Everything to Gain: Facilitating Intergenerational Communication

By

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Abstract

This research explored the experiences of volunteers connected to organizations through the non-profit organization Volunteer Victoria. The study investigated the perceived and experienced intergenerational communication challenges of volunteers, and the volunteers’ ensuing needs and expectations. Through an online survey and semi-structured interviews, volunteers discussed their perceptions and experiences with volunteer organizations in the Greater Victoria Region. Guided by the frameworks of generational and communication theories, and held within the principles, tools, and practices of an exploratory case study methodology, this mixed-methods study addressed the research question, *In what ways can Volunteer Victoria best support its member agencies in fostering intergenerational communication for volunteers?*

This study reinforced scholarly and industry knowledge that the generations have differing communication needs and that there is value, for all organizational stakeholders, in fulfilling those needs in the non-profit sector. If intergenerational communication is not fostered, there are many implications. Among the highest-risk implications are: the loss of knowledge that could be transferred from senior volunteers to younger and emerging generations of volunteers, and the impact on the organization’s reputation associated with poor engagement of volunteers.

Included in the design of this research is an intention to follow up, with organizations that are willing, in order to learn of any outcomes or impacts of the disseminated research.
Key Terms
Communication, volunteering, intergenerational, intergenerational communication,
Generation Y, Greater Victoria Region, mixed methods, case study, generational.
List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full text</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VV</td>
<td>Volunteer Victoria</td>
<td>Partner organization for research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVR</td>
<td>Greater Victoria Region</td>
<td>Geographical scope of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Senior Engagement Survey</td>
<td>Online study conducted by VV; included follow up focus groups.</td>
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Glossary of Terms

**Cohort**

In this thesis, the term refers to those born in the same general time frames, who share defining life events during developmental periods of their lives.

**Senior**

In the VV SES, this refers to an adult between the ages of 55 and 95.

**Corporate Knowledge**

An awareness and understanding held by employees or volunteers of an organization of the history, current state, and intended future direction of an organization.

**Traditionalists**

A generational cohort born between 1922 – 1945, whose defining developmental life events may have included being raised in the aftermath of the end of World War II and the Great Depression, the space age, and the Korean war. They value conformity, hard work, discipline, and a respect for authority.

**Baby Boomer**

A generational cohort born between 1946 – 1964, whose defining developmental life events may have included the Vietnam war, the sexual revolution, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights movement. They value equal rights, teamwork, personal growth and gratification, and want to make a difference.

**Generation X**

A generational cohort born between 1965 – 1980, whose defining developmental life events may have included being the first large-scale generation of dual-income families with working mothers, the end of the Cold War, an increase in divorce rates and single parents. This generation is often known as “Latchkey Kids”. They value work-life balance, diversity, pragmatism, and independence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Generation Y</strong></th>
<th>A generational cohort born between 1981 – 2000, whose defining developmental life events may have included being raised in a digital age and the ensuing comfort with technology, terrorism and 9/11 in particular, school shootings, and a sense of governmental and parental oversight. They value civic duty, diversity, techno literacy, teamwork, fun, and tolerance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Millennials</strong></td>
<td>Another term for Generation Y. While this term has not been used by the author in this thesis, it may appear in quotations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retiree</strong></td>
<td>A blanket term used in general reference to either Baby Boomers or Traditionalist who have retired, and may therefore be in a similar phase of life with regards to volunteer activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

A heartfelt thank you to the survey and interview respondents who gave their time and effort to this study, and to my Volunteer Victoria partners; particularly the effervescent Lisa Mort-Putland, Executive Director of Volunteer Victoria.

My love and gratitude goes out to my mother, Joy Thompson, and my brother, Andrew Hill, who have been stalwart paragons of love, support, and assurance to me throughout the past two years (and the previous 33!); to my Uncle Steven Hill and my aunt Wendy Porter, for thoughtful advice and glasses of wine, and to my family-by-choice, Leanna Hill and Maegan Chase, whose friendship and encouragement I have cherished more than ever in the past two years. In absentia, I am grateful to my father, Daniel Hill, who would have been quite proud.

I cannot thank the faculty and staff of Royal Roads University enough, particularly my supervisor, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro. Carolin’s insight, patience, and enthusiasm have encouraged and sustained me through this work. I am grateful to Brian Belcher, Jaigris Hodson, Julia Jahansoozi, Carole Sandhu, and Bernard Schissel, who have provided me with many words of kindness and wisdom throughout my MAIS program.

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Finally, a heart full of gratitude to Reuben Hubbard. Thank you for helping me to stay grounded, sane, and steady. I love you buckets.
1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will: Describe the origins of this research, present the hypothesis that guided my research, present the objectives of the work, explain the importance of the work, and explain the scaffolding that forms the theoretical and scholarly grounding.

1.1 Origin and Purpose of the Study

My thesis research emerged from discussions with Lisa Mort-Putland, Executive Director of Volunteer Victoria (VV), who invited me to delve deeply into issues which emerged from VV’s research into volunteer engagement (Lisa Mort-Putland, personal communication, January 17, 2017). Specifically, VV hoped to learn more about how to address ineffective communication between volunteers of different generations among their member organizations.

VV administered its Senior Engagement Survey (SES) to 423 volunteers in the Greater Victoria Region (GVR). VV then conducted 24 focus groups to investigate a growing concern at VV that emerged from the survey results. Volunteers stated that if the communication issues were not addressed then volunteers, who did not feel respected and connected to other volunteers in their volunteer work, would be less likely to continue serving in their chosen organizations. There are far-reaching ramifications of such a loss for organizations that rely on volunteers (Lisa Mort-Putland, personal communication, January 17, 2017). Excerpts (?) from the focus groups can be found in Appendix A.

In order to determine how best to foster intergenerational communication at volunteer organizations under the VV umbrella of service, this study was designed to look deeply into the aforementioned communication issue identified in VV’s SES. In particular, this work considers
issues that tie into communication, such as: respect, comfort, acknowledgement, and appreciation (Takash, 2008; Deetz, 1992) for volunteers across the generations in Victoria.

1.2 Research Question

My primary research question was: *In what ways can Volunteer Victoria best support its member agencies in fostering intergenerational communication for volunteers?*

1.3 Volunteer Victoria’s Mission and Mandate

Volunteer Victoria (VV), the partner organization for this research, is an umbrella organization providing a central agency of service for approximately 550 non-profit and not-for-profit member organizations within the Greater Victoria Region (GVR). VV’s mission statement says that it:

- building and sharing knowledge through the delivery of professional development, training, learning and networking opportunities, and specialized services and resources that advance the quality of volunteer programs and build capacity in the non-profit sector;
- treating all members, volunteers, partners, staff, and stakeholders with fairness, dignity and respect;
- providing welcoming spaces that embrace diverse ideas, knowledge, cultures, and experiences; and,
- enhancing the quality of life for individuals and the wellness of communities through volunteerism (Volunteer Victoria, n.d.).
In service of the GVR communities and their member organizations since 1974, VV:

- maintains a database of over 700 volunteer opportunities, which is updated on a daily basis;
- registers volunteers and connects them with one of its 300 member agencies as appropriate;
- advertises more than 400 member agency volunteer opportunities through news, radio, and television each year;
- provides training on topics such as strategic development, volunteer management, and board membership to more than 1100 individuals each year;
- recognizes more than 300 youth in volunteering each year, and provides specific programs for youth aged 15 to 25;
- provides Volunteer Access Programs and Recreation Visiting Programs, which serve more than 170 people each year who are on a mental health or substance use journey; and,
- provides tools, resources, and consultation to the community on issues related to volunteer and non profit management.

(Volunteer Victoria, 2017, pp. 1, 9-14)

1.4 Implications of the Study

If the communication challenges at VV are left unattended, there are a host of possible ramifications. Ineffective communication can lead to increased misunderstandings and conflicts, which, in turn, can result in volunteers feeling disrespected and disconnected from other
volunteers in their service contributions. This can escalate to a loss of morale and increased dissatisfaction. When volunteers no longer feel connected to others, engaged, or supported, there is also the potential for loss of loyalty to the organization and its team. Dissatisfaction and loss of loyalty can lead to volunteers leaving their chosen organizations, resulting in loss of corporate knowledge in the GVR’s non-profit organizations; that is to say, a loss of knowledge gained from the lived experiences of volunteers. The exodus of volunteers from their chosen organizations can lead to high turnover, which is extremely problematic for organizations that rely heavily on volunteers. High turnover is expensive for an organization, because it means that the member organization would be in a cycle of recruiting, training, performance management, and increased supervision, until volunteers are able to perform to standard (Rekar Munro & Laiken, 2004).

In the GVR in 2015, thousands of local volunteers helped organize 26 international events, 16 national championships, 18 provincial championships, and 38 regional and invitational championships, generating approximately $118 million in local economic activity (Victoria Foundation, 2016, p. 31).

Volunteerism is clearly important to the GVR community, and the community of non-profit organizations that benefit from this are well-poised to address communication breakdowns and champion change.

1.5 Importance to the Community

In the GVR, 48% of the population serves in volunteer positions, and yet community engagement has begun to falter (Victoria Foundation, 2016). In order to encourage
engagement and retention, there is a growing need to address the communication needs of volunteers (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015).

The *Victoria Foundation’s 2014 Wellbeing Survey* found that citizens who engaged in civic participation, such as volunteering, “felt a much higher degree of belonging … than those who were not engaged” (p. 5). Volunteering and civic engagement can thus be tied directly to community engagement, further demonstrating the necessity of understanding the communication needs of GVR volunteers.

1.6 Hypothesis

The working hypothesis for my study was that generational cohorts approached communication differently, and would have different needs and expectations. I hypothesized this in three ways: 1) how different generations show, and want to be shown, respect; 2) how they communicate and how they want to be communicated with; and 3), what they are looking for from volunteer work.

My hypothesis further proposed that a breakdown of communication between generations would cause a loss of engagement in volunteers. A volunteer who does not receive words of gratitude at an annual event, for example, might feel unappreciated and disengaged, and thus less likely to either volunteer the following year or to recommend the event to their social circle. A loss of engagement due to poor communication can also lead to volunteers choosing shorter volunteer assignments, rather than longer volunteer terms, and it can also lead to a loss of corporate knowledge. The loss of corporate knowledge is especially problematic, since the sharing of wisdom between volunteers is a value-added and highly cost-effective supplement to formal training in non-profit organizations.
Ultimately, the implications of inefficient communication within an organization can spread into the community, and erode the services upon which citizens are dependent (Akingbola, Duguid, & Viveros, 2013, p. 68). The importance of retaining volunteers and facilitating communication between generations, in order to minimize the negative consequences for volunteers, VV and its member organizations, and GVR communities, was a key factor for this work.

The broad goals of this study were to:

- identify areas of communication breakdown between generations;
- connect with volunteers to learn about their experiences and concerns;
- analyze the resulting data to determine areas of potential improvement; and,
- develop a set of recommendations that can be shared with interested member organizations under the VV umbrella.

1.7 Theoretical Frameworks

My research was conducted through the lenses of two theoretical frameworks:

Generational theory, specifically the generational cohort model (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010; Strauss & Howe, 1991), offers explanations of the different ways in which generations approach respect, appreciation, values, and communication (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Schullery, 2013); and,

Communication theory, specifically the critical communication theory put forth by Stanley Deetz (1992), asserts that communication reform can impact both productivity and address contemporary social issues (p.79).
These theories provided twin lenses through which I conducted this exploratory case study and addressed my objectives.

1.8 Objectives

Within the framework of my research question, *In what ways can Volunteer Victoria best support its member agencies in fostering intergenerational communication for volunteers?*, my objectives were to:

i. conduct my research in keeping with ethical best practices, holding space for my own reflection and process;

ii. develop an understanding of the world of intergenerational communication as perceived and experienced by the volunteers of different generational cohorts;

iii. use the lenses of generational and communication theories to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by VV’s volunteer community;

iv. develop a set of recommendations that could be used by VV member organizations to enhance intergenerational communication;

v. develop a workshop to be delivered to volunteer coordinators at member organizations, if appropriate and desired by VV; and,

vi. follow up with member organizations six months after project completion to learn if, and how, they have been able to use the recommendations and/or workshop.

Ideally, an understanding of generational differences, willingness to work towards win-win scenarios, and a healthy dose of patience and compassion, will lead to what Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) called an “environment in which leaders form constructive employee interactions
and [use] their differences to strengthen organizational goals.” (p.66). My intent with this research was to help VV to facilitate the building of what Rekar Munro (2014) called a “culture of inclusion” (p. 198) for the member organizations that serve the communities and people of the GVR.

1.9 Generational Limitation

While Generation Z, born after 1995, is beginning to enter into volunteer and paid work in Canada, this generation is comprised of ages which would have made working with them difficult to do with the care and consideration necessary to work ethically with youth. I made the choice not to do so, as I was not confident that it could be done adequately within the timeframe of this study.
2. Literature Review

This chapter will provide an overview of scholarly literature relevant to the topics of generational cohort theory and communication theory, which framed the research conducted for this thesis. Volunteering and volunteerism within the GVR and the broader Canadian contexts will also be addressed.

The review of scholarly literature is important to place this research in the context of other work that has been done, and in order to confirm the scholarly validity of the work.

2.1 Generational Cohort Theory

Generational cohort theory embraces each generation without being limited to, though including broad and changeable, birth year cut-offs (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Rekar Munro, 2014). Cohort theory includes “individuals born around the same time, who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical developmental periods” (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1120), and designates cohorts based on their having “experienced the same historical events within the same time period” (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010, p. 266). Members of the same generational cohort experience similar life events – wars, technology, societal revolution, political influences, and evolution (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Kowske et al., 2010; Twenge et al., 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014). Generational cohorts both drive and follow social change, in support of what Kowske et al. (2010) called the “ebb and flow of new and old generations” (p. 266). The societal impressions made by, and upon, generational cohorts speak strongly to the ways in which they shape landscapes of organizational behaviour (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Rekar Munro, 2014; Twenge et al., 2010).
2.1.1 Birth years of generational cohorts.

While generational cohorts are formed by shared life experiences and cannot easily be bound by birth years, it is helpful to view these cohorts within a framework of Howe and Strauss’ (2000) generational guidelines. For the purposes of this thesis and the discussion that follows this chapter, generational cohort will be outlined as put forth by Rekar Munro (2014):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Birth Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>1981 – 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>1965 – 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1946 – 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalist / Silent Generation</td>
<td>1922 – 1945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within these generational cohorts are cuspers, born on either end of a generation (Arsenault, 2004), whose touchstone life experiences may overlap with those of the next generational cohort (Levickaitė, 2010; Arsenault, 2004).

2.1.2 Generations in the workplace.

Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) note that this is “the first time [that] the U.S. has four generations of people working alongside one another” (p. 59). The four generations currently inhabiting the workplace are: Traditionalists, also known as “Veterans” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 59) and the “Silent Generation” (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190), who were born between 1922 and 1945, and work primarily in governance and high level executive roles (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014); Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964, and work primarily in high level executive roles (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014); Generation X, who were born between 1965 and 1980, and work primarily in managerial and
directorional positions (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014); and Generation Y, who were born between 1981 and 2000, and work primarily in front line or mid-level positions (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014). Each of these four generations can be referred to by many names, enumerated succinctly by Al-Asfour & Lettau (2014), who said that:

- Veterans are also referred to as Silent, Traditionalists, Roaring Twenties, Depression babies, and World War II generation. Baby Boomers are also referred to simply as Boomers. Generation X is also referred to as the Baby Bust generation. Finally, Generation Y is also referred to as the Millennial, Baby Boom Echo, and the Nexters, (p. 59).

