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# Senior Volunteerism: Dissatisfaction and Turnover Among Older Volunteers

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Senior Volunteerism:  
Dissatisfaction and Turnover  
Among Older Volunteers

This Thesis written by

Joan Pokroy

This Thesis written under the guidelines of the Faculty  
Advisory committee, and approved by all its members, has  
been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
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A THESIS SUBMITTED

by

Joan Pokroy

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of

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July 23rd, 1996

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined levels of satisfaction with dimensions of the volunteer job to determine whether there was a meaningful association between dissatisfaction with the volunteer job and the decision to discontinue volunteering among senior volunteers.

Very little association was found to exist. Senior volunteers who stopped volunteering were only somewhat less satisfied with their volunteer jobs than those who continued to volunteer. Rather, the findings suggest that other reasons, namely poor health, the need for paid employment, and other personal reasons accounted for turnover among older volunteers.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Background

Older volunteers are an important human resource for nonprofit organizations because they provide valuable services without pay. Older people have abundant talents, experience, and discretionary time and many are willing to commit to improving their communities. A number of nonprofit organizations depend heavily on older volunteers and employ staff to recruit, train, and supervise them. However, large numbers of older volunteers discontinue their services within one year. Turnover is costly to organizations and disruptive to clientele.

Thirty years ago the idea of involving older people as volunteers was considered innovative. In 1974 only one in ten older people volunteered (Harris & Associates, 1975) compared to almost four in ten today (Marriott Senior Living Services, 1991). The increase in involvement has been due to several factors: (a) The senior population is twice what it was in 1960 and is projected to reach approximately 65.6 million by the year 2030; (b) government funds are unable to meet the growing needs of the general population in health-care, education, the arts, and public safety; (c) the stereotype of the older person has changed, and older volunteers have proved to be active, talented, reliable, and willing to make a contribution to society; (d) traditional volunteers, middle-aged women, are no longer available to

volunteer since they have moved into the paid labor market; and (e) people are living longer and many are retiring at an earlier age with a third of their lives ahead of them.

Research suggests that older people benefit from volunteering. It provides them with increased self-confidence, new opportunities for social relationships and chances to be actively involved in the community. Some older people view it as a way of filling empty hours and easing their loneliness, while for others it is an addition to their salaried work or homemaking (Chambre, 1987).

Thousands of programs in communities throughout the United States depend on senior volunteers. Some receive public support, others are private initiatives or public-private partnerships. Government recognizes the potential of older people and continues to support senior volunteer programs like the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). Social policy to promote senior volunteerism has reduced barriers to volunteering by offering benefits of free lunches, transportation costs, and limited medical and liability coverage to older volunteers.

Public-private partnerships such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) have initiated and cosponsored volunteer programs to encourage senior volunteerism. Other popular programs include the Widowed Person's Service, Volunteers in Tax Assistance (VITA), and a Volunteer Talent Bank that matches volunteers and jobs. The

Minneapolis-based National Retiree Volunteer Center (NRVC), started in 1986, is a private-sector initiative that provides technical support to corporations that wish to establish volunteer programs for retired employees.

In 1993, President Clinton, together with Congress, recognized the value of older volunteers and passed the National and Community Service Trust Act which created the AmeriCorps initiative and the Corporation for National and Community Service. As a result, ACTION (the federal agency for volunteerism) was dissolved, and publicly funded senior volunteer agencies are currently overseen by the Corporation. National service for older Americans is referred to as "senior service."

Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton (1987) concluded in National Service: What Would It Mean?, their 1987 study of options for national service (cited in Public/Private Ventures, 1994, p.3) that "persons at or beyond retirement may have more to give and more reason to benefit from national service than any other group." In 1993 Senator David Pryor, chair of the Special Committee on Aging, introduced the Mentor Corps Act to encourage older Americans to use their experiences to assist youth and children. A study by Public/Private Ventures, funded by The Commonwealth Fund of New York, sought to assess the reality of national service involving older people. The study concluded that, despite major challenges, national service for older Americans had the potential to profoundly change society.

The research literature on the management of senior volunteer programs includes topics pertaining to volunteers' demographic profiles, volunteer roles, motivations of older volunteers, minority elders, comparisons between volunteers and nonvolunteers, retention, and benefits to older volunteers. A selection of manuals addresses management issues of recruitment and recognition that are, for the most part, based on empirical observations. There is evidence that senior volunteerism does make a difference in society. However, little comprehensive data exists that describe why older people do not continue to serve as volunteers. Fischer and Schaffer (1993) noted that "it is somewhat difficult to assess when and whether there are attrition problems, because most volunteer organizations do not have adequate data" (p 96).

There is a great deal to learn about senior volunteerism. The challenge for administrators is to develop and manage successful volunteer programs, to build them by selective recruitment from among the millions of older people who are willing and able to volunteer, and to nurture older volunteers by maximizing their satisfaction with their jobs.

#### Statement of the Problem

In the United States the need for services provided by public agencies and nonprofit organizations continues to grow. Associations rely heavily on the support of volunteers, especially senior volunteers who they recognize



as a valuable asset. Although organizations target seniors as volunteers, they may fail to treat them appropriately. Administrators often make incorrect assumptions about older volunteers that may result in volunteer dissatisfaction and termination of services. Generally, senior volunteers do not have the same incentives as younger volunteers and are more prone to terminating their jobs if they are dissatisfied (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). The loss of trained volunteers is a drain on organizations.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Washoe County expends federal dollars to recruit and place people, 55 years and older, as volunteers. Local nonprofit and public agencies use a portion of scarce resources to orient, train, and supervise senior volunteers. It is costly to organizations and disruptive to clients when older volunteers terminate their volunteer services.

This study addresses the problem of turnover among senior volunteers.

#### Normative Definitions of Relevant Variables

Older volunteers: People 55 years and older who volunteer through the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Washoe County.

Active volunteers: Members of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Washoe County (RSVP) who volunteered for a minimum of three hours a month, and who became members between 1990 and 1994.

Inactive volunteers: People who became members of RSVP

between 1990 and 1994, volunteered for a minimum of three months but who stopped volunteering.

Dissatisfaction with volunteer job: Discontentment with some aspects of the volunteer job.

Turnover: the discontinuation of volunteer service.

#### Research Questions

- 1) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the use made of skills and knowledge the volunteer brings to the job, and turnover?
- 2) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the type of work performed by the volunteer, and turnover?
- 3) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the challenge the job presents the volunteer, and turnover?
- 4) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the amount of time spent volunteering, and turnover?
- 5) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the location of the organization where the volunteer works, and turnover?
- 6) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the reimbursement received by the volunteer for travel from RSVP, and turnover?
- 7) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the recognition received by the volunteer from RSVP, and turnover?
- 8) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with reporting hours to the RSVP office, and turnover?
- 9) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the

assistance offered by RSVP to a volunteer to find a position, and turnover?

10) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the feedback received from a supervisor at the volunteer site, and turnover?

11) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the contact the volunteer has with other volunteers, and turnover?

12) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the attitude of the staff at the volunteer site toward the volunteer, and turnover?

13) What is the relationship between lack of satisfaction from helping others, and turnover?

14) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the opportunity to make a contribution to the community, and turnover?

15) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the opportunity for the volunteer to learn something new, and turnover?

16) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the value of the training or orientation received by the volunteer, and turnover?

17) What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the recognition accorded volunteers by RSVP, by the volunteer station, and by the service recipients, and turnover?

### Importance

This study adds to the body of information concerning older people and volunteering, with specific implications for administrators of programs that rely heavily on older people as volunteers.

Administrators often struggle to recruit, place, and retain senior volunteers in appropriate assignments. As life events and interests change, a natural turnover occurs. However, because volunteer turnover is very costly, it is important to address problems that precipitate unexpected turnover. Administrators could benefit from information that encourages continued volunteer service and reduces turnover. An increase in the number of hours seniors volunteer results in an increase in service and supports continued funding at the federal, state, and local levels.

The intent of the study was to increase the research data on senior volunteerism and add to the theoretical literature on volunteer job dissatisfaction and turnover among older people.

### Limitations:

The ability to generalize on statistical grounds to all senior volunteers may be somewhat limited because RSVP volunteers were only a small percentage of people who composed the senior corps of volunteers in the United States. This study was drawn from one senior volunteer program in one small city.

Volunteer turnover might be influenced by factors other

than dissatisfaction with aspects of the volunteer assignment. Such factors were not examined.

As predicted, a high percentage of inactive volunteers self-selected not to answer the questionnaire and therefore the opinions of a proportion of dissatisfied volunteers are not reflected. Furthermore, the researcher is a staff member of the RSVP of Washoe County, NV. and currently holds the position of director of volunteers, a position that involves the recruitment and placement of seniors in volunteer assignments. Since the researcher has been employed in the role for the past five years she was personally responsible for recruiting almost all the 266 volunteers who composed the original population. There is the possibility that volunteers decided not to respond to the questionnaire, or responded with a positive bias because of their familiarity with the researcher (N=174).

Finally, senior volunteerism is continuous. This cross-sectional research occurred within a single time frame. It can capture the associations among variables, but this design brings assertions of causality into doubt.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

#### Profile of Older Volunteers

Over the past thirty years a number of national surveys examined senior volunteer trends and behaviors. Findings described the sociodemographic characteristics of older people who volunteer. However, due to lack of uniformity among the surveys, the information about older volunteers varied. Firstly, the surveys defined the term "volunteerism" in a variety of ways; namely, "unpaid work" (Harris & Associates, 1975), "volunteer service" (Marriott Senior Living Services, 1991), and "unpaid work for hospitals, clinics, health or medical organizations, education, social or welfare, recreation, civic, community action or political groups, legal services, scouting or youth groups, churches, or synagogues (ACTION, 1975). Secondly, the surveys were conducted at different times of the year. This might have impacted on the sample of respondents, summer being a time when older volunteers travel. A third inconsistency related to the different types of volunteering. Some surveys were restricted to formal volunteer programs of nonprofit groups and included religious organizations, and other surveys included informal volunteering, which was represented by assisting friends or relatives not living in the same household.

