An exploration of pathways, motivations, and experiences among older Jewish volunteers in Vancouver

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the pathways, motivations, and experiences of older Jewish adults who volunteer within the Jewish community of Vancouver. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-one older adult volunteers (age 55 and over) and two paid volunteer staff within the Jewish community. Theoretical concepts of social capital, generativity, and the life course theory were used to frame and guide this research. Results indicate that older adult volunteers in the Jewish community have life-long volunteer trajectories and are often recruited by fellow community members and peers to volunteer. Participants were motivated to volunteer by factors including self-improvement, to help others (generativity), and Jewish values. Common experiences of volunteering included forming connections with others and the community, working with older adults, leadership, and exploring interests and skills. These findings have potential practice implications for the creation of inclusive, culturally-sensitive volunteer programs for older adults, and how to best recruit and retain older adult volunteers.

Keywords: Volunteerism; Culture; Community Engagement; Judaism; Generativity; Older Adults

Dedication

To Mom, Dad, Emma, Eve, and Kelbey for all of your love and support.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

"Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength."

Betty Friedan

Significant increases in longevity and human life expectancy over the past several decades have allowed individuals to spend an extended amount of time in older age. Rather than viewing this period as a time of decline, dependency, and stagnation, “active aging” is an approach to growing older which focuses on the recognition of older adults as productive, independent, and valuable members of society who can contribute a diversity of skills, experience, and knowledge (The National Seniors Council, 2010). One method by which older adults can increase their level of activity, foster their interests, contribute to their communities, help others, and establish the social connections necessary for good health and well-being in older age is through volunteering.

Volunteering can be broadly defined as “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause” (Wilson, 2000, pg.1), and more specifically, as “unpaid work that benefits others to whom one owes no obligation,” (Gottlieb & Gillespie, 2008, pg.400). These definitions help to distinguish formal volunteering from the similar concept of “informal helping,” an activity that is typically private, and not carried out within the context of a formal organization (Wilson & Musick, 1997). Research on volunteering has become increasingly prominent within the field of gerontology, documenting the positive benefits of the practice, as well as why and how individuals choose to volunteer. For many, volunteering can provide purpose and structure to everyday life, allow for the creation and maintenance of important friendships, and fulfill a desire to help others (Cattan et. al., 2011; Chen, 2016; Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; Pinquart, 2002; The National Seniors Council, 2010). Understanding the patterns and experiences of volunteering for older adults can be considered of particular importance, since research over the past several decades has also confirmed the numerous health, social, and psychological benefits related to volunteerism (Anderson et al., 2014; Barron et al., 2009; Chen, 2016;

Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Kahana et al., 2013; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003).

Despite extensive research on volunteering and older adults, significant gaps remain with regards to the examination of volunteer experiences within ethnocultural minority communities. While studies comparing the rates of volunteerism amongst prominent racial groups (Johnson & Lee, 2017; Gonzales et al., 2016; Sundeen, Garcia, & Raskoff, 2008; Tang, Copeland & Wexler, 2012;) and immigrant populations (Dudley, 2007; Guo, 2014; Meinhard et al., 2011; Scott, Selbee, & Reed, 2006; Thomas, 2012) have been conducted, there has been less concentration on volunteers who belong to specific ethnocultural minority groups, as well as ethnoreligious groups (Dulin et al., 2011; Guo, 2014; The National Seniors Council, 2010). Further, diverse groups of older adults have also been left out of the literature regarding best practices for volunteer recruitment and retention (Sellon, 2014). The purpose of this thesis is to address these research gaps by exploring the volunteer pathways, motivations, and experiences of a specific ethnocultural minority group: Jewish older adults.

1.1. Background: Volunteering in Canada

Recent data collected by Statistics Canada indicates that many Canadians donate their time to help others in need. Results from the 2013 Canadian General Social Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (GSS-GVP) indicate that nearly half of the population (44% or 13.3 million Canadians) aged 15 and over volunteered at least once over the past year (Turcotte, 2015). In total, Canadians were found to have given nearly 2.1 billion volunteer hours to their communities, to those in need, and other recipients, the equivalent of close to 1.1 million full-time jobs (Turcotte, 2015). Of the many individuals who volunteer in Canada, older adults emerge as a significant group. While those aged 55 and over are overall less likely to volunteer compared to younger age cohorts, they tend to give more hours on average than any other age group as “top volunteers” (The National Seniors Council, 2010). In 2013, 41% of Canadians aged 55-64 volunteered at least once per year, with an average of 203 hours per year. Results from the 2013 GSS-GVP also indicated that 38% of Canadians aged 65-74 volunteered at least once per year (with an average of 231 hours per year) and 27% of those aged 75+ volunteered at least once per year (with an average of 196 hours per year). In comparison, 48% of Canadians aged 35-44 volunteering at least once per year, (with an

average of 122 volunteer hours per year) (Turcotte, 2015). Such differences between age groups may reflect the various changes and transitions that take place over the life course; for example, older adult volunteer may have transitioned out of the work force, and as a result may have more hours to dedicate to their volunteer roles. By contrast, younger volunteers may have to dedicate more time to school, paid work, and caregiving roles, leaving less time for volunteering (Sinha, 2015).