This gives a burgeoning sense of exactly how diverse the members of these many-named cohorts must be, to merit such a wealth of titles.

### 2.1.3 Individuality within generations.

A brief overview of each generation is necessary to gain some understanding of the intergenerational issues that may be facing non-profit organizations who work with volunteers from a multitude of age groups. First, however, let us take a moment to set a mental framework that will help to preclude the stereotyping of generational cohorts.

While it is easy to stereotype members of a generation, it is vital to keep in mind that each cohort is made up of individual members. Generational cohort theory cannot “claim to be able to explain the individual actions of individuals, nor to be able to predict an individual’s behaviour” (Codrington, 2008, p. 15). As a group, a generational cohort may demonstrate a trend towards one preference; this cannot necessarily be applied to each individual person within that cohort.
2.1.4 Overview: Traditionalists.

The Traditionalist generation feels a strong sense of duty and respect for authority (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2013). Their values and ethics centre on discipline, morality, and integrity. Traditionalists believe that rules were meant to be followed without question (Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013; Berkowitz & Schewe, 2011), and tend towards having “great respect for authority” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 59). In some organizations, Traditionalists remain the driving force behind corporate culture, having been the ones to establish the processes and workplace culture that are in place today, although most organizations have shifted to a more Boomer-centric workplace model (Zemke et al., 2013).

2.1.5 Overview: Baby Boomers.

In a Baby Boomer-centric workplace, allegiance, optimism, and participation are highly valued (Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013). Boomers question authority and have high levels of ambition (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Rekar Munro, 2014) and their values lie accordingly. They appreciate consensus-building in the workplace (Zemke et al., 2013). It is worth noting that a managerial style “used with the Veterans’ generation could be applicable to the Baby Boomers, especially if they are born on the cusp of either generation” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 66). The significant break in preferences occurs between the Boomer generation, and Generation X (Bova & Kroth, 2001).

2.1.6 Overview: Generation X.

Generation X is an independent cohort that values challenge, candour, and being given opportunities to showcase their skills, abilities, and knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar
Members of Generation X are “independent problem solvers and self-starters, technologically literate, responsive, focused, lifelong learners, ambitious, and fearless” (Bova & Kroth, 2001, p. 58), and demand workplace opportunities which support their priorities (Rekar Munro, 2014; Howe & Strauss, 2000). The “trademark of this generation is brutal honesty” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 60), which may be the characteristic that most distinguishes them from the generation that follows, Generation Y (Tulgan, 2000).

2.1.7 Overview: Generation Y.

Generation Y is well known for the ease with which its members use technology (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Rekar Munro, 2014) and belief in “collective action, and a will to get things changed” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 60). In fact, “By birth year, the Internet itself is a member of the Millennial generation” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 212) and the cell phone was first launched to mass marketing in 1983 (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), meaning that Generation Y truly came of age with technology at its fingertips (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013). While they value integrity, Generation Y prefers a softer, more “polite relationship with authority” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 60) and believe that “respect is earned and not assumed” (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 14). In the workplace, they are determined high performers (Rekar Munro, 2014), and strongly opposed to micromanagement (Martin, 2005). While Generation Y is often presented as a confident, ambitious cohort (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013), it has been the subject of scholarly work finding that they show “an increase in reported panic attacks and stress … While Generation Y appears to have high self-esteem, it often hides the
shallow or fragile lack of confidence that is impacted by dealing with failure” (Barnes, 2009, p. 61).

2.1.8 Communication preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Birth Years</th>
<th>Communication Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>1922 – 1945</td>
<td>Face-to-face communication that follows professional code of conduct/ etiquette guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Johnson & Johnson, 2010, pp. 218-234; Rekar Munro, 2014, pp. 8-10; 72-75; 189-190).

2.1.9 Differences and similarities between generational cohorts.

Scholarly findings in the area of differences and similarities between generations have been fraught with contradictions. At the forefront are findings such as the Generation Y cohort exhibiting “higher voluntary turnover rate than Gen Xers and Boomers but lower turnover intentions” (Kowske et al., 2010, p. 267-268) and predictions that Generation Y “will not value leisure as much as previous generations” (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1123). Regarding communication and compassion, Berkowitz and Schewe (2011) wrote:

Already research has begun to reveal differences among Millennial medical students and their Generation X predecessors. They have been found to rate higher on scales of warmth and on being more outgoing. They are more dutiful or rule-conscious, more sensitive and sentimental. (p. 200)
It appears that "despite the popular press’ accounts, empirical research on generations’ work attitudes is sparse and mixed” (Kowske et al., 2010, p. 268), yet in the workplace we consistently find “that there are real differences, misunderstandings, and other unfortunate tensions between and among employees that have been raised in different eras” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 58). Rekar Munro (2014) suggests the need for “a culture of inclusion – a workplace that is guided by a fundamental norm that welcomes, encourages, and nurtures differences” (p. 194).

Between the lesser shifts in attitudes from Generation X to Y, and the significant changes between them and the Traditionalist and Boomer generations, we begin to witness changes to the landscape of how each generation perceives good communication in the workplace (Berkowitz & Schewe, 2011; Hastings, 2008).

There are similarities between Generations X and Y in regards to the type of behaviours they exhibit and prefer in the workplace, but there are distinct differences between Generation X and Boomers, and Generation Y and Traditionalists (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Hastings, 2008; Kowske et al., 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014). In one noteworthy example, Bova and Kroth (2001) said that “job-hopping is a normal, accepted method of career advancement for Generation Xers” (p. 57), a trait that is currently attributed to Generation Y with great frequency (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Barnes, 2009; Hastings, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2009; Kowske et al., 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013). Yet still, scholars are finding that “generational differences at work are small overall, at least with regard to work attitudes” (Kowske et al., 2010, p. 267).

While Hoole and Bonnema (2015) found substantial differences “between Baby Boomers and Generation X and Baby Boomers and Generation Y” (p. 1), they also noted that “no significant
differences were noted between Generation X and Generation Y” (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015, p.1).

The fact that each generational cohort has been shaped by considerably different environmental and social development factors (Howe & Strauss, 2000) means there are “real differences, misunderstandings, and other unfortunate tensions between and among employees that have been raised in different eras” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 59). However these challenges are surmountable through clear expectations, understanding, and compassion (Westerman & Yamamura, 2006; Rekar Munro, 2014).

In order to avoid a vacuum in leadership and corporate knowledge as more than 75 million Traditionalists, Boomers, and members of Generation X retire in the coming years, “organizations need a clear understanding of the work values of the new generation and how they may differ from the values of previous generations” (Twenge et al., 2010, p. 1118). In the scholarly arena, there is a recognized need “for more research in the area of generational diversity” (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014, p. 58), and for the leadership and executive management of organizations to spot where and why generational cohorts are different, in order to address gaps as they come up, or even before a gap can arise. (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010).

To address the cohort diversity phenomenon and, hopefully, correct for the impending gap in corporate knowledge resulting from retirement, organizational leaders must be able to identify the needs of new generations as they enter the workplace (Howe & Strauss, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014; Zemke et al., 2013). Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014) expressed this concisely by saying that “what some leaders might view as inappropriate, employees,
depending on their generation, might view as appropriate. Therefore, leaders need to understand the best way of leading people based on their generation” (p. 66).

With all four of these diverse cohorts converging upon the North American workplace, scholars and industry leaders have found mentorship and training programs to be helpful for combating discord and creating a climate of workplace harmony (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Rekar Munro, 2014). Despite difficulties that may be encountered in the implementation of mentorship programs, and the high cost of training design and facilitation, the advantages of these programs outweigh the organizational challenges (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Hastings, 2008). In fact, Hastings (2008) identified a potential unforeseen benefit of training and mentoring programs to Generation Y and the organizations that employ them:

The good news is that many of the perks Millennials seek—such as education, training and advancement opportunities— not only will help firms attract and retain these professionals right now, but also will position these workers to tackle new business challenges.

(Hastings, 2008, p. 30)

This creates a win-win scenario that is preferable for Generation Y, and also supports the development of trust and respect in an organization (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Barnes, 2009; Rekar Munro, 2014). Bova (2001) quoted a respondent from one of her case studies, who said, “‘The organization wins and I win. They get a solution to an issue, and I develop some new skills.’ ” (p. 60). Building positive organizational qualities through proven training and mentorship programs helps to capitalize on the unique talent that Generation Y brings to the workplace (Barnes, 2009; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).
2.2 Communication Theory

Communication theory covers an extensive array of theories relating to communication across a multitude of disciplines. The applicability of communication theory to scholarly fields ranges from mathematical and computer science theories through to sociological, organizational, and journalistic theories (Sage, Foss, & Littlejohn, 2009). Communication theory provides for the complexity of systems thinking within human culture and society (Rosengren, 2006), allowing us to find holistic solutions to wicked problems.

2.2.1 Organizational communications.

This research draws on critical organizational communication theory, which directly addresses the complexities of power and interpersonal dynamics (Todericiu & Fraticiu, 2013) of communication within organizations. Within communication theory, critical organizational communication addresses the importance of the “cultural life of organizations” (Sage et al., 2009, p. 226). Organizational communication emphasizes the importance of communication within the organization as well as communication between “organizations and the society surrounding them” (Rosengren, 2006).

Communication theory, and specifically the critical theory relating to organizational communication brought forth by Stanley Deetz (1992), states that “workplaces can be made more productive and democratic through communication reforms” (May & Mumby, 2004, p.87) and that a democratic approach to workplace communication will support employee development and cooperation (May & Mumby, 2004).
2.2.2 Life span communication: A caveat.

Communication theory as a broad field also provides the theory of life span communication, the intention of which is to “describe, explain, and predict the modifications that occur to human communication and thus to its outcomes over the course of a life span” (Sage et al., 2009, p. 120). Life span communication theory would seem to offer a nuanced look at both generational cohort theory and communication theory (Sage et al., 2009), however that nuance concerns itself with the development of communication over the course of a lifetime (Fisher & Roccotagliata, 2017), whereas the intent of this work is to address developed styles of communication, and how they may be addressed.

2.3 Volunteerism

2.3.1 Volunteering in the GVR.

Volunteerism in the GVR: fills a gap by providing important services, such as refugee aid, settlement support, language services (ICA Victoria, 2016); preserves history and land (Craigdarroch Castle, 2017; TLC The Land Conservancy, 2016); and provides necessary support to children, youth, and families in communities (BCCHF, 2017; CHOICES, n.d.; Silver Threads, n.d.). However, there is more to volunteerism than the services it provides. To Canadians, volunteerism is also “the means by which Canadians express ideals” (Brudney, 2011, p. 1), and is “an important third pillar of Canadian society” (Volunteer Canada, 2013). It is thus as important at the national level as it is at the community, family, and individual level (Brudney, 2011) to understand volunteerism and to support Canadian volunteers at every stage of their lives (Volunteer Canada, p. 3).
2.3.2 Volunteers in Canada.

Statistics Canada (2013) provides an overview of data concerning volunteerism across age groups in the Canadian context. While the age groups do not match generational cohorts, they can be broadly grouped. Overall, 43.6% of all Canadians volunteer an average of 154 hours each year (Statistics Canada, 2013). The breakdown across ages is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Average annual volunteer hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 34</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z / Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y / X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X / Baby Boomer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer / Traditionalist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 – 74</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer / Traditionalist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 +</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Statistics Canada, 2013).

Of the volunteers who responded to a Volunteer Canada (2013) study, 47% of Canadian volunteers were recruited to their organizations by word of mouth (para. 7). The top motivations for volunteering in Canada were to “contribute to community, use skills and experience, [and because respondents felt] personally affected by cause” (para. 9). Based on word of mouth
recruitment statistics, I argue that we can extrapolate that the reputation of an organization is vital to recruitment and retention.
3. Research Design

Chapter 3 will explain the design of this study. I include descriptions of the following: the scaffolding of the theoretical frameworks that I have chosen, the methodology which created the foundation for the research methods that I have used, and the application of research methods to this body of work.

3.1 Interdisciplinary Context

The design of this study is interdisciplinary, meaning that it “combines methodologies and epistemologies from more than one discipline in a single research activity” (Belcher, 2016, p. 279). Within this research design is the explicit intent to combine theories from the fields of communication and business (organizational communication theory, generational theory), and to draw methodologies and methods from qualitative and quantitative frameworks employed across those theories (exploratory case study methodology and the methods therein: surveys, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis among them). In adherence to the definition of interdisciplinary research offered by Mitchell and Willetts, this research was designed with “a practical, problem-solving intent” (2009, p. 2). The plan for disseminating this research in toolkits and workshops delivered by VV meets the eligibility requirement of interdisciplinary research to provide “effective communication for diverse audiences” proposed by Mitchell and Willetts (2009, p.16).

Aboelela, Larson, Bakken, Carrasquillo, Formicola, Glied, Haas, and Gebbie (2007) suggested that interdisciplinary researchers be defined by their “the ability to make mistakes gracefully” (p. 334). While I will not speak to my levels of grace, I have certainly made mistakes and learned from them along the way.
3.2 Theoretical Frameworks

This study was conducted through the lenses of generational and communication theory. Generational theory, and specifically the generational cohort model (Twenge et al., 2010; Strauss & Howe, 1991), was appropriate for this study as it offered foundational insights into the different ways in which generations approach respect, appreciation, values, and communication (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Schullery, 2013). See Appendix B for birth years and communication styles for reference.

Communication theory, and specifically the critical theory relating to organizational communication brought forth by Stanley Deetz (1992), states that “workplaces can be made more productive and democratic through communication reforms” (May & Mumby, 2004, p. 87), and that a democratic approach to workplace communication will support employee development and cooperation (Deetz, 1992; May & Mumby, 2004). Communication theory provides a second lens for this work, further focusing the study from generational cohort theory to the specific study of communication within and between generational cohorts. The specific aim of communication theory is to “increase the performances of the organization” (Todericiu & Fraticiu, 2013, p. 187), which speaks directly to the intended outcome of this work.

The theoretical frameworks of communication and generational theories complement each other, each theory bringing to light aspects particular to the other with respect to the facilitation of communication between generations.

3.3 Methodology

This study was conducted using an exploratory case study methodology, which allows the researcher to delve deeply into complex issues (Yin, 1994). Case study methodology is “an
empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,” (Yin, 1994, p.23). Exploratory case study methodology was appropriate for this study, because it supports the use of methods such as content analysis and semi-structured interviews, facilitating the exploration of the experiences that give meaning to respondents’ answers (Simons, 2009) during both the online survey and interview phases.

The exploratory case study methodology created a connection between the methods used and the generational and communication frameworks through which I conducted my research.

3.4 Methods

This exploratory case study used mixed methods in order to derive as much data as possible from the survey and interviews with the least onus on respondents’ time. With thematic content analysis leading the research and threaded throughout the work, it is considered to be the leading method of this study.

