satisfaction we tapped into a thoroughly studied subject. However, this paper shed new light on the relations between volunteer motivation, satisfaction, and retention that has not been observed before. Understanding the motives behind the willingness or desire of members in professional associations to volunteer is critically important for these organizations to thrive. The relevancy of taking 501(c)(6) volunteer resources into consideration is obvious when realizing that volunteers of professional associations are also their members, and they deserve special attention and treatment by these organizations.

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Creating, Implementing, and Supporting a State-wide Volunteer Conflict Management System

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Abstract

Volunteers are essential in carrying out the mission of Washington State University Extension. Properly managed volunteer conflict in Extension programs can have a positive impact on the organization's image, the ability to achieve programmatic outcomes, recruitment and retention of volunteers, and ultimately fulfilling the mission of the organization. A comprehensive volunteer conflict management system was created and implemented across the 4-H Youth Development program at Washington State University. Educational training sessions on the use of the Volunteer Conflict Management System were provided. Participant evaluations indicated a higher understanding of the system and resources available. Follow up evaluations and professional development opportunities are being implemented in the coming months.

Key Words: Conflict Management, Organizational Systems, Volunteer Management

Need

The Extension System is a non-formal educational program developed in the United States to provide individuals with researched based knowledge to improve their lives. This service is provided by each state's designated land grant university. Washington State University (WSU) is the land grant university for Washington State. Many of WSU Extension's educational programs engage volunteers to implement programs.

Volunteers are essential in carrying out the mission of WSU Extension. Specifically, they are a critical component of the 4-H Youth Development program and most often the direct link to positive youth development (PYD) outcomes (Arnold, Dolenc, & Rennekamp, 2009). Some suggest that the ability of staff to effectively manage volunteers has the greatest impact on 4-H youth activities and personal development (King & Safrit, 1998). Conflict management and people skills are competencies needed by Extension professionals working with volunteers (Seevers, Baca, & Leeuwen, 2005). Improperly managed conflict in any Extension program can have an adverse impact on the organization's image, the ability to achieve programmatic outcomes, and the recruitment and retention of volunteers. "Conflict is a normal part of life. Healthy conflict can lead to positive changes in personal relationships and organizations. Negative conflict can however be very destructive and can sap energy from a group," (University of New Hampshire, 2009).

In youth programs, volunteer conflict can also have severe negative impacts on young members. Systematic volunteer training and on-going support is a primary component impacting the satisfaction and retention of volunteers (Arnold, Dolenc, & Rennekamp, 2009). To strengthen and build the capacity of the local 4-H Youth Development program, quality volunteer education and sustainable volunteer systems must be in place. Otherwise, youth development outcomes suffer as well as volunteer retention, and overall program weakens. According to the National

Framework for 4-H Volunteerism, a comprehensive volunteer system includes both volunteer resource management and the development of individuals participating in the 4-H Youth Development program (Stone and Edwards, 2008). Systems exist to assist in managing risks, liabilities, and conflicts related to volunteers and their involvement in the 4-H Youth Development program. Systems exist to assist in managing risks, liabilities, and conflicts related to volunteers and their involvement in the 4-H Youth Development program.

Action

Before 2016, WSU Extension did not have a system-wide approach for handling volunteer conflict. Conflict is defined as challenges between two volunteers, volunteer to youth, youth to youth, etc. Conflict costing faculty, staff, and administration excessive amounts of time and resources handling volunteer grievances. The Volunteer Conflict Management Team, consisting of county-based, regional, and statewide 4-H Youth Development faculty, was formed at the request of the Associate Dean and Director of Extension. Team goals were 1) to develop a state-wide, research-based 4-H Youth Development volunteer conflict management system; 2) to design, deliver, and train faculty and staff on educational tools and resources; and 3) to aid in local system implementation across the WSU 4-H Youth Development program.

The Volunteer Conflict Management Team utilized best practices of supervising and coaching volunteers from National 4-H Learning Priorities: Volunteerism for the Next Generation (2010) to provide the Volunteer Conflict Management System framework. This system also integrates a coaching model by incorporating a corrective action process. A four-step process for handling volunteer conflict was created. The process includes:

1) identifying disruptive volunteer behaviors,

2) documenting and investigating using the supporting resources,

3) communicating findings with the volunteers involved,

4) next steps/follow up.

