Embracing the Diversity of Civic Engagement: Opportunities for National Service

Tuesday, May 17 – Thursday, May 19, 2022
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Welcome!

Please be advised that all lines have been muted to avoid background noises and to allow for greater engagement.

Please use the chat feature to submit any questions throughout the presentations. Select Everyone when submitting your questions. We will read your questions for you.
Introductory Remark

Mary Hyde, Ph.D.
Director,
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation

2022 Research Grantee Dialogue:
Embracing the Diversity of Civic Engagement
2022 Research Grantee Dialogue: Embracing the Diversity of Civic Engagement

Keynote from AmeriCorps CEO

Michael D. Smith
2022 Research Grantee Dialogue: Embracing the Diversity of Civic Engagement

Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

May 17, 2022
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces
Panel Moderators

Andrea Robles, Ph.D.,
Research and Evaluation Manager,
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation

Shane Dermanjian
Research Assistant,
AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation
Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

Jennifer Crittenden, Ph.D., MSW
Assistant Professor
University of Maine, School of Social Work
2017 Grantee
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

Description of Study

Identify the extent to which formal volunteering is impacted by caregiving, working, and informal helping roles along with the attending programmatic strategies that support role intersections.

Challenges: Older Adult Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Who does this affect? Older adults, Volunteer programs, Communities
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

Study Design

Three-Phase Study, Role Theory Framework of Inquiry

1) Survey of 1,697 active RSVP volunteers ages 55+
   • Quantitative, Multiple regression analysis looking at role conflict, satisfaction, intent to stay, and time commitment

2) Survey of RSVP program sites (N=21)
   • Qualitative and exploratory in nature

3) Follow-up qualitative interviews with 11 RSVP program sites
Findings - Phase I

Average hours in formal volunteering (RSVP)

22.6 hours/month

M = 53.17 hours/month
M = 42 hours/month
M = 19.41 hours/month
Role Conflict

For those who had additional roles:

Average conflict score: 7.49  (SD=5.05)
Range from 5-35 (35 poss. Points)

There are sig. differences in conflict scores between caregivers and non-caregivers

There are sig. differences between workers and non-workers with regard to conflict scores
Role Conflict

- A higher number of roles held outside of RSVP was associated with lower RSVP participation.

- Higher levels of role conflict were associated with lower levels of satisfaction with RSVP volunteering.

- Health is an important intervening factor that is also related to participation and satisfaction.

- Poorer self-rated health was associated with lower reported levels of participation in and satisfaction with RSVP.
Role Enhancement

Communication
Social Skills
Organization
Time Management

Fundraising
Exercise Instruction
Tax Prep

Care Approaches
Meal Preparation
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

Phase III

- 11 RSVP sites recruited
- 7 States
- Program sizes ranged from 50 volunteers to 650 volunteers
Phase III Findings: Practices and Themes

- Collaboration
- Supports, Resources, Wellness Promotion
- Remote and Home-Based Volunteering
- Substitute Volunteers
- Time-Limited and Intermittent Volunteering
- Onboarding
- Breaks and Flexible Scheduling
- Training
- Intake
Intake procedures (subtheme)

- Identify caregiving or working volunteers, scheduling considerations
- Volunteer placement considers interest to transition to paid employment.
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Training (subtheme)

- Offering training beyond that required for the volunteer role enhances skills that can be used in other roles.

- Example: RSVP of Northern Arizona offers additional professional development trainings to give volunteers the opportunity to build their skill set beyond those required for the volunteer role.
Breaks were viewed as a method for preventing burnout and increasing retention.

Flexibility in schedule and hours is critical.

Conversations during initial intake can identify scheduling needs.
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

- Flexibility and lack of a major time commitment viewed as helpful to some volunteers
- Offered during non-workday hours
- One-time opportunities, lasting a few hours in duration

Staff perspectives

- Viewed as time-consuming for RSVP staff
- Opportunities get “volunteers through the door”
Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

- Flexibility to take time away from volunteering to attend to other roles.

- Trained for multiple volunteer opportunities, some specific to a given program

- Allows participants ability to volunteer more often outside of short-term opportunities, a “per diem” type role
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

- Volunteering from home seen as a feasible way to engage more volunteers, especially during COVID

- The ability to volunteer from home while simultaneously caring for a loved one was noted as an advantage of remote and home-based volunteering

- Such opportunities provide more flexibility in volunteering after typical work day hours.
Provision of supports to volunteers around personal wellness and well-being, not related to their volunteer work specifically.

- Caregiver information and support groups
- Available services
- Supports offered both formally and informally
A means for programs to provide resources and trainings to volunteers.

