

An Exploratory Evaluation of Volunteer Satisfaction at
Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle

by

Ellen Moore Osborne

Capstone project

Submitted to:

Non Profit Studies, SPCS
University of Richmond
Richmond, VA

December 17, 2018

Advisor: Dr. Andrew Schoeneman

Abstract

This paper examines volunteer satisfaction at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle. Volunteer satisfaction is important to nonprofit organizations that rely on them for sustained delivery of program services because satisfied volunteers bring long-term stability to an organization. This study determined that Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle's volunteer tutor retention rate is not necessarily indicative of volunteer satisfaction. Twelve past and present volunteer tutors were interviewed regarding their level of satisfaction, and 20 years' of quantitative data on volunteers' reasons for leaving the program were examined. While previous studies indicate that training, recognition, and screening to match volunteers to the tasks for which they are best suited are of primary importance in volunteer retention and satisfaction, the volunteers interviewed for this study place a higher value on the relationships they developed with their student partners. The volunteers also revealed that their level of satisfaction with the program was significantly influenced by their students' success. It is hoped that this study will inform program improvements at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle and provide insight to volunteer managers in similar programs.

Keywords: volunteers, retention, literacy, nonprofit

An Exploratory Evaluation of Volunteer Satisfaction at
Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle (LVCA) recruits and trains approximately 200 new tutors each year, yet cannot keep up with the demand from individuals requesting help learning to read, write, and speak the English language. The mission of the organization is to address low literacy among adults in the region through free, individualized instruction through the use of trained volunteer tutors, so that adults can become better workers, consumers, neighbors, citizens, and parents. Volunteers who serve in community-based literacy programs such as LVCA for an extended period of time offer many benefits to the organization because their experience with the institution contributes stability. The length of time a volunteer remains with an organization can be an indicator of volunteer satisfaction.

Volunteer retention is the primary subject that I explore in this paper. To enhance the experience of volunteers, I want to understand their motivations and reasons for leaving. In order to better understand why tutors left the Literacy Volunteers program, I interviewed eight volunteers who left the program and four who were still in the program. My hope is to discern if the causes of their leaving are within the organization's control and can be eliminated or ameliorated through program improvement.

When the organization understands what tutors need from the experience for it to be personally fulfilling, the organization can make programmatic changes to keep the volunteers engaged. Long-term volunteers who supply institutional knowledge form an allegiance with the organization that helps with new tutor recruitment and fundraising. A secondary research question will seek to discover what is unique about the volunteers for whom the experience is overwhelmingly positive. This exploratory study can help the organization understand why some

volunteers stay in the program for years and why some choose to leave early in their tenure. The satisfaction issues faced by participants in the Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle program have the possibility of being similar to any program that uses volunteers for sustained delivery of services.

The beneficiaries of Literacy Volunteer programs are traditionally considered to be the students, and test scores and goal achievements are standard evaluation metrics of their success. In the course of my time as executive director at LVCA, however, I have come to understand that the volunteers who deliver this service also substantially benefit from the program. The staff at LVCA often hears from volunteers that they believe they get as much out of the volunteer experience as their student gets out of the education. Both learners and educators gain from the program, especially when a safe and trusting relationship is developed. Perry and Luk (2018) describe the ideal teaching situation as transformative, where educators become more than “just teachers” (p. 22). Can LVCA make the exchange of knowledge within the student/tutor pair transformative, and not merely transactional?

Based on research studies of similar types of organizations, the staff and board at LVCA can expect a volunteer retention rate of approximately 70%, which is higher than the 68% the organization experienced in FY17. The primary reason to increase LVCA’s retention rate is that it is more cost-effective than continually recruiting and training new volunteers. Additionally, “volunteer outcomes” is one of the four measures of the impact of volunteer organizations as described by Perry and Thomson (2004). In the case of LVCA, increasing the positive experience of the volunteer will result in better volunteer outcomes and is likely to affect student outcomes. LVCA aims to develop better ways of retaining these volunteers from one year to the next.

In many ways, volunteers are LVCA's greatest resource. In fiscal year 2018, 440 volunteer tutors contributed 31,061 hours of instruction-related labor (Literacy Volunteers, 2018, p.1). According to the *Independent Sector*, the value of a volunteer hour in Virginia is \$24.69, which means tutors contributed labor valued at \$766,896 during the year (2018, para. 1). This is the manpower and economic equivalent of having approximately fifteen full-time teachers on staff, but with the variety of background experiences of 440 different individuals.

The 440 volunteers who participated in the program in fiscal year 2018 are similar in demographics to those who volunteer every year. They range in age from 18 to 87, with education levels from "some college" to "doctorate degree." Approximately half of these volunteers are in the labor force, 41% are retired, and a small percentage of them choose not to work. The majority of these tutors live in Albemarle County (58%), while 32% live in the city of Charlottesville and 10% live in one of the surrounding counties. As tutors, women outnumber men 64% to 36% (Overstreet, 2018).

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle served 482 adult students in fiscal year 2018, and the majority of them (93%) were immigrants or refugees who are English language learners (Literacy Volunteers, 2018). As Charlottesville and Albemarle are designated resettlement areas for refugees through the U. S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, there is always a high need for English language learning services. Both the city of Charlottesville and the county of Albemarle offer English classes for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), but Literacy Volunteers is unique in that it offers one-to-one instruction. This individual instruction is especially important for those who have schedule conflicts and cannot make class times or have personal situations that would render class participation difficult. Testing of LVCA students

shows educational level gains that indicate their students progress at the expected rate or better when compared to other Adult Education programs in the area (NRS, 2018).

As the population needing services has grown, so has Literacy Volunteers. In the seven-year span between fiscal years 2012 and 2018 (inclusive), the organization has seen a 102% increase in number of students served during the year, from 239 to 482. In 2012, LVCA had 191 tutors in the program; in 2018 there were 440. The organization's budget has also doubled, from approximately \$200,000 to \$400,000 annually.

While the organization has grown in many areas, the tutor retention rate, measured by the number of volunteers returning from one year to the next, has been inconsistent. From 2012 to 2017, the rate at which volunteers committed to an additional year of instruction with Literacy Volunteers has ranged from 64% to 68%, dropping to an all-time low of 60% in 2015. Foster-Bey, Grimm, and Deitz (2007) found that retention rates in the social and community services field among agencies participating in their study ranged from 66% to 72%. In their study, volunteers who donated 100 or more hours per year had at least an 80% retention rate. In the Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle program, volunteers are expected to make an initial commitment of at least 2 hours per week for an entire year, a minimum of 100 hours. Based on the demographics of the LVCA tutor base, research from Foster-Bey et al. (2007), and clear expectations of volunteers, it is reasonable to set a goal of having a retention rate of at least 70% each year. For LVCA, increasing the retention rate from 64% to 70% translates into retaining approximately 24 more tutors each year.

The cost of recruiting and training tutors is a significant expense for Literacy Volunteers, and, according to internal budget breakdowns for the organization, approximately \$50,000 of staff time is allocated to the recruitment and training of volunteers. The organization conducts

eleven all-day pre-service training events each year. Additional recruitment costs, such as advertising and training space, account for another \$20,000, bringing the total cost of acquiring qualified tutors to \$70,000 each year. The retention rate indicates the organization loses approximately 1/3 of its volunteers each year, which is not cost effective.

In addition to losing the contribution of time that volunteers donate, there is also a financial cost when volunteers leave the program. Financial donations from volunteers are another indicator of volunteer satisfaction, and, based on donor reports, LVCA volunteers are also likely to become financial donors (Osborne, 2018a). This is not unusual, according to Van Slyke and Johnson (2006): “The probability of giving during the year was found to be 25% higher for volunteers than for nonvolunteers. The annual financial donation for volunteers was almost double that of nonvolunteers” (p. 484). Giving and volunteering households give 43% more in total to all organizations than giving-only households (Independent Sector, 2002). In FY18, 129 of the 359 individual donors (36%) to LVCA in FY18 were also volunteers, accounting for \$26,875 in income (Osborne, 2018a). This represents 45% of all the individual donation income to LVCA during the year and about 7% of total income.

While the organization has been in existence in the Charlottesville/Albemarle area since the 1980s, the LVCA student demographic has changed significantly in the last decade. There are fewer individuals who are native to the area requesting basic literacy services. The unemployment rate in the area has fallen below 3% for several years (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), and traditionally during times of high employment there is less call for services from English-speaking individuals. Between FY 2012 and FY 2018, the area has officially accepted 1,646 refugees and immigrants, according to Harriet Kuhr, Executive Director of the International Rescue Committee (Personal communication, Sept. 11, 2018). Many of these

refugees and immigrants find their way to Literacy Volunteers after their initial time-limited services from the IRC end. The International Rescue Committee and “word of mouth” are the top sources of student referrals (Overstreet, 2018).

Literacy Volunteers does not advertise for students because there are usually 20 and 40 students on the waiting list for a tutor. The number of accepted students continually outpaces the number of volunteers who are recruited and trained to be tutors even though LVCA hired an employee to focus specifically on recruitment in 2013. Fortunately, some tutors agree to teach more than one student.

Each tutors is matched with a student, and the pair work together for approximately a year or until the student’s educational goal is met. Both the tutor and the student have the opportunity to express to the staff if the match is not a good personality fit. According to Program Manager Steven Reid, the vast majority of tutor/student matches are successful. In the past year, Reid could think of only three that ended shortly after they began due to complaints from the student. In each case, the student felt the tutor was not a good match for his or her learning style. Of the remaining matches that ended early, schedule conflicts were cited most often as the reason (personal communication, September 10, 2018).

Goals of Research

The goal of this research is to discover the main reasons volunteers left or stayed in LVCA’s tutoring program between 2012 and 2018 and to suggest solutions for improving volunteer satisfaction. Our volunteer database records provide one source of insight. Over the course of the past seven fiscal years, 301 volunteers who served the organization for a year or less did not renew or continue their commitment to service. Over 200 of them reported they left due to “health problems,” “job change,” or “left area,” and 61 left the organization for reasons

marked “dissatisfied with experience” or “other.” The remaining 102 individuals (36.2%) left for reasons that were not clear to the staff. Unfortunately, the organization does not conduct a formal exit interview for volunteers.

During a presentation on volunteer motivation in the spring of 2018, I heard anecdotal comments such as, “At first I didn’t think I was a good teacher,” “I needed a lot of support in the beginning,” and, “My student kept cancelling our appointments and it was frustrating to my schedule” (personal communication, April 12, 2018). This type of problem can be addressed by changes in the organization, resulting in greater volunteer satisfaction.

Overview of this study

This paper presents the study in four chapters. In the next chapter, a literature review of research studies related to volunteerism will focus on nonprofits that use volunteers for sustained delivery of direct services, such as community-based literacy organizations. Material that examines volunteer motivations at organizations where any type of relationship-based mentoring occurs will be relevant, but particular emphasis is given to volunteerism in the adult education context. I will not include material where the volunteer activity involves working with children, because working with children introduces another set of motivations that are likely unrelated to the adults-only program at LVCA.