Older adults may choose to commit their time to volunteering either “episodically” or on a more regular basis, depending on the importance of the volunteer role or other lifestyle factors. Episodic volunteers might volunteer on a flexible, short term basis, as little as once or twice a year. By contrast, regular volunteers demonstrate a frequent (perhaps weekly) commitment to a specific cause (Sinha, 2015). The majority of volunteers in Canada dedicate themselves to a regular volunteer role, with a weekly job being the most common. Results from the 2013 GSS-GVP indicated that 30% of Canadians volunteer on a weekly basis; 25% volunteered on a monthly basis, and 7% volunteered on a daily basis. The remaining 37% of Canadian volunteers gave their time on a less frequent, episodic basis, which in this case was defined as volunteering between 1-4 times each year (Sinha, 2015). Certain individual characteristics have been shown to increase the likelihood of older adults in Canada beginning or maintaining a volunteer role, including having a higher level of education, frequent religious service attendance, as well as having a driver’s license and owning a vehicle (National Seniors Council, 2010). Higher household income, better health, and age (ie: The “young old” old being more likely to volunteer) have also been determined as predictors of volunteerism among older adults (Choi 2003; Cook & Sladowski, 2013).

Data collected from the 2013 GSS-GVP found that Canadians are most likely to volunteer for social service programs (including residential care homes, mental health services, after school programs for children, and food banks, among other programs); sports and recreation organizations; education and research; and religious organizations. In terms of specific volunteer duties and activities, the most common areas of responsibility for Canadian volunteers included organizing activities; supervising, and coordinating events; helping with fundraising, and sitting on a committee or board (Sinha, 2015). Results from GSS-GVP also found that older adults in Canada were more likely to engage in certain volunteer activities; 42% of volunteers age 55 and over sat on a committee or board, compared to 34% of volunteers aged 35 to 54

and 26% of volunteers aged 15 to 34. Older adult volunteers in Canada were also reported to be more likely to volunteer by providing various forms of health care and support, such as companionship, through a formal organization than younger volunteers (Turcotte, 2015). Thus, volunteering clearly represents an important form of altruistic activity among older adults in Canada, and yet is not fully understood.

1.2. Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the volunteering experiences of older Jewish adults who offer assistance without remuneration to others through formalized volunteer organizations in the Jewish community of Vancouver. This specific ethnocultural minority group was chosen for several reasons. While religion and religiosity have frequently been studied as a motivator for volunteerism (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Clerkin & Swiss, 2013; Jackson, Bachmeir, Wood, & Craft, 1995; Johnston, 2013), these studies do not focus on Judaism and volunteering specifically. This is despite the strong religious and cultural traditions related to supporting community within the Jewish religion (Berkowitz, 2014; Cnaan, Kasternakis, & Wineburg, 1993; Ravid, 2014; Tobin, 2001) and the existence of countless Jewish community and charitable organizations around the world, which often provide volunteer opportunities for individuals, including older adults. As a Jewish individual living in Vancouver, I have had various interactions and volunteer experiences with the Vancouver Jewish community over the years, leading to a strong interest in this particular population and a desire to highlight the contributions that Jewish older adults frequently make to their community.

1.3. Research Questions

1.) What are the pathways to volunteering for older Jewish volunteers in Vancouver?

2.) What are the motivations to volunteer among this group of older adults?

3.) What are the experiences of volunteering [of older Jewish adults who volunteer to help others within a Jewish community setting]?

Chapter 2. Application of Theory

This study utilizes qualitative methodology to explore the pathways, motivations, and experiences of older Jewish adults who volunteer. As is typical for most qualitative research, preconceived theories and models are not tested in this study (Taylor, Bogdan, & Devault, 2016). However, three theoretical concepts: social capital, generativity, and the life course perspective of aging, were utilized to formulate the research questions, interpret the data, and to understand research findings. Descriptions of these theories, and their relationships to volunteering, are presented in the following section.

2.1. Social Capital

Social capital is defined by political scientist Robert Putnam (2000) as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (pg. 2). In his seminal work on social capital theory, "Bowling Alone" (2000), Putnam also describes altruism, or helping others, as a "diagnostic sign of social capital" (pg. 117). Indeed, volunteerism requires that many individuals come together in support of a common cause. To make this happen, a sufficient amount of social capital, that is, mutual trust, social networks, and social norms must be present. These elements of social capital allow for cooperation, teamwork, and reciprocity to take place, all essential features of a volunteer organization. Thus, the more social capital present in a community, the more likely it is that altruistic acts or volunteering are to occur (Putnam, 2000). Social capital can also be described as being cyclical in nature. As previously stated, the presence of social capital in a community helps to promote acts of mutual cooperation such as volunteering. At the same time, when activities such as volunteering take place they help to foster social capital within a community. When community members interact and spend time with one another, a sense of "trustworthiness" begins to grow, followed by acts of reciprocity; doing for others without any expectation of immediate repayment (Sander & Lowney, 2006).

As an ethnoreligious minority group, the Jewish community has been found to have high levels of social capital (Burstein, 2007). This is indicated by factors including

close community ties and a large number of faith and culturally based organizations, including Jewish community centers, Jewish day schools, seniors' centers, and family service agencies. While not a religious experience, participating within the Jewish community by volunteering and building social capital can work to contribute to the well-being and continuance of a spirit of community, to the sense of "being Jewish." (Schlesinger, 2003). The Jewish community of Vancouver has established an extensive number of volunteer and community organizations committed to supporting the local Jewish community and beyond. The theory of social capital can be used to help contextualize the pathways, motivations, and experiences of volunteerism in the Jewish community. A goal of this study is that the information gathered from will help to further understanding of the relationship between volunteering and the construction and maintenance of social relationships and connectedness between older adult individuals and their community.

