ABSTRACT

The goals of this study are to examine why seniors volunteer and how where they volunteer affects their everyday lives. A group of volunteers from a seniors association in southeastern Ontario are used to investigate how seniors become volunteers, why individuals continue to volunteer at a particular place, what tasks senior volunteers perform, and the number of years and hours seniors volunteer at a particular organization. The study makes use of 23 interviews with volunteers aged 54 to 89. The findings from the interviews were then compared to national data on senior volunteers gathered from the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (CSGVP). The secondary data were used to examine such things as, the tasks senior volunteers perform and the reasons seniors volunteer across Canada. The analysis reveals that the group of volunteers show several similarities to volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada. The interviews show that the specific characteristics of the place influence why seniors volunteer and continue to volunteer at this particular organization. In addition to the characteristics of the place, the interviews disclose the potential to view the seniors centre as a therapeutic landscape, where healing, well-being and maintained health are enhanced.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The population is aging in Canada, as is in many other parts of the world, but instead of viewing seniors as a burden to society, society should look at this segment of the population as a rich source of volunteers (Erlinghagen and Hank, 2006; Warburton, Terry, Rosenman and Shapiro, 2001). Erlinghagen and Hank (2006: 567) importantly note that the discussion surrounding the growing “‘burden of population ageing’ should not neglect the substantial productive potential of older people”. While some seniors, especially those who experience chronic health conditions, may not be able to volunteer, there are still a large number of healthy, viable seniors who are capable and have substantial productive potential. In fact, research (e.g., Fisher and Schaffer, 1993; Shmotkin et al., 2003; Warburton, Terry, Rosenman and Shapiro, 2001; Wheeler, Gorey and Greenblatt, 1998) examines positive trade offs to volunteering among older people. There is no doubt that individuals who receive voluntary services experience the enhancement of emotional, mental, and physical well-being. However, not only do individuals who receive voluntary services experience positive improvements to their health and well-being, but those who provide the voluntary service do as well. For example, those who volunteer were found to have higher self-esteem and rate their health more positively (e.g., Meier and Stutzer, 2004; Shmotkin, Modan and Blumsten, 2003; Wilson and Musick, 1999).

Despite stereotypes that portray seniors as dependent and in a negative light, and the lack of discussion in the academic literature surrounding seniors and volunteer work, I argue that seniors are valuable members of Canadian society. Moreover, I contend that
senior volunteerism in Canada will be significant in providing care and services to an increasing aging population and improve the quality of life for many individuals, not just those receiving the volunteer services.

In the remainder of the thesis, by older adults or seniors, I mean individuals who are 55 years of age or older unless otherwise specified or if I am quoting the work of others who have defined older adults or seniors with alternative age categories.

INVESTIGATING SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

In light of this large untapped pool of potential volunteers, it is important to understand what senior volunteers do and what motivates them to volunteer (Okun and Schultz, 2003). By investigating such avenues, a clearer idea of how to promote volunteer work to seniors and how to create a system that is beneficial and inclusive to everyone can be established. While there are many areas in need of investigation, for my research I examine a group of volunteers from a seniors association in southeastern Ontario in order to investigate how seniors become volunteers, why individuals continue to volunteer at a particular place, what tasks senior volunteers perform, and the number of years and hours seniors volunteer at a particular organization.

Secondary data from the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (CSGVP) are used to examine such things as, the tasks senior volunteers perform and the reasons seniors volunteer across Canada. Then the study makes use of 23 interviews with volunteers aged 54 to 89. The interviews conducted at the Seniors Association – Kingston Region (in the remainder of the thesis I will simply use Seniors Association) and the data extracted from the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering
and Participation are analyzed and compared to examine whether the senior volunteers at the Seniors Association are similar or different to senior volunteers aged 55 and older across Canada. Characteristics of place are also explored to see whether place affects where and why seniors volunteer. To take that one step further, I examine how place and volunteering affect the everyday lives of senior volunteers. In addition to the role of place, this thesis examines the potential to view the seniors’ centre as a therapeutic landscape, where healing, well-being and maintained health are enhanced.

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

There is lots of research conducted on the benefits of volunteering and staying physically, mentally, and socially active as one ages, but less research is conducted on what seniors do as volunteers or what motivates them to volunteer. It is anticipated that the information examined in this thesis will help add to the literature about seniors as volunteers (e.g., what seniors do as volunteers, how seniors become volunteers, and why individuals continue to volunteer at a particular place), place, and therapeutic landscapes. The research uses activity theory, successful aging, and productive aging to explain the importance of older people staying active. Furthermore, this research hopes to promote *productive aging* and shed light on the importance of remaining physically, socially, and mentally fit through one’s life.

In addition to these goals, this thesis investigates volunteerism among seniors in Frontenac Country and determines if senior volunteers from an organization in southeastern Ontario show similarities to senior volunteers across Canada. Furthermore, this thesis establishes a profile of senior volunteers aged 55 and older. In accomplishing
these goals, it is anticipated that this research will help determine why some seniors volunteer, why senior volunteers continue to volunteer, how seniors get involved in volunteering, determine what roles or tasks senior volunteers perform, and illuminate any potential barriers or challenges that seniors may face as volunteers.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The central goal of my research was to investigate and examine why seniors volunteer and how where the place they volunteer affects their everyday lives. Underpinning this goal are the following supporting questions:

1. How did you first become a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
2. Why do you continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association?
3. How long have you been a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
4. What do you do as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
5. Do you face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
6. How many hours do you volunteer per week at the Seniors Association?
7. Do you volunteer anywhere else?
8. How many hours in total do you volunteer per week?

To provide a broader context for the investigation, I also examined the following questions from the wider evaluation project on the Seniors Association:

9. How does the Seniors Association enrich your life?
10. How does the Seniors Association contribute to the quality of life of the community?

**OVERVIEW**

The remainder of the thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter two outlines important literature surrounding seniors as volunteers. This chapter investigates volunteering among seniors, why seniors volunteer, factors affecting involvement, what seniors do, and the health benefits associated with volunteering. Chapter three outlines
important literature surrounding place, health, and therapeutic landscapes. Chapter four describes the methodology, specifically examining the Seniors Association, the wider project that Dr. Mark Rosenberg and I conducted for the Seniors Association in 2007-2008, the research design used for this thesis, and limitations of the thesis. Chapter five extracts data from the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation to examine senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada. The purpose of examining these data is to provide a broader context for understanding the results of the case study of a group of senior volunteers from the Seniors Association. This chapter investigates, for example, what formal volunteer activities senior volunteers do, how older people get involved as volunteers, and how many hours seniors volunteer across Canada. Chapter six is a case study where interviews with senior volunteers from the Seniors Association were conducted. In this chapter, 23 in-depth interviews are explored to discover such things as how seniors first became a volunteer at the Seniors Association, why they continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association, what they do as volunteers, how long they have been volunteers for this particular organization, and if they face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association. Chapter six discusses the key findings of the research, specifically how the 23 senior volunteers interviewed at the Seniors Association fit or do not fit into the wider portrait of senior volunteers aged 55 and over in Canada. This is achieved by comparing the group of 23 senior volunteers at the Seniors Association with the findings from the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation on senior volunteers aged 55 and over in Canada. Furthermore, in chapter six, I am able to combine the results of my fieldwork with the literature on senior volunteers, place, and therapeutic landscapes to explore whether place affects where and
why seniors volunteer, and how place and volunteering affect the everyday lives of senior volunteers. Finally, chapter seven examines what the thesis has accomplished, suggestions for future research, and the importance of organizations like the Seniors Association.
CHAPTER 2
SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

Productive aging and remaining active is becoming increasingly important as the population in Canada, and in many other parts of the world age. As the baby boomers age and extend into their later years of life, the proportion of elderly people in society will expand. In 2007, the population consisted of over 4.4 million seniors (or 13 per cent of the total population) that were 65 years and older (Statistics Canada, 2008). Future projections indicate that in 2031 the elderly population over 65 years of age, will expand to between 8.9 million and 9.4 million, more than doubling the figures in 2007 (Belanger, Martel and Caron-Malenfant, 2005). This expansion in the elderly population will be problematic. As a large portion of the population expands to over 65 years of age, a higher risk for chronic illness will strain Canada’s health care system as demand for care will dramatically increase. However, staying active and being involved in activities that keep one mentally, physically and socially healthy (e.g., volunteering) will help one age successfully and could also help to address the growing demand for eldercare. While productive aging can encompass a variety of activities aside from volunteering, this paper focuses on volunteer work among seniors.

VOLUNTEERING

According to Wilson (2000: 215) the act of volunteering is referred to as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause”. Volunteering can occur within an informal setting, such as a neighbour’s home, within a more formalized setting through charities or nonprofit organizations, or through volunteer
efforts within an organization that is part of the publicly funded health system, such as a hospital (Carr: 2001). While some individuals contribute time and their physical being to volunteering, others donate money as a way to volunteer, essentially substituting money for time. Though both informal and formal volunteering is conducted by senior volunteers, the emphasis of this analysis is on formal volunteering (through an organization) among seniors.

SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

Herzog and Morgan (1992: 196) found that, unlike a decrease in participation with age within the labour force, unpaid productive activities show less of a decrease by age. This finding illustrates that some older adults are willing, and able, to stay involved in productive ways (e.g., through formal and informal volunteering).

Activity theory, successful aging, and productive aging are theoretical frameworks that will be used in this chapter to help explain the importance of volunteering among older adults. Activity theory proposes that “life satisfaction and well-being of the elderly are improved by maintaining social interactions after middle age” (Havighurst et al., 1968 as cited in Kim and Hong, 1998: 149; Herzog et al., 1989). Activity theory examines the effect that volunteering has on the behaviour and attitudes of older individuals (Kim and Hong 1998). Researchers using activity theory argue that volunteering, being socially engaged and remaining active in older age “results in a positive identity and high well-being” (Kart and Longino, 1980 as cited in Luoh and Herzog, 2002; Lemon, Bengston and Peterson, 1972). In addition, various studies (e.g., Glass, Mendes de Leon, Marottoli and Berkman, 1999; Herzog, Franks, Markus, and
Holmberg, 1998) found that participating in activities and being involved can be linked to well-being and decreased mortality rates among seniors. Activity theory promotes the idea of maximum participation, and that seniors should get involved as soon as possible and as much as possible (Hendricks and Cutler, 2004).

Similar to activity theory, successful aging highlights the importance of being involved in productive activities (Herzog and House, 1991; Luoh and Herzog, 2002; Rowe and Kahn, 1998). The idea behind successful aging is that “there is a broad range of psychosocial benefits to be gained by older people maintaining an active profile in society” (Baldock, 2000; Gubrium and Wallace, 1990; Szinovacz, 1992 as cited in Warburton, Terry, Rosenman and Shapiro 2001: 587).

Productive aging proposes similar ideas. Since the mid 1980s productive aging has become increasingly important (Butler, 2002). According to Butler (2002: S323), “productive aging includes voluntary as well as paid contributions to society and, at its most basic, continuing self-care”. There is a consensus among researchers that senior volunteering is a key to aging well, both among individuals who volunteer and society as a whole (Herzog and House, 1991). Since activity theory, productive aging and successful aging are similar to one another, for the purpose of this paper I will use productive aging from this point on to refer back to the importance of these theories.

VOLUNTEERING AMONG SENIORS

Common trends are found amongst various research (e.g., Choi, 2003; Kim and Hong, 1998; Shmotkin, Blumstein and Modan, 2003) where seniors aged 75 years and over are less likely to volunteer, versus younger seniors. The differences between the
various age groups may be a result of an increase in chronic conditions (e.g., mental and physical conditions) as one ages.

There are competing views on how the rate of volunteering among seniors has changed over the years. Some studies indicate that the rate of volunteering by older people has slightly increased and the percentage of elderly involved in volunteering has risen within the last decade or two (e.g., Chambre, 1993: 221; Okun and Michel, 2006: 173; Wilson, 2000: 217). Wilson (2000: 217), for instance, notes “… a “third age” population of healthy elderly is volunteering at higher rates than ever before”. However, other research indicates that the participation of Canadian seniors in volunteer work has remained the same over the last 15 years (e.g., Narushima, 2005: 567). As Statistics Canada (2001) notes individuals aged 65 years of age or more are a minority of the volunteers and that volunteer rates amongst this group was 18 per cent in 2000, which has remained the same since 1986. Therefore, volunteer rates among seniors are thought to be either rising or remaining stable, but no studies indicate that volunteer rates among seniors is decreasing or falling.

While there does not seem to be a consensus on whether the number of senior volunteers has risen over the past decade or two, there is a consensus among authors (e.g., Gallagher, 1994; Jones, 1999) that senior volunteers provide more hours of volunteer work than do younger age groups. As Jones (1999) found, the average number of hours volunteered increases with age. Statistics Canada (2001 as cited in Narushima, 2005: 568) reveals that in 2000, senior volunteers contributed an average of 269 hours, compared to 162 hours for other age groups. In addition to providing more volunteer hours, Narushima (2005: 574) found that “the average duration of an older volunteers’
involvement was longer (more than three years) than that of younger volunteers (three months to one year)”. Seniors may volunteer more hours and for longer periods of time due to an increase in free time available to many older people (Jones, 1999). Therefore, while the percentage of senior volunteers may be lower, the duration of involvement and the number of volunteer hours performed by older people is much greater than for any other age group.