3.4.1 Thematic content analysis of SES.

I began by reviewing available survey results and focus group transcriptions from VV’s 2016 SES through thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis was an appropriate method for its ease of use and replicability (Smith, 1992). As well, it can make use of material that is already available, reducing the burden on VV. The analytical aim at this stage was to determine any patterns (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) into which the study could delve more deeply. I applied thematic content analysis to determine the occurrence of words and terms that appeared frequently and could be thematically grouped (Elo & Kyngä, 2008; Spencer, Ritchie & O’Connor, 2004) and used to develop questions for the online survey.
3.4.2 Online survey.

Based on the thematic content analysis of VV’s SES and subsequent focus groups, I developed the Volunteer Victoria Communication Survey (Appendix C), in consultation with my supervisor, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro, and the Executive Director of VV, Lisa Mort-Putland. This online survey was developed on LimeSurvey software, which allows for anonymity and holds data on Canadian servers, in keeping with ethical best practices in Canada (Government of Canada, 2010, p.56). I chose an online survey specifically to create confidence in the anonymity of the research (Best & Harrison, 2009), and because the results can be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Unfortunately, the online survey is limited by being accessible only to the online population of volunteers in Victoria (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). However, for the purposes of this research, the benefits outweigh the limitations. An online survey has the benefit of being something that can be done at the respondent’s leisure, and without the need to collect or return printed materials to/from respondents. I contend that the output of the research and the ease of access to the respondent population overrides the population limitation.

The survey consisted of 15 questions (Appendix C). Key words within questions were formatted in bold text to reinforce them for the respondent as they worked through the survey. The text design was purposefully non-academic and non-technical in order to reach a lay audience. The questions and survey design were intended to allow for emotional responses, with open-ended text boxes to allow respondents to expand on their answers.

Questions 1 through 10 were closed-ended survey questions, and they were designed using a six-point Likert scale to minimize central tendency error (Lewis-Beck, 1995, p. 11). The Likert
scale options were: strongly disagree; disagree; somewhat disagree; somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree. Beyond the initial requirement for respondents to confirm that they had read and agreed to the terms of the survey, no responses were mandatory. Each question provided a space for text at the end in the event that respondents wanted to elaborate or comment. Questions 11 and 12 were open-ended, with the following wording:

Question 11: ‘What change(s) would you suggest in order to improve communication between generations at the organization for which you volunteer?’; and,

Question 12: ‘Is there anything else that you would like to share?’” (Hill, Communication Survey for Volunteer Victoria [CSVV], 2017)

Questions 13 and 14 requested demographic information on the ages of respondents and how many years they had spent as volunteers. Question 15 requested contact information from respondents willing to be contacted for interviews.

Gender demographics were not included in the design of this study, as I was not comfortable providing binary gender choices, and I did not feel that I could do justice to a gender-impact aspect of this research within the timeframe allotted for the completion of my research.

The survey was sent through the VV volunteer listserv to approximately 200 volunteers. Volunteers were given an overview of the project, information about the voluntary nature of the survey, and a note that all data gathered would be anonymous and coded numerically (Appendix G). The survey was accessible to the VV volunteers from February 3rd, 2017 to February 28th, 2017. Canvassing for completion of the survey was done through e-mail to the VV list serve.
The survey data were then analyzed as a starting point for interview questions.

### 3.4.3 Qualitative and quantitative survey analyses.

After the survey closed, I completed an initial quantitative analysis to assess trends across the responses by generational cohort, and to correlate responses with either generational cohorts or years spent volunteering. I then conducted a thematic content analysis of the results in order to develop questions for the next phase of research, which consisted of semi-structured interviews. Within thematic content analysis, I used “inductive coding (themes emerging from respondent’s discussions)” (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 9) to identify relevant areas for recommendations to VV.

### 3.4.4 Interviews.

Following the survey analysis, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews inspired by the questions from the online survey. The respondents for this phase of the data collection were those volunteers who stated in the online survey that they would be receptive to being interviewed. As stated in Question 15 of the online survey:

> The results of this survey will be used to develop a set of questions for one-on-one interviews, in order to get a deeper understanding of the needs of volunteers connected to Volunteer Victoria. If you are willing to be contacted for an interview, it would be greatly appreciated! If so, please enter your information in this text box - it will not be shared with anyone outside of this
research, and the interview can be conducted with as much privacy as you need. Thank you! (See Appendix G)

Four interviews were completed by phone, and two by Skype. Two additional respondents, who were abroad but keen to participate, asked to respond to the questions via e-mail. Although the richness of the interview was missing from e-mail correspondence, I was able to engage in a dialogue with the e-mail respondents that yielded interesting information and continued over the course of two weeks.

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in exploratory case studies for their “openness and ability to deal with complexity” (Kohlbacher, 2006, para. 77). Semi-structured, face to face interviews provide the opportunity to look at the case from multiple angles and allow for the exploration of emergent issues (Wilson, 2013, p. 24). This open, exploratory structure allowed me to expand upon and delve more deeply into the lived experiences of volunteers, and provided me with a wealth of information, such as examples and personal stories, from which I could draw recommendations for VV. I transcribed these interviews within an hour of the completion of each interview, keeping notes to record places where I might watch for my own bias (Sitthiamorn & Poshyachinda, 1993), and to track any impressions from respondents that were not easily transcribed.

With the data available from both the survey and interviews, I conducted a final thematic content analysis of the transcribed interview data. This method allowed for the natural emergence of trends across the transcribed interviews. Repetitive reviewing of the data aided me in my effort to “reduce complexity and filter out the main points of analysis in an iterative
process” (Kohlbacher, 2006, para. 77), while allowing for the context of individual situations (Petre & Rugg, 2007) and the volunteer- and GVR-specific nature of the inquiry to arise.

### 3.5 Population

This study was comprised of adults between the ages of 18 and 94, who volunteer for an organization that is a member agency under the umbrella of Volunteer Victoria. The respondents ranged in seniority of volunteer roles, acting as event assistants, ticket takers, one-on-one literacy support, emergency coordination, and members of boards of director. Eight interviews averaging an hour each were completed with respondents who were kind enough to offer their contact information and time at the end of the survey. I was fortunate to interview two respondents from each of the four generations.

### 3.6 Limitations and Scope

Respondents were asked to confirm that they were over the age of 18, a requirement of the scope of my ethical review, and so this study did not include Generation Z. Because the survey was completed online, respondents and subsequent interviewees were limited to volunteers with internet access.

This study was conducted within the GVR and did not extend beyond the geographical boundaries of this region.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study was cleared by the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board and conforms to Canadian Tri-Council requirements. Both the online survey and interviews used anonymized data and identified respondents through random numerical codes. Respondents were informed
that their participation in the study was completely voluntary, and that they may choose to stop participating at any time without any repercussions to their volunteer role(s) or relationship with Volunteer Victoria. Respondents were assured that they could stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason. Any decision to either stop participating, or to choose not to answer particular questions, would not affect their relationship with either me or Volunteer Victoria. In the event that a respondent withdrew from the study, all associated data collected would be immediately destroyed up until the point where the data had been collated into a report and this thesis, and would no longer be individually identifiable.

Data from both the online survey and interviews were gathered to form a set of recommendations and the outline of a workshop that can be delivered by VV on the subject of facilitating intergenerational communication among volunteers. The recommendations report will be publicly accessible on VV’s website in August 2017. Data will be kept on a password-protected flash drive, in a locked file cabinet until January 2018 as per my approved Research Ethics Board application. After January 2018, the confidential data files will be destroyed.

3.8 Controlling Bias

Throughout this research, I maintained a record of notes and self-assessment. My research journal was a tool that I used in order to avoid researcher bias and maintain an arm’s length relationship with the work (Sitthi-amorn & Poshyachinda, 1993). In particular, I was concerned about four biases concentrated within the design of the research instruments (question order bias), the research itself (social desirability and leading question biases), and the analysis (confirmation bias).
3.8.1 Controlling question order bias in instrument design.

Question order bias suggests that asking for “sensitive information initially might prevent a number of sample members from ever starting the questionnaire” (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p.228). When the perception is that the survey will be simple to navigate, and that the questions are intuitive and clear, it can make respondents more inclined to complete the survey (Fowler, 1995).

When designing the survey, I ordered the questions in a way that placed sensitive information at the end. This would encourage respondents to focus on their emotional responses to intergenerational communication rather than focus on whether the survey was being framed by their age or seniority, as it might have seemed if the survey began with demographics (See McFarland, 1981). I ordered the questions in my survey into general categories, as follows:

1. Opinion questions, e.g. “I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers who are younger than me” (Question 1, Appendix C);
2. Comfort questions, e.g. “I am comfortable asking questions of my volunteer coordinator” (Question 6, Appendix C);
3. Questions that evoke feelings, e.g. “I feel that my age is a factor in how I am treated” (Question 9, Appendix C); and,
4. Demographic questions.

When designing my interview guide I asked broad and general questions first, such as: “Can you tell me about your volunteer experience?” (Question 1, Appendix E) and drilled down to more personal questions about respect, communication, and appreciation preferences. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, this guide was rarely followed in the intended order,
however the generic questions were always presented first and helped to build rapport for the questions that followed. I appreciated the flexible style of this method. Semi-structured interviews became conversations, and respondents became more comfortable telling their stories and discussing their responses in ways that, I argue, would not have been possible in a structured interview.

3.8.2 Controlling social desirability/leading question biases during interviews.

Social desirability bias, which can originate with a respondent and be addressed by the interviewer, comes from a desire to present the best version of one’s self and a “lack of comfort to reveal his or her true attitudes” (de Winter & Dodou, 2014, p. 1). In the context of this study, social desirability bias might have surfaced in the form of a respondent omitting a negative response, because the organizations discussed are generally considered to be doing work that is good for the community (Chung & Monroe, 2003). In order to account for social desirability bias, I presented “unconditional positive regard. This includes phrasing questions to show it’s okay to answer in a way that is not socially desirable” (Sarniak, 2015, para. 6). For example, a respondent told a story about a difficult relationship she has with a fellow board member that she attributes to the board member’s age and gender. She said that she was comfortable speaking up against him despite his stature in the organization. I responded, saying “It’s great that you have that voice, and that you can use it” (Interview 4, Generation Y respondent). She went on to elaborate, and talked about her sense of personal development, which she attributed to being able to challenge authority with confidence.

When designing the interview questions, I focused the questions on the respondent’s personal experiences rather than the failures or successes of others. I asked, “What do you like the least
about volunteering?”, rather than “What do you think that your organization/fellow volunteers do badly?”. This was done in an effort to minimize any tendencies that respondents might have to manage impressions (Chung & Monroe, 2003, pp. 296-299).

As well, steps were taken to minimize leading questions; that is, questions which recommend a preferred response, or guide the interviewee towards a particular response (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In order to minimize my own use of leading questions, I designed my interview questions to be as neutral as possible. To confirm the validity and appropriateness of the questions, they were reviewed by both Lisa Mort-Putland, Executive Director of VV, and by my supervisor, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro.

As these interviews were semi-structured, I wanted an ongoing reminder to reflect upon whether or not my questions would be leading before I spoke during the interviews. I added a quick reminder at the top of my interview guide which said “Remember! A leading question imposes my perspective or views on the respondent” (Appendix E). This helped me to frame my questions and comments carefully during discussions with interviewees, which had the added benefit of simplifying analysis as the responses I received were very clear.

3.8.3 Controlling confirmation bias in the analysis of results.

Confirmation bias during the analysis phase of research can lead to a researcher “misinterpret[ing] new information as supporting previously held hypotheses” (Rabin & Schrag, 1999, p. 38). During my analysis of survey and interview data, I noted in my research journal that it would be possible for me to be biased towards my own initial hypothesis, which I saw as valid due to VV’s initial SES. Having identified that bias, I was able to put it aside and analyze the data without referring back to that hypothesis. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this
led to the realization that the hypothesis I initially proposed was, in fact, incorrect based on my results.
This chapter will discuss the results of the survey and interviews conducted in line with my research question and objectives. I will present the results of my analysis of VV’s SES, my own survey results and analysis, and the thematic areas and learnings from the semi-structured interviews that I conducted.

This study was intended to address the research question, “In what ways can VV best support its member agencies in fostering intergenerational communication for volunteers? My objectives were to gain an understanding of the communication challenges and preferred ways of engaging identified by volunteers of different generational cohorts in the GVR, to link identified needs and conflicts to relevant scholarly literature, and to develop a set of recommendations for VV member agencies.

For the purposes of this section, please note that the VV SES used the term “Senior” to refer to adults between the ages of 55 and 95.

4.1 Thematic Content Analysis of the VV SES

The online survey for this study was designed based on data collected from VV’s SES and focus groups, which identified communication and respect as two large areas of concern for the GVR’s senior volunteers.

4.1.1 Thematic area from VV SES: Communication.

The first identified area was that of communication; respondents said that organizations need to facilitate “communication, [and] consistency” (VV Focus Group 3, 2016), but they also identified challenges of such facilitation when it came to intergenerational communication. One focus group perceived senior volunteers as resistant to being taught skills by volunteers who
were younger than them (VV Focus Group 2, 2016). Another focus group stated that “honesty, fairness, open communication – all go both ways” (VV Focus Group 3, 2016) between generations of volunteers. Unfortunately, because this was not the purpose of VV’s SES, there was no additional data available to flesh out this statement.

Within the thematic area of communication, the subject of whether or not volunteers of all ages had, or wanted, an understanding of the structure of the organization was raised. One respondent cited frustration with “position description changes with no warning” (Focus group #4, 2016) at their organization; another mentioned that their organization needed “to be transparent/communicative” regarding how the roles and responsibilities were laid out for volunteers.

It was not clear whether the issues of communication and respect were between volunteers, or between volunteers and the organization’s representatives.

**4.1.2 Thematic area from VV SES: Respect.**

The second thematic area which emerged from VV’s SES was that of respect. Seniors spoke of the disrespect they experienced when carrying out their volunteer tasks, categorized clearly in Focus Group #4 as a sense that “younger people talk down or don’t respect opinions of seniors” (2016). Senior volunteers cited issues such as a “sense of entitlement” (Focus Group 3, 2016) by other volunteers. An analysis of the focus group transcripts led to common issues among seniors – namely, a lack of communication, a feeling of being patronized, limited opportunities to offer their input, feeling unappreciated, and a desire for mentorship-style relationships (Focus group 1, 2016; Focus group 3, 2016; Focus group 6, 2016). Unfortunately, no additional data were
available, as these were not the issues that the SES was designed to investigate and the respondents were not directly quoted in transcription.

When the focus groups discussed respect, the subject of appreciation surfaced often. Respondents noted that they were more likely to “stick with opportunities when the efforts are worthwhile and appreciated” (Focus Group #5, 2016) and that they wanted to know “that our knowledge/contribution is appreciated/valued” (Focus Group #1, 2016). Unfortunately, as this was not the purpose of VV’s SES. There were no additional data available to flesh out where or how volunteers wanted to be recognized.

