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The Power of Investing in Volunteers: A Look into the Volunteer Landscape of Richmond, Virginia

Timothy Nesselrodt

University of Richmond, School of Professional and Continuing Studies
Nonprofit Academic Division

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I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work.

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Abstract

The volunteer landscape across the country shows a demonstrable need for volunteers to help nonprofit organizations achieve their missions. For many, this need is undermined by constant volunteer turnover and low retention rates. The purpose of this paper is to examine any relationship between transformational leadership and volunteer retention. The information found indicates such a relationship exists and should be the topic of further research. In order to determine the impact organizations made on volunteers, this study used online, anonymous surveys distributed to volunteers. Volunteers responded in accordance with their experiences at both their longest and shortest held volunteer positions. Respondents also indicated the importance of seven different components of known volunteer retention as they relate to them. Survey data was gathered and presented in accordance with the responses to best answer the research questions.

Regarding the importance of known retention factors, personal and emotional growth was the most common trait of importance while having a voice in the organization was the least valued trait. While satisfaction in volunteering and feeling appreciated by the organization were both highly valued, respondents felt that organizations investing in their growth was the most important factor. Having a voice in the organization was by far the least valued trait by a wide margin. This study, while not indicative of causation, does add to the existing research that suggests leadership by organizations has an impact on the retention rates of volunteers. It indicates an opportunity for further research to be done in this field and provides information for program leaders to begin to shape their programs to best impact the needs of its volunteers.
The Power of Investing in Volunteers: A Look into the Volunteer Landscape of Richmond, Virginia

Many organizations rely on volunteers’ work to accomplish their mission and provide their programs at a nominal fee to their constituents. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics (as cited in Walk, 2018), “In 2015, about 25% of U.S. adults donated 8.7 billion hours of their time to nonprofits” (Walk, Zhang, & Littlepage, 2018, p. 1). This is a clear indication of the scope of the nonprofit landscape and how important volunteering is in the nonprofit sector where for many, funding can be hard to find and volunteers are used to cover those services (Handy & Mook, 2011, p. 412). With organizations attempting to stay under budget for their programs, there seems to be a lack of time committed to retaining volunteers. Because volunteers are not paid for their work, many organizations are failing to see the expenses around finding and training new volunteers or the value they provide to the organization. There is also an opportunity for attention to be paid to the leadership at every level of any organization, not simply the administration and how it impacts the retention of volunteers.

Context

Nonprofit organizations throughout the world rely on volunteers to aid and facilitate in running programs and providing services. Doing so allows for programs to have lower costs to organizations and lower costs to participants making it a critical component in nonprofits functioning effectively. Despite this, many nonprofits experience high turnover rates in volunteer participation (Bowman, 2009). This is due to several reasons relating to retention and investment into volunteers.
Satisfaction. A common theme amongst researchers is prevalent: despite large numbers of volunteers, the volunteer landscape is declining. Harp, Scherer, and Allen (2017) brought this to light after conducting research from which they determined “the 2013 volunteer rate (25.4%) not only declined from the 2012 rate (26.5%), but it is also the lowest rate recorded since 2002 when the survey supplement was first distributed” (p. 443). This study determined a need to investigate potential predictors of volunteer work and whether they would stay in that organization or leave (Harp, et al, 2017). According to their research, the method used to determine these potential methodologies was based on the concept of “community service self-efficacy (CCSE)” (Harp, et al, 2017, p. 443). “Participants were volunteers from three U.S. nonprofit organizations, including two animal welfare groups in Colorado (n = 87) and California (n = 60) and a shelter for the homeless in Nebraska (n = 88)” (Harp, et al., p. 447). From those participants, the study used an anonymous survey that measured each respondent’s perceptions of satisfaction and well-being as it related to their organization (Harp, et al., 2017).

From the data gathered, the researchers were able to determine that job constraints and role ambiguity were the two strongest negative factors for volunteer engagement (Harp, et al., 2017, p. 450). They also determined that “CSSE did not significantly attenuate the negative relationship between role ambiguity and volunteer engagement” (Harp, et al., 2017, p. 451). While the findings did show personal CSSE provided some relief from the negative forces placed on volunteers, it was not significant and thus makes the organization’s methods more important in volunteer retention (Harp, et al., 2017).

Having effective organizational practices is not only relevant to volunteer engagement, but also to creating an environment where volunteers feel valued. According to Johnny and Lindsey Garner (2011), their research found that volunteers tend to simply leave an organization
when something goes wrong rather than invest time to fix the problem. This was especially true for those who had poor communication outlets for their volunteers (Garner & Garner, 2011).

The researchers determined there are two major factors to be considered for this: considerate voice and aggressive voice (Garner & Garner, 2011, p. 816). These referred to the methods in which organizations communicate with volunteers and how they respond back (Garner & Garner, 2011). In the study “a total of 383 volunteers participated in the survey, representing a 36% response rate” (Garner & Garner, 2011, p. 818). Within that survey they recorded responses in relation to satisfaction, autonomy, and freedom of opinion (Garner & Garner, 2011). These results determined there was a stronger correlation between volunteer motivations as opposed to level of satisfaction regarding willingness to voice dissatisfaction (Garner & Garner, 2011, p. 819). Researchers found that volunteers are less likely to leave an organization that provides adequate support even if they feel dissatisfied with their role (Garner & Garner, 2011). The study highlighted the need for an organization to support their volunteers and provide an avenue for voice.

**Contribution.** One significant aspect of volunteer participation is the ability to contribute to a cause or organization effectively. In order to facilitate this need, organizations must create effective models for volunteers to contribute. A study was conducted as a voluntary survey to members of the American Youth Soccer Organization and data showed that empowerment was the best fit for cultivating volunteer retention (Kim, Chelladurai, & Trail 2007). It determined that volunteers’ personal psychological empowerment was the best method for organizations to create effective environments of retention (Kim, et al., 2007). This will be a concept discussed in great detail in the following chapters.
Value. Determining the value of volunteers can be difficult for many organizations. From a budgeting standpoint, the current consensus on the value of an hour of volunteer time is about $25 (Independent Sector, 2019). Ten years ago, the previous consensus among nonprofit professionals was $17 per hour, indicating a significant increase in value (Bowman, 2009). This number is used by organizations in assessing the replacement cost of a program as it pertains to volunteer hours, but it does not encompass the full value of that volunteer’s time. It also does not consider the type work being done by a volunteer or the revenue generated by the organization from that work.

A few current methods of estimating volunteer economic worth are detailed in Salamon, Sokolowski, and Haddock’s (2008) research of the subject (p. 222-223). Their research compares input methods, output methods, and valuation methods in determining the value of work completed (Salamon, et al., 2008, p. 222). Bowman also suggests a need for a change in how organizations assess volunteer time from an evaluation standpoint (p. 492). He suggests moving away from the common methods of replacement cost and demand price in favor of studying the volunteer’s contribution to revenue (Bowman, p. 495-496.). Like the research done by Salamon et al, Bowman found that outcome-based approaches can be useful in determining the volunteer’s impact on an organization’s revenue (Bowman, p. 496). This impact is characterized as volunteer contribution to revenue (Bowman, 2009). He concludes that value is characterized by both the economic worth of the time and the physical time spent volunteering (Bowman, 2009). Those two parts together create a better representation of volunteer value to an organization from a tangible perspective.