The third chapter includes a discussion of the interview method and findings from conversations with former tutors who left the program and current tutors who are still enjoying the experience. I will analyze how factors related to students, to LVCA staff, and to tutors themselves contribute to volunteers’ dissatisfaction with their experience and will attempt to determine which of these variables lie within the organization’s control, at least to some extent, and which lie beyond our scope of influence. I interpreted the findings based on my knowledge

of the relevant literature on volunteerism and my experience working at the organization as Executive Director.

I anticipate the practical lessons and implications for community-based literacy organizations to inspire new ideas for ensuring volunteer satisfaction. When volunteers are fulfilled, the students benefit from the tutor's positive feelings about the organization. The results of this study will also inform database improvements, so that organizations who use the database developed for Virginia-based literacy organizations can better access information on why volunteers leave.

While this exploratory study will garner information specific to the tutors at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle, I expect a discussion of the findings will be relevant to many community-based literacy organizations as well as to other nonprofits that use volunteers to deliver direct services in a mentoring type of situation. Based on the findings, I may be able to offer practical ways to improve volunteer satisfaction. The paper concludes with suggestions for specific action steps to improve volunteer satisfaction in the hope of retaining more volunteers at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle, and indications for future research.

Literature Review

This chapter will address the history of volunteerism in the United States and volunteerism specifically in literacy organizations as the adult education movement came of age. I will also explain the approach of literacy volunteerism as a means to empower social change, as well as a means for individual empowerment, and why those goals are sometimes in tension with each other. I will examine a broad range of research on personal motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic, for why individuals become volunteers.

Volunteerism in a Historical Context

Ever since French sociologist and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville published *Democracy in America* in 1835, Americans have recognized their tradition of volunteerism and celebrated their inclination to form civil associations. The U.S. has taken volunteerism to new heights in the 21st century. During 2016 there were 62.8 million volunteers working in nonprofits across the country, which is 25% of the adult population donating their time to worthy causes (The Charitable Sector, n.d.).

Volunteerism has provided a level playing field and an opportunity for everyone to contribute to the good of society, regardless of skill level, interests, or gender to contribute to the good of society. Bryer (2014), frames volunteerism this way:

Volunteerism represents a people invested in their community, willing to sacrifice time and resources to benefit a cause or idea that is potentially wholly apart from their own material interests. As a means, volunteerism is a gateway to broaden civic, social, and political life. (p. 7)

Many scholars argue that understanding volunteerism helps develop a more complete picture of American society. By including volunteerism, women are more fully included in this

history, because they contributed untold hours toward the common good in many unpaid positions before they were allowed to participate in the workforce. Ellis and Campbell (2005) make the case that sometimes volunteers underestimate the impact of their work and contributions to our shared history (p. vii). For many decades, volunteering has been perceived as “women’s work” or wrongly assumed as work done by untrained people (p. viii).

Modern-day literacy voluntarism has a foundation in the settlement houses that were established after the waves of immigrants began arriving in the 1840s. Immigrants needed education to fit into their new country, and ethnic societies were established to help them assimilate. Settlement houses provided services to the newcomers and also awakened the sensibilities of the more fortunate people in the area (Cass and Manser, 1976, p. 18). The need for English education intersected historically with the growth of women’s voluntary service, allowing Literacy Volunteer programs to thrive.

Volunteerism in Literacy Organizations

Literacy and adult education organizations have long been reliant on volunteerism to serve their clients. I will first address how the adult education movement came into being and how volunteer organizations have filled the service gaps. I will also examine differing arguments for the mission of adult education, as education can be for personal and individual gain or for broader empowerment of society. In fact, at times, the organizational mission, organizational funders, volunteer motivations, and the individual learner’s needs operate in tension with one another.

The adult education movement. Adult education is usually defined as something other than traditional schooling in order to supplement a skills deficiency in an adult learner. This type of education is often referred to as “adult basic education” or “functional literacy” (Kidd, 1973,

p. 197). This field of adult education fits in neither the K-12 system nor the college system, and is often sponsored by community colleges. In general, adult education services are provided for those individuals aged 16 and up who drop out of school, have a learning disability, or who have limited English proficiency. Degree-granting programs at colleges and universities are usually not considered part of the adult education program.

In Virginia, the adult education field encompasses adult basic education programs for students working below the ninth-grade level who have the following goals:

- Transitioning to adult secondary education programs, which are designed for individuals to acquire a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential
- To learn functional English, for those with a first language other than English (English for Speakers of Other Languages program)
- To obtain workforce and civics skills in programs specifically designed for English language learners (the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program)
- Workforce preparation activities for adults to learn specific skills needed in the local workforce (Virginia Department of Education, n.d.).

In 1955, the U. S. Office of Education established an adult education section in an attempt to encourage educators and the public to accept adult education as a part of regular educational programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, pg. 4). Adult education began to garner wider public support during the 1960s with the advent of the Economic Opportunity Act that established the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program and the Adult Education Act that created links to workforce training. Section 310 of the Adult Education Act mandated that at least 10% of the funds be spent on experimental education projects for adults, and this money was often designated for community-based literacy programs. Over the years, these so-called

“310 projects” were important sources of funding for volunteer programs such as Laubach Literacy and Literacy Volunteers of America (Ilsley, 1985, p. 13).

Ilsley (1985) complained that the literature about volunteerism in literacy organizations is descriptive and case specific and did not build upon itself. He claimed that none of the documented 310 projects substantially referenced any of the others, possibly due to the continued need to appear experimental to qualify for funding. I can understand why none of the 310 projects built upon previous research—my experience is that many community-based literacy organizations operate in silos, with economic self-preservation being of primary importance. In my experience, the research on volunteerism at literacy organizations has improved in the last 30 years, partly due to the professionalization of the nonprofit sector.

Frank C. Laubach created Laubach Literacy Action in 1955, which was built on the “Each One Teach One” strategy that was designed so that anyone, not just a professional reading instructor, could help someone learn to read (Ilsley, 1985, p. 11). Laubach Literacy Action was also evangelical in nature, and this religious element influenced curriculum for many years (Christoph, 2009). Ruth Colvin, who founded Literacy Volunteers of America in 1962, had been a literacy volunteer with Laubach Literacy. When she began recruiting and training tutors for Literacy Volunteers of America, the majority of them were middle-aged women “who continue to be the backbone of our organization” (Colvin, 1987, p. 32). Today, 56 years later, the typical Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle tutor is a 54 year-old white female (Tebbenhoff, 2018).

The mission of Literacy Volunteers of America focused on improving individual lives through literacy, a narrower focus than the original mission of Laubach Literacy. Laubach’s services were designed to “empower adults and their families by assisting them to acquire the

literacy practices and skills they need to function more effectively in their daily lives and participate in the transformation of their societies” (Laubach Literacy Staff, 2003, p.11). Laubach Literacy, perhaps because of its global perspective, placed importance on the societal transformative nature of education for society as a whole where Literacy Volunteers of America stressed individual transformation. ProLiteracy has retained an element of Laubach’s influence with a worldwide focus, and “awareness and advocacy” is part of their mission (Adult Literacy Advocacy, 2018, p. 1).

Since the 1960s, when federal funding in the United States for adult basic education was first legislated, volunteer tutors have played an extremely significant instructional role (Belzer, 2006a). Nationally, 42% of the instructors in programs that received federal funding in the year 2000 were volunteers (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). When the number of community-based literacy organizations that do not usually receive federal funding are taken into consideration, it is clear that volunteer tutors are the majority of adult education instructors. Ziegler, McCallum, and Bell (2009) claim that 60% of all instructors in adult literacy programs in the U.S. are volunteers. With such a large amount of instruction being contingent upon volunteers, it is important to understand what motivates these volunteers to initially decide to do this work, and what motivates them to stay.

Volunteers who are working in one-to-one tutoring situations are primarily focused on the success of their individual student. The student’s progress has an impact on the volunteer’s ego and sense of satisfaction with a job well done. In my experience, this individualism, combined with the problem of community-based organizations typically operating in silos, places extreme importance on documenting the positive changes that take place in a student’s life due to acquiring literacy skills. However, we know from our understanding of Laubach Literacy

history that literacy initiatives can have an effect on entire communities and not just in an individual's position in life.

Empowerment initiatives within adult education. Community-based adult education can advance both personal empowerment and social justice. The role of literacy in a community's self-determination cannot be underestimated. An example in U. S. history comes from the "Freedom Summer" campaign in 1964 when volunteers in the south opened forty-one new "freedom schools" to serve 2100 students independent of state control according to the Freedom School Report (as cited in Sturkey, 2010, p. 1). African Americans recognized literacy as key to their advancement. At the Freedom Schools, "The hope that Blacks could participate fully in American democratic life was a precondition for activist' pedagogy, as for their politics" (Perlstein, 2002). Literacy instruction helped overcome the disenfranchisement of this group, as literacy tests were used to disqualify individuals from voting until the Voting Rights Act ended this practice in the South in 1965 (Literacy Tests, 2018).

Heaney (1995) is deeply critical of the U. S. literacy initiative because of the very individualism touted as strengths by traditionalists in adult education. He calls for redefining the problem to understand literacy in a broader context of class, gender, and race (p. 7). "Illiteracy is not an educational problem. It is a political problem leaving millions in the United States without voice in decisions which affect day-to-day life," he said. Heaney finds fault with the idea that individuals are asked to overcome the limitations of social class by personal effort and skill development:

Most literacy efforts in the United States are de-contextualized, self-defined as neutral, without political agenda. Which is to say, the political agenda of literacy in the United States is usually to minimize disruptions to the social order by

enlightening individuals willing to conform to the standards of a meritocracy. The deeper, more profound, political purpose of literacy—the advancement of social equality and participation in the decisions affecting day-to-day life—is ill-served by programs which merely foster the advancement of individuals in a serendipitous pursuit of jobs and independence. (p. 7)

In my experience with community-based literacy organizations, few volunteers are looking at the bigger problems of social class. Instead, many volunteers identify illiteracy as a deficiency in skills and something that the volunteer has the power to fix.

Adult education programs in the U.S. address two types of adult learners. Some adults for whom English is their first language are deficient in basic skills, and they are called “basic literacy” students. Others speak another language and are English language learners. The desire to serve these latter students grew out of a desire to Americanize newcomers; additionally, the aim of the education was for the benefit of the public, not the individual good (Ferguson, 1988).

Perry and Luk (2018) argue that the contributions of volunteer tutors should be examined to determine if their thinking and practice are aligned to bring about true and meaningful transformation to the lives of learners, or to merely bring a student’s skills up to meet the status quo (p. 20). In Perry and Luk’s research to determine if volunteers in an independent community-based organization could be agents of social change, they found that although tutors were aware of a critical consciousness about the effect of literacy in society, they still struggled with understanding the systemic causes of the hurdles learners face, such as poverty (p. 29). In fact, the study suggested that tutors were helping learners to cope the best they could with their life situations, but not instigating

real change in circumstance (p. 28). While the tutors' consciousness was raised, they did not have the tools or knowledge to take the next steps toward improving the lives of their students.

Funding influences the perspectives that are embraced in a literacy organization. Davis (1991) found that adult basic education programs based in community colleges, universities, and adult high-school classes reflected the values of the sponsoring institutions, which are typically aligned with the dominant class (p. 34). Literacy education in organizations primarily funded through government sources requires outcome measures based on standardized test scores and workplace productivity. Teaching is approached with the attitude that an inability to read represents an individual deficiency in the learner (p. 35), instead of a problem with the social system as Heaney suggests.

