

Utilizing the Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of Career Development to Interpret the Volunteer Activities of Retirees

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Introduction

- ❑ This study examines connections between retirees' previous paid work and their volunteer activities at non-profit organizations
- ❑ These insights are valuable for the recruitment, placement and retention of retirees who volunteer in non-profit organizations

- ❑ Some Background Statistics:
 - ❑ Thirty-two percent of people age 65 and older volunteer
 - ❑ Canadian volunteers of all ages contributed almost 2 billion volunteer hours to non-profit organizations
 - ❑ Twenty-five percent of volunteers contribute the most volunteer hours, accounting for 77% of all volunteer hours
 - ❑ Volunteers contributed an average 168 hours to non-profit organizations over the course of the year in 2004, and older volunteers tend to contribute the most average volunteer hours

Statistics Source: (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tyron, 2006)

Rationale

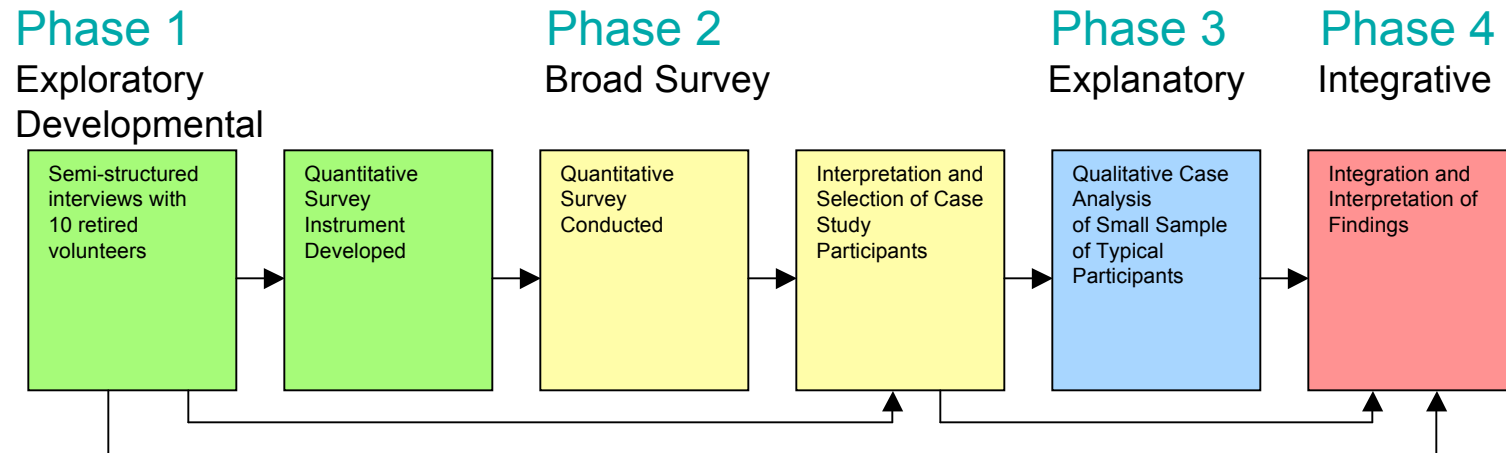
- ❑ Our population is aging:
 - ❑ In Canada, there are more than 4 million people over age 65 (Statistics Canada, 2007)
 - ❑ Between 2001 and 2006, individuals aged 55 to 64 were the fastest growing age group; they number 3.7 million individuals (Statistics Canada, 2007)
 - ❑ Today, an older individual can expect to spend as much as 25 to 30 years in retirement (Stone, 2006) because of longer life expectancies
- ❑ As our population ages, there will be more older people with time to volunteer and retirees' opportunities for development and their ability to pursue fulfilling activities will become increasingly important
- ❑ Gaining a better understanding of the experiences of retirees who volunteer with non-profit organizations is critical because retirees are a growing demographic (Statistics Canada, 2007) and older volunteers are an important resource for non-profits (Canada Volunteerism Initiative, 2005; Foster-Bey, Grimm, & Dietz, 2007)

Research Questions

-  To what extent do retirees use the skills and abilities that they developed through their paid work experiences in their volunteer activities and to what extent do they develop new ones?
-  To what extent do retirees use the knowledge that they developed through their paid work experiences in their volunteer activities and to what extent do they seek to learn new things?
-  To what extent do retirees transfer contextual factors from their paid work and work experiences to their volunteer activities?
-  To what extent do retirees' career self-concepts change from those they developed during their paid-work careers, as they are engaged in later-life volunteer roles?

The theoretical perspectives used in this study are the life-span, life-space theory of career development (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996) and the life course approach (Giele, J. Z. & Elder, G. H., Jr. 1998).

Mixed Method Paradigm



(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003)

Phase I Participants

- ❑ Snowball sampling used
- ❑ Ten interviews with individuals 55 to 72 years of age
- ❑ Retired within the last 6 years
- ❑ Five men, five women
- ❑ Middle class, Caucasian and living in Southern Ontario
- ❑ Retired from blue collar jobs (2) and from professional jobs (8) - health and safety technician (1), maintenance and inventory technician (1), auto sales person (1), teacher (4), principal (1), lawyer (1), computer analyst (1), and nurse (1)
- ❑ Volunteer organization types: social service; arts and cultural; educational; religious; political and environmental

Preliminary Findings

- ❑ The majority of participants felt their skills, abilities and knowledge had been transferred to their volunteer activities. For some this was planned; for others, it just happened. Participants indicated that their skills were not completely transferred to their volunteer activities: 30% to 100% of skills and abilities were transferred
- ❑ Some participants felt contextual factors had been transferred to their volunteer activities
- ❑ All of the participants wanted to continue learning new things, developing new skills and gaining knowledge

Work in Progress

- ❑ The changes in career self-concept
 - ❑ The role of worker is replaced with new roles, leading to a transformation of career self-concept
 - ❑ The development of a new self-concept and its relationship to Erikson's (1974) theory of psychosocial identity development
- ❑ Life themes are visible across each participant's life course
 - ❑ How does this connect to and inform their self-concept during this transition?
- ❑ Continuing work with Phase 1 qualitative data
 - ❑ Phase 1 is developmental and will help inform the survey to be conducted in Phase 2

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