EXPLORING EFFECTIVE MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES: A STUDY OF THE

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NONPROFITS AND COLLEGE VOLUNTEERS

by

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Abstract

In the United States, the number of college-age students (19-24) who volunteer is rising rapidly. However, most of the research in regard to sustaining volunteers with nonprofits is targeted to the whole population, especially older adults. This research employed the first sample survey of college volunteers for the study of a public relations theory. The findings show that theories developed for older adults may also apply to young adults and could provide insights about youth relationships. While using organization-public relationship model as the theoretical background, the results suggest that Access, Networking, and Assurances are important public relations strategies for nonprofits maintaining college volunteers. Nonprofits should try to cultivate a sense of commitment with college volunteers, which could greatly increase their intention to volunteer. In addition, as suggested by the previous research, this study collected the data in regard to college volunteers' parents' social-economic status, and has found that parental involvement with nonprofits has a great impact on their children's volunteer behaviors in the future.

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Chapter 1 - Literature Review

In the United States, the number of college-age students (19-24) who volunteer is rising rapidly. Within three years, the number of college volunteers grew by nearly 600,000 from 2.7 million in 2002 to 3.3 million in 2005. The college volunteer rate of 30.2% exceeded the general adult volunteer rate of 28.8% (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006). However, most of the research in regard to sustaining volunteers with nonprofits is targeted to the whole population, especially older adults, because they have more stable life circumstances which cause them to donate more time and energy (e.g. Browne Jamison , 2003; Garner & Garner 2010). Only one piece of research has explored the effective relationship strategies with adolescent volunteers (Bortree, 2010). In addition, most nonprofits did not view their volunteers as strategic assets or develop ways to take full advantage of them (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009; Jamison, 2003). Therefore, regarding the increasing number of volunteers among college students and the limited research in maintaining them for a longer time, this study is going to explore how a nonprofit organization should direct its public relations efforts to cultivate positive relationships with college students.

The increasing trend in young volunteers

Research in the previous two decades has suggested that individuals' involvement with their community has significantly declined over the last half-century (Putnam, 2000). However, volunteer behavior over the last 30 years indicates that there has been a real increase in volunteering since 1974 (Putnam, 2000). While there was a decline in the volunteer rate between 1974 and 1989, the 2005 data indicated that volunteer rates were at a 30-year high (Putnam, 2000). College students, who represent a large and growing source of the nation's volunteers, deliver valuable services to communities across the country. The number of college students who

volunteer was up by approximately 20% from 2002 to 2005, and the growth rate was more than double the growth rate of all adult volunteers (9%) (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006).

What exactly drove young people's increased enthusiasm for volunteering? One factor seemed to be the growth of school-based service and service learning (Kielsmeier, 2010; Skinner & Chapman, 1999). There has been a growing trend to include community service and service-learning in America's schools, because educators and school administrators realized the value of service for youth's academic and personal development. This compares to low percentages for service-learning activities and community service opportunities among public high schools in 1984 (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006).

Another motivator helped to boost young people's interest in volunteering in nonprofit organizations may be due to recent events. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 shocked the United States, and may have been the catalyst for more Americans to make a contribution to the health and well-being of the nation, particularly among young people (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006). Similarly, recent natural disasters, such as Hurricane Ivan, the 2004 tsunami, the wildfires in the southwestern and western United States, and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, may also have created an increased commitment to volunteer among American young people (Dote, Cramer, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006). According to the Higher Education Research Institute, 66.3% of college students in 2005 believed it to be very important to help others who were in difficulty; this is the highest percentage reported by students who were entering college in the last 25 years (See HERI).

The third factor might be the increasing number of nonprofit organizations. The Urban Institute's National Center on Charitable Statistics estimated that the number of operating public charities more than doubled between 1989 and 2004(Elizabeth, 2006). Many of the nonprofit

organizations continue to rely on volunteers to help them run their internal operations and provide services to the community (Hager & Brudney, 2004; Netting, O'Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, 2005), therefore the large increased demand of young volunteers was not surprising.

The difference between young and older volunteers

Kanfer and Ackerman (2004), who addressed motivation within a life-span context, suggested that older individuals tended to be more contextually motivated, focused more on the aspects of the job related to helping, while younger individuals were more achievement oriented, focused more on task accomplishment. This echoes the perspective on adult development offered by Levinson et al. (1978), who noted that older adults desired a new balance between society and themselves, whereas young adults were more focused on achieving life goals. Research findings with volunteers in the nonprofit field were supportive of these ideas, insofar as age-related differences in volunteer motivation have consistently been found (e.g. Miller, Powell, & Seltzer, 1990). For instance, in a study of Red Cross volunteers, Frisch and Gerrard (1981) found that younger volunteers tended to be motivated less by altruistic considerations than older volunteers, who tended to be more motivated by service or community concerns (Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000). Similarly, Tschirhart (1998) found that older volunteers placed more importance on helping others than do younger volunteers, who tended to be more motivated toward developing and using skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Research regarding attitude formation and age suggested that older volunteers tended to be more influenced by something that helped society, but younger individuals tended to be more aspired toward personal accomplishment through their roles in the nonprofit (Etzioni, 1975).

Mutual benefits from quality relationships

Quality organization-public relationships result in positive effects for both parties. From the organization's perspective, quality relationships could improve organizational effectiveness (Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995; L.Grunig, J.Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hon, 1997; Huang, 1999), resolve conflicts between the organization and the public (Huang, 1997), affect the publics' attitudes, evaluations, and behaviors (Bruning, 2002; Ki & Hon, 2007), develop positive public relations strategies (Huang, 2004), and enhance corporate reputations (Bridges & Nelson, 2000; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001).