Having accounted for inconsistencies, some generalizations of these surveys were that compared to

nonvolunteers, (a) older volunteers were more affluent, (b) had higher education levels, and (c) were in better health (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). More than 66% of older volunteers had college degrees, and 37.5% had high school diplomas (Marriott Services, 1991). Gender was not a discriminating factor (Harris & Associates, 1981). This finding was supported by the Marriott study (1991), which found that although more women (8.2 million) volunteer than men (7.3 million), the percentage of volunteerism was actually higher among men (45.5%) than among women (37.9%). Secondary analyses of surveys indicated that married people were more likely to volunteer, and that there was no conclusive evidence whether racial and ethnic factors affected volunteerism (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). Senior volunteers fell into two categories: Those who decided to become volunteers in later life, and those who had a history of volunteering.

Other findings about senior volunteers portrayed them as people who enjoyed a very active lifestyle (Chambre, 1985), and as happy people who felt themselves to be useful members of society (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992). They were identified as having strong family ties and as attending church or synagogue more regularly than the balance of the population (Chambre, 1987). The findings were inconsistent concerning retired and employed people. One source reported that volunteer activity did not tend to increase upon retirement, and that seniors who worked part-time were more

likely to volunteer than the fully retired person (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992). Another source reported that retired people spent more time volunteering than those still working (Chambre, 1984).

Reported rates of volunteering for older people varied from 11% to 52% (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993). The Marriott study (1991) concluded that 41.1% of people ages 60 and older performed some form of volunteer work in 1990-1991. A secondary analysis of a number of surveys by Chambre (1993) concluded that 38.6% of people ages 65 years and older were involved in formal volunteering. She reported that between 1980 and 1990 the proportion of volunteers who were 70 years or older in nationwide Retired and Senior Volunteer Programs increased from 45% to 66%. The most recent findings from a national survey indicated that only two demographic groups showed an increase of 5% or more in their rate of volunteering from 1991 to 1993: Those who are aged 75 years and older and retired people (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994).

Older volunteers had an extensive variety of volunteer opportunities from which to select jobs. Based on their comprehensive synthesis of research on senior volunteerism, Fischer and Schaffer (1993) classified volunteer roles into three conceptual categories by type of service activity: (a) serving the public, e.g., ushering for a cultural event; (b) working with objects, e.g., envelope-stuffing, and (c) helping individuals, e.g., tutoring. The diversity of



positions enabled senior volunteers to select long or short term commitments. On average, seniors between the ages of 65 and 74, volunteered 4.3 hours per week (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992). This finding was slightly higher than the average of 3.6 hours found in the Marriott study (1991). Most older people volunteered their services to religious organizations (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994). Informal volunteering, such as helping a friend, ranked second followed by working for social service agencies, arts organizations, and in education. Fewer volunteers were involved in political organizations (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994; Marriott study, 1991).

Many of the publications on volunteering by older people were based on the experiences of practitioners (Kouri, 1990; Sugarman, 1990; Schindler-Rainman, 1985; Rakocy, 1981). However, the research literature, based on empirical observations, both supported and challenged these findings. One study found that, in most ways, older volunteers were no different from other adults who did not volunteer (Kornblum, 1979). Kornblum addressed the claim that the volunteer service role improved the health, morale, social participation, and self perception of the older volunteer, and concluded that volunteer participation had no measurable impact on these variables.

The findings of a study that examined whether older volunteers were wealthier, happier, believed they had more to offer, or were more satisfied with life proved to be

inconclusive (Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989). On the other hand, a comparative study of the effects of volunteering on older people indicated that volunteers benefitted emotionally, socially and physically, but not economically from volunteering (Fogelman, 1981).

However, the majority of research studies admitted that both the nature of the samples and the limited study size imposed a limit on the generalizability of the findings.

#### Recruitment and Motivations of Older Volunteers

The ability to effectively recruit and retain volunteers was a primary goal of managers of volunteer programs. In order to achieve this objective, administrators needed to be cognizant of the importance of issues that related to the value of the volunteer experience (Rakocy, 1981). Much has been written about the relationship between recruitment and placement, and motivations for volunteering among volunteers of all ages (Burke & Lindsay, 1985; Francies, 1985; Moore, 1985; Gidron, 1983). Older volunteers were found to have similar needs, beliefs, and goals about volunteering as held by volunteers of all ages.

Senior volunteers' stated reasons for involvement included: the need to help others (Chambre, 1985; Kouri, 1990; Stevens, 1989; Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989); to feel more useful and productive (Marriott study, 1991); a desire for enjoyment (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992); a desire for self-fulfillment, to enhance self-esteem (Chambre, 1987); a

belief in the organization's cause, (Cohen-Mansfield, 1989); to fulfill a moral responsibility and as a social obligation (Marriott study, 1991); establish social contacts with others (Marriott study, 1991; Chambre, 1985; Sainer and Zander, 1971;); to do "church work" (Fischer & Schaffer, 1991; Marriott study, 1991; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1994) and, to use ones skills and knowledge (Sainer & Zander, 1971). However, older volunteers appeared less motivated by the opportunity to learn a new skill or gain job experience than younger volunteers, and the benefits of material gains were less important to them (Stevens, 1988).

Recruitment was a multiphased process for administrators that required a number of approaches to make potential older volunteers aware of opportunities. Target marketing, and media-based advertising campaigns were popular and effective, but were costly to the organization (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993; Chambre, 1985; Watts and Edwards, 1983). The link between successful recruitment and placement occurred when administrators informed potential volunteers "about the match between their motivational concerns, the organization, and its activities" (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1993, p. 342). According to Clary et al. (1993):

If we can correctly identify the motivation that a potential volunteer seeks to satisfy, then persuasive messages can target that motivation and demonstrate how the motivation can be satisfied by

a particular volunteer activity. Persons who believe that their needs and goals will be satisfied by volunteering are more likely to engage in the service than those who have no such assurance (p. 335).

#### Retention and Turnover Among Volunteers of All Ages

Fischer & Schaffer (1991) found that:

Retaining volunteers may be even more critical than recruitment for the survival of volunteer organizations....volunteers who quit after a short time are costly. Costs are incurred for training and supervising them. Typically, ex-volunteers or almost-volunteers take away their acquired learning and leave little behind. Another problem is disruptive service....But there are other problems as well. Turnover, especially high turnover, can create havoc in the administration and management of volunteer programs (p. 92).

Relatively little research attention had been paid to turnover among volunteers. Nonprofit organizations rely on volunteers, and high turnover has a damaging impact on organizations, adversely affecting financial resources and the delivery of services. For example, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer undertook over eighty hours of intensive training to become an advocate for a child in the court system. The resignation of this volunteer was disruptive and even harmful to the client.

Organizations have a strong incentive to encourage retention of their current volunteers, since it is both time-consuming and costly to recruit and train.

Managers need to understand the reasons for termination and continuation of volunteer service in order to effectively address these issues. Questions such as, Why do volunteers choose to continue or discontinue their volunteer service? and, What are the characteristics that contribute to staying on the job? need to be asked.

Phillips (1982), noted a distinction between why a person began to volunteer and the reasons later cited for continuing to volunteer. He found that motivations changed over time as the volunteers became more involved with the program, with different motivations predominating at different times. This led him to propose that the nature of the job itself was of paramount importance. Gidron (1983) examined dimensions of the volunteer job to search out sources of job satisfaction. He felt that job satisfaction from volunteer work had been neglected because of the perception that volunteering was purely an altruistic act. The belief that volunteers gave but did not need to receive had created a bias against viewing volunteer work as a satisfying experience. Phillips' (1992) study found that overall job satisfaction of volunteers was related to the work itself. A satisfying volunteer job contained similar elements to paid employment. The implications for administrators were clearly stated. The relationship

between job satisfaction and continuity on the job was of primary importance and should be addressed.

Retention among all volunteers might be a natural consequence of effective recruitment, according to a study by Francies (1985). In addressing the problem of turnover among volunteers of all ages, Francies believed the key question to ask was: "Why do people volunteer?" He suggested that initiating a screening process and a personal interview facilitated understanding the volunteers' needs and could ultimately lead to higher levels of retention. He advocated the use of a tool, the Volunteer Motivation-Needs Profile, which promoted a better match between the volunteer's needs and the task, led to more job satisfaction and ultimately helped solve the problem of turnover.

Whereas many researchers and professionals in the field have considered the processes of recruitment, placement and retention separately, Clary et al. (1993) proposed a functional approach viewing these three aspects of volunteering together interdependently, as "pieces of the same cloth," providing a different way for understanding volunteer activity. They further suggested that relevant feedback to volunteers was a vital key to meeting volunteer motivations. They believed this could be achieved if volunteer administrators kept abreast of changing motivations and then expanded the current task or changed the assignment to satisfy changing volunteer needs.

Saxon (1984) found that among the important management

functions for a director of volunteer services is to fully utilize volunteers, assign them to appropriate positions, and, in order to retain them, meet their needs. When both the organization's satisfaction and the volunteer's satisfaction were met, retention was greatly enhanced.

#### Retention and Turnover Among Older Volunteers

From their case study information on senior volunteers, Fischer and Schaffer (1993) concluded that most organizations did not have adequate data about turnover, since they did not collect formal data on rates of attrition. In fact, they found that only 30% of programs did anything about collecting information about volunteers who dropped out. Instead, administrators concentrated their efforts on replacing volunteers with new recruits, rather than dealing with issues that related to their volunteers terminating service.

Some turnover, especially among older volunteers, was not preventable. Many older volunteers stopped volunteering for reasons that were compatible with their life styles. They moved away from the area, obtained paid employment, suffered from poor health, or experienced changes within their families which accounted for a certain amount of natural attrition (Rakocy, 1981). Common reasons stated for discontinuing volunteering were increased age and failing health (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1992; Kornblum, 1979).

