The Balancing Act: Examining How Older Adult Volunteers Juggle Multiple Roles

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“This material is based upon work funded by the Office of Research and Evaluation at the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and Senior Corps under Grant No. 17REHME001 through the National Service and Civic Engagement research grant competition. Opinion or points of view expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position that is endorsed by, CNCS or Senior Corps.”
Demographic shifts

- Workforce participation
- Caregiving
- Informal Helping
- Formal Volunteering
Background: Benefits of Volunteering

- Health
- Mental Health
- Life Satisfaction
- Health Behaviors
- Longevity
Conceptual Framework

**Role Theory**
Individuals have different social roles, roles come with social expectations that are fulfilled

**Scarcity Perspectives**
Energy spread out among roles is finite

**Expansion Perspectives**
Energy can be created from participation in multiple roles

**Role Conflict/Role Strain**
Role demands outstrip resources

**Role Enhancement**
Benefits gained from multiple roles/synergy created
Research Phases

**Phase I**
- Volunteer perspectives
- Volunteer survey

**Phase II**
- Focus on workers & caregivers
- RSVP program perspectives

**Phase III**
- Focus on workers & caregivers
- Additional data analysis
- Interviews with RSVP programs
Research Questions

1) Does role conflict predict satisfaction with, participation in, and/or intention to leave the volunteer role?

2) What are the compensatory strategies used by older adults to navigate role conflict and what benefits do older adults accrue in their volunteer roles that could effectively counterbalance role conflict?
Sample

Adults 55+

Current RSVP volunteer

6,796 surveys distributed nationwide
Defining Roles

**Worker**
- 1 or more hours per month working for pay

**Caregivers**
- 1 or more hours helping a friend or relative age 18 or older who has trouble taking care of themselves due to physical or mental illness, disability, or other reason

**Non-RSVP Volunteering**
- 1 or more hours of unpaid help to others outside of RSVP
Predictor Variables

Role Conflict (WAFCS)

Role Load (Total)

Role Load (Hours)
Control Variables

Demographics

• Age
• Gender
• Race
• Marital Status
• Income
• Education

Health and Well-being (PROMIS)
Outcome Variables

- Volunteer Satisfaction
- Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (BIAJS)
- Intent to Remain
- Volunteer Participation (RSVP Hrs/Month)
Analysis Approach

Descriptive Stats

Pearson Correlations

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

Mann-Whitney U & T-Testing

Inductive Content Analysis (open-ended ?s)

1st Entry: Predictor(s) alone

2nd Entry: Predictor(s) & Control Variables
Phase I Volunteer Survey Results
Recruitment

59 sites recruited

55 sites
27 states
80-1,800 vols/year
\( (M = 385) \)

Surveys allocated based on preference and volunteer diversity

6,796 surveys distributed by mail and e-mail
Intro letter
Survey (1 week later)

1,697 surveys (25 % response rate)
Age

- 55 to 65 Years: 18%
- 66 to 75 Years: 50%
- 76+ Years: 31%
- Age missing: 1%

Mean = 72.4
SD = 7.56
Gender

- Female: 72.40%
- Male: 26.6%
- Another Gender: 0.20%
- Gender missing: 0.80%
Household Income

- less than $20K: 11%
- $20K to less than $40K: 19%
- $40K to less than $60K: 18%
- $60K to less than $80K: 15%
- $80K to less than $100K: 10%
- $100K and above: 14%
- Income Missing: 13%
Race

- White: 90.60%
- African-American: 5.20%
- Race Missing: 1.80%
- Multi-Race: 1.20%
- Asian: 0.60%
- Native American: 0.30%
- Another Race: 0.30%
- Pacific Islander: 0.00%
Role Load and Intensity

Average hours in formal volunteering (RSVP)

22.6 hours/month

M = 53.17 hours/month

M = 42 hours/month

M = 19.41 hours/month
Conflict Differences

Role Conflict
For those who had additional roles:
Average conflict score: 7.49 (SD=5.05) Range from 5-35 (35 poss. Points)

• There are sig. differences in conflict scores between caregivers and non-caregivers
• There are sig. differences between workers and non-workers with regard to conflict scores
Role Load

Participation

Role Conflict

Satisfaction

Health
“In what ways has your volunteer work through RSVP helped you in your caregiving?”
Role Enhancement: Skills & Techniques