In contrast, literacy education in a typical community-based organization focuses on increasing the ability of learners to fully participate in a democracy, not just to become better workers (Davis, 1991, p. 37). Community-based organizations value the empowerment, social mobility, and equality that come along with the acquisition of skills, even if it does not result in broad societal transformation as Perry and Luk (2018) found. The staff and volunteers at community organizations often rely on the personal nature of relationship for this empowerment to take place, according to Cranton and Wright (2008):

The educators who are learning companions in literacy education . . . listen, use stories, learners' experiences, build respect and trust, and help their learners not merely to improve their reading and writing but to find a personal voice that gives them the courage to want to learn. (p.45)

In summary, literacy education has the power to create both societal change and individual change, and volunteer instructors are entrenched in both community-based literacy organizations and state-sponsored adult education systems. Community-based literacy organizations often have the independence to claim advocacy and empowerment as part of their mission, but many of them focus on the learners' individual improvement. Quantifying and documenting the transformative effect of literacy education on individuals and entire communities is an area that requires further study.

Volunteer Motivations

Volunteering is traditionally thought to primarily benefit a nonprofit organization or the community receiving the good works. However, there is also a return value to volunteering, which can be a strong motivating factor. Ilsley (1990) states that reliance on volunteerism has been so central to our society and traditions that everyone assumes we know what it is and why people do it. He states that, "attempts to unravel the complexities of voluntary action have relied heavily on explanation of motivational, personality, and psychological features of volunteers" and complains that research has been presented "from the point of view of either social science or psychology theorists or of volunteer managers" instead of the volunteers (p.13). To address Ilsley's complaint, in this study I had the opportunity to listen to the volunteers themselves.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Volunteer Motivations. Motives for volunteering can be *intrinsic* or *extrinsic*. An intrinsic motive is one based on self-determination theory, and related to a need for competence (desire to be able to handle tasks), autonomy (desire to feel a sense of choice), and relatedness (desire to feel connected to others) (Deci, et al. 2001, p. 931). These three psychological needs are often combined into an index of general need satisfaction (Gagné, 2003, p. 201). When people are intrinsically motivated to engage in an activity, they find the

activity inherently interesting and enjoyable. Bidee, et al. (2012) determined that when people are intrinsically motivated to volunteer, the quality of the work is usually high because they find the activity interesting and enjoyable (p. 35). Kidd (1973) defined intrinsic motives as those that prompt action for the chance to use special skills, the opportunity to work with peers, the pleasure of the activity, or for the need of something to do (p. 103). A volunteer who is motivated by intrinsic reasons participates in the activity for internal satisfaction and often does not need accolades.

In contrast, extrinsic motivations relate to an end product or payoff for the volunteer. In the case of Literacy Volunteers, an example of an extrinsic motivation for volunteering could be to gain experience to put on a résumé. Extrinsic motivations exist along a continuum according to how much the behavior gets integrated and internalized. Sometimes volunteers, over time, can find enough value in activities that extrinsic motivations become intrinsic (Oostlander, Güntert, & Wehner, 2013). Gagné (2003) found that incentive systems (which are extrinsic motivators) are not an effective means of inspiring behavior such as volunteerism. In fact, several studies have found that incentives can decrease subsequent helping (p. 200). This aligns with what Tang, Morrow-Howell, and Hong (2009) found in their study of older volunteers: a longer period of commitment was associated with a lower level of incentive (p. 178). Individuals who cite an extrinsic motivation, such as strengthening a résumé, will probably not be long-term volunteers at LVCA.

Motivation and personal values. When personal values are in alignment with the volunteer activity, volunteers are likely to maintain satisfaction for a longer period of time and stay with the organization. Studies by Clary and associates found that “volunteers who received benefits congruent with personally important functions had greater satisfaction with their

volunteer activity. . . and greater intentions to continue to volunteer in the future” (Clary, et al., 1998, p. 1528).

Illesley (1990) emphasizes that motivation changes over time, and length of service is not an accurate way to judge the strength of commitment. In Illesley’s study, volunteer motives were related to the choice of organization: volunteers chose an organization that seemed likely to fulfill their initial desires. But as time passed and they got to know the organization better, motivations changed as they become more or less aligned with the mission. Illesley states, “the more deeply volunteers become involved with an organization and its mission, the more fluid their motives become” (p. 22). Illesley warns that some organizations lose volunteers because they continually treat them as if they have the same motives as new volunteers (p. 31). Illesley (1990) and Clary (1998) appear to contradict each other.

The Volunteer Function Inventory. Common themes among volunteer motivations can be identified. Clary, Snyder, and Ridge (1992) grouped many of the reasons individuals are motivated to volunteer into the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI), assuming that volunteering serves some function in an individual’s life. This tool offers a helpful framework for classifying volunteer motivation at LVCA as it describes a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors for volunteers. Through a series of 30 questions, the authors of the VFI break volunteer motivations down into six categories: (1) values, such as helping the less fortunate; (2) understanding, where the volunteer is seeking to learn; (3) enhancement, whereby one is seeking to grow psychologically; (4) career, to gain experience to help in the workforce; (5) social, to fill one’s need for interaction; and (6) protective, which protects one’s ego by reducing guilt over one’s own good fortune in life. In my examination of volunteer motives of tutors at LVCA, I have come to understand that the protective function has both a positive and negative

connotation. As Clary et al. describe the protective function in a negative light as “reducing guilt,” the positive side appears to be sharing one’s perceived fortunes by “paying it forward.”

Best Practices in Volunteer Retention

Best practices in volunteer retention typically focus on recognition, training, and screening volunteers for the appropriate tasks. Retention is related to an organization’s capacity to provide for the volunteers. “Retention appears to be very much a product of what charities do directly for their volunteers” (Hager and Brudney, 2004, p.9).

McCurley and Lynch (2011) claim that how volunteers are managed and supported has an impact on retention, and they quote the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies study in 2008:

Volunteers stay when they have a sense of belonging to the organization, when they feel satisfied and recognized, and when they learn new things or see opportunities for growth. Volunteers leave when there are no meaningful activities, when they feel unappreciated or unsupported. (p. 210)

McCurley and Lynch also stress the importance of recognizing critical incident points at which the volunteer will review his or her decision to remain a volunteer. These points are typically at initial contact, during the first month, sixth month, and at the first anniversary or end of initial term of commitment (pp. 218-220).

Tang et al. (2009) also make the case that organizational activities determine the rate of volunteer retention. In a study of volunteers aged 50 and older, they examined the effects of volunteer role flexibility, incentive, role recognition, and training. They found that volunteers stayed in the programs longer when they received more training, a higher level of role recognition, and a lower level of incentives (such as stipends or reimbursements). Since the

research indicates that retention is a product of what charities do for their volunteers, I will examine the three areas over which an organization may have control: Recognition, Training, and Screening.

Recognition. Formal and informal volunteer recognition activities may affect volunteer satisfaction and volunteer retention. Volunteers who are motivated by community approval—an extrinsic motivation—need formal recognition. Volunteers who have a primary motivation focused on helping the clientele will feel more honored by a system that recognizes the *client's* achievements and the volunteer's contribution toward it (McCurley & Lynch, 2011, p. 223). Fisher and Cole (1993) write of the importance of recognition events: “Such events assist in the development of a climate that positively influences volunteer motivation and develops strong connections among volunteers within the organization, between volunteers and paid staff, and between the work of volunteers and the organization's mission” (p. 69). Tang et al. (2009) found that recognition was important for older adults because the volunteer role helps him or her continue to be productive after retirement. Currently 61% of the tutors at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle are aged 55 and older, so recognition is an important factor to consider.

Hagar and Brudney's study (2004) found that charities that used episodic volunteers—those with many volunteers who contribute few hours—are more likely to conduct recognition activities than charities that use sustained volunteers for delivery of service over a significant length of time (p. 6). McCurley and Lynch (2011) suggest that day-to-day exchanges have as powerful an effect as recognition and appreciation. Small gestures and interactions experienced in daily life can foster a sense of belonging in the volunteer (p. 223). For some organizations, recognition activities are not seen as a strong investment in volunteers compared to activities

such as training and professional development. An ideal recognition system in an organization will likely include a mixture of different procedures and events in order to meet all the volunteer needs (p. 224). Pidgeon (1998) emphasizes the need for recognition to be individualized, as some individuals will not want public recognition. He summarizes the issue as, “The important thing is to know each volunteer’s needs and desires and to make an effort to fulfill them” (p. 291). Hagar and Brudney (2004) found that charities operating in the health subsector were most likely to have adopted all of the best practices for volunteer retention, which they attribute to a greater number of resources and a higher level of professionalization (p. 8).

Training. In the establishment of the Literacy Volunteers model, Ruth Colvin and her associates paid close attention to the training and equipping of volunteers—an emphasis which is still important to Literacy Volunteer programs. New volunteer training and in-service training can equip a volunteer to feel confident in his or her work, which may help reduce turnover. Furthermore, most programs that use volunteer tutors require initial training and then follow-up training (Belzer, 2006a). Participation in lengthy training indicates a substantial level of commitment at the outset, and the training attracts individuals who likely have good intentions for following through with teaching. Literacy Volunteers of America required participation in 12 to 15 hours of training (Colvin, 1987), and Laubach Literacy Action, another national literacy organization, required 12 hours of training (Belzer, 2006b, p. 113).

Newton, Becker, and Bell (2014), found that investment in professional development is a two-way street. Volunteers may be inclined to stay with an organization when they perceive the organization is investing in them by offering learning opportunities (p. 526). Their study used the Volunteer Function Inventory to determine motives for joining an organization, and discovered that volunteers with the primary motive of “understanding”—seeking to learn something new—

were more committed to the organization as learning development opportunities increased (p. 527).

Although there is a strong history of training models developed by the two national literacy organizations in the 1960s through 1980s, Perry and Hart (2012) found that institutions vary greatly in the quality and delivery of literacy volunteer training. Training built confidence in the volunteers, but that did not always correspond to competence.

However, given the high rate of turnover among volunteer educators, confidence may not be a small matter and could make the difference between an educator who persists in teaching (and seeks additional professional development or self-education opportunities) and one who does not. (p. 118)

Volunteers in Perry and Hart's study requested to be like apprentices in the program and spend time with someone already tutoring. They also identified access to materials and resources as a significant benefit (2012).

Researchers have found that credentials, either a Bachelor's or higher degree, or a teaching certificate, mattered for success in instruction (Ziegler et al., 2009). Another researcher found that training programs are ineffective in preparing volunteer educators, as those who are not credentialed tend to use instructional practices that reflected their own learning experiences instead of techniques based on current theory and practice in adult education (Ceprano, 1995). Volunteer training events at literacy organizations, limited by time, tend to convey broad ideas instead of the technical aspects of teaching literacy (Belzer, 2006a).

Perry and Hart, in *I'm Just Kind of Winging It* (2012), found a very uneven landscape in the way institutions teach literacy among refugee populations. Even certified teachers felt unprepared to teach English language learners, especially when the students had limited prior

schooling. Both certified and uncertified educators needed support for teaching adults who did not speak English in the form of mentoring, a reference person, and social networking among educators. In fact, one of the volunteers in Perry and Hart's study claimed that having a "reference person" was what had encouraged her to stick with tutoring for a while (p. 119).