Transformational Leadership. There has been much research done into effective methods of leadership. The theory of transformational leadership suggests the use of charisma
and empowerment as the best means of leadership (Northouse, 2018). Northouse defines this theory as “a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (p. 175). This leadership theory suggests leaders empower and build up followers. In the context of volunteer retention, this theory allows organizations to meet the aforementioned retention criteria and improve the experience of their volunteers.

Transformational leadership utilizes components that are often in alignment with known factors of volunteer retention. For the purpose of this research, the components of empowerment and goal setting are the primary overlapping functions with the known retention components (Northouse, 2018). These components are critical to the retention of volunteers at the individual level, but also at the team level (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013). Organizations looking to implement the fundamental concepts of transformational leadership must understand its impacts to best evaluate its effect on retention (Braun, et al., 2013).

**Problem and Significance**

Many of the studies discussed above indicate the need for organizations to find new methods to empower their volunteers as a means of reducing volunteer attrition rates. The scope of this problem is significant as volunteer work accounts for 8.7 billion hours each year (Walk, Zhang, & Littlepage, 2018). Considering that an hour of volunteer time is currently worth $25, the cost of replacing those volunteers with employees would be approximately 217.5 billion dollars each year (Independent Sector, 2019). While the nonprofit sector is unlikely to see every volunteer disappear, the lack of volunteer retention is arising in organizations across the world.
The loss of volunteers is creating unexpected costs for organizations relying on their participation.

One consideration is the cost of training new volunteers every program cycle. While calculating the cost of training is more complicated and varies significantly by organization, one metric of this cost are the salaries of those conducting the training, usually a volunteer coordinator (Schreiner, Trent, Prange, & Allen, 2018, p. 243). According to the Nonprofit Times Salary Survey, the average salary of a volunteer coordinator is $36,535 (Bluewater Nonprofit Solutions, 2014, p. 7). If a significant amount of their time is spent on training new volunteers rather than developing and empowering existing volunteers, resources are going into perpetuating the problem of volunteer attrition. The research of this paper will delve into suggested methods to break this cycle and retain existing volunteers.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this paper is to take the theory of transformational leadership and define its relationship to, and impact on, volunteer retention. By taking the theory of transformational leadership and combining it with the idea of volunteer empowerment through the organization’s ability to facilitate the individual goals of a volunteer, data was gathered to assess the effectiveness of this approach as a means for organizations to improve their volunteer programs. This paper answers the following research questions:

1. **What impact does an organization’s ability to meet a volunteer’s personal and emotional goals have on their decision to stay with an organization?**

2. **How can effective transformational leadership at every level of the organization influence that ability?**
Methods. In order to determine the impact organizations made on volunteers, this study used online, anonymous surveys distributed to volunteers. Volunteers responded in accordance to their longest and shortest held volunteer positions. Respondents also indicated demographic information and were provided open-ended response questions relating to their perceived impact of leadership. Survey data was gathered and presented in accordance to the responses to best answer the research questions.

Roadmap

The following chapter will discuss in detail the existing literature surrounding volunteer retention, specifically in reference to personal and emotional growth and goal setting. It will also discuss transformational leadership and how the two concepts have intersected in existing studies. Chapter three will discuss the findings from the study conducted by the Principle Investigator (PI). Chapter four discusses the implications of these findings and how organizations can implement them into their existing programs and practices.

Chapter 2

With the value of volunteers increasing and the need for social change and impact continuing to grow, the need for new methods of retaining volunteers continues to rise as well. The purpose of this study is to look at the impact transformational leadership has on the emotional and personal growth of a volunteer and its ability to impact retention. The following discusses the existing literature on known retention factors, personal and emotional growth, and transformational leadership.
What is Emotional Growth

The consideration of the emotional component of volunteer retention is critical to success in retaining volunteers. It can relate to many different aspects of how a volunteer values their involvement. Each of these components has considerable impact on a volunteer’s experience and their willingness to continue with that organization in that capacity. There is also the need for the creation of an inclusive environment on behalf of the organization (Waters & Bortree 2012).

Emotional Satisfaction. Much of the research done on emotional satisfaction comes from the ability of organizations to meet the purpose behind a volunteer’s motive for joining. In a study conducted by researchers on the emotional connectivity of volunteers, the concept of satisfaction is addressed at length (Farny, Kibler, Hai, & Landoni, 2019). The study was conducted on four different organizations with community-based missions. They achieved this data gathering by

Participating in a wide range of different activities, from working with other volunteers in the gardens, harvesting produce, packaging and delivering vegetable crates, to regular volunteer meetings, the annual enterprise party and board meetings. While all these meetings helped us to build a trusting relationship with the volunteers to such a degree that they would be willing to share personal insight with outsiders, they also demonstrated organizational inefficiencies and the concomitant frustrations of being a volunteer (Farny, et al., 2019, p. 8).

The researchers found that “building the emotional connectivity of volunteers to a prosocial venture is decisive for achieving volunteer retention. Our analysis demonstrates that emotional
connectivity depends on the practices entrepreneurs undertake to manage conflicting organizational duality orientations and volunteers’ experiences thereof” (Farny, et al., 2019, p. 12). By connecting with volunteers on an emotional level, organizations can better create satisfaction amongst them.

**Creating an Inclusive Environment.** An often-overlooked component of developing the emotional connection of volunteers is creating an environment in which they feel welcome and is inclusive of all. According to Waters and Bortree (2012), inclusiveness can include group activities with other volunteers, a sense of worth in an organization, or the chance to interact with organization leaders (Waters & Bortree, 2012, p. 94). This study was conducted by surveying volunteers within a library system across multiple states (Waters & Bortree, 2012, p. 96). The research was done to determine differences in motivations between men and women who volunteered and did so through a variety of questions about their experience (Waters & Bortree, 2012). The researchers determined that amongst survey participants, “participation had a positive influence on feelings of trust for female volunteers whereas social group inclusion had a similar impact on satisfaction” (Waters & Bortree, 2012, p. 100). It also determined “for male volunteers, information networks, social group, and organizational inclusion had positive impact on commitment” (Waters & Bortree, 2012, p. 100). This study indicated that both men and women saw a positive influence from an inclusive environment.

Waters and Bortree (2014) also investigated inclusiveness involving a diverse racial group (Waters & Bortree, 2014, p. 211). They found that volunteers often chose to volunteer their time with members of the same race and population (Waters & Bortree, 2014, p. 218). Their research found that minority populations feel less included in volunteer opportunities (Waters & Bortree, 2014, p. 211). Given this sentiment and the research displayed, it demonstrates a
problem in providing equal volunteer demographic representation. As a result, there is the potential for volunteer populations to leave who do not feel represented, which can decrease volunteer retention rates.