4.1.3 Using the VV SES in survey design.

The thematic content analysis conducted on the VV SES revealed the following themes as key concerns for GVR’s senior volunteers: communication, respect, understanding organizational structure, and appreciation. While these subjects were peppered throughout the discussions, they were not further investigated during VV’s SES. Therefore, I considered it to be important to carry the topics of communication, respect, understanding organizational structure, and appreciation into my survey design.

Communication, engagement, appreciation, and entitlement are common themes in intergenerational work (Rekar Munro, 2014, p.12), which led to my hypothesis that generational cohorts approach communication differently, and would have different needs and expectations. The objective of my survey was to address the themes of communication, appreciation, and engagement through the eyes of multiple generations.
4.2 Online Survey: Quantitative & Qualitative Analyses

The results of my survey served as a grounding follow-up to the VV survey. Equally important, the results helped me to develop my interview guide. In this section, I will: break down the responses by age, correlate responses to relevant literature, and discuss how these responses informed the development of my interview questions.

4.2.1 Demographics.

Fifty-four respondents completed the entire survey and 21 respondents partially completed the survey. The respondents who did not fully complete the survey did not give their reasons for doing so.

Of the respondents who identified their age group, the breakdown was as follows:

![Demographics: Respondent age chart]

- 18-36: 9%
- 37-52: 9%
- 53-71: 63%
- 72-94: 19%
The age ranges indicated in the response rate to my survey are not commensurate with the average volunteer rates in the GVR for 2016. In the GVR, ages 18-36 have an approximate volunteer rate average of 42%, and ages 53-71 have a similarly approximate volunteer rate average of 41%. Comparatively, in my survey the 18-36 age group had a respondent rate of 9%, and the 53-71 age group had a respondent rate of 63%. One possible reason for the discrepancy in responses to this survey when compared to the amount of people volunteering in each age range is that volunteers aged 53-71 have a higher likelihood of being retired, and may have more time to offer to additional volunteer activities such as survey participation.

When asked for the length of time they had been volunteering, the breakdown was:

This data are reflective of respondent ages. Generation Y, ages 18 – 36, may have begun volunteering in high school as part of credit programs (see Vonde, 2004), and based on this data, has continued to volunteer at a fairly consistent rate over the past 10 – 15 years. Generation X members, ages 37 – 51, have a broader range of length of service, which may be reflective of
how busy their lives are. Generation X members, as of this writing, may have young children or teenagers, be focused on career and retirement planning, and might therefore have less time for volunteer activity than their retired counterparts. This autonomous generation of adult latchkey kids may also be seeking out independent initiatives through volunteerism. Baby Boomers, ages 52 – 71, are the first age range to reach the 20+ category of years as a volunteer. While 40% of Baby Boomers who responded to this survey are starting out in the 0 to 5 year range, that may be reflective of busy individuals that have recently retired and are looking to contribute to volunteer activities with newfound free time. Baby Boomers are, in fact, spending longer years in the workplace, and often “need to keep working because they have not saved enough for a comfortable retirement” (C. Rekar Munro, personal conversation, June 23, 2017). Traditionalists, ages 71 – 94, are the first respondent group not to have shown responses in the 0 to 5 range of years spent volunteering. These are individuals who, if retired, have likely been retired for more than five years and have been able to devote as much or as little time to volunteer activities as their lives allow, and as they are inclined to do. The Traditionalist cohort feels that giving back to community is important, and comprises the second-highest age group in Volunteer Canada’s 2013 study on hours spent volunteering. Volunteers in the age group 75 and older contribute 200 or more hours volunteering per year (para. 4).

4.2.2 Responses by age: Ages 18 – 36 (Generation Y).

Questions can be found in Appendix C.
Overall, responses from volunteers in the 18 – 36 age group trended towards the centre of the Likert scale. Respondents selected “somewhat agree”, “somewhat disagree”, and “disagree” (Appendix X) over the stronger responses on either end of the scale. The CSVV survey showed that volunteers between the ages of 18 – 36 largely perceived, in general, that their opinions were respected, including respect from younger volunteers. Responses became less positive when asked if they felt “acknowledged and appreciated” in their volunteer roles. None of the survey respondents in this age group felt strongly that their age was a factor in how they were treated. No additional data in any of the text boxes were provided by the respondents to substantiate their ratings.

The lowest ratings from respondents in the 18 – 36 age range were assigned to the question pertaining to the degree to which they felt consulted on their opinions and asked about their needs. This is of concern, as Generation Y has a strong drive to collaborate and participate in decisions that affect them (Tapscott, 2008). As Diaz, Fields, Hyde, and McCauley (2015) noted,
when working to engage Generation Y, it is important that organizations “give them a voice in decision-making and … allow them to influence the way work is done” (p. 4). Without this sense of investment and influence, Generation Y can often feel disengaged in an organization and with the work they are doing. This sense of being unimportant to the big picture, for this highly involved and engagement-seeking generation, could lead to a loss of knowledge-building capacity within an organization, and increased turnover, which is expensive and potentially damaging to the reputation of an organization.

Based on these findings, the issues of consultation and opinion-seeking were brought into my interview questions.

4.2.3 Responses by age: Ages 37 – 52 (Generation X).

The respondent group between the ages of 37 – 52 had the greatest diversity of responses, despite having one of the lowest numbers of respondents, a signpost of this independent, individualistic generation (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, ). Generation X responses to questions
about whether or not they were comfortable asking questions of their fellow volunteers and volunteer coordinators were entirely positive and frequently on the “strongly agree” side of the scale. There was one exception to the positivity of their responses: they had varying responses to the statement “I am consulted on my opinions as a volunteer”. Since the fewest comments came from this age group, it is difficult to determine whether or not being asked for an opinion would be important to them. The question of how important it is to be consulted required further investigation, and was thus incorporated into my interview guide.

Scholarly literature tells us that Generation X prefers to have a high level understanding of an organization in order to “experience a sense of ownership” (Smith, n.d., para. 13), and that they will challenge rules, behaviours, or actions (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). With the median age in the Canadian workforce having been 40.6 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016), and the mean age of non-profit employees having been 43.4 in 2013, one could hypothesize that Generation X’s comfort in today’s volunteer organization comes from working within a system designed by people of its generation and designed for people of the generation. I kept this hypothesis in mind while designing my interview questions.

**4.2.4 Responses by age: Ages 53 – 71 (Baby Boomers).**
The Baby Boomer respondent group, aged 53 – 71, showed a strong sense of feeling appreciated for the work that they did as volunteers, but varied in whether or not they felt that their opinions and needs were respected. This may indicate that for them, respect and appreciation are not inextricable from one another – rather, to show appreciation is to demonstrate respect.

Baby Boomer respondents indicated that there was a sense of having to prove oneself, with one volunteer saying: “at the start of my volunteer experience I felt like the manager did not value my input. Now that I have “proven” myself, I am listened to.” Another Baby Boomer respondent said that there was “a paternalistic attitude [is] often present as well as an assumption that the volunteer is less educated, less capable, less experienced, etc.” Based on scholarly literature, we know that Baby Boomers in particular are unlikely to welcome any preconceived notion that they are less than capable of doing the work that is required of them.

As Martin and Tulgan (2006) said:
Ask Boomers of all ages what’s important to them at work, and you’ll hear three things: respect, respect, respect.

- Respect for their contributions
- Respect for their skills, knowledge, and wisdom
- Respect for what they can still offer organizations before they ‘retire’.

(p. 31).

In the workplace, Baby Boomers “didn’t make demands. They waited for their bosses to notice their hard work and reward them in due course” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006, pp. 24-25). A generation often “defined by their work” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006, p. 25), Baby Boomers associate respect with organizations recognizing and understanding what they bring to the table.

From my analysis of Baby Boomers’ written text responses on the survey and their responses to questions on the Likert scale, it was unclear to me, whether they felt respect from their volunteer organizations. I brought this question forward in my interview design, and it is particularly reflected in question 2.a.: “What contributes to feeling respected/not respected as a volunteer?” (Appendix C).

4.2.5 Responses by age: Ages 72 – 94 (The Silent Generation/Traditionalist).
Over all, the responses from respondents aged 72-94 were the least polarized and closest to Generation Y in their tendency towards positive, if not effusive, responses. This polite, protocol-oriented generation (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190) is known for a tendency to “accept their roles in an organization and rarely complain” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 127) and may trend towards the polite and circumspect responses even in an anonymous survey. One respondent added to her selection in the survey that “Communications are complicated. Whether to ask or keep quiet is always a decision; often better to say nothing.” This disinclination towards conflict may make the large Traditionalist respondent group the most challenging to decipher, and thus I hoped to find deeper and more precise responses through interviews. However, it is also possible that this is simply a generation that is pleased with its place in the volunteer sphere of the GVR – after all, this generation has survived the Great Depression, D-Day, polio, and the Korean War. As one interviewee said to Johnson and Johnson (2010), “Volunteering with the Chamber allows me to do something new: to work in a lower-stress environment, and still contribute to my community”
(p. 123). This may indicate that while Traditionalists are inclined towards community activism, they prefer to do so in lower-profile, support-based roles that are not reminiscent of the stress of their careers compared to other generations.

The survey had a high response rate, but very few written comments that communicate the specific thoughts of Traditionalist behind the Likert scale responses. Therefore, I looked to my interview design to learn more about the needs of Traditionalist volunteers. The design of my interview guide as semi-structured emerged particularly from the Traditionalist survey responses, as I hypothesized that learning more about them would require deviation from any rigid question structure.

4.2.6 Survey results: Conclusion.
The purpose of this survey was to provide a source and starting point for the design of an interview guide, to be used in the next phase of my research, and served that purpose well. Quantitatively, of the 48 text box comments that were input in this survey, the only words which appeared in a significant way (more than twice) were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Amount counted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While not easily quantifiable, an understanding of the volunteers’ organizational structure came up in various comments seven times. This quantitative analysis helped me to develop my
interview questions by showing me the importance of respect, appreciation, communication, and organizational structure to the respondents.

I found that questions emerged regarding how consultation and use of skills impacted engagement and loyalty, and whether or not such consultation was important to all generations or just – as the survey would seem to indicate – Generation Y. I found areas of curiosity with Generation X, specifically around whether or not a high level understanding of organizational structure was important to them. The area of respect, which was reflected in my first four questions, collectively received the fewest text-based comments from respondents, and so I hoped to dig into this with open-ended interview questions that would allow respondents from all generations to express their opinions about respect.

4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviews that I conducted yielded two key pieces of information: 1) reasons for volunteering and for remaining as volunteers in the partnering organizations of VV; and, 2) four thematic areas of interest: respect; communication; appreciation; and comprehension of organizational structure.

All of the respondents, across the generations, stated that they volunteer in order to fill a need in their communities. To a lesser extent, they volunteer for the perks offered by organizations, such as free tickets and event attendance. Community involvement and a need to give back to others were often mentioned. As stated by one Generation Y respondent: “I volunteer … as a long-term commitment to my community, and in short-term assignments, and these activities are a great way to become connected and a part of this community”. As well, respondents stated they were interested in being part of creating and supporting specific communities that had personal
relevance to them. One respondent said, “I really want this space to exist for my own personal needs, and I recognize that in order for it to do so, it must have volunteers” (Generation Y, respondent 8). Traditionalists often cited “having the time to give” (Traditionalist, respondent 1) or “filling time” (Traditionalist, respondent 2) when discussing their reasons for volunteering. One respondent said they decided to volunteer because “I have spare time. I don’t want a part time job, and I thought I might meet people” (Traditionalist, respondent 1); another said, “I see a need, and I have the time, so I think that I should help” (Baby Boomer, respondent 3). This connection between spare time and volunteering was a common theme in responses from Traditionalists and retired Baby Boomers.

Non-retired Baby Boomers and Generation X interviewees cited an opportunity to employ their skills in support of their community as their reason for volunteering. One respondent said he “needed to feel useful” (Baby Boomer, respondent 4), and another respondent said she “enjoys using the skills I developed throughout my career” (Baby Boomer, respondent 3). A retired public servant and immigrant to Canada said that she has “a great deal of public service training, in the areas of emergency response, and I enjoy continuing to use those skills in my new home” (Generation X, respondent 6). Added to this, Baby Boomers expressed a need to be affiliated with organizations that are of personal interest to them. As one respondent noted, “If I have the skill set and I have the interest, then that fits in to where I decide to volunteer” (Baby Boomer, respondent 3). Generation Y also stated the importance of volunteering with an organization that was of personal interest to them, but this was less relevant to Generation X respondents.
One Generation Y respondent cited social awareness as his reason for volunteering, saying of his volunteer work with literacy:

Writing and reading are the most basic ways we learn about other humans. I care about issues of globalization, colonialization, privilege, and since I think many of them demand empathy, this is a tiny first step toward increasing the chances that more people will hear each other's stories and make choices from an informed, inclusive, mindful position (Generation Y, respondent 8).

Generation Y respondents spoke specifically about skill building. As stated by one Generation Y respondent “I get to use my brain the way I don’t get to use it at work, and the idea of giving back, or giving forward, is incorporated into that” (Generation Y, respondent 7). For another Generation Y respondent, volunteering is a way to “build my CV and portfolio” (Generation Y, respondent 8). The desire to develop expertise and aptitude is indicative of this early-to-mid career generation, who are broadening their horizons through volunteering (Akingbola et al., 2013).

The interview data from this study may be said to reflect phases of life: Generation Y’s, who are leaving high school and entering post-secondary school or the workforce, with a focus on building an essential skill set for the early stages of their career; the established Baby Boomers and Generation X’s, who are looking for ways to use the skills that they have accumulated; and, the accomplished and retired Traditionalists, who are looking to give back to their communities in a way that is meaningful to them. With a broad understanding of what motivates volunteers to give their time, energy, and effort to non-profit organizations, we can delve into the four
4.3.1 Thematic area 1: Respect.

Of the four thematic areas, the greatest response variance between generations was in the area of respect; specifically in how they perceive respect being demonstrated to them, and the behaviours that they offer to signal respect.