From the volunteers' perspective, especially that of young volunteers, service activities have been tied to the development of teamwork, positive relationships, and social capital (Larson et al., 2006, p. 849), and community service helped increase young people's sense of social responsibility and personal competence (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Newmann & Rutter, 1986; Yates & Youniss, 1996). In addition, by working with community organizations, the youth not only benefit from the volunteer assignment provided by the organization, but also benefit from other relationships that the organization would bring, which include relationships with peer volunteers (Youniss et al., 2001), relationships with adults in social networks built through their volunteer experiences (Larson et al., 2006), and relationships with those who were served by the community organizations (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Meanwhile, volunteerism can be the basis for young people learning about the work environment as well (Johnson et al., 1998). Studies based in the United States have found that students who volunteer were more likely than non-volunteers to have leadership ability, social self-confidence, and skills in critical thinking and conflict resolution (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999).

Volunteer management

An integral part of many nonprofit organizations is volunteer management, and many nonprofits depend on the volunteer workforce for key tasks (Hager & Brudney, 2004; Netting, O'Connor, Thomas, & Yancey, 2005). However, nonprofit organizations may struggle because the nature of volunteer work implies that those people are serving "out of the goodness of their heart," rather than depending on the organization for a paycheck (Adams, Schlueter, & Barge, 1988). Volunteers' sense of commitment must come in different ways. Boezeman and Ellemers (2008) stated that a volunteer's organizational commitment would ultimately be based on the perceived importance of volunteer work and the perceived support of the organization. According to their argument, the perceived importance of the work increased volunteers' pride in the organization, whereas perceived organizational support increased volunteers' respect for the organization. Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, and Darcy (2006) reported similar findings in their study of Australian rugby clubs in that the clubs that used better planning practices and provided appropriate training and support were less likely to have retention problems. Taken together, these studies indicated that nonprofit organizations may be able to increase their volunteers' commitment by communicating the importance of the organization's work and the volunteers' contributions to that work.

Galindo- Kuhn and Guzley (2001) identified four dimensions of satisfaction. Two of those dimensions (satisfaction with organizational support and satisfaction with participation efficacy) were similar to what was described earlier. This is to say, the volunteer was satisfied with the degree to which the organization provided adequate planning, training, and support for the specific tasks to which the volunteer contributed and where the volunteer was satisfied that his or her work made a difference. A third dimension of satisfaction considered empowerment, the

degree to which the organization gave the volunteer freedom in deciding how to carry out assigned tasks. The final dimension identified by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) was satisfaction with group integration, and this dimension was measured by how happy volunteers were with the relationships they formed as a result of their volunteer work.

However, some studies indicated that both volunteers' dissatisfaction and quitting rate in volunteering were at a high level. Young (1989) found that 40% of volunteers reported dissatisfaction with how they were managed; only 20% said they were pleased with the way they were treated; A total of 61% of the volunteers in AIDS service organizations had been serving for only 6 months (Lindhorst & Mancoske, 1993); a total of 43% of hospice volunteers dropped out of service between 4 to 11 months after beginning their assignments (Amenta, 1984, as cited in Glass & Hastings, 1992). According to motivation theory, volunteers left an agency because expectations that brought them to the agency remained unmet or because structures, processes, and relationships associated with the volunteer experiences were insufficient (Black & DiNitto, 1994; Blau, 1964; Cnaan & Goldberg Glen, 1991; Maslow, 1970; McClelland, 1961; Meneghetti, 1995; Vroom, 1964). In addition, one can be satisfied with the overall experience of volunteering at a nonprofit organization while being dissatisfied with a particular event or set of circumstances. Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) found that, predictably, negative experiences were directly related to volunteers' dissatisfaction and non-commitment. Negative experiences also moderated the importance of organizational support, and such support took on added importance in the face of dissatisfying circumstances. As volunteers were deciding how to react when confronted by dissatisfying circumstances in their volunteer work, their communication with paid staff in the organization was an important part of that decision (Bennett and Barkensjo, 2005).

Research on nonprofit organizational behaviors has identified a number of strategies to retain volunteers, including engaging in ongoing supervision, regular communication, screening volunteers before making assignments, offering professional development opportunities, establishing written policies and procedures, and providing annual recognitions (Brudney, 2005; Hager & Brudney, 2004). Gidron (1984) found that the major predictors of retention in service volunteer workers included (1) good preparation for the particular task, (2) placement in a job in which the volunteer can find self-expression, (3) an environment in which volunteers feel their work can produce results and (4) opportunity for positive peer interaction. Dailey (1986) found that job satisfaction, work autonomy, job involvement, and feedback predicted organizational commitment for volunteers. Miller, Powell, and Seltzer (1990) studied hospital volunteers and found the most consistent correlation of turnover to be satisfaction, job contentment, overall satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Stevens (1991) found that with volunteers 60 to 93 years old, their background and the social environment of the agency were associated with their satisfaction and their retention rates. Spitz and MacKinnon Jr., (1993) found the following psychological factors were associated with volunteer success: intelligence, trust, social inhibition, imagination, and self-assurance.

J. Garner and L. Garner (2010) suggested that nonprofit organizations should be more intentional to meet volunteer expectations; nonprofits should ensure that volunteers feel supported and have opportunities to connect with other people in their volunteer work, and nonprofits should encourage volunteers to openly express their ideas. Understanding the relationship between nonprofit organizations and young volunteers would benefit from more studies of public relations strategies that can be engaged to maintain relationships between these two partners.

Theoretical background: Organization-Public model

The concept of measuring a relationship between an organization and the public was first proposed by Ferguson (1984). His assertion was that the relationship between an organization and the public should be the central unit of analysis for the public relations field (Ferguson, 1984). Many public relations scholars have since adopted this perspective. Ki (2006) defined Organization-Public relationship as "the state in which each party relies on the other party's resources and each party is affected by the other (p.15)." Such relationship consists of three stages—antecedents, relationship maintenance strategies, and relationship quality outcome (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997, Grunig & Huang, 2000).

In the first stage, the antecedent level, an organization should identify with those who need to develop a relationship (Ki, 2006, p.17). In the second stage, the relationship maintenance strategies, covers the strategies utilized to maintain and cultivate those relationships. Finally, relationship outcomes are the consequences, or measures of relationship quality, that are produced by effective relationship maintenance (Grunig & Huang, 2000).

