APPLYING STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES TO THE MAINTENANCE OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION-VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the use of stewardship as a strategy for maintaining the relationship between nonprofit organizations and their volunteers. Nonprofit organizations rely heavily on volunteers to provide the organizations services and in some cases, volunteers are used in administration functions of the organization; thus, making it imperative for nonprofit organizations to nurture and maintain relationships with their volunteers.

Stewardship as defined by Kelly (1991) is a collection of relationship maintenance strategies including: participating in reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing. To date, stewardship practices have only been applied to nonprofit organizations and its charitable donors.

This study surveyed 19 paid staff and 27 volunteers of nonprofit organizations in the Indianapolis, Indiana area. Results indicated that stewardship practices are being used by nonprofit organizations but there is still much room for improvement. Some inconsistencies were found in the areas of reporting and responsibility. Overall, volunteers are satisfied with their relationship with their affiliated nonprofit organization.
INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have brought awareness of the importance of volunteering with events such as the earthquake in Haiti, hurricane Katrina, hurricane Andrew of the 1990’s and even the September 11 attacks. According to a survey conducted by United Way of Central Indiana's Volunteer Center, the current economic times forced numerous budget cuts meaning many administrative roles once assigned to staff are now being filled by volunteers (UWCI, 2009).

With this increased awareness, there has been a growth in the number of volunteer organizations around the world; all the while the number of available volunteers is diminishing (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Although there has been a decrease in numbers from past years, the number of volunteers is still quite high. In the United States alone, 63.4 million people volunteered for an organization in 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Thus, it is imperative for organizations to maximize volunteer retention and satisfaction.

A look at the relationship management theory of public relations helps understand what needs to be done by the nonprofit organization to progress its relationship with its volunteers. Relationship management theory stresses the importance of building, nurturing and maintaining relationships. It fully supports
the idea that positive relationships are derived from applying a two-way approach to relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998a). This approach envisions the creation and maintenance of positive relationships between an organization and its key publics are a result of continual and reciprocal exchange between them.

To evaluate this two-way approach to relationships, Hon and Grunig (1999) developed a relationship measurement scale, which is based on the existence of six dimensions of long-term relationships. These dimensions include: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship. These dimensions have proved to be effective in measuring the quality of relationships between an organization and its publics. This study will apply this scale to measure the effectiveness of stewardship practices on organization-volunteer relationships.

Stewardship is a matter of concern in this paper due to its lack of diverse application in research. Stewardship is a collection of relationship maintenance strategies which include: participating in reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing (Kelly, 1991). As yet, stewardship, as a form or maintaining relationships, has only been studied and applied to nonprofit organizations and its charitable donors (Conway, 2003).

Although researchers have recognized that these practices should be applied to other relationships such as nonprofit organizations and its volunteers, there has been little research in which this is done. Research has shown that implementing
the use of these practices will create positive relationships among nonprofit organizations and its donors (Kelly, 1991; Kelly, 1998; Kelly, 2001).

Several instruments have been developed by researchers to measure volunteer motivation. One of the most widely used is the Voluntary Functions Inventory (VFI) developed by Clary (et al. 1998). This inventory suggests six motives that drive an individual to volunteer; values, enhancement, social, career, protective and understanding. With this understanding, organizations can then tailor their strategies in building and maintaining relationships with volunteers thus, potentially increasing volunteer satisfaction and retention (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Brussell & Forbes, 2002; Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Hager & Brudney, 2004).

Volunteer retention, a priority for nonprofit organizations, has been linked to the organizations’ use of management practices (Bortree & Waters, 2008). Positively received management practices, studies suggest, include organizations investing in regular volunteer recognition activities (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Hager & Brudney, 2004), creating a volunteer friendly environment (Bussell & Forbes, 2002), providing written policies and job descriptions (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Hager & Brudney, 2004), and communicating to volunteers how their work helps accomplish the mission of the organization (Millette & Gagné, 2008). These practices have been shown to increase overall volunteer satisfaction and, in turn, increase volunteer retention (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Stewardship practices attend to these issues and may potentially provide a
guideline for organizations to follow to ensure it is recognizing and addressing each issue regularly.

Stewardship, volunteer retention and relationship management theory will be addressed more fully with a focus on how nonprofit organizations can better manage its relationship with volunteers. An evaluation of research concerning the motivations of volunteers and what they view to be important in maintaining relationships with an organization will also be covered. This study will attempt to solidify an argument that stewardship practices can be effectively used in maintaining relationships between nonprofit organizations and their volunteers.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted to study volunteerism. The following is an overview of the research that has been conducted on the subjects of stewardship, volunteer motivation, volunteer retention and relationship management.

Stewardship

Stewardship embodies the relationship management theory in that it is centered on building and maintaining organization-public relationships. It is the “total range of responsibilities an institution undertakes when it accepts a contribution” or in our case takes on a volunteer (Hopkinson, 1989, p. 55).