**WHY SENIORS VOLUNTEER**

There are various reasons why individuals volunteer, which include but are not limited to, completing enough volunteer hours to graduate high school, to help others, to gain experience in a particular field, or to build networks for social support or employment opportunity. Motivation to volunteer can often be broken into two areas: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is when an individual primarily volunteers in order to help others, having altruistic motives. An individual who volunteers for intrinsic reasons will “receive an internal reward as a direct result of their activity and/or from the outcome of the volunteer work they do” (Meier and Stutzer, 2004: 4). Motivation to volunteer is derived from the enjoyment of helping out others and no other “material” reward is expected (Meier and Stutzer, 2004).

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, individuals who volunteer for extrinsic reasons primarily do so in order to receive something in return. Individuals with extrinsic motivation do not necessarily enjoy volunteering or volunteer to help others, but volunteer in order to receive something in return for their volunteer work (Meier and
Stutzer, 2004). For example, women who have been out of the labour market while giving birth or raising children may volunteer as a re-entrance strategy (Schram and Dunsing, 1981). People who volunteer for extrinsic reasons may also volunteer because community service is a prerequisite for a particular position in a firm, or volunteer to develop social contacts, which are of value in establishing business contacts or achieving employment (Meier and Stutzer, 2004). Individuals who volunteer for extrinsic reasons see helping others as secondary and see “volunteering as an investment and expect external benefits or payoffs” (Meier and Stutzer, 2004: 5).

According to much of the research on why older people volunteer, it appears that senior volunteers have both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to volunteering. For example, one study conducted by Smith and Gay (2005) found that “keeping the brain active”, the “concurrent dread of indiscriminate telly watching” and “feeling good” was important to senior volunteers and the most frequently mentioned motives for volunteering. These reasons are considered extrinsic motivators. However, when discussing the senior volunteers in their study, Smith and Gay (2005: 7) further noted that “most of the sample mentioned their desire to help others and to affirm caring and compassion, which volunteering allowed them to do”. As a result, it appeared that the volunteers in this study displayed both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to volunteer. In another study conducted by Narushima (2005), almost all (95%) volunteers wanted “to help a cause they believed in,” 81 per cent volunteered “to put their skills and experience to use”, 69 per cent “to be personally affected by the cause the organization supports,” and 57 per cent volunteered in order to “explore their own strength”. Therefore, it appears that senior volunteers have mainly intrinsic motives but sometimes there are also
extrinsic motives as to why they volunteer, and the reasons for volunteering differ from
one individual to the next. Interestingly, studies (e.g., McAdams, de St.Aubin and
Logan, 1993) have discovered that older adults demonstrate more concern and altruism
than do individuals in younger generations.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

In addition to exploring what motivates seniors to volunteer, it is also important to
examine how seniors get involved in volunteering. Examining what motivates seniors to
volunteer is useful to discovering what recruitment strategies are successful (Jones, 1999:
12). Discovering what motivates seniors to volunteer and successful recruitment
strategies help organizations or individuals reach out to seniors and get them involved.

In a study conducted by Smith and Gay (2005: 13) it was discovered “that word
of mouth is one of the most effective means of engaging all people, including older
people, in volunteering”. Interestingly, studies (e.g., Davis Smith, 1992; Fischer, Mueller
and Cooper, 1991 as cited in Warburton, Terry, Rosenman and Shapiro, 2001) have
found that older people who indicated they do not volunteer said it was because no one
asked them to. Therefore, older adults who volunteer can play an important role in the
recruitment of other senior volunteers by spreading the word about volunteer
opportunities. In addition to asking individuals to volunteer or recruiting individuals
through word of mouth, another successful measure used to recruit older individuals to
volunteer was placing advertisements in local newspapers or newsletters (Smith and Gay,
2005). By indentifying and using these recruitment strategies, it may help increase the
number of seniors who volunteer.
CHARACTERISTICS/FACTORS AFFECTING INVOLVEMENT

Various researchers (e.g., Chambre, 1993; Jones, 1999; Okun and Michel, 2006) discuss a range of socioeconomic and demographic factors that affect the involvement of seniors in volunteer work. The most common factor discussed amongst research affecting the involvement of seniors in volunteer work is education. Research suggests that the likelihood of volunteering among seniors increases as formal education increases (Chambre, 1993; Jones, 1999; Keith, 2003; Okun and Michel, 2006). Other factors affecting the increased involvement of seniors in volunteer work include: organizational ties, church attendance, and generative concern (Okun and Michel, 2006), occupational status (Keith, 2003), employment (especially part-time work) (Choi, 2003; Keith, 2003; Warburton et al., 2001), good health, high household incomes (Chambre, 1993; Choi, 2003; Jones, 1999; Keith, 2003; Warburton et al., 2001), large social networks (Choi, 2003; Warburton et al., 2001), a past history of volunteering (Choi, 2003; Warburton et al., 2001), and individuals having fewer children and experiencing longer periods of retirement (Chambre, 1993).

Today, seniors are experiencing more free time from work and a decrease in family obligation. Sex and marital status made little difference to participation rates among senior volunteers in a study conducted by Jones (1999); however, other research found that older volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to be married (Choi, 2003; Warburton et al., 2001). It is also important to note that some studies do not take into account the prevalence of informal volunteering (e.g., helping out a neighbour with shopping).
In addition to these factors, “psychological factors in the volunteer experience affect whether or not a person becomes a committed volunteer; that is, the way a volunteer feels about his or her experience affects whether or not the person remains committed” (Fischer and Schaffer, 1993: 106). The psychological factors that Fischer and Schaffer (1993: 106) examined include “feelings of competence, job satisfaction, and ideological congruence”. To further support this idea, Okun’s (1994) study of American seniors found that “… when compared to others, those who chose ‘feeling useful or productive’ as the main reason [for volunteering] were over four times more likely to volunteer two or more times a month” (cited in Narushima, 2005: 570). Therefore, if an individual experiences positive psychological factors then they are likely to volunteer more often and remain at the same organization for a longer period of time.

**WHAT SENIOR VOLUNTEERS DO**

We have examined what motivates seniors to volunteer, successful recruitment strategies and factors affecting involvement, but what exactly do senior volunteers do? Smith and Gay (2005) provide a useful table consisting of tasks carried out by senior volunteers (see table 2.1). This table provides a summary and a wide spectrum of tasks and activities done by seniors as volunteers according to Smith and Gay (2005).
Table 2.1: Tasks carried out by senior volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Photocopying, filing, envelope stuffing, reception desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Befriending</td>
<td>Visiting isolated people, supporting caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and advice giving</td>
<td>Providing information, advice and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical tasks</td>
<td>Small works, gardening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare/therapy-type tasks</td>
<td>Talking to patients, members providing services for fellow clients and fellow members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusteeship</td>
<td>Serving on boards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smith and Gay (2005, p. 19)

Jones (1999: 16) found that “formal volunteers were most likely to be involved in activities that made good use of their experience: organizing or supervising events, sitting on boards, and canvassing, campaigning or fundraising”. In addition to past experience, what a senior volunteer does also depends on their physical and mental ability. It is also important to note that volunteers may have more than one role, “for example, helping with administration, speaking at meetings and traveling worldwide on behalf of the charity” (Smith and Gay, 2005: 19). Overall, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what seniors do for volunteer work. Senior volunteers participate at different degrees, at various organizations and do a range of tasks.
VOLUNTEERING AND HEALTH BENEFITS (WELL-BEING)

Volunteering contributes to the well-being of the individuals receiving the volunteer services, volunteers themselves, families, and communities. Volunteers significantly contribute to society by, for example, donating time and delivering health services. It is apparent that recipients of volunteer services are positively affected by the enhancement of social, mental, emotional, physical and material support; however, the focus for this discussion will be on the effects volunteering has on those who provide the services, specifically the elderly. Not only is the health of those receiving voluntary services positively affected, but the very act of volunteering itself is important to, and enhances, one’s health. One’s well-being is positively affected for those who engage in volunteer work, regardless of life circumstances, age, reason or motivation behind why one volunteers. For example, health may be affected intrinsically by receiving an internal reward for helping others’ or extrinsically by gaining experience and skills. Whatever the reason may be for when or why one chooses to volunteer the act of volunteering positively affects an individuals’ well-being.

Many studies have been conducted that explore the benefits of volunteering on older adults and seniors (e.g., Fischer and Schaffer, 1993; Shmotkin et al., 2003; Wheeler, Gorey and Greenblatt, 1998). Fischer and Schaffer (1993: 184) point out that volunteering may be especially important for seniors as “…old age brings a number of hazards: an accumulation of chronic conditions (ranging from heart disease to impaired vision and hearing), a special vulnerability to acute illnesses, a steeply rising risk of dying, and inevitable experiences of loss as spouses, siblings, friends, and other peers die”.

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Volunteering among the elderly can play an important role in maintaining good physical and mental health of an aging individual by remaining socially involved and engaged in meaningful activities. Volunteering, like other common activities, such as physical or social activities and having a hobby, shares adaptive features such as physical and mental vitality, purposeful behaviours, sense of control, and social involvement (Fischer and Schaffer, 1993; Shmotkin, Modan and Blumstein, 2003). Therefore, volunteering may help to counteract some of the hazards that come with old age; resulting in individuals leading a happier and healthier life.

Volunteers experience a range of benefits from volunteering. Individuals, who volunteer, benefit by improving their skills (e.g., interpersonal skills and communication skills), participating in an activity that promotes healthy aging, increasing their knowledge about issues related to their voluntary work, and gaining employment experience (Hall, McKeown and Roberts, 2001; Health Canada, 2003). In addition, there are several studies (e.g., see Graff, 1991; Luoh and Herzog, 2002; Meier and Stutzer, 2004; Musick, Herzog and House, 1999; Oman, Thoresen and McMahon, 1999; Rowe and Kahn, 1997; Van Willigan, 2000; Wilson, 2000; Wilson and Musick, 1999) that illustrate a positive relationship between volunteering and enhanced life satisfaction, self-esteem, self-rated health, and protective mortality effects.

Research shows that those who volunteer are less prone to depression (Wilson and Musick, 1999), are more likely to report high life satisfaction (Meier and Stutzer, 2004; Shmotkin, Modan and Blumstein, 2003), have reduced heart rates and blood pressure, enhanced immune systems, increased endorphin production, and volunteering helps overcome social isolation (Graff, 1991). Shmotkin, Modan and Blumstein (2003: 602)
also discovered that volunteers “are better on all other functioning markers: they were less impaired cognitively, had fewer depressive symptoms, had more close relationships, and evaluated their lives more positively”. Furthermore, research conducted by Newman, Vasudev and Onawola (1985) found volunteer experiences among older volunteers provided structure in seniors’ lives, and helped them to overcome personal trauma. It is clear that volunteering and remaining active in the community as one ages can assist with productive aging, both physically and mentally, and improve coping strategies when faced with trauma. Smith and Gay (2005: 22) discovered that most of the seniors involved in their study agreed “that the good effect [of volunteering] were most often in keeping the mind active, meeting people on a regular basis and getting out of the house, especially for those experiencing the death of a spouse after a lifetime together”. These are just a sample of the numerous health benefits that individuals who engage in volunteering experience.

In addition to research that has discovered that volunteering can enhance life satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-rated health, research has also found that the act of volunteering can have protective mortality effects. Various studies (e.g., Luoh and Herzog, 2002; Thoits and Hewitt, 2001) indicate that participating in more than 100 annual hours of volunteer work have protective effects against poor health and death. Musick, Herzog and House (1999) and Oman, Thoresen and McMahon (1999) even report that volunteering has protective mortality effects for older adults by providing an opportunity for social integration and active living. Volunteer work, therefore, does not only add to an individual’s quality of life through socializing and feeling as though they are part of the community, but research shows that it can lengthen one’s life.
To emphasize the importance of volunteering on health, Meier and Stutzer (2004) further illustrate in their research that individuals who have never volunteered reported the lowest scores of life satisfaction. Meier and Stutzer’s study supports not only the notion that “volunteering influences happiness but also that evidence is presented for reverse causation: happy people are more likely to volunteer” (Meier and Stutzer, 2004: 20). Volunteering creates a positive cycle, improving health among individuals, families and communities within society. As individuals volunteer and improve health and happiness, they in return volunteer more, which further contributes to greater personal health and social well-being within society. As individuals become socially, mentally, emotionally, and physically healthier, less demand and stress is placed on society. The engagement in activity remains a significant well-being predictor in gerontology and correlates with successful aging (Rowe and Kahn, 1997).
CHAPTER 3
PLACE, HEALTH AND THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES

In this chapter, place, health and therapeutic landscapes are examined. The reason they are examined is to explore how volunteering and the Seniors Association are tied to productive aging, and why seniors volunteer and continue to volunteer at a particular organization. Furthermore, examining these concepts helps us to understand how the Seniors Association affects the everyday lives of the senior volunteers.

SPACE/LANDSCAPE

‘Space’ and ‘landscape’ are two concepts that often appear alongside ‘place’ in the literature. In comparison to place, space is considered to be “a more abstract concept… Spaces have areas and volume” (Cresswell, 2004: 8). Space also differs from place in that it has been seen as a realm without meaning (Cresswell, 2004). What starts off as space without meaning, “becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value… The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition” (Cresswell, 2004: 8). When an individual spends time in a particular space and becomes attached to the space (positively or negatively) then that space becomes a place. For example, naming a space is one way to give it meaning and have it become place (Cresswell, 2004). Cresswell (2004: 8) further notes, “if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Cresswell, 2004: 8).