2.2. Generativity

According to developmental psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of human development (Erikson, 1959), a human lifespan can be characterized by eight distinct stages. During the stage of generativity, adults in mid to late life face the struggle of either giving back to society and thus becoming something greater than themselves, or to continue being self-interested and remain stagnant (Erikson, 1959). Generative individuals are concerned with leaving a legacy and providing for future generations, having spent their previous years establishing an identity for themselves (Son & Wilson, 2015). Several research studies have identified generativity, as well as the related concepts of "helping others" and "giving back to the community," as a primary motivation for older adults to volunteer (American Association of Retired Persons, 2012; de Espanes et al., 2015; McAdams & St. Aubin, 1992; Rossi, 2001; Son & Wilson, 2011; Theurer & Wister, 2010).

In the 1984 work "Outliving the Self: How We Live on in Future Generations," psychologist John Kotre suggests four distinct types of generativity, including a cultural variation. Cultural generativity includes the creation, renovation, and conservation of a "symbol system," or the "mind" of a culture, including its institutions and ideas, that are then passed on as an identity (Kotre, 1984). Ultimately, when you have a sense of belonging to a particular culture, cultural generativity states that you may feel a personal

responsibility to pass it on (Manheimer, 1995). Recent literature on generativity, indeed, suggests that personal values and culture can be common aspects of life that older adults wish to pass on. In a qualitative study exploring legacy as a part of the aging experience, Hunter and Rowles (2005) conducted in-depth interviews with participants aged 31-94. Findings from this study indicated the passing on of personal, social, and cultural values were the most important type of legacy amongst participants. The desire to transmit religious beliefs and cultural values was demonstrated by several participants, including a Jewish couple. These individuals considered their faith and culture as one of the most important aspects of their lives that they could pass on, quoting Hillel the elder as the "epitome" of Jewish belief: "If I am not for myself alone who will be for me, but if I am not for others of what good am I?" Similarly, a study by Warburton and Winterton (2010) explored the cultural erosion experienced by older adults in Australia of Asian descent, and how volunteering and civic engagement helps to maintain cultural role identity and contributes to cultural generativity (Warburton & Winterton, 2010). Volunteering by older adults within the Jewish community can potentially be viewed as culturally generative. Older adults may volunteer with a desire to provide for the future of the Jewish community, and to pass down and preserve Jewish identity and community, indirectly benefiting future generations. The concept of generativity will be used in this study to understand participants whose pathways, motivations, and experiences of volunteering are influenced by a desire to preserve the legacy of their cultural community, to help others, or to give back.

It is important to note the potential overlap between the concepts of generativity and social capital. While these concepts originate from unique theoretical roots, they are not entirely mutually exclusive; both relate to the desire of supporting the success and growth of one's community. One distinguishing feature is that social capital is typically linked to an extrinsic sense of community, that is, individuals may feel motivated to volunteer for the outside rewards of increased social engagement and an ongoing sense of community (Zimmerman, 2015). By contrast, generativity can be understood as being more intrinsically motivated. That is, generativity reflects an individual's understanding of the essential nature and inherent purpose of volunteering, bringing a sense of personal satisfaction to the volunteer rather than external rewards (Zimmerman, 2015).

2.3. The Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective of aging views one's journey through life as a sequence of interconnected events, influenced by the larger social and historical context in which they live (Elder & Johnson, 2003). According to this theory, our later lives are a product of our place in history, the social structure of the world, our own agency, and of the consequences of earlier decisions that we make (Wister & McPherson, 2014). Elder and Johnson (2003) describe five general principles of the life course perspective:

1.) Human development and aging are lifelong processes: many early experiences, meanings, events, and transitions are linked to later life opportunities and experiences.

2.) Agency prevails: individuals construct their own life course through the choices they make and the actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and their personal circumstances.

3.) The life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime. Individuals and birth cohorts at the micro level are affected by large scale macro level historical events, including wars, economic depressions, or natural disasters.

4.) The antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events, and behaviour patterns vary according to when they happen in a person's life. For example, different birth cohorts can be impacted differently by the same historical event.

5.) Lives are lived interdependently, and social historical influences are expressed through these shared relationships; lives are not lived in isolation. Our actions are determined by and influence the actions of those with whom we are closely linked.

In seeking to understand volunteering in later life, the life course perspective considers an older adult's volunteering history, various life events, and role transitions as being instrumental to one's decision to volunteer. For older Jewish adults, there may be particular aspects of their ethnocultural identity and involvement with the Jewish community over the life course that have led them to volunteer in later life. Each of these theories played an important role in the research process and in the interpretation of the

findings related to the pathways, motivations, and experiences of volunteering. The inclusion of social capital theory ensured that this study would include questions surrounding the creation of social networks and social connectedness as a result of volunteering. Generativity theory inspired inquiry related to volunteer motivation and impact, while the life course perspective emphasized the importance of individual's life histories when exploring a volunteer role. Each theory offers a specific perspective on volunteerism among older adults, while also complementing one another, allowing for a well-rounded, unique interpretation of the data.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

This literature review includes qualitative and quantitative studies documenting the pathways, motivations, and experiences related to volunteering, and will synthesize the key findings in these areas. The vast majority of articles focus on volunteering in later life specifically.