According to Greenfield (1991), the purpose of stewardship in fund raising is to thank donors who have made gifts and to “establish the means for continued communication that will help to preserve their interest and attention to the organization” (p. 148). Worth (1993) added, “Because the best prospects for new gifts are past donors, programs that provide careful stewardship and provide donors with timely information on the impact of their gifts can pay significant dividends in continued support” (p. 13).

Stewardship consists of four relationship maintenance strategies that “recognize the strategic value of previously established relationships to future
public relations efforts” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 17). These elements are defined and described in more detail below.

**Reciprocity:** The organization shows its gratitude for those who are supportive of its beliefs and behaviors (Kelly, 2001). There are two underlying factors of reciprocity, which include the nonprofit organizations acknowledgement of its publics and a sincere expression of appreciation on behalf of the organization (Waters, 2009). A nonprofit organization can accomplish this by simply saying thank you in a timely manner by offering a note of appreciation. “When (reciprocity is) expressed genuinely, from the heart, it creates a strong bond between the organization and donors being thanked” (Conway, 2003, p. 433).

**Responsibility:** The organization acts in a socially responsible manner to those who have supported it if they desire longevity (Kelly, 1998). Responsibility simply means that organizations act as good citizens and keep their word (Kelly, 2001). “Betraying public trust is expensive; building goodwill with people who already are aligned with the organization saves money” (p. 285).

**Reporting:** The organization meets legal and ethical requirements of accountability (Kelly, 1998). Reporting requires an organization to keep its publics informed of the on-goings of the organization by providing open and accurate information. Doing this builds trust and increases the publics’ confidence in the organization (Kelly, 2001). Simple ways a nonprofit can demonstrate financial and social accountability is by voluntarily making available IRS tax forms and audited
financial documents and keeping its’ publics informed of current services and programs (Waters, 2009).

**Relationship Nurturing:** The organization accepts the importance of supportive publics and keeps them central to the organization’s perception when making any type of decision (Kelly, 1998). Providing information and involving publics is important to the organization’s long-term successes (Kelly, 2001). Relationship nurturing can be achieved by “letting people know on a regular basis that you care about them, respect their support, appreciate their gifts, and what their interest and involvement is” (p. 286). An organization is presented daily with numerous opportunities to nurture relationships with its publics. Nonprofit organizations should make sure to send their publics newsletters and annual reports and invite relevant publics to special events (Kelly, 1991). This extra effort will demonstrate the organization’s commitment to its publics consequently increasing the public’s commitment to the nonprofit organization (Waters, 2009).

A practical application of these stewardship practices can be seen in the development of guidelines for intentional stewardship by Emlen (2007) which are described as follows:

To survive and flourish, an institution must engage a large group of enthusiasts who are passionately committed to supporting its mission with their wealth, work, and wisdom. That passion is based on a relationship that must be sustained between the individual and the institution. Relationships built between individuals and the institution are solidified through, recognition, engagement, and communications that encourage regular involvement in and giving to the institution’s highest priorities (p. 1).
Through her research, Emlen (2007) presents three key stewardship principles for nonprofit organizations to consider when building and maintaining relationships. The first is that all staff members of an organization must participate in stewardship. It should not be up to a select few to thank donors. The second says that the management of stewardship responsibilities must be spread throughout the organization; meaning that one department recruits donations, one is in charge of making reports, and another delegates the funds. Lastly, she says stewardship should be measured based on outcome not output.

Emlen’s (2007) principles demonstrate how stewardship practices can be used by an organization to maintain and nurture an already existing relationship. Stewardship practices can be viewed as best practices, used in creating an ongoing positive relationship between an organization and its’ publics.

Volunteer Motivation

According to Bussell and Forbes (2002), “The key to an organizations success in recruiting and retaining its volunteers is to have an understanding of motives of its target group of volunteers,” (p. 248). There have been many approaches used in identifying and measuring these motives but the most promising results have come from the application of the functional approach (Musick & Wilson, 2008). This is fitting for the study of volunteer motivation because this approach’s main focus is on the reasons and purposes that create beliefs and actions in individuals. According to the functional theory of motivation, “individuals initiate volunteer behavior if
they believe it will serve one or more of their psychological needs,” (p. 56). This theory also states that the same act can serve different purposes for different people and more than one motivation may be met by the same volunteer activity. Thus, the theory suggests that volunteers seek out opportunities that fit with their own needs and goals (Clary & Snyder, 1999).

Using the functional approach, one very notable study led to the development of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). This inventory, created by Clary (et al. 1998), is designed to be used as a measurement tool to assess volunteer motivations. Through the development of this inventory, six motivations emerged that are consistently associated with volunteer work including: values, enhancement, social, career, protective and understanding.

Table 2.1 defines and illustrates how each motivation is accessed on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary, et al. 1998).
Table 2.1. Functions served by volunteering and their assessment on the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Sample VFI item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>The individual volunteers in order to express or act on important values like humanitarianism. The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.</td>
<td>I feel it is important to help others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>One can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.</td>
<td>Volunteering lets me learn through direct, hands-on experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancement</td>
<td>The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.</td>
<td>Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.</td>
<td>Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative personal problems.</td>
<td>People I know share an interest in community service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several studies have produced results that are consistent with the six motivations for volunteering listed above. For example, Kemmelmeier, Jambor and Letner (2006) found that learning, careers, personal growth, self-expression and escape from problems were all identified as motivations to become a volunteer.