Continued training is expected in many organizations. For instance, Skoglund (2006), in a study of volunteers working at Caring Hearts, a bereavement program administered at a military hospital in Texas, found that volunteers expected additional during their time at the organization. They wanted annual refresher courses and regular professional development workshops, and identified ongoing training as an area influencing their decision to stay.

Screening. The screening of volunteers refers to discovering which tasks are appealing to specific volunteers, and appropriately matching them to those tasks. Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Abemarle uses volunteers for office tasks, board work, and on committees, but for the purposes of this paper I am only interested in the task of tutoring. Participants who attend the pre-service training have selected to become tutors and work as instructors, thus screening themselves into the position. In my experience at Literacy Volunteers, a few who attend the training session each year determine the activity is not what they anticipated, and request some other activity for service because they want to stay involved in the organization.

Most of the literature around screening and matching of volunteers to the appropriate task is connected to matching volunteers to experiences that fulfill their original motivation for volunteering. Many studies use the Volunteer Function Inventory, and find that volunteers reported greater satisfaction the more their experiences matched their reasons for helping (Finkelstein, 2008; Warner, Newland, & Green, 2011). My research will be another case study to add to the volume of organizations reviewed.

Method and Findings

This study explores the feelings that tutors have about their experience at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle. Through conversations with tutors, I seek to understand the level of satisfaction volunteers feel about several areas of the program. Twelve volunteer tutors were interviewed for this study: four are currently active, and eight have left Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle sometime in the last three years. The interviews were conducted by phone or in person over the course of four weeks, and most lasted approximately 30 minutes. Ten of the interviews were recorded and transcribed and I took extensive notes during the remaining two.

Selection of Participants

The organization has data on 1642 volunteers who attended a required initial training event between 1988 and September 2018 (although the data appear inconsistent prior to 1996). In addition to demographic data on these individuals, records include the date each tutor entered and left the program, how many hours of volunteer work he or she contributed, and the reason for leaving. The system auto-calculates how many days a tutor is in the program, and it is helpful to know how the hours a volunteer has contributed to the program are distributed over a period of time. I did not select anyone for interviews who left the program prior to 2015 because I am most interested in how our current program with current staff can be improved. Also excluded from interviews were individuals who identified a practical reason, obviously beyond organizational control, for leaving the program, such as “moved/left area,” “health reasons,” or “job conflict.”

Study participants fall into three categories. The first category comprises volunteers who were marked “Dissatisfied with the experience” or “Other” as their reason for leaving LVCA. I

identified that they were knowledgeable enough about the program because they had volunteered long enough to gain some teaching experience with a student. These individuals remained in the program a minimum of 120 days (at least four months) and met with their students for at least 20 hours of instruction each (approximately 10 tutoring sessions).

The second category of participants comprises individuals who left the program and were marked as having “fulfilled commitment.” Tutors commit to a year of service. The commitment ends at a logical point in the student’s study, which is usually at the time the student is retested to see if he or she has made an educational gain. This group of tutors contributed 54 to 262 tutoring hours over terms of service lasting 406 to 1795 days (slightly more than a year to almost five years). One tutor left the program after multiple years during which she taught three students. It is important to know why these individuals did not continue tutoring after successful completion of at least one year.

The third category of participants comprises current volunteers. All of the tutors in this category have taught multiple students. These selections were made using convenience sampling, as these tutors were in and out of the LVCA office during the time of this study.

All prospective respondents received an email requesting a 30-minute interview to discuss their experience. I did not follow up with non-respondents. Although I have been director of Literacy Volunteers since the fall of 2011, I personally knew only two of the individuals interviewed for the project; one is on the LVCA board, and I serve on a different community board with the other. The table below indicates who responded to my requests for interviews.

Table 1.

Response rate for interview requests

Category of participant	Requests	Interviews	Response Rate
“Dissatisfied with program”/ “other”	9	3	33%
“Fulfilled commitment”	13	5	38%
Still active in program	6	4	66%
Total	28	12	42.8%

Demographics of participants

The demographics of participants in the study approximately mirror the overall demographics of the volunteers at LVCA. For further details on the demographics of the tutor population, see Appendix A.

Table 2.

Demographics of study participants compared to volunteer population

	All Volunteers 2012-2018	Study Participants
Gender		
Female	75%	75%
Male	25%	25%
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	4%	8%
Asian	3%	8%
Hispanic/ Latino	3%	0%
White	90%	84%
Age		
18-44	31%	25%
45-64	29%	33%
65+	40%	42%
Education		
Some college or less	12%	17%
Undergraduate Degree	43%	66%
Graduate Degree	45%	17%

The Questions

All interviewees were asked the same open-ended questions. A script with of the list of questions is attached as Appendix B. I was looking for comments on the volunteer experience that reflect best practices in volunteer satisfaction found in the literature, and I grouped the questions around these themes:

- Original motivation to sign up as a Literacy Volunteer
- How the experience met or did not meet expectations
- Satisfaction with the initial training and in-service training provided
- Usefulness and appropriateness of the materials and resources available for use
- Quality of the interactions with the staff at LVCA
- Level of appreciation felt by the volunteers from staff and students
- Satisfaction with the student and tutor relationship
- Suggestions for making the program better

I was looking for differences in responses to these topics based on whether or not the volunteer left dissatisfied, left after he or she finished the commitment, or remained in the program.

Limitations of Study

I was limited by the number of individuals who left the program because they were “dissatisfied with experience” and who would talk about their experience at Literacy Volunteers. Because I am both the director of the LVCA program and the researcher, individuals may not have been inclined to discuss their experience with me. Almost all respondents, however, had both negative and positive comments about the program, regardless of their departure status. Departure status in the organizational database did not always tell the complete story. For instance, several who left because they “fulfilled commitment” indicated that they plan on coming back at some point. It would have been helpful to have a quantitative survey of program participants running concurrently with this study to gain a more complete picture of the volunteer experience, since only 12 volunteers were interviewed.

Quantitative Data

To get a broader understanding of why individuals left the organization, I compared quantitative LVCA data from the onset of data collection (approximately 1996) and from the last 7 years to see if there were differences in the stated reasons for leaving. I chose these dates because the LVCA program changed significantly after I arrived in the fall of 2011. Until then, the organization almost exclusively served individuals who fit the Virginia Department of Education student model, which targets students with long-term educational goals. The organization also began accepting students with abilities beyond the fifth-grade level, whereas previously those students were referred to city or county classroom programs. LVCA's priority became students who distinctly needed one-to-one instruction to overcome an inability to achieve success in a classroom, including students whose test scores revealed they could read up to the ninth-grade level. Another significant change occurred in December 2012 when the organization moved to a larger facility with more room for student/tutor pairs to study.

There were minor differences in reasons for leaving LVCA between the overall tutor group and the group involved in the program during the last seven years. Significantly, students have been less likely to terminate the student/tutor match in the past seven years, which may be attributable to the higher number of students learning English as speakers of other languages; students in the ESOL program are much more likely to persevere in the program than basic literacy students. Also notable is the fact that fewer tutors left the program for "other" reasons in the past seven years, but a higher percentage left because they were "dissatisfied with the experience." I surmise that the organization may be receiving more detailed information from departing tutors and that those reasons are being recorded more accurately.

Table 3.

Reasons tutors have departed the LVCA program

Reason for Leaving	All Tutors n = 1642		Tutors 2012-2018 n = 899	
Dissatisfied with experience	47	2.86%	37	4.11%
Fulfilled commitment	328	19.97%	135	15%
Health reasons	95	5.78%	46	5.11%
Job conflict	201	12.24%	75	8.34%
Moved/left area	179	10.90%	84	9.34%
Information not available	156	9.50%	105	11.67%
Other	112	6.82%	24	2.66%
Personal problems	54	3.28%	29	3.22%
Schedule conflict	94	5.72%	29	3.22%
Student terminated	31	1.94%	1	0.11%
Transportation problems	4	0.24%	2	0.22%
Never started after training	31	1.88%	25	2.78%
Still active in program	341	20.76%	307	34.14%

I was also curious to know if the increase in the number of students and tutors in the program had an effect on the quality of interactions between staff and volunteers. While the number of students and volunteers has practically doubled since 2012, staff hours have not. I addressed this issue with a question in the interviews about the quality of interactions with staff.

Analysis of Responses

I used printed pages of questions with large blocks of white space to take extensive handwritten notes on every interview. These notes were typed up immediately after the interview to aid in my recall of the conversation. For five of the nine interviews that were recorded, I did not type up my notes but had them handy during the transcription of the interview so that I could

see how accurate my notes were. I used the “comments” feature in Microsoft Word to insert codes and comments in both the typewritten notes and the transcriptions.

Broad themes based on the question topics were identified in the transcriptions and typewritten notes. While I asked all volunteers the questions in the same order, conversation sometimes drifted between subject areas. When discussing whether or not the volunteer felt appreciated by the student, for instance, tutors ventured into the area of the student/tutor relationship even though that question had not yet been asked. Answers to questions about how the volunteer experience met or did not meet expectations often led to a discussion about the initial training event. Because the answers to questions sometimes meandered into other subject areas, I assigned codes based on common themes and sorted these topics into ten columns in an excel spreadsheet. This coding enabled me to see comments on a particular theme from all respondents, whether or not the comment was in response to a particular question.

Coded comments were transferred to the spreadsheet at the time the interviews and notes were transcribed. There was no particular order in which the interviews were conducted and transcribed, so the results were not grouped by the volunteers’ status in the program. The random order of respondents on the spreadsheet helped reveal that there were few commonalities among volunteers based on their status. Assigning different colors to respondents’ rows of comments helped visually separate each tutor’s feedback on the program.

General Findings

I found that, while a volunteer’s long tenure with LVCA can indicate a high level of satisfaction, a volunteer’s early departure is not necessarily an indicator of dissatisfaction with the organization itself. Two of the three who left “dissatisfied with the program” still want to be involved with the organization in some way. Four of the five who “fulfilled commitment” and

left the program expressed interest in returning when a situation in their life changes (although one has moved too far away for it to be practical). Current tutors offered the most practical suggestions for program improvement.

Tutors placed little importance on their motivations for being in the program. Although I was specifically looking for a relationship between a tutor's original motivation for volunteering and feelings about how the program met a need in his or her life, I found no indication that the original motivation to volunteer had any bearing on his or her satisfaction with the tutoring experience. Half of the study participants mentioned that they were interested in tutoring because they had retired and felt like they had time to do something interesting, and they mentioned how much they have learned from the experience. "I assumed there would be learning in both directions," said tutor G.M., whose expectation was met. One dissatisfied participant said she signed up to tutor because she had friends in the program, and two dissatisfied participants linked the desire to teach English to their values and concern for the immigrant and refugee populations. One of these tutors, when asked about motivation, said,

It was after the presidential election in 2016. And just wandering around trying to figure out what in the heck can be done to help these people who are getting ready to get screwed royally, and [my wife] said, "Why don't you check with the Literacy Volunteers. They always need people," so that's what I did.