In addition to ‘space’, ‘landscape’ is another concept that appears alongside ‘place’ in the literature. Landscape differs from place in that “landscape refers to the
shape – the material topography of land” and “in most definitions of landscape the viewer is outside of it” (Cresswell, 2004: 10-11). In contrast to this idea of landscape, ‘places’ can be imaginative and emotional, and are “very much things to be inside of” (Cresswell, 2004: 10). Similar to the idea that space can become place once one assigns value to it, landscape can also become place when it is given meaning. Within the literature, landscape is not only referred to as the physical and built environment, but also as “a product of the human mind, and of material circumstances” (Gesler, 1992: 743). When discussing the concept ‘landscape’, a combination of physical features, and the imprint of the human mind and human activity are often included, raising the thought that landscape can be affected by an individual person or society as a whole. Similar to the idea of ‘place,’ ‘landscape’ can also hold various meanings and uses from one person to the next. For example, what ‘landscape’ means to an artist may be different than what it means to a planner (Gesler, 1992: 736). Landscape reveals human values and meaning, and is associated with sense of place and imbued with symbolic meaning (Gesler, 1992).

PLACE

Place has a variety of definitions. One straightforward definition provided by Cresswell (2004: 7) states that place is “a meaningful location”. Sime (1986: 54) states, the term place “extends the focus of attention beyond geographic space to the experience people have of being in particular landscape environments”. The meaning of place goes beyond the physical landscape or structure to incorporate imaginative and emotional ties as well. The term place is often used “to refer to the significance of particular places for people” (Rose, 1995: 88). Knox, Marston and Nash (2007: 42) further explain how the
concept of place has two levels of meaning: “(1) an objective location that has both uniqueness and interdependence with other places; (2) a subjective social and cultural construct – somewhere that has personal meaning for individuals or groups”. To break down the concept of place further, John Agnew (1987, as cited in Castree, 2003: 167) identifies three principal meanings of place in geographical discourse.

1. Place as location – a specific point on the earth’s surface
2. A sense of place – the subjective feelings people have about places, including the role of place in their individual and group identity
3. Place as locale – a setting and scale for people’s daily actions and interactions

While John Agnew’s work is dated, his three principal meanings of place are still frequently used today by several authors (e.g., Castree, 2003; Cresswell, 2004). In addition to John Agnew, research conducted by Yi-Fu Tuan is also prominent among literature surrounding the concept of place. When discussing place, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974; as cited in Manzo 2003: 49) claims, “what begins as undifferentiated ‘space’ evolves into ‘place’ as we come to know it better and endow it with value”. This illustrates that it is individuals within particular spaces that generate the meaning surrounding the concept of place. Knox et al. (2007: 42) further explain, “[our] lives in the world inevitably make certain small parts of that world unique and meaningful to us as individuals”. Different places in the world are often unique to various individuals and the meanings of these places often vary from one individual to the next. Therefore, the meaning and construction of place is subjective.

People all over the world are engaged in place (e.g., homeowners redecorate, build additions, and manicure the lawn and in the process of doing so create places) (Cresswell, 2004). Places are “dynamic, with changing properties and fluid boundaries
that are the product of interplay of a wide variety of environmental and human factors” (Knox et al., 2007: 3). Places are constantly “being made, maintained and contested” (Cresswell, 2004: 5), where “[place] making is always incomplete and ongoing, and it occurs simultaneously at different scales” (Knox et al., 2007: 6).

Places can “exert a strong influence, for better or worse, on people’s physical well-being, their opportunities, and their lifestyle choices” (Knox et al., 2007: 3). They can “contribute to people’s collective memory and become powerful emotional and cultural symbols” (Knox et al., 2007: 3). Places can acquire emotional or cultural value because of the “buildings, events, people, histories or myths, and images” that individuals associate with or are connected to (Knox et al., 2007: 4). Through place we see relationships, experience, and attachments.

Place can be created when people impose themselves on an environment by living and/or working, where they modify and adjust their surroundings to meet their needs and express their values (Knox et al., 2007). While people create and modify places, they can also be influenced by the settings in which they live and work; it is a two-way process (Knox et al., 2007). Places often “provide meaning for people in many different ways: through identity and feelings of security, as settings for family life and employment, as locales for aesthetic experience” (Gesler, 1992: 738).

**SENSE OF PLACE**

Sense of place is a term used by geographers, and others from various disciplines, “when they want to emphasize that places are significant because they are the focus of personal feelings” (Rose, 1995: 88). As Kearns (1993: 140) notes “…the ‘sense of place’ concept describes the consciousness people have of places holding a special significance
for them”. This concept incorporates how individuals and groups interpret and develop meaningful attachments to specific places where they live out their lives and of places or areas that hold special significance for them (Castree, 2003; Kearns, 1993). As Castree (2003: 177) explains, “you will have a highly personal sense of place that’s bound up with specific events in your life, involving not just your perception of place(s) but your feelings about place(s)”. The feelings and emotions that are tied to a particular place are just as important and real as the material and physical structure of place (Castree, 2003). Therefore, the term ‘sense of place’ describes the emotion, value, importance, and meaning that an individual gives to a place they have experienced over time or that holds a special significance to them.

A sense of place can be very personal; however, it can extend beyond just one person’s meaning and feelings for a place. These feelings can also be social where “such feelings and meanings are shaped in large part by the social, cultural and economic circumstances in which individuals find themselves” (Rose, 1995: 89). Therefore, how we identify with place and give place meaning is not just a result of subjective experience but influenced by other external forces as well.

It is interesting to note that while a ‘sense of place’ can exist among individuals for a particular space, “place attachment and identities that people can and do develop” vary from one individual to the next for the same place (Castree, 2003: 178). For example, one individual may feel in-place and attached to a certain place, while another individual may feel displaced and unattached in the exact same place. Furthermore, one’s sense of place can transform and develop over time for the same place. Individuals may originally be indifferent or have negative connotations towards a place, but after
spending time in a particular place and experiencing place over time, one may begin to have a strong positive sense of place, and vice versa. Having a strong positive sense of place for an experienced place can result in therapeutic effects on an individual’s behaviour and attitude (Jackson, 1989 as cited in Williams, 1998).

PLACE AND HEALTH

The relationship between people and elements of their environment has a profound importance to health (Kearns, 1993). Jackson (1989: 13, as cited in Williams, 1998: 1199) states “a positive sense of place is strongly associated with a healing environment, as it is deeply relevant to the basic need for internal cohesion, mental health, a sense of security and direction, and a feeling of relationship with the world around one”. For instance, feeling an attachment to place or “rootedness” is of great importance to one’s health, specifically their psychological health (Gesler: 1992). Places have the potential to satisfy a “basic human need for roots”, where the potential for places to satisfy the basic need for roots grows as the links between people and place strengthens (Kearns, 1993: 140). Psychological rootedness, for example, can be “achieved through a long-standing and possibly ongoing relationship with a certain place” (Williams, 1998: 1198). Gesler (1992) discusses the importance of feeling secure and identifying with places, which are characteristics of psychological rootedness (Williams: 1998).

It is important to note that thus far place has generally been discussed within a positive context. However, place can equally be that “which individuals singly or collectively would like to actively avoid if they could” (Sime, 1986: 50). In addition,
there can be “people without place” (homeless/refugees) or people may feel “out of place” (gays/lesbians) (Cresswell, 2004).

**THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES**

Therapeutic landscapes are places that have “reputations for providing physical, mental, and spiritual healing” (Kearns and Gesler, 1998: 8). During earlier times, the concept of therapeutic landscapes primarily applied to places that were known to heal (e.g., health spas); however, research (e.g., Gesler, 1992; Williams, 1998; Williams 1999) has extended this idea to include places that promote well-being and maintain health (Gesler, 2005: 295). Therefore, in addition to places that heal, therapeutic landscapes are considered to be places that promote and maintain health and well-being. Williams (1998: 1193) argues that “[t]herapeutic landscapes are those changing places, settings, situations, locales, and milieus that encompass both the physical and psychological environments associated with treatment or healing, and the maintenance of health and well-being”. In addition to healing elements from the physical environment, social and psychological elements of the environment play an important role in therapeutic landscapes. For example, as discussed above, feeling psychologically rooted and having a positive sense of place is associated with a healing environment and affects one’s health.

While places can be healing to some, these places are not considered therapeutic to all. David Conradson (2005) points out how settings are not intrinsically therapeutic; rather, they are experienced in very different ways by different people. What is thought to be therapeutic, or perceived to be a therapeutic landscape, can vary from one person to
the next, as well as over time and place, illustrating that that the “idea of therapeutic landscape is context dependent” (Gesler, 2005: 296).

When discussing therapeutic landscapes it is important to discuss what this concept encompasses. Among the growing body of literature surrounding therapeutic landscapes, Smyth (2005: 490) explains, “attention has been paid to the location, internal design and architecture of therapeutic spaces (physical landscapes), to the people interacting within these settings (social landscapes) as well as to elements of the symbolic landscapes (objects, artifacts and language) within these spaces”. Since therapeutic landscapes are context dependent, what contributes to particular therapeutic landscapes varies over time and space, and from one individual to the next. However, some common features are thought to exist, for example, “natural characteristics [such as] magnificent scenery, water, and trees; human constructions such as healing temples or spa baths; contributions to sense of place such as feelings of warmth, identity, rootedness, or authenticity; symbolic features such as healing myths; the incorporation of familiar, daily routines into the treatment process; sensitivity to cultural beliefs; and an atmosphere in which social distance and social inequalities are kept to a minimum” (Kearns and Gesler, 1998: 8).

Kearns and Gesler (1998: 7) interestingly discuss the idea that landscape can be just as much as what is included as is excluded, noting that this idea is “important in developing the connection between landscape and health, for people can believe a place to be healthy when, from their perspective, there is simply an absence of unhealthy elements”. For instance, a landscape may be seen as healthy simply because there is an absence of disease.
THERAPEUTIC NETWORKS

Therapeutic networks often incorporate “kinship groups and networks of care provided by family, friends, therapists and other agents of support” (Smyth, 2005: 489). Essentially, they have to do with the people that populate the places where seniors volunteer. Therapeutic networks provide individuals with a way to “gain support and care”, which is “often outside the biomedical tradition” (Smyth, 2005: 489). As Smyth (2005: 493) further points out lines between biomedical and alternative medicines are being blurred. As medicines, methods and other spaces in health care become increasingly blurred “new opportunities arise for us to explore new spaces of health care that may help us to understand better the relationships between health and place that can be used in positive ways to develop therapeutic places that actively promote health and well-being” (Milligan et al., 2004: 1790). Elements that may not necessarily fall under western medicine are sometimes just as important to the health of individuals as those elements that do fall under western medicine. Being socially and physically active, as discussed in chapter 3, can have substantial positive effects on self-esteem, self-rated health, reduced mortality rates, and on various other elements of health. Similar to Kearns and Gesler’s (1998) idea that therapeutic landscapes can be just as much inclusive as exclusive, Smyth (2005: 493) notes that therapeutic networks can be just as exclusionary as inclusionary.

The concepts discussed in this chapter will be used to help explore the nature of place and the therapeutic potential of the Seniors Association. Through the analysis of the in-depth interviews this thesis discusses the importance of place, examining why seniors volunteer and continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association, and how where
they volunteer affects their everyday life. In addition to the importance of place, this thesis explored the potential to view the seniors centre as a therapeutic landscape, where healing, well-being and maintained health are enhanced.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

Voluntary organizations are located within the voluntary sector and “help to organize voluntary action and volunteers to: further a common public goal, provide services, give support and resources, and engage in dialogue and action” (Health Canada, 1999: iv). According to Health Canada (1999: iv) voluntary organizations:

- do not seek profit as an end in itself;
- are accountable to constituencies or members through democratic governing structures and sometimes legal frameworks;
- encompass national, provincial or territorial, regional, local, and citizens' organizations;
- may have a financial relationship with governments, the private sector and citizens, for which they are accountable, but are primarily autonomous and independent.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada (2004: 1), “voluntary health organizations work to improve lives by enhancing the social, mental, emotional, physical and material well-being of Canadians”. This is achieved through health promotion, prevention, protection and participation directly through service delivery, public and professional education, research, policy development and public involvement (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004).

Through the voluntary health sector, a wide range of issues are addressed. For example, problems surrounding environment, fitness, active living, health protection, human rights, illness and chronic disease, international health, social development, research, policy, and safety and injury prevention (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004). In addition to addressing pressing health issues, the voluntary health sector
reaches out to vulnerable populations that are in need of assistance. This sector is active within a variety of population groups such as: adolescents/youth, children, Aboriginal people, families, consumers, ethnic and cultural groups, persons with disabilities, seniors, and women (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2004). The voluntary health sector is at the forefront of addressing prominent health concerns, and helps to represent and bring aid to populations who are in need of assistance that otherwise may not have the opportunity to voice their needs and desires. In particular, as the population ages the demand to address issues facing seniors continues to increase. Various voluntary organizations are present within Frontenac-Kingston area that exists for seniors and some are even led by seniors (e.g., the Council on Aging and the Seniors Association). The Seniors Association is the largest seniors association in Kingston, but it is not the only one that is dedicated to advocating and providing services for seniors.

SENIORS ASSOCIATION – KINGSTON REGION

The Seniors Association is a non-profit, charitable organization that has been serving seniors in the Greater Kingston area for over 30 years (Seniors Association, 2008). It has been located at 56 Francis Street, Kingston, Ontario since 2001. Prior to its current location, it operated out of Artillery Park in downtown Kingston, Ontario (Seniors Association, 2008). Its mission statement is: “Enhancing the quality of life for seniors throughout our community”.