Some practitioners who worked with senior volunteers believed that when volunteers felt dissatisfied they became

disenchanted with volunteer work and stopped volunteering (Sugarman, 1990; Rakocy, 1981). Barriers for the new, larger, and more active group of older people presented a great many challenges to professionals. It was a necessity for them to understand and address the reasons for dissatisfaction which included: (a) not recognizing the interest of many older people to continue in lifelong learning; (b) not offering opportunities to use and build on their skills and education; (c) not providing opportunities that promoted new social experiences; (d) not providing sufficient guarantees of safety and security for volunteers who served "high risk" populations; (e) not providing activities that built respect for the person's worth and contributions (Rakocy, 1981).

A limited number of studies targeted older volunteers and the problems that related to dissatisfaction and ultimate termination of volunteer service.

#### A Review of the Studies

Eighty-three older adults participated in a self-help program in St Louis that sought to gain insight into the effective use of older volunteers by determining reasons for terminating services (Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989). Most of the people who quit expressed dissatisfaction with their inability to help their clients to the extent they thought they would. They were also frustrated by the lack of client appreciation. Another reason cited for dropping out was lack of training and support in dealing with clients. The



authors suggested that volunteer efforts could be more productive if training and support needs were more adequately met and if the match between client and volunteer was more carefully assigned.

A group of retired professionals served as participants in a study to test hypotheses regarding their morale, self-esteem, and alienation, as well as the extent of their participation in other voluntary activities. Analysis indicated that older volunteers responded positively, but not dramatically, to opportunities for meaningful social participation. However, the authors cautioned that novel involvement in the later years might not automatically contribute to feelings of well-being. It might be more important to ensure continuing opportunities. They also, suggested that managers strive to create a suitable match between volunteer and volunteer assignment in order to best utilize the volunteer's potential and encourage continued participation (Houghland, Turner, & Hendricks, 1988).

When older volunteers experienced a mutually beneficial relationship between themselves and their clients, they felt a strong sense of purpose and personal competence, and chose to continue with the program even though their time commitment had ended (Kuehne & Sears, 1993). From their findings, the authors tentatively suggested that to minimize turnover, volunteer directors needed to recruit older volunteers who had more education, more annual income, more involvements in other organizations, and a higher life

satisfaction. They reiterated the value of administrative intervention that was recommended earlier (Morrow-Howell & Mui, 1989), to carefully examine volunteer's experiences and background to create a good match between volunteer needs and program opportunities, and in this way promote volunteer longevity and reduce turnover.

Chambre's (1987) analysis of research on retention among older volunteers concluded that volunteers stayed because they "reap certain benefits" (p 121). Of most value was the prestige they received from being a volunteer, since this strengthened their identity and satisfaction with the job. A similar observation was made by Rakocy (1981). However, Chambre (1987) concluded that quitting was, in part, due to burnout, underutilization of the skills and talents volunteers brought to their jobs, and to subordination to paid workers. She identified another area of potential conflict that could influence turnover. Problems occurred when older volunteers performed similar kinds of assignments they once did as paid workers (Chambre 1985). She blamed lack of knowledge in how to deal with skilled volunteers as a major reason for dissatisfaction among volunteers. She asserted that professionals in the field need to understand how to work with older volunteers. Her suggestion was to constantly reward volunteers as a way of keeping them committed and involved.

Based on a total of 171 older respondents from three different samples, Pasquel (1986) showed that utilization of

their skills, flexibility in scheduling, training, and the acquisition of new skills were important reasons for continuing to volunteer. The instrument used to explore retention in this study was the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) developed by B.P. Payne and C.N. Bull, 1974-1977 (Bull, 1982).

An in-depth study of older volunteers set out to examine factors that related to the volunteer job and satisfaction (Stevens, 1988). Highly correlated with job satisfaction were the qualities of recognition, interaction, and the continuity of respect. Further analysis demonstrated that two years later 75% of seniors were continuing to volunteer. Those who were likely to be more satisfied were those who had social contact with others on the job, and who felt appreciated and recognized for what they had done. The perceived congruence between their expectations and the actual job was an important reason stated for continuing to volunteer. For this sample, the primary motive for continuing in the volunteer role was the need to feel useful. The author believed that this was a key factor for older volunteers, and when addressed would influence the continued involvement by older volunteers.

The studies reviewed above pertaining to older volunteers and retention demonstrate that older adults have a basis for volunteering. If society wishes to reap the benefit of their talents, managers of senior volunteers must continue to strive towards meeting the needs and goals of

older volunteers by creating positive volunteer experiences.

#### Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

In 1969 the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was created as a volunteer program of the Administration on Aging by Title VI, Part A of the Older Americans Act. Four years later, in 1973, together with the Senior Companion and Foster Grandparent Programs, it was designated as ACTION's Older American Volunteer Program (OAVP) by title II of the Domestic Volunteer Act. In 1993 OAVP was reauthorized as the National Senior Volunteer Corps by the National and Community Service Trust Act.

Today there are 763 RSVP programs sponsored and managed at local levels in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Currently they provide 81 million hours of service in their communities, at a value of \$982 million. The total cost of fielding one RSVP volunteer is less than \$1.00 per hour of service. The annual federal budget of \$34.4 million is matched with \$36.7 million contributed by states and local communities.

There are more than 450,000 RSVP volunteers assisting in more than 60,000 public and nonprofit community agencies. In Washoe County, Nevada more than 400 volunteers contributed over 60,000 hours of service per year.

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program provides volunteer opportunities for people aged 55 and older from diverse backgrounds, with a variety of experiences and interests. The RSVP volunteers serve about three to four

hours per week in an organization of their choice. They may receive reimbursement for transportation and are provided with on-duty accident and liability insurance. A full spectrum of people, from very young to very old, including frail homebound elderly, at-risk youth, adults in literacy programs, veterans, and foreign students, are among the clientele with whom RSVP volunteers interact in stations that include but are not limited to, schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and police departments.

At this time there is a resolution before the House of Representatives calling for the elimination of the Corporation for National Service and moving NSSC programs to the Administration on Aging (AoA). Since AoA's mandate is to provide services for needy seniors, there is a possibility that RSVP and the other Older American Programs will lose their federal funds and the programs will be eliminated.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Respondents

The respondents in the study were older volunteers who had joined the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Washoe County, Nevada. They had been classified as either active or inactive members by the director of the program. The population comprised all volunteers who signed up with RSVP between January 1990 and December 1994, with the exception of those who moved out of the area.

#### Research Design

The design was a cross-sectional study. Its main purpose was explanatory. This focus examined dissatisfaction with the volunteer job and considered whether there was an association between dissatisfaction and and termination of volunteer service.

Senior volunteers, members of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Washoe County, comprised the study population. They were volunteers who joined RSVP between 1990 and 1994 and numbered 266 people (N=266). Computer-generated lists of names and addresses were made accessible through the cooperation of the RSVP director. Updated lists were checked for reliability and both active and inactive volunteers were identified. Names of volunteers who had moved out of the area or died were removed from the lists.

#### Instrumentation

Two parallel questionnaires, one for active volunteers

and one for inactive volunteers, were designed to elicit information about factors that were possibly associated with turnover. The questionnaire for active volunteers (Appendix B) differed only slightly from the one sent to inactive volunteers (Appendix D). All questions were closed-ended to encourage uniformity of responses.

Section II used 18 questions that focused on sources of volunteer job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The instrument used as a measure of job satisfaction was a modified version of the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI). The VSI had been used to "tap some of the dimensions surrounding the role of volunteer and the satisfaction derived from the role" (Bull, 1982). The VSI was first used by B. P. Payne and C. N. Bull between 1974 and 1977 in a longitudinal study in Kansas City and Atlanta with panels of volunteers and members of RSVP. However, certain items were found not to be applicable and there were reported problems involving halo effects. Pasquel (1986) too found that a number of items in the original instrument were nonapplicable. A search through the Social Science Citation Indices (SSCI) yielded no record of other studies using this instrument.

A modified version of the VSI, using 18 items, was constructed. Items omitted from the original VSI were those six items previously identified as problematic or not applicable. Excluded items dealt with the volunteer's involvement in policy making and planning, promotion within

the agency, reporting to fellow volunteers, physical work, and the opportunity to assist with problems of the elderly.

The instrument used to measure the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the volunteer job, as perceived by the senior volunteer, is the modified VSI. Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 are used as the response measure. Lowest volunteer satisfaction ratings were scored (1) and the highest volunteer satisfaction were scored (5).

### Procedures

The method of data collection involved two self-administered questionnaires which were mailed to active and inactive members of RSVP who had entered volunteer service between January 1990 and December 1994. A cover letter described the purpose and importance of the study and encouraged participation (Appendices A and C). Confidentiality was stressed and respondents were requested not to sign the survey. Introductory comments and basic instructions were clear and concise with each section headed by a sentence or two that explained the purpose of the items to be completed and emphasized that there are no right or wrong answers. Self-addressed, stamped return envelopes were coded, and follow up letters were mailed to encourage participation and the timely return of surveys. Printing was large and clear and the format was designed for easy reading and speedy completion.

Reliability was addressed by a pretest. The research instrument was distributed to six senior volunteers at the



Washoe County Senior Service Center. The feedback revealed some difficulty in answering the questions that were posed in the negative. Confusion resulted due to the change from positive to negative statements. A second questionnaire was designed with a simpler format. It was pretested on a different group of senior volunteers. Volunteers answered all the questions appropriately.

An effort was made to establish face validity and content validity. To ensure that the questionnaire did measure sociodemographic characteristics, as well as volunteer history and behavior and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the volunteer assignment, two people experienced in the field of senior volunteerism and one person experienced in the field of gerontology reviewed the questionnaire. They were asked to ascertain whether the questions were valid and measured the relevant variables, and to examine the definitions of the important variables. Ambiguous and irrelevant definitions and questions were modified in accordance with these reviews. Question (2), "When was the last time you did some volunteering?", served to make the distinction between an active and an inactive volunteer for purposes of this study. It was a method of checking the validity of the RSVP lists.

#### Operational Definitions of Relevant Variables

Involvement as an RSVP volunteer: as defined by questions 1-3,4,6 (See Appendices B and D).