The main categories of relationship maintenance strategies derived from interpersonal communication, and they were identified as (1) positivity (interacting with partners in a cheerful, uncritical manner); (2) openness (directly discussing the nature of the relationship and disclosing one's desires for the relationship); (3) sharing of tasks (performing one's responsibilities such as household chores); (4) social networks (relying on common affiliations and relations); and (5) assurances (communicating one's desire to continue the relationship) (Canary & Stafford, 1992) (Ki, 2006, P.19). The four measurements of organization-public relationship outcomes are: control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Ki, 2006).

Ki (2006) first empirically tested a model for linking maintenance strategies, relationship perceptions (outcomes), attitude, and behavioral intentions. It has been suggested that positive, long-term relationships are valuable to organizations because these relationships are more likely to encourage supportive behaviors (e.g., sales, donations, favorable legislation, and high performance among employees), while preventing unsupportive behaviors (e.g. boycotts, picketing, litigation, and government regulation) among the public (Grunig et al., 2002).

Ki (2006) defined attitude as "evaluation of an organization by members of a public." This study assumes that perceptions (outcomes) precede shifts in attitude because relationship literature suggests that relationship perceptions are antecedents of supportive (or absence of unsupportive) feelings and behaviors among the public toward organizations (p.45). Perloff (2003) explained the conceptualization of behavioral intentions as "the intention to perform a particular behavior, a plan to put behavior into effect" (p. 92). Ki's (2006) study adopted behavioral intentions instead of actual behavior for several reasons. First, observing actual behavior is often difficult, particularly at the time that research is conducted, so social scientists frequently measure behavioral intentions as a predictor of actual behavior (Ki & Hon, 2007). Second, and more importantly, asking people about their behavioral intentions is the most reliable predictor of behavior, and behavioral intentions tend to be identical to behavior since most social behavior is under the individual's control (Perloff, 2003). Lastly, behavioral intentions are an intermediate variable between attitude and behavior, according to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The literature suggests that an organization may sustain the organization-public relationship through engaging in maintenance strategies (Grunig & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki, 2006). Public relations literature has proposed and tested that the organization can build and

maintain the relationships with publics by engaging in six relational maintenance strategies: Positivity, Assurances, Shared tasks, Openness, Networking, and Access. The following is a discussion of each strategy in the context of public relations literature and young adult interpersonal relationship literature.

Positivity.

In public relations literature, Positivity would be considered as: "the degree to which members of the public benefit from the organization's efforts to make the relationship more enjoyable" (Ki, 2006, p.25). It is anything the organization or the public does to make the relationship more enjoyable for the parties involved (Hon and Gruning, 1999, p.14). In young adults' literature, Positivity in the form of pro-social behavior is a predictor of positive peer relationships. Pro-social behavior predicts outcomes of "conflict, closeness, companionship, helping and security" (Cillessen, Lu, West, & Laszkowski, 2005, p.165). In summary, Positivity results in a positive outcome in both organization-public relationships and youth interpersonal relationships; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Positivity may impact the relationships between college volunteers and the nonprofit organization.

Assurances.

In public relations literature, Assurances is defined as "any efforts by an organization to assure its strategic publics that they and their concerns are attended to" (Ki, 2006, p.29). In young adults' literature, supportiveness, as one aspect of Assurances, impacts youth behaviors. For instance, students suggested that parental support conveyed with praise and encouragement continue to be important in the education of older youth (Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, Chen, 2010). Another example of supportiveness within a close relationship is one that predicts the survival of a relationship through a transition (Oswald & Clark, 2003). In summary, aspects

of Assurances result in positive outcomes in both organization-public relationships and youth interpersonal relationships; the same may be true for the relationships between college volunteers and the nonprofit organization.

Shared task.

In public relations literature, the concept of Shared task is "an organization's efforts to share in working on projects or solving problems of mutual interest between an organization and its publics" (Ki, 2006, p.27). Practical examples include "reducing pollution, providing employment, making a profit, and staying in business, which are in the interest of either organizations, or the public, or both" (Gruning & Huang, 2000, p.40). In young adults' literature, parents set goals or helped children resolve conflicts as an endorsed way for the youth to step forward in the transition to adulthood (Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, & Chen, 2010). Parents who are viewed as collaborators offer potential benefits to youth because youth may view their parents as stakeholders in their future (Chang, Heckhausen, Greenberger, & Chen, 2010). In summary, Shared task results in positive outcomes in both organization-public relationships and youth interpersonal relationships. It is reasonable to assume that when the young are working with a nonprofit organization to accomplish a common goal, Shared tasks may also share the same affects.

Openness.

In public relations literature, Openness is "an organization's efforts to provide information about the nature of the organization and what it is doing" (Ki, 2006, p.26). Openness is the condition in which both organizations and the public are open and honest with each other and more than willing to share their opinions, and how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with each other (Grunig et al., 2002). In young adults' literature, self-disclosure as an aspect of Openness,

predicts success of a close relationship through a transition (Oswald & Clard, 2003). It is a measurable quality of the relationship (Matza, Kupersmidt, & Glenn, 2001) that is associated with family communication, family cohesion, and family satisfaction (Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990.) In summary, Openness has a positive outcome in both organization-public relationships and youth interpersonal relationships. It is reasonable to hypothesize that Openness will have the same positive effect in the relationships between college volunteers and the nonprofit organization.

Networking.

In public relations literature, Ki (2006) defined Networking as "the degree of an organization's effort to build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups" (p. 28). This concept is offered as an extension of the interpersonal concept of social networking, which results in enjoyment of the relationship (Gruning & Huang, 2000). Substantial theoretical reasoning and empirical evidence suggest that many people engage in volunteer activities to expanding their social contacts, which may be used to get better jobs (Wuthnow, 1998; Crosby, 1999; Marks & Jones, 2004). Although those studies did not deal specifically with any particular population, their findings might be all the more relevant to university students (young adults), as they are more likely to be in a transition from student life to labor force or institutions of higher learning (Handy, et al., 2000). It is possible that organizational social Networking has a positive impact on the relationships between college students and a nonprofit organization, which, however, is difficult to predict.