3.1. Pathways to Volunteering Among Older Adults

In order to evaluate the current volunteer roles being performed by older adults, it is important to understand the pathways that brought them there in the first place. A recent study by Greenfield & Moorman (2018), using data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study on Aging, focused on identifying the pathways from volunteering in early life to volunteering at an older age. Results indicated that volunteerism in later life was consistently higher for individuals who had also volunteered in their early years. While studies examining patterns of volunteerism over the life course are limited, these findings indicate that being a "joiner" in early life may predict life course volunteer behavior. More common pathways to volunteering explored in the literature include belonging to a religious community and having high social capital (ie: community ties, various connections with others). In a study exploring the frequency and effectiveness of volunteer recruitment within close-knit religious groups, Merino (2013), describes how volunteer recruitment often takes place within personal networks, such as religious communities. Such organizational involvement works to expand one's number of social ties and relationships with others, provides individuals access to volunteer opportunities, or may perhaps even require volunteering as a part of membership (Mireno, 2013). Paik & Navarre-Jackson (2011) also found religious involvement to be associated with a higher probability of "being asked" to volunteer. Other studies on volunteering have also found "being asked" to be one of the strongest predictors of volunteering (Bowman, 2004; Brown et al., 2011; Tang & Morrow-Howell, 2008)

3.2. Motivation to Volunteer Among Older Adults

When asked about reasons and motivations for volunteering on the General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating (2013), 93% of Canadians

surveyed expressed a desire to contribute to their communities through volunteering. Other motivations for volunteering included the desire to utilize and practice specific skills and experience (77%); having a personal connection to the volunteer cause (60%); to improve their own sense of well-being (52%); to network and meet people (45%), and to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (18%) (Sinha, 2015). In the following section, I will highlight three examples of motivating factors for older adults to volunteer that are of particular importance to this study.

3.2.1. Volunteering to Help Others and Give Back

Findings from the 2012 American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Survey in Civic Engagement suggest that older adults volunteer to have an impact, that is, giving back to the community, to help those in need, and making a difference in their own neighbourhood and community. A study by de Espanes et al. (2015) explored the motivations and commitment to volunteering among Argentinian adults and found that older adult participants were more likely to view volunteering as a way to "unselfishly help others" (pg. 157), and therefore, to volunteer due to generative concerns. Similarly, results from a study by Martinez et al. (2006) on older volunteers in Baltimore public schools identified "helping children," "giving back," and "leaving a legacy" as key motivational factors, with 67% of participants citing "generative motives" for volunteering. When asked about the perceived benefits of volunteering, Morrow-Howell, Hong, and Tang (2009) describe how 90% of the older adults in their qualitative study felt that the community and people served by the volunteer program were "better off" (pg. 96), as a result of their volunteer efforts. Volunteering is an effective way for older adults to become more community-minded and engaged with their communities, as well as to meet individuals from different backgrounds and walks of life.

3.2.2. Volunteering as a Social/Community Activity

Older adults may volunteer for social reasons, for example to foster new relationships, expand their social network, to spend time with friends, and to become more socially engaged in their communities (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tryon, 2007; Martinez, 2006; Morrow-Howell et al., 2014; National Seniors Council, 2010; Okun & Schultz, 2003). Results from the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that 56% of older seniors (aged 75+) and 52% of younger seniors

(aged 65 to 74) indicated they volunteered because their friends volunteered, while 58% of older seniors and 55% of younger seniors volunteered to network and meet people. Okun and Schultz (2003) conducted a study to determine the influence of age on volunteer motivation, and found that as age increases, social motivation, that is, volunteering to strengthen one's social relationships, also increases (Okun & Schultz, 2003). A 2014 study conducted by Morrow-Howell et al., explored the social and civic activity of older adults following a period of four years spent volunteering for the Experience Corps. In the follow-up period, it was found that a large number of the older adult volunteers had become more active in their communities in various ways: 16% of the volunteers reported they had started a new job, 53% had taken another volunteer position in addition to the Experience Corps, 40% had begun a community activity, and 39% took a class or enrolled in an educational program. When questioned as to how their volunteer role in the Experience Corps had influenced their new community activities, 71% of volunteers reported that volunteering had increased their confidence, 76% said it had increased their understood importance of participation in organized activities, and 40% said they had made social connections with other volunteers that led them to these new activities (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014)

When discussing such examples of volunteer motivation as social and community engagement, as well as the desire to give back to one's community and help others, the overlap between the theoretical concepts of generativity and social capital is clear. Aspects of volunteer pathways, motivations, and experiences might be related to preserving the future and success of a community, social engagement with others, leaving a legacy etc., thus emulating both social capital and generativity. Martinez et al, (2006) studied the experiences of older adults volunteering for the "Experience Corps," a national program that brings older adults into elementary schools to work with children, over a four-year period. When asked about perceived benefits of this volunteer experience, as well as their motivations to take on this volunteer role, participants described both generative ("giving back," "leaving a legacy, "etc.) and non-generative motivations. Non-generative motivations among volunteers included having something to do, a reason to get out of the house, interaction with other people, as well as to find social support, to make new friends, get together with existing friends, and to find other people with common interests (Martinez et al., 2006). Indeed, volunteering among older

adults has often been found to lead to both the formation of new social connections and increased community involvement.

3.2.3. Volunteering and Religion

Religious participation and involvement can also work to encourage or motivate volunteerism in several ways. For example, general religious values such as charity, service, and "loving thy neighbour" can encourage individuals to help and assist those in need through volunteerism. In addition, involvement within religious organizations and institutions often results in a greater number of volunteer opportunities being presented to the individual, thus making volunteering more likely (Ammerman, 2005). In his 1991 work "Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves" (1991), Robert Wuthnow argues: "Many people value compassion because they have been taught to in their churches, synagogues, fellowship halls, meeting places...these organizations command valuable resources for mobilizing people, turning their good intentions into concrete actions, so the needy are actually helped." (pg. 284). Numerous research studies have sought to determine the connection between various aspects of religiosity (including religious participation, attendance, denomination, etc) and volunteerism (Becker & Dhingra, 2001; Clerkin & Swiss, 2013; Johnston, 2013; Loveland & Park, 2008; Monsma, 2007; Okun et al., 2015).