- **Examples:**
  - Workshops on Alzheimer’s disease with a local Cooperative Extension
  - Partnerships with Area Agencies on Aging to connect volunteers with services
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

Roles & Health Matter

Volunteering Accrues Benefits Across Roles

Volunteers & Programs Can Work Together To Manage Role Conflict

Big Picture Takeaways
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/older-adult-volunteer-study/
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

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mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/older-adult-volunteer-study/
Phase III Sites
Acknowledgements

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Engaging and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers: A Role Intersection Perspective

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Where have all the volunteers gone?
Volunteering Cliff in the US Rural Communities: Why Rural Residents Volunteer Less than Before (and what we still don’t know...)

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Background
Examples of Mediating Structures
- Congregations
- Family
- Neighborhoods
- Voluntary associations (might include service nonprofits)

Why is this important?

Communities increasingly rely upon private efforts to respond to complex social issues.

• Changes in the social and economic structure of local communities may be eroding civic capacity.

• And civic engagement and community development are productive cycles.

The rural/urban divide appears more pronounced than ever (economically, socially, economically)

• Much of what we know about volunteering is based on studies of urban respondents or assumes that rural/urban doesn’t matter.
Two questions

1. What explains the “historical differences” between urban and rural volunteering rates?

2. What factors might explain the persistent decline in volunteering rates, specifically what might be behind the rural volunteering cliff?
Study Design:

Quantitative Study of Census Data

• Current Population Survey (CPS) Volunteering Supplement
  • Added to the basic monthly CPS survey (labor force data) every September
  • Representative of the US public
  • Asks about the incidence and intensity of volunteering
  • Years 2002 through 2015 (we are eager to dig into more current data...)
• N = 1,072,000 individuals, which is about 90,000 per year

• Data Limitation: In the publicly available CPS data, the county identifier is masked for about 59 percent of the respondents (for confidentiality reasons). A high proportion of individuals with masked county codes are in rural communities.
  • We have permission to access the confidential-level CPS volunteering data in a secure U.S. Census Bureau research data center (RDC). This means that we can merge in county-level contextual data for ALL respondents, thus overcoming that major data limitation.
• WARNING: We don’t have rural residents in all these results.
Findings
(across several studies)
What explains the rural/urban divide?

• Rurality by itself is **not** significant—“there isn’t something in the water in rural places.”
• Individual resources provide a small advantage to urban residents (.011 of the gap).
• Much of the difference results from differences in the characteristics of community that favor residents of rural communities (.064)
  • Congregational density
  • Racial homogeneity
  • Lower community wealth (hmmm....)
• And differences in the **size** of the effects of community characteristics (.092)
  • Religiosity (density of adherents) and density of nonprofits has a stronger effect in rural places
What explains the rural/urban divide?

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  • Religiosity (density of adherents) and density of nonprofits has a stronger effect in rural places
Ongoing efforts to understand what’s behind the decline?

Recession and associated economic changes?

Changing social connections?

“Graying” of rural places
Examination of Economic Factors

• The recession, even when controlling for other economic factors, has a negative effect on volunteering rates
• Economic growth in the 1990’s seems to have a long-term positive effect on volunteering, especially among the communities of winners!
• Changes in community income and growing income inequality are not likely drivers of the decline in volunteering

• Next Steps
• Release the results of the rural analysis from analysis in the Census lab
  • Investigate the interaction between rurality and the economic variables
A Social Explanation

Perhaps rural residents get involved in volunteering in different ways? And maybe these pathways are changing over time?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Mean of pathway variable</th>
<th>RURAL</th>
<th>URBAN</th>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
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<td>Obligation</td>
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<td>Recruitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
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Key Finding: # 2

Small differences in pathways to volunteering

*All differences are statistically significant

Voluntary: you approach the organization or your own involvement
Social obligation: asked by a friend, relative or co-worker
Recruitment: asked by someone at organization, public appeal
Coercive: mandate through school, public housing or court
Declines in recruitment?

More research is needed to understand the changes in the capacity of organizations (government/nonprofit/religious) in rural places to engage and support volunteers.
Next steps

Research and Implications for Practice
Ongoing Research

#1. Is changing age structure of rural places dampening volunteering rates?

Marginal Effects of Age-Cubed on Probability of Volunteering

#2. Has increasing secularization in rural places dampened rural volunteering?

#3. Are we experiencing “hollowing out” of our civic institutions in rural places? (churches and other nonprofits?)