Access.

In the public relations literature, Ki (2006) defined Access as "the degree of effort that an organization puts into providing communication channels or media outlets that assist strategic

publics in reaching it" (p.23). Access is a strategy that a party (either a public or an organization) uses to reach the other party and express or share their opinions and thoughts (Ki, 2006, p. 23). Access is the only one that does not originate in the interpersonal communication literature. A parallel construct has not been explored in young adults' interpersonal literature. The impact of this strategy on the relationships between college students and a nonprofit organization cannot be predicted.

This study's aim is to identify key relationship maintenance strategies in the nonprofits-college volunteer relationships, explore the impacts on relationship quality outcomes, and discover college volunteers' intended volunteering behavior in the future. Three research questions were built based on the organization-public model for linking maintenance strategies, relationship perceptions (outcomes), attitude, and behavioral intentions.

RQ1: Are the relationship maintenance strategies and relationship quality outcomes reliable measurements in the nonprofits-college volunteer relationship?

RQ2*:* Which maintenance strategies(s) could predict quality outcome (s) in the nonprofits-college volunteer relationships?

RQ3: Which quality outcome(s) in the nonprofits-college volunteer relationship could predict volunteers' intended behaviors?

Chapter 2 - Methodology

Sample

Requirements of the sample were restricted to college students who have had volunteer experience in a nonprofit organization in the past 12 months. Participants from this study were recruited through three channels: 1) KSU Arts & Sciences students who had volunteered for the

Kansas State University Foundation, especially Telefund program; 2) KSU students who had

taken a Non-Profit Leadership internship class; 3) KSU students who had taken the class of Mass

Communications in Society from A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Channels two and three were chosen because students who took those classes were more likely to

have volunteer experience in a nonprofit organization, and represented various majors and grades.

Procedure

The researcher used the Survey Monkey website as a tool to administer a twenty-eight

question survey. Participants were able to access the link to an on-line survey, as their email

addresses had already been provided to the researcher. Participants were not incentivized for

completing the survey.

The researcher did a pilot test with five qualified student volunteers. They helped

proofread the questions and provided useful suggestions on the grammar and reading flow. Based

on their responses, twelve questions were rewritten for a college volunteer audience. Over a two-

day period, the researcher sent out a survey link via email and set a due date for participants to

complete the survey. A week later, the researcher sent out a reminder email to all participants, and

attached the same link for the ones who had not yet accessed the survey. The survey could be

administered only once via the link provided. Two weeks later, a total of 280 surveys were sent

out and 87 were returned; of those, 85 produced usable data for this study, a 31% response rate.

Table2. 1 shows major sample characteristics.

Table 2.1

Sample Characteristics

Gender	Female	**71.4%**
	Male	28.6%
Education	Freshman	16.9%
	Sophomore	18.2%
	Junior	24.7%
	Senior	**31.2%**
	Graduate student	7.8%
	PHD candidate	1.3%
Religious level	Not at all	9.2%
	a little	14.4%
	Neutral	11.8%
	Some what	**43.4%**
	Very much	21.6%
Parents' involvement with nonprofits	Never or seldom	**29.9%**
	A few times	15.6%
	Neutral	18.2%
	Usually	**26%**
	Very often	10.4%
N = 87.		

Measurements

Four sets of measures were used in this study: 1) relational maintenance strategies; 2) relational quality outcomes; 3) volunteer intended behaviors; and 4) demographic questions. The following are descriptions of the measures.

Relational maintenance strategies.

In organization-public relationship, the six relational maintenance strategies are Positivity, Assurances, Shared tasks, Openness, Networking, and Access, which were proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999). Those strategies were tested from a scale by Ki (2006). An adopted version of these measures was used in this study with a 5-point scale. Examples of measures are "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management provide you with adequate contact information? (Access)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management attempt to make interactions with you enjoyable? (Positivity)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management share enough information with you about the organization's governance? (Openness)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management work with you to develop solutions to problems that benefit you? (Shared of task)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management effectively build coalitions with groups that impact you? (Networking)", and "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management make a genuine effort to provide personal responses to your concerns? (Assurances)"

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Relational quality outcomes.

Eight scale questions were used to measure relational quality outcomes of Control mutuality, Satisfaction, Trust, and Commitments. These items were modified from the scale proposed and refined by Huang (1997; 2001), and applied by a number of studies in public relations (Ki, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007). A modified version of these measures was used in this study with a 5-point scale. The measures were adapted to reflect perspectives of college volunteers in this study. Examples of measurements were "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management believe that the opinions of volunteers are legitimate? (Control mutuality)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management make volunteers' interactions with the organization dissatisfactory. (Satisfaction)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management treat volunteers fairly and justly? (Trust)", "In your most recent experience with volunteering for the nonprofit organization, did the volunteer management try to maintain a long-term commitment with you? (Commitment)"

Volunteer intended behavior.

The model proposed in this study predicts that the level of relational quality outcomes in the nonprofits-college volunteer relationship will influence the intended behavior of college volunteers. The c nonprofits-college volunteer relationship has the potential to have a positive long-term effect on college volunteers by influencing their likelihood to volunteer in the future. To test intended behavior, two measures were adapted from Zeihaml, Berry, & Parasuraman (1996) and Ki (2006). They were: "Will you continue to volunteer for your organization in the

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years to come?" and "How much of an effort will you make to volunteer in your organization and/ or other nonprofit organizations in the years to come?" Those measures were tested using a 5-point scale.

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide their age, gender, grade, major, and their parents' educational level. Respondents also provided how religious they were on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 of being not at all, and 5 of being very much, as well as frequency of their parents' involvement in nonprofit work on a scale of 1 to 5, 1of being never or seldom, and 5 of being very often.