Communication
Social Skills
Organization
Time Management

Fundraising
Exercise
Instruction
Tax Prep

Care Approaches
Meal Preparation
My duties at our senior nutrition site is [sic] to help serve meds and read the menu and nutrition facts. This helps me to be a better caregiver by serving healthy meals. #603 (caregiver)
Role Enhancement: New Information & Resources

I am aware of community resources to share with others in need. #675 (informal volunteer)

I get to talk to others who do caregiving and get ideas on how to do things more efficiently. #546 (caregiver)
I volunteer with a digitizing project in records preservation. Through this project, I became involved with another non-profit history preservation project. This has led to volunteering with a veteran’s group in a lawn care project for the nonprofit. One led to another, and that led to another, so to speak. #8484 (informal volunteer)
The training I received from RSVP as a group exercise instructor in [Name of exercise program redacted] qualified me in my paid job as an exercise instructor, and Life Coach for the pre-diabetes program at the YMCA. #8887 (worker)
The organization I volunteer for with RSVP interacts with other volunteer organizations that I am a member of also. The cross-fertilization of being in all of these organizations helps all of the leaders know what the other organizations are doing, where they can work together on things, and share ideas that come up in one organization and are also useful in others. #9147 (informal volunteer)
For the short time I am volunteering at RSVP, it is like a vacation from my caregiving. I am able to put my worries on hold... #8013 (caregiver)
Indirect Benefits

- Socialization
- Personal Growth
- Greater Perspective
- Positive Emotional Benefits
- Staying Active/Busy
- Physical/Cognitive Benefits
Sources of Conflict: Roles

- Worker role conflict
- Informal volunteer conflict
- Caregiver conflict

Factors:
- Time constraints
- Energy & stamina
Role Conflict Examples

I give my time to volunteering only when [I’m] not working, so it is limited. #515 (informal volunteer & worker)

The reason I'd be a better RSVP worker without caregiving is simply because I'd have a little more time to volunteer. #8689 (caregiver)
Health Barriers

I wish I didn't have physical limitations so I could be more available to give more of myself. #8778 (open response comment)

Physical limitations prevent me from doing more volunteer work. Until 6 months ago, I also volunteered once a week at our no-kill cat shelter, animal protection association. Because of back pain, I can no longer do this, but I really loved it. #661 (open-response comment)
Managing Conflict

Caregivers
- Respite
- Taking care recipient along

Workers
- Vol. during off-work hours

Both
- Flexible scheduling/accommodations
- Time management skills
- Break from volunteering
- Meaningful volunteer work
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Conflict</th>
<th>Enhancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Time devoted across roles</td>
<td>• Direct benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connected with satisfaction</td>
<td>• Indirect benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Related to time and health</td>
<td>• Workers &amp; Caregivers are key</td>
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Implications

Encouraging older adults to participate in volunteer work in addition to other life role responsibilities through:

**Recruitment:**
- Articulating role-related benefits
- New recruitment avenues: employers, caregiver organizations, other civic organizations

**Retention:**
- Volunteer job flexibility/scheduling
- Volunteer assignment matches that will create role-related benefits
- Support volunteer health
Phase II RSVP Program Survey Results
Phase II Research Questions

- What role enhancement strategies have older adult volunteers employed to combat role conflict?

- What strategies have RSVP programs employed to assist older volunteers in managing role conflict?

- Based on study findings from Phase I, what recommendations do RSVP program directors have for addressing role conflict within older adult volunteering?
21 Surveys Returned

Average of 438 volunteers (SD = 197.84)
Range: 85-900 volunteers

Average of 73 program sites
SD = 56.83
Range: 8 to 211 sites
Supporting Caregivers

- Strategies that RSVP programs use to support caregivers
- Inclusion of care recipient
- Care and empathy
- Referrals to caregiver resources and supports
Inclusion of Care Recipient

“We allow for flexibility, and depending on the volunteer opportunity, we allow for volunteers to bring their loved one with them and find a way for them to participate as well. For example, the volunteer might be assembling packages for veterans and the loved one would be helping by tracking names and holding items until needed.” Program #1

“…one of our volunteers takes her husband with her to a food distribution. He sits there in a wheelchair and watches while she works. She says they both enjoy getting out.” Program #21
Expressing Care & Empathy

“As volunteer coordinator, I maintain contact via occasional emails and phone calls to let the volunteer know they are thought of by our organization during their time of caregiving. Thinking of you cards and notes are sent to the caregiving volunteer, likewise the person the volunteer is caring for, as appropriate.”