Volunteer history: type of place where volunteering occurred

and preparation for volunteering through training as defined by questions 5,7,8, (See Appendices B and D).

Satisfaction/dissatisfaction with main volunteer job: the modified VSI instrument defined in questions 9- 26 (see Appendices B and D).

Sociodemographic characteristics: defined by questions 27-31 and 34-36 (see Appendices B and D).

Geographic characteristics: defined by questions 32-33 (see Appendices B and D).

#### Treatment of the Data

The data were entered using the Quattro Pro for Windows spreadsheet. It was then coded and analyzed using the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentage and frequency distributions were used to report findings pertaining to the sociodemographic characteristics and the volunteer satisfaction index. Since the participants in the study were not randomly selected, tests of significance were not employed.

Bivariate analysis was the technique used to examine the relationship between the independent variable, the volunteer satisfaction index and the dependent variable, turnover.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

This chapter will discuss the rate of response, report the descriptive findings and will address the survey results as they relate to the research questions as stated in Chapter One.

#### Rate of Response

Questionnaires were mailed to all Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) volunteers who had become members between January 1990 and December 1994, with the exception of those who had moved out of the area (since forwarding addresses were not available). A total of 266 surveys was mailed out. The return rate was 65.4% or 174 surveys. Surveys were mailed to two groups. One hundred and sixty seven surveys were mailed to active RSVP members with a return of 72.9% (N=127). Ninety-nine surveys were mailed to inactive volunteers, with a return rate of 47.5% (N=47). It was anticipated that the active volunteers would have a higher rate of return because of their ongoing involvement and loyalty to RSVP.

#### Sociodemographic Findings

Table 1 shows the sex of the respondents

Table 1

Sex of Respondents

Sex	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Female	32 69.6%	94 75.2%
Male	14 30.4%	31 24.8%
Total	46 26.9%	125 73.1%

The breakout between the active and inactive groups was very similar.

Table 2 shows the age range of the respondents

Table 2

Age Range of Respondents

Age	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
55-64	3 6.5%	14 11.3%
65-74	31 67.4%	67 54.0%
75-84	12 26.1%	41 33.1%
85+	0	2 1.6%
Total	46 27.1%	124 72.9%

These findings were in accordance with findings from the Marriott study supporting the fact that increasing age

had a negative effect on volunteering. The small number of RSVP volunteers in the category 55-64 may be attributed to the fact that until June 1993 people were required to be 60 years of age to enter the RSVP program. The age was lowered to 55 years in that year.

Table 3 shows the marital status of the respondents

Table 3

Marital Status of Respondents

Marital	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Married	15 32.6%	56 45.2%
Divorced	8 17.4%	10 8.1%
Widowed	22 47.8%	55 44.4%
Single	1 2.2%	3 2.4%
Total	46 27.1%	124 72.9%

In Chapter 2 it was reported that married people were more likely than nonmarried to be involved in volunteer work. This study supports that finding.

Table 4 shows the educational levels of respondents

Table 4

Educational Levels of Respondents

Education	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Less than 12 years	0	13 10.5%
High School	14 30.4%	28 22.6%
College	21 45.7%	49 39.5%
Bachelor	6 13.0%	20 16.1%
Graduate	5 10.9%	14 11.3%
Totals	46 27.1%	124 72.9%

According to the Marriott study (1991) and secondary analyses by Chambre (1987), education level was a significant predictor in determining the level of volunteering. Active volunteers were more likely to be better educated than nonvolunteers. However, in this study there was very little difference in education levels between the inactives and actives. In both groups, more than 66% reported educational histories that included some college. Table 5 shows the employment status of the respondents.

Table 5

Employment Status of Respondents

Employment Status	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Full Time	2 4.3%	0
Part Time	8 11.74%	10 8.1%
Unemployed	1 2.2%	0
Retired	34 73.9%	112 90.3%
Other	1 2.2%	2 1.6%
Totals	46 27.1%	124 72.9%

These findings were contrary to findings by Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1992), who reported that seniors who worked part-time were more likely to volunteer than those who were fully retired.

Table 6 shows the living arrangements of respondents.

Table 6

Living Arrangements of Respondents

Living Arrangemen	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Spouse	17 37.0%	58 46.8%
Alone	23 50.0%	55 43.7%
Family	5 10.9%	7 5.6%
Friend	1 2.2%	5 4.0%
Other	0	1 0.8%
Totals	46 26.7%	126 73.3%

Table 7 shows the racial diversity of the respondents.



Table 7

Racial Distribution of Respondents

Race	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Caucasian	45 97.8%	117 92.8%
Hispanic American	0	2 1.6%
Asian American	1 2.2%	2 1.6%
African American	0	0
Native American	0	5 4.0%
Totals	46 26.7%	126 73.3%

According to the 1990 Census of Population and Housing 94.1% of people ages 55 years and older who live in Washoe County are Caucasian. Chambre (1987) hypothesized that socioeconomic differences may account for lower participation by blacks.

Table 8 shows the health status of the respondents.

Table 8

Health Status of Respondents

Health Status	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Excellent	9 19.6%	40 31.7%
Good	29 63.0%	72 57.1%
Fair	6 13.0%	12 9.5%
Poor	2 4.3%	1 0.8%
Other	0	1 0.8%
Totals	46 26.7%	126 73.3%

In Chapter Two it was reported that volunteers were in better health than nonvolunteers, and that there was a strong relationship between volunteering and perceived good health. A positive relationship between good or excellent health and volunteering also existed in this study.

Volunteer Behavior

Almost 85% of active volunteers reported that they had been in the program more than two years, with another 14.2% stating they had been RSVP volunteers for between one and two years. Only 25.5% of the inactives had been in the program more than two years before leaving. As many as 40.3% of inactives had left the program within a year of joining and almost half of those only volunteered for as few

as 3 to 6 months.

Of the actives, 45.7% continued to volunteer more than 20 hours a month. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1992) found that older volunteers worked an average of 4.4 hours per week (approximately 18 hours a month). Among the inactive group 27.7% reported that they had worked more than 20 hours a month when they had been active volunteers. Of the inactive respondents, 55.3% reported they had volunteered between 1 and 12 hours a month while only 34.6% of the actives reported so few hours. Generally, those who had become ex-volunteers volunteered fewer hours per month compared to those who remained active.

"It is important to help others" was selected by 40.2% of active volunteers as the number-one reason for choosing to volunteer. In the Marriott study (1991), 83% of volunteers responded in a similar manner. Twenty three percent of active volunteers responded that their main reason for volunteering was "I can do something to help a cause that is important to me," with 19.7% reporting their main reason as "I feel needed when I volunteer." Table 9 shows responses to questions pertaining to continuing and discontinuing to volunteer.

Table 9

Reasons for Continuing or Discontinuing to Volunteer.

Reason for discontinuing or continuing	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Important or not to help others	0	50 41.0%
Felt able to help needy or not	0	8 6.6%
Did or did not believe in the cause	1 2.3%	28 23.0%
Did or did not enjoy the work	4 9.1%	9 7.4%
Did or did not feel needed	5 11.4%	24 19.7%
Other	34 77.3%	3 2.5%
Totals	44 26.5%	122 73.5%

Thirty seven respondents selected "other". However, more than 77% of the respondents were from the inactive group of volunteers (N=34). All 34 specified their reason for stopping to volunteer (Appendix E). Twelve respondents referred to their own or their spouse's ill health (N=12). Nine of the comments referred to the desire or need to work for pay (N=9). Thirteen of the comments referred to personal reasons such as burnout and negative feelings about their job (N=13). In Chapter Two it was reported that Kornblum (1979) had concluded that poor health was the most important reason people gave for discontinuing volunteering.

The response to: "What type of place do you volunteer at the most?" was similar for active and inactive volunteers. Hospitals, social service organizations and working with the elderly ranked the highest for all RSVP volunteers. Other studies identified social service organizations, the arts, and education as areas where most formal volunteering occurred.

In response to, "What best describes what volunteering did/does for you?", 39.1% of inactive volunteers responded that "Volunteering make me feel needed" while 43.2% of actives responded that "Volunteering allows me to give something back to the community."

Regarding the amount of training that RSVP volunteers received to assist them in their volunteer jobs, it was of interest to note that 66% of the inactives stated that they received no training, while only 41.1% of the actives did not receive any training - a difference of 24.9%. None of the inactives stated that they received more than eight hours of training whereas 15.3% of actives reported receiving more than eight hours.

#### Research Questions

The focus of the study was an investigation into whether lack of retention (turnover) was linked to dissatisfaction with the volunteer job. The questions addressed concerned various dissatisfactions as probable causes of turnover among RSVP volunteers

## Measures of Association

Measures of association create a special problem of description not found with tests of significance. With tests of significance, convention has settled on widely recognized and employed probability levels - generally 5% or 1% - where we are willing to take the chance of making a Type I error (the probability of claiming a result, when it is false). With measures of association, the problem of making a decision about claiming a finding is less clear. Measures of association were used in this study because the data were gathered from a population, not a randomly selected sample.

One of the clearest expositions of a number of measures of association is provided by Loether and McTavish (1988). They spend two chapters presenting measures of association for variables measured at various levels of measurement, including phi coefficient and lambda (nominal level); gamma, Kendall's tau a,b,c, and Somers' d (ordinal level); and Pearson's r and eta (cardinal level). However, nowhere in the section devoted to bivariate associations, do they indicate the levels at which an association can be claimed as existing, nor do they provide the numerical levels where you may describe an association as "weak", "moderate", or "strong".

One introductory statistics text provides some help. Sprinthall (1994) discusses "effect size" and eta squared. Eta is a measure of association parallel to Pearson's r, but

it may be used with an independent variable measured at any level of measurement. Eta squared, like r squared, is a "proportional reduction of error" (PRE) measure (Loether and McTavish, 1988, p.221). With these measures, the association coefficient is calculated by counting the reduction in errors made in predicting the values of one variable by using information from the second variable.