Chapter 3 - Results

Descriptive results

For the six maintenance strategies, four relationship outcomes and volunteer intended behaviors, each was asked by two questions. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha to analyze their internal consistency. Result showed that three of those strategies had acceptable reliability scores (due to the small sample, those reliability scores which were above .5 were considered in an acceptable range), and they were Access (α =.684), Networking (α =.614) and Assurance (α =.781). Two of the relationship outcomes had acceptable reliability scores, and they were Trust (α =.551) and Commitment (α =.800). The reliability of volunteer intended behaviors was high with the score of .943(Table 3.1).

As shown in Table 3.1, the average score of the three maintenance strategies were 3.964 (Access), 3.601 (Positivity) and 3.967 (Assurance) on a 5 point scale; the average score of the two relationship outcomes 4.547 (Trust) and 3.547 (Commitment) on a 5 point scale; and the average score of volunteers' intended behaviors was 3.955 on a 5 point scale. This sample

showed moderate-to-high levels of the three relationship maintenance strategies, the two relationship outcomes and volunteer intended behaviors.

Table 3.1

Descriptive Statistics For Key Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Number of items	α
Relationship Maintenance strategies				
Access	3.964	.91	2	.684
Networking	3.601	.79	2	.614
Assurances	3.967	.88	2	.781
Relationship quality outcomes				
Trust	4.547	.65	2	.551
Commitment	3.547	1.06	2	.800
Volunteer Intended behaviors				
Intended behaviors	3.955	1.34	2	.943
N = 87				

All α values are Cronbach's alpha scores

Relationship results

Table3.2 showed below presents the result of linear regressions of maintenance strategies on quality outcomes. Access (β=.204, $p < .001$) and Assurances (β=.280, $p < .001$) has a positive relationship with Trust with the test score of R^2=.392, $p < .001$. However, Networking could not predict the quality outcome of Trust with the P value that above .05. The following regression equation predicting the relationship quality outcome of Trust driven with standardized regression coefficients:

$$\text{Trust} = 2.439 + .204 \text{ Access} + .280 \text{ Assurances}$$

In addition, all of Access (β=.350, $p < .05$), Networking (β=.311, $p < .01$) and Assurances

(β=. 262, $p < .01$) have a positive relationship with Commitment with the test score of R^2=.392, $p < .001$. The following regression equation predicts the relationship quality outcome of Commitment driven with standardized regression coefficients:

Commitment =.350 Access + .311 Networking +.262 Assurance

Table 3.2

Linear Regressions Of Maintenance Strategies On Relationship Quality Outcomes

Maintenance Strategies	Relationship Quality Outcomes	
	Trust	Commitment
Access	β = .204***	β = .350**
Networking	β = .065	β = .311*
Assurances	β = .280***	β = .262*
R^2	.392***	.312***

N = 71

β values are standardized regression coefficients

Each of the relationship quality outcome indicators of Trust, and Commitment were the dependent variables for each regression analysis.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 3.3 below presents the linear regression of Commitment on Trust. Commitment could predict Trust with the test score of R^2=.392, $p < .001$, and Commitment (β=. 301, $p < .001$) has a positive relationship with Trust. The following regression equation predicts the relationship quality outcome of Trust driven with standardized regression coefficients:

Relationship quality outcome of Trust =3.479 + .301 Commitment

Table 3.3

Linear Regressions of Commitment On Trust

	Relationship Quality Outcomes
	Trust
Commitment	$\beta = .301$***
R^2	.487***

N = 71

β value is standardized regression coefficient.

The relationship quality outcome indicator of Trust was the dependent variables for the regression analysis.
***$p < .001$.

Table 3.4 below presents the linear regression of relationship quality outcomes on volunteer intended behaviors. Trust could predict volunteer intended behaviors with the test score of $R^2 = .449$, $p < .01$. , and the two has a positive relationship ($\beta = . 301$, $p < .001$). However, Commitment has no relationship with volunteers' intended behavior with $p = 066$. The following regression equation predicts the volunteer intended behaviors driven with standardized regression coefficients:

$$\text{Volunteer intended behaviors} = .812\text{Trust}$$

Table 3.4

Linear Regression On Volunteer Intended Behaviors

	Volunteers' Intended Behavior
Trust	$\beta = .812$***
R^2	.449**

N = 31

β value is standardized regression coefficient.

The indicator of volunteers' intended behavior was the dependent variables for the regression analysis.
**$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

Another interesting finding here is that the level of parents' involvement with non-profit work (M= 2.378, SD=1.53) has a positive relationship with their children's intention to volunteer in the future (R^2 = .179. p <.05). Result showed that parental involvement with nonprofits may predict college volunteers' future volunteer behaviors.

In summary, this study analyzed the relationship maintenance (Access, Networking, and Assurances) as predictors of relationship quality outcomes (Commitment and Trust), and relationship quality outcomes (Trust and Commitment) as predictors of volunteer intended behavior. In addition, parental involvement with nonprofits was found to predict their children's volunteer behaviors as well. As shown in figure 3.1, it presented the relationship among relationship maintenance strategies (Access, Networking, and Assurances), relationship quality outcomes (Commitment and Trust) and volunteer intended behaviors.