Generation Y respondents spoke of wanting to be known. According to one Generation Y respondent, “I want the person, or whoever is impacted by the work that I do, to see me and know my name. That contributes to my feelings of respect” (Generation Y, respondent 7). This respondent continued by saying:

     Transparency and communication attributes to my feelings of respect. So if
     I’m contributing to the bigger picture, if I’m part of a puzzle piece, I want
     to know how that piece fits in to the bigger picture, and I want to know
     what the bigger picture is. I like to hear that stuff – I think that’s respectful.
     To say, ‘this bigger picture is happening, and this is a fluctuation that we
     know about. This is a moving part, and I wanted to let you know, because I
     know you’re interested’ – that’s respect. (Generation Y, respondent 7)

The desire for open communication and its connection to respect aligns with scholarly literature on Generation Y, which looks for honesty and transparency, and has:

     little time for being patronized. As we have already learned, they can
     see through spin and they know what they want. Unless you respect
them and genuinely listen to them, they simply won't do business with you. (Bibb, 2014a, para. 6)

When we speak of organizational structure, it is in the context of “division, coordination, control of tasks and the flow of information within the organization” (Hiriyappa, 2008), and generally includes the power structures of an organization. The organizational structure could be considered to be how the work of the organization gets done, within and through the organization. Generation Y respondents spoke of “avoiding the tiered, formal structure” (Generation Y respondent 8) as a form of respect. According to another Generation Y respondent:

Human-to-human communication is what I especially need in a volunteer organization. By that, I mean that I want an opportunity to get away from the hierarchical relationship power structures, to where as a volunteer, I’m just me. And the person sitting across from me is not their societal position, they’re just that person. I think we talk to each other differently when we are person to person, human to human. Whether you’re talking to the volunteer coordinator, or the executive director, or the rest of the board, just being treated like a valued human individual where you can just converse. In its best case scenario, it feels like we are all doing this work because we care about X. So let’s just carry on doing that. (Generation Y, respondent 7)

This resistance to hierarchy aligns with generational cohort literature. Generation Y, a generational cohort that came of age with the internet, and subsequently internet search engines such as Google, doesn’t “think in terms of hierarchy, as they are accustomed to looking ‘out’ for
information instead of looking ‘up.’” (Karsh, 2013; para. 13-15). This shared inclination to give and gain respect based on a person’s attributes and knowledge, rather than position, is shared with Generation X and echoes Martin’s (2005) assertion that “most Xers and Yers say they respect a person in authority if he or she has the credibility to back it” (p. 50). Generation Y assigns value to a person based on their skills, knowledge, and ability to create meaning and make a difference (Karsh, 2013; Rekar Munro, 2014), a preference similar to the “unimpressed by authority” (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190) stance of Generation X.

Generation X begins to bridge the gap between Generation Y and Traditionalists, as responses connect appreciation and respect. One respondent said the following as it pertains to how she has been shown respect as a volunteer:

I always feel respected as a volunteer. During the response to the View Towers fire, evacuees were so grateful for the bit of assistance we (as volunteers registering them for services) could offer, despite the fact that they were also under incredible stress. That made my effort so worthwhile. That experience also showed me what a healthy community we have. Many of the evacuees had very little, had lost everything, had no one to support them … yet they didn’t panic. That is the sign of a healthy community, one in which people know that their community will step up when needed.

(Generation X, respondent 6)

The above quotation demonstrates a strong connection between respect and appreciation, as well as a need for visible, positive, immediate impact, which is aligned with the Generation X desire for the “direct and immediate” (Rekar Munro, 2014).
Another Generation X respondent, who formally serves as a volunteer coordinator but for the purposes of the interview spoke about her experiences in her volunteer capacity, said that she shows respect by trying to “make volunteers feel appreciated by acknowledging their contributions as valuable and important, as part of a team enabling wonderful things to occur” (Generation X, respondent 5). As stated by Martin (2005), “often-forgotten words of courtesy are vital to showing respect and appreciation,” showing scholarly support for the connection between appreciation and respect demonstrated by respondents 5 and 6. This is similar to the expressed preferences of Traditionalists.

Baby Boomers showed an inclination towards a desire to be asked for input, and to bring their skills, expertise and training to the role in which they volunteer. One volunteer spoke about respect as follows:

First of all, to have clarity about what they want from you. To be clear about it, and to be able to go into it smoothly. I did a little bit of volunteering for an organization an NGO I won't mention, and when I got there, they really weren't very clear about what they wanted me to do until I sat around for a while, which I did not appreciate. And then some of the things that I did, well, they really weren't what I felt was a good use of my time and so I didn't do it for very long. So really, clarity. Being ready when volunteers arrive so that they can step right in and do it. That’s being treated respectfully. (Baby Boomer, respondent 3)

Another Baby Boomer respondent spoke about participation in decision making, in the context of his volunteer work as a board member:
If you get the explanation and consultation, it's sort of an indication of whether or not you’re valued, I think. And again, it really depends on what is going on. I don't always have to have everything my way, it's just more a question of having things explained and having a chance to discuss things. I respect other people's opinions, and others respect my opinions, that's the kind of respect I want. Not that what I want gets done, but just that there's at least some communication and everything is understood. (Baby Boomer, respondent 4)

This validates similar scholarly writing on recognition and the connection to the “bottom-line orientation” (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190) of the Baby Boomer cohort. Known for their core values of involvement and efficiency (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190), and for wanting to be “put in situations where they can shine” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 81), Baby Boomers interviewed for this research showed a desire to have their skills valued and applied, and to enter an efficient work space. When asked about what makes them feel respected as a volunteer, Baby Boomer respondents spoke of a volunteer workplace – be that at an event or at an office – that was organized and ready for them to hit the ground running.

As Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) said of Baby Boomers, they “respect their experience and include them in planning for your organization’s future. This generation wants to leave a meaningful legacy” (p. 74). Inclusion in consultation, respect for their input, and being clear, efficient, and prepared are all ways in which non-profit organizations can demonstrate respect for the Baby Boomer cohort. The desire to be consulted is similar to Generation Y’s need for have meaningful involvement.
My conversations with Traditionalists about respect returned to the topics of appreciation and gratitude. The Traditionalists that I interviewed were retired, and spoke consistently about the importance of organizations respecting their time. One respondent said that “if an organization doesn’t respect my time – that’s a disgrace, because I’m retired, but my time is still valuable” (Traditionalist, respondent 1). Another respondent concurred by saying “whether you have only the hours after work, or you work all day, your time should still be considered a valuable commodity” (Traditionalist, respondent 2). Traditionalists also spoke about the need for gratitude in connection with demonstrating respect, something that they shared with Generation X respondents. As Johnson and Johnson (2010) noted in their writing on the values and ways of managing Traditionalist volunteers, “they will resent it if they don’t get an occasional word of acknowledgment … and be sure to thank them for the effort.” (p. 164). All respondents spoke of the importance of appreciation, but Traditionalist spoke specifically about gratitude in the context of respect, often answering questions about respect with answers about gratitude. This speaks to a sense of respect that comes from feeling valued and seen.

Traditionalist respondents stated that the height of disrespect comes from being treated as though “we have no memory … like we are senile” (Traditionalist, respondent 1); another agreed, saying she often “felt invisible” (Traditionalist, respondent 2) because of her age. Age discrimination serves the volunteer sector poorly; particularly in the GVR, where Traditionalists comprise the majority of volunteers, making up 34% of the volunteer force compared to 30% of volunteers being Baby Boomers, 17% Generation X, and 19% Generation Y (Volunteer Victoria, 2016).
During discussions of respect and gratitude, financial matters were of concern to one respondent, who felt that “if you do volunteer, it shouldn’t cost you anything. I’m giving experience and time, trying to be helpful, and filling a need. And in some cases, it’s saving them hiring someone” (Traditionalist, respondent 1). She offered examples of having to pay for gas, parking, or printing in some of her volunteer roles. This respondent felt that respect and consideration were reflected in how thoughtful an organization was, or was not, around the needs of volunteers, and that one way to demonstrate this thought and care was to offer to cover the costs of volunteering. She added that the financial aspect “should be offered. It’s not a huge amount – shouldn’t I be worth $3 to them? All of my life, I’ve had to scrimp and save, and I wouldn’t ask anyone to do anything for me without making sure they were not out of pocket.” (Traditionalist, respondent 1).

For a generation which “came of age in the Great Depression … and were responsible for the prosperity following World War II” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 230), it may come as no surprise that they consider it an organization’s responsibility to make sure that volunteering their time and effort does not cost them anything, and that they consider that a mark of respect.

4.3.2 Thematic area 2: Communication.

Overarching communication, within which respect, appreciation, and organizational structural comprehension fit, has framed this study. This thematic area, focussed specifically on each generation’s preferences for giving and receiving communication from their volunteer organizations.

Previously discussed was Generation Y’s need to have human-to-human, non-hierarchical conversations that offer insight into the role it plays in relation to the organization’s big picture.
One respondent gave the following example of what she considered to be effective, considerate communication:

I learned from the woman who is leading a group project in my area about the intersection between an Urban Farmer’s group, and the Community Association, and it helped me to understand the complexity of the relationship. She also shared with me the complexity of the work with the city. So while it wasn’t germane to what we were learning about soil health, and holding workshops on tomatoes, it really helped me to get a better sense of not just my community, but something bigger. And to feel like I was part of something bigger. I was a part of improving relationships across the board. That allowed me to be more mindful, and more intentional about my service, and that really works for me. (Generation Y, respondent 7)

From the theme of respect for Generation Y, it can be argued that this would also have been taken as a show of respect for the Generation Y volunteer.

Respondents also spoke of the communication faux pas, or behaviours that impede communication, which included “a lack of transparency” (Generation Y, respondent 8), and “power struggles and withholding information, jockeying for power and position” (Generation Y, respondent 7). It may perhaps shed some light on this need for transparency to note that Generation Y was “raised in a world of marketing and advertising, so they can detect a sales pitch with a heavy topspin in a second” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 186), thus honest communication has become high on its list of priorities. Where Generation Y values transparency, Generation X preferences focus on clarity, appropriateness of communication, and medium.
Generation X respondents identified e-mail as a preferred medium, as “I am pretty busy … it’s easier to find time for e-mail” (Generation X, respondent 5), rather than communicating in person or by telephone. Within the context of e-mail, they want “regular communications, which have something of interest or can make me a better volunteer” (Generation X, respondent 5), and communication which is “clear and helpful with plenty of opportunity for input” (Generation X, respondent 6). For a generation which tends “to be fast paced and will become frustrated when they think things are lagging” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p.224), this desire for communication that is “direct and immediate” (Rekar Munro, 2014, p.190) is a clear fit with scholarly literature. The desire that Generation X expresses for clarity of communication is shared with the needs of Baby Boomer volunteers.

Baby Boomers value receiving “the support that they need in order to continue to perform at the highest levels” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 222). In the context of this study, that support may take the form of organizations having processes in place to streamline problems, and communicate with clarity in a consultative manner. Baby Boomers “may put process ahead of result” (Zemke et al., 2013, ch. 3, section 6), demonstrating the importance placed on the clarity of organizational procedures. One respondent cited his need for organizations to “explain why decisions are made as well as simply making those decisions” (Baby Boomer, respondent 4). He shared a story about a situation where he felt driven to make a difficult decision in the face of an interpersonal communication challenge. In this situation, the organization:

…Has one particular individual who was constantly very negative, sarcastic, just sort of cranky all the time. That's one of the criteria where, if I'm running into that, then I wonder: is he more important to the organization, or
am I? I'd only been there for two years, and he'd been there for a long time.

So that institutional memory, the long-term directorship, is probably critical to that organisation. So basically I decided not to stand for re-election.

(Baby Boomer, respondent 4)

This story demonstrates the loyalty and optimism that are characteristic of Baby Boomers, as well as how much they value efficiency and professionalism (Rekar Munro, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

In contrast, another Baby Boomer respondent discussed an issue that she felt was handled with clear communication in her volunteer role. This issue, which might have presented a challenge for the organization, was handled with care and transparency. The potential conflict thus became an experience that, for this respondent, created connection and a sense of confidence in the capability and professionalism of the organization. The situation, she said, was that:

One of the schools brought a bunch of kids and the kids were really inappropriate. That kind of thing is usually fuel for a lot of chatter, but they sent the information quickly and said they would deal with it, and so we trusted that they would. Some time later, we were informed that there was another school coming, so immediately we were questioning it, but they were very matter-of-fact about the fact that they had spoken to the school and given instructions about students who want to start moving or backing out, which they're not supposed to do. So they're very clear about what my role is in relationship to that, and taking responsibility for dealing with the
issue. So they're transparent, and it's all done quickly and professionally.

(Baby Boomer, respondent 3)

Optimistic and highly moral, Baby Boomers will question authority (Rekar Munro, 2014; Tapscott, 2008) and expect communication to be a two-way street (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). The cohort’s need for clear and transparent communication ties it not only to the generations that followed them, but to the Traditionalists who came before.

Traditionalists have a “strong sense of self-sacrifice, duty, and responsibility for family and organizational members” (Egri & Ralston, 2004, p. 213) that is apparent in the high numbers of Traditionalist volunteers in the GVR (Volunteer Victoria, 2016). This hard-working generation “rarely talked about ‘changing the system,’ but instead about ‘working within the system’” (Howe, 2014), and were thus nicknamed The Silent Generation by Time Magazine in 1951. This inclination towards taciturnity was reinforced by two respondents, who, when asked how they request information one respondent said, “I don’t think I generally query anything” (Traditionalist, respondent 1) and another respondent said, “I don’t, I think. If I don’t understand I’ll just muddle along until I do” (Traditionalist, respondent 2). However, even though they were less likely to be assertive in asking for information than their younger counterparts, they both spoke of the value of their time in the context of communication. The value of time was made clear in the example provided by one of the respondents who had experienced frustration with a paid employee who:

…Kept sending us e-mails. Thankfully she’s moved now, so we don’t get all of those e-mails because that’s a bit annoying, and a waste of time. After
a while, we deleted them automatically, and so might have missed
something that we should have read. (Traditionalist, respondent 1)

Expanding upon the subject of e-mail communication, based on my interviews, it would be an
error to make assumptions about how internet savvy Traditionalists may be. Both traditionalists I
interviewed said that they “prefer to use e-mail, it’s just simpler” (Traditionalist, respondent 2),
and that they find it “easier to keep track of everything online” (Traditionalist, respondent 1).

4.3.3 Thematic area 3: Appreciation.

Generation Y has a *show me, don’t tell me* approach to feeling valued, meaning that they place
very little importance on verbal appreciation, and prefer to receive appreciation through inclusion
in organizational development, and the recognition of their skills. As one respondent said:

To me, ‘thank you for being on the board’ is like yeah, yeah. That’s great – I
want to hear it – But the opportunity for me to stretch and grow, and
contribute meaningfully, and to be given the trust to do that – for me, that’s
a sign of appreciation. I know that my work is valued when I am being
asked to do more complex work, to join a different kind of conversation that
may be tangential, or being tapped on the shoulder to lend an eye to
something. It’s a fine balance, because you don’t want to be tapped on the
shoulder all the time, and I don’t want to be given work that’s meaningless,
but I like to be known well enough that I can contribute meaningfully. So
those invitations, to me, are valued so much as a thank you.

(Generation Y, respondent 7)
The desire to be valued, and to have that value communicated through invitations to be involved in organizational decision making and problem solving, echoes the Generation Y desire to be respected and known. Verbal appreciation seems to be low on their list of ways to receive appreciation, as one respondent noted: “I don’t need a thank you – I’m doing this for my own reasons, and if I’m fulfilling those reasons, then hopefully I feel appreciated by whatever community I’m serving” (Generation Y, respondent 8). This interactive, connected, collaborative generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000) looks for proof of appreciation in how they are encouraged to engage and be involved in the work of an organization.

Generation X respondents had less to say about appreciation, and tended to redirect their answers towards communication. In response to the question “what makes you feel appreciated as a volunteer”, one respondent mentioned “the sense of contributing and helping others and building community” (Generation X, Respondent 5), suggesting that for her, appreciation was directly connected to the good that she felt she was able to do. This ability to rely on one’s own perceptions in order to feel appreciated connects to Generation X’s self-reliance (Rekar Munro, 2014, p.190). The need for transparency in communication suggests that organizations who communicate well with their volunteers would demonstrate appreciation to often suspicious Generation Xers, who “understood from day one of their working lives that large institutions couldn’t be trusted” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006).