The Seniors Association offers over 100 different programs and activities throughout the year to its members and non-members (Seniors Association, 2008). Some of the programs and activities offered include, but are not limited to: language classes;
computer courses; multicultural events; art classes; woodworking; monthly dances; day and extended trips; the Rendez-vous Café; Hatters Cove restaurant; the *Vista* newsletter; exercise classes; and table tennis. In addition to a wide variety of programs and activities, the Seniors Association also offers a variety of services to seniors throughout the Greater Kingston region. These services include: medical drives, a frozen food program, counseling, expert advice, referral services, general information, and foot care (Seniors Association, 2008).

Geographically, its members come from the greater Kingston Region and now number approximately 5,000. Members are demographically seniors. There, however, are no formal geographic or demographic definitions used to define membership. The Seniors Association operates with revenue primarily from the membership of its 5,000 members, program and service fees, fundraising, and some support from municipal and provincial governments (Seniors Association, 2008). According to the 2005 Annual Report, approximately 70 per cent of the funds are self-generated and the remainder comes from grants from the City of Kingston and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care. The Seniors Association is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, operated by a small team of employees, and assisted by approximately 650 volunteers (Seniors Association, 2008).

**SENIORS ASSOCIATION – WIDER PROJECT**

The 23 interviews used for this study were only a small component of a larger project conducted for the Seniors Association led by Dr. Mark Rosenberg. The Seniors Association requested that a broad evaluation be carried out of the current situation in
which the Seniors Association finds itself and what future issues it needs to consider as it goes forward in the longer-term. The three goals that guided the research and the wider report for the Seniors Association were:

1. the identification and evaluation of how the Seniors Association contributes to the quality of life of its members and the community,

2. the identification of the current advantages of the Seniors Association with respect to the structure and operation of the facility, transportation, programs and services; and

3. suggestions for new directions and plans for the future that builds on the Seniors Association’s current advantages.

In order to accomplish these goals, the study took a multi-perspective and multi-method approach. By multi-perspective, we meant that we sought the views of four key groups: the board members, members, volunteers and non-members. It is important to note that while these four groups were examined we also need to recognize that people play multiple roles in the Seniors Association (e.g., one can be a volunteer and participate in one of the programs as a member); that many members’ connection to the Seniors Association is only through their receipt of Vista, the newsletter of the Seniors Association; and that non-members can take advantage of the Seniors Association in various ways (e.g., using the Rendezvous café or seeking information). By multi-methods, we meant the use of various methods to seek the views of the four key groups. A structured-interview approach was used where a set of questions was developed for each group and each person interviewed from a group was asked the same questions, but some questions differed depending on if the person identified themselves as a volunteer (see Appendix A). Volunteers were asked an additional set of questions in order to investigate how seniors become volunteers, why individuals continue to volunteer at the
Seniors Association, what tasks senior volunteers perform, and the number of years and hours seniors volunteer at the Seniors Association.

The additional questions asked of volunteers were specifically designed for the thesis and were not included in the report done for the Seniors Association. This was done with the agreement of the Seniors Association to draw a distinct division between the evaluation project led by Dr. Rosenberg where ongoing consultation with the committee of the Seniors Association was part of the process and my thesis which was completely independent of the process and does not represent anyone else’s views, but my own.

In addition, to seek a broader sampling of the members for the evaluation project, a questionnaire was designed based on the interviews and inserted into the November 2007 issue of *Vista* with a return, postage paid envelope (see Appendix B).

All research protocols and data collection instruments were submitted to, and approved by, the Queen’s University Ethics Board. For the *Vista* Survey, the postage paid envelopes containing the questionnaires were forwarded unopened to Dr. Mark Rosenberg’s office at Queen’s University. Ultimately, 375 questionnaires were entered into a password-protected database and were used for analysis in the final report provided to the Seniors Association. For the purpose of this thesis, the questionnaires will not be included, only questions from the in-depth interviews on volunteers will be explored.

To capture the perspectives of the board members, volunteers, and members, a “purposive” non-random sampling procedure was used to select interviewees. In essence, the research team (RT) wanted to interview as many members of the board and a selection of regular members and volunteers who were willing to be interviewed. In
addition to this purposeful selection, all of the interviews were carried out at the centre, which resulted in a small number of non-members being interviewed. In the public areas of the Seniors Association Centre on Francis Street (i.e., the coffee shop and foyer), people using the centre were discreetly approached and asked whether they were interested in participating in the Kingston Seniors Association Centre Evaluation Project. The nature of the project was explained to them in general terms and they were asked whether they would like to book an appointment to be interviewed. If they agreed, a day and time was booked and the place in the Centre where the interviews took place was identified. They were given a letter of information (see Appendix C) and a consent form (see Appendix D) to bring with them to the interview. Both the letter of information and consent form included telephone numbers that they could call to cancel the interview should they change their minds. In Appendix E, the profile of the interviewees is summarized. Appendix F summarizes the profile of the volunteer interviewees, which is discussed in further detail in chapter six. The number of interviews carried out was 38. Interviews lasted anywhere from 5 minutes to 51 minutes with an average interview time of 20 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed into electronic files for analysis. The audio recordings and the transcriptions are electronic digital files that can only be accessed by the RT and are password protected on a secure computer.

In theory, the sample of volunteers was originally defined as all board members and a random sample of volunteers that work at the centre. The sample is drawn from 10 board members and approximately 650 volunteers that give their time to the centre’s activities. For the purpose of this research, 9 board members and 14 volunteers were interviewed. In sum, 23 volunteer interviews are used in the thesis. Results from the
interviews with the board of directors, members, and non-members, and the *Vista* survey are not included in this survey, but can be found in the report prepared for the Seniors Association either through a request to Dr. Mark Rosenberg or the Seniors Association.

**METHODS**

Qualitative techniques are the key methods used in my research. Individuals who use “qualitative methods do so because they [wish to] seek an understanding of human beliefs, values, and actions, and they do so from the standpoint of an equal partnership between the researcher and the researched” (Gatrell 2002: 78). Qualitative methods break from statistical analysis and meta-narratives to incorporate feelings and human agency. A quantitative component is also incorporated into the thesis to examine senior volunteers across Canada by using the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). The use of the CSGVP is discussed in detail in chapter five.

*Methods of collection*

In-depth interviews were used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of why seniors volunteer, why they continue to volunteer, and what barriers they face. In-depth interviews give the interviewee more scope to describe and explain their own experiences, perhaps raising issues that have not occurred to the interviewer (Gatrell, 2002). As Gatrell (2002: 79) argues, this “approach is avowedly subjective, treating those being interviewed as people whose values, beliefs, and feelings are to be respected and valued as legitimate sources of data to inform the study”. In-depth interviews provide a more equal relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer (Gatrell,
The use of respondents’ quotes are “important for revealing, how meanings are expressed in the respondents’ own words rather than the words of the researcher” (Baxter and Eyles, 1996: 508). It was important to try and convey the interviewee’s response and feelings as accurately as possible, and this was to some extent attainable by using respondent quotes from the interviews.

**The Interviews**

Interviewing commenced in the latter part of July 2007 and 38 interviews were completed. In the Centre, a private office was provided for the interviews. On the day and time of the interviews, I met with the interviewee. I reviewed the letter of information and the consent form to ensure that the interviewee wanted to continue. If the interviewee changed her or his mind, they were thanked and the process terminated. If they agreed to continue, the interview commenced and depending on the consent given, I recorded the interviews and/or took written notes.

The distinction between volunteers and non-volunteers was made by asking the interviewee to indicate whether they were a member, volunteer, board member, non-member or other. Of the 38 interviewees, 23 identified themselves as volunteers. If the interviewee indicated they were a volunteer then they were asked the following additional questions during the interview for volunteers only:

1. How did you first become a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
2. Why do you continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association?
3. How long have you been a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
4. What do you do as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
5. Do you face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
6. How many hours do you volunteer per week at the Seniors Association?
7. Do you volunteer anywhere else?
8. How many hours in total do you volunteer per week?
To incorporate further support for my thesis, I also examined the following questions from the wider evaluation project on the Seniors Association:

9. How does the Seniors Association enrich your life?
10. How does the Seniors Association contribute to the quality of life of the community?

**Interview Analysis**

In order to analyze the interviews a modified form of content analysis was used. The following steps were taken:

1. To identify themes a literature review was conducted and a set of themes were identified (e.g., how seniors become involved in volunteering and formal volunteer activities);
2. Transcribed interviews were read to identify the existence of the themes discovered through the literature review;
3. Transcribed interviews were read simultaneously to discover new themes;
4. All interviews were re-examined to make sure all existing and new themes discovered were considered for all interviews;
5. Themes were reformulated into more general terms;
6. Information was coded and placed into tables; and
7. Tables were analysed (looking for similarities and differences).

**LIMITATIONS**

Visiting an organization where seniors volunteer is an effective way to locate seniors that volunteer within Frontenac County. This approach reduced time spent searching for seniors who volunteer. However, the approach also has its limitations. First, it may not be representative of all seniors who volunteer to focus on a selected volunteer organization. Seniors from the Seniors Association may have different reasons for volunteering, face different barriers, and possess different characteristics in contrast to volunteers in other sectors or at different organizations. Furthermore, the volunteers likely have particular biases towards the Seniors Associations, and it may be difficult to
draw conclusions based on the information received from them. Second, the sample is non-random and thus might not even be representative of volunteers in the Seniors Association. Third, the research is focused on an organization in an urban area. There were no distinctions made between urban and rural areas, where volunteer participation or activities may be different in urban areas than they are in rural areas. Finally, the nature of the Seniors Association might not be representative of all seniors groups in Kingston.

In addition to the above mentioned limitations, my analysis used a large scale survey, the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). This was a self-reported survey; therefore, the results may not be indicative of what the reality is. In addition, large scale surveys do not necessarily ask all the questions you need for a thorough assessment of the particular topic; therefore, research is limited by the questions asked on the survey. One final limitation to my thesis worth noting may result from human error. Misinterpretation could have possibly occurred during the analysis of the CSGVP or the in-depth interviews.
CHAPTER 5
RESULTS FROM THE CANADA SURVEY OF GIVING, VOLUNTEERING AND PARTICIPATING (CSGVP)

Senior volunteers across Canada were examined using the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). The purpose is first and foremost to provide a broader context than can be achieved through a case study on volunteering. Second, it provides an opportunity to compare qualitative findings to the quantitative findings, but obviously these comparisons need to be taken with caution because of the differences between a national survey and a small qualitative survey.

The Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) was developed through a partnership of federal government departments and voluntary sector organizations, which included Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Imagine Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada and Volunteer Canada (CSGVP, 2004). The purpose of the survey was to understand better how Canadians support individuals and communities on their own or through their involvement with charitable and nonprofit organizations (CSGVP, 2004). Although the 2004 CSGVP collected data in all provinces and territories, the public use microdata file contains only provincial data. The target population for the provincial component of the survey was residents of the 10 provinces in Canada, 15 years of age and older, excluding full-time residents of institutions, persons living in a house without a land phone line, no phone or with only a cell phone (CSGVP, 2004).

The 2004 CSGVP was conducted by Statistics Canada from September to December 2004 and consists of a representative sample of 22,164 Canadians aged 15 and
older (CSGVP, 2004). The CSGVP “provides the most comprehensive look at the contributions of Canadians to one another and to their communities ever undertaken in Canada” (CSGVP, 2004: par 1). The survey provides information about how Canadians: “give money and other resources to charitable and nonprofit organizations; volunteer time to charitable and nonprofit organizations, help other individuals directly by contributing time without involving an organization, and participate in organizations, groups and associations by becoming members” (CSGVP, 2004: par 2). This research allows individuals to examine and report on charitable giving, volunteering and participation by Canadians in 2004. Population weights were used to generate results in order for results to be based on the population figure instead of the sample size and also to adjust for sampling methods.
Figure 5.1 illustrates the age distribution in Canada during 2004. During that time, individuals aged 35-44 and 45-54 encompass the largest part of the Canadian population. For instance, 19.8 per cent and 18.6 per cent of the total Canadian population is between the ages of 35-44 and 45-54, respectively. Examining the age distribution helps to identify and predict when Canada is going to experience significant increases in its elderly population. The elderly population can be separated into three groups: the younger-old, aged 55-64, those in their mid-years, aged 65-74, and the older-old, aged 75 and over (Jones, 1999:9). According to figure 5.1, in the next decade or two there will be higher proportions of younger-old seniors; however, as time goes on these numbers will significantly increase, generating a larger proportion of all three age groups of seniors (younger-old, mid-year and older-old).
Figure 5.2 illustrates the percent of the Canadian population, by age, who does and does not volunteer. According to the CSGVP (2004), 45 per cent of the Canadian population aged 15 and over indicated they were a volunteer. Of the 45 per cent, there is a higher per cent of volunteers among those aged 15-24 and 35-44, 9 per cent and 10 per cent of the Canadian population, respectively. Another way to examine figure 5.2 would be to look at each age group and look at what percent are volunteers. For example, when you examine the age group 15-24, 54.5 per cent of those aged 15-24 are volunteers and 45.5 per cent are non-volunteers.