Program #4
Referrals and Resources and Supports

“We provide a volunteer caring companion for respite care. We offer caregiving support groups at our agency.” Program #12

“...being sure to listen to their needs and situation and to provide referrals for services that they might need in the community, such as caregiver respite.” Program #22
Supporting Workers

Strategies used to support working volunteers

Off-work hours volunteering

Intermittent and one-time volunteering

Electronic communication & extended program hours
Off-Work Hours

“We offer projects after working hours or on weekends that are family friendly to encourage all ages to attend. This allows for participants with various abilities to be active no matter what physical or mental limitations they may have.” Program #3

“We also have a list of outside agencies that need volunteers on evenings and weekends. Most of these volunteer stations are listed in 'other community priorities'. They give volunteers working full-time a chance to volunteer.” Program #10
Intermittent and One-Time Volunteering

“We offer special event opportunities that still meet a community need, such as monthly fresh produce distributions to people in need. However, volunteers can sign up to serve at one or multiple distributions. This allows for much flexibility to the volunteer.”

Program #19

“For example, one man who is working and volunteering has one special project he does each year. He is active a few times a year, but his main focus is this one project.”

Program #1
“We communicate by email to mitigate the problem of not being able to reach folks during our office hours.” Program #11

“For example, we run a Tax Counseling for the Elderly program and provide the training on Saturdays…” Program #26
Overlapping Strategies for Both Caregivers & Workers

Strategies that RSVP programs use to support caregivers and workers

- Assignment Accommodations
- Flexible and Creative Scheduling
- Breaks from Volunteering
Big Picture Takeaways

- Roles & Health Matter
- Volunteering Accrues Benefits Across Roles
- Volunteers & Programs Can Work Together To Manage Role Conflict
- For Programs, Empathy and Flexibility are Critical Approaches
Q & A
Phase III - Currently Underway

Additional Data Analysis
RSVP Program Interviews
Research Questions

• Who are the caregiver volunteers within the RSVP population?
• Who are the working volunteers within the RSVP population?
• What other activities are competing for their time?
• Overall, how satisfied are they with their volunteer experience?
• What comments have they provided about their RSVP experience that will help us to better recruit and retain them as volunteers?
• What are some models for how RSVP programs are successfully recruiting, supporting, and retaining caregiver and worker volunteers?
What are some models for how RSVP programs are successfully recruiting, supporting, and retaining caregiver and worker volunteers?

Currently conducting interviews with RSVP Programs!

Contact: jennifer.crittenden@maine.edu to participate
Juggling Multiple Roles: An Examination of Role Conflict and Its Relationship to Older Adult Volunteer Satisfaction and Retention

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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Interdisciplinary in Gerontology)
The Graduate School
The University of Maine
May 2010

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Elaborate on the context

Introduction
The face of older adult volunteering has been changing over time resulting in volunteer programs to innovate and respond to the new realities of the "retirement years." This shift has elicited new questions to be explored that will help the nonprofit sector anticipate and respond accordingly. In the spring of 2010 a multi-phase study, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, was launched to examine: 1) the relationship between holding multiple roles such as caring, working for pay, and informal volunteering and older adult volunteering outcomes; 2) the benefits that older adults gain from volunteering; and 3) the strategies used by both volunteers and volunteer programs to help older adults navigate increasing "role demands" of activities. The study yielded valuable information about how older adults and their volunteer programs are able to avoid and address role conflict. Findings from this study provide implications for volunteer programs that can be applied to help recruit and sustain older adults as volunteers.

This report provides a detailed summary of the key elements from the study on older adults and their volunteering. It includes a full technical documentation report for the Phase 1 volunteer survey can be found online. The report is also available by request from the study PI, Dr. Jennifer Colletta at jennifer.colletta@maine.edu.
mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/older-adult-volunteer-study/
Acknowledgements

Advisor: Dr. Sandra Butler, UMaine School of Social Work

Graduate Assistants: Leah Kravette ('19 MSW), Abbie Hartford, Nicholas Silver, and Rachel Coleman