Baby Boomers prefer verbal expressions of appreciation, going so far as to say that when they are thanked, “it fits in to where I decide to volunteer” (Baby Boomer, respondent 3). A discussion about volunteer appreciation events met with a lukewarm response, with respondents
feeling that they are not personal enough, and often feel like additional social responsibilities. 

One respondent, when asked about her attendance at appreciation events, said:

I don’t always attend those…I don’t often go, really. To me, that’s not particularly important … although there was one really nice event that was at the art gallery, and was sort of a step above what volunteer appreciation events normally are, and that was nice. I guess because we had given up a lot of time on that particular project, and it felt sort of special – there were dignitaries there and it was just nice to be invited. (Baby Boomer, respondent 3)

The Baby Boomer generation finds fulfillment in consequential, meaningful work, and values verbal reward and visible recognition (Kupperschmidt, 2000, pp. 67-69), and thus the personal thanks given by organizational representatives, as well as inviting them to events as appropriate, are key to securing the loyalty of this generation.

Traditionalists see verbal feedback and written gratitude, such as cards, e-mails, and letters, as “basic etiquette, or common sense, or at the very least good manners” (Traditionalist, respondent 1), and this basic etiquette is “certainly missed if it’s not offered” (Traditionalist, respondent 2). Appreciation events, however, similar to Baby Boomer responses, are not always welcome by Traditionalists. One respondent said that “It’s almost like volunteering my time in order to be appreciated for volunteering” (Traditionalist, respondent 1) and that, generally she does not attend. She expanded upon this by saying:

I mean, to drive all the way over there and stand around – and I have bad legs, so I can’t stand – I’d rather stay at home. So it’s not appropriate for me.
But to come up with what to do … I don’t know. Try some originality, or send out a questionnaire. We have the tools – and rather than telling us, ‘this is where the reception is, we hope you enjoy what we’ve decided to appreciate you with.’ A better option would be a gift card, not a gift because we’ve all got knick-knacks and seniors tend to be downsize, but a gift card might be thoughtful, even a small amount. And the reception must cost money, so it’s a question of allocating resources. But every human being wants to be appreciated, don’t they? (Traditionalist, respondent 1)

The desire for personal, written appreciation is in keeping with scholarly literature on Traditionalists, which identifies Traditionalists as preferring written communication (Rekar Munro, 2014). Mannerisms and behaviours that might be considered formal to younger generations are considered common courtesy to Traditionalists (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 155-159), and with a reasonable effort, this courtesy is more than feasible to ensure that Traditionalists feel appreciated for the volunteer work that they do.

4.3.4 Thematic area 4: Understanding of organizational structure.

Generation Y expressed a strong inclination to understand the structures of the organizations for which they volunteer. Engagement with an organization, for Generation Y, means that they can “connect their individual contributions with their own and the company’s goals” (Zemke et al., 2013, ch. 5, section 14); and in order to be able to do this, they must have a thorough understand of the organization’s structure. One respondent expressed the importance of being familiar with the structure by saying:
Understanding the structure of the organization – that’s very important to me. That falls into transparency. So I seek the information out – it’s voluntarily given, but it’s me who asks. But I think it would be best practice for everybody to know what we are about. (Generation Y, respondent 7)

Another respondent concurred, adding “knowing the structure … makes me more effective. It isn’t part of training in my experience, but I think it would be good. Just to have that overview” (Generation Y, respondent 8). This understanding of structure gives Generation Y members a sense that they can “be a contributing member right away. And then I feel connected to the organization, like it built loyalty within me so quickly” (Generation Y, respondent 7). As an example of a positive experience that offered increased understanding of high level structure, one respondent offered an example of a very positive experience with an organization whose board of directors she had recently joined:

I was invited to a meeting with the chair and executive director, I had an opportunity to ask the questions that I needed to ask, they shared with me where they're at, and they were transparent with where they're at, which I found super interesting. So I got a little bit of the narrative of the organisation, and that thread of where we're going and where we’ve been was interesting. And what, in the next three years, is going to be a big project. I was also invited on a walkabout, when we got to walk about with one of the staff who was extremely knowledgeable. So he brought the space to life in a different way, we got a sense of what clients or visitors I guess or respondents would experience at the organization.
It was kind of like when you come to your new boyfriend's parents’ house, and you're welcomed in, beyond well pressed living room. Maybe the first time you go and sit in the formal living room, and the next time you get to join the family room and help out in the kitchen. For me, the walkabout felt like being welcomed into the space as a contributing member of the space. Starting to learn that organizational specific language around ecosystems, and native plants, and that made me feel welcomed and honoured. (Generation Y, respondent 7)

This story gives us insight into what Generation Y needs from an introduction to an organization: in-depth understanding, a welcoming environment, and connection to others. Rekar Munro (2014) said that “if we begin with what we want Gen Y to do, we’ll lose their attention. They may never hear the how and why!” (p. 85), thus connecting volunteers with why the organization does what it does, and how the moving parts connect, we can ensure greater commitment from this generation of volunteers.

Relationships, leadership, and clarity are important when talking about the structure of the organization. A clear organizational structure will allow the viewer to understand how reporting works within the organization, and to whom they should go with questions or concerns. Generation X respondents said that they would like to have “more understanding of who was who[m] in the organization” (Generation X, respondent 5). Generation X looks for “status, authority, and rewards from their working relationships” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006, p. 52) and autonomy from their leadership, disliking “close supervision, preferring freedom” (Codrington,
One interview respondent specifically discussed needs pertaining to leadership, saying:

The structure … works well, and is clear, which is what is needed in emergencies. We have an extremely dedicated leader … which also counts for a lot. She finds opportunities to groom others for leadership roles and is always open to ideas. (Generation X, respondent 6)

Both of these respondents state their preference for understanding clearly the accountabilities assigned to each staff member within the organization. No mention was made of the structure of the work of the organization or training, with one respondent saying only that they “learned by doing” (Generation X, respondent 5), which validates academic literature. Martin and Tulgan (2002) expressed this by saying “they don’t want the ‘story’; they want to know the bottom line” (p. 16). When working to develop an understanding of structure for Generation X volunteers, then, it may be best to give them an overview of roles and responsibilities, clarity in their own roles, and to then give them the freedom of the independence and self-reliance (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190) that they desire.

Responses from Baby Boomers corresponded to literature that declares this generation to have been the first generation whose classroom report cards included “‘works well and plays well with others’ as a graded category”; a generation that champions “teamwork and consensus as the way to meet their goals” (Martin & Tulgan, 2002, p. 21). For example, one volunteer who was faced with a lack of information took the initiative to create a resource for his fellow volunteers on a board of directors, demonstrating initiative and commitment to his new team:
I asked if there was an orientation for new members and was told ‘oh, well, just read the minutes from the past meetings’ which of course was a binder about eight inches thick. And I did do that. I pulled the calendar, which various boards previously had done, and gathered what they had done and what they had funded and supported and then I wrote that up and sent it to all the directors including the new directors. So when I found that there wasn’t an understanding of the organisation, then I sort of tried to figure it out and then share that information with others that I thought would find it useful. (Baby Boomer, respondent 4)

This story demonstrates not only an initiative to improve his own understanding of the board’s structure and history, but to share that with others that he believed might benefit. This drive to independently discover information was echoed by Baby Boomer respondent 3, who said:

Usually, when I get involved in an organization, I guess because of my background, I tend to figure out pretty quickly what the organizational structure is. But I don’t need a lot of detail, as long as the person that I’m responsible is clear. [One organization] would hand out a little job description at training, and if they do that, then usually I’ll just leave [the training/orientation session].

There is a thread of independence and inclination to do-it-yourself that ran through Baby Boomer responses, which I argue connects to the mass corporate downsizing that Baby Boomers experienced in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s (Martin & Tulgan, 2006). The economizing of
those decades saw “a record number of [Baby Boomers] flatly rejected corporate America once and for all and set out to create their own businesses” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006, p. 25).

Based on my interviews, I would argue that Traditionalists’ look to understand the job they’re doing, and don’t need a full understanding of the systems in place at an organization. It is worth noting that the Traditionalists I interviewed volunteered in fairly independent roles, either with specific events or one-on-one mentoring, showing a preference for volunteer work that was independent of a team or group. As one respondent said,

I’m not sure that [understanding the structure] is necessary for the things that I do. I just have somebody who tells me ‘you have an appointment with this person,’ or ‘this is the time of our next committee meeting,’ and I just show up. There’s no need for anything more extensive. (Traditionalist, respondent 1).

While it could be argued that the structure of an organization is directly governing its volunteer time, the impact is not felt by volunteers. Rather, volunteers were empowered to do their work with a degree of autonomy and by their own initiative.

This same Traditionalist respondent told a story of a time that she felt misled in terms of a volunteer event’s structure:

We had a boat show here about five years ago. So I volunteered, and I didn't really understand … [it turned out that] I was really working for this private stall – this American outfit, who was selling clothing and whatnot. I thought I was working for the organisation, but I was volunteering to work for a
private company! That was quite misleading - I would never have volunteered to work for a private company (Traditionalist, respondent 1).

The respondent went on to say that she had “never been back … I would never volunteer for that show again” (Traditionalist, respondent 1). Traditionalists value honour (Rekar Munro, 2014, p. 190) and place importance on “honesty, integrity, and ethics” (Martin & Tulgan, 2006, p. 185). Thus, when considering how to communicate organizational structure to Traditionalists, we can conclude that transparency is as important to them as it is to Generation Y. If that desired transparency is in place, then Traditionalist volunteers will be happy to simply get on with the job at hand. Based on these interviews, it could be argued that Traditionalists do not seek out details about the systems of the organizations for which they volunteer.

4.4. Closing Comments on Data Analysis

While each generation discussed the nuances of its perceptions, experiences and preferences, the generations are often in agreement on what is important in terms of respect, communication, appreciation, and understanding structures. This is important for us to understand as we move into the recommendations section. I may make a specific suggestion for one generation – this does not signify that the recommendation would not necessarily be appropriate for another generation as well. For example, members of Generation Y did not specify that they want to be verbally thanked, as the Traditionalists did, which may only mean that it may be further down their list of priorities – not that it is off the list altogether.
5. Recommendations

In this chapter, I will address the question “so what” – so, what’s next? How do we address the issues that have been discovered? What can be done to facilitate and foster improved intergenerational communication among the GVR’s volunteers and their organizations?

A reminder that VV is an umbrella organization, providing services for their 550 non-profit and not-for-profit member organizations. The recommendations below are intended for the use of those organizations, and will be distributed to them in lay language and format by VV.

5.1 Thematic Area Recommendations

5.1.1 Respecting all generations.

There are some noteworthy differences in how the generations perceive and receive respect. Generation Y looks for non-hierarchical, personal systems, honesty; and transparency. Generation X wants to be appreciated and to be recognized through the demonstrated impact, and acknowledgment, of their work. Baby Boomers look for clarity of structure and consultation, particularly consultation which results in the use of their ideas and recommendations. Traditionalists look for gratitude in the form of praise and recognition for their efforts, freedom from age discrimination, and volunteer activities that do not have out-of-pocket costs. Having said this, I propose the following recommendations for volunteer organizations:

- Orientation. Many of the suggestions below can be incorporated into a thorough orientation process, which minimizes question fatigue for new volunteers and allows organizations to disseminate key information consistently and efficiently. At the same time, such a show of initial effort on the part of the organization will demonstrate respect and commitment to the support and development of a volunteer.
• **Onboarding surveys.** Ask open-ended questions such as “What makes you feel respected?”, and/or “How do you demonstrate respect?”

• **Connect with volunteers on an individual level.** As much as possible, know if they are dealing with physical restrictions or family needs. Be clear on the skills that they offer and the value that they, specifically, bring. This can take the form of informal conversation, or be a part of the onboarding structure.

• **Provide clarity of role and structure.** Have a prepared job description that can be provided to the volunteer, as well as what they will need to know – information about the environment (e.g. parking, mobility restrictions), the person to whom they report, etc.

• **Make sure volunteering isn’t an out of pocket cost.** Your volunteers may expect to pay for transit (or not), but if possible, cover parking and any other costs related to the volunteer activity.

### 5.1.2 Communicating with all generations.

In regards to communication both given and received, the data from my survey and interviews revealed variations in communication preferences across the generations. Generation Y looks for transparency, a high level outlook, and does not want to see or be involved in power struggles. Generation X wants direct communication, and information communicated in a timely manner. Baby Boomers want clarity and professionalism, and they do want to be in an organization that expects them to agree with directives based on hierarchy. Traditionalists want to be free from age-related assumptions, and not to have their time wasted by communicators. Also, it is
important to remember that Traditionalists may not reach out to others if they lack information to complete a task.

Some suggestions for organizations:

- **Orientation.** Many of the suggestions below can be incorporated into a thorough orientation process, which minimizes question fatigue for new volunteers and allows organizations to disseminate information consistently and efficiently. Through the orientation process, organizations can conduct informal learning on communication preferences with their new volunteers through casual conversation.

- **Onboarding surveys.** Ask open-ended questions such as “What type of communication do you prefer (electronic/in person/phone/other)”, and/or “How often would you like to check in regarding your work?”.

- **Provide a high level overview of what the organization does.** You might include an annual report, anecdotes, community outcomes, and any measurable outputs in this package of information. Have documentation prepared that provides information on the organization’s strategic plan and current challenges and opportunities.

- **Be direct, clear, and professional.** Refer back to your onboarding survey results to ensure that you know your volunteers’ preferences.

- **Have the volunteer environment ready.** Some examples of this preparedness might be: having role profiles ready, having the environment prepared for the volunteer (e.g. brochures ready to hand out at an event, cash box ready to use for service roles, doors unlocked and workstations ready for office volunteer roles), and communication sent out in a timely manner with any relevant information for the volunteer role.
5.1.3 Appreciating all generations.

Expressing appreciation may be the most difficult aspect of volunteer management for organizations to do well across the generations, yet it is the most important way to build loyalty with individual volunteers and prevent loss of knowledge and loyalty that may result from volunteers feeling unappreciated (Takash, 2008, p. 43). Generation Y wants to be included in collaborative activities, and has a “show me, don’t tell me” approach to gratitude. For Generation Y, appreciation might include seeking out their opinions and abilities, and asking them to collaborate on projects specific to their skill set. Generation Xers looks for direct communication, and to be shown the outcomes of their work. Baby Boomers want verbal appreciation and visible recognition, and expressed neutral to negative reactions to volunteer appreciation events. Traditionalists look to formal, personal, written communication for appreciation, and would prefer a tailored approach to each individual that acknowledges their personal value to the organization. Traditionalists expressed a dislike for volunteer appreciation events, and would prefer a tangible expression of gratitude.

Some suggestions for organizations:

- **Orientation.** Many of the suggestions below can be incorporated in to a thorough orientation process, which avoids question fatigue for new volunteers and allows organizations to get all of the information that they need at once. At the same time, such a show of effort on the part of the organization will demonstrate immediate appreciation of their new volunteers.
• **Onboarding surveys.** Ask open-ended or multiple choice questions, such as “Do you prefer (appreciation events/gift cards/written notes/etc.)”, and/or “What makes you feel appreciated?”