Volunteers aged 15-24 and 35-44 combined make up nearly half (42.2%) of the volunteers in the Canadian population aged 15 and over. There are various hypotheses as to why this may be the case. For example, individuals aged 15-24 may have fewer
responsibilities (e.g., no children), need to complete volunteer hours to graduate high school, and may volunteer to gain contacts or skills in order to advance their career, while those aged 35-44 may have children and volunteer to coach their child’s sports league or be on a PTA board. In contrast to individuals aged 15-24 and 35-44, those aged 65 and over were found to be less likely to volunteer. About 10.1 per cent of those aged 65 and over indicated they were non-volunteers, while only 4.9 per cent indicated they were a volunteer. Those aged 55-64 were found to be the second lowest segment of the population to volunteer; 7.6 per cent indicated they were non-volunteers, while only 5.6 per cent indicated they were a volunteer. The low percentage of senior volunteers aged 65 and over may result from decreased mobility and health that naturally occurs with age. As the population ages there is a higher proportion of individuals in society who experience chronic conditions and thus may be less likely to volunteer. In addition, it is evident that the percent of volunteers progressively decreases from 45 to 65 years of age and older. There may be a decrease in volunteer participation among those aged 45-64 due to individuals participating in full-time work. While all age groups have been examined in the charts up until this point, for the purpose of this thesis only volunteers aged 55 and over will be examined from this point on.
Figure 5.3 examines senior volunteers aged 55 and over, by sex, in Canada in 2004. According to figure 5.3 there is a higher percent of female volunteers (53.9%) versus male (46.1%) among individuals aged 55 and over.

Figure 5.4 illustrates the reasons for volunteering among seniors aged 55 and over in Canada, 2004. According to figure 5.4, the top four reasons for volunteering among respondents aged 55 and over were “contributing to the community” (91.4%), “using
skills and experiences” (77.4%), “affected by the cause” (55.1%), and “networking with/meeting people” (51.2%). In contrast, “improving job opportunities” (5.0%) and “religious obligation” (29.9%) were the bottom two reasons for volunteering among seniors aged 55 and over in Canada. What this shows is that seniors are volunteering to give back to the community or an organization they believe in, to give meaning to their life and to stay socially connected. As we see, seniors are less likely to volunteer because they feel they need to or have to, but volunteer because they want to. It is, however important to note that individuals can select more than one reason for volunteering when interpreting this question and what the results mean.

Figure 5.5: Formal Volunteer Activities among Senior Volunteers aged 55+, in Canada, 2004 (n= 7,316,596)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach, Referee, Officiate</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collected Deliver Goods</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee/Board Member</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor/Provide Advice</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-aid, Fire-fighting</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care, support</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain/Build Facilities</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office/Bookkeeping/Admin. Work</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize Activities/Events</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Wildlife, Conservation</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach/Educate/Mentor</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unpaid activities</td>
<td>55+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating 2004
Figure 5.5 examines the formal volunteer activities performed by seniors aged 55 and over in Canada, 2004. While the number of volunteers is 2,712,739, the number of responses was 7,316,596. This figure shows the top three formal volunteer activities among respondents aged 55 and over are committee/board member (16.7%), organize activities/events (15.5%), and fundraising (14.1%). In contrast, it was discovered that the bottom two formal volunteer activities among senior volunteers aged 55 and over, in Canada, are coach/referee/officiate (2.6%) and first-aid/fire-fighting (1.5%). What this figure shows us is that senior volunteers aged 55 and over are more involved in administrative or organizing events, versus physically straining volunteer work like coaching or fire-fighting. This may be a result of the body naturally slowing down or experiencing more chronic conditions as one ages.
Figure 5.6 examines the number of organizations individuals aged 55 and over volunteered for in Canada in 2004. Of the 23.1 per cent of seniors aged 55 and over who indicated they were volunteers, 51.3 per cent of those aged 55 and over indicated they volunteered for one organization. The percentage of individuals who indicated they volunteered for two organizations decreases by about half from those who indicated they volunteer for one organization. For instance, 26.0 per cent of those volunteers aged 55 + indicated they volunteered for two organizations, dropping from 51.3 per cent who indicated they volunteered from one organization. The percentage of individuals who indicated they volunteered for three or more organizations significantly decreases from those who indicated they volunteered for one or two organizations. Therefore, the majority of senior volunteers are primarily volunteering for one organization at a time, while some are volunteering for two or three organizations at the most. Very few senior volunteers were found to volunteer for four or more organizations at a time.

![Figure 5.7: The number of years volunteers aged 55+ volunteered for their organization, Canada, 2004 (n= 2,712,739)](source: Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating 2004)
Figure 5.7 illustrates the number of years individuals aged 55 and over have volunteered for an organization. The modal category of years volunteered for an organization for individuals aged 55 and over was 5 years (44.9%), which decreases to 0 per cent at 7 years before slightly increasing at 9 years (2.0%)\(^1\). This chart illustrates that those aged 55 and over are committed to volunteering and to their particular organization.

Figure 5.8: How volunteers aged 55+ found out about volunteer opportunities, Canada, 2004 (n= 1,208,391)

There were various ways that volunteers aged 55 and over found out about volunteer opportunities, including: responding to a public appeal on TV or radio, through the internet, through a referral from an agency, responding to an advertisement (e.g., poster, newspaper, etc.) or other. Of the five options where a way was indicated, 76.8 per cent of individuals aged 55 and over indicated ‘other’ as the way they found out about

\(^1\) The lack of observations for 7 and 8 years is the result of the small number of observations. There are obviously people in Canada who have volunteered for 7 and 8 years and more than 9 years.
their volunteer opportunity. The second most popular response was through an advertisement (e.g., poster, newspaper) (12.6%).

Since 76.8 per cent of senior volunteers aged 55 and over indicated ‘other’, a further investigation took place to examine other ways individuals found out about volunteer opportunities. Two popular ways individuals found out about volunteer opportunities were: being asked to volunteer by someone (see Figure 5.9) and approaching the organization themselves to inquire about possible volunteer opportunities (see Figure 5.11).

![Figure 5.9: Proportion of volunteers aged 55+ asked by someone to volunteer, Canada, 2004 (n= 1,518,992)](chart)

Figure 5.9 examines the percentage of individuals aged 55 and over in Canada, 2004, who indicated whether or not they were asked to volunteer by someone. Of the 23.1 per cent of seniors aged 55 and over who indicated they were a volunteer, 89.1 per
cent indicated someone had asked them to volunteer, while 10.2 per cent indicated they were not asked by someone to volunteer.

Figure 5.9 shows that a large percentage of people were asked by someone to volunteer, but did not specify who asked them. Figure 5.10 examines potential sources of people who asked individuals aged 55 and over to volunteer. Among those aged 55 and over, the most popular source was “someone in the organization” asked them to volunteer, followed by “a friend/relative outside the organization”. Of the 89.1 per cent of volunteers aged 55 and over who indicated they were asked to volunteer by someone,
72.6 per cent indicated that someone from the organization asked them to volunteer, while 19.2 per cent indicated that a friend/relative outside the organization asked them.

In addition to examining whether individuals were asked to volunteer, the CSGVP also examined the percentage of individuals who approached the organization themselves to inquire about volunteer opportunities (see Figure 5.11). Of those aged 55 and over, 42.1 per cent indicated they approached the organization themselves to enquire about volunteer opportunities. While there are a higher percentage of individuals who indicated “no” to approaching the organization themselves, this was still a popular way for older individuals to find out about volunteer opportunities and become involved in volunteering.
As was discovered in the literature, education is a key explanatory factor linked to the likelihood of volunteering among seniors. Better educated seniors are more likely to volunteer than less educated seniors. In contrast to education, marital status as a factor had mixed findings in the literature. Some literature determined that it was a key characteristic, while other research found it did not play a significant role in affecting whether seniors volunteer. Since CSGVP examined marital status and education levels among volunteers, I thought it would be valuable to examine these factors in more depth.

Figure 5.12: Marital status of volunteers aged 55+ in Canada, 2004 (n=2,712,739)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married/Common-law</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, never married</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow/Widower</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/Divorced</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating 2004

Figure 5.12 illustrates the marital status among volunteers aged 55 and over in Canada in 2004. It was found that of the 23.1 per cent of individuals 55 and over volunteering, 73.9 per cent of them were married, while 12.4 per cent were widowed, 8.4 per cent were separated/divorced and 4.7 per cent were single/never married. These
numbers indicate that volunteers aged 55 and over are more likely to be married than widowed, separated/divorced or single/never married but whether this is just a reflection of demographics (i.e., older Canadians are likely to be married) or whether there is a causal link between marital status and volunteering cannot be inferred.

Figure 5.13 illustrates the level of education obtained among volunteers aged 55 and over in Canada. Table 5.1 (CSGVP, 2004) outlines what each level of education represents.

**Table 5.1: Levels of education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No post-secondary degree, certificate or diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-university certificate or diploma from a community college, CEGEP, school of nursing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>University certificate below bachelor’s level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>University degree or certificate above bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Figure 5.13 shows is that Canada has an educated group among volunteers aged 55 and over. The majority of senior volunteers have some university education (level 4), a bachelor’s degree (level 5) or more than a bachelor’s degree (level 6).

What is found by examining data from the CSGVP is what is predominately discussed in the literature. The information shows that over the next decade or two the proportion of seniors is going to increase in the Canadian population. Seniors aged 55 and over are volunteering, but not at the rate younger generations are. Among the seniors that are volunteering it was discovered that the majority of them are female, married and well educated. Seniors predominantly find out about volunteer opportunities because someone asked them to volunteer or by approaching the organization themselves. The majority of volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada volunteer for one organization and are devoted to volunteering, spending on average 5 years with the same organization. The survey shows that senior volunteers are more likely to participate in activities that are geared towards organizing activities/events or administration work, rather than physically demanding positions like lifeguarding or firefighting. Finally, senior volunteers across Canada are volunteers because they want to, not because they feel obligated to. For example, respondents claim they volunteer in order to contribute to the community or are affected by the cause, not because of religious obligations nor their need to improve job opportunities.
CHAPTER 6
CASE STUDY: SENIORS ASSOCIATION

In the last chapter, I showed seniors across Canada are less likely to volunteer than other age groups, but appear more committed by the number of hours and years they volunteer. Taking this into account, the focus of this chapter is a case study of volunteers at the Seniors Association in Kingston, Ontario. In contrast to the previous chapter, which used quantitative methods to analyze the nature of volunteering among senior volunteers, qualitative methods are used in this chapter.

Before discussing the results let me describe my impressions of the Seniors Association as I observed it over time. The red brick building in which the Seniors Association is located was once an elementary school. Surrounding the centre are beautiful gardens, which provide a bright and cheerful element to the building. Upon entering the centre you are greeted by a volunteer located near the front door (one of the many volunteer opportunities for seniors at the Seniors Association). The front desk is located straight ahead, where a team of staff and volunteers are ready to assist you. On the wall to the right of the front desk you will find a bulletin board with a calendar of events and program information. With over 100 programs and activities, there is something for everyone. In addition to the greeter’s station and front desk, you will see the Rendez-vous café as you walk through the front doors of the centre. The café is a place where people socialize and have coffee. On the walls surrounding the tables in the Rendez-vous café are shelves covered with books that individuals can donate to or purchase at a small price. To the left and right of the front desk are long hallways where classrooms are located. The classrooms are used for various events and activities (e.g.,
bridge, art classes, and language classes). Lining the hallways are paintings (created by
the members), which can be purchased and add a personal touch to the interior of the
building. At the end of one of the hallways is a gymnasium, where dances and tennis
table take place. The atmosphere at the Seniors Association is bright, warm, welcoming
and friendly.

SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

Of the 38 interviewed for the wider evaluation project at the Seniors Association,
23 individuals (60.5%) indicated that they were volunteers. Just over half of the 23
senior volunteers interviewed were female (60.9%) versus male (39.1%). The age range
was 54 to 89 years of age, with the median age being 73.0. About 47.8 per cent indicated
that they were married, while 22.7 per cent indicated they were widowed, 13.0 per cent
divorced, 8.7 per cent single/never married and 8.7 per cent did not respond. Just under
half (47.8%) responded to living with their partner, while 39.1 per cent indicated they
lived alone, 8.7 per cent did not respond, and 4.3 per cent indicated living with a family
member. The senior volunteers interviewed were well educated; 65.2 per cent of
interviewees indicated they had a university degree or above. In addition to being well
educated, 22 out of the 23 volunteers interviewed indicated that they still drove their own
car. While it was difficult to make any conclusions pertaining to income, as the income
brackets used were too large, it did appear that the individuals interviewed were fairly
well to do². About 56.5 per cent indicated that they had an income of $13,000 to $49,999
annually after taxes, while 39.1 per cent indicated they had more than $50,000.

² Dr. Rosenberg had designed an income question which provided much more detail, but the Seniors
Association requested that only three categories be used.
When the volunteers from the Seniors Association in southeastern Ontario are compared to national data on senior volunteers gathered from the 2004 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (CSGVP) the senior volunteers show several similarities to volunteers aged 55 and over from across Canada. There were more female senior volunteers than male at both the Seniors Association and in the national data. Just over half of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association were female (60.9%), while 53.9 per cent of senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada were female. It was also discovered that a large number of volunteers are married. While there was a higher percentage of senior volunteers aged 55 and over married across Canada (79.3%), there were still a high percentage of individuals married at the Seniors Association (47.8%). This indicates that marital status and sex are important characteristic of senior volunteers aged 55 and over. In addition to sex and marital status, both senior volunteers across Canada and senior volunteers at the Seniors Association are well educated. Through analysis, it was discovered that 65 per cent of volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada had a university degree or more. Senior volunteers at the Seniors Association were also found to be well educated, where 65.2 per cent have a university degree or more. According to the literature on senior volunteers, marital status and educational levels are factors affecting involvement in volunteer organizations. Research suggest that the likelihood of volunteering among seniors increases as education levels increases, and that older volunteers are more likely to be married than non-volunteers.
How seniors became involved at the Seniors Association

Various responses were given by interviewees when asked ‘how did you first become a volunteer at the Seniors Association?’ The responses fit into three categories. These categories include: approached organization themselves (10), asked by someone in the organization (10), and responded to an advertisement looking for volunteers for the Seniors Association in either the Vista newsletter or in the local newspaper (e.g., Kingston Whig-Standard) (3). Upon closer examination, more than half of the volunteers approached the organization themselves (8), while more than half of the board members indicated they were asked by someone at the organization to volunteer (5). Perhaps individuals on the board were specifically asked to volunteer at the organization with the hope that they would bring specific knowledge and expertise to the association.