According to Sprinthall (1994), if eta is less than .10, a weak effect may be claimed; if eta is equal to or greater than .10 up to .30, a moderate effect may be claimed; and if eta is equal or greater than .30, a relatively strong effect may be claimed. There is one problem with Sprinthall's formulation. Almost all associations show some degree of relationship, some numerical value greater than zero. Therefore it was decided for the associations calculated in this thesis research that associations below .15 would not be claimed as a finding. They would be termed "meaningless". Associations measure values falling between .15 up to .20 would be described as "very weak", and associations equal to or above .20 to .30 would be described as "weak". If the PRE measure of an association was equal or greater than .30 up to .50, it would be called "moderate", and any association equal to or larger than .50 would be termed "strong". These ranges are conservative relative to Sprinthall's, but have the advantage of focusing attention on those relationships in the data of enough magnitude to be

meaningful for both scholars and administrators.

Research question 1: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the use made of skills and knowledge the volunteer brings to the job, and turnover?

Table 10 shows the results of this research question.

Table 10

Degree of Satisfaction with Use of Skills and Knowledge in Volunteer Programs

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very Satisfied	11 25.0%	55 47.0%
Satisfied	20 45.5%	57 48.7%
Uncertain	6 13.6%	4 3.4%
Dissatisfied	5 11.4%	1 0.9%
Very Dissatisfied	2 4.5%	0
Totals	44 27.3%	117 72.7%

Lambda: .0625

Forty seven percent of the active volunteers stated they were very satisfied with the situation. Only 25% of inactives were very satisfied with how their skills were used (a difference of 22%). Almost 30% of inactive volunteers expressed themselves as uncertain, dissatisfied



or very dissatisfied. Only 4.3% of active volunteers fell into these three categories. However, there was no meaningful overall association between activity status and level of satisfaction. In Chapter Two it was noted that a number of researchers suggested that when volunteers were assigned to appropriate positions that fully utilized their skills, retention could be enhanced. This was not demonstrated.

Research question 2: What was the relationship between dissatisfaction with the type of work performed by the volunteer, and turnover?

Table 11 shows the results of this research question.

Table 11

Degree of Satisfaction with the Type of Work Performed by Volunteers

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very Satisfied	10 22.2%	62 50.0%
Satisfied	27 60.0%	53 42.7%
Uncertain	5 11.1%	7 5.6%
Dissatisfied	3 6.7%	2 1.6%
Very Dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	45 26.6%	124 73.4%

Lambda: .07463

Only 22.2% of inactives were very satisfied compared to 50% of the actives, a difference of 27.8%. This difference narrowed to 10.5% when the categories of very satisfied and satisfied were combined. There was no meaningful association between the variables. In the literature it was suggested that the nature of the job was extremely important for retention.

Research question 3: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the challenge the job presents the volunteer, and turnover?

Table 12 shows the results of this research question.

Table 12

Degree of Volunteers Satisfaction with Job Challenge

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very Satisfied	8 18.2%	52 43.3%
Satisfied	25 56.8%	53 44.2%
Uncertain	6 13.6%	11 9.2%
Dissatisfied	4 9.1%	3 2.5%
Very Dissatisfied	1 2.3%	1 0.8%
Totals	44 26.8%	120 73.2%

Lambda: .00769

More than 43% of active volunteers indicated that they

were very satisfied with the challenge the job afforded. In comparison, only 18.2% of inactives were very satisfied by the challenge of the job, a difference of 25.1%. Eleven and four-tenths percent of inactives stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the challenge the job offered, whereas only 3.3% of actives fell into this category, a difference of 8.1%. No meaningful association was shown.

Research question 4: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the amount of time spent volunteering, and turnover?

Table 13 shows the results for this research question.

Table 13

Degree of Satisfaction with the Amount of Time Spent Volunteering

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	8 18.6%	51 42.5%
Satisfied	22 51.2%	55 45.8%
Uncertain	6 14.0%	9 7.5%
Dissatisfied	7 16.3%	5 4.2%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	43 26.4%	120 72.6%

Lambda .01550

Eighty-eight and three-tenths percent of actives and 69.8% of actives indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the amount of time they contributed to volunteering (a difference of 18.5%). Slightly over 30% of the inactives were uncertain or dissatisfied with the challenge compared to 11.7% of actives (a difference of 18.6%).

Research question 5: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the location of the organization where the volunteer works, and turnover?

Table 14 shows the results for the this research question.

Table 14

Degree of Satisfaction with the Location Where The  
Volunteering Takes Place

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	19 41.3%	70 58.8%
Satisfied	23 50.0%	42 35.3%
Uncertain	2 4.3%	4 3.4%
Dissatisfied	2 4.3%	3 2.5%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	46 27.9%	119 72.1%

Lambda .03279

A higher percentage of actives (58.8%) were very satisfied as compared to 41.3% of inactives. Location was not a dimension of the job that caused dissatisfaction in either group, as shown by the meaningless Lambda.

Research question 6: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the reimbursement received by the volunteer for travel from RSVP, and turnover?

Table 15 shows the results for this research question:

Table 15

Degree of Satisfaction with Reimbursement

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	3 23.1%	9 24.3%
Satisfied	8 61.5%	19 51.4%
Uncertain	1 7.7%	4 10.8%
Dissatisfied	0 4.3%	4 10.8%
Very dissatisfied	1 7.7%	1 2.7%
Totals	13 26.0%	37 74.0%

Lambda: .0000

Only 50 out of 174, or 28.7% of the volunteers, answered this question. The low response was expected because approximately 30% of RSVP volunteers requested and received travel expense reimbursement. A slightly higher percentage of inactive volunteers were satisfied than active volunteers with the RSVP reimbursement package. There was no relationship between reimbursement and turnover.

Research question 7: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the recognition received by the volunteer from RSVP, and turnover?

Table 16 shows the results to this research question.

Table 16

Degree of Satisfaction with Recognition By RSVP

Degree of satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	8 22.2%	45 41.7%
Satisfied	19 52.8%	54 50.0%
Uncertain	4 11.1%	6 5.6%
Dissatisfied	4 11.1%	3 2.8%
Very dissatisfied	1 2.8%	0
Totals	37 25.0%	108 75.0%

Lambda: .01869

Only 22.2% of the inactive volunteers were very satisfied with the recognition they received from RSVP, while 41.7% of actives reported being very satisfied, a difference of 19.5%. When three categories - uncertain, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied - were combined 25% of inactive volunteers indicated some level of dissatisfaction with recognition and 75% of inactives reported some level of satisfaction.

Research question 8: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with reporting volunteer hours to the RSVP office, and turnover?

Table 17 shows the results for this research question.

Table 17

Degree of Satisfaction with Reporting Hours to the RSVP Office

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	4 10.3%	37 33.3%
Satisfied	26 66.7%	55 49.5%
Uncertain	7 17.9%	12 10.8%
Dissatisfied	1 2.6%	5 4.5%
Very dissatisfied	1 2.6%	2 1.8%
Totals	39 26.0%	111 74.0%

Lambda: .0000

Neither the actives or the inactives, with any magnitude, indicated that reporting hours to the RSVP office caused them dissatisfaction.

Research question 9: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the assistance offered by RSVP to a potential volunteer to find a volunteer position, and turnover?

Table 18 shows the results of this research question.



Table 18

Degree of Satisfaction with RSVP Assistance in Finding a  
Volunteer Position

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	8 25.0%	37 48.1%
Satisfied	23 63.9%	33 42.9%
Uncertain	1 2.8%	4 5.2%
Dissatisfied	2 5.6%	3 3.9%
Very dissatisfied	1 2.8%	0
Totals	36 31.9%	77 68.1%

Lambda: .05376

Only 60% of active volunteers and 76% of the inactives responded to the question. The reason for the lower response was unclear. Both groups reported high degrees of satisfaction. Actives had a higher percentage of "very satisfied" responses than inactives.

Research question 10: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the feedback received from a supervisor at the volunteer site, and turnover?

Table 19 shows the results of this research question.

Table 19

Degree of Satisfaction with Feedback from Supervisors in the Volunteer Program

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	13 35.1%	53 52.0%
Satisfied	16 43.2%	37 36.3%
Uncertain	5 13.5%	7 6.9%
Dissatisfied	1 2.7%	4 3.9%
Very dissatisfied	2 5.4%	1 1.0%
Totals	37 27.0%	102 73.0%

Lambda: .03636

Neither group indicated serious dissatisfaction with feedback. More actives reported being very satisfied than inactives but combined categories of very satisfied and satisfied demonstrated that 78.3% of inactives and 88.3% of actives were generally satisfied. Clary et al. (1993) proposed that providing relevant feedback was an important way to meet volunteer motivations.

Research question 11: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with contact the volunteer has with other volunteers, and turnover?

Table 20 shows the results of this research question.

Table 20

Degree of Satisfaction with the Amount of Contact with Other Volunteers

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	8 21.1%	35 34.7%
Satisfied	22 57.9%	55 54.5%
Uncertain	6 15.8%	10 9.9%
Dissatisfied	2 5.3%	11 1.0%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	38 27.3%	101 72.7%

Lambda: .01000

More actives than inactives rated themselves very satisfied (34.7% to 21.1%). Combined categories indicated that 79% of inactives and 89.2% of actives were generally satisfied with the opportunity afforded them to interact with other volunteers. The Marriott study (1991), Chambre (1985), and Sainer and Zander (1971) mentioned opportunities for social interaction as a reason for involvement as a volunteer.

Research question 12: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the attitude of the staff at the volunteer site towards the volunteer, and turnover?

Table 21 shows the results for this research question

Table 21

Degrees of Satisfaction with Attitudes of Staff Towards the Volunteer

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	13 28.3%	60 51.7%
Satisfied	27 58.7%	49 42.2%
Uncertain	3 6.5%	6 5.2%
Dissatisfied	3 6.5%	1 0.9%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	46 28.4%	116 71.6%

Lambda: .09848

Neither group indicated much dissatisfaction. A larger percentage of actives reported being very satisfied than inactives, a 23.4% difference. The gap narrows when the two categories of satisfaction are combined.