• **Don’t assume.** A single appreciation style is unlikely to work for everybody! It is important to continue checking assumptions as well, as preference can change over time. Create a schedule that allows you to periodically check in with your volunteers over time.

• **Maintain a database.** This could be based on the results of your onboarding surveys. Track your volunteers’ individual skills and preferred styles. This recommendation could be managed by a volunteer, once established.

• **Offer opportunities.** Your volunteers may be looking for collaboration, or to expand their skill sets. Make sure that they know what is available. Websites, e-mail distributions, and poster boards may offer existing options for sharing such opportunities.

### 5.1.4 Understanding of organizational structure.

Generation Y looks for the most thorough understanding of organizational structure of the generations. To create a sense of loyalty and engagement through understanding for Generation Y members, provide them with a thorough overview of the organization at the beginning of their time with the organization, offer to let them experience what the organization does, and be available to answer their questions, particularly as they begin work for an organization.

Generation Xers would prefer a clear overview of roles and responsibilities and organization charts, but may not require a high level of detail, focussing more on their own sphere of
influence. Baby Boomers want printed (electronic may be acceptable) materials that provide them with the information they need, to know who they go to if they have questions, and then to be given the space to find their place and define their roles on their own. Baby Boomers like organizations that emphasize and embrace team work in their structures. To engage the Traditionalist volunteer, organizations and organizational representatives must show that they are honest and act with integrity, and once that is established, can let the Traditionalists go on with their work – these volunteers need very little high level information.

Some suggestions for organizations:

- **Orientation.** Many of the suggestions below can be incorporated into a thorough orientation process, which avoids question fatigue for new volunteers and allows organizations to get all of the information that they need at once. You may also wish to offer information on organizational structure, such as organization charts and leadership structure, as a part of this orientation.

- **Prepared information.** Provide as much or as little information as the volunteer wants through information that has been prepared ahead of time, and is available upon request. Have organizational charts and roles and responsibilities available.

- **Show off!** Offer to show them the on-the-ground work that you are doing.

- **Be transparent and honest, and operate with integrity.**

5.2 Overarching Recommendations for Organizations

Ultimately, it is impossible to make each and every volunteer happy. There will be some who do not find a fit with an organization, and others who leave due to circumstances beyond the
organizations’ control. All that can be done is for organizations to be aware of potential generational needs, and to recognize that each person is an individual within her/his generation. With such understanding, organizations can keep the lines of communication open and seek feedback from their volunteers on an ongoing basis.

5.3 Recommendations for Sustainability

The suggestions presented in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 represent a fairly significant amount of work required for organizations. Most of this time and effort would be largely spent in the development phase, collecting the material required and establishing tools such as the onboarding survey. Some organizations may already have most of this information available; others may find that they benefit from the structure that evolves from the development of the materials (e.g. organization chart). Once the initial work is completed, there will be a level of maintenance required to keep the information and any databases up to date, which could potentially be managed by a volunteer.

5.4 What’s Next?

Volunteers of different generations have communication needs that can be grouped generally by generational cohort. How they recognize respect, what they want to know – and don’t want to know – about organizations are needs that can be filled with the right communication. Volunteer organizations in the GVR can be dealing with a multitude of different generational cohort needs on any given day, and that can seem to be an insurmountable task. I would argue that with preparation, and making use of the tools that we have at our disposal, this challenge can be
overcome. As one of my interviewees so eloquently put it, “to feel valued and appreciated – that is a very human thing. A very human need” (Traditionalist, respondent 2).

So how can we fill that need? One answer is by beginning with the foundations of a broad understanding of what generational cohorts, or volunteers at different stages of life, need. From that foundation, we can develop the scaffolding, learning what individual volunteers are looking for – remember, the generational cohort model is not one-size-fits-all – and using tools such as surveys and databases to understand how to best support and serve our body of active volunteers.

As an example, organizations could deliver an onboarding survey, which could ask volunteers to think about what makes them feel respected, and how much – or how little – they want to know about the organization, how they like to be appreciated, and what they are looking for from their experience. It is not enough to deliver a one-size-fits-all approach and hope that it works for some of the volunteers – organizations need to recognize and appreciate individual needs.

Having delivered this onboarding survey, and gathered information about the volunteer’s needs, the organization is now well positioned to maintain the volunteer-organization relationship through understanding and knowledge.

This sounds like a lot of work for non-profit organizations, which often suffer from being understaffed and underfunded. I would argue that an effort of this sort at the outset could make a significant difference in the sense of loyalty and engagement that a volunteer feels to and with the organization, and that the return on investment of such an effort is well worth the cost.

Remember that an organization does not need to meet every individual’s exact needs, or even every generation’s exact need, but rather needs to keep stretching towards the goal of understanding those needs and meeting them as well as possible. An organization that
demonstrates best efforts towards meeting volunteer needs is demonstrating the value it places on volunteers.

5.5 Cost & Reward

This section will lay out a list of tools that might support the recommendations in this chapter, but is by no means exhaustive or an airtight fit for all organizations. Organizations may also consider that once these tools are in place, and with clear direction, it might be reasonable for them to be managed by a volunteer.

What is the cost of an effort to engage generational cohorts as they begin new volunteer roles? The cost is mainly in effort and time, which are understood to be in short supply. However, if an organization were to tackle this issue as part of the onboarding process of new volunteers, with an eye towards covering the needs of each generational cohort, they might:

- Prepare a package of information about the organization, including an organizational chart and a list of roles and responsibilities;
- Prepare a clear description of each volunteer role, and provide the role description as part of the information package. Make sure it includes, as applicable:
  - To whom they report;
  - The hours and days of work;
  - The role’s impact on the bigger picture of the organization;
  - A word of appreciation for how their work will help you.
- Design a short (5-10 questions) survey for new volunteers that asks about their communication needs. This can be done using free online tools such as Survey Monkey, which allows the results to be managed;
• Inquire about the volunteer’s skill set, beyond what they need to be able to do the job at hand, in order to know what assets you may have in place and be able to call upon them;

• Maintain a database of volunteer needs and skills, including the results from the Survey Monkey (or similar) questions;

• Have regular tours that show volunteers the impact that you have as an organization. If your work is less tangible, have a written explanation – with testimonials, if possible – of why your organization’s work matters (this can be repurposed for funding requests!);

• Make sure that the role they are stepping into is ready for them, that their responsibilities are clear, and that they know who to go to with questions.

As you can see, the costs for this project will be the time of a volunteer coordinator or representative to create the package and survey, and manage the database, tour(s), and organizational chart.
6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will discuss unexpected results, what assumptions may be in place and how we can correct them, and a relevant potential action plan for organizations. I will also address the issue of further study on this subject, and close by revisiting the initial hypotheses and research question of my study.

6.1 Correcting Assumptions

An unexpected finding in this study was the need to correct an assumption from my hypothesis that the communication issues identified in VV’s Senior Engagement Study in 2016 were between volunteers. In fact, many of the stories and challenges that I heard indicated that volunteers face more communication issues between themselves and the organizations for which they volunteer. The intergenerational aspect of the issue between the volunteer and the organization remains, as it is clear that what an organization does for one generation may not work for another. A written note of thanks, for example, could satisfy a Traditionalists’ desire to feel appreciated while leaving a Generation Y volunteer feeling unsatisfied and unappreciated. With this new insight gleaned from conducting this study, the more salient research question would have been: In what ways can VV best support its member agencies in fostering intergenerational communication?

The risk of a lack of communication between generations remains the same: dissatisfied volunteers will leave organizations, taking with them knowledge and abilities that represent the time and efforts of the organization in recruiting, training, and supporting that volunteer. The organization further risks the loss of a volunteer who could train, and support other volunteers,
thus reducing the burden on the organization as well as the potential for reputational loss in the community. This risk is worthy of the attention of non-profit and not-for-profit organizations in the GVR. I argue that increased effort put into the needs of volunteers at the outset of their volunteer activity will pay off over time.

6.2 Further Study

This work would benefit from an exploration that expanded to Generation Z, the newest generation currently entering the workforce who were born after 1995. Sixty-six percent of volunteers between the ages of 15 and 19 were engaged in volunteering, which is projected to hold true through to 2021 (Volunteer Victoria, 2016).

This study is replicable outside of the GVR within Canada and the United States; however, countries and cultures outside of Canada and the U.S. may have different generational cohorts and thus, would need to redesign the work. If the study were replicated in Canada or the U.S., I would suggest including Generation Z, and adding questions to the survey that would ascertain gender identity demographics beyond binary genders.
6.3 A Final Word

The hypothesis held at the outset of this work was that generational cohorts approached communication differently, and they would have different needs and expectations in the volunteer capacities. While this has been proven true, I would argue on the side of many scholars who have said that the generations have more commonalities than differences (Martin, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Rekar Munro, 2014). I further hypothesized that a breakdown of communication between generations would cause a loss of engagement in volunteers, leading to shorter volunteer terms, less corporate knowledge, and ultimately, poorly serving the communities that depend upon the services of these organizations (Akingbola et al., 2013, p. 68).

The interviews that I conducted bore this out, with three volunteers identifying organizations that they had left because they felt either disrespected or unappreciated – or both.

The risk of not meeting these needs is that non-profit organizations will lose volunteers who are disengaged, whether because they do not feel respected, valued, appreciated, or that they have been provided with clear communication. All generations – all people – want to feel appreciated, valued, and respected. It is the responsibility of those who would engage members of any generation to ensure that those needs are met, whatever form they take.

In chapter 5, I identified a few possible process changes that an organization could make in order to address the needs of intergenerational volunteers. While such changes would not be easy, the reward of this initial effort may be loyal, engaged volunteers who stay with organizations, training other volunteers (whether informally or formally), supporting the organization’s work, and spreading positive word of the work done by the organization for which they volunteer.
The years in which I have worked on this degree have held their share of fear and dread on the world’s stage, and I have found this study to be an unexpected source of hope. Each generation has challenged the one before it and, to some extent, despaired of the one that followed – but each has, in unique and emergent ways, changed our world for the better. By remembering that which holds us together is greater than anything that keeps us apart, and by looking for compassion and strength at every opportunity, we can build bridges upon bridges between the generations.

As a member of the GVR’s non-profit populace, I believe that our community is thriving. It is worth the effort to ensure that our volunteers thrive as well.
References


Appendix A – Volunteer Victoria 2016 Study

Volunteer Victoria Senior Engagement Survey 2016 – Selected content from focus groups

December 12th
Focus Group 9: (Esquimalt Recreation Centre)
Attendees: 4

-She has volunteered for over 30 years.
-Volunteering makes her feel positive about life because when you are younger you take with both hands, when you are an adult you take with one hand and give with one hand. When you are a senior you give with both hands. And that’s the stage she is at, wanting to give back with both hands.
-Had the only option to volunteer in the evenings or after work while working but now can volunteer for anything she wants at anytime.
-Volunteers at the Belfry as a bartender and at long court theater. She is also volunteering at the senior advocate centre.
-He found that it was rewarding at first and enjoyed talking to people about the cause, but started to feel like he was alone and had no support from volunteer managers or the non-profit because nobody every reached out to check in and see how things were going so he stopped volunteering at this organization. “It lost the shine.”
-He volunteered in Vitoria at the ICS but left because he was frustrated by the lack of communication and management.
-Now he does collections for the Salvation Army.
-His volunteering seems to fluctuate with whatever amount of time he can put into it.
-Doesn’t consider herself a senior (she’s 65 years old)
-Impacted her volunteering: stopped volunteering for a while because she became a caregiver for her husband before he passed away last year. She started volunteering all of the time to get past the grief. Volunteering and helping people makes her happy and keeps her busy.
-Restricted her: osteoporosis in knees and arthritis but is now learning how to manage the pain and deal with the diseases.
-Because of the changing health concerns she has modified her volunteering to less physical activities and shorter shifts when volunteering.
-She volunteers to feel good and loves the thought of giving to the community.
-if there is a lack of emotional connection to a position he will not stay in it.
-Work had impacted her volunteering but now she is retired and can volunteer all the time.
-She lost her son to a rare brain cancer so she took time off (1.5 years ago).
-She volunteers to meet people and give back to the community. It makes her happy.
-Important to give but also to get back (emotionally and feel good personally).
-Moving residence has impacted his volunteering.
-Traveling impacts his volunteering.
-Looking for more opportunities to volunteer and looking for flexibility when he travels (snowbird).
- Wants to give back and be involved in a community.
- Wants to learn and expand his skills.
- When he relocated to Victoria he felt like he lost his roots and sense of community so is looking at getting the connection back in Victoria.

Obstacles:
- Lack of awareness of volunteer opportunities.
- Using social media to connect people and seniors to new opportunities an become aware of them would be beneficial to the organizations and the potential volunteers.
- It's a shifting and changing world and seniors are online now.
- When you move to a city of strangers you don't know or hear about volunteer opportunities that are needed.
- Nobody asks for feedback of what skills or what he wants to door or asks him to expand on his volunteer duties.
- Difficult to find the right fit.
- Wants to feel valuable and needed. Doesn’t want to show up and have nothing to do.
- Looks in the paper for volunteering opportunities and online.
- 1988 came to Victoria and has a network but is still finding it difficult to find out about good opportunities that would be a good fit.
- Watches social media for opportunities.
- Things she wanted to volunteer for she couldn’t because they were during the day so she couldn’t until she retired.
- When she did retired she could do what she wanted.
- Other conflicts where specific opportunities unions wouldn’t allow it because she was “taking someone’s job”.
- Volunteering and working= hard to have a work/like balance but can volunteer in a smaller capacity.
- Getting joy back and feeling useful through volunteering.
- Doesn’t want to be sitting around doing nothing.
- If she doesn’t get these back then she will move on to another opportunity.
- Every morning you wake up with a sense of purpose when you are in volunteer roles.
- worst days of my life are ones when I get up and don't have purpose/anything to do.
- It fulfills needs of personal satisfaction.
- Some volunteer experiences were on you and you lose the self satisfaction.
- At some point you need reassurance and a thank you. It acts as a reminder why you are volunteering for that group.
- If you are an individual volunteer it’s hard if you get disheartened because you don’t have the peer support to pick you up. And if you don’t have a volunteer manager that supports you and checks in then you defiantly don’t feel useful anymore.
- A need to establish a new network through volunteering is important.
- Two groups she volunteered with checked in with her to see how she was doing when she had her loss and withdrew from volunteering.
- They didn’t ever ask when she was coming back the just called and reached out to support her. Simple but it made her want to go back when she was ready.
- Volunteer family reached out and made an effort to support her.
- Volunteer organization became her support system when she needed it and when she was ready she went back volunteering with them. She didn’t expect it but was extremely grateful they did.
- Divorced and left community and his family a couple years ago so needed to become involved with a new community.
- People are social beings and when you detach you have difficulties so having the volunteering gives you purpose.
- Volunteering gives you “a place”.
- Volunteering agencies need to be aware everyone has a reason to volunteer and people want to engage or re-engage in community and social groups.
- Modification of roles as needed is important when changes occur.
- Both organizations and volunteers need to understand and recognize the mental and physical changes and make the accommodations for the volunteers.
- Organizations need to find the right fit and have that difficult conversation.
- Being pro-active and know how to accommodate your senior volunteers that travel.
- Useful for organizations to have an exit interview for feedback.
- RBCM- they have a yearly gathering where they have past volunteers come in and celebrate with them to make the past volunteers feel appreciated still.
- It’s important to be apart of the organization and know it even when you aren’t active/you are retired from that volunteer role.
- Don’t erase the past volunteers from your organization but maybe use their expertise, keep them involved as mentors.
- A card of thank you.