In a study conducted by Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese (2001), doing something worthwhile is one of the most important motivations for volunteers. Gaining social experience, altruism, and social interactions also proved to be important motivations for participation in volunteer activities. An interesting finding addressed by these researchers suggests how well an organization is organized influences motivations to volunteer.
Findings by Bussell and Forbes (2002) have produced similar results. Altruism, helping others and the idea that a family member is benefiting from the organization were all identified as motivations to volunteer. Individuals also reported that they volunteer to develop useful skills, help obtain employment, fulfill their need for affiliation and to gain prestige or self-esteem. These researchers also found that people are four times more likely to volunteer when an organization personally asks them for their services.

Altruism, a term coined by Auguste Comte, a sociologist and philosopher, is defined as unselfish concern for the welfare of others (altruism, n.d.). Another definition by Thomas Nagel, a philosopher, reads, "By altruism I mean not abject self-sacrifice, but merely a willingness to act in the consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives," (1970, p. 79).

Altruism has proven to be difficult to measure. One reason for this difficulty is what some psychologists call it the warm-glow of giving, that is, the value one gets simply from the act of giving *without* any concern for the interests of others (Andreoni 1989, 1990). Though it is possible that altruism exists apart from warm-glow, “it seems most likely that the two are complements - the stronger your desire to act unselfishly, the greater the personal satisfaction from doing so,” (Andreoni, Harbaugh & Vesterlund, 2007, p. 1).

Several studies have concluded that altruism is a real form of motivation many experience. Some studies have shown that altruism is innate through the use of MRI’s (Tankersley, Stowe & Huep, 2007). Other studies have suggested that
altruism is dependent on culture (Henrich, et. al., 2001; Roth, et. al., 1991). Lastly, studies such as the one conducted by Harbaugh and Krause (2000), found evidence linking altruism to socialization and psychological development.

Many volunteer motivations have been identified by researchers throughout the years. Most address motivations internal to the individual but there are some that are affected by external factors. Realizing this, researchers have identified some practices an organization can employ to increase the likelihood an individual will be motivated to volunteer with their organization. These include, but are not limited to, being well organized, personally asking individuals to participate, and understanding an individual’s personal motivations for volunteering (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Clary, et al., 1998; Kemmelmeier, Jambor & Letner, 2006; Ryan, Kaplan, & Grese, 2001). Taking the time to understand and accommodate volunteers has been shown to increase satisfaction with an organization thus leading to increased retention (Bussell & Forbes, 2002).

**Volunteer Retention**

Nonprofits rely heavily on volunteers to provide the organizations’ services and in some cases, volunteers are used in administration functions of the organization. With the amount of available volunteers diminishing, it is imperative for organizations to maximize volunteer retention (Gaskin, 1998). Volunteers that have been with an organization for a period of time gain a better understanding of the organization’s mission and their role in it; thus providing better services to the
community. Also, recruiting and training new volunteers can be expensive and time-consuming (Hager & Brudney, 2004). Through the retention of volunteers organizations are able to lessen the amount of time spent on recruiting and training therefore, ensuring a more efficient organization (Ryan, Kaplan, & Grese, 2001) therefore saving resources while increasing productivity (Millette & Gagné, 2008).

There are many things an organization can do to increase volunteer retention rates. Millette and Gagné (2008) suggest that an organization should give volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills, work in teams and establish contacts between volunteers. These researchers also stress the significance of letting volunteers know how their work helps accomplish the mission of the organization thus, giving the volunteers a sense of importance and belonging.

Creating a volunteer-friendly environment in the organization also has been shown to enhance retention (Hobson, Rominger, Nalec, Hobson & Evans, 1996). This can be created through promoting positive relationships between paid staff and volunteers (Bussell & Forbes, 2002), creating a culture that is welcoming to volunteers, allocating sufficient resources to support them and soliciting volunteers to recruit others (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

The way in which volunteer management practices are implemented in the organization will positively or negatively affect volunteer retention. In 1998, the UPS Foundation commissioned a study that warned, “Poor volunteer management practices result in more lost volunteers that people losing interest because of changing personal or family needs,” (Hager & Brudney, 2004, p. 2). Another study
by Grossman and Furano (2002) identify three elements crucial to the success of a volunteer program. These include screening potential volunteers to ensure appropriate entry and placement; orientation and training to provide volunteers with skills needed for the task ahead; and management and support from the organization to ensure time is not wasted. Once the volunteer has been placed, he should be provided with written policies and job descriptions (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Hager & Brudney, 2004).

Organizations should also invest in regular volunteer recognition activities (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Hager & Brudney, 2004). Studies show when volunteers feel recognized for efforts, are valued, and feel the organization cares about ones well-being, they are more likely to remain with that organization (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). As with any successful relationship, trust must also be built between an organization and its volunteers. This can be accomplished by listening to the volunteers’ suggestions and exhibit social accountability (Bortree & Waters, 2008).