A study that examined volunteer firefighter retention rates found that “a strong and positive correlation was also found between organizational commitment and group integration, which is also expected given that a more cohesive group may engender increased commitment to an organization” (Henderson & Sowa, p. 50). The study was conducted as a means of reducing volunteer attrition to save costs for local fire departments. The determination was made that the best method of doing so was investing into volunteer development by the organization (Henderson & Sowa, p. 53). By simply creating an environment that was inclusive of new members, volunteers were more willing to stay. This in turn saved the organization money as it did not have to train or recruit new volunteers.

What is Personal Growth

Personal growth, unlike emotional growth, refers to the goals and objectives that a volunteer may have in holding that position. It differs from emotional growth in that there tend to be more tangible goals organizations can work to meet (van Woerkom, & Meyers, 2019). These goals include skill development, the ability to contribute, and organizational investment into the volunteers.

Skills and abilities. One study looked at the use of an evaluation tool for measuring the personal growth of volunteers as it related to their skills and experience (Chan, 2013). This study was based on a program designed to implement home care for children (Chan, 2013). It discusses the need to reward volunteers, a significant factor in satisfaction, but that evaluating a
volunteer’s work is seen as negative or as a punishment (Chan, 2013). However, “In the case of the VHVP, the primary aims of evaluation were to encourage, facilitate, direct, and reinforce the development of the volunteers’ required skills” (Chan, 2013, p. 512). The reasoning behind the evaluation was critical in implementation and communication to the volunteers. The evaluation consisted of five components that related specifically to those evaluation goals:

1. The reception of new knowledge and skills for promoting home safety (including home hazard identification and prevention, emergency handling and first-aid, home visitation techniques, and communication skills).

2. The application of knowledge and skills during actual home visitations (by establishing relationships, developing trust, exercising independent judgment in assessing the risk of URCIs, suggesting necessary environmental or behavioral adjustments, providing assistance in the implementation of injury prevention practices, and helping caregivers deal with home safety concerns).

3. The modification of their knowledge, skills, and actions in response to particular contexts.

4. The integration of their knowledge, skills, and applications.

5. The synthesis of their knowledge and the acquisition of mastery skills (Chan, 2013, p. 513).
The evaluation put in place allowed for supervisors to assess the volunteers while providing the volunteers an opportunity to see demonstrable growth within themselves and the organization. It is a critical component to the personal growth of a volunteer.

As stated in the prior study, evaluation is critical for satisfaction in volunteers. Evaluation is also a component that many organizations implement and may use to provide feedback on the state of their volunteers. A study conducted on the organization Meals on Wheels (MOW) considered the evaluation component of an organization run by volunteers (Mye & Moracco, 2015). Their evaluation looked at four main points:

1. What are the essential program components of MOW, as identified by key stakeholders?

2. To what extent are volunteers implementing the identified essential components as intended by the mission statement, protocols, and key stakeholders?

3. What is the level of volunteer satisfaction with the program?

4. What suggestions do stakeholders have for improving the program? (Mye & Moracco, 2015, p. 19).

The study was done using interviews, surveys, and field observations as a means of gathering the data (Mye & Moracco, 2015). The researchers found that “although implementation fidelity and volunteer satisfaction were initially posed as two separate evaluation questions, this process evaluation revealed that they are linked” (Mye & Moracco, 2015, p. 22). The study also found
that the three biggest components to this correlation were leadership, social contact, and fulfillment (Mye & Moracco, 2015, p. 22). It indicated that “in regards to leadership, effective management was described numerous times as facilitating essential program components, and some respondents listed working with MOW staff/organization as one of their favorite parts of volunteering” (Mye & Moracco, 2015). This is a critical element of volunteer retention and is often overlooked. By having effective leadership in place at the staff level, this organization was able to show a positive trend in the satisfaction of their volunteers and, therefore, a better producing program.

**Contribution.** Organizations must also meet the need to contribute for a volunteer. While this may seem like an obvious goal for both parties, it is not always met and oftentimes is done in a manner that best serves the organization rather than the volunteer. One effective model was created by Kim, Chelladurai, and Trail (2007) in their study of volunteer retention around youth sports (p. 152). Their preliminary research found that volunteers in the sports industry were worth an estimated $50 billion (Kim, et al., 2007, p. 152). They also found that it is more cost effective to retain a skilled volunteer/employee than it is to replace them (Kim, et al., 2007). With those figures in mind, the study was created to determine the best model of retention for volunteers. Their study was based on three variables, person-task fit (PT), person-organization fit (PO), and managerial treatment (MT) (ibid.). The study used three models that relate these variables together (Kim, et al., 2007).

Model A is the fully mediated model, in which empowerment mediates the relationships among the three correlated independent variables (P–T fit, P–O fit, MT) and the dependent variable (intention to continue volunteering). Model B is
the partially mediated model, in which the independent variables have both a
direct effect on the dependent variable and an indirect effect through the mediator.

Model C is the direct-effects model, in which the independent variables and
empowerment all have direct effects on the dependent variable, and there are no
indirect effects. (p. 152-153)

The study was conducted as a voluntary survey to members of the American Youth Soccer
Organization and returned data from 515 volunteers and 256 volunteer managers (Kim, et al.,
2007). Data showed that Model A was the best fit for cultivating volunteer retention (Kim, et al.,
2007). It determined that volunteers’ personal psychological empowerment was the best method
for organizations to create environments of retention (Kim, et al., 2007). The study demonstrated
how an organization can model its practices to empower volunteers within their programs to
grow and achieve personal success while also still providing programming and meeting its
mission.

Volunteer training. In addition to creating an environment that allows volunteers to feel
included and empowered, it is also important to provide volunteers with the tools needed to act
upon their environment. To allow volunteers to accomplish that, employers can provide effective
training techniques for their program volunteers. Deslandes and Rogers (2008) created an
evaluation tool for organizations to assess their training methods of their volunteers (Deslandes
& Rogers, 2008, p. 360-363). They created a framework that can be implemented at different
levels depending on the experience of the volunteer (Deslandes & Rogers, 2008). The modules
included allow for the organization to implement a culture of growth from the very beginning
(Deslandes & Rogers, 2008).
A similar study conducted on effective management practices regarding volunteer solutions found supporting results. The study was conducted by Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, and Darcy (2006) and involved volunteer retention problems in rugby clubs (Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, & Darcy, 2006, p. 157). The study found that “along with planning, orientation practices were found to be a significant predictor of lower volunteer retention problems amongst volunteer coaches” (Cuskelly et al, 2008, p. 157). The study confirmed prior research where effective training and preparation made an impact on volunteer retention rates (Cuskelly et al, 2008). Effective preparation time being spent on volunteers as they start with an organization allows for a culture of growth and development within the organization. This type of culture can aid in raising volunteer retention rates.

While the research suggests a need for implementing strategies to improve current volunteer retention, there is research suggesting an alternative solution. In *The Attrition of Volunteers*, Dekimpe and Degraeve (1997) outline a study conducted on Red Cross volunteers and their attrition rates (Dekimpe & Degraeve, 2008, p. 41). The study determined there was a high rate of attrition for new volunteers, with an even higher rate for older volunteers (Dekimpe & Degraeve, 2008, p. 46). The results suggested that rather than needing a new method of employee training and development, there was a need for change in volunteer recruitment strategies (Dekimpe & Degraeve, 2008). This is important when considering some concerns expressed may be a result of poor recruiting or placement by an organization.