While these studies effectively document religion as a key motivator towards volunteer activity, they often fail to capture the experiences of older adult volunteers, as well as of individuals belonging to religious denominations outside of Christianity (such as Jewish individuals). Furthermore, none of these studies approach the proposed connection between volunteering and religiosity in a deeper contextual manner. For instance, highlighting the experiences and perceptions of the volunteers themselves, and how their religious association and beliefs perhaps influence their volunteer role, and how in turn, their religious identity is impacted by their volunteer role. This thesis fills this gap in research by highlighting the experiences of older adult volunteers in the Jewish community in an in-depth, exploratory manner, and by asking participants how volunteering has impacted their connection to the Jewish community, their Jewish identity, and related experiences.

3.3. Experiences of Volunteering

This thesis also aims to explore volunteer experience, and it is thus important to cover literature on the various effects volunteering can have on older adults. Volunteering can bring profound meaning and purpose into an individual's life, as well as positive benefits for health and well-being. These domains of experience are addressed in separate sections below.

3.3.1. Meaning and Purpose

Dedicating oneself to a volunteer role can bring a sense of meaning and purpose. Bradley (1999) describes how volunteering can provide a way to give meaning to the lives of older adults and "a reason to get up each morning." Indeed, because a volunteer is able to exercise personal choice with regards to what their volunteer role will be, it is a way to commit to and express personal values, goals, and life perspective (Bradley, 1999). In a report prepared by Volunteer Canada, Cook and Sladowksi (2013) explain the ways in which volunteer roles can potentially provide structure and purpose to life for older adults at a time when work and family demands are lessening. In examining the experience of volunteering in relation to aspects of a paid work, Nichols & Ralston (2012) describe various rewards of volunteering for participants, including structured time, being a source of personal status and identity, and enforcing regular activity, among others. Varma et al. (2015) found older adult literacy volunteers for school children to describe feeling more worthwhile and accepted, as well as having something to offer to other people. For older adults who are going through transitionary periods such as retirement, the loss of a spouse, or bereavement, such increases in self-confidence and ability may be even more beneficial.

3.3.2. Social Experience of Volunteering

For older adults, volunteering can provide the acquisition of improved interpersonal skills, deepen social networks, increase access to information and support, and reduce the likelihood of social isolation (National Seniors Council, 2010). Research indicates that an increase in social networks and a sense of increased social engagement can be gained by older adults who volunteer (Chen, 2016; Morrow-Howell, Lee, McCrary, & McBride, 2014; Morrow-Howell, Hong, & Tang, 2009). Mui et al. (2013),

explored a volunteer project for Chinese immigrant older adults in New York City, in which they would provide supportive telephone calls to caregivers of ill relatives within the Chinese community. The program, “Phone Angel” was created using the guidance of social capital theory, with the aim that volunteers and recipients would develop trust and confidence in each other, resulting in a mutually supportive relationship, increased social engagement, and empowerment for all parties involved. After 6 months of telephone calls, results from focus groups and questionnaires indicated that Phone Angel volunteers had enlarged their social circle of friends, developed better relationships with their family, and had become more involved in social activities.

3.3.3. Volunteering, Health and Well-Being

Research has also indicated that older adults who volunteer often experience improvements to their health and well-being. Studies examining the benefits of volunteering in older adults have found evidence of increased well-being, life satisfaction, higher perceived health, quality of life, and decreases mental health conditions such as depression (Choi & Kim, 2011; Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Morrow-Howell et al., 2003; The National Seniors Council, 2010; Theurer & Wister, 2010). When considering the various aspects of a volunteer role, including helping others, contributing to your community, participating in a personal, enjoyable activity, it is easy to see why feelings of increased well-being and life satisfaction might occur. Volunteers are often met with gratitude and social recognition for their efforts, which can work to enhance one’s sense of self and confidence. A volunteer role has the potential to increase an individual’s sense of “mattering,” promoting positive role identity, fostering a sense of self-efficiency, and allowing for adaptation to the various stresses and transitions that might accompany aging (Kahana et al., 2013). Numerous research studies have also linked volunteering to increased longevity for older adults (Harris & Thorenson, 2005; Luoh & Herzog, 2002; Musick, Herzog, & House, 1999). Other research has also reported lower rates of morbidity in older adults who volunteer, including decreased rates of hypertension (Burr, Han, & Tavares, 2016; Burr, Tavares, & Mutchler, 2011) and hip fracture risk (Warburton & Peel, 2008). While my goal for this thesis is not to measure health, psychological, or social benefits of volunteerism, highlighting such benefits provides evidence for the importance of volunteer research promoting volunteerism among older adults. Further,

similar impacts on health and well-being may arise as part of volunteer experiences in this study.

3.4. The Jewish Community Context

Literature related to the volunteer experience supports the notion of volunteering in older age. However, there are specific populations of older adults for which the benefits and experiences related to volunteering are largely unknown due to lack of research, including the target population for this study: Jewish older adults. For purposes of preserving culture, embracing and maintaining ethnic identity, building relationships with other Jewish persons, and passing down traditions and culture to the next generation, older Jewish adults may be inclined to volunteer. Judaism, as will be discussed in the following sections, as well as the Jewish community, which includes numerous health, social, family, religious, and educational services and organizations, is highly oriented towards volunteering and serving others. The following sections will describe this target population in greater detail, including the importance of community and helping others in need.