Ryan, Kaplan, and Grese (2001) conducted a study to measure volunteers’ commitment to environmental stewardship programs. These researchers suggest that organizations should provide regular and frequent opportunities to volunteers to increase retention. Results also showed that commitment is more related to the frequency of participation than to the length of time a volunteer has been with the organization. Organizations that incorporate many of these practices regularly will potentially have better relationships with volunteers (Bortree & Waters, 2008). In
order for an organization to identify issues that increase volunteer retention, a better understanding of how relationships work should be developed. A look at the public relations theory of relationship management will cultivate this understanding.

**Relationship Management Theory of Public Relations**

As addressed earlier, relationship management theory focuses on the importance of building, nurturing and maintaining relationships (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The public relations field stresses the importance of organization-public relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998b). This can be seen as new definitions of public relations are developed.

One definition of public relations reads “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public’s on whom its success or failure depends” (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994, p. 2). From the relationship management perspective, according to Ehling (1992), the main goal of public relations is to “build, nurture and maintain organization-public relationships rather than manipulate public opinion” (as cited by Ki & Hon, 2007). There is a strong focus on building and maintaining organization-public relationships suggested by these definitions.

Many researchers have attempted to develop instruments to measure these mutually beneficial relationships. The most widely used is the public relations relationship measurement scale developed by Hon and Grunig in 1999. Through
research on the topic, these researchers discovered six important elements of long-term relationships. The six dimensions include: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship. According to Hon and Grunig’s (1999) scale, each dimension can be defined as:

**Control Mutuality:** “Is the degree to which parties agree on who have the rightful power to influence one another. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require organizations and their publics to each have some control over the other” (p. 3).

**Trust:** “One party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (p. 3). There are three dimensions of trust. 1) Integrity: the belief that an organization is fair and just; 2) Dependability: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; 3) Competence: has the ability to do what it says it will do.

**Satisfaction:** “The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced” (p. 3). Benefit outweighs the cost.

**Commitment:** “The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” (p. 3). There are two dimensions of commitment that must be recognized. The first is continuation of commitment, which refers to a certain line of action. The second is affective commitment, which refers to the emotional orientation of commitment.
**Exchange Relationship:** “One party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future” (p. 3).

**Communal Relationship:** “Both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return, developing communal relationships with key constituencies is much more important to achieve than would be developing exchange relationships” (p. 3).

Though this is the most recognized scale, several other instruments have been developed to measure organization-public relationships and should be addressed. One developed by Ledingham and Bruning (1998a), measured based on trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. These researchers found that these variables influenced the “publics’ loyalty as well as behavioral intentions toward the organization as long as the public was aware of the organizations relationship-building activities,” (p. 59).

Bortree and Waters (2008) found trust of the organization to be very important to volunteers. It is the best predictor of which volunteers are more likely to dedicate more time to an organization, once again, increasing volunteer retention.

Bortree and Waters (2008) also found that an organization should make small changes in its volunteer management practices to increase volunteer satisfaction. These changes may include increasing efficiency of the organization, using an application and interview process in the recruitment of volunteers and
trying to gain an understanding of motivations for volunteering to align them with an applicable volunteer position.

Bruning and Ledingham (2000) constructed a process model for relationship management that outlines the necessary steps that must be followed in managing organization-public relationships. It is called PR SMARTS: Scan (analysis), Map (plan), Act (produce), Rollout (implement), Track (evaluate) and Steward (Adjust). This model is worth noting here because of its addition of the “steward” step.

The two most popular formulas for describing the public relations process, RACE (research, action, communication, evaluation) and ROPE (research, objectives, programming, evaluation) do not include this steward step, hence, suggesting that the process ends in evaluation (Kelly, 1991).

These contradict the current definitions of public relations, which state that the main goal of public relations is to build and maintain relationships between organizations and their publics (Cultrip, Center & Broom, 2000). With the inclusion of stewardship as a step in managing organization-public relationships we can be sure that the public relations process is truly cyclical (Kelly, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to determine if the application of stewardship practices to a nonprofit organizations’ relationship with its volunteers would yield positive results in the retention and overall satisfaction of volunteers. In a time where the retention of volunteers is imperative, the application of stewardship to organization-volunteer relationships could bring about best practice guidelines for maintaining and nurturing these relationships.
The importance of applying stewardship practices to relationships other than organization-charitable donor relationships can be seen in a statement by Jeavons (1994), “stewardship is thought of too narrowly as dealing only with the management of contributed funds...steward speaks of a person who is concerned with the right ordering and management of all the affairs and concerns,” (p. 111).

Based on the review of the literature, the following research questions are posed for the current study.

RQ1: Are stewardship practices applicable to maintaining the relationship between nonprofit organizations and its volunteers?

RQ2: Can guidelines be developed, based on stewardship practices, to be followed as best practices for maintaining the relationship between nonprofit organizations and its volunteers?