**What is Transformational Leadership**

The connection between emotional and personal growth and a volunteer comes from the organization. More specifically, it comes from the organization staff a volunteer interacts with during the time they are volunteering. While much research has been done on the effects of
transformational leadership on employees, there is much less done on its effects on volunteers. There are clear opportunities to draw parallels between workforce and volunteers.

**Transformational leadership on satisfaction.** The ability of an organization to meet the needs of its volunteers is critical in the ability to retain them. This often falls on the shoulders of the staff members interacting with the volunteers. A study conducted on Lions Club volunteers considered both a volunteer’s motives and the leadership of staff while evaluating volunteer outcomes. The study hypothesized that “there will be a positive association between volunteer team leaders’ transformational leadership behaviors and volunteer satisfaction” and “there will be a positive association between volunteer team leaders’ transformational leadership behaviors and volunteer contributions” (Dwyer, Bono, Snyder, Nov, and Berson, p. 186). The study surveyed active volunteers from over 1,000 nonprofit organizations. They determined that “higher levels of transformational leadership were associated with greater volunteer satisfaction, with evidence that this link was mediated by enhanced meaningfulness of the work and higher quality team relationships” (Dwyer et al., p. 197). It found that organizations were able to make an impact on the actual levels of satisfaction of a volunteer simply through leadership. It is worth noting however, that “transformational leadership was not associated with volunteer contributions in this study” (Dwyer et al., p. 197). It does discuss the challenges associated with contribution versus satisfaction and determined that satisfied volunteers were no more likely to contribute to organizational change than those who were not satisfied. While the ability to contribute does impact satisfaction levels as previously discussed, it does not appear to work the other way around.

In addition to transformational leadership, servant leadership theory is often found associated with volunteerism. While not completely the same as transformational leadership, it
does encompass most of the same characteristics and focuses on the well-being and development of the follower (Erdurmazlı, 2019). A study conducted on servant leadership and volunteer motivation investigated three concepts: servant leadership in regard to volunteer motivation, organizational commitment, and volunteer commitment (Erdurmazlı, 2019). The study was conducted on 450 individuals representing nine different organizations (Erdurmazlı, 2019). The study determined that “perceived servant leadership behaviors had positive relationships with each of the motives to volunteer” and “servant leadership behaviors displayed by leaders significantly and positively influenced the affective (β = 0.35, p < .01) and normative commitment (β = 0.20, p < .01) of volunteers toward their organizations” (Erdurmazlı, 2019). This correlation is significant in showing how leadership can affect the retention of volunteers. Not only does it influence the volunteer’s decisions to stay, but also the organization’s ability to commit to said volunteer (Erdurmazlı, 2019). By increasing leadership effectiveness, organizations can best impact their retention rates.

**Implementing transformational leadership.** The benefits of transformational leadership are well known and documented. However, the context of how employees best exhibit these characteristics is also critical to the effectiveness of this theory (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). In a 2011 study conducted on the best context for employers to aid their employees, middle managers specifically, research was conducted to determine the best environment as opposed to the best characteristics of individuals (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). The study utilized experience sampling method (ESM) and questionnaire data to provide a better context on the impact (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). The study examined the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Situation-specific characteristics predict transformational leadership behaviors. Specifically cognitively demanding situations and
situations where the leader feels in control will be positively associated with
transformational leadership behaviors.

Hypothesis 2. Managers' perceptions of the work environment will be
related to their self-reported transformational leadership behaviors.
Specifically, high cognitive demands and having a meaningful work will be
positively related to transformational leadership behaviors. (p. 346)

The study was designed to indicate what factors would lead to higher rates of manager self-reported practices of transformational leadership. They found that both hypotheses were supported (Nielsen, & Cleal, 2011). By creating environments that were catered to the abilities of the manager, and by providing a simultaneously cognitively stimulating environment, companies provided the best outcomes of transformational leadership (Nielsen, & Cleal, 2011). In addition to understanding how leadership impacts volunteers, it is critical for organizations to also understand what methods can be used to allow their employees to practice and implement this theory.

Summary

The existing literature discusses many of the characteristics of volunteer retention, including those relating to personal and emotional voice. By bringing in the existing knowledge of those aspects of volunteer retention and combining it with the knowledge of leadership, a picture begins to be drawn. While there is little literature surrounding the impacts of transformational leadership on volunteer retention, what does exist poses a clear correlation between the two. The following research presents the scope of impact transformational
leadership has on the nonprofit landscape of Richmond, VA and attempts to define any trends or patterns in responses between emotional and personal growth and transformational leadership.

Chapter 3

The previous chapters discussed existing literature surrounding volunteer retention and transformational leadership. This chapter will outline the research conducted in this study to answer how transformational leadership impacts volunteer retention in Richmond, VA. The responses collected provide a glimpse into what impact may be had.

Collection

Data collection was completed through an anonymous online survey using the software Qualtrics. The survey (Appendix A) was distributed through contacts of the Principle Investigator and participating organizations. The survey was distributed to approximately 200 people and yielded 40 responses (n=40) for a response rate of 20%. Respondents were kept anonymous and all data was deidentified.

The survey was distributed via email and link sharing through word of mouth or messaging to volunteer contacts at Richmond Community Rowing, Sportable, VCU, and the University of Richmond. The majority of respondents were younger individuals within the sampled population. The survey was conducted over the course of two weeks with any unfinished surveys collected at the end with answered questions added into the results.

Survey. The survey was provided online through a link distributed to volunteers and associates. The survey was hosted through the software Qualtrics and was available by computer and mobile device. The survey was 23 questions long featuring multiple choice, agree/disagree
statements, and ranking. There were also two questions where qualitative data was collected as respondents could write out answers to the questions.

**Types of questions.** The survey featured a multitude of different style questions that centered around the known traits of volunteer retention and transformational leadership. Questions include demographic information, volunteer experience, and asked for the respondent to relate to different attributes of volunteer retention. The ranking section asked respondents to think about seven components of volunteer retention: personal growth, organization investing in their goals, satisfaction, voice, defined role, appreciation, and comfort in voicing concerns. It then asked respondents to rank these from one to seven in order of perceived significance. The survey also asked respondents to consider their longest and shortest volunteer positions and consider if they experienced different characteristics of transformational leadership. The survey concluded with two short answer questions. The first question defined transformational leadership and asked if respondents had experienced such leadership themselves. The second question asked if leadership had influenced their decision to stay with an organization.

**Collection method.** Data was collected through the online survey over the course of two weeks. During that time respondents could start and save their survey. If the survey was not finished within five days of starting, completed answers were recorded. Data was analyzed through a spreadsheet with answers measured for the mean and mode responses for each question. The qualitative data provided was analyzed for common patterns or trends and provided insight into potential answers from the survey such as the ranking of traits. No identifying information was provided in the surveys.

**Limitations.** The survey was only available for a short period of time given the nature of the research. There was also a limited sample of volunteers available and most respondents were
men ages 18-25 years with less volunteer experience than older, more experienced volunteers may possess. Future research would have a greater spread of distribution with a better community representation with the findings. Distribution was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as organizations were unable to distribute to volunteers given the other pertinent information needing to go out and programming being canceled. Due to the timing of this research, many organizations had furloughed employees and were not communicating with volunteers. Respondents were also in the midst of a crisis and may not have been as likely to respond as a result.