3.4.1. Judaism

> *"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?" Ethics of the Fathers, 1:14*

Founded over 3,500 years ago in the Middle East, Judaism is thought to be one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world. The earliest history of the Jewish people is described in scriptures of the Old Testament, a collection of religious writings by ancient Israelites. It is in these writings that Abraham, the earliest ancestor of the Jewish people, is promised to become the father of a great nation and its future people, the rightful owners of the land of Canaan (now Israel) (Cohn-Sherbok, 2006). The 613 laws governing the Jewish way of life, covering family relationships, social interactions, and more, are known collectively as the Torah. While the majority of modern Jewish people are not fully observant of the Jewish laws, many engage in some form of traditional rituals and customs, and thus contribute to a sense of collective Jewish belonging (Cohn-Sherbok, 2006). Examples of such activities might include the celebration and observance of the high holy days, attending synagogue with their families, hosting a

Shabbat dinner on a Friday night, or attending a class at the local Jewish Community Centre. The sociocultural connection to Judaism, the feelings of "belonging" to a particular group, is often viewed as more powerful than the religious aspects of Jewish identity. The commonality, shared experience, history, and ancestry is a powerful force binding Jewish individuals together. In a study by Altman, et al (2010) exploring Jewish ethnic identity, participants described their connection to Judaism in ways such as "a connection to all other Jews, a connection to something that's a lot bigger than me specifically and that I can count on" and be "part of a chain, you're always a link on a chain, you always have the roots where you've come from and no matter what you do you can't deny those" (pg. 166).

3.4.2. The Jewish Elderly in Canada

With approximately 400,000 individuals, Canada has one of the largest Jewish populations in the world (Shahar, 2014), following Israel (6,451,000), the United States (5,700,000) and France (456,000) (Dashefsky & Sheskin, 2018), relative to total population size. The majority reside in the provinces of Ontario (57.9%) and Quebec (23.9%), particularly in large cities, such as Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Montreal. Smaller percentages of the population live in British Columbia (8.9%), Alberta (4%), and Manitoba (3.7%) (Shahar, 2014). Between 2001 and 2011, the Jewish community of Canada increased by 4.7% (Shahar, 2014) and the total population of Jewish individuals over the age of 65 grew from 62,125 to 66,280. As of 2014, it was estimated that older adults make up 16.9% of the Canadian Jewish community, a figure matching the current proportion of older adults in the overall Canadian population. Approximately 51.7% of Jewish seniors are aged 65-74 (34,295 individuals) and 33% are aged 75-84 (21,860 individuals) (Shahar, 2014).

3.4.3. Helping Others and Community Among the Jewish people

The list of commandments in the Torah ask Jewish people "To love all human beings who are of the covenant," "To not stand by idly when a human life is in danger," "To relieve a neighbor of his burden and help to unload his beast," "Not to refrain from maintaining a poor man and giving him what he needs," "To give charity according to one's means," and "To love the stranger" (Rich, 2011). The Torah does not present these values as lofty ideals or goals to be had for a distant future, but rather as values

that should be learned and demonstrated by all Jewish people. The Hebrew phrases "Tikkun Olam," and "Tzedakah," that is, to heal, repair, and transform the world by helping others, and to practice the virtues of justice and righteousness, are principles commonly referred to within the Jewish religion and often associated with Jewish charitable and community organizations (Cnaan, Kasternakis, & Wineburg, 1993; Tobin, 2001). Judaism not only expects its people to believe, but to act as well; Tzedakah is distinguished by being a "must, not a should, a command, not a consideration" (Tobin, 2001, pg. 11). Over thousands of years, these commandments have shaped Jewish beliefs, customs, and the everyday behaviour of the Jewish people.

The Jewish people are often described as a "Peoplehood," with a collective identity, belonging to an extended family with a purpose (Berkowitz, 2014). This collective identity is said to be the result of the long, shared history of Jewish people over centuries of success, oppression, and challenges, as well as the continued shared responsibility for the future Jewish population and the desire to improve the world (Ravid, 2014). The importance of Jewish community today is supported and facilitated by numerous Jewish organizations and institutions, including philanthropic organizations, charities, schools, community centers, and synagogues, many of which provide spaces for learning, growth, and support within Jewish communities around the world. It is within such a community in which the importance of ethnic identity, solidarity with others, heritage, and the constant betterment of your community and the world is taught and reinforced, that acts such as volunteering and helping those in need are able to flourish. However, it is understood that not all individuals identifying with being Jewish will internalize these belief systems to the same extent.

Chapter 4. Methods

This chapter presents the research methods used to explore the pathways, motivations, and experiences of older adult volunteers in the Jewish community of Vancouver. This study utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically, in-depth semi-structured interviews with volunteers and paid volunteer staff, to gain an in-depth understanding of the research questions.

4.1. Research Design

An exploratory, qualitative research approach was utilized in order to contextualize the various aspects of older adults' volunteer experiences. More specifically, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, exploring their pathways to volunteering, their motivations to begin and continue volunteering, and their experiences related to their previous and current volunteer role(s). Qualitative methodology can be considered particularly important when studying older adults, an increasingly complex and diverse group of individuals, among which multiple realities may be present (Rowles & Schoenberg, 2002). This study attempts to expand on the current knowledge in this body of research by including qualitative, descriptive accounts of older adults' experiences of volunteering, guided by the theoretical concepts of social capital, generativity, and the life course perspective. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix A).

4.2. Study Participants

4.2.1. Volunteer Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling, a non-random method of selecting research participants (Sargeant, 2012) was utilized for this study. In the months leading up to this study, connections were formed by the principal investigator with organization leaders from the Jewish Community Centre Greater Vancouver (JCCGV), the Jewish Seniors Alliance (JSA), and the Kehila Society of Richmond. These individuals were first contacted by telephone or email and were then met by the principal investigator in person. JCCGV and JSA board meetings were also attended by the principal investigator, in order to

make the study objectives known to the board members of these organizations. All three of the organization leaders agreed to assist with participant recruitment.