Research question 13: What is the relationship between lack of satisfaction from helping others, and turnover?

Table 22 shows the results of this research question.

Table 22

Degrees of Personal Satisfaction Derived from Helping

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	12 27.9%	73 59.8%
Satisfied	25 58.1%	42 34.4%
Uncertain	4 9.3%	5 4.1%
Dissatisfied	2 4.7%	2 1.6%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	43 26.1%	122 73.9%

Lambda: .10569

Almost twice as many active volunteers, 59.8%, compared to 27.9% of the inactives (a difference of 31.9%), reported that they were very satisfied with the personal satisfaction they received from volunteering. The gap narrowed when the first two categories were combined, with 86% of inactives responding that they were satisfied or very satisfied. Ninety-four and one-fifth percent of actives felt the same way. This was the highest value of any reported for the research questions, albeit a meaningless .106.

Research question 14: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the opportunity to make a contribution

to the community, and turnover?

Table 23 shows the results of this research question.

Table 23

Degree of Satisfaction with Opportunity to Contribute

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	14 31.1%	60 48.0%
Satisfied	21 46.2%	54 43.2%
Uncertain	8 17.8%	9 7.2%
Dissatisfied	2 4.4%	2 1.6%
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Totals	45 26.5%	125 73.5%

Lambda: .04286

Neither group reported high degrees of dissatisfaction with the opportunity to make a contribution to the community. Both groups reported general satisfaction: for the inactives, 77.3%, and for the actives, 91.2%.

Research question 15: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the opportunity for the volunteer to learn something new, and turnover?

Table 24 shows the results of this research question.

Table 24

Degree of Volunteer Satisfaction with the Opportunity to  
Learn Something New

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	5 16.1%	47 46.1%
Satisfied	18 58.1%	43 42.2%
Uncertain	5 16.1%	9 8.8%
Dissatisfied	3 9.7%	2 2.0%
Very Dissatisfied	0	1 1.0%
Totals	31 23.3%	102 76.7%

Lambda: .04854

Only 65% of inactives responded to this question and a majority of them (74.2%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied. 88% of active volunteers were satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities afforded. According to findings by Stevens (1990), older volunteers appeared less motivated by the opportunity to learn a new skill than younger volunteers.

Research question 16: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with the value of the training or orientation received by the volunteer, and turnover?

Table 25 shows the results for this research question.

Table 25

Degree of Volunteer Satisfaction with Training

Degree of Satisfaction	Activity Status	
	Inactive	Active
Very satisfied	5 19.2%	26 32.5%
Satisfied	13 50.0%	46 57.5%
Uncertain	7 26.9%	4 5.0%
Dissatisfied	0	4 5.0%
Very dissatisfied	1 3.8%	0
Totals	26 24.5%	80 75.5%

Lambda: .05479

Sixty-six percent of inactives and 41.1% of actives indicated earlier that they had not participated in any form of training. This explains the weak rate of response to this question. When the two categories, very satisfied and satisfied, were combined, the totals indicated that more active volunteers were satisfied with the value of the training than inactive volunteers. Pasquel (1986) found that training was important for retention.

Research question 17: What is the relationship between dissatisfaction with recognition accorded volunteers by RSVP, the volunteer station, and by recipients, and turnover?

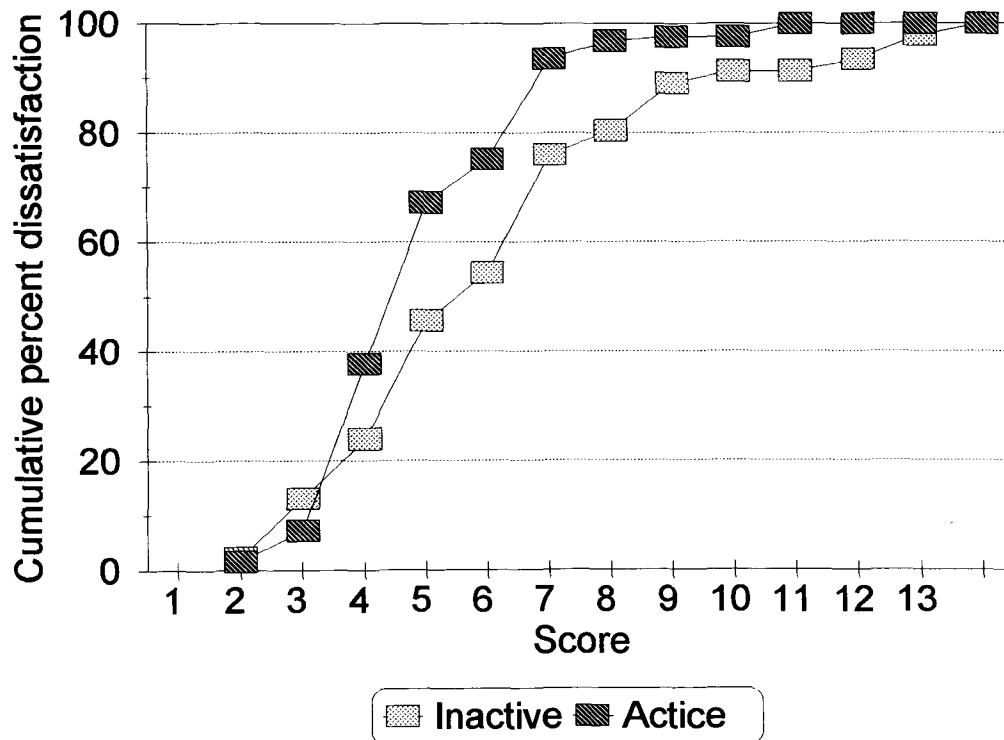


A reliability analysis was done to assess the validity of combining the responses from three questions, (15,18, and 19) which covered the topic of recognition. The analysis provided a standardized item alpha of .7882, indicating sufficient reliability for the combined items to be used as a scale. The combination of three scores provided a possible range from 0 to 15. Responses were scored from 1 to 13 with a mean of 4.567, median of 4, and a standard deviation of 2.078. The distribution curve had a skewness of -1.412.

Figure 1 shows the results of this research question.

Figure 1

Degrees of Dissatisfaction (Score) with Recognition Given  
by: RSVP, the Volunteer Station, and the Service Recipients



Inactive volunteers perceived that they received less recognition than active volunteers, and almost all indicated higher levels of dissatisfaction than did the active volunteers.

The data from this study fail to demonstrate the existence of a meaningful association between turnover and job dissatisfaction, since the majority of all the respondents appear to be either satisfied or very satisfied with the various dimensions that compose the volunteer job.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary and Conclusion

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the research study and draws conclusions based on the data collected. A discussion of suggested recommendations for future research will be presented at the end of the chapter.

#### Review of the Problem

The issue was turnover among senior volunteers. Nonprofit organizations rely heavily on volunteers, and a high volunteer turnover adversely affects the financial resources and delivery of services within organizations. Managers need to understand the reasons for both termination and continuation of volunteer service in order to effectively address these issues. Some turnover is not preventable. In this study, many older volunteers stopped volunteering for reasons that were compatible with their life styles. Paid employment, family demands, poor health, and other personal reasons accounted for a large amount of the attrition uncovered.

However, it had been suggested that some volunteers discontinued service because they were dissatisfied with the volunteer job. If managers were aware of these potential barriers to continuing volunteering, the turnover problem could be more effectively addressed. This study examined aspects of the volunteer job to determine whether dissatisfaction with the job was linked to turnover. What were the aspects of the volunteer job that could lead to a

more satisfying experience and an enduring career as an older volunteer?

#### Discussion of the Findings

The attrition rate for people who became RSVP volunteers between January 1990 and December 1994 was 37%. This figure did not include volunteers who moved away from the area or those who died. Also not included in this attrition rate were volunteers who withdrew from the program but who had joined RSVP before January 1990. If these volunteers had been included the turnover rate would have been higher during the four years.

The group of volunteers who joined the RSVP program between January 1990 and December 1994 and continued to volunteer work were classified as actives. These volunteers were 75% female, 25% male, and were largely in the age range of 65 through 74 years. The majority were married or widowed and either lived with their spouse or lived alone. More than two thirds had some college education, and a bachelor or graduate degree. Over 90% were Caucasian and retired, and the vast majority drove a car less than 10 miles from their home to a volunteer assignment. One third perceived themselves to be in excellent health, and more than one half reported their health as good. Almost 85% had been actively volunteering in the program for more than two years, with 45% responding that they volunteered more than 20 hours a month. Most of the volunteering took place in social-service organizations and hospitals. Visiting

homebound elderly persons was a close third. Fewer than 1% were involved with environmental organizations. Over 40% reported that they had not received any training from the organization for which they were currently volunteering. When asked what their main reason was for volunteering, more than 40% responded "It is important to help other people." In reply to the question "Which statement best describes what volunteering does for you?" more than 40% agreed that "Volunteering allows me to give something back to the community."

The group of volunteers classified as inactive volunteers were people who joined the RSVP program between January 1990 and December 1994, but who had stopped volunteering. Seventy percent of the inactive volunteers were female; 30% were male and the majority stated they were within the age range of 65 through 74 years. Almost one half were widowed and lived alone, and one third were married and lived with a spouse. Thirty percent had graduated from high school and 69% had some college education, undergraduate or graduate degrees. Seventy-four percent were retired and 17.4% worked part time. The vast majority were Caucasian and traveled by car for fewer than 10 miles to the volunteer assignment. More than 17% reported their health as fair or poor, while 19.6% perceived their health as excellent. Over 40% of this group were no longer volunteering within a year of joining. Twenty-five-and-one-half percent remained for two years before

discontinuing their volunteer service. Most of the volunteers in this group volunteered fewer than 12 hours a month. One fourth volunteered more than 20 hours a month. Two thirds of the inactives had received no training for their volunteer assignments. Inactive volunteers who had attended a training workshop received fewer hours of training than members of the active group. Most volunteering occurred in social-service organizations, with seniors, and at hospitals. The smallest number worked at museums.