Findings

**Respondent Information.** Responses were deidentified and did not include any direct identifying information. The survey did collect information on age, gender, and volunteer location. Of the responses, 92% fell in the age range of 18-25 and the remaining 8% were 26-39. This may limit the scope of impact to the question and, therefore, will remain focused to a younger population for the duration of the analysis. Of the respondents, 40% identified as female and 60% identified as male. As a result, the majority of the respondents were 18-25-year-old men. This is due to the sampled population, as many of the volunteers at the surveyed organizations were in that age range. Of the responses, 78% identified they only volunteered in Richmond, VA.

Table 3.1
Amount of Volunteering. Respondents were asked about the amount of time they spent volunteering. This included questions relating to the number of positions they held in the last year, how many hours on average they volunteer each year, and if they volunteered in the last year. In regard to their volunteering, 95% of respondents indicated they had volunteered within the past year. The ranges in number of positions varied with 63% averaging between 2-4, 18% holding just one position per year, and 15% holding over 5 positions each year.
The amount of volunteering done each year revealed a population invested in doing volunteer work. The average number of hours volunteered by respondents was 28 per year. Within the sample, 40% indicated they volunteered more than 50 hours per year. The data presented a near perfect balance with 38% indicating they volunteered between 1-20 hours per year, and the remaining 22% indicating they volunteered between 21-50 hours each year. The following graph indicates the number of positions held and amount of volunteering done by the respondents.

Table 3.2

Volunteering Time Per Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Hours Per Year</th>
<th>Percent Responded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Longest Held Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Responded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response to Questions

To best gauge the impact transformational leadership has on retention, the survey asked respondents to answer questions relating to their experiences and to rank the value of seven identified components of volunteer retention by level of personal importance. The following tables demonstrate the responses of the sample and likelihood of each listed trait being the most important trait or the least important trait.

Table 3.3

**Most Important Characteristic**

![Bar chart showing the percent responded for the most important characteristic.]

**Least Important Characteristic**

![Bar chart showing the percent responded for the least important characteristic.]

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As can be seen in Table 3.3, personal/emotional growth is the most common trait of importance while voice in the organization is the least valued trait. While satisfaction in volunteering and feeling appreciated by the organization were both highly valued, respondents felt that organizations developing in their growth was the most important factor. Having a voice in the organization was by far the least valued trait by a significant margin. There may be a number of reasons behind this including the relatively young age of the respondents or the natural assumptions that volunteers do not hold power within an organization.

Respondents also indicated the length of time they were at their longest and shortest volunteer position. The survey asked respondents to answer a series of questions based on their longest position, and subsequently, their shortest position. The data gathered was analyzed to determine any possible patterns between experiences of shorter positions against those of longer held positions.

The survey prompted respondents to think of their longest and shortest volunteer positions and answer a series of questions relating to them. The questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale where respondents indicated the level of which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Such questions included statements such as “The staff I interacted with cares about my personal and emotional growth” or “The staff I interacted with encourage volunteers to suggest ideas or changes.” The survey touches on a number of different components that are associated with transformational leadership to assess their impact on each volunteer and their experience. The hypothesis was the volunteers who experienced the traits associated with transformational leadership were more likely to stay at a position, while those who did not experience it were more likely to leave.
The data provided a mixed return on this. While nearly every respondent answered “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” to questions asked regarding volunteer voice and the ability to express concerns when thinking of their longest held position, there was also a similar response rate to the same questions while considering the shortest held position. The majority of respondents claimed to have experienced those components on both long and short-term positions.

The data began to provide a pattern in responses regarding personal and emotional growth. In the statement “The staff I interacted with cares about my personal and emotional growth” there was a majority agreement to the statement when considering the longest-held position with 80% of respondents agreeing to the statement and 10% no response. However, that number drastically changes when considering the shortest-held position. Responses on that question found that 61% of respondents disagreed with only 17% agreeing and 22% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Table 3.4
All other answers saw little fluctuation in responses between longest-held or shortest-held positions. While this may have to do with the young ages of respondents and lack of volunteer experience (only 55% of respondents held a volunteer position longer than one year), the clear lack of perceived emotional growth from the shortest period of volunteering is certainly worth discussing. This is of significance especially when considering personal and emotional growth was the top valued trait amongst respondents.

While the emotional and personal growth component are not prevalent this is not necessarily the cause of the shorter volunteer positions, however, it certainly suggests a correlation or trend amongst the two concepts. It is also important when considering that transformational leadership is centered on the growth and empowerment of followers. It is the most important factor in implementing effective transformational leadership as an organization.

Open-ended responses. The final portion of the survey consisted of two short answer questions. The initial question simply asked “Did the leadership you experienced influence you
to stay with an organization? If so, please explain”. The second question started as “Transformational leadership is best defined as a process where leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation.” It then asked, “In your time volunteering, have you experienced this from your organization?” The goal of these questions was to define what the prior questions were alluding to and identify any patterns in thought from the respondents. This section had 12 responses from the survey.

In analyzing these responses, a common theme emerged: leadership was impactful on their decision to stay with an organization. Many of the responses included some variation of how leadership was important in the decision to volunteer. These included “The organization I was a part of emphasized leading and teaching leadership, so its skilled leaders influenced me to stay,” and “Yes, I think leadership is really important in deciding, as a volunteer, if I want to continue working with that organization. When they show an interest in my help, it makes me want to help more.” It also included responses such as “The organization emphasized morality and motivation” and “Yes the leadership was inspiring and were one of my motivations for staying with the organization.” While the responses from the statements before only demonstrated that personal growth was a pattern of need, these responses clearly indicate that leadership was a critical element of volunteering. Many of the responses touched on the ideas of growth, inspiration, morality, or teaching. All of these traits are considered part of transformational leadership and are critical components of that leadership making an impact on its volunteers. The following conceptual map helps display the anticipated trend displayed by the data.
Reflected in the table above, as organizations invest into volunteers those volunteers experience components of growth. As those components are reached, the volunteer stays at the organization for a longer period of time. This relationship works both ways as a volunteer who stays at an organization for a long period of time may also achieve the different components of transformational leadership. While those three components are the most important to the respondents from this survey, there are many other components that may be achieved during a volunteer’s time with an organization.

**Summary**

The data presented a potential pattern amongst responses indicating that emotional and personal growth was the most important component to respondents. It was also the one aspect
that was found the least in positions that were held for the shortest period of time. This pattern allows for discussion to be had around the significance of this trait. The following chapter will discuss the implications of the presented data and how it can be used by organizations to ensure they best retain volunteers.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Volunteerism is found in organizations across the world and often serves as a primary resource for these organizations to accomplish their missions. This creates a significant need for volunteers to stay and be available to organizations. Considering the estimated cost of one volunteer hour is $25 of employee time, that creates a sizeable financial concern if volunteers were no longer available (Independent Sector, 2019). In addition to the cost of employee time, training new volunteers can prove to be a costly endeavor as well (Kim, et al., 2007). New volunteers may involve staff training, onboarding, and the initial learning period. By retaining volunteers, organizations can avoid these scenarios and better serve their communities.