After being presented with a description of the study purpose and the eligibility criteria for participants, each organization leader was then asked to reach out to volunteers whom they felt would be interested in participating by emailing them a brief description of the study, as well as a recruitment flyer (See Appendix D). During this time, recruitment flyers were also placed on the bulletin boards at the JCCGV, and an advertisement was placed in a local magazine published by the JSA. Interested volunteers then contacted the principal investigator by telephone or email to arrange an interview. Volunteers were primarily recruited through local community contacts (15), snowball sampling (5), and the magazine advertisement (1), (See Appendix E). Eligibility for this study was restricted to individuals age 55 and over, who identified as Jewish, who were currently committed to a volunteer role within the Jewish community of Vancouver and spoke English fluently. The age of 55 was selected as the minimum age of participation for several reasons. It was determined by the principal investigator that including individuals aged 55 and over would result in a large potential pool of participants in the Jewish community, as well as for a wide range of age categories to be represented in this study. Further, the 2013 GSS-GVP (Turcotte, 2015), a Statistics Canada report used to provide relevant background information and justification for this particular study, uses age 55 when presenting data on older adult volunteers and their unique contributions to volunteering in Canada.

Over the course of the recruitment process, an effort was made to include participants from a wide variety of volunteer roles. In total, 21 volunteers consented and participated in this study. The types of volunteer roles filled by participants varied widely. Some had chosen “hands-on” type experiences, working directly with children or older adults, while others took on more behind the scenes duties, working on an administrative level of an organization, or serving on a board. A few participants had roles that required weekly preparation and research on their part, requiring time outside the scope of their actual volunteer role. The majority of participants gave time to organizations on a regular, committed basis. Participants had been committed to one single role within the Jewish community for a number of years.

Of the 21 participants, one was in the age category of 55-64, nine were between the ages of 65-74 and ten were between the ages of 75-84. Nine of the 21 participants were born outside of Canada. The majority (14) of participants were married or in common-law relationships, five were widowed, one was divorced/separated, and one was never married. Eight had completed high school, eight had attended college or university, and five had completed graduate school. The majority of participants (18) self-rated their health as being "good," "very good," or "excellent," while one rated their health as "fair," and two did not know. Of the 21 participants, 18 were retired; two continued to work part-time, and one remained working full-time. All names of study participants in this report are pseudonyms, which are used to maintain confidentiality.

Table 1. Jewish Community Volunteer Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Primary Volunteer role(s)
James	68	Administrative position on the board of a seniors outreach program
Robert	71	Volunteer for a seniors outreach program
John	85	Volunteer assisting Holocaust survivors
Richard	89	Executive position within a seniors outreach program
Linda	72	Volunteer for a seniors outreach program
Barbara	81	Volunteer for a museum and historical society
Judith	81	Volunteer for a seniors outreach program
Joseph	83	Volunteer for a discussion group program
Betty	74	Volunteer for a museum and historical society
Susan	73	Volunteer with synagogue Sisterhood group
Charles	75	Administrative position on a seniors advisory committee

David	73	Administrative position for a historical society
Shirley	79	Executive position for senior women's outreach program
William	78	Volunteer for Torah study; executive position on a discussion group program
Janet	84	Volunteer for seniors outreach program
Walter	74	Volunteer at a Holocaust education Centre
Gloria	81	Volunteer for a seniors outreach program
Diane	70	Volunteer for a seniors outreach program
Karen	57	Volunteer with synagogue Sisterhood group
Gary	71	Volunteer recreation leader
Sharon	80	Volunteer on seniors advisory committee, administration level position on board of an adult day centre

4.2.2. Paid Volunteer Staff Participant Selection

In order to further understand the volunteer opportunities available for older adults within the Jewish community, interviews were conducted with paid staff members who actively recruit and supervise older adult volunteers within the Jewish community. Two staff members in the community were contacted by the principal investigator via email and were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview. Both staff members that were contacted consented and agreed to participate in this study.

4.3. Data Collection

4.3.1. Interviews with Volunteer Participants

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with older adult volunteers were the primary source of data collection for this study. Beginning on September 8th, 2017, interviews

were scheduled with participants at their convenience, commencing on October 28th, 2017. Interviews took place at the home of each participant. Following the completion of informed consent (See Appendix C), each participant was asked to complete a socio-demographic background questionnaire. (See Appendix A), in which participants reported their age, gender, immigration history, family and children, volunteer history, education, and self-rated health. Following the completion of the background questionnaire, participants were then asked questions from the in-depth, semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix A). The interview guide focused on participant pathways, motivations, and experiences of volunteering within the Jewish community. With the consent of each participant, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were given assurances of confidentiality, freedom to withdraw at any time, and anonymity.

4.3.2. Interviews with Paid Volunteer Staff

This study also conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with two individuals currently working in paid positions within the Jewish volunteer organizations chosen (see Appendix B). These interviews were conducted to gain further insight on the experiences of a volunteer within this community, and focused on topics including recruitment of volunteers, volunteer characteristics, and the observed benefits of volunteering for the older adults whom they supervised. With the consent of both participants, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were given assurances of confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, and anonymity. Following the interviews with volunteers and staff, I wrote detailed reflexive notes, detailing my observations from the interview, emotions of the participant, and pre-conceived biases, if any, that I felt I came into the interview with (Higginbottom & Cruz, 2013).