Figure 3.1 Model of Nonprofits-College Volunteer Suggested By Findings
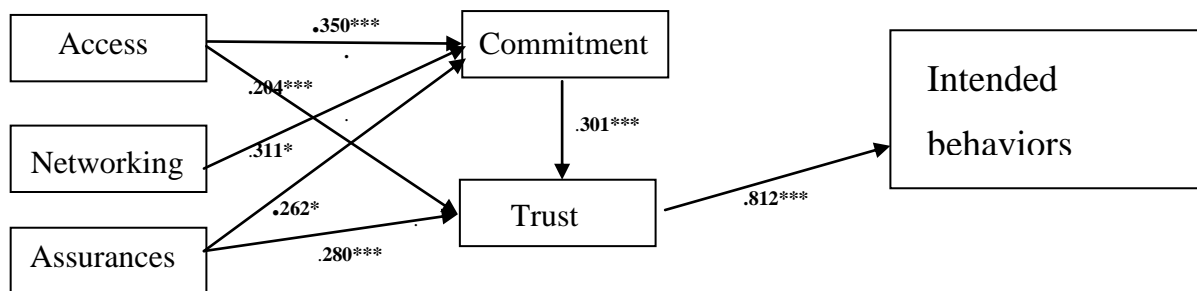

Numbers indicate standardized regression coefficient β.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

Through a survey of college volunteers, this study identified productive ways that nonprofit organizations can engage with college volunteers to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. As shown in figure 4.1, results indicate that Access, Networking, and Assurances were influential relationship strategies on relationship quality outcomes (Commitment and Trust). In addition, Commitment and Trust played important roles in intended behaviors toward future volunteering. Commitment was influenced by three maintenance strategies (Access, Networking and Assurances).Trust was influenced by two maintenance strategies (Access and Assurances) and directly influenced the volunteers' intended behaviors.

This study provided part of the nonprofits-college volunteer relationship model. The researcher did test the rest of the three relationship maintenance strategies (Positivity, Openness and Shared tasks) and the rest of the two relationship quality outcomes (Control Mutuality and Satisfaction), but those variables had relatively low reliability scores, and were not qualified for further analysis.

Figure 4.1 Model of Nonprofits-College Volunteer Suggested By Findings
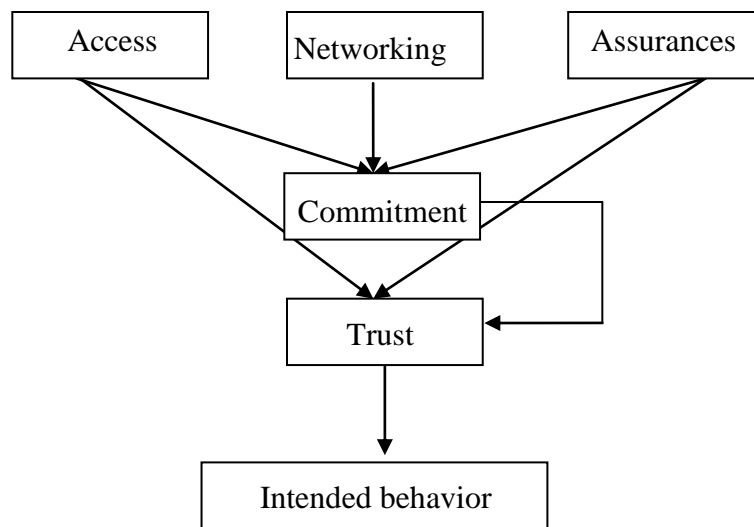
The study suggests that Access could predict the positive quality outcomes of Commitment and Trust. The more college volunteers express or share their opinions and thoughts to the nonprofits, the more they cultivate a sense of loyalty and importance in the relationship with the organization. Access would lead to a better performance and probably more positive feedback from peers and managers. In addition, those who are highly involved with an organization are likely to feel a part of the organization, thus leading to a higher sense of Commitment and Trust. When nonprofits establish assignments to college volunteers, it is better to provide feedback channels as well. Opportunities to express volunteers' feelings and opinions to staff would empower their importance in the position. This finding provides a new understanding to the young adults' literature. Access could be an important strategy for nonprofits in cultivating a positive relationship with young volunteers. Prior nonprofit literature suggests that regular communication, having opportunities to connect with other people, and openly expressing volunteers' ideas all contribute to positive volunteer experiences. These strategies seem to be, at least in part, related to Access in a volunteer setting.

Assurances could predict Commitment and Trust as well. The more that college volunteers are told that they are valuable to the organization, the more they will feel they have power in the relationship with the organization. College volunteers donate their time and energy to a nonprofit organization to help it accomplish the goal that is important to the organization. The more that college volunteers know that their concerns are taken seriously, the more positive feelings and contributions they would like to provide for this organization. Therefore, when providing channels for college volunteers to express their opinions, nonprofits should also make a genuine effort to offer personal responses to their concerns. This finding is consistent with the literature review that Assurances result in positive outcomes in the nonprofits -college volunteer

relationship. Prior research in the nonprofit literature suggested that annual recognition and being more intentional to meet volunteers' expectations lead to greater retention of volunteers and a more positive experience. These findings seem to link to the result in this study about Assurances.

Networking could only predict Commitment. The more that college volunteers are provided social networking opportunities, the more they will feel it is beneficial to their future career. College students are more in need of labor market credentials than any other segment of the population, so more chances to expand college volunteers' social connects will increase their commitment and desire to stay. This finding provides a new understanding in the literature review that Networking has a positive impact on the relationships between nonprofits and college volunteers. Prior research in regard to offering professional development opportunities, in part, may connect to Networking in volunteer management.

An interesting finding is that Commitment was influenced the most from all three maintenance strategies (Access, Networking and Assurances), while Trust was just impacted by two of the maintenance strategies (Access and Assurances). However, Commitment does not directly influence the future intended behaviors, while Trust does. This could be explained by the facts that college students are in a transition period from students to the labor force, their life circumstances are changing frequently, and it is less possible to commit to longer-term service. But still, Commitment is a key relationship quality outcome generated by college volunteers, and nonprofits should try to cultivate the quality outcome of Commitment in working with college volunteers.

Finally, as suggested by the previous research (Bortree , 2010), this study collected the data of parental involvement with non-profit work. The researcher found that there was a positive relationship between parental involvement with nonprofits and their children's future

volunteer behaviors ($R^2 = .179$, $p < .05$). The more parents get involved with nonprofits, the higher the probability that college volunteers will be interested in volunteering for nonprofits in the future. This finding may help nonprofits to recruit more college volunteers by targeting their parents.