There are a few known factors associated with volunteer retention ranging from their voice within the organization to how satisfied they are within the organization (J. Gardner & L. Gardner, 2011). Perspectives of the volunteer can be influenced by their experience at the position, but also with the staff leadership they came in contact with. This study aimed to answer the level of impact transformational leadership has on volunteer retention. A survey was distributed online to volunteers in Richmond, VA that assessed their experiences in relation to the different components of volunteer retention and transformational leadership. Data from the survey showed a non-diverse respondent ratio with most of the participants falling in the age
range of 18-25 years. This was reflected in the low number of respondents who held a volunteer position longer than five years. The majority of the data found showed little difference between the short-term and long-term positions, with the same observation made for the associated level of emotional and personal growth. Respondents indicated they experienced that aspect of transformational leadership significantly less when answering the short-term response as opposed to the long-term response. It was also determined to be the most important component of retention by respondents. This trend in responses has implications for organizations looking to improve retention rates and should be researched further.

**Implications for Practice**

**What the data trends indicate.** The data provided can give organizational leaders insight into methods that may alleviate volunteer turnover rates. The data provided a trend in responses as it relates to transformational leadership. The theory of transformational leadership is, in its simplest form, based on the empowerment of followers (Northouse, 2018). The responses from the survey indicated they experienced emotional and personal growth and empowerment the least when thinking of the shortest volunteer position they held. The data indicated that only 17% of respondents agreed they experienced this component from staff while at their shortest-held position (Table 3.4). Respondents were also asked to rank seven components of volunteer retention in order of importance. Emotional and personal growth was decisively the most important component to respondents (Table 3.3).

Survey respondents were also provided the opportunity to answer open-ended questions relating to leadership and its impact on retention. Responses provided indicated a substantial importance in the leadership of staff in the respondents’ decision to not only stay at an organization, but for some to volunteer at all. This indicates an importance for effective
leadership practices to be adhered to at every level of the organization, not just the administration. Volunteers desire transformational leadership during their experiences. By implementing this theory at every level of an organization, staff can create an environment that caters to the needs of volunteers while simultaneously accomplishing its mission at the organizational level.

**Implementation for organizations.** Given the trend in the data responses, organizations desiring to implement change from the inside should look to add transformational leadership theory into their training for staff. It is important to note that volunteers may not interact with an Executive Director or other members of the administration. As such, this training and implementation must be done at every level where volunteers interact in order to maximize effectiveness. Many organizations likely have annual staff training sessions in place already and by adding a module into that training session, organizations can begin implementing the components of leadership theory in every level of their organization. Some organizations may prefer to add an online module that can be completed at the discretion of the employees. This may be an effective method for larger organizations who do not have the time or manpower to train every employee in person. It would also be an effective cost-saving practice as it may not pull employees away from other organization time and can be added to career development to be completed outside of normal work hours (if such a policy is in place).

Organizations should also attempt to gather information from volunteers relating to the previously discussed and researched retention components and values (Chan, 2013). As this study indicated, personal and emotional growth were the most important factors in retention for respondents. It was also the least seen component of transformational leadership found in short-term positions. By creating a quick questionnaire for incoming volunteers, staff who work with
those volunteers can have a better understanding of how to help them achieve their goals during their time as volunteers (Chan, 2013). While this may be best served for organizations who have a dedicated volunteer coordinator or similar position, it can still be done to some extent by program and administrative staff members.

**Strategic planning use.** In addition to implementing this in practice with staff, understanding the impact of transformational leadership can be used at the planning level. If the data indicates that volunteers can be positively impacted by leadership at every level of an organization, it will behoove organizations to invest in the long-term training and development of its staff. It would also allow for effective evaluation programs to be created and implemented that would track the level of training and tangible retention rate changes the organization may experience. This evaluation component would not be a short-term implementation, so planning for it accordingly would be necessary for an organization wanting to track its impact.

Implementation of this evaluation would also rely on receiving information from volunteers and developing a strong relationship with them. Developing a pre and post program evaluation for volunteers can allow organizations to integrate data from their volunteers into their program planning. Organizations willing to create a program specifically catered to volunteer development could also see an increased effectiveness in the work of their volunteers from this implementation. If the staff and funds exist to host such a program, the organization could create an evaluation or training that exists to allow volunteers to grow and accomplish goals within the organization (Mye & Moracco, 2015). In order to host this, organizations may need to develop a funding source to support and implement the change in program. Data has indicated investing in volunteers has a positive impact on retention rates thus lowering the cost of training new volunteers (Kim, et al., 2007). A sample evaluation matrix and training module
outlined were provided by Richmond Community Rowing and are included as Appendix C and D, respectively.

Research supports the implementation of these concepts into volunteer training by organizations. A previously discussed study conducted on effective management practices regarding volunteer solutions found results that would support this implementation. The study conducted by Cuskelley, Taylor, Hoye, and Darcy (2006) involved volunteer retention problems in rugby clubs (p. 157). The study found that volunteer orientations were a strong indicator of future retention (Cuskelley, et al., 2006, p. 157). The study confirmed prior research where effective training and preparation made an impact on volunteer retention rates (Cuskelley, et al., 2006). Research also indicates that volunteers, and to an extend employees, should be provided some level of control over their situation (Lee, Won, & Bang, 2014). By implementing a training for volunteers, in addition to that of staff, organizations can have the most accurate information on how best to serve their volunteers. This will allow those volunteers to better serve the organization. By planning for the long-term, the savings from retaining volunteers have the potential to act as the funds for the new volunteer investment program (Appendix B).

**Cost of implementation.** Calculating the cost of training can be complicated and varies significantly by organization. One consideration of this cost are the salaries of those conducting the training, usually a volunteer coordinator (Schreiner, Trent, Prange, and Allen, 2018, p. 243). As previously stated, the average salary of a volunteer coordinator is $36,535 (Bluewater Nonprofit Solutions, 2014, p. 7). While this may encompass the day to day role of that position, many organizations do not have the capacity to bring on such a hire for this role. An alternative method that has been demonstrated to be effective is to hire from an outside source to run the
training (Hallman and Zehr, 2019, p. 21). This can reduce the stress of the staff while also providing the volunteers with a sense of growth and development (Hallman & Zehr, 2019).

**Considerations.** While this data does begin to provide a glimpse into potential program improvements for organizations, the sample population should be considered prior to any significant changes. Given the sample population was mostly young people, organizations with an older volunteer base may find these outcomes do not apply. Organizations can still take data from this study, with the existing literature, and conclude volunteer investment can make an impact on their retention rates.