RQ3: To what extent do stewardship practices impact overall volunteer satisfaction?

RQ4: To what extent do stewardship practices impact volunteer retention?
METHODS

The study population consisted of paid staff and volunteers of nonprofit organizations in Indianapolis, Indiana. A list of more than 2,000 nonprofit organizations was compiled. Forty of those organizations were randomly selected to be contacted. Emails were sent out to the directors of those organizations requesting 1) participation in the study 2) for the directors to forward the email to paid staff and volunteers who may be interested in the study. The email consisted of a description of the study, informed consent and links to the surveys (appendix 1). The target sample size was 50 respondents, ranging in ages from 18 to 80.

The instrument used for the study was a survey composed of 59 questions measuring the quality of the relationship of volunteers and their affiliated organizations. Two surveys were developed, one for paid staff (appendix 2) and the other for volunteers (appendix 3) of the nonprofit organizations. Though the surveys were the same, questions on the relationship measurement scale were changed to make it relevant for both paid staff and volunteers. For example, a question concerning control mutuality reads, “This organization really listens to what people like me have to say”. This would not make sense given to a paid staff
member representing the organization. A new question may read, “This organization really listens to what our volunteers have to say” (Seltzer, 2006, p. 16).

In accordance with the suggestion of Grunig and Hon (1999), respondents were asked to use a five-point Likert-type scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each question on the relationship measurement scale and for the stewardship questions.

The surveys developed for paid staff and volunteers of nonprofit organizations provided data sets for 1. satisfaction with organization, 2. perceived satisfaction of volunteers by organization, 3. expected commitment of volunteer to organization, 4. perceived level of stewardship practices by organization (from both perspectives). Sample questions of Hon and Grunig’s (1999) relationship measurement scale are as follows:

**Trust:** “This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.”

**Control Mutuality:** “This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.”

**Commitment:** “I feel that this organization is trying to maintain a long-term commitment to people like me.”

**Satisfaction:** “I am happy with this organization,” (p. 4).

Questions were added to assess levels of stewardship. These questions included:

**Reciprocity:** This organization thanks its volunteers on a regular basis for their efforts.

**Responsibility:** This organization acts in a socially responsible manner.
**Reporting:** This organization provides regular reports to volunteers about the on-goings of the organization.

**Relationship nurturing:** This organization genuinely cares about its volunteers.

Additional information was collected with regard to the volunteers’ motives for volunteering with an organization. The volunteers’ gender, age, race, level of involvement and the type of organization they volunteer at was also surveyed. The type of organization was classified in six categories based on the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ classification system. These include arts and humanities, education, healthcare, human services, public/society benefit, and religious organizations (Bortree & Waters, 2008). Also, a question was added to indicate whether the nonprofit organization is small, medium, or large. All data was anonymously collected and analyzed using Survey Monkey.
RESULTS

This section outlines the results from the surveys administered to paid staff and volunteers. Average responses to the questions appear below. In addition to the listing of average responses, how the responses coincide with the research questions will be discussed.

Since the snowballing method was used to collect responses, there is no true way of knowing how many surveys were actually sent. Out of the forty emails sent out, 19 paid staff surveys and 27 volunteer surveys were completed.

**Demographic information**

The majority of the paid staff surveyed (52.6%) fell between the ages of 26-40. Twenty-one percent fell between the ages of 18-25, 21.1% fell in between 41-55 and only 5.3% were between 56-70. Also, 77.8% were female and 22.2% were male. One participant did not to respond to the gender question.

Comparatively, the majority of the volunteers surveyed (50%) were in between the ages of 56-70. Forty-six percent fell in between 18-55 and only 4% was over the age of 71. In addition, 62.5% of the respondents were male and 37.5% were female. Three participants chose not to respond to the age or gender questions.
The majority for both paid staff and volunteers were Caucasian 94.7% and 91.7% respectively.

In relation to the organization, the majority (81.3%) of paid staff classified their organization as human services. The majority of volunteers (65.2%) also classified their organization as human services. Fifty-three percent of paid staff and 58.3% of volunteers consider their organization to be medium in size compared to others. Most other paid staff (36.8%) and volunteers (29.2%) considered their organization to be large in size.

Ninety-five percent of paid staff are highly involved with their organization. The majority of volunteers also consider their level of involvement to be high (54.2%), 37.5% are moderately involved and 8.3% are not very involved. Most paid staff plan to stay employed at their current nonprofit organization in a year from now (89.5%) and 10.6% plan to be employed at another organization or not employed at all. Seventy-five percent of volunteers also plan to continue volunteering with their affiliated nonprofit organization.

**Relationship Measurements**

The first section of the survey was used to measure trust, controlled mutuality, commitment and satisfaction. Eighty-one percent of volunteers trust their organization with a rating average of 4.2 out of 5. Similarly, 88.4% of paid staff felt that volunteers trust their organization (M=4.24). Sixty-five percent of volunteers (M=3.78) and 71.93% of paid staff (M=3.72) feel there is controlled mutuality in their organization. Seventy-six percent of volunteers feel committed to
the organization \((M=4.03)\). While, 81% of paid staff feel their volunteers are committed to their organization \((M=4.13)\). Overall, volunteers say they are satisfied with their organization \((83.9\%, M=4.17)\).