The most common complaint from tutors was the lack of availability of tutoring rooms for their lessons. Seven tutors mentioned that finding space to work with their students has been a frustrating issue. While the organization has seven private instructional rooms, two meeting spaces in the common area, and two classrooms with room dividers where pairs can meet, at certain times of the day all of the spaces are full. At some point during the last few years, the

organization had tables and chairs set up in the hallway to be used during the busy times, but tutors noted problems with that situation. “We battle distraction constantly,” one tutor said. Another said, “We can’t work in the hall. It’s too distracting. When everything was full, we went to Gearhart’s [across the street] instead.”

I was listening for feedback on training, recognition, and screening because the research indicates their importance. Other themes arose and occupied a great deal of our conversation time. I will address the topics expected to influence volunteer satisfaction first.

Training. Comments regarding the training events attended by the tutors were overwhelmingly positive. Tutor E.R. thought that the program manager did a “good job painting a clear picture of what to expect. It gave me a broadness of it all.” Another tutor who had a positive experience with the organization for years said, “I don't think anything could ever truly prepare you; you have no idea who you're going to meet when you walk into the room for the first time.” Several volunteers mentioned the variety of people in their initial training group. In one case, a tutor found it intimidating to be in a training session with someone who already spoke five or six languages. In another case, a tutor found encouragement from the other attendees. Tutor G.M. said,

It was helpful to hear from other volunteers who weren't career language teachers, 'Hey, you can do this; you're not going to do anybody any harm anyway.' ... Most of us who are volunteering are used to being good at what we do and professionally competent and there certainly is a fear of being incompetent at the task.

Half of the respondents had attended at least one additional training event while serving as a tutor with the organization. The other half expressed a bit of guilt over *not* attending any in-

service training events or indicated that they wished they had participated in the extra trainings. Several tutors recognized that there was a lot to go over in the limited amount of time available for any training event. Tutor M.H. said, “The in-service trainings were outstanding because I learned the theory to go with the actual practical experience.” Another tutor appreciated the in-service workshops because they provided her some time to interact with other tutors. There was little difference in opinions about the trainings offered at LVCA among those volunteers who left early and those who stayed in the program a significant length of time, although two of the three who left the program dissatisfied did not attend any additional training events after the first one.

Recognition. Volunteers were asked if they felt appreciated by the staff and their student. Based on volunteer responses, it appears that tutors had not thought very much about whether or not their work was appreciated. Tutor M.H. said of her experience, “I don’t remember feeling *unappreciated*.” Another tutor said, “It was clear that the staff understands tutors are the backbone and I felt like a rockstar. We were recognized and got ribbons at Wordplay” (the organization’s annual fundraising event). Several tutors mentioned small interactions with staff that contributed to their feeling recognized as part of the organization. Tutor S.B., for instance, said, “[The receptionist] knew who I was. I didn’t feel like a stranger coming in.”

Many tutors expressed that they had been well-thanked by their students. Several mentioned instances when they had been asked to do something extra, such as representing the organization at an event, which made them feel valued within the organization. One went so far as to say, “I was honored to be asked” to be in a video about the LVCA program. That tutor, in return, used her connections and obtained a grant from a family foundation for LVCA. I was unfamiliar with the connection when I asked her to participate in this study.

The recognition that stood out as significant to the tutors was a sense of being appreciated by a student's family. Eight of the tutors interviewed spent time talking about the interactions they had with their students' families. One tutor, when speaking of a former student, said, "It was heartening to leave the relationship knowing there was positive regard on both sides." Tutor J.L., who left the program early, said, "The student appreciated me so much that it was guilt-inducing when I wanted to quit."

Screening. The literature indicates that a "best practice" in volunteer retention encourages the screening of volunteers in order to match them to tasks that are appropriate for them. At LVCA, however, volunteers go through a new-tutor training event and self-select to be tutors, although there are a few other roles for volunteers in the organization. The interviews did, though, reveal several instances in which the organization could have done a better job screening the clients admitted into the program. Since the student/tutor match is so important to the success of the program, I will address the screening of both volunteers and students here.

Volunteer screening. Two of the three volunteers who left because they were "dissatisfied with the experience" placed responsibility for their dissatisfaction with the program on their lack of patience in the instructional process. In fact, when asked for ideas on improving the program, tutor J.L. suggested offering volunteers a "patience self-test" during the initial training event as a way to predict success. Another similarity expressed by these two volunteers was limitations on their time. One individual lives more than 30 minutes from the LVCA office and mentioned that the time involved to travel to the office was an obstacle. The other mentioned that she was already feeling frustrated with her own lack of patience and quit the program when her work schedule became intense and required more energy. Both of these individuals expressed great self-awareness. One explained:

You know I was a contractor before, a builder, and when I had people that were working under me or working for me I always found it difficult to maintain the patience to say, “This is how you do this, then you do this and this...” I’m much more about—just do the job—and if someone’s watching me, they pick up on it at that time.

If LVCA had stressed the extreme amounts of time and patience required at the outset, these two individuals might have screened themselves out of tutoring and into another function at the organization.

Client screening. Prior to a student/tutor match, volunteers are offered several students to choose from based on educational level, country of origin, and schedules. Half of the interviewees mentioned that it was important that they had some choice in the student assignment process. Unfortunately, not all clients were viewed by the volunteers as appropriate for the LVCA program.

In one instance, a student’s mental health issue arose and interfered with her communication with her tutor, which led to the student’s frequent “no shows.” The tutor said, “After many weeks of texting her and saying, ‘where are you; are we going to meet?’ she’d set a time and then cancel out... I think had she been in a better place of mind [it would have been different].” The student’s emotional troubles also rendered the tutoring sessions that did occur less effective than the tutor wished. “Sometimes the sessions devolved into her being emotionally troubled about things with her husband,” the tutor recalled. “It got a little bit uncomfortable for me at times.”

In another situation, a tutor found it difficult to work with a student who was a young mother with several children. “Her life was too busy and demanding,” the tutor said. One tutor

who has worked with multiple students over a number of years has had the opportunity to meet potential students while she was in the office. On several occasions this tutor has turned down a student because of perceived family and scheduling challenges. When asked about suggestions for program improvement, she said:

Improvement might have to start with the interviewing of the students. Make sure they understand how crucial this is. They come into it sometimes thinking it's more flexible. I think that's what happened with [my student]... and her first tutor. The other day [my student] walked to class, and it was cold. She said, "I wanted to call you and not come." But she didn't! Because *I* never miss. *I will come if I'm dead*. If *I* miss, *they* will start missing... I tell my student, when you call me, have a plan for when we can make it up. And [my student] hates that, so she doesn't cancel!

In another instance, a student did not meet the tutor's expectations of a typical person needing our services. Because LVCA offers services for free, most often the organization serves those who cannot afford classes in the city of Charlottesville or in Albemarle County. The majority of students are on some type of public assistance and working on improving their English so that they can qualify for better jobs. However, the organization does not conduct financial screening of clients. Tutor S.B. was between jobs and considering a career in teaching English as a second language, so she signed up for the training and was assigned a student from Brazil who spoke Portuguese. The tutor was shocked to discover that she was working with someone with a similar level of education, but of a perceived higher social status. She said,

I know her husband was a doctor, and she came in with a Louis Vuitton bag, and she was traveling here and there and everywhere, it was a little bit deflating...

here's someone who's not paying for these services... it was a little frustrating on that side of things, because I knew what I was struggling with at home. ... I felt like it was an environment that was there to serve people who really needed the financial break, and needed the leg up that learning the language would give them.

In addition to the perceived difference in social status, the tutor, who had an educational background, also noted that it was frustrating to have her student cancel their meetings so often. The tutor mentioned being diligent about planning lessons and activities for each meeting. "I expected to be working with someone who maybe either was working hard and trying to fit in learning language lessons, or a person busy making their own sacrifices to make our meetings," she said.

Unexpected themes. I found that, among the tutors interviewed, the student/tutor relationship, student progress, and the educational materials available had the most bearing on volunteer satisfaction. The tutors who left because they were dissatisfied with the experience never developed a substantial relationship with their students. Other complaints stemmed from frustration with student progress—many of those interviewed judged themselves on their student's success or lack thereof. Only two interviewees were satisfied with the materials offered, and neither of them expressed enthusiasm about it.

The student/tutor relationship. I found that all of the volunteers who fulfilled their commitment or who were still in the program placed significant value on the student/tutor relationship and whether or not it was a good fit. Half of the volunteers mentioned they appreciated the opportunity to choose from among several students needing services based on general details about the student's life. There were several instances where the student/tutor

match was the highlight of the tutoring experience. Tutor M.H., when speaking of her student, said, “We were from different parts of the world but cut from the same cloth.” Five of the tutors had met their student’s family members, and interviewees described these relationships as “friendly,” “mentor-like,” and “a close relationship.” In one instance where a male tutor was teaching a female Muslim student, the student and her husband decided to call the tutor “brother,” as a way of making it acceptable for her to be in a room alone with him. “When you spend a couple of hours each week with someone, there’s bound to be some sort of relationship that develops,” he said, “and this was a way of making it okay.” Tutors mentioned at least four students who remained in touch with them after the student/tutor match ended. Tutor L.C. spoke of a surprise phone call she received from a former student:

She called me the other day, and I had a conversation with her on the phone that I never could have had with her two years ago. Her English is so much better and I really acknowledged her for how far she’s come. She brought me up to date on her life, and it really touched me that she would reach out again and give me an update on how things were going for her.

There were two instances where student transitions from one tutor to the next were mentioned as a problem. In one instance, the tutor described the relationship as “perhaps too close” because the student did not want to meet a new tutor when their time together ended. In another instance, tutor M.H. talked about her disappointment when program staff ended the match after two years of study. Conventional wisdom in literacy programs indicates that a student will get used to learning one way from a tutor and should gain experience learning from someone different after a year or two. Tutor M.H. said, “I guess I had heard that you break up pairs after a certain time, but I wasn’t ready for it. I felt like I was just getting up steam.” She did

not pick up a new student after this match ended, even though her comments about her experience in the program were extremely positive. Two other tutors mentioned the need for a better transition for a student from one tutor to another, with one tutor suggesting that both tutors meet with the student for the first learning session when a transition is made.

Student advancement. Volunteers regarded the advancement of their students as a reflection on their skill as a tutor and took progress (or lack thereof) personally. Five of the respondents had some type of teaching background and they all indicated that they relied on their experience. The three who left the program before fulfilling their commitment had no teaching experience. One dissatisfied volunteer mentioned her confidence was “tenuous” going into the first tutoring session. When her student did not advance after a while, she believed, “It was me, not getting the job done.”

In some cases, the tutor assumed he or she was doing well until the student took a test and did not show the expected improvement. Tutor R.C., when asked if the program met his expectations, said, “I was somewhat disappointed I wasn’t able to get my student to the finish line. I thought I could do it, I tried to motivate him... I was frustrated with not being able to accomplish my goal.” He viewed the student’s failure as his own, but said confidence was not an issue for him. “I felt confident, but I don’t know what else I could have done,” he said.