**Implications for Stakeholders**

The primary stakeholders of this study are the volunteers, the organizations, and the community impacted by the organization. The secondary stakeholders include donors to the organization and close friends and family of volunteers who interact with them often. This study illuminates the impact leadership makes on the volunteer themselves, but one can also deduct that by empowering the volunteer they also will see a tertiary impact on those close with that volunteer. While not necessarily the goal of the volunteer growth from an organizational standpoint, by allowing that volunteer to grow and change they are likely to influence those around them in positive ways. Donors should also be invested in this volunteer development as it allows their donations to be more impactful. With an organization increasing its impact through returning volunteers, working in concert with their goals and the organization goals, donor funds are more impactful on the constituents receiving the service. Volunteers may also see an uptick in productivity as a result of this investment (Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). By investing in and empowering volunteers, they are likely to stay and invest into the program they work with. By
improving that output by a volunteer, organizations may see improvements within their programs as a result of the work done by the volunteer.

Organizations could also use this increase in effectiveness as a tool to increase donations. As was mentioned in chapter one, organizations can see a viable financial improvement through the retention of volunteers (Kim et al., 2007). This improvement in finances may help convince major donors to expand on their giving. The retention of volunteers may also prove to be a source of donations as volunteers often serve as donors to their organization (Handy and Katz, 2008). By bringing in engaged volunteers, organizations may see an increase in donations from within their base support group.

**Implications for Education**

While the nature of this study was designed to examine the practical effect that transformational leadership has on volunteers in the nonprofit landscape, it also creates an opportunity for impact in education. This study was based on the theory of transformational leadership and its effect on volunteer retention. Through this study and literature, a case is made for leadership being a significant component in volunteer retention and impact at every level of an organization. This can be used at the collegiate level in nonprofit programs.

By introducing leadership as a course into these programs, the tools to solve this problem may be introduced to individuals going into the nonprofit sector. It is important to note that while this study was centered on the theory of transformational leadership, there are many other leadership theories that exist and can be used effectively throughout an organization. These theories do not directly relate with executive or administrative positions, rather they are tools that can be used at any level of an organization. This study showed that volunteers were impacted by
staff they worked with during their volunteer experience. Those individuals were not always administration or people with the titles often considered as “leaders”. By implementing leadership components and understanding the leader-follower relationship, they were able to maximize the impact they had on their volunteers. Similarly, many students in programs are not yet in executive positions. In creating an option to develop leadership components to students within the program, these universities may better prepare students for work in the sector.

**Implications for Research**

This study was completed as a capstone project over the course of a semester. As a result, the sample size was small and not as diverse as intended. Despite this, it does add to the existing literature on volunteer retention and brings to light a common trait between volunteer retention and the theory of transformational leadership: the personal and emotional growth of volunteers. It also highlights a common desire for self-growth amongst younger volunteers. While there are many studies surrounding the components of volunteer retention, there are very few that study the relationship between those and leadership. Even fewer examine the relationship between such components and transformational leadership explicitly. While this sample does not indicate a definitive causation between retention rates and leadership, it does present a pattern that should attempt to be replicated in future studies.

This research has seen replication in other studies. According to a study that investigated motivation of volunteers within a sport-based organization, it found they are often driven by their passion for the sport, but they have also demonstrated their motives can be intrinsic in nature and based on their values or motivations as individuals (Welty Peachey, Lyras, Cohen, Bruening, and Cunningham, 2014, p. 1054). Given the nature of the sample volunteer group coming from sport-based organizations, this replication is important when identifying the accuracy of results. This
also was found to be true in the nonprofit sector on a larger scale with an individual’s personal values being the biggest indicator of volunteerism (Kim, et al., 2007, p. 165-166). The values of personal and emotional growth are deemed the most critical to this survey and are replicated in numerous others.

This research also supported the research done regarding leadership behaviors and servant actions by Erdurmazlı (2019). In that study, discussed in chapter two, respondents who experienced factors of transformational and servant leadership exhibited higher rates of satisfaction with their roles (Erdurmazlı, 2019). They also indicated higher rates of retention (Erdurmazlı, 2019). By replicating the results found in other studies, there is a pattern of value displayed by investing in volunteers.

While this study investigated factors related to transformational leadership and volunteer retention, there are other practical motivators for volunteers to participate. These factors differ depending on the age of the volunteer. The respondents to this study were all under 30 years old, and thus are more likely to be motivated by future career choices and social networking needs (Yamashita, Keene, Lu, & Carr, 2019). These factors could be considered as personal goals of the volunteer and should also be considered when creating a training and evaluation program.

**Future Research**

Given the nature of existing literature and the pattern presented in this study, future research should be directed toward the relationship between leadership and volunteer retention at a broader scale. This study was a small sample that was comprised of primarily men ages 18-25 years living in Richmond, VA. In addition to needing replication at a larger scale, it also needs replication at a diverse scale to be applicable to the general volunteer landscape. Research should
also be done looking specifically at the personal and emotional growth of volunteers and how transformational leadership impacts those aspects. This study was more broadly directed at transformational leadership and its impact on all components of volunteer retention. However, with the newly found data, further research in those specific areas could prove impactful for organizational leaders.

**Implications for the Nonprofit Sector**

The value of volunteers to the nonprofit sector, both financially and altruistically, cannot be overstated. There is a pressing need for organizations to maximize their outputs in order to reach their fundamental goals and mission. For many organizations, volunteer work is a significant output. In addition to the retention challenges faced by organizations, there are also challenges in keeping reliable volunteers (Vantilborgh, & Van Puyvelde, 2018). While this study does not look directly at the nature of reliability, there are certainly commonalities between the two concepts. By increasing the abilities and dedication of volunteers, one could surmise organizations may also increase the outputs of their volunteers. This allows for their services to better impact the community.

The financial implications of retaining volunteers is also substantial. By retaining a volunteer, an organization could save on many costs associated with bringing on a new volunteer, such as recruitment, orientation, training, and any potential liabilities that may come from inexperienced volunteers (Kim, et al., 2007). This could prove to be especially critical when discussing the organizations who work with at-risk populations and need specific training and evaluation. Many of those steps and costs could be avoided by retaining volunteers for extended periods of time. It could also allow an organization to direct its message to interested supporters as a need for donations rather than manpower.
There are many different avenues of impact retaining volunteers can have on an organization. By implementing changes at the organizational level, there is the potential for a sweeping change to occur within the sector that matches the investment into a volunteer with the value they truly represent.

Conclusion

The nature of volunteer retention has historically relied on finding a good fit for a volunteer. There tends to be little development or investment into volunteers as organizations work to prioritize a finite amount of funding to best achieve their goals. The nature of this research was to look into the impact volunteer investment can make on retention and how the theory of transformational leadership can help organizations best achieve those results. Research was conducted through an online survey of volunteers in Richmond, VA. The results indicated a pattern in the importance of personal and emotional growth of a volunteer during their time with an organization. It is also a critical aspect of the theory of transformational leadership allowing leaders to empower their followers. Open-ended response data also indicated the importance of leadership as a deciding factor to stay at an organization as a volunteer.