How seniors got involved in volunteering are similar between the group of volunteers at the Seniors Association and senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada. The top three reasons provided by senior volunteers at both the Seniors Association and across Canada as to how they first became a volunteer are the same. Both the group of volunteers at the Seniors Association and senior volunteers across Canada said they were “asked by someone to volunteer”, “approached the organization themselves”, and saw an “advertisement” about the volunteer opportunity. What was discovered, and corresponds with the literature, is that “word of mouth” is one of the most effective ways of getting people, including seniors, involved in volunteering. In fact, the literature discusses that some individuals do not volunteer simply because they are not asked to volunteer (e.g., Fischer, Mueller and Cooper, 1991). As a result, seniors can play a significant role in the recruitment of volunteers by spreading the word. The
literature also shows that putting advertisements in the local newspaper or sending out notification to local hospitals and/or employers is another successful recruitment strategy. This method was also acknowledged as an effective way to recruit seniors to volunteer by the CSGVP and the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association. Discovering successful recruitment strategies among senior volunteers will help organizations and individuals reach out to seniors and get them more involved.

**Reasons for continuing to volunteer at the Seniors Association**

There were a variety of responses provided by the interviewees as to why they continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association. These responses include: social interaction (e.g., fellowship, meet people, place to go, etc.), practice skills/learn new skills, gives a sense of belonging (e.g., gives a sense of purpose, fills void, etc.), keeps you physically and mentally active, place to volunteer, contribution to community (e.g., help others, give back, etc.), affected by cause, and it is fun/enjoyable.

Among both the volunteers and board members, the top two reasons provided as to why individuals continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association is that it is “fun/enjoyable”, and for “social interaction”. For instance, when asked “why do you continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association” the following narratives provide a sample of volunteers and board members who indicated they continued volunteering at the Seniors Association because they found it satisfying, fun and enjoyable.

Because I really, really enjoy it. I really enjoy it. I enjoy the people. I like the work. I like the people I work with. I like the chef. (Volunteer Interviewee #7)
Well, I get a lot of positive things from it… I enjoy the Association, I get to use skills that I have… I get a lot of positive feedback at the front desk from people, I enjoy helping people… I feel that my contribution matters and it makes a difference. I have volunteered at other places where I have left because that wasn’t there; not that anybody did anything in particular, but I think one has to feel that what they do… I, personally, have to feel that what I do is of value. People where I’m doing it may think it’s of value, but if I don’t then I don’t stay there. So that feedback, to me, is a positive thing. I just enjoy… there’s a lot of social camaraderie… (BM Interviewee #19)

Another popular response that was emphasized when asked “why do you continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association?” was the value of social interaction (e.g., fellowship, meet people, place to go, etc.). This is illustrated in the following responses:

This is how you meet great people… I’ve made some good friends here… it provides opportunities for friendship, for growth, socialization, and most of all I have fun doing it and most of us will continue with it. (BM Interviewee #3)

Because it gets me out of the house, not sitting at home… and coming out to meet people. (Volunteer Interviewee #14)

Because I like the people… and the atmosphere and the food’s good. When you live by yourself those things become very important. (BM Interviewee #17)

In addition to the top two reasons, board members also indicated “contributing to the community”, “practice skills/learn new skills”, “gives sense of belonging”, and “affected by cause” as equally important as to why they continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association.

The reasons given for volunteering differ amongst the group from the Seniors Association and senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada. The top two reasons for volunteering at the Seniors Association are “fun/enjoyable” and “social interaction”, which differ from the top two reasons found in the national data, which are “contribution
to community” and “use skills and experience”. These responses could differ as a result of asking volunteers about why one chooses to volunteer at a particular place versus volunteering in general. It is important to note that both the group of volunteers at the Seniors Association and volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada often indicated having more than one reason for volunteering. Individuals showed both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for volunteering. It is evident that individuals who volunteer at the Seniors Association experience a positive sense of place, and convey the importance of place through their responses. As discussed in the literature, the way an individual feels about their volunteer work affects their commitment to an organization. For example, when an individual feels useful/productive, satisfied, or competent, they are more likely to continue volunteering at a particular organization. Furthermore, when an individual feels a psychological rootedness to a place they experience feelings such as internal cohesion, security and direction, and feel they have a relationship with the world around them. It is evident that volunteers at the Seniors Association feel a positive connection to the centre at which they volunteer.

Tasks carried out by senior volunteers at the Seniors Association

There was a wide range of responses to what each individual volunteer did at the Seniors Association. The formal volunteer activities among the senior volunteers at the Seniors Association were broken down into 9 categories:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Volunteer Activity</th>
<th>Board Member (n=9)</th>
<th>Volunteer (n=14)</th>
<th>Total (n=23)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee member</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving (e.g., drive individuals to medical appointments, deliver food, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office/bookkeeping/administrative work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize activities/events</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach/educate/mentor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/cafè</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vista magazine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web design/website</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these 9 groups the top 5 activities listed among the interviewees was: “committee member”, “teach/educate/mentor”, “cafè/restaurant”, “organize events/activities”, and “office/bookkeeping/administrative work”. The top 3 formal volunteer activities for volunteers were “teach/educate/mentor”, “organize activities/events” and “cafè/restaurant”. In addition to volunteering on the board, board members indicated “committee member”, “teach/educate/mentor”, and “bookkeeping/administration work” as their top 3 formal volunteer activities.

It is important to note that individuals often indicated being involved in multiple activities and roles. In fact, 73.9 per cent of senior volunteers who were interviewed indicated that they participate in more than one formal volunteer task/activity. This can
be demonstrated by viewing one interviewee’s response when asked “what do you do as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?”:

I’m on the board, I chair a committee – as a board member I chair the committee – I write for Vista magazine, do editorial work with Vista magazine, [and] I lead the book discussion group as a volunteer. (BM Interviewee #17)

Both the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association and senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada stated that the top formal volunteer activity was committee/board member (see Table 6.2) While the activities that followed were similar, they were, however, listed in a different order of significance.

Table 6.2 – Order of Formal Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Association Volunteers</th>
<th>Volunteers in CSGVP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee/board member</td>
<td>Committee/board member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach/educate/mentor</td>
<td>Organize activities/events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café/restaurant</td>
<td>Fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office/bookkeeping/administration work</td>
<td>Counsel/provide advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize events/activities</td>
<td>Office/bookkeeping/administration work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these differences must also be interpreted as an artifact of the differences in activities/categories at the Seniors Association in contrast to the categories used in CSGVP.

The literature discussed a variety of tasks carried out by senior volunteers, illustrating that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what senior volunteers do. What seniors do as volunteers is dependent on a variety of factors (e.g., employment experience, skills they have, health condition, and available opportunities). What is, however, evident
through the analysis of seniors across Canada, the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association and the literature, is that senior volunteers are less likely to participate in formal volunteer activities that are physically strenuous (e.g., fire fighting or coaching). What is also evident from the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association, and from the literature, is that individual volunteers often perform multiple tasks and have more than one role. For instance, one interviewee from the Seniors Association indicated being on the board, chairing a committee, doing editorial work, and leading a book discussion.

**Challenges faced by senior volunteers at the Seniors Association**

When asked “do you face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?” the majority of interviewees said no (17), while a select few indicated facing some challenges (2) or did not provide a response (4). Some of the interviewees who indicated ‘no’ to facing any challenges at the Seniors Association did discuss facing challenges that were welcomed, but made it clear that they did not face any negative challenges or barriers. This is illustrated by viewing some of the interviewees responses when asked “do you face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?”:

… I like to have a challenge when I do certain things because it challenges you to push yourself a little bit. No, I can’t say that I do. (BM Interviewee #19)

I don’t, I don’t find any aw, barriers. The challenges are of course making sure that I’m doing what I’m suppose to be doing correctly, but that’s, that’s an everyday thing that’s, it’s not really a challenge, it’s part of the job. (Volunteer Interviewee #27)

There were, however, a small number of interviewees (2) who revealed that they did face challenges. The challenges were expressed among the volunteers, not the board
members, and relate to issues of volunteers being treated with more respect, being able to comfortably voice their opinion, and being involved in decision making.

**The number of hours volunteered**

There were a range of responses by interviewees when asked “how many hours do you volunteer per week at the Seniors Association?” The number of hours spent volunteering per week ranged between 2-3 hours per week up to 20-25 hours per week. Responses were provided both on a weekly basis and monthly; therefore, all responses were converted to the number of hours individuals volunteered per month at the Seniors Association. The average number of hours volunteered per month among the volunteers at the Seniors Association was 32.9 to 36.6 hours, while board members averaged 15.9 to 17.2 hours.

**Length of time volunteered at the Seniors Association**

The number of years individuals have been volunteering at the Seniors Association ranged from 8 months to 28 years. The median number of years for volunteers was approximately 3 years, and 6 years for Board Members.

In the literature, it was discovered that the average duration of senior volunteers at an organization was 3 years or more. Research has determined that older volunteers perform more hours of volunteer work and for longer periods of time than volunteers in younger generations. It was discovered through the CSGVP that just under half (44.9%) of seniors across Canada volunteered at their organization for 5 years. To add to this discovery, the next highest duration of time spent at an organization by seniors across
Canada was 4 years (15.7%). This illustrates the commitment senior volunteers have for their organizations. Similarly, the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association shows a strong commitment to their organization. The median number of years board members volunteered at the Seniors Association was 6 years, while the median number of years for all other volunteers was 3 years. Therefore, through analysis it is clear that both the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association and senior volunteers across Canada show similar commitment to their organizations. In addition, as shown above, the findings from the CSGVP and the interviews coincide with the research discussed in the literature on the devotion that senior volunteers have for the organizations for which they volunteer.

**Other places seniors volunteer**

Approximately half (12) of those interviewed indicated that they volunteered somewhere other than at the Seniors Association. Individuals indicated volunteering at anywhere between one to four other places aside from the Seniors Association. Of the 12 individuals who indicated they volunteered at other places, 6 volunteered at one other place, 2 volunteered at two other places, 3 volunteered at three other places, and 1 volunteered at four other places.

Although the literature did not discuss the number of organizations for which seniors volunteer, the CSGVP did and it was examined during the interviews at the Seniors Association as well. What was discovered is that the group of seniors at the Seniors Association show similar trends to senior volunteers across Canada when examining the number of organizations for which they volunteer. Almost 48 per cent of
the group of senior volunteers at the Seniors Association indicated volunteering for one organization, while 51.3 per cent of senior volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada indicated volunteering for one organization. Twenty-six per cent of volunteers at both the Seniors Association and volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada indicated volunteering for two organizations. The percentage of individuals who volunteered for 3 or more organizations significantly decreased for both groups.

**Total number of hours volunteered**

Individuals were asked to indicate how many hours in total they volunteered per week. These hours were composed of the time volunteered through formal volunteer activities at the Seniors Association and also any time volunteered at other organizations outside the Seniors Association. The number of total hours that individuals volunteered per month ranged between 4-6 hours to 80-100 hours. The average number of hours volunteered per month in total among the volunteers was 39.0 to 41.6 hours, while board members indicated averaging 28.1 to 28.6 hours.

**Contributions to the Quality of Life - Individual**

For the larger project, it was agreed by the Study Committee and Research Team (RT) that a definition of quality of life would not be provided and that it would be left up to the interviewees to choose their own definitions of quality of life. Only one interviewee found this problematic because he/she felt a standard definition of quality of life should have been provided.
Almost all volunteers who were interviewed reported that the Seniors Association enriched their life in some way. For example, some interviewees indicated the Seniors Association enriched their life by providing a place to volunteer, socialize, meet people, a place where individuals can practice or learn new skills, exercise, give back to the community, keep their brain active, and as a place to interact and/or participate in various programs and activities.

Of the 23 volunteers interviewed, 22 indicated experiencing some sort of physical, mental or social benefit to participating in and/or through the Seniors Association. The most frequently mentioned benefits were fellowship, meeting people, socialization and having a place to go. When asked ‘how does the Seniors Association enrich your life?’ the following narratives are a small sample of the responses:

… this is very important, this place to me in terms of my life, I’m single, I’m living alone, I’ve got, you know, to go out and do something… it’s been very good to me because it’s a place where I can come, I can use some of my skills, and I can meet people. (Volunteer Interviewee #3)

It allows me to give back to the community. I also have created friendships. It fills a void. Another sense of purpose. (Volunteer Interviewee #16)

So it’s really enriched my life; it’s given it a different dimension, there’s more interaction than I had even when I was working because when I was working I went from work to home to the grocery, to church… and now I have time for myself and time to develop in different ways. So there’s a social aspect, there’s the cultural aspect… it keeps your brain going, it keeps the social life going, and ---- I’m thinking of probably joining a yoga class, so it has already enriched my life in different ways. (BM Interviewee #20)

While the majority of people indicated that the Seniors Association enriched their lives on some level, there was one individual who indicated that participating at the Seniors
Association was fun but was unsure if, or how, the Seniors Association enriched his/her life. This case was idiosyncratic in nature as the overwhelming majority of those interviewed responded in a positive manner when asked how the Seniors Association enriches their life.