This process uses supporting documents and resources to help faculty and staff navigate the Volunteer Conflict Management System. The supporting documents include a behavior matrix, staff documentation form, tips to effective documentation handout, and letter templates.

The Volunteer Conflict Management System was grounded in a positive youth development perspective by integrating the 4-H essential elements (Kress, 2003). A matrix of volunteer behaviors was created and linked to the potential negative impacts for each behavior on the 4-H essential elements of positive youth development. Specific volunteer behaviors are color coded within the matrix to help faculty and staff recognize the severity of the conduct. Behaviors are identified as Green – low risk, Yellow – medium risk, and Red – high-risk. Specific actions listed on the matrix were created using input from internal and external stakeholders from 9 of the 39 Washington counties including 4-H volunteers, fair representatives, and other youth development agencies, as well as input from the university's human resources personnel and attorneys. While the matrix has an extensive list of behaviors, it is not intended to cover all disruptive volunteer behaviors.

The Volunteer Conflict Management System also involves a step-by-step process to help faculty and staff in diagnosing the severity of disruptive volunteer behavior and includes template letters and documentation forms for staff to use when working with volunteers through a conflict situation. The documentation forms allow staff to investigate and appropriately document the situation for a consistent process and approach across the entire state. Similar to the documentation form, volunteer template letters accompany the system for faculty and staff to use to address individual color coded behaviors. These letters allow customization for each

situation but also remain consistent for continuity across the entire state 4-H Youth Development program.

Once a faculty or staff member thoroughly investigates an incident, they document the situation, and then contact by letter the involved volunteer to arrange a face-to-face meeting. The in-person discussion gives the volunteer and staff opportunities to review findings of the investigation and to work with the volunteer on identified behaviors needing improvement. Face-to-face meeting outcomes with the volunteer may include no issues found, low-risk behavior change needed, volunteer suspension, re-education, or if necessary, volunteer removal.

The final step is to complete any specific next steps needed to finalize the issue. At the conclusion of this step, the Volunteer Conflict Management System is complete.

To support staff in the using the conflict management system five regional conflict management trainings (n=80) were held throughout the summer of 2016. Training was held at five different sites across the state and taught by two of the Volunteer Conflict Management Team members; one of whom co-taught at every regional training to provide consistent delivery. Participants included local and statewide staff and faculty from each of the three Extension program units (Youth and Families, Community and Economic Development, and Agricultural and Natural Resources). All were either directly or indirectly involved in volunteer management. Each training included overview of the Volunteer Conflict Management System, an in-depth review of the four steps in the process (i.e. Identify disruptive behaviors, documentation and investigation, communicating with the volunteer, the findings and next steps) and the supporting tools (i.e. behavior matrix, staff documentation form, tips to effective documentation handout, letter templates). The training concluded with a small group activity that involved each group receiving a scenario to practice implementation of the Volunteer Conflict Management System.

Each team presented how they would handle the situation from beginning to end utilizing the system and resources provided. Examples of scenarios included "lack of timely communication with 4-H Youth Development staff and repeated failure to submit club documents on time", "two volunteers not getting along in a club setting, both complaining to you individually," and "adult bullying/harassment of another adult in 4-H Youth Development program". Four additional trainings were held throughout the state in the fall and winter of 2016.

Results

Five in-depth conflict management regional trainings were attended by a total of 91 individuals. Each participant was asked to complete a retrospective post-then-pre survey to measure knowledge gain and intent to change behavior in volunteer conflict management practices. Response rate was 88% (n=80). Participants included local, regional, and statewide staff and faculty (41% (n=31) were extension faculty, and 59% (n=45) were extension program support staff). Four participants did not indicate their role within extension. 44% (n=33) of participants responded being in their current position for three years or less, and 56% (n=42) indicated being in their role for four or more years. Five participants did not identify how many years they had been in their current position.

Participants were asked to indicate their change in knowledge with six statements before and after participating in the workshop using a five point Likert scale (1 = very prepared; very confident; definitely yes; extremely comfortable; extremely well or; extremely consistent and 5 = not at all prepared; really not confident; definitely not; extremely uncomfortable; not well at all or; not consistent at all). Percent change was calculated as follows: % change = ((after-before)/before) x 100. The retrospective post-then-pre indicators revealed that participants experienced a positive change in knowledge, ability, confidence, and attitude. Three of the six

indicators registered a positive change over 40%. The overall mean for the nine items increased

from 3.03 (before) to 4 (after) (Table 1).