Several tutors said that they needed more feedback on their work. “I wasn’t sure I was doing the right thing,” said E.R., “but I felt better about my abilities after the student test.” Another offered, “Tutors need more understanding about testing. I know you all are afraid that teachers will teach to the test, but we won’t. We just want to understand the process.” An anomaly was the tutor who said that he and his student wanted *more* testing. For this tutor, formal feedback was necessary.

Several tutors seemed unclear about how much their students were actually grasping from the lessons. Tutor S.S. said,

My confidence grew, especially as I could see his pronunciation get better, and his reading got better. But when I started asking questions about an essay, he couldn't tell me what it was about. So I thought, I'm just not helping him like he needs to be helped.

Another tutor expressed that she wanted a better idea of where her student should be educationally after a certain amount of instruction. "Contact with someone at the next level would help," she said.

Materials. No volunteer was enthusiastic about the teaching materials supplied by LVCA. When asked about the materials provided, one volunteer mentioned that he took it upon himself to go to a local bookstore and choose something different than what was assigned by the program manager. Tutor S.S. said, "[My student] and I both thought the materials were worthless. All of our stuff came from somewhere else." This tutor, who left the program before her commitment was up, was unique among those interviewed because she did not meet with her student on-site, but rather at the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library. While the majority of the student/tutor pairs meet at LVCA, the only requirement for a meeting space is that it be a public location. At the public library, she met members of the Albemarle County Adult Education staff who suggested materials to use. The tutor raved about how helpful the Albemarle County Adult Education teachers were and encouraged the student to leave the LVCA program and take a class at Albemarle County instead.

Tutor A.L. said that he and his student "just made it up as we went along" and often used articles from newspapers and magazines to practice the language. While using news articles can

be a great teaching tool, the tutor was using them because “the material [supplied by LVCA] never gelled with us” and was “not appropriate.” Another tutor said that she needed a more “structured textbook” and that she generated a lot of materials, such as flash cards, herself. On the other hand, one tutor with no background in teaching said that she liked the fact that she was given the flexibility to discover what would work for her and the opportunity to “use [her] own ingenuity.” This tutor had a background in the arts and appreciated the opportunity to bring creativity to the task.

One tutor considered the materials to be a “paradox of choice.” He said there is a “vast array of stuff, but not a lot of curricular guidance,” while recognizing that all students start at different levels. He suggested that the organization needs a “gold standard” of textbooks. Several tutors understood the importance of using materials that were immediately relevant to the student’s lives in addition to, or in place of, the assigned materials.

I had more success working with how I could use their lives and experiences to make it relevant and personal. Some of the books weren’t useful for an entry-level student. I like the fact that there’s room for improvisation and dialogue, and that’s not just reading back and forth from the book. The ability to carry on conversation in English was an equally beneficial part of the time we were spending.

Two volunteers had the impression that the materials given to them were selected based on financial issues in the organization, and one tutor went so far as to volunteer fundraising ideas to enable the purchase of better materials.

One current tutor, who frequently helps with the new-volunteer training events, suggested that teaching materials be introduced at the trainings. “Show more of what’s here and how you use it,” she suggested. Interviewees understood that there was no one solution to the materials

problem because of the vast differences in abilities of incoming students and the strong differences in teaching styles.

Conclusion to Findings

No volunteer had completely positive or completely negative comments about their tutoring experience. Tutors bring their own needs and wants to the experience. The value that tutors place on the relationships that develop between tutor and student has probably been underestimated. Staff assumes that volunteers not constitutionally suited to the task will screen themselves out of tutoring because of the intensive initial training and commitment required, but that may not always be the case. Staff also assumes that volunteers will ask for guidance on using curriculum, but that may not be the case, either. Volunteers appreciate some independence in choosing educational materials, which increases the likelihood that they will take ownership of their teaching project, but there is also a lot we do not know about the tutoring experience. It would be helpful to have these interviews on an annual basis.

Discussion

Findings in this study can guide the staff at Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/ Albemarle and similar community-based literacy organizations to make changes in the program to improve the volunteer experience. I was surprised to find so few connections between the research on volunteer retention and the lived experience of the volunteers I interviewed. For the tutors in this study, the highlights of the experience were the relationships that developed with the students and the volunteers' feeling of accomplishment. Volunteer retention, or the length of time a volunteer was in the program, appears to be only an occasional indicator of volunteer satisfaction. I did not find any one major fault or problem with the organization that, when corrected, would quickly improve the retention rate. In fact, the retention rate may not be as fixable as I would like it to be.

The findings of this study can, however, help shape decisions in practical ways. I will make some suggestions for program improvement at LVCA around student and tutor expectations, access to curricula and to educational materials, and the ways in which staff interact with volunteers. Shortcomings in these areas may be related to the rapid growth of the organization and the resultant less personalized service that volunteers receive from staff. Suggestions for program improvement will build upon the strong volunteer commitment that I heard about during the interviews.

Implications for Practice

Redefine success. From the interviews, I learned that volunteer satisfaction is often tied to student success. Most volunteers regard the standardized test as the primary indicator of success, and nearly all students make some educational gains when they are tested after a period of instruction. In about 40% of cases, however, the educational gain is not sufficient to bump a

student up to the next educational functioning level. For students who begin at the lowest level of education, it may take two years of instruction before they improve enough to reach the next level. While these tests are important, there are a number of other ways to define success, such as a student's accomplishment of a personal goal. Tutors report on these personal goals monthly, but they may not realize how significant such achievements are. Currently, a board member receives a list of student achievements distilled from these reports each month and sends congratulatory notes to students as a way of offering encouragement. Perhaps the student's tutor could be recognized in a similar way. In cases where the student/tutor relationship is close, these accomplishments may feel like a team effort for the tutor. Tutors who indicated that their experience at LVCA was overwhelmingly positive talked about a number of successes that their students experienced during their time working together.

Additional training. The Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle pre-service tutor training focuses on broad themes such as characteristics of adult students, the importance of the student's goals, and the patience required to work with adult learners. These themes are intended to instill positive feelings of success and confidence in the tutor, which may influence him or her to continue. Participants in this study overwhelmingly thought the initial training was effective. In-service workshops offered throughout the year focus on topics such as grammar and teaching styles. As I found in the study, some tutors will never attend additional trainings due to time conflicts, so the information presented in these workshops could be distilled into short videos accessible on the website, as several tutors mentioned accessing training and reference materials on the LVCA website was valuable.

A portion of the new-tutor training event needs to emphasize that staff is available to offer practical suggestions when tutors encounter issues with the curriculum. While the staff

assumes that the volunteers should know when to ask for suggestions, I found through the interviews that many are hesitant to reach out to the staff. There were several instances where tutors mentioned receiving helpful information through casual conversation in the office, so staff should be accessible. An area of future research could focus on why volunteers are hesitant to formally ask the staff for help. In the case of LVCA, volunteers could perceive the staff as overwhelmed and not want to burden them further, or staff members may not be immediately available.

Use of materials. Curriculum material usage and accessibility appeared to be the greatest problem for the tutors in the study. There appeared to be a tension between telling the volunteers what to use and allowing the tutors flexibility to choose the material they liked. Tutors for whom adult education is a new area found this especially challenging because they were unfamiliar with the material, and did not know what they would prefer.

Additional training modules should include explicit instruction on the use of educational materials. Typically, the program manager selects a textbook and student workbook deemed appropriate for a student's level and these are given to the tutor prior to his or her first meeting with the student. The program manager suggests the tutor try the books for a while, with the option to switch to different materials if the student and tutor do not like them. Other materials in the LVCA library are also suggested at this time. The organization has a 2300-book library of reading materials for low-level and ESL learners to supplement the assigned materials. A one-page guide to what is in the library with a description of which materials are appropriate for each reading level would be easy to supply to the tutors. This information could also be displayed as a chart on the wall in the library.

Within the past year the organization has switched from using the *English No Problem* book series published by New Readers Press (a division of ProLiteracy) to the *Ventures* series published by Cambridge University Press due to anecdotal comments staff have heard over the years. None of the interviewees had been assigned the new book series, so I received no feedback on it from them. For the current *Ventures* series, the student/tutor pair is given a textbook and a workbook but not a teacher's manual; one copy of the teacher's manual for each level is kept in the LVCA library for reference. While the manual is expensive, tutors should be offered the option of having a copy to take home to use for instructional preparation. This is an example of the volunteers' perception that some of the decisions made about material usage being based upon organizational finances is correct.

At the initial training, new volunteers are given a tour of the office space, tutoring rooms, and library, but not much time is spent on materials. Because of the volunteers' various teaching styles and experience levels, and the wide range of student educational levels, there will never be one definitive curriculum that will work for everyone. In response to feedback from tutors who have appreciated the opportunity to learn from others, the organization could compile a list of "favorite teaching ideas," which could be applicable to the different instructional levels. One seasoned volunteer made it clear that she appreciated being asked to share their expertise with others. Some of the volunteers with the most experience could be asked to write up brief notes on what has worked for their students, specifically including favorite books. These documents could be grouped by student level, so that new tutors could refer to ideas that worked for a student at a level similar to that of the student with whom they are paired.

From the interviews, I learned that some volunteers would rather look for materials on their own than ask a staff member, so these favorite teaching ideas could be added to the

organization's website. The task of putting this information down on paper to share with other tutors might give some volunteers more recognition of the way they conduct their instruction and might strengthen their connection to the organization as a whole. Such a collection of tutor-recommended material would be useful for any community-based literacy organization dealing with the same issues. Adult Education and Literacy is a niche market in textbook publishing, and the materials are limited.

Feedback. Feedback was especially important to those tutors who had no teaching experience, as effective feedback acknowledges the work already accomplished between the student/tutor pair. Tutors wanted to know if they were "doing the right thing," even if they were unwilling to ask staff the question. Staff should design a way for tutors to indicate that they want more feedback on how the student is doing, since we know from the interviews that some volunteers will not reach out and request this information on their own. The solution could be as simple as adding a check-box on the monthly tutor report indicating that the volunteer would like a call from staff for a progress update.

As McCurley and Lynch (2011) suggest, staff should recognize important points along the way in the volunteer experience (pp. 218-220). At LVCA, the crucial times are likely to be during the initial training, at the point of meeting their first student, and during the first few lessons with their student. The organization offers a professional development opportunity called "check and connect" after the first six months that is designed to reunite a training cohort to discuss any issues they have encountered since beginning work with their student partners. Several tutors mentioned they noticed who was in their training class, so reuniting the group will likely create a positive training event.

The end of a tutor's initial commitment term is usually related to the timing of the student's post-test, which is a formal evaluation of the student's progress, usually given after a year of instruction. Typically a student comes in on his or her own time to take the test, and staff reports the results to the tutor separately in a phone call or email. This separation might make the tutor feel disconnected, since the student usually receives the results immediately. Since the research indicates this is an important time in the volunteer's engagement, and because the findings indicated that so much of a tutor's satisfaction is impacted by student success, staff should pay particular attention to how they report on testing.

Implications for Stakeholders

The exceptional growth the organization has experienced over the last seven years may have affected the quality of the volunteer experience. Prior to hiring a part-time staff person to work on tutor recruitment in 2013, the organization's growth was confined by the limited number of volunteers recruited and trained each year. There have been some unintended consequences of doubling both the volunteer base and the number of students served, which may have negatively impacted volunteer satisfaction.