4.4. Data Analysis

Express Scribe, an audio player software designed to assist in the transcription of audio recordings, was used to help transcribe the in-depth interview recordings for this study. Express Scribe allowed for the control of audio playback, assisted in managing interview files, and taking notes. Following the verbatim transcription of each interview, analysis of the interviews was performed using both handwritten notes and qualitative

analysis software (NVivo). The process of open coding was used for data analysis, a practice Corbin and Strauss (2008) define as “opening up data to all potentials and possibilities contained within” (pg. 160). This involved reading through the data line by line, building concepts and ascribing a conceptual name, or a “code” to describe my understanding of various portions of the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). At this stage of the coding process, three of the interview transcripts were reviewed together by the principal investigator and one thesis committee member. This process helped to establish coding techniques and early agreement of themes (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). During the open coding process, notes were taken of “recurring regularities” in the data, patterns that could potentially be sorted into categories (Quinn-Patton, 2015). Once these codes and potential categories were created, the interview transcripts were read and re-read to ensure refinement of the codes and categories. Codes were then summarized and amalgamated into more defined categories based on the connections between them in a process termed axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Analytic memos analytic were also taken during this process, detailing these changes and noting the potential patterns emerging. Guided by the major research question of this study, the refined codes were eventually placed under broad categories of volunteer experience, pathways to volunteering, and motivations to volunteer. Following the creation of these broad categories, the process of focused coding began. This process involved the analysis of patterns within each of the three categories to form themes, each representing the meanings of the patterns that emerged (Charmaz, 2002). Finally, the themes were interpreted and described as the study findings.

4.4.1. Personal Relationship with the Setting/Community

As a self-identified Jewish person living in Vancouver, I have had a relationship with the Vancouver Jewish community for most of my life. I have participated in several youth programs over the years at the Jewish Community Centre, and most recently, began assisting the seniors program coordinator at the centre as a summer student. This experience motivated my interest in exploring the ways in which older adults could potentially become involved within the Jewish community, while also allowing me to build contacts and rapport with authority figures of local Jewish organizations, and with community members. These previously established relationships helped to facilitate access to several third-party contacts who were able to assist in my recruitment of

volunteers within the Jewish community. Prior to data collection, I also met with directors, executive members, and volunteer coordinators of the organizations that provide volunteer opportunities for older adults in the Jewish community.

4.4.2. Reflexivity

Due to my pre-existing relationship with the Jewish community, the practices of reflexivity and self-reflection became a priority during the research process. Higginbottom and Cruz (2013) describe reflexivity as "being focused on making explicit and transparent the effect of the researcher, methodology, and tools of data collection on the process of the research and the research findings" (pg. 42). When conducting qualitative research and thus making subjective interpretations of the phenomena in question, it is difficult to not let your own ideas and preconceived notions interfere or influence what you see and interpret. This is especially true if the researcher is familiar with, or has personal experiences with the culture being studied (Higginbottom & Cruz, 2013), as I do with the Jewish community of Vancouver Berger (2015) explains how reflexivity allows the researcher to "carefully monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research, and maintain the balance between personal and universal" (pg. 220). Due to my previous position of working with older adults within the Jewish community and my current position as a researcher, it was essential that I was aware of any potential biases, personal beliefs, or experiences that would the influence the ways in which I would collect and interpret the data. Over the course of the research process, I made a consistent effort to be aware of my own thoughts and feelings, both personal and professional, and how they might impact my work. I practiced self-reflection and reflexivity through the use of journaling throughout the data collection and analysis process, which allowed me to record and navigate any personal beliefs or preconceived notions I had regarding the Jewish volunteer experience.

Chapter 5. Findings

This chapter presents key findings from the data collected from interviews with 21 older adult volunteer participants, and two staff who work with volunteers. Findings were sorted according to themes within three categories related to the research questions: pathways to volunteering, motivations to begin and continue to volunteer, and volunteer experiences. Each of these categories contains significant, relevant themes that together illustrate the unique volunteer journeys undertaken by each participant.

5.1. Category 1: Pathways to Volunteering for Older Adult Volunteer Participants

In order to have an in-depth understanding of people's volunteer roles, it is essential to understand the factors that led them to pursue this opportunity, and how they came across it in the first place. Amongst the participants interviewed, two dominant themes related to volunteer pathways emerged: A long standing history of volunteerism throughout their lives, and secondly, the experience of being asked to volunteer by fellow members of the Jewish community to join a particular cause as a volunteer.

5.1.1. Life-long Life Course Trajectories

For the majority of the participants interviewed, volunteering was not a recently discovered pastime. Rather volunteering, in one shape or form, had been a consistent part of their lives for many years, and for some several decades; for many volunteering could be traced back to childhood or adolescence. Upon reflection, having parents, or other close family members that volunteered seemed to be of particular importance when it came to influence. Indeed, participants recalled being included in or tagging along with their parents to help other people in need when they were very young. According to participants, having this kind of upbringing gave them a sense of duty to give back, and a natural inclination to volunteer. For example, Gloria, 81, a regular volunteer for a seniors activity and education group at her synagogue, described how she often observed the community work done by her father as a child:

> Well I quite like the idea of helping. I always have, I'm kind of nurturing. And I like…I am a life-long learner, and I like to pass that along. My dad was always very into community work. Always. And my mother wasn't so much, but in those days, mothers didn't do that. But so…I was always kind of brought up working with the community. We always had people at our house, because he was the president of the local social housing society. Well he was in charge of all that area. At that time that is where we lived. And I so I felt…no that it was my duty, and that is just what I did.

Another life-long volunteer, Linda, 72