Section two of the survey measured stewardship practices being used by the organization. Paid staff felt that their organization is participating in reciprocity \((71.97\%, M=3.82)\) significantly more than what is being conveyed by the volunteers \((58.67\%, M=3.61)\). The main visible difference lies in nonprofits sending thank you letters to their volunteers for their work. Sixty-eight percent of paid staff \((M=3.53)\) believe that their organization does this regularly while only 52% of volunteers \((M=2.96)\) felt that way.

Sixty-five percent of paid staff say their organization keeps their volunteers informed of current on-goings of the organization \((M=3.77)\). The most common practice of this is sending out newsletters \((M=4.42)\) and the least commonly practiced is sending out financial reports \((M=2.74)\).

Similar results were produced for the reporting aspect of stewardship from the volunteers \((58.67\%, M=3.59)\). Volunteers also felt said that newsletters were the most common form of reporting \((M=3.76)\) and financial reports were the least \((M=2.88)\). Paid staff \((80.73\%, M=4.14)\) and volunteers \((70.67\%, M=3.88)\) felt that their organization acts in a responsible manner when it comes to dealing with volunteers. Lastly, both paid staff \((92.1\%, M=4.16)\) and volunteers \((82\%, M=4.26)\) agree that their organization participates in activities, such as inviting volunteers to
special events, to nurture their relationship. Two volunteers chose not to respond to this section.

Section three measured motives for volunteering and ones overall satisfaction with the nonprofit organization. Both paid staff and volunteers felt there were a number of benefits for volunteering ranging from making one feel important (paid staff, M=4.42; volunteer, M=4.16), to gaining new perspectives on things (paid staff, M=4.53; volunteer, M=4.20) and making contacts to advance ones career (paid staff, M=3.44; volunteer, M=3.08). Also, both paid staff (92.62%, M=4.41) and volunteers (90.4%, M=4.4) felt that volunteers are overall satisfied with their volunteer experience. Two volunteers chose not to respond to this section.
DISCUSSION

Overall, the volunteers surveyed have a positive relationship with the nonprofit organizations they are affiliated with. The paid staff of these organizations also indicated a positive relationship.

*RQ1: Are stewardship practices applicable to maintaining the relationship between nonprofit organizations and its volunteers?* According to the results, the answer is yes. It seems as though most organizations are already practicing reciprocity, reporting, responsibility and relationship nurturing with their volunteers, though, there is room for improvement. For example, results showed that paid staff thought they were sending out more thank you cards to their volunteers (68%) than what volunteers reported (52%). When a volunteer feels important and that the organization cares about them, they are more willing to stay with that organization.

*RQ2: Can guidelines be developed, based on stewardship practices, to be followed as best practices for maintaining the relationship between nonprofit organizations and its volunteers?* Again, according to the overwhelming positive responses from both the paid staff and volunteers, the answer is yes. Guidelines will help ensure that volunteers are receiving thank you cards, newsletters, financial
reports and invitations to special events on a regular basis. A specific person in the organization should be assigned the task of making sure that these things are done, preferably someone that is in contact with volunteers and knows them on a more personal level.

**RQ3: To what extent do stewardship practices impact overall volunteer satisfaction?** The results suggest that stewardship practices are being used to maintain relationships with volunteers and that volunteers are satisfied with their relationship with their organization. One can then assume that if these stewardship practices are used more frequently satisfaction would also increase.

**RQ4: To what extent do stewardship practices impact volunteer retention?** As the research has indicated, there are many ways an organization can increase volunteer retention. Many researchers agree that organizations should invest in regular volunteer recognition activities (Bortree & Waters, 2008; Farmer & Fedor, 1999; Hager & Brudney, 2004). This falls in line with many of the stewardship practices. According to this study’s results, volunteers plan to continue volunteering with their current nonprofit organization; they are satisfied and committed to their organization, all of which increase retention. The results also show that stewardship practices are being used to maintain these relationships, thus, suggesting a positive correlation between stewardship and retention.

**Limitations of Study**

There are several limitations to this study. First, the survey should have been distributed on a larger scale. For instance, if all nonprofit organizations in the United
States were used as the population, it would yield more generalizable results. Because of time, financial and data restraints, this was not feasible. Also, qualitative data should have been collected. Interviewing paid staff and volunteers would provide a clearer insight to what each truly wants or expects in terms of stewardship practices.

**Implications for Future Research**

For future study, the researcher recommends a study including both qualitative and quantitative methods. This will provide a more clear insight to the feelings of both paid staff and volunteers. It should also include a larger population.

Another study could carry out an international comparison of the use and value of stewardship practices. For example, one could compare the United States’ use of stewardship practices by nonprofit organizations to that of nonprofits in the United Kingdom.