The trends in the collected data, in addition to the existing research and literature, provide insight into how leadership at every level of an organization can aid in the retention of volunteers. By implementing effective leadership practices, organizations can best serve their volunteers and lower the impact of finding and training new volunteers. This allows organizations to be more impactful in their missions and dedicate resources to implement change. While this study adds to the conversation and does not indicate causation, further research should be directed into this field to determine best practices for organizations. By
investing in volunteers and empowering them, organizations can improve the lives of its volunteers, and in turn, its constituents.
References


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[https://doi-org.newman.richmond.edu/10.1002/nml.21344](https://doi-org.newman.richmond.edu/10.1002/nml.21344)


doi:10.1177/0899764013501579


doi:10.1177/0733464817701202
Appendix A: Survey

The Power of Investigating Volunteers: A Look into the Volunteer Landscape of Richmond, VA

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 The Power of Investing in Volunteers: A Look into the Volunteer Landscape of Richmond, VA
URIRB200211

Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study on volunteer retention methods. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. If you have questions, please feel free to contact the researchers (listed below) for more information.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to learn more about the impact of transformational leadership on volunteer retention to create a better environment for volunteers to participate in. The study should take approximately [state time] to complete. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey in which you will answer the questions as they pertain to your experience. Topics include your time volunteering, the nature of your experience, and your perception of employee leadership.

Contact Information
This research is being conducted by Tim Nesselrodt. If you have any questions about the project, Tim can be contacted at tnesselr@richmond.edu.

Possible Risks
The risks associated with this study are minimal. That is, the risks for completing this study are no more than the risks experienced in daily life. If you do experience any discomfort during the study, remember you can stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer.
particular questions that are asked in the study.

Possible Benefits There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this project, but you may get some satisfaction from contributing to this investigation.

Confidentiality of Records Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that your individual results will remain confidential. However, as with any research process, the risk of a breach of confidentiality is always possible. Nevertheless, to the best of the investigators’ abilities, your answers in this study will remain anonymous and confidential. Once the study is completed, we will completely “deidentify” our data. All identifiers will be removed from the identifiable private information and only then will the information be used for future research studies.

Use of Information and Data Collected We will not tell anyone the answers you give us. Your responses will not be associated with you by name and the data you provide will be kept secure. What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

Protections and Rights If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the University of Richmond’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research at (804) 484-1565 or irb@richmond.edu for information or assistance.

Statement of Consent The study has been described to me and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty. I understand that my responses will be treated confidentially and used only as described in this consent form. I understand that if I have any questions, I can pose them to the researcher. I have read and understand the above information and I consent to participate in this study by clicking “Continue.” Additionally, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

- Yes, I agree; I wish to begin the study [Continue] (1)
- No, I do not agree; I do not wish to participate (2)
Q2 Which age group best describes you?

- □ 18-25 (1)
- □ 26-39 (2)
- □ 40-59 (3)
- □ 60+ (4)

Q3 Which gender do you best identify with?

- □ Male (1)
- □ Female (2)
- □ Other (5)

Q4 Do you volunteer in RVA?

- □ Yes (1)
- □ No (2)

Q10 On average, how many volunteer positions do you average in a year?

- □ 1 (1)
- □ 2-4 (2)
- □ 5+ (3)
Q5 Have you volunteered in the last year?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q6 On average, how many hours do you volunteer per year?

- 1-20 (1)
- 21-50 (2)
- 50+ (3)

Q7 How long were you at your longest volunteer position?

- 5+ years (1)
- 3-5 years (2)
- 1-3 years (3)
- less than 1 year (4)
Q8 How long were you at your shortest volunteer position?

- 2+ years (1)
- 1-2 years (2)
- 6 months - 1 year (3)
- less than 6 months (4)

Q9 How long were you at your latest (or current) volunteer position?

- 5+ years (1)
- 3-5 years (2)
- 1-3 years (3)
- less than 1 year (4)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q11 Rank the following in order of importance to you with 1 being the most important and 7 being the least:

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<tr>
<td>My personal growth from the organization (1)</td>
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<td>Having an organization willing to invest in my goals (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>My satisfaction in volunteering (3)</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable speaking my concerns to the organization and its staff (4)</td>
<td>Having my role clearly defined (5)</td>
<td>Feeling appreciated by my organization (6)</td>
<td>Having a voice in the organization (7)</td>
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End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3
Q12 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the longest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with inspire volunteers to improve and grow

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q13 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the longest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with listen and care about volunteers’ problems and concerns

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q14 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the longest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with encourage volunteers to suggest ideas or changes

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q15 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the longest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with works to help me achieve my goals

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q16 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the longest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with cares about my personal and emotional growth

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Q17 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the shortest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with inspire volunteers to improve and grow

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q18 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the shortest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with listen and care about volunteers’ problems and concerns

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q19 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the shortest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with encourage volunteers to suggest ideas or changes

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)
Q20 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the shortest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with works to help me achieve my goals

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q21 Thinking of the volunteer position you held for the shortest period of time, select the response most appropriate to each statement: The staff I interacted with cares about my personal and emotional growth

- Strongly agree (1)
- Somewhat agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Q22 Did the leadership you experienced influence you to stay with an organization? If so, please explain:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Q23 Transformational leadership is best defined as a process where leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. In your time volunteering, have you experienced this from your organization?

End of Block: Block 5
Appendix B: Retention Benefits if Employees

The Cost Breakdown of Volunteer Work

Assumptions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Time Value</th>
<th>$25 per hour (Loaded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Value Cost Per Volunteer (32 hours per week)</td>
<td>41,600 (Loaded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Mid Complexity Jobs</td>
<td>20% Cost of Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Turnover Amount:</td>
<td>10 volunteers per program cycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefit of reduction in turnover:

\[
\begin{align*}
&41,600 \times 0.20 = 8,320 \\
&10 \text{ Volunteers} \times 8,320 = 83,200 \\
&\text{Total Savings: } \mathbf{83,200}
\end{align*}
\]
Appendix C: Volunteer Training Module

Volunteer Development Training Module Addition

Schedule of Training

Phase I: Placement (20 Minutes/ Four Segments)

A. Am I in the Right Program for Me?
   a. How to apply your strengths to the team

B. What Alternatives Can I Pursue?
   a. Other program options

Phase II: Individual Growth and Development (20 Minutes/ Two Segments)

A. What Can I Gain Out of This Experience?

B. Where Do I Want to Be When the Program Ends?

Phase III: Achieving Personal Goals (10 Minutes)

A. What Are the Goals I can Achieve with the Program Director and Staff?

Phase IV: How to Voice Your Opinion (10 Minutes/ Two Segments)

A. Who Can I Talk to?

B. When and Where You Can
# Appendices

## Appendix D: Evaluation

**Volunteer Evaluation Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does this organization provide you the opportunity to voice concerns or ideas?</td>
<td>To determine volunteer’s opinions on their ability to express themselves</td>
<td>Questionnaire and comment cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel your goals are accomplished through volunteering with this organization?</td>
<td>To determine the organization’s impact of facilitating volunteer growth</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the training teaching you the skills and knowledge needed to succeed?</td>
<td>To determine the effectiveness of volunteer training programs</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel the environment is inclusive to your needs and goals?</td>
<td>To identify the level of perceived inclusion by volunteers within the organization</td>
<td>Questionnaire and comment cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you likely to return as a volunteer at the next cycle?</td>
<td>To evaluate expected retention rates during solution implementation</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any additional concerns you would like to address?</td>
<td>To evaluate any additional aspects of volunteer programs needing to be considered</td>
<td>Comment cards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>