Table 1

Percent Change among All Training Participants

Survey Questions	Before	After	Change	% Change
Do you have the tools you need to handle conflict in your county [a]	3.0	4.3	1.3	43.5%
How well prepared do you feel in handling volunteer conflict in your county [b]	2.9	4.1	1.2	42.1%
How consistent do you feel WSU Extension will be in responding to volunteer conflict issues [c]	2.9	4.0	1.2	40.2%
How well do you think you will be able to distinguish the severity of volunteer conflict situations (i.e. minor versus major issues) [d]	2.9	3.8	0.9	30.9%
How comfortable are you in handling a volunteer conflict issue in your county [e]	3.0	3.8	0.8	25.4%
How confident do you feel in your abilities to handle conflict in your county [f]	3.5	4.0	0.5	13.8%

Note. n=80
[a] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = definitely yes, 5 = definitely not) scale.
[b] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = very prepared, 5 = not at all prepared) scale.
[c] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely consistent, 5 = not consistent at all) scale.
[d] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely well, 5 = not well at all) scale.
[e] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely comfortable, 5 = extremely uncomfortable) scale.
[f] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = really confident, 5 = really not confident) scale.

When comparing participants according to number of years in their current role, the

percent change is greater across all indicators for respondents with zero to three years in their

present role. The percent change for two of the six indicators is two times higher for respondents

with zero to three years in their role than respondents with four or more years. The data indicates

that staff with less experience in their role may benefit more from the training.

Table 2

Percent- Change Between 0-3 Years and 4+ Years Employees

Survey Questions	0-3 Years % Change	4+ Years % Change
Do you have the tools you need to handle conflict in your county [a]	61.0%	33.8%
How well prepared do you feel in handling volunteer conflict in your county [b]	60.9%	30.9%
How consistent do you feel WSU Extension will be in responding to volunteer conflict issues [c]	50.0%	35.6%
How well do you think you will be able to distinguish the severity of volunteer conflict situations (i.e. minor versus major issues) [d]	41.9%	24.6%
How comfortable are you in handling a volunteer conflict issue in your county [e]	37.0%*	14.2%
How confident do you feel in your abilities to handle conflict in your county [f]	19.4%*	8.3%

Note. 0-3 Years n=33. 4+ Years n=42

* = The percent change is two times greater for respondents with 0-3 years in their role than respondents with 4 or more years

[a] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = definitely yes, 5 = definitely not) scale.

[b] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = very prepared, 5 = not at all prepared) scale.

[c] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely consistent, 5 = not consistent at all) scale.

[d] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely well, 5 = not well at all) scale.

[e] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = extremely comfortable, 5 = extremely uncomfortable) scale.

[f] Topics evaluated on 1 to 5 (1 = really confident, 5 = really not confident) scale.

In addition to the positive results in Table 2, qualitative feedback was also provided. Here is what one participant said, "I found it useful for guiding how corrective action and discipline should be handled with our volunteers. Prior to the system, we were left to our own decisions, and the tool provides me with the confidence to handle issues that may occur with our volunteers."

Recommendations

In the end of 2017 the volunteer conflict management team will conduct a one-year follow-up evaluation with the staff and faculty who participated in the 2016 regional conflict management trainings to identify impacts since implementing the Volunteer Conflict Management System.

The team is developing training modules the state will utilize to educate new hires in Extension Volunteer programs. Implementing a staff and faculty online module system will allow training to happen as needed throughout the year, and allow new hire education on managing volunteer behavior regardless of when that person joined the Extension staff. Additionally, the Volunteer Conflict Management System team is in the process of developing online modules for additional training of staff and faculty in conflict management best practices and creating conflict management resources for volunteers.

Although the Volunteer Conflict Management System was developed to address an unmet need within the Washington State University 4-H Youth Development program, Extension administration quickly recognized the value of having a consistent process to managing volunteer conflict Extension-wide. As a result, the 4-H Volunteer Conflict Management System became the model for all Extension volunteers. The team worked collaboratively with other volunteer program unit leadership to ensure the system was applicable for any Extension volunteer. The materials developed can be implemented in any county in Washington State, and also potentially replicable nationwide (upon locally vetting volunteer laws and university policies).