**Contributions to the Quality of Life - Community**

A similar approach was taken to the definition of community as was taken to the definition of quality of life. In other words, the RT did not provide a definition. While it appeared unproblematic for individuals to discuss how the Seniors Association enriched their life, it was more difficult for those interviewed to discuss how the Seniors Association contributes to the quality of life of the community. Of the 23 volunteers interviewed, 20 indicated that the Seniors Association positively contributes to the quality of life of the community. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to define/describe community in their own way. What was discovered through the interviews was that the majority of the interviewees defined community sociologically (seniors within the Association), while a select few defined community geographically (seniors within Kingston). For those who defined community sociologically, the following narratives illustrate how those interviewees described the Seniors Association as positively contributing to the quality of life of seniors within the Association.

Well, you wind up with a large number, say 5000, of seniors who are healthier and happier. (Volunteer Interviewee #8)

… you cannot help but come in here and feel good about being a senior. You know, because all of these things are happening I think that must inspire people and it has to… you know, so many people do tend to become involved and it involves them and I think it’s what many many people are looking for when they retire; I think
they will find a lot of it here and I think it goes beyond this, you know. (BM Interviewee #33)

For those who defined community geographically, the following narratives illustrate how the interviewees described the Seniors Association as positively contributing to the quality of life of seniors within the local Kingston community.

Oh, I think it provides a focus for seniors. Umm, it also provides services for seniors, aww, not just the activities that are here at the Centre, but we provide lists of people who will do housekeeping, yard work, repairs, that sort of thing. We provide medical rides for people that can’t get to their doctors appointments easily by themselves. Umm, we provide drivers, refresher courses, umm, they really look at the needs of seniors and provide as much as they possibly can. (Volunteer Interviewee #12)

Well I think being active, and out and about and meeting new people is certainly an asset to the community, cause they’re not stuck in the house or stuck in an apartment watching four walls and keeps them active, and the whole community can be active. All seniors in it are active. (Volunteer Interviewee #29)

Oh I think, aww, I think, you know, here we’ve got, aww, close to 5000 members. Aww, I think the Seniors Association provides a forum for seniors, particularly to keep active, aww, to keep together as a particular sector of the society, aging, or the seniors group… so I think that’s part of it too, and, aww, so I think it’s provided, aww, say a particularly the, aww, an activity for seniors to come together. And, yea… and so normally they come together, but also to be provided with the services and the programs that Kingston have. (BM Interviewee #38)

There were, however, three individuals who indicated they did not know how to respond to this question, or that in order to answer this question you would need to go outside the Seniors Association and into the community.

Through examining the in-depth interviews of volunteers 55 and over from the Seniors Association it was discovered that the Seniors Association significantly contributes to the quality of life of individuals who use the centre, as well as to the
quality of life of the community (both seniors within the Association and seniors within Kingston). The majority of interviewees discussed experiencing some sort of physical, mental and/or social benefit to being a part of the Seniors Association.

Seniors primarily became involved in volunteering as a result of being asked by someone in the organization or approached the organization themselves to inquire about volunteer opportunities. Among all volunteers, the main reason for continuing to volunteer at the Seniors Association was because it was “fun/enjoyable” and for “social interaction”. The number of years and hours that interviewees volunteered at the Association varied from one individual to the next, but there is strong indication that individuals are committed to volunteering at the centre. Volunteers at the centre carry out a variety of tasks, often performing more than one formal volunteer activity at a time. What is evident is that senior volunteers at the Association primarily participate in administrative activities (e.g., organizing events/activities or being on a committee). The majority of senior volunteers indicated not facing any negative challenges or barriers. In addition to volunteering at the Seniors Association, half of the interviewees indicated they volunteered at one or more other organizations. On most issues, whether it was a board member or volunteer, there was little to no difference between the nature of volunteering by their role.

**PLACE**

Overall, the analysis reveals that the group of volunteers at the Seniors Association show several similarities to volunteers aged 55 and over across Canada.
What a national survey cannot convey is how volunteering is often tied not just to a specific organization but also to the specific place.

The importance of the specificity of the place is clearly conveyed when examining the interview responses of the group of seniors from the Seniors Association. All the volunteers, but one, indicated that the Seniors Association enriched their life in some way. The interviewees frequently pointed out that the Seniors Association enriched their life by providing a place to go, fellowship, a place to volunteer, socialization, and a place that provides appropriate programs and activities for seniors. The Seniors Association is organized and run by seniors; therefore, the needs of its participants are understood and appropriately accommodated as necessary. The Seniors Association modifies activities to fit the lifestyle of seniors. Activities are altered to accommodate changing competencies, level of ability, and are geared toward seniors in order to allow aging individuals to participate and continue to remain active. The image that the Seniors Association portrays of seniors is important. It does not portray seniors as dependent, but as independent and successful in participating in society as productive citizens. It conveys a message to society that aging does not have to be scary or avoided. With a motto like “seniors helping seniors” it clearly demonstrates the productive power and potential that seniors have to offer to society and to each other.

As is discussed in the literature, place can be simply referred to as a meaningful location, a space where an individual has developed meaningful attachments (Cresswell, 2004). Places acquire emotional or cultural value because of the building, events, people, histories and images that individuals associate with them (Knox et al., 2007). What specifically became evident during the interviews was that the majority of the
interviewees associated their volunteering with the centre as a place to go, a place to volunteer, and a place to socialize and meet people. The following examples of respondent quotes are significant in capturing the connections between volunteering and the centre as a place.

The atmosphere is so nice; everybody’s friendly so you needn’t… you don’t have to sit at home and feel lonely, that’s for sure. Not here. (Volunteer Interviewee #7)

It’s very friendly, even though I’ve been here since, I think October, you know you never feel like you’re new. There’s a tremendous feeling of belonging. (Volunteer Interviewee #15)

It’s a tremendous place to get to know other people that think like you do. (BM Interviewee #17)

The Seniors Association is seen as a place where individuals feel like they belong and feel understood, it is seen as having a positive atmosphere and welcoming environment, and is a place that gives meaning and a sense of purpose to those who are a part of the centre. It is particularly important for individuals who live alone or have no family; as they have a place to go where they can socialize, be engaged, be active and participate in meaningful events or activities that promote productive aging. The interviews also show the connection between the centre as a place, which influences why seniors volunteer and continue to volunteer at this particular organization. The literature discusses the importance of participating in activities and being involved, which can be linked to well-being and decreased mortality rates. Research also shows that having a strong positive sense of place can result in therapeutic effects on human attitude and behaviour.
THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES

In addition to the importance of place, the interviews disclose the potential to view the seniors centre as a therapeutic landscape, where healing, well-being and maintained health are enhanced. Through analysis, it was discovered that 22 out of the 23 volunteers interviewed indicated experiencing some sort of physical, mental or social benefit to participating in and/or through the Seniors Association. The association provides opportunities for older adults to be active and continue to contribute to their own well-being and to the welfare of others. In addition, 20 out of the 23 volunteers interviewed indicated the Seniors Association positively contributes to the quality of life of the community. The interviewees primarily defined community sociologically (seniors within the Association), while a select few defined community geographically (seniors within Kingston).

The Seniors Association provides an avenue for individuals, specifically seniors, to be active and engaged. They provide opportunities for seniors to volunteer, for its members to participate in various physical, mental, spiritual and cultural activity/events, services, guidance, a café and restaurant for meals, and a place for individuals to go and socialize. As discussed in the literature, the benefits of remaining active, volunteering and the importance of social interaction positively contributes to one’s well-being. For instance, research found that individuals who volunteer are less prone to depression (Wilson and Musick, 1999), have reduced heart rates and blood pressure, enhanced immune systems, increased endorphin production and volunteering helps to overcome social isolation (Graff, 1991). Furthermore, volunteering can help individuals overcome trauma (Smith and Gay, 2005) and can have protective mortality effects (e.g., Luoh and

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Herzog, 2002; Oman, Thoresen and McMahon, 1999; Thoits and Hewitt, 2001). Therefore, one way the Seniors Association promotes well-being and maintained health is by providing seniors with opportunities to volunteer.

In addition to being an avenue for seniors to volunteer and participate in activities that promote productive aging, it also incorporates features, according to the literature (Kearns and Gesler, 1998), that are considered common features of a therapeutic landscape. For instance, the centre has beautiful gardens around the building (cultivated by the members and which provide natural characteristics to its environment). Furthermore, as discussed above, individuals feel a sense of place at and/or through the Seniors Association. Interviewees conveyed feeling of a sense of belonging, rootedness, and a warm environment when they discussed how the Seniors Association enhanced their lives. The Seniors Association also incorporates familiar and daily routines, is sensitive to cultural diversity and has created an environment and atmosphere where social distance and social inequalities are kept to a minimum. Finally, the Seniors Association has generated an environment that promotes and creates therapeutic networks. According to the literature (Smyth, 2005), therapeutic networks can incorporate kinship groups and other networks of care provided by family, friends, therapists and other agents that provide individuals with a way to get support and care. The Seniors Association offers courses, where individuals meet life long friends, a café and restaurant for individuals to socialize, and provides activities, programs and services where individuals come into contact with instructors, therapists and other agents. These networks add to the relationship that exists between health and place.
Therefore, whether an individual decides to volunteer, enjoy the atmosphere by having a cup of coffee at the café or eating at the restaurant, or becomes a member and participates in the wide range of programs, activities, and services offered, they experience some sort of physical, mental, or social benefit to participating at and/or through the Seniors Association. This landscape provides an avenue for seniors to lead active, productive, and healthy lifestyles; therefore, it has the potential to enhance one’s well-being and maintained health or healing. As a result, the seniors centre can potentially be viewed as a therapeutic landscape.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

In summary, this thesis examines 23 in-depth interviews from a group of senior volunteers from an organization in southeastern Ontario. The primary goal of the research was to determine why some seniors volunteer, why senior volunteers continue to volunteer, how seniors get involved in volunteering, determine what roles or tasks senior volunteers perform, and illuminate any potential barriers or challenges that senior volunteers may face as a volunteer. In addition to the interviews, secondary research was conducted on the CSGVP in order to determine if a group of senior volunteers from an organization in southeastern Ontario show similarities, or differences to senior volunteers across Canada. The thesis also draws connections between volunteering and specific characteristics of the Seniors Association Centre as a place.

The findings demonstrate that the group of senior volunteers from an organization in southeastern Ontario show several similarities to senior volunteers across Canada. There were, however, also some differences. The differences were hypothesized to be a result of specific characteristics of the place. It was evident through the in-depth interviews that there is an importance of place when the group of senior volunteers discussed their volunteer experiences at the Seniors Association. Finally, the research discovered that the seniors centre has the potential to be viewed as a therapeutic landscape, where healing, well-being and maintained health are promoted and enhanced among its participants. The majority of interviewees indicated experiencing some sort of mental, physical and/or social benefit to being a part of the Seniors Association.
FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several areas that would benefit from additional research. First, it would be beneficial to conduct further research on senior volunteers from a variety of organizations. This would help minimize any bias towards one particular organization and reduce errors in making generalizations. Second, conducting research in a variety of locations, both urban and rural, where seniors volunteer would help create a better picture of senior volunteers in Frontenac County. It would allow for a greater understanding of the similarities and differences among volunteers in urban and rural areas, if any. Third, having a random sample of volunteers at a variety of locations would be more representative of senior volunteers and senior organizations. A final area of research that would be interesting to examine would be seniors that do not volunteer within the Kingston area and explore the reasons for their decision. While it is beneficial to examine senior volunteers and why they volunteer, it would be equally beneficial to examine why seniors do not volunteer.

IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING AND ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE SENIORS ASSOCIATION

Regardless of age or reasons for volunteering, volunteering is beneficial to any individual. Volunteer work creates an opportunity for individuals to be mentally, physically and socially active in the community. In fact, volunteer work adds to an individual’s quality of life, and it can even lengthen one’s life. Research shows that individuals who volunteer have higher self-esteem, enhanced self-rated health, and protective mortality effects. Therefore, volunteering is an important, and possibly a life altering, activity in which to engage.
Organizations like the Seniors Association are extremely important to seniors and to the community as a whole. These organizations create a venue for seniors to volunteer and participate in activities that are geared toward this particular sector of society, which is not necessarily associated with these opportunities. In fact, it is an organization that illustrates the productive power and potential of seniors. The Seniors Association is organized and run by seniors, which is beneficial for reaching seniors and knowing what seniors need. “Seniors helping seniors” is a motto that the Seniors Association lives by and lives up to. This type of organization keeps seniors in the community mentally, physically and socially active. It is an organization that promotes well-being, maintained health and productive aging.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX A

Kingston Seniors Association Interview Guide

Interview Number: ____________

Interview Date: ______________

Interview Time: ______________

First, I would like to ask you whether you are (please check all that are applicable) a:
__ Member
__ Volunteer
__ Board Member
__ Non Member
__ Other _______________________________

Is anyone else in your household a member of the association (e.g., spouse, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, companion, etc.)
__________________________________?

Does anyone else in your household use the association (e.g., spouse, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, companion, etc.)
__________________________________?

How many times per week/month/year do you visit the Centre? _________________

1. How does the Seniors Association enrich your life?
2. How does the Seniors Association contribute to the quality of life of the community?
3. What programs/services/activities, provided at and/or through the Seniors Association, do you use?
4. What programs/services/activities do you find most useful? (How?)
5. Are there any programs/services/activities that are not available that you think should be available?
6. What do you like most about the Association and its programs/services/activities?
7. Is there anything you would change about the Association and its programs/services/activities? (How?)
8. How do you get to the Seniors Association (e.g., bus, car, Access Bus, etc.)?
9. What would make it easier to get to the Seniors Association?
10. How could public transportation services be improved to help you participate more?
11. Would you make more use of the Association and its programs/services/activities if its hours of operation were extended to evenings?
12. Would you make more use of the Association and its programs/services/activities if its hours of operation were extended to weekends?
13. Do you feel the Association reaches and serves all groups within the community?
14. Is there a group, or groups, you feel are not being served or using the Association?
15. If so, how do you think the Association could reach the identified group?
16. If the Seniors Association were to open a program satellite location – where do you think that should be? (consider what location would be most beneficial for yourself and others)
17. Do you think a satellite location would increase your participation in the Association and its programs/services/activities?
18. What programs/services/activities would you look for at a satellite location?