In reply to the question, "What was the main reason you discontinued to be a RSVP volunteer?", 75% of the respondents selected the option "other". Ill health and the need to work for pay were common reasons stated for stopping. Less than 9% referred to their volunteer job in a negative manner. In reply to the question, "What question best describes what volunteering did for you?", almost 40% selected, "Volunteering made me feel needed." Eleven percent indicated they discontinued because they did not feel needed.

In Chapter Two it was reported that Rackocy (1981) had concluded that some turnover was not preventable. He suggested that older volunteers discontinued for reasons that were compatible with their life styles. They moved away from the area, obtained paid employment, suffered from poor health, or experienced changes within their families. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1992) reported increased age and

failing health as reasons for stopping volunteering. The findings of this research study concurred. Inactive volunteers in this study stated that turnover was directly related to: ill health, either their own or that of spouses (35%); the desire or need to resume paid employment (26%); and personal reasons (39%).

Eighteen questions relating to aspects of the volunteer job addressed the level of satisfaction with the volunteer job. The instrument was devised to explore whether there was an association between job dissatisfaction and turnover among older volunteers. The results indicated that no single aspect of the volunteer job appeared to be a major source of dissatisfaction. In all eighteen questions, a higher percent of active volunteers responded they were very satisfied, whereas the plurality of inactives stated they were satisfied. This could be interpreted that in order to remain active the highest levels of job satisfaction are necessary. When the categories of very satisfied and satisfied were combined, 80 to 95% of active volunteers and 70 to 90% of inactive volunteers fell into this combined category.

The largest percentage difference (20%) for the combined categories of very satisfied and satisfied between the active group and the inactive group were for questions that referenced the use of skills and knowledge, the opportunity to make a contribution to the community, and the amount of training or orientation received.

When the categories of dissatisfied and very dissatisfied were combined, 4 to 16% of inactives and 1 to 5% of actives fell into the combined category. The largest percentage differences, in the range of 12 to 15%, appeared in questions that referred to use of skills and knowledge, the amount of time spent volunteering, and the recognition shown by RSVP.

Recognition was tenuously related to turnover. Volunteers who perceived receiving more recognition appeared more satisfied and experienced less turnover.

### Conclusions

A great deal of turnover among senior volunteers in the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Washoe County was the result of ill health, the need for paid employment, or for other personal reasons. The hypothesis that dissatisfaction with the volunteer job was linked to turnover among older volunteers was not supported. Inactive respondents did indicate that they were somewhat less satisfied with all aspects of the volunteer job than active respondents, but the statistical evidence relating to any specific variable was very weak. The decision to stop volunteering among older people did not appear to be influenced strongly by dissatisfaction with their volunteer job. On the contrary, RSVP volunteers clearly stated that the reasons they stopped volunteering were directly related to ill health, the need to be employed for pay, and to other personal reasons.



One aspect of the volunteer job that is perceived to cause some dissatisfaction for inactive volunteers concerns the inadequate use of their skills and knowledge. Another aspect that purportedly caused some dissatisfaction was insufficient recognition. It therefore becomes relevant to suggest that organizations that utilize senior volunteers examine these areas to determine whether the methods of conveying recognition are sufficient and meaningful. Program managers for RSVP need to take note of the numbers of inactive volunteers who were disenchanted with the amount of recognition shown by RSVP.

Volunteers who remain active were generally very satisfied with all aspects of the volunteer job. Inactive volunteers were generally satisfied with aspects of the job and ceased to volunteer for reasons other than disenchantment with the volunteer job.

Demographic trends suggest that there will be more older people available to volunteer. Many will be women who are retired, as opposed to being homemakers. The older population is better educated than ever before and many are retiring at an earlier age and living longer and healthier lives. This group of older people will have the time and the ability to volunteer. Will they volunteer? A challenge for managers of older volunteers will be to recognize that volunteers are not who they used to be: The volunteer profile has changed. A further challenge will be to create the types of jobs that utilize the higher skills older

people bring to their volunteer jobs.

Managers of programs that rely on older volunteers should be prepared to accept the reality that turnover may not be avoidable. Retirees may need to return to the workforce. As older volunteers age, their abilities and willingness to volunteer are affected by their declining health or the declining health of a family member. Managers should be cognizant of these factors and when necessary, redirect volunteers as they become increasingly frail or experience other life changes.

Volunteers who remained active were very satisfied with their jobs. All dimensions of the volunteer job that were examined by the instrument were found to be relevant by the respondents. This result supports the proposition that job satisfaction is an important component of turnover prevention.

### Recommendations

A purpose of this study was to increase knowledge that can be applied to enhancing the volunteer experience in order to decrease the rate of turnover. The need for a suitable match between the volunteer and the assignment has been stressed in the literature. Although this study failed to demonstrate that dissatisfaction with the job is linked to turnover, this is by no means conclusive. Further studies using larger and more diverse populations and different instruments may reach differing conclusions. The combination of RSVP volunteers and other older volunteers

may provide a more suitable and diverse group to study.

Personal interviews with senior volunteers who remain active or become inactive as volunteers may reveal areas that cause discontentment not mentioned in the survey. Better-educated, older volunteers may be more verbal and expressive of their concerns about volunteerism.

The aging revolution in the United States of America offers great opportunities. However, it cannot be assumed that because there are increased numbers of people who will live longer and healthier lives than ever before, that they will elect to become volunteers. Researchers should investigate the percentages who will elect to involve themselves and their reasons for participation or nonparticipation. If the "new" older population is disenchanted with volunteerism, nonprofit organizations and agencies that depend on them may have to restructure their programs. This may impact social policy.

It is clear that the older volunteer is not what he or she used to be. Further research would clarify the continuing changes in the volunteer profile and identify how and why older volunteers in the 21st century will require different kinds of recruitment, different incentives to stay involved, different types of jobs and supervision, and different types of recognition.

Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, and African Americans are part of the aging population that is increasing. Very little is known about their interests,

experiences and willingness to volunteer. Further research examining the connection between cultural diversity and volunteering would increase the limited amount of knowledge that exists about older people of different ethnic and racial groups, their level of commitment to volunteerism, and the components needed to recruit and retain them as volunteers.

Directors and managers of programs that depend on older volunteers have a number of challenges ahead. How can they effectively educate private and public agencies about the changing profile of older volunteers and their changing needs? How can they convince the growing numbers of older people of their potential to impact the generations who follow through their commitment to volunteerism?

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Appendix A

Cover Letter Sent to Active Volunteers

November, 1995

Dear RSVP volunteer:

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Joan Pokroy and you may know me as the coordinator of volunteers for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Washoe County. I have been working towards a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Administration through the University of San Francisco. I have completed the class work and am currently working on a research project.

The topic of the thesis is an important one; it is about senior volunteers. To accumulate the needed data, I am mailing this questionnaire to all people who signed up with RSVP of Washoe County from 1990 to 1994.

I would be most grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope, as soon as possible. I will share the collective findings about senior volunteers with you in RSVP newsletter.

Please do not sign your name as this survey. Your answers are confidential. There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your opinions and feelings.

This questionnaire should take less than 10 minutes to complete. I am enclosing a scented tea bag for you, with sincere thanks for your input. Enjoy it!!

I hope, with your assistance, we will increase support for senior volunteerism and make volunteering a positive experience for all.

Sincere thanks,

Joan Pokroy  
Director of Volunteers

P.S. If possible please return the questionnaire by December 2nd, 1995.



## Appendix B

### VOLUNTEER Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. In many of the questions we want to know your thoughts and opinions so there are no right or wrong answers.

#### SECTION I.

This first section asks about the amount of time you have been involved with RSVP and reasons for continuing to volunteer:

1. How long have you been a volunteer with RSVP?  
(circle one number)

1. more that three month but less than six months
2. more than six months but less than one year
3. more than one year but less than two years
4. more than two years

2. When was the last time you did some volunteering?  
(circle one number)

1. this month
2. one to three months ago
3. four to six months ago
4. seven to twelve months ago
5. more than a year ago

3. When you volunteer, how many hours per month do you work?  
(circle one number)

1. less than three hours per month
2. between four and eight hours per month
3. between nine and twelve hours per month
4. between thirteen and sixteen hours per month
5. between seventeen and twenty hours per month

4. What is the MAIN reason you continue to volunteer?  
(circle one only)

1. It is important to help others
2. I feel compassion towards people in need
3. I can do something to help a cause that is important to me
4. I thought I would enjoy the work
5. I feel needed when I volunteer
6. other: please explain \_\_\_\_\_

5. What type of place do you volunteer at?  
(circle only the ONE where you spend most of your time)

1. hospital
2. school
3. library
4. social service organization
5. museum or arts organization
6. visiting
7. environmental organization
8. senior center
9. other: please explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which statement BEST describes what volunteering does for YOU? (circle only one)

1. Volunteering makes me feel better about myself
2. Volunteering allows me to meet new people
3. Volunteering helps me deal with my own problems
4. Volunteering allows me to give something back to the community
5. Volunteering makes me feel needed

7. How much training (formal or informal) did you receive for your volunteer job? (circle only One)

1. none
2. one to four hours
3. over four to eight hours
4. more than eight

8. How helpful was the training in preparing you for your volunteer job? (circle only ONE)

1. extremely helpful
2. very helpful
3. somewhat helpful
4. not helpful
5. I received no training

## SECTION II.

This next section is about how you feel about your volunteer job. If you volunteer in more than one place, select ONE VOLUNTEER POSITION only and think about it when you answer the questions