A Volunteer Conflict Management System can be applied to other volunteer programs and organizations. Creating a list of volunteer expectations, identifying disruptive behaviors with consequences gives administrators and volunteer managers the skills to make appropriate conflict management decisions. For example, Fair boards and Fair management can create their own set of expectations for volunteers and identify inappropriate behaviors before the Fair or event to ensure positive interactions and to create a consist method for handling conflict.

Annually, all members of the Volunteer Conflict Management System team will meet to

review and refine the system and the accompanying resources to continue best practices

implementation.

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Befriending with Socially Isolated Immigrant Seniors: An Inquiry into

its Contributions and Challenges

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Abstract

Social isolation is a major risk factor for a host of physical and psychosocial health problems among older adults. The Befriending program is a community intervention used by service agencies to reduce social isolation among older adults. While there are several reports on the positive effect of these programs on the lives of older adults in general, there is no information on its use with the immigrant population. This article presents the findings of an exploratory qualitative study of a befriending program with the socially isolated immigrant seniors. Data were collected during face-to-face interviews with immigrant older adults and befrienders at two points in order to examine their perspectives and subjective experiences, as well as the factors associated with the continuation of their relationships. Based on the study findings, recommendations are made to service agencies to enhance their organizational capacity, and to adopt more effective recruitment and retention strategies.

Key words: Immigrant seniors, Social isolation, Befrienders, Volunteering.

Literature Review

As the immigrant population in most Western nations grows in size, the number of older immigrants is expected to increase in the years to come. One of the implications of this trend is that service agencies and professional providers are more likely to work with immigrant seniors. Thus, they need to learn about the unique challenges faced by this group of clients.

One of the main challenges faced by immigrant seniors is social isolation (Ajrouch, 2008; Northcott and Northcott, 2010). In addition to the losses associated with ageing, immigrant seniors often face challenges that could place them at a greater risk for social isolation. When immigrant seniors leave their countries of origin, they leave behind their extended networks of relatives, friends, and community support. Even when they live with their adult children, their children may have limited time to spend with them, as they struggle to adjust to a new society. Moreover, the feminization of the workforce, further reduces the availability of the female relatives, who traditionally have cared for older adults. Linguistic and cultural barriers also increase the risk of isolation among immigrant seniors (Ajrouch, 2008; Ng and Northcott, 2010).

Research has consistently shown that social isolation is a risk factor for a host of physical and psychosocial health problems among older adults, including mental health problems, cognitive decline, injuries, hospitalization, and even premature death (McGowan and Jowett, 2003; MacCourt, 2016; The National Seniors Council, 2014a,b). Social support networks can mitigate these negative effects by providing needed resources, enhancing self-esteem and self-efficacy, and reducing the perceived importance of stressful life events (George, 2005; Stanfeld, 2006; Yoo and Zippay, 2012).

Thus, service agencies have developed various intervention programs aimed at reducing social isolation among older adults by: a) offering training programs to improve older

individuals' psychosocial and communication skills, necessary to develop and maintain meaningful relationships; b) increasing opportunities for social interactions, by organizing groups with educational and support purposes; c) providing transportation services to facilitate participation in social activities (Cattan et al., 2005; De Jong et al., 2006; Findlay, 2003; National Seniors Council, 2014b; Stevens, 2001).

Befriending programs have also been used to enhance the social networks of the older adults (Andrews et al., 2003; Cattan et al., 2005; Goldman, 2002; Lester et al., 2012; McNeil, 1995). In befriending programs, isolated individuals are matched with volunteers who act as friends and offer support for a determined period of time. Research shows that befriending programs reduce the effects of social isolation, and improve health and emotional well-being among the participants (Andrew, et al. 2003; Behnia, 2007). However, to the author's knowledge, to date, there are no published studies on the befriending interventions with immigrant seniors. Given the potential impact of such programs on the lives of socially isolated and marginalized groups, it is imperative to learn more about them, and to find ways to enhance the recruitment and retention capacity of the organizations that offer such programs.

This article presents the results of a qualitative study of a befriending program with immigrant seniors - the *Friendly Visiting Program* -in Ottawa (Canada). In this program, socially isolated immigrant seniors are matched with volunteers who speak their native languages (they may or may not be of the same ethno-cultural background). The overall goal of this study was to learn about the immigrant seniors' and the befrienders' perspectives and the subjective experiences of their relationships. A particular emphasis was placed on exploring the factors that propelled the befrienders to volunteer with immigrant seniors and the underlying reasons for their continued commitment.