Additionally, it may be useful to survey and interview volunteers to see what exactly holds their interest in a nonprofit organization. One may find things that are not addressed by stewardship but are just as valuable in nurturing and maintaining the relationship.

**Conclusion**

Nonprofits in Indianapolis, Indiana are actively ensuring they are maintaining positive relationships with their volunteers. Stewardship practices are being used but not to their fullest by the nonprofit organizations. Better use of these
practices will increase volunteer satisfaction and retention which is needed due to the growing need for volunteers and the seemingly limited supply of them.

Several studies have concluded that stewardship practices work in retaining charitable donors for nonprofit organizations. This study shows that these practices also help nurture and maintain nonprofit organization-volunteer relationships.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

SUBJECT: Nonprofit/Volunteer Survey
NOTE TO DIRECTOR ONLY: Please forward to all employees/volunteers that may be interested in taking this survey.

Greetings,

You are invited to participate in a study of nonprofit organizations - volunteer relationships. The purpose of this study is to examine how a nonprofit builds and maintains its relationship with its volunteers. Findings from this research may help develop potential guidelines for improving this relationship, thus, creating better volunteer retention and satisfaction.

To be eligible to participate in this survey, you must be employed by a nonprofit organization or volunteer at one. You must also be over the age of 18.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
Click on the link below that you most identify with to take the survey:

VOLUNTEERS:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=8obUzKr39L_2bEVRqOTpcXNA_3d_3d

PAID STAFF:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=nxG5dHga_2faGGq5fv8n5tBw_3d_3d

There are no foreseeable risks associated in participating in this study. All data will be maintained as anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the researcher. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before taking the survey.

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Coordinator of Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, 765-285-5070, irb@bsu.edu. If you have any questions about
this study, please contact either myself (my information is provided below) or my faculty advisor, Dr. Dustin Supa, at dwsupa@bsu.edu or via telephone at 765-285-8215.

Researcher Contact Information:
Principal Investigator:
Dana L. Ziebarth, Graduate Student
Journalism
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: 574-527-2590
E-mail: dlziebarth@bsu.edu
APPENDIX 2: SURVEY FOR PAID STAFF

There are no foreseeable risks associated in participating in this study. All data will be maintained as anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the researcher. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before taking the survey.

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Coordinator of Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, 765-285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

SECTION ONE

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether you AGREE OR DISAGREE with the following statements as they relate to your respective nonprofit organization with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

Strongly DISAGREE  1  2  3  4  5 Strongly AGREE

1. This organization treats people our volunteers fairly and justly.
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, we are concerned about our volunteers.
3. This organization can be relied on to keep its promise.
4. I feel very confident about this organization’s skills.
5. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
6. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of our volunteers.
7. This organization and its volunteers are attentive to what each other say.
8. When volunteers have an opportunity to interact with this organization, I feel they have some sense of control over the situation.
9. This organization won't cooperate with its volunteers.
10. I believe volunteers have influence on the decision-makers of this organization.
11. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with its volunteers.
12. There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and its volunteers.
13. Compared to other organizations, its volunteers value their relationship with this organization more.
14. Volunteers have no desire to have a relationship with this organization.
15. I feel a sense of loyalty to this organization.
16. I am happy with this organization.
17. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with its volunteers.
18. Most people enjoy dealing with this organization.
19. The organization fails to satisfy the needs of its volunteers.

SECTION TWO

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether you AGREE OR DISAGREE with the following statements as they relate to your respective nonprofit organization with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

Strongly DISAGREE  1  2  3  4  5 Strongly AGREE

1. The organization acknowledges its volunteers work in a timely manner.
2. The organization sends thank you letters to its volunteers.
3. The organization in not sincere when it thanks volunteers for their contributions.

4. This organization recognizes volunteers as friends because of their continued work with the organization.

5. The organization keeps its volunteers informed of the current programs and services it has to offer.

6. The organization sends its volunteers newsletters at least once a year.

7. The organization sends its volunteers annual financial reports.

8. The organization does not provide its volunteers with information about the current happenings of the organization.

9. The organization considers its volunteers when making decisions.

10. The organization does not use its volunteers’ time effectively.

11. I have confidence that the organization will use its resources responsibly.

12. The organization keeps its volunteers informed.

13. The organization only contacts its volunteers when it wants something from them.

14. The organization is more concerned with its fiscal health than with its relationship its volunteers.

15. The organization invites its volunteers to participate in special events that it holds.

16. The organization truly cares about its volunteers.

SECTION THREE

Using the 5-point scale below, please indicate how important or accurate each of
the following possible reasons for volunteering is for you in doing volunteer work at this organization. Record your answer in the space next to each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT AT ALL important/accurate for you</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>EXTREMELY important/accurate for you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Volunteering can help get peoples foot in the door at a place where I work.