Please circle ONE number that best describes your feelings

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 9. How satisfied are you with the ways that your volunteer job makes use of your skills and knowledge?           | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 10. How satisfied are you with the particular type of volunteer work you do?                                     | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 11. How satisfied are you with the challenges volunteer work affords you?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 12. How satisfied are you with the amount of time you spend volunteering?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 13. How satisfied are you with the location of the organization where you volunteer(is it convenient to get to)? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 14. How satisfied are you with reimbursement you receive from RSVP for travel expenses?                          | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 15. How satisfied are you with recognition you receive for being a volunteer, from RSVP?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 16. How satisfied are you with reporting volunteer hours to the RSVP office?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 17. How satisfied are you with assistance RSVP offers in finding a volunteer position for you?                                  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 18. How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for being a volunteer from the place where you do your volunteering? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 19. How satisfied are you with the appreciation shown by those who benefit from the work you do?                                | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 20. How satisfied are you with feedback from your supervisor concerning the work you do?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 21. How satisfied are you with the contact you have with other volunteers?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 22. How satisfied are you with the attitudes of the staff toward you?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 23. How satisfied are you with personal satisfaction you feel for helping others?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 24. How satisfied are you with the opportunity you have to make a contribution to the community?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 25. How satisfied are you with the opportunity you get to learn something new?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 26. To what extent did you find the orientation or training you received (from the organization you volunteer for) helpful, for the work you do for them? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

### SECTION III.

This is the last section: This section asks questions about YOU? All the information confidential:

27. Are you:  
 (circle one)
1. female  
 2. male

28. What is your age?  
(circle one)
1. 55-64 years of age
  2. 65-74 years of age
  3. 75-84 years of age
  4. 85 or older
29. What is your marital status?  
(circle one)
1. married or in a long-term relationship
  2. divorced
  3. widowed
  4. single, never married
30. What is the highest level of education completed?  
(circle one)
1. less than 12 years of schooling
  2. high school graduate
  3. some college or technical school
  4. bachelor degree
  5. graduate degree
31. Which of the following best describes your employment status (circle one)
1. employed full time
  2. employed part time
  3. unemployed, but seeking work
  4. retired
  5. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
32. How many miles, approximately, do you travel to reach your main volunteer job site?
1. less than one mile
  2. more than one mile but less than five miles
  3. more than five miles but less than ten miles
  4. more than ten miles
33. How do you travel to your main volunteer job site?
1. I drive there in a car
  2. I use public transport i.e. the city bus
  3. I use special transport i.e. citilift
  4. Someone drives me there
  5. I use a taxi
  6. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do you: (circle one)

1. Live with a spouse or significant other
2. Live alone
3. Live with family
4. Live with friend(s)
5. Live in a retirement residence
6. Live in an assisted living facility
7. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

35. Are you: (circle one)

1. Caucasian
2. African American
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Native American
6. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

36. What best describes your overall health?  
(circle one)

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Thank you very much for completing the survey.  
Please return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

THANKS, thanks and thank you again

Appendix C

Cover Letter Sent to Former Volunteers

November, 1995

Dear Former RSVP volunteer:

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Joan Pokroy and you may know me as the coordinator of volunteers for the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Washoe County. I have been working towards a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Administration through the University of San Francisco. I have completed the class work and am currently working on a research project.

The topic of the thesis is an important one; it is about senior volunteers. To accumulate the needed data, I am mailing this questionnaire to all people who signed up with RSVP of Washoe County from 1990 to 1994.

I would be most grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope, as soon as possible. I will share the collective findings about senior volunteers with you in RSVP newsletter.

Please do not sign your name as this survey. Your answers are confidential. There are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your opinions and feelings.

This questionnaire should take less than 10 minutes to complete. I am enclosing a scented tea bag for you, with sincere thanks for your input. Enjoy it!!

I hope, with your assistance, we will increase support for senior volunteerism and make volunteering a positive experience for all.

Sincere thanks,

Joan Pokroy  
Director of Volunteers

P.S. If possible please return the questionnaire by December 2nd, 1995.



## Appendix D

### VOLUNTEER Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. In many of the questions we want to know your thoughts and opinions so there are no right or wrong answers.

#### SECTION I.

This first section asks about the amount of time you had been involved with RSVP and reasons for discontinuing to volunteer:

1. How long were you a volunteer with RSVP?  
(circle one number)

1. more that three month but less than six months
2. more than six months but less than one year
3. more than one year but less than two years
4. more than two years

2. When was the last time you did some volunteering?  
(circle one number)

1. this month
2. one to three months ago
3. four to six months ago
4. seven to twelve months ago
5. more than a year ago

3. When you volunteered, how many hours per month did you work? (circle one number)

1. less than three hours per month
2. between four and eight hours per month
3. between nine and twelve hours per month
4. between thirteen and sixteen hours per month
5. between seventeen and twenty hours per month

4. What was the MAIN reason you discontinued to volunteer?  
(circle one only)

1. It is not important to help others
2. I did not that I could be of help to needy people
3. I can did not believe in the cause
4. I did not enjoy the work
5. I did not feel needed when I volunteered
6. other: please explain \_\_\_\_\_

5. What type of place did you volunteer at?  
(circle only the ONE where you spent most of your time)

1. hospital
2. school
3. library
4. social service organization
5. museum or arts organization
6. visiting
7. environmental organization
8. senior center
9. other: please explain \_\_\_\_\_

6. Which statement BEST describes what volunteering did for YOU? (circle only one)

1. Volunteering made me feel better about myself
2. Volunteering allowed me to meet new people
3. Volunteering helped me deal with my own problems
4. Volunteering allowed me to give something back to the community
5. Volunteering made me feel needed

7. How much training (formal or informal) did you receive for your volunteer job? (circle only One)

1. none
2. one to four hours
3. over four to eight hours
4. more than eight

8. How helpful was the training in preparing you for your volunteer job? (circle only ONE)

1. extremely helpful
2. very helpful
3. somewhat helpful
4. not helpful
5. I received no training

## SECTION II.

This next section is about how you felt about your volunteer job. If you volunteered in more than one place, select ONE VOLUNTEER POSITION only and think about it when you answer the questions

Please circle ONE number that best describes your feelings

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 9. How satisfied were you with the ways that your volunteer job made use of your skills and knowledge?                | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 10. How satisfied were you with the particular type of volunteer work you did?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 11. How satisfied were you with the challenges volunteer work afforded you?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 12. How satisfied were you with the amount of time you spent volunteering?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 13. How satisfied were you with the location of the organization where you volunteered (was it convenient to get to)? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 14. How satisfied were you with reimbursement you received from RSVP for travel expenses?                             | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 15. How satisfied were you with recognition you received for being a volunteer, from RSVP?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 16. How satisfied were you with reporting volunteer hours to the RSVP office?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 17. How satisfied were you with assistance RSVP offered in finding a volunteer position for you?                                   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 18. How satisfied were you with the recognition you received for being a volunteer from the place where you did your volunteering? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 19. How satisfied were you with the appreciation shown by those who benefitted from the work you did?                              | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 20. How satisfied were you with feedback from your supervisor concerning the work you did?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 21. How satisfied were you with the contact you had with other volunteers?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 22. How satisfied were you with the attitudes of the staff toward you?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 23. How satisfied were you with personal satisfaction you felt for helping others?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 24. How satisfied were you with the opportunity you had to make a contribution to the community?   | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 25. How satisfied were you with the opportunity you had to learn something new?  | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |
| 26. To what extent did you find the orientation or training you received (from the organization you volunteer for) helpful, for the work you did for them? | 1. very satisfied<br>2. satisfied<br>3. uncertain<br>4. dissatisfied<br>5. very dissatisfied<br>6. not applicable |

### SECTION III.

This is the last section: This section asks questions about you. All the information is confidential:

27. Are you:  
(circle one)

- 1. female
- 2. male

28. What is your age?  
(circle one)
1. 55-64 years of age
  2. 65-74 years of age
  3. 75-84 years of age
  4. 85 or older
29. What is your marital status?  
(circle one)
1. married or in a long-term relationship
  2. divorced
  3. widowed
  4. single, never married
30. What is the highest level of education completed?  
(circle one)
1. less than 12 years of schooling
  2. high school graduate
  3. some college or technical school
  4. bachelor degree
  5. graduate degree
31. Which of the following best describes your employment status (circle one)
1. employed full time
  2. employed part time
  3. unemployed, but seeking work
  4. retired
  5. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
32. How many miles, approximately, did you travel to reach your main volunteer job site?
1. less than one mile
  2. more than one mile but less than five miles
  3. more than five miles but less than ten miles
  4. more than ten miles
33. How did you travel to your main volunteer job site?
1. I drove there in a car
  2. I used public transport i.e. the city bus
  3. I used special transport i.e. citilift
  4. Someone drove me there
  5. I used a taxi
  6. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

34. Do you: (circle one)

1. Live with a spouse or significant other
2. Live alone
3. Live with family
4. Live with friend(s)
5. Live in a retirement residence
6. Live in an assisted living facility
7. other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

35. Are you: (circle one)

1. Caucasian
2. African American
3. Hispanic
4. Asian
5. Native American
6. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

36. What best describes your overall health?  
(circle one)

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Thank you very much for completing the survey.  
Please return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

THANKS, thanks and thank you again

## Appendix E

### Answers to Question 4 on the Volunteer Questionnaire Sent to Inactive Volunteers

#### Health (12)

"I had an operation and have not fully recovered"

"Became a caregiver for my husband"

"My health"

"To nurse my husband"

"Back problem"

"I became ill"

"It was necessary to have surgery"

"My husband became ill and I opted to care for him at home"

"Poor health"

"Health reasons"

"Accident - fall"

"Had a knee operation"

#### Employment (9)

"I needed to get a job that paid"

"Decided to work for income"

"I was too busy with my job"

"I started a necessary full time job"

"I went to work and no longer had time/energy"

"To work full time"

"Went to work"

"Became employed"

"I did part-time baby sitting and had to be available"



Personal (13)

"At the end of three years felt burnt out"

"Too hard work and lousy supervisor"

"Too much hassle to get there"

"Personal reasons"

"Job I had been doing ended"

"Was not treated as a volunteer"

"Personal or other time demands"

"Loss of transportation - inconvenient"

"The attendance not large enough"

"Home reasons"

"I became extremely busy at home and had to help out my children, so did not have the extra time"

"Pressing family business and house broken into"

"The kitchen closed"