Methods

In this study a descriptive qualitative exploratory research design was adopted. A convenient sample of immigrant seniors and befrienders was interviewed at two points, within two months of matching, and then again during the fifth to sixth month of their relationship. Two sets of interview guides (one for the befrienders and one for the immigrant seniors) were developed for data collection at each phase. The interview guides, consisting mainly of open-ended questions, were pre-tested and the necessary changes were incorporated. The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the author's university research ethics board.

A total of thirty-nine face-to-face interviews with immigrant seniors and their matched befrienders were conducted. Twelve immigrant seniors and twelve befrienders were interviewed within the first two months of their match. In the second phase, eight of the participating immigrant seniors were interviewed for a second time. The attrition of the immigrant seniors was caused by illness, out of country travel, and one refusal. Of the initial twelve befrienders, seven participated in the second phase of the study. Five volunteers had either moved away from Ottawa, or were traveling out of Canada at the time of interviews.

The majority of the immigrant seniors was female (91.6%), 65-74 years of age (70%), and lived with their spouses or other family members (58%). Half of them had university degrees (50%) from their countries of origin. The majority of the befrienders was female (91.6%), 25-64 years of age (75%), married (58%), and had university degrees from their countries of origin (75%). All befrienders except one, who was born into an immigrant family in Canada, were foreign-born.

Interviews, which were conducted in the participants' places of residence, lasted approximately 60 minutes and were tape recorded. The data coding and analysis were guided by

the work of Strauss and Curbin (1998) to ensure an open-minded, exploratory and systematic

process. Upon the completion of interviews, the researcher read and open coded the transcribed

interviews in order to identify categories and patterns that reflected the experiences and

perspectives of the study participants. This step involved indexing data by applying labels to

sentences and paragraphs of transcripts which signified aspects of experiences addressed by the

excerpts. This process allowed the researcher to identify emergent categories and patterns. In the

second phase of analysis, the identified categories and patterns were tested on the transcripts and

the necessary revisions were made. In the third phase, re-reading of the data within indexed

categories allowed researcher to interpret and synthesize the data, and to identify themes.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Social Isolation

The participating immigrant seniors expressed a profound sense of social isolation, and

identified some of the contributing factors. Some had no family in Ottawa (or even in Canada).

But even those whose adult children lived in Ottawa experienced loneliness as a result of their

children's busy lives or family conflict. Declining health was cited as a major barrier to their

ability to engage in social activities such as shopping, visiting family and friends, participating in

community events, and attending language classes. They also relayed the negative impact that

the lack of access to adequate public transportation and home support services had on their

engagement with the outside world.

The social isolation experienced by the participants created a range of emotional

reactions including a sense of loneliness, sadness, and vulnerability: "Solitude is very difficult…I

am all alone." For one of the study participants the pain of loneliness was so unbearable that she

reported leaving her apartment door open in the hope of initiating social contact:

"I spend every day like this, between four walls. I really like having people come…I

would lose my memory staying like this all the time, all alone…I leave my apartment

door open to show the people that they can visit me."

Befrienders' Contribution

Befrienders made invaluable contribution to the lives of immigrant seniors. They escorted

them to medical appointments, language classes, shopping malls, parks, museums, and

community events; they taught them how to use public transportation; translated documents;

helped them to practice their English or French; and encouraged them to do physical exercise

and join community programs. In addition to the face-to-face visits, several times a week, they

called their matched seniors in order to monitor and support them. These phone conversations

were very reassuring to the immigrant seniors, and gave them a sense of relief that, should they

need help, there would be someone to rely on.

The befrienders described their deliberate attempts to empower the immigrant seniors by

validating their feelings, respecting their social persona, and reaffirming their sense of self-worth

and identity. Some talked about actively creating opportunities for the immigrant seniors to

express their knowledge skills and wisdom on various topics, such as child rearing, family

matters, and cooking.

The remarks made by the immigrant seniors reflected their acknowledgment of the many

benefits of their relationships with the befrienders. One participant described the impact on her

mood this way: "You know I am changed so much now. Before, I was crying, crying all the

time, because I was alone. I was so sad. Solitude is so difficult." For others, the befrienders acted

as close confidants with whom they could share their most intimate concerns and personal

information: "I told her 'we seniors are afraid of getting Alzheimer's disease … The old people,

they [lose] their memory…I am scared!'"