Optional Questions for Volunteers Only

19. How did you first become a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
20. Why do you continue to volunteer at the Seniors Association?
21. How long have you been a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
22. What do you do as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
23. Do you face any challenges as a volunteer at the Seniors Association?
24. How many hours do you volunteer per week at the Seniors Association?
25. Do you volunteer anywhere else?
26. How many hours in total do you volunteer per week?

Question 23 for All Interviewees.

27. Is there anything else you would like to add/say/comment on?

Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.

Age: _________

Sex: _____ (to be recorded by observation)

Physical disabilities (to be recorded by observation):

_____ Mobility
_____ Agility
_____ Visual impairments
_____ Hearing impairments
_____ Speaking impairments

Marital Status (optional depending on household participation questions):

_____ Single, Never Married
_____ Married
_____ Widowed
_____ Divorced
Living Arrangements (optional depending on household participation questions):

_____ With partner
_____ Alone
_____ Family Member(s)
_____ Retirement Home
_____ Other: _____

What is the Highest Level of Education You Obtained:

_____ Less than High School
_____ High School
_____ Community College
_____ University – Undergraduate
_____ University – Graduate or Professional Degree (Master’s, MBA, Ph.D., MD, etc.)

Please indicate your last paid/unpaid employment position (e.g., teacher, police officer, factory worker, homemaker, etc.):

________________________________________________

Do you still drive your own or your spouse’s car on a regular basis?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Approximate Annual Family Income after Taxes:

_____ Less than $12,999
_____ $13,000 to $49,999
_____ More than $50,000
APPENDIX B

Seniors Association Kingston Region – Evaluation Project

Questionnaire Introduction

We are writing to you to seek your participation in the Seniors Association Kingston Region – An Evaluation being conducted by Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg and Jennifer Bridgen (Master’s Candidate) of the Department of Geography at Queen’s University. Dr. Rosenberg has been asked by the Seniors Association to carry out an independent evaluation to help the Seniors Association understand how it contributes to the quality of life of Kingston’s seniors. This project is being done on a volunteer basis by Dr. Rosenberg on behalf of the Seniors Association and with their cooperation, but at arm’s-length and independently of them. The project has been reviewed by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University.

The overall purpose of the project is to identify and evaluate how the Seniors Association contributes to the quality of life of its members and the community, the current advantages of the Seniors Association with respect to the structure and operation of the facility, transportation, programs and services, and to help create a direction and plan for the future that builds on the Seniors Association’s current advantages.

Information from the questionnaire will be entered into a password protected electronic database and measures will be taken to ensure that there is no possible way to identify any individuals. In all oral presentations and publications resulting from the research, results will only be presented in aggregate form. Only the members of the research team (Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg, Jennifer Bridgen and another one of Dr. Rosenberg’s assistants who will help entering the questionnaire information into the electronic database) will have access to the electronic database. No one from the Seniors Association will have access to the original questionnaires or the electronic database in any form. The original questionnaires will be kept in a locked cabinet for seven years and then destroyed. As the questionnaires will be entirely focused on the nature and characteristics of the Seniors Association and with the safeguards that have been proposed, we do not anticipate that there is any risk, inconvenience or discomfort of any kind that might result should you choose to participate.

The results of the questionnaires will be used to prepare presentations to the Seniors Association and a written report that will be available to the public once the report has been submitted to the Seniors Association. In addition, material from the questionnaires might be used by Jennifer Bridgen in her Master’s thesis. Any additional secondary uses of the data (e.g., other student theses) will be subject to clearance by the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg at (613) 533-6046 or mark.rosenberg@queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, please contact the Acting Head of the Department
of Geography, Dr. Paul Treitz, at (613) 533-6030 or paul.treitz@queensu.ca or the Acting Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Steve Leighton at (613) 533-6081 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

Instructions

You are under no obligation to answer any part or any question. To ensure complete anonymity, please do not provide any information that might lead to your identification. When you have completed the questionnaire, please return the questionnaire in the pre-paid postage envelope to the Seniors Association. The sealed envelopes will be forwarded to Dr. Rosenberg.

1. Please indicate whether your type of membership (please check all that are applicable) a:
   ___ Single Member
   ___ Household Member
   ___ Life member

2. Is anyone else in your household a member of the association (e.g., spouse, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, companion, etc.)
   ____________________________?

3. Does anyone else in your household use the Centre or its services (e.g., spouse, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, companion, etc.)
   ____________________________?

4. How many times per week/month/year do you visit the Centre?
   ____________________________

5. How does the Seniors Association enrich your life (please check all that are applicable)?
   ___ Social interaction (e.g. fellowship, place to go, etc.)
   ___ Practice skills/learn new skills
   ___ Gives a sense of belonging (e.g. gives a sense of purpose, fills void, etc.)
   ___ Keeps you physically and mentally active
   ___ Place to volunteer
   ___ Provides you with useful information (e.g., through Vista)
   ___ Other: ____________________________

6. What do you like most about the Association and its programs/services/activities (please check all that are applicable)?
   ___ Good Governance (e.g. good leadership, good direction, well organized, etc.)
   ___ Social interaction (e.g. fellowship, meeting new people, etc.)
__Atmosphere (e.g. vibrant place, fun, friendly, welcoming, positive, active, etc.)
__Activities/Services (e.g. Vista, special events, wide range of programs and services, etc.)
__Other: ________________________________

7. Is there anything you would change about the Association and/or its programs/services/activities (please check all that are applicable)?
   __No, I would not change anything
   __Volunteering (e.g. increase volunteer responsibility, ensure appreciation, etc.)
   __Ensure accessibility to all groups (e.g. fees stay affordable, convenience, etc.)
   __Other: ________________________________

8. Would you make more use of the Association and its programs/services/activities if its hours of operation were extended to weekends?
   __Yes
   __No
   __Don’t Know/No Opinion

9. Do you feel the Association reaches and serves all groups within the community?
   __Yes
   __No
   __Don’t Know/No Opinion

   If you indicated Yes or Don’t Know/No Opinion, please go to Question 11. Otherwise, please answer Question 10.

10. Is there a group, or groups, you feel are not being served or using the Association (please check all that are applicable)?
    __Isolated/Lonely/ seniors
    __Low income seniors
    __Visible minority seniors
    __Other: ________________________________

11. If the Seniors Association were to open a program satellite location in Kingston, where do you think it should be? (consider what location would be most beneficial for yourself and others)
    __East (e.g., somewhere in Pittsburgh Township)
    __North (e.g., somewhere around Counter and Division)
    __West (e.g., somewhere in Kingston Township)
    __Somewhere else: ________________________________
    __The Seniors Association should not open a program satellite location
    __Don’t Know/No Opinion

   If you indicated that the Seniors Association should not open a program satellite location or Don’t Know/No Opinion, please go to Question 13. Otherwise, please answer Question 12.
12. Do you think a satellite location would increase your participation in the Association and its programs/services/activities?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

13. Age: _____

14. Sex: _____ Male _____ Female

15. Marital Status:
   ___ Single, Never Married
   ___ Married
   ___ Widowed
   ___ Divorced
   ___ Other: ___________________________

16. Living Arrangements:
   ___ With partner
   ___ Alone
   ___ Family Member(s)
   ___ Retirement Home
   ___ Other: ___________________________

17. What is the Highest Level of Education You Obtained:
   ___ Less than High School
   ___ High School
   ___ Community College
   ___ University – Undergraduate
   ___ University – Graduate or Professional Degree (Master’s, MBA, Ph.D., MD, etc.)

18. Please indicate your last paid/unpaid employment position (e.g., teacher, police officer, factory worker, homemaker, etc.):

   ________________________________________________________________

19. Do you still drive your own or your spouse’s car on a regular basis?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

20. Your approximate annual family income after taxes is:
   ___ Less than $12,999
   ___ $13,000 to $49,999
   ___ More than $50,000

21. Is there anything else you would like to add/say/comment on?

   __________________________________________________________________________
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. PLEASE REMEMBER TO RETURN YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE POSTAGE PAID ENVELOPE.
Dear ___________:

We are writing to you to seek your participation in the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation being conducted by Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg and Jennifer Bridgen (Master’s Candidate) of the Department of Geography at Queen’s University. Dr. Rosenberg has been asked by the Seniors Association to carry out an independent evaluation to help the Seniors Association understand how it contributes to the quality of life of Kingston’s seniors. This project is being done on a volunteer basis by Dr. Rosenberg on behalf of the Seniors Association and with their cooperation, but at arms-length and independently of them. The project has been reviewed by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen’s University.

The overall purpose of the project is to identify and evaluate the current advantages and limitations of the Seniors Association with respect to the structure and operation of the facility, transportation, programs and services, and to help create a direction and plan for the future that builds on current advantages and avoids or reduces any identified limitations.

We would like to arrange to meet and interview you. The interview would last no more than one hour and take place in an office at the Seniors Centre. The questions would focus on your participation at the Seniors Centre, how it enhances your quality of life, how the Seniors Centre might improve its activities, and some basic socio-demographic questions.

Should you agree to participate, the interview will be carried out by Jennifer Bridgen, a trained interviewer, who will audio record the interview with your permission and also take notes. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse to answer any or all of the questions asked. You can withdraw your participation at anytime and we will destroy any audio recordings, interview notes, transcriptions or electronic files at your request.

Information from the interview will be entered into a password protected electronic database and measures will be taken to ensure that there is no possible way to identify any individuals. In all oral presentations and publications resulting from the research, results will only be presented in the format agreed by you on the consent form attached with this letter. Only the members of the research team (Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg, Jennifer Bridgen and another one of Dr. Rosenberg’s assistants who will help in the transcription of the recordings and notes) will have access to the electronic database. No one from the Seniors Association will have access to the original interviews in any form. The original interview recordings and notes will be kept in a locked cabinet for seven years and then destroyed. As the interview will be entirely focused on the nature and characteristics of the Seniors Association and with the safeguards that have been proposed, we do not
anticipate that there is any risk, inconvenience or discomfort of any kind that might result should you choose participate.

The results of the interviews will be used to prepare presentations to the Seniors Association and a written report that will be available to the public once the report has been submitted to the Seniors Association. In addition, material from the interviews will be used by Jennifer Bridgen in her Master’s thesis. Any additional secondary uses of the data (e.g., other student theses) will be subject to clearance by the General Research Ethics Board of Queen’s University.

You have been given two copies of the consent form for you to indicate if you would like to participate in the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation. Please keep this letter for your records. Please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for your records and give the other one to Jennifer Bridgen at the time of your interview.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg at (613) 533-6046 or rosenber@post.queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, please contact the Head of the Department of Geography, Dr. Anne Godlewska, at (613) 533-2903 or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6288.

Should you decide that you do want to participate in the interview at anytime prior to the date and time when the interview is supposed to take place, please feel free to call Jennifer Bridgen at (613) 533-6000 ext. 75736 or e-mail her at 0jb25@queensu.ca.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg
Professor of Geography
Principal Investigator, Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation

Enclosures:
Two copies of the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation Consent Form
APPENDIX D

Consent Form – for Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information and I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I am being asked to be interviewed as part of the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation.

I understand that the overall purpose of the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation is to identify and evaluate the current advantages and limitations of the Seniors Association with respect to the structure and operation of the facility, transportation, governance, funding, programs and services, and to help create a direction and plan for the future that builds on current advantages and avoids or reduces any identified limitations.

I understand that there will be no known risk, discomfort or inconvenience associated with being interviewed as part of the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation.

I understand that should I consent to participate, then I will be contacted by telephone or e-mail depending on the instructions I have provided below to arrange the interview.

I understand that confidentiality will be protected by the conditions indicated in the letter of information and the appropriate storage and access of data.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time without any consequences.

I understand that I can contact Dr. Mark W. Rosenberg, the principal investigator with questions about the study at (613) 533-6046. I also understand that for questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this project, I can contact the Head of the Department of Geography, Dr. Anne Godlewska, at (613) 533-2903, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, at (613) 533-6288.

I consent to be interviewed ................................................................. Yes  No.
Name (please print): ________________________________________________
Signature: _________________________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________________

I prefer to be contacted to arrange the interview at the following time, telephone number and/or e-mail address:

Preferred time(s) ___________________________________________________
Preferred telephone number or e-mail address ______________________________
Sample Telephone Script

Hello, my name is _____________________________, I am calling from the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation on behalf of Dr. Mark Rosenberg from Queen’s University. Recently, you returned a consent form indicating your willingness to be interviewed as part of our project. Are you still willing to do so [if yes, continue to next statement. If no, [go to *Statement* at the bottom of the page]? Have you thought of any questions, you would like to ask based on the Letter of Information you have already received or anything else that is now of concern to you? Can I interview you on:

Option 1: Day, Time
Option 2: Day, Time
Option 3: Day, Time

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you.

*Statement* We are sorry to have bothered you and thank you again for your interest in the Seniors Association – Kingston Region – An Evaluation.
### Table 1: Summary Profile of Interviewees (n=38)

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<th>Dimension</th>
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## Table 2: Summary Profile of Volunteer Interviewees (n=23)

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