In summary, Access, Networking, and Assurances are important public relations strategies for nonprofits maintaining college volunteers. Nonprofits should try to cultivate sense of commitment with college volunteers, which could increase their future volunteer behaviors. In addition, parents are influencers on their children; parental involvement with nonprofits can impact college volunteers' desire to volunteer in the future.

Chapter 5 - Limitations

Due to limited time and resources, the researcher could not recruit the sample size that is large enough (ideally, 500 participants), and most of the participants were from the Arts and Sciences College at Kansas State University. Therefore, whether the sample could represent the whole of college volunteers in the U.S is questionable. In addition, small sample size may be not able to satisfy some of the regression analysis assumptions, which may harm variables' validity and reliability and increase the risk of Type II error. Future research should recruit a bigger sample size and more participants from various backgrounds to increase the ability to make generalizations in regard to the whole population, and to free from the regression analysis assumptions.

In this research, the reliability scores of the three relationship maintenance strategies (Positivity, Openness, and Shared task) and two relationship quality outcomes (Control Mutuality and satisfaction) were not reliable. One reason for this might be small sample size, which makes it difficult to generalize those items' internal consistency. Another explanation

might be the limited number of items that measured the variables. Future research should balance the length of the questionnaire and items to measure those variables, in order to increase the reliability score.

Using self-reported data is another limitation. Questions in the survey were asked about respondents' religious level and their parental involvement with non-profit work. However, respondents may have found it necessary to guess when answering, because there was no definitional context to better understand their responses. Future research should provide a clear context to each question, to increase the validity of responses.

The researcher here borrowed the organization-public relationship model in applying to the college volunteers' group. College students have their own characteristics, while the organization-public relationship model is targeting the whole population. Therefore, there might be additional maintenance strategies that would impact the nonprofits-college volunteer relationship. Future research could address more issues in the relationship maintenance strategies that are specifically tailored for college volunteers.

Chapter 6 - Implications

For practice

The proposed half model of nonprofits-college volunteer relationship has implications for nonprofit organizations, for college volunteers and for public relations.

For nonprofits, the results suggest ways in which organizations can best engage college volunteers to make the experience as positive as possible. Organizations should provide channels for college volunteers to get in touch with staff members, letting college volunteers know that they are valued by the organization. This finding provides a new understanding to the young adults' literature. This strategy, at least in part, related to prior findings in the nonprofit literature.

In addition, nonprofits should take college volunteers' feedback seriously while also making a genuine effort to offer personal responses to volunteers' concerns. This finding consists with previous literature review that annual recognition and being more intentional to meet volunteers' expectations lead to greater retention of volunteers and a more positive experience. Finally, social networking opportunities seem to be crucial to the relationship. College volunteers are the population segment with the highest need of labor market credentials. Opportunities to expand their social connections will make them desire to stay. This finding provides a new understanding in the literature review. Prior research in regard to offering professional development opportunities, in part, may connect to Networking in volunteer management.

For college volunteers, the results suggest that they will be most pleased with the relationship if they feel committed to the nonprofits. College volunteers should seek out organizations that appreciate their value and performance, and share interests in cooperating with them in a longer relationship.

For public relations, the results suggest that regular communication with college volunteers about their value to the organization appears to be critical to the relationship. Identifying and addressing needs of college volunteers will improve their perceptions of the organization and lead to greater desire to volunteer in the future. This finding is consistent with previous research that nonprofit organizations were able to increase their volunteers' commitment by communicating the importance of the organization's work and the volunteer's contributions to that work (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008; Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, & Darcy 2006). In addition, the model suggests that good practice with college volunteers can be a type of social responsibility. The quality of the relationship with nonprofits influences college volunteers' likelihood to volunteer in the future. Consistent with Walker's (2002) research that not only does

a lifetime of volunteering benefit the individual, it also benefits society through the impact made by volunteers. Finally, as suggested by previous research, this study collected data on parental involvement with non-profit work. The results indicate that parents' involvement with non-profit work could have a great impact on their children's desire to volunteer.

For theory

This study tested the organization-public relationship model proposed and tested by Hon and Grunig (1999), and the results were largely consistent with prior literature reviews. This study also tested the influence of the organization-public relationship on intended behavior, and the results confirmed prior research (Bruning 2002; Ki, 2006; Ki & Hon, 2007).

In addition, this research adds to the literature on relationships between quality outcomes. All three of the relationship maintenance strategies influence the quality outcome of Commitment. But Commitment did not have a direct relationship with volunteer-intended behaviors. This study has found that commitment can predict trust, and trust is a predictor of future behaviors. However, the result is different from previous research (Ki, 2006) that trust predicts commitment. It could be explained that, as college volunteers are in a transition period from students to employees, their life is unstable and they move frequently. They cannot guarantee staying anywhere for long periods of time, not to mention committing to volunteer in a nonprofit organization. However, Commitment is still a powerful relationship quality outcome generated by most of the college volunteers.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

This study presented here tested the application of the organization-public relationship model with college volunteers, and the results were largely consistent with prior literature reviews. Three relationship maintenance strategies of Access, Assurances and Networking could

generate positive quality outcomes (Trust and Commitment), and positive quality outcomes of Trust and Commitment could cultivate a great desire of college students to volunteer in the future. Although Commitment does not have a direct relationship with volunteers' intended behaviors, Commitment can predict trust, and trust is a predictor of future behaviors.

This study employed the first sample survey of college volunteers for the study of a public relations theory, and results have implications for nonprofit organizations, for college volunteers and for public relations. The findings show that theories developed for older adults may also apply to youth, volunteer management strategies that are good for older adults, at least in part, are applicable to college volunteers. In addition, results provide insights about youth relationships and add to the literatures of Networking and Access that are especially useful maintenance strategies in targeting college volunteers. More research in public relations needs to consider young adults as a population segment, which would provide a more thorough understanding of the impact of communication and behavior on the organization-public relationship. Finally, as suggested by the previous research (Bortree, 2010), this study collected the data about respondents' parents' social-economic status, and found that parents' involvement with nonprofits would create a greater desire within college volunteers to join nonprofit works.