Remarkably, the closeness of the immigrant seniors-befrienders dyadic

relationships was such that most participants used familial terms, such as daughter and

mother to refer to each other: "I feel like I have a daughter by [my] side."

Befrienders' Reasons to Volunteer with Immigrant Seniors

A common reason cited by the participants for volunteering was their desire to help

immigrant seniors in dealing with the many challenges of living in a foreign land. For some of

them, befriending seemed to bring to the surface, and possibly help them process, their own

anxieties and uncertainties vis-à-vis their future as immigrant seniors: "I one day will be like

them in many ways…I will be very lonely." Befriending provided an opportunity for vicarious

learning, preparing them to better cope with similar future experiences: "From this relationship,

what I receive is… a lesson about the future. I must prepare myself…."

Among other motivating factors identified were: a) a desire to meet people from different

cultural backgrounds and life experiences; b) seeking the opportunity to gain Canadian work

experience, and to acquire skills needed to improve their chances of getting a paid job; and c)

altruism, a genuine desire to improve people's lives.

Challenges of Volunteering with Immigrant Seniors

In response to the question, 'have you experienced any challenges in your befriending

relationship', some befrienders vented their frustrations of working with immigrant seniors, and

two disclosed their deep sense of disappointment to the extent that they were contemplating the

termination of their involvement. The main underlying reasons for their negative experiences

were related to the perceived difficult behaviors of their clients. A few described their matched

seniors as being disrespectful and defiant: "He'll make sure that I know that he knows more than I know…It really does discourage me a little bit."

Others noted that some immigrant seniors were overly sensitive, and could be easily offended. This caused befrienders to be extra cautious in their communications in order to avoid inadvertently hurting the seniors. At times, setting personal boundaries seemed to be difficult. Befrienders complained that some immigrant seniors asked personal questions about their marital status and religious beliefs that made the befrienders feel uncomfortable: "Seniors ask you about your religion and [then] they comment on your religion."

Sometimes the source of difficulty rested with the immigrant seniors' families. It was noted by a few befrienders that some immigrant families were concerned that their relatives might disclose private family-related information with the befriender, who might, in turn, share it with other members of the community. This made some of the befrienders feel overly conscious about how their conduct may be interpreted.

Finally, a history of animosity or conflict between the countries of origin of the immigrant seniors and their befrienders was another potential source of tension in their relationships: "When the first time I met her, we felt we [had] a big distance, because [I am] from Communist [China] and Taiwan sees the Chinese Mainland like an enemy."

Befrienders used various strategies to cope with some of the aforementioned challenges. For instance, to avoid unfriendly family members, they arranged to visit immigrant seniors when their relatives were not at home. When there was a history of animosity between their countries of origin, they tried to avoid any discussion around politic issues.

To maintain their relationships with immigrant seniors, some befrienders resorted to cognitive strategies. For instance, some attributed the challenging behaviors of immigrant seniors to their low self-esteem: **"**They think 'nobody knows me', 'I am nobody'…'nobody loves me'." Others used ageist interpretations to explain the seniors' difficult behaviors. A few compared seniors to children: "…like you deal with a little kid about the age four-five years old…They need your attention, they need your love." Another befriender talked about age-related cognitive decline as the cause of such behaviors: "When you get old, [your brain] is gone …Because the brain is shrinking."

Factors Associated with the Continuity of Relationship

A number of factors influenced the befrienders' commitment to their relationships with the immigrant seniors. Their admiration for the seniors' personal traits, such as resiliency, optimistic outlook, open mindedness, patience, and pleasant manners played an important role in their desire to continue their volunteer work.

Moreover, befriending seemed to help some of the volunteers feel reconnected to the memories of their own cherished past family relationships, and/or to re-experience the close bonding and affection they had been longing for. Witnessing the positive impact of their contribution on the quality of lives of immigrant seniors was another major reinforcing factor for some the befrienders. The improvements made in various domains of the seniors' lives confirmed that their efforts had the intended effects and were not futile.

Interestingly, the immigrant seniors were not merely passive recipients of help. They seemed to be active partners in maintaining and strengthening their relationships with the befrienders. They tried to reciprocate the volunteers' support through acts of care, genuine expression of their gratitude, and interest in their well-being. Some immigrant seniors treated

befrienders with the same care and affection that they would extend to their own children and relatives. A befriender relayed the following experience: "She's more like a mom...when I am sick, she calls me…to make sure that I am okay." Befrienders also pointed out that immigrant seniors showed their appreciation by offering food, courtesy, and even money: "She appreciates everything that I do for her… she insists that she wants to pay me, actually. So I say no –that is not our deal!"