3. Our organization is concerned about those less fortunate than myself.

4. Volunteers can learn more about the cause for which we are working.

5. Volunteering makes people feel important.

6. No matter how bad people have been feeling, volunteering helps them to forget about it.

7. Volunteers can make new contacts that might help my business career.

8. Volunteers are genuinely concerned about the particular group they are serving.


10. People volunteers are close to want them to volunteer.

11. Volunteering allows people to gain a new perspective on things.

12. By volunteering, volunteers feel less lonely.

13. Our volunteers are enjoying their volunteer experience.

14. Our volunteers are personally fulfilled through their experience with our organization.

15. Volunteering with this organization is a worthwhile one.

16. Volunteers are able to make an important contribution by volunteering at this organization.

17. People accomplish a great deal of “good” through their volunteer work at this organization.
SECTION FOUR

1. This nonprofit organization is centered on:
   A. Arts and humanities
   B. Education
   C. Healthcare
   D. Human services
   E. Public/society benefit
   F. Religion
   G. Other

2. I would consider this organization to be:
   A. Small in size compared to other nonprofits
   B. Medium in size compared to other nonprofits
   C. Large in size compared to other nonprofits

3. My level of involvement with this organization is:
   A. High
   B. Moderate
   C. Low

4. One year from now, will you be (please answer with your best guess as of today):
   A. Employed at this organization.
   B. Employed at another organization.
   C. Not employed at all.

5. Which best describes your gender?
   A. Male
   B. Female

6. Which of the following best describes your age?
   A. 18 - 25
   B. 26 - 40
   C. 41 - 55
   D. 56 - 70
   E. 71 or older

7. How would you classify yourself?
   A. Arab
   B. Asian/Pacific Islander
   C. Black
   D. Caucasian/White
   E. Hispanic
   F. Indigenous/Aboriginal
G. Latino
H. Multiracial
I. Other ____________________________

THIS IS THE END OF THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!
APPENDIX 3: SURVEY FOR VOLUNTEERS

There are no foreseeable risks associated in participating in this study. All data will be maintained as anonymous. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the researcher. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before taking the survey.

For one's rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: Coordinator of Research Compliance, Office of Academic Research and Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, 765-285-5070, irb@bsu.edu.

SECTION ONE
Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether you AGREE OR DISAGREE with the following statements as they relate to your respective nonprofit organization with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

Strongly DISAGREE  1  2  3  4  5 Strongly AGREE

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. This organization can be relied on to keep its promise.
4. I feel very confident about this organization’s skills.
5. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
6. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
7. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
8. When I have an opportunity to interact with this organization, I feel that I have some sense of control over the situation.
9. This organization won’t cooperate with people like me.
10. I believe people like me have influence on the decision-makers of this organization.
11. I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me.
12. There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and people like me.
13. Compared to other organizations, I value my relationship with this organization more.
14. I have no desire to have a relationship with this organization.
15. I feel a sense of loyalty to this organization.
16. I am happy with this organization.
17. Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with people like me.
18. Most people enjoy dealing with this organization.
19. The organization fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.

SECTION TWO

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 whether you AGREE OR DISAGREE with the following statements as they relate to your respective nonprofit organization with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

**Strongly DISAGREE  1  2  3  4  5 Strongly AGREE**

1. The organization acknowledges my volunteer work in a timely manner.

2. The organization sends me thank you letters for my work.

3. The organization is not sincere when it thanks me for my contributions.

4. Because of my continued work with the organization, I am recognized as a friend.

5. The organization keeps me informed of the current programs and services it has to offer.

6. The organization sends me newsletters at least once a year.
7. The organization sends me annual financial reports.

8. The organization does not provide me with information about the current happenings of the organization.

9. The organization considers me when making decisions.

10. The organization does not use my time effectively.

11. I have confidence that the organization will use its resources responsibly.

12. The organization keeps me informed.

13. I only hear from the organization when it wants something from me.

14. The organization is more concerned with its fiscal health than with its relationship with me.

15. The organization invites me to participate in special events that it holds.

16. The organization truly cares about me.

SECTION THREE

Using the 5-point scale below, please indicate how important or accurate each of the following possible reasons for volunteering is for you in doing volunteer work at this organization. Record your answer in the space next to each item.

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<th>EXTREMELY important/accurate for you</th>
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1. Volunteering can help me get my foot in the door at a place where I’d like to work.


3. I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.

4. I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.

5. Volunteering makes me feel important.
6. No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.

7. I can make new contacts that might help my business career.

8. I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.


10. People I'm close to want me to volunteer.

11. Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.

12. By volunteering, I feel less lonely.

13. I am enjoying my volunteer experience.

14. My volunteer experience has been personally fulfilling.

15. This experience of volunteering with this organization has been a worthwhile one.

16. I have been able to make an important contribution by volunteering at this organization.

17. I have accomplished a great deal of “good” through my volunteer work at this organization.

SECTION FOUR

1. This nonprofit organization is centered on:
   A. Arts and humanities
   B. Education
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   C. Low

4. One year from now, will you be (please answer with your best guess as of today):
   A. Volunteering at this organization.
   B. Volunteering at another organization.
   C. Not volunteering at all.

5. Which best describes your gender?
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   A. 18 - 25
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**THIS IS THE END OF THE SURVEY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**