As Literacy Volunteers has grown from a manageable 205 active volunteers per year to 440 active volunteers per year in a seven-year time-frame, the staff and board has lost the ability to get to know each volunteer well enough to meet his or her needs for feedback, support, and recognition, which calls into question the value of organizational growth. If students and volunteers are both intended beneficiaries of the organization, is it acceptable for the quality of service to one of these constituencies (the volunteers) to decline so that more of the other (students) can be served? A solution to some of the issues encountered by the tutors would be to add program staff to provide more guidance and attention to tutors while increasing the space

available for students and tutors to meet. Both of these changes would significantly increase the organization's costs.

Volunteers. One finding revealed in the study was the importance of the student/tutor relationship. The volunteer is actively engaged in a very personal relationship with their student, so a superficial relationship with staff is incongruous with the deep, supportive personal relationships typical in student/tutor partnerships. The large quantities of people the LVCA staff deals with on a daily basis precludes them from providing volunteers the individual attention that they might prefer. The overcrowded office space which forces some volunteers to meet their students off-site or at odd hours results in irregular tutor contact with staff. Perhaps volunteers realize that the staff has a large number of volunteers to manage, and consequently hesitate to ask questions when they feel unsure of what they are doing.

Students. As more tutors have become available, LVCA has begun accepting more students. Perhaps, as a result of this increase, the organization is not appropriately screening out students who are unable to commit to studying and meeting with their tutor. Several of the participants in the study identified problems with their student's ability to commit to learning. The organization has a built-in delay for student/tutor matching because students are required to begin work on an English-language computer program on site before being assigned a tutor, but perhaps it is not an effective way of discouraging students who are not committed to learning. During the student's initial four- to eight-weeks at LVCA, he or she schedules time in the office to work on the computer. Staff members have the opportunity to get to know the student as he or she comes and goes. The staff notes whether or not the student makes all of his or her appointments, if they call to cancel, and how they approach the task of learning. Students who follow through on this commitment are most likely to be matched with a tutor as soon as one

becomes available. As more tutors have become available, the screening has become less rigorous. LVCA's goal is to match a new tutor with a student within the first week after the volunteer completes the training, which sometimes results in a student being matched with a tutor even if his or her attendance and perceived commitment is not ideal.

Staff and board. As the program has grown, staff spends less time with each volunteer. Staff has become more heavily reliant on tutor reports to gauge student progress and to identify problems in need of remediation, but I know from the interviews that issues will come up in conversation that tutors will not put in the reports. Sometimes tutors fail to include information in a monthly report because they do not think it is important to do so or because the tutor wants to get the report turned in on time. Casual conversation, less frequent with the large increase in tutors, can yield clues to the volunteer situation that cannot or will not be included on written reports.

Any changes in the program to improve the volunteer experience will be staff-driven and will take staff time to implement. For the board of directors, impersonal numbers—quantities of students served and test scores—are primary indicators of program success instead of the quality of relationship-based instruction. Information gleaned from this study can help the board of directors get a better overall view of the program. A residual effect of improved volunteer satisfaction may be increased donations from volunteers, which will also be important to the board since it is primarily responsible for the overall financial health of the organization.

Community. Several study participants, including one who was dissatisfied with the program and suggested her student attend a class instead, spent time talking about how much the LVCA program is needed. There would be significant implications for the community if LVCA took steps to improve volunteer satisfaction by reducing the number of students and volunteers

served. If some students are screened out, other organizations will need to step up and serve them. We offer our services at no cost to students because we serve primarily low-income people, and there is currently no other service provider for some of these students. If no other organization serves them, more individuals in the community will struggle with language issues. As indicated by the issues discovered in this project, the current LVCA program is not very scalable with the number of current staff and the location in which it is situated. The community could benefit from a similar program established in another part of Albemarle County.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The organization and others like it can take steps to better understand and document why volunteers leave the program. Many Virginia-based community literacy organizations use a database created by the Virginia Literacy Foundation, so they collect similar data. In the case of Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle, though, there is a significant number of volunteers—129—who left the program in the last seven years whose reason for departure is either not available or was classified as “other.” How can the organization better account for these departures? Were their reasons for leaving beyond the control of the organization?

It was surprising to learn that some of the volunteers who left the program after they fulfilled their commitment intend to return when a situation in their life changes. The database needs to be adjusted so that staff can tag individuals who might be open to returning. There may also be others, among those who left the program for “health reasons,” “job conflict,” or “personal problems,” who might be open to returning when their situation changes. If the organization will not perform exit interviews, perhaps volunteers who leave the program would be willing to fill out an exit survey. The organization would benefit from staying in contact with former volunteers and discovering deliberate ways to invite them back.

If growth has affected volunteer satisfaction, the organization may want to decrease the number of students served each year. If the organization decides to limit the number of students served each year, what policies will be instituted to determine who gets services and who is turned away? Will the organization attempt to focus on the most needy?

Although I found no link between stated motivation and retention of tutors among the study participants, the organization may want to pay particular attention to the initial motivation of volunteers who joined the organization after November 2016. Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle does not address issues of community empowerment in tutor training sessions beyond focusing on the individual issue of helping a student obtain the skills necessary to become self-sufficient, which could prove a substantial deficiency in the organization affecting tutor retention in future years. In a study conducted in the summer of 2018, a large number of tutors who joined the program after November 2016 cited the desire to “do something” in the wake of the presidential election and the negative impact of the current federal administration on immigrants and refugees (Osborne, 2018b). That group includes one of the tutors interviewed for this study. The concurrent civil unrest in Charlottesville around the “Unite the Right” rally, and the existing racial divide which it highlighted also contributed to the desire of some volunteers to contribute their time to LVCA. The staff is unclear if this group of volunteers will respond to the traditional volunteer retention methods used by the organization. Will the needs of this volunteer group be different than others?

The staff and board have always chosen to appear politically neutral because the U.S. tax code requires nonprofits to be nonpartisan. The staff and board are also aware that some of the largest individual donors to the organization support traditionally conservative causes and candidates as well. Will the volunteers who became tutors out of frustration with the current

political climate become frustrated with LVCA's continued desire to be seen as nonpartisan? I surmise that if these volunteers are focused only on the task at hand—helping one individual become proficient in English—then student success will be of primary importance to volunteer satisfaction.

Future Research

Most tutors placed a high value on their relationship with their student partner; therefore, aspects of the student/tutor relationship could be explored in future research. The one-to-one teaching relationship is different from the relationship of a classroom teacher to his or her students and can offer insights into how success is attained and perceived. Our volunteers characterize the student/tutor relationship in several different ways, and it would be helpful to see if one characterization correlates with greater success in student learning or with higher volunteer satisfaction than another.

Another area for further study is the ideal number of volunteers a literacy program can effectively supervise so that the volunteers are satisfied while maintaining positive outcomes for the students. An examination of how various volunteer organizations handle accelerated growth could offer insights to agencies such as Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Abemarle. Perhaps instead of scaling up to serve more clients, some organizations might do better to replicate themselves in different localities.

It would be interesting to understand the different characteristics of volunteers who ask for help and those who try and figure out problems on their own. Certain personality types may be inclined to handle challenges on their own. Are there instances when an organization might prefer to attract those who are independent problem solvers or those who rely on more guidance from paid staff?

Conclusion

A student's success, and particularly his or her progress as measured by test scores, affects volunteer satisfaction more than I previously recognized. The participants in this research study talked about their students a great deal, indicating the value of those relationships and the volunteer's investment in helping a student partner improve his or her life. In an organization where relationships are so obviously important, staff should pay as much attention to their own relationships with tutors as to the relationships between tutors and their student partners. While there is no simple solution to ensure that every volunteer is satisfied, there are some changes to the program that can be made immediately to help tutors feel more competent and confident in their work. Beyond the scope of the volunteer experience at LVCA, these findings suggest that satisfied volunteers who feel good about their work create an environment that positively influences client behavior and effort.

References

- Adult Literacy Advocacy. (n.d.). Retrieved October 18, 2018, from <https://proliteracy.org/What-We-Do/Advocacy>
- Belzer, A. (2006a). What Are They Doing in There? Case Studies of Volunteer Tutors and Adult Literacy Learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(7), 560-572. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40017623>
- Belzer, A. (2006b). Less May Be More: Rethinking Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Training. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 38(2), 111-140. doi:10.1207/s15548430jlr3802_1
- Bidee, J., Vantilborgh, T., Pepermans, R., Huybrechts, G., Willems, J., Jegers, M., & Hofmans, J. (2012). Autonomous Motivation Stimulates Volunteers' Work Effort: A Self-Determination Theory Approach to Volunteerism. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24(1), 32-47. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42629792>
- Bryer, T. A. (Ed.). (2014). *National service and volunteerism : achieving impact in our communities*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.newman.richmond.edu>
- Cass, R. H., and Manser, G. (1976). *Roots of Voluntarism*, in America's Voluntary Spirit, edited by Brian O'Connell. The Foundation Center, New York, 1983.
- Ceprano, M. (1995). Strategies and Practices of Individuals Who Tutor Adult Illiterates Voluntarily. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 39(1), 56-64. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40016721>
- Christoph, J. N. (2009). Each One Teach One: The Legacy of Advocacy, Advocacy, in Adult Literacy Education. *Written Communication*, 26(1), 77-110. doi.org/10.1177/0741088308327478

- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., & Ridge, R. (1992). Volunteer motivations: A functional strategy for the recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 2 (4), 333-350. Doi:10.1002/nml.4130020403.
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., Haugen, J., & Miene, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1516-1530.
- Colvin, R. J. (1987). *A way with words: the story of the Literacy Volunteers of America*. Syracuse, NY: Literacy Volunteers of America.
- Cranton, P., & Wright, B. (2008). The Transformative Educator as Learning Companion. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(1), 33-47.
doi:10.1177/1541344608316961
- Davis, D. (Sept. 1991). Adult Literacy Programs: Toward Equality or Maintaining the Status Quo? *Journal of Reading*, 35 (1), pp. 34-37.
- Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Gagné, M., Leone, D. R., Usunov, J., & Kornazheva, B. P. (2001). Need Satisfaction, Motivation, and Well-Being in the Work Organizations of a Former Eastern Bloc Country: A Cross-Cultural Study of Self-Determination. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(8), 930-942. doi:10.1177/0146167201278002
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1835. *Democracy in America*, Part 1. As translated by Henry Reeve, 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/815/815-h/815-h.htm>
- Ellis, S. J., & Campbell, K. N. (2005). *By the people: A history of Americans as volunteers*. Philadelphia: Energize.
- Ferguson, P. (1988). The Politics of Adult ESL Literacy: Becoming Politically Visible in Adult ESL: Politics, Pedagogy, and Participation in Classroom and Community Settings, edited

- by T. Smoke. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, publishers. Mahwah, New Jersey.
- Finkelstein, M. A. (2008). Volunteer Satisfaction And Volunteer Action: A Functional Approach. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 36(1), 9-18.
doi:10.2224/sbp.2008.36.1.9
- Fisher, J. C., & Cole, K. M. (1993). *Leadership and management of volunteer programs: A guide for volunteer administration*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Foster-Bey, J., Grimm, R., Jr., & Deitz, N. (2007). Keeping baby boomers volunteering: A research brief on volunteer retention and turnover (United States, Corporation for National and Community Service, Research and Policy Development). Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved from https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0307_boomer_report.pdf
- Gagné, M. (2003). The role of autonomy support and autonomy orientation in prosocial behavior engagement. *Motivation and Emotion*, 27(3), 199-223.
doi:http://dx.doi.org.newman.richmond.edu:2048/10.1023/A:1025007614869
- Hager, M. A., & Brudney, J. L. (2004). Volunteer Management Practices and the Retention of Volunteers. *The Urban Institute: Volunteer Management Capacity Study Series*, 2. Retrieved from https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/Management_Brief.pdf
- Heaney, T. W. (July 30, 1995). Learning to be Heard: Organization, Power and Literacy. National-Louis University. Faculty Papers. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.574.8287&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Ilsley, P. (1985). *Adult Literacy Volunteers: Issues and Ideas. Information Series No. 301*. National Center Publications.