November 14 2016 - stage based volunteering focus group
5 attendees
Ponder 3 Q’s
Milestones (Likes, Dislikes) – keep, change, Tell us
What supports/barriers – keep/Go?
How to make better? What do organizations need to know
Most useful? About working with seniors?
Least useful – How to fix
Remembers seniors have a lot to offer
My time is important and respected
Communicate
Include Us – That we are knowledgable/contribution us appreciated, valued
Entry/exit surveys – important
Patronization of senior volunteers – suck it up or leave
Manager/organizational changes – long term volunteers not appreciated
Feeling motivated and appreciated is important.
Tools that help – evaluated through supervisors; reinforcement – positive
Barriers: inclusion, communication, want to contribute – skills based volunteers – exit surveys important
Need Training for volunteers/so important
Need orgs to be transparent/communicative
Be connected – staff and volunteers
We couldn’t do it without you – Show us – cut the lip service
To know what is expected of me – clear
Appendix B – Generational Overview

Generations and preferred communication styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Birth Years</th>
<th>Communication Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>1922 – 1945</td>
<td>Face-to-face communication that follows etiquette.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z</td>
<td>2000 – ?</td>
<td>Clear descriptions and orientation are key. Be welcoming, lead by example, provide fun,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rewards, and engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Johnson & Johnson, 2010, pp. 218-234; Rekar Munro, 2014, pp. 8-10; 72-75; 189-190).

Population statistics by birth year
# Table 1
Generations in Canada, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>number</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918 and before</td>
<td>93 years and over</td>
<td>91,195</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of baby boomers (1919 to 1940)</td>
<td>71 to 92 years</td>
<td>3,074,045</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World War II generation (1941 to 1945)</td>
<td>66 to 70 years</td>
<td>1,444,035</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers (1946 to 1965)</td>
<td>46 to 65 years</td>
<td>9,564,210</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby busters (1966 to 1971)</td>
<td>40 to 45 years</td>
<td>2,823,840</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children of baby boomers (1972 to 1992)</td>
<td>19 to 39 years</td>
<td>9,142,005</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z (1993 to 2011)</td>
<td>18 years and less</td>
<td>7,337,350</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C – Survey Questions

Introduction

This survey has 14 questions, and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you decide to take part in this survey, you are free to withdraw at any time without questions or consequences and the responses you provided up until that point will be removed.

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, in whole or in part, you give free and informed consent to participate in this research. You will not be named in the results. After each question, there is a place for you to add comments in as much or as little detail as you would like.

We are really interested in knowing about your volunteer experiences, especially about how you perceive and experience channels of communication. Your input in this survey will help us further enhance the way we engage with each other in our collective effort to make a difference as volunteers in our community.

As you work through this survey, please think of your answers in the context of your volunteer work. If you volunteer at multiple places, please think of your answers from the perspective of whatever current volunteer experience you find to be the most challenging. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at any time at Gwen.5Hill@royalroads.ca.

I have read and agree with the terms and conditions set out in the description of this survey. Yes/No

Survey Questions
I feel that my opinions are respected by my volunteer coordinator (representative of the organization for which I volunteer).

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers of the same age.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers who are younger than me.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers who are older than me.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I am comfortable asking questions of any of my fellow volunteers.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I am comfortable asking questions of my volunteer coordinator.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I am consulted on my opinions as a volunteer.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I am consulted on my needs as a volunteer.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I feel that my age is a factor in how I am treated.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:
I feel acknowledged and appreciated for the work that I do.

1------2------3------4------5------6
Strongly disagree – Strongly agree

Comments:

What one change would you like to make that would contribute to enhancing communication at Volunteer Victoria?
Any other comments?

I am between the ages of:
72 – 95
53 – 71
37 – 52
17 – 36
Under 17

I have volunteered for:
0 – 5 Years
5 – 10 Years
10 – 15 Years
15 – 20 Years
More than 20 Years

The results of this survey will be used to develop a set of questions for one-on-one interviews, in order to get a deeper understanding of the needs of volunteers connected to Volunteer Victoria. If you are willing to be contacted for an interview, it would be greatly appreciated! If so, please enter your information in this text box - it will not be shared with anyone outside of this research, and the interview can be conducted with as much privacy as you need. Thank you! When you have completed the survey, please click the 'Submit' link at the bottom, in the middle.
Appendix D – Survey Responses
Statistics by age group

Survey Responses: Ages 18-36

Survey Responses: Ages 37-52
Years spent volunteering by age group
Statistics by Question
Question 1
*I feel that my opinions are respected by my volunteer coordinator (the representative of the organization for which I volunteer).*

“I have always felt respected and appreciated in all communication with the coordinator.”
“Seldom do I have to voice opinions. Difficult to answer these questions I volunteer at the Belfry Theater as ticket taker.”
“At the start of my volunteer experience I felt like the manager did not value my input. Now that I have "proven" myself, I am listened to.”
“I volunteer for three organizations and the Belfry is the organization I am completing this for. The other two are not so organized.”
“I volunteer where there are paid representatives and also where all of us are volunteers for an organization. The level of agreement does vary from somewhat (paid) to strongly (fellow volunteer).”
“I hardly ever see my volunteer coordinator. She is too busy.”
“Have worked closely for years and we each respect and consider each other's ideas.”
“I don't believe our organization has a representative.”
“The volunteer coordinator has a supervisor (i.e., in Saanich fire department) who seems to pay little attention to my opinions. The fire department operates on quasi-military ranks so, even though the coordinator respects my opinions, important suggestions, recommendations and explanations are sometimes disregarded.”
Question 2
*I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers of the same age.*

“All contribute well considered ideas.”
“There are times when exercises are done with similar groups from other parts of Victoria and some people tend to get bossy!”

Question 3
*I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers who are younger than me.*

“I mostly find that fellow volunteers seem to be within about 10 years of my age (i.e. the same age according to my thinking!)”
“Ageism is relevant with all.”
“As one of the old guys, the younger volunteers seem considerate of my views.”
“Most are similar to me in age.”
“I am older than most of the other volunteers in search and rescue, as it is a younger person's activity, needing fitness and good health.”

Question 4
I feel that my opinions are respected by fellow volunteers who are older than me.

“They humour me.”
“Few volunteers would be older than me!!”

Question 5
I am comfortable asking questions of any of my fellow volunteers.

“Some of my fellow volunteers have become friends.”
“Communications are complicated. Whether to ask or keep quiet is always a decision, often better to say nothing.”
“I want to hear what they think.”
“Communication and cooperation among volunteers at the operational level is excellent.”

Question 6
*I am comfortable asking questions of my volunteer coordinator.*

“Paid coordinator.”
“See previous answer item 1” (I hardly ever see my volunteer coordinator. She is too busy)
“If she doesn't know she does her best to find out.”
“As per above, don't know who the rep is.” (I don't believe our organization has a representative.)
Question 7
*I am consulted on my opinions as a volunteer.*

“Depends on the organization; some elicit more input than others.”
“Same as question 1.” (I volunteer where there are paid representatives and also where all of us are volunteers for an organization. The level of agreement does vary from somewhat (paid) to strongly (fellow volunteer)).
“Never.”
“Often gave draft material to comment on.”
“Most of the places I volunteer for work well as a team.”

Question 8
*I am consulted on my needs as a volunteer.*

“Never.”
“Some organizations are more inclined to include volunteers as part of the ‘team’, while others necessarily are more top-down and volunteers' roles are quite task-specific.”
“Paid coordinator.”
“I am not consulted but my wishes, if asked, are usually complied with.”
“I don't have any needs that aren't already being met.”
“It really but we can all choose not to join in if the work required is not what we feel we can manage.”
“See comment on first question above.” (The volunteer coordinator has a supervisor (ie - in Saanich fire department) who seems to pay little attention to my opinions. The fire department operates on quasi-military ranks so, even though the coordinator respects my opinions, important suggestions, recommendations and explanations are sometimes disregarded.)

Question 9
*I feel that my age is a factor in how I am treated.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“80 year olds are expected to knit and make lace doileys, not play the piano, write books.”
“How do i answer this? age is irrelevant in our organization.”
“My age and 10 years of volunteering are respected.”

Question 10
*I feel acknowledged and appreciated for the work that I do.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I am appreciated by the people who I help and work with much more than I am ever appreciated by staff.”
“I am always thanked at the end of each shift.”
“I rarely get a thank you.”
“get recognized by my coordinator, fire chief and mayor.”
“As mentioned, the team and the coordinator acknowledge and appreciate, but the coordinator's supervisor seems almost unaware.”

Question 11

_What change(s) would you suggest in order to improve communication between generations at the organization for which you volunteer? (Not mandatory)_

“Use some of the young persons language 'sweet!' Etc.”
“Elder volunteers have a lot of expertise. They could be very helpful in decision making and planning. Generally they are not asked to be part of decision making or planning for the future.”
“More opportunity to socialize or connect.”
“When signing up for shifts ex for Symphony, Belfry, Conservatory the Belfry uses Sign up Genius which is very effective and seems like less work for the coordinator. It is a good way to see all the shifts available so can check your day planner to pick. It is also very good to see which positions are avail and you can pick which one you want, ex concession, greeter… Also you get automated email reminder. Maybe VV member org could get a group rate, free trial.”
“Haven't noticed 'generational' differences; everyone just connects in a positive way. have noticed online signup systems being implemented and i expect more online media systems to be included in the future, which could very likely be unfamiliar to older volunteers. if they don't have the appropriate apps or understand how to use them, some older volunteers may give up and not sign up. orientation or links to mini lessons [eg on youtube] might be something to consider.”

“Attitude - A paternalistic attitude is often present as well as an assumption that the volunteer is less educated, less capable, less experienced, etc. I do understand that the employed person is in charge and is held responsible, but this is beyond that.”

“Perhaps more opportunities to meet and talk with each other; so often you come in, do the assigned tasks and leave without necessarily much of an opportunity to get to know your fellow volunteers.”

“I don't think communication is related to age. More related to the personality of a new coordinator trying to establish themself.”

“Communications lessons. One can never be too young to learn.”

“Getting more social media savvy.”

“None.”

“None. Communication seems fine both ways among generations.”

Question 12

_Is there anything else that you would like to share? (Not mandatory)_

“I think that skill level and willingness to learn new things are more important than age.”

“Many of the volunteers are much older, and older-acting than I am. I look for the energetic and smart volunteers - regardless of their age.”

“I used the website to volunteer at numerous organizations. None responded. I called two personally. One said "someone" would get back to me later in the week. That never happened. The other jerked me around for a couple of weeks, then informed me they couldn't use me unless I paid a fee and went on a waiting list. That was the sum of my experience with Volunteer Victoria. Abysmally rude, disrespectful treatment by arrogant, disdainful people. No thanks.”
“When I mentioned this option to the Conservatory they did not know about it” (referring to Sign up Genius).
“The sign-up/enrollment process should be much, much simpler. For example, though I tried, I was unable to volunteer (for goodness sake) to serve coffee and cookies at the blood donor clinic. I tried by internet and found the process less than straightforward and I tried by telephone. I was unable to volunteer at a school for similar reasons. The process is just too complex and/or the employed person is so self-important as to be inaccessible. I recommend some trial projects advertising in weekly papers (they have volunteer columns), providing a telephone number and answering the telephone without recorded waits and choices; I am guessing the response would be huge.”
“Good organization is essential. I will cease to volunteer with an organization that isn't well organized, or when I feel they are using me as free labour (use me; don't abuse me).”
“I feel great when I’m at V.V.”
“i'm very happy with having monthly meetings that aren't mandatory to attend, lots of different projects to volunteer for.”
“Ultimately, I reached an impasse on use of equipment outside of the Capital Region District and quit. 10 years of practice and training to include Search Manager was thus lost to Saanich. Sad…and foolish.”
Interview Guide

Remember! A leading question imposes my perspective or views on the respondent.

Rapport building:
- Who I am and what I'm doing
- Ethical considerations
- Why I think it's important
- What's in it for you

1. Tell me about your volunteer experience.
   a. What made you want to do it?
   b. What do you like best?
   c. What do you like the least?

2. Do you feel respected as a volunteer?
   a. What contributes to feeling respected/not respected as a volunteer?
   b. Tell me more
   c. Give me an example
3. Within your volunteer experience, what comes to mind when you think about communication?
   a. Can you give me an example (good or bad)?
   b. Can you give me an example of how you would like to see it?

4. Can you tell me about the organizational structure where you volunteer?
   a. How important is it to you to understand that structure?
   b. Why is it important/not important?

5. How was your training experience?
   a. How could it have been improved?
   b. What would be your ideal training experience?

6. Is there anything that I didn’t ask that I should have asked?

7. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

8. What advice do you have for me as I go forward?
Appendix F – Victoria Region Statistics

Population by Age, Victoria, BC, Core Capital Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>18,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>21,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>35,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>28,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>26,890</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>24,171</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>22,795</td>
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<td>70-79</td>
<td>21,160</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>19,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>18,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>18,460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total pop: 76,758
Appendix G – Introductory Letter

Dear Volunteers,

My name is Gwen Hill, and I am a graduate student with Royal Roads University. Based on the outcomes of Volunteer Victoria’s previous survey and focus groups with many volunteers, we will be working together to dive more deeply into what communication issues are present for volunteers in Victoria, and what we can do about them. I will be doing this research as part of my Master’s degree, and I am deeply grateful for Volunteer Victoria for their initiative and to you for your time!

In order to keep this research ethically sound and, hopefully, to put your minds at ease, all data gathered will be anonymous and coded numerically. No one will be able to connect you to the information that you provide, unless you give specific permission in writing.

The purpose of this research is to help Volunteer Victoria serve their member agencies to the best of their abilities. Depending on the results of this survey, this may include helping volunteer managers to understand generational preferences in communication, and where different generations might have different needs.

The second stage of research will be in-person interviews, which can be done over the phone or Skype if you prefer. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, with each interviewee’s transcribed information assigned a random numerical code. Data from both the web survey, and the interviews, will be gathered to form a report and recommendations to Volunteer Victoria. A copy of the compiled results will be publicly available online.

This project is filed with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board, and follows federal ethical requirements. Participation is not required and there is no penalty for withdrawing or electing not to participate. The data from this project may be published in academic journals, non-academic resources, and presented at conferences. I would ask that you please complete this survey only if you are above the age of 18.

Workshop and training opportunities will be assessed as a result of the work, but all findings will remain anonymous. If you would like to verify the authenticity of this project, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Carolin Rekar Munro: carolin.rekarmunro@royalroads.ca. You can contact me at any time with any questions at gwen.5hill@royalroads.ca. Again, thank you for the time you have already given and for any time you may be able to contribute to this follow up study.

Kind regards,

________________________

Gwen E. Hill