However, this study only tested three of the relationship maintenance strategies (Access, Assurances, and Networking) and two of the relationship quality outcomes (Commitment and Trust). The researcher tested the rest of the variables, but due to relatively low reliability scores, those variables were not allowed to be used in further analysis. More research needs to be done in examining the rest of the maintenance strategies and relationship quality outcomes. Another significant find in this study is that relationship quality outcomes could be affected by each other. This study only tested the relationships between two of the quality outcomes (Trust and

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Commitment). Therefore, more research needs to be done in regard to the relationships of the remaining two quality outcomes (Positivity and Satisfaction). In addition, this study on intended behaviors has focused on intention to remain in the same organization. However, due to unstable life circumstances of college volunteers, it is difficult for them to remain in the same nonprofit organization for a life time. Thus, more research needs to be done on the future behaviors that are beyond the scope of one organization-public relationship, but have long-term impacts to college volunteers.

Future research should attempt to draw a truly random sample for data collection. The study presented here used a convenience sample. This data collection approach does limit, to some degree, the ability to generalize the findings. Also, the small sample size may be the reason that caused the lower reliability scores of some variables, and may harm the satisfactions of some regression analysis assumptions.

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Survey Invitation

I am Aobo (Audrey) Dong, a second year graduate student in the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Kansas State University. I am conducting my master's thesis about members' perception and behavioral intentions toward organizations. You have volunteered in a nonprofit organization (i.e., Telefund) in the past twelve months, and you would be my ideal participant. I obtained your email address from Ms. Bethany Plucinik, Administrative Specialist in College of Arts and Sciences, and your response is extremely important and valuable to my research.

The survey should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain completely anonymous. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at dongaobo@ksu.edu or at (785)317-8135.

Please click on the Web address (URL) below to complete and submit the survey at your earliest convenience. All responses are kept confidential.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nonprofit-volunteers_1

This Survey URL is for your use only. It cannot be used by anyone else. If you cannot click on the Web address, please copy the underlined text and paste it into the address field of your Web browser.

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Aobo (Audrey) Dong

Graduate student

A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications

Kansas State University

dongaobo@ksu.edu

(785)317-8135

Survey Cover Letter

Thank you for taking time to answer the questions in this survey, this survey is about members' perception and behavioral intentions toward organizations. This is a thesis research study conducted by a student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Kansas State University. Your answer will be used only for statistical purposes and will remain strictly confidential. You may stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss. Please read instructions and questions carefully.

If you have any questions about the survey questions, please contact Aobo Dong at dongaobo@ksu.edu; or Todd Simon at simont@ksu.edu. If you have any further questions regarding the method or the research procedure, please contact KSU Research Compliance Office at 203 Fairchild Hall, Manhattan KS66502 or by phone at 785-532-3224 or fax at785-532-2378 or by email at comply@ksu.edu

Survey Questionnaire

Please read the sentence below. It serves as the beginning for each question.

In your experiences volunteering for the nonprofit organizations, did the volunteer management

1. _____ provide you with adequate contact information?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

2. _____ provide you with opportunities to meet its staff ?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

3. _____ attempts to make interactions with you enjoyable?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

4. _____ act fairly when handling disagreements with you?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

5. _____ share enough information with you about organization's governance?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

6. _____ use volunteers' meetings as a valuable way for you to communicate your opinions?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

7. _____ work with you to develop solutions to problems that benefit you?

○ Totally disagree

○ Partially Disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Partially Agree

○ Totally Agree

8. _____ work to ensure its volunteers work well together at solving shared problems?

○ Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

9. _____ effectively build coalitions with groups that impact you?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

10. _____ build coalitions with other nonprofit organizations to benefit your organization?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

11. _____ make a genuine effort to provide personal responses to your concerns?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

12. _____act when volunteers raise concerns and take these concerns seriously?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

13. _____ believe that the opinions of volunteers are legitimate?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

14. _____ neglect volunteers?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

15. _____ make volunteers' interactions with the nonprofit organization dissatisfactory.

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

16. _____act when volunteers feel unhappy with the nonprofit organization?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

17. _____ treat volunteers fairly and justly?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

18. _____ mislead volunteers.

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

19. _____ try to maintain a long-term commitment to you?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

20. _____make you feel a sense of loyalty to the nonprofit organization?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

21. _____Will you continue volunteer for your organizations in the years to come?

○Totally disagree

○Partially Disagree

○Neither Agree nor Disagree

○Partially Agree

○Totally Agree

22. _____How much of an effort will you make to volunteer in your organization in the years to come?"

○Not at all

○a little

○Neutral

○somewhat

○Very much

23. Gender: _____Male   _____Female

24. Age: _____

25. Grade:

    _____Freshman

    _____ Sophomore

    _____ Junior

    _____Senior

    _____Graduate student

_____PHD candidate

26. Major: _____

27. How religious are you? (On a scale of 1-7 of 1 being not at all and 7 of being very much)
○Not at all
○a little
○Neutral
○somewhat
○Very much

28. Father's educational level?
○Some high school
○High school diploma
○Some College
○Associates Degree
○Bachelors Degree
○Masters Degree
○Doctorate Degree
○Do not know

29. Mother's educational level
○Some high school
○High school diploma
○Some College
○Associates Degree
○Bachelors Degree
○Masters Degree
○Doctorate Degree

○Do not know

30. What is the frequency for your parents volunteering in the nonprofit organization? (on a scale of 1 – 7 of 1 being never and 7 of very often

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or seldom			Neutral			Very often

Thank you so much for your participation!

Survey Reminder

Hello Guys,

I hope this email may find you well!

 Short time ago I sent you a survey linkage about members' perception and behavioral intentions toward organizations. It is my master's thesis research.

 If you have completed the survey questionnaire and submitted the result, thank you very much for your help! However, if you have not found the time to respond, I have placed the link to the survey questionnaire below. Please take 10 minutes to complete.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/nonprofit-volunteers_1

I appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Aobo (Audrey) Dong

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