Ilsley, P. J. (2009). *Enhancing the volunteer experience: New insights on strengthening volunteer participation, learning, and commitment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Independent Sector. (April 19, 2018). The Value of Volunteer Time/ State and Historical Data.

Retrieved September 8, 2018, from https://independentsector.org/resource/vovt_details/

Independent Sector. (2002). *Giving and volunteering in the United States 2001*. Washington, DC.

Kidd, J. R. (1973). *How Adults Learn. Revised Edition*. New York: Cambridge, The Adult Education Company.

Laubach Literacy Staff. (2003). *Teaching adults – A literacy resource book*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Literacy Tests. (2018, May 03). Retrieved November 01, 2018, from

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/democracy-exhibition/vote-voice/keeping-vote/state-rules-federal-rules/literacy-tests>

Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle. (2018). Annual report 2018. Retrieved from

http://literacyforall.org/docs/FY18_Annual_Report_WEB.pdf

McCurley, S., & Lynch, R. (2011). *Volunteer management: Mobilizing all the resources of the community*. Plattsburgh, NY: Interpub Group Corporation.

NRS Table 4. (2018). 979-Adult Ed Program Region 10, 757-Literacy Volunteers of

Charlottesville, *Educational Gains and Attendance by Educational Functioning Level*.

Virginia Department of Adult Education.

Newton, C., Becker, K., & Bell, S. (2014). Learning and development opportunities as a tool for the retention of volunteers: A motivational perspective: Learning and development for

- volunteers. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 24(4), 514-530. 10.1111/1748-8583.12040.
- Oostlander, J., Güntert, S., & Wehner, T. (2014). Linking Autonomy-Supportive Leadership to Volunteer Satisfaction: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 25(6), 1368-1387. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43654672>
- Osborne, E. (2018a). [Historical donor data comparing individual giving between volunteers and non-volunteers]. Unpublished raw data.
- Osborne, E. (2018b). LVCA survey of volunteer motivations based on the Volunteer Function Inventory. Retrieved from <http://literacyforall.org/docs/Motivations.pdf>.
- Osborne, E., & Overstreet, M. (2018). [Age, Gender, and Employment Data of Tutors FY12—FY18]. Unpublished raw data.
- Overstreet, M. (September 2, 2018). [Tutor Demographics 17-18]. Unpublished raw data.
- Overstreet, M. (September 10, 2018). [Student Demographics 2012-2018]. Unpublished raw data.
- Perlstein, D. (2002). Minds Stayed on Freedom: Politics and Pedagogy in the African-American Freedom Struggle. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39(2), 249-277. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3202522>
- Perry, J., & Luk, A. (2018). Volunteer Tutors: Agents of Change or Reproduction? An Examination of Consciousness, Ideology and Praxis. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 30(1), 19-32. Retrieved from <https://cjsae.library.dal.ca/index.php/cjsae/article/view/5397>

Perry, K., & Hart, S. (2012). "I'm Just Kind of Winging It" Preparing and Supporting Educators of Adult Refugee Learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(2), 110-122.

Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23367717>

Perry, J. L., & Thomson, A. M. 2004. Civic service: what difference does it make? Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Pidgeon, W. P. (1998). *The universal benefits of volunteering: A practical workbook for nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and corporations*. New York: Wiley.

Skoglund, A. G. (2006). Do Not Forget about Your Volunteers: A Qualitative Analysis of Factors Influencing Volunteer Turnover. *Health & Social Work*, 31(3), 217-220.

Retrieved from <https://search-ebscohost-com.newman.richmond.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ssf&AN=507906443&site=ehost-live>

Sturkey, W. (2010). "I want to become a part of history": Freedom Summer, Freedom schools, and the Freedom news. *The Journal of African American History*, 95(3-4), 348+.

Retrieved from [http://link.galegroup.com.newman.richmond.edu:](http://link.galegroup.com.newman.richmond.edu:2048/apps/doc/A246259273/UHIC?u=vic_uor&sid=UHIC&xid=7ad42a84)

[2048/apps/doc/A246259273/UHIC?u=vic_uor&sid=UHIC&xid=7ad42a84](http://link.galegroup.com.newman.richmond.edu:2048/apps/doc/A246259273/UHIC?u=vic_uor&sid=UHIC&xid=7ad42a84)

Tang, F., Morrow-Howell, N., & Hong, S. (2009). Institutional Facilitation in Sustained Volunteering among Older Adult Volunteers. *Social Work Research*, 33(3), 172-182.

Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42659726>

The Charitable Sector. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://independentsector.org/about/the-charitable-sector/>

Tebbenhoff, H. (2018). [Tutor Demographics]. Unpublished raw data.

U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (July 2018). Economy at a Glance. Retrieved September 9, 2018, from https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.va_charlottesville_msa.htm

- U. S. Department of Education. (November, 2013). An American Heritage: Federal Adult Education, a Legislative History 1964-2013. Retrieved from https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/Adult_Ed_History_Report.pdf
- U. S. Department of Education Division of Adult Education and Literacy. (2000). History of the Adult Education Act: An Overview. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/anniv40/silver-a.pdf>
- Van Slyke, D., & Johnson, J. (2006). Nonprofit Organizational Performance and Resource Development Strategies: Exploring the Link between Individual Volunteering and Giving. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 29(4), 467-496. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447607>
- Virginia Department of Education. (n.d.). Adult Education. Retrieved November 01, 2018, from <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/adulted>
- Warner, S., Newland, B. L., & Green, B. C. (2011). More than Motivation: Reconsidering Volunteer Management Tools. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25(5), 391-407. doi:10.1123/jsm.25.5.391
- Ziegler, M., McCallum, S. R., & Bell, S. M. (2009). Volunteer instructors in adult literacy: Who are they and what do they know about reading instruction? *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 3(3), 131-139.

Appendix A.**Tutors in the LVCA program FY12 to FY18**

		<i>FY18</i>	<i>FY17</i>	<i>FY16</i>	<i>FY15</i>	<i>FY14</i>	<i>FY13</i>	<i>FY12</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	104	99	98	75	66	43	37
	Female	336	292	238	208	186	162	154
<i>Age</i>	18-24	21	15	15	12	9	4	6
	25-34	63	55	42	30	27	29	31
	35-44	40	34	19	14	23	17	18
	45-54	42	36	37	27	33	28	20
	55-64	87	83	75	70	72	65	58
	65-74	137	131	108	90	70	51	43
	75-84	43	32	33	36	16	11	13
	85+	5	5	7	4	2	0	2
	Not available	2						
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Asian	15	13	10	9	7	8	6
	Black/African American	14	9	9	7	5	5	4
	Middle Eastern	5	4	0	0	0	0	0
	Hispanic/ Latino	12	9	5	6	5	4	2
	White	394	356	312	261	235	188	179
<i>Employment Status</i>	Full-time	127	115	92	72	68	58	60
	Part-time	81	66	62	50	49	48	41
	Unemployed	15	17	14	14	16	15	10
	Not in labor force	36	27	20	21	21	19	15
	Retired	180	166	148	126	94	65	63
	Not available	1	0	0	0	4		
<i>Education</i>	HS Diploma	2	2	0	0	0	1	1
	Some college	41	33	28	30	25	16	19
	Associate degree	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Undergrad degree	184	159	146	114	104	76	71
	Graduate degree	204	191	159	136	116	97	97
	Doctorate degree	5	5	3	3	3	0	3
	Not available	2	0	0	0	4	1	0
<i>Total Tutors</i>		440	391	336	283	252	205	191

(Osborne and Overstreet, 2018)

Appendix B

Script of questions asked of the study participants

These first few questions deal with your overall experience at Literacy Volunteers.

- Tell me about what motivated you to originally sign up with Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle?
 - Respond with questions about specific motivations/needs of the volunteer being met. (For instance, if they wanted to learn about middle-eastern culture, did they learn enough to satisfy their interests? If they wanted to connect with new people, did they participate in social activities? Etc.)
- How did the experience meet your expectations? What was different from your expectations?
- Tell me about your interactions with the staff. Did you find they were adequately available?
 - Were there specific instances where you had questions that didn't get answered?
 - What about the response time to inquiries, either via email or phone?
- Tell me about the materials and supplies LV had on hand. Did you feel like the suggested curriculum was appropriate for your student? Do you feel like LV supplied you with the materials you needed to be successful?
- Staff and students convey their appreciation for volunteer work in different ways. How appreciated did you feel by the **staff and board** at LV?
 - If individual **did not** feel appreciated by the **staff and board**: What could the staff or board have done differently to convey how much we appreciated your work? Did you need more communication from them?
 - If the individual **did** feel appreciated by the **staff and board**: Acknowledge answer.

This set of questions address the individual's feelings about their competence as an instructor in the program.

- You attended the initial training in [Month, Year]. How well did this training adequately prepare you for working with your student? Why?
 - If individual **did not** feel prepared: "What did you encounter during your teaching experience that you did not expect?" and/or "What could the trainers have done differently to prepare you?"

- If individual **did** feel prepared: “What part of the training did you feel was most helpful?” Maybe: “The portions delivered by staff, or the portions delivered by current tutors?”
- Tell me about your experience as a teacher. I know your background is in (industry). Were you confident in your ability to work with your student after the first couple of sessions?
 - How effective do you think you were as a teacher?
 - If individual **did not** feel effective: Can you think of anything that would have helped with this? More training? Having a long-time tutor sit in with you for a few sessions?
 - If individual **did** feel effective: thank them for the work they did with their student. Ask if staff kept him or her adequately apprised of the student’s progress on tests and such. How could the volunteer tell he or she was making a difference?

This set of questions address your experience teaching the student you were assigned.

- Tell me about the student you were assigned. Do you think it was a good match for you, or did you want some other type of student?
 - How committed do you think your student was to learning? How could you tell? Did you meet with your student on-site, or at another location?
- How would you describe your relationship to your student? [looking for “teacher,” “mentor,” “friend,” open-ended for discussion]. “Is this what you expected?”
- How appreciated did you feel by your student?
 - If individual **did not** feel appreciated by their **student**: What could the student have done differently to convey how much he or she appreciated your work? Did you need more communication from the student?
 - If the individual **did** feel appreciated by the **student**: Acknowledge answer.
- What could have happened differently to make the experience better for you?

Close by thanking the individual for their time and telling them where to find the completed research study.