Need to consider rural context in studies of volunteering.
-Importance of the CPS data to track volunteerism
-Support access to the restricted data through the RDC

Building multidisciplinary teams.
Implications for practice

Much of the attention on bolstering volunteerism has often focused on the individual attributes of volunteers and “teaching people” to be volunteers (school service programs etc.).

Our research suggests that volunteerism needs to be a continued focus for community development efforts.

- The importance of strong organizations—what happens when we lose local organizations? Schools, youth associations, places of worship?
- The consequences of “gentrification” of rural places.
- The “graying of communities.”
Questions and Comments

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Appendix of more detailed statistical results
Economic Explanations
(largely drawn from economic and political science theories—”sociotropic approach”)

- **Economic distress:**
  - Economically distressed communities have lower levels of trust, greater competition for resources, less incentive to invest in the long term, fewer civically engaged role models (Grueter et al., 2020; Lettinga et al., 2020; Letki, 2008 Parboteeah et al., 2004)

- **Economic inequity:**
  - Increasing social distance and less community solidarity (Collins & Guidry, 2018; Fateh Ahmad & Majid, 2021)

- **Economic decline:**
  - Dampens collective self-efficacy
  - Creates long-term public disinvestment in building human and social capital
  - **Interterritorial inequality:** Long-term decline creates a sense of segregation from the broader society that fuels anger and resentment that their community has been left behind and “doesn’t matter” to the larger society —”the fly over effect” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).
Results of the Oaxaca Blinder Decomposition

Endowments

Coefficients

-0.200
-0.150
-0.100
-0.050
0.000
0.050
0.100
0.150
0.200
0.250
0.300

Total individual
Median income
County education
Population homogeniety
Adherent rate
Nonprofit density
Congregational density
**Probit Results**  
*(Community Variables)*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Median income</strong></td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Income Inequality</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Recession</strong></td>
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<td>-.150***</td>
<td>-.136***</td>
</tr>
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*Percent change in median household income (standard deviations): 1990-2000*

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<td>NS</td>
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<td>2 SD below</td>
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<tr>
<td>3+ SD above</td>
<td>.283**</td>
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*Warning:* The effects of many community variables vary across rural/urban areas.

*The interaction between economic variables and the recession is not significant.*
Marginal Effects of Community Age Norm on Probability of Volunteering

Older Community

Younger Community

Predicted Probability of Volunteering

the proportion of age 65 more in the community

the proportion of age 35 below in the community

- group under 35
- group btw36-64
- group over 65
Is the changing age structure of rural places dampening volunteering?

Next steps: Release the data on rurality, age structure, and volunteerism. *This is complex because the effect of individual age changes across the age structure of place.*
Has secularization dampened rural volunteering?

Faith congregations are a traditional source of entry into volunteerism and a source of resources for local organizations.

Congregations directly provide services.

Congregational structures are “anchor institutions”

Median weekly worship attendance:
2000: 137
2020: 65

65% of congregations average less than 100 people attending worship (vs. 45% on 2000)

Next steps: Partner with religious study colleagues to examine the unique effects of religious community on volunteering

https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/fact-2020-survey/
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces
Best Practices: Engaging Seniors, Urban, and Rural populations

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

**Recruitment:**
- Articulating role-related benefits
- New recruitment avenues
  - Employers
  - Caregiver organizations
  - Other civic organizations
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Older Adult Volunteer Best Practices

Retention

• Create Role Enhancement Opportunities (Holistic Approach)
  • Integrating supportive practices
• Support Health and Well-Being
• Reduce isolation
• Build volunteer infrastructure
  • Volunteer job flexibility/scheduling
  • Volunteer assignment matches that will create role-related benefits
Processes and impact of volunteering in an under-resourced Virginia neighborhood

Emily Zimmerman, Ph.D., M.S., M.P.H.
Best practices for volunteering in under-resourced neighborhoods

- Employ a community liaison, with good rapport with and connections to community residents, to create ongoing dialog/navigation/translation
- Have structures in place that allow feedback from the community to ‘move up the ladder’ in the organization to have an impact on planning and service provision.
- Foster transparent communication and report back to communities
- Have a community engagement strategy in place
- Build community and resident capacity
- Carefully investigate community and residents’ needs and strengths before offering help or starting a program and include community voice throughout
  - Consider unintended consequences during assessment and planning
- Approach planning services and programs as a conversation with the community
- Consider the historical and cultural context of communities, including institutional racism, before starting work there. Make sure that managers, coordinators, and when possible, volunteers, have opportunities to learn about the historical and cultural context.
Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces

Reflections: Turning Research to Action

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Volunteering among Senior and Volunteering across Rural/Urban Spaces
Panelist Discussion and Q&A

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Closing Remarks

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