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal the positive impact of befriending programs in fostering a supportive social environment for immigrant seniors. The befrienders offered their help with a range of emotional, informational, and instrumental activities. Many provided what has been described in the literature as responsive, personalized, biographical and psychosocial identity care (Aminzadeh et.al.2013). They recognized immigrant seniors' unmet needs, showed a genuine commitment and caring attitude towards them and consciously used creative strategies to provide opportunities for meaningful social exchanges in order to reaffirm the seniors' sense of self-worth, personhood and role identity. In turn, the trusting and affectionate nature of the relationships fulfilled the befrienders' desire for a meaningful connection.

Consistent with the motivational theories in the field of volunteerism, the befrienders were motivated by both altruistic and self-interest motives (Behnia, 2012, 2001; Cook and Speevak-Sladowski, 2013; Rochester et al., 2012; Wilson, 2012). The results also point to the influence of social identity in befrienders' decisions to volunteer with immigrant seniors. According to social identity theory, people tend to volunteer with groups with whom they feel a sense of connection (Haski-Leventhal & Cnann, 2009; Weng and Lee, 2016). In this study, the perceived shared identity with the immigrant seniors emerged as a major motivating factor for

the volunteers. Moreover, the future prospect of "aging in a foreign land" and the ensuing loss of meaningful familial and social connections appear to draw the befrienders to work with the immigrant seniors. The befrienders' firsthand experiences with immigration motivated them to reach out to a more marginalized group of immigrants, and sensitized them to their needs. In turn, their interactions with immigrant seniors helped them cope with their own sense of uncertainty of their future as immigrants.

A fascinating finding of this study that needs further exploration in future research is the active role most immigrant seniors played in strengthening their relationship with befrienders. Far from being passive observers and recipients of help, they tried to reciprocate, in any way they could, the care and support they received.

However, not all the interactions with immigrant seniors were described in a positive light. A few befrienders complained of the disrespectful, unappreciative and defiant behaviors of their matched seniors and/or their families. It is noteworthy how the befrienders coped with these challenges by engaging in various behavioral and cognitive strategies. To implement effective strategies to support the befrienders in their efforts to cope with challenging interactions, it is imperative to further investigate activities that volunteers engage in order to sustain their helping relationships.

The findings also point to the key role of service organizations in providing educational and emotional support to the befrienders. Based on the study results, most could benefit from training on various topics such as communication with older adults, changes associated with aging, family dynamics, and cross-cultural communication. Moreover, to ensure successful matching, the organizations could facilitate informal community events in order to create

opportunities for the volunteers and immigrant seniors to meet and familiarize with each other

prior to being matched.

Consistent with past research, the findings support the importance of providing feedback

to the volunteers on the value of their contributions and the impact of their work on the quality of

lives of their clients (Behnia, 2012; Musick and Wilson, 2008). Sharing the immigrant seniors'

positive feedback, their sense of gratitude, and the high esteem they may hold for their matched

befrienders can boost the volunteer's sense of self-efficacy, and strengthen their on-going

commitment to the relationships.

One of the strengths of this study is that interviews with both the befrienders and

immigrant seniors provided an opportunity to examine the processes, meaning and efforts from

the perspectives of both groups. This is an important first step in filling some of the gaps in our

knowledge. However, the results need to be interpreted and generalized with caution. The

population interviewed in this study is not representative of all older adult immigrants. The study

is limited by its convenience sampling technique, small sample size, fairly homogeneous gender

and ethnic composition, and follow-up attrition. More research with larger and more

heterogeneous and representative samples of immigrant seniors and befrienders are needed to

further validate the findings. Nevertheless, the study findings provide valuable insights that could

assist community organizations in their efforts to combat social isolation among older adult

immigrants and to increase the number of befrienders and successful matches.

Finally, it should be noted that the befriending programs function within a broader social

system. Structural factors such as accessibility and affordability of public transportation,

housing, home care services; availability of multicultural community programs and services, and

the existence of supportive immigration policies are critical to the health and welfare of older

adult immigrants. It is, therefore, imperative that service agencies advocate for changes at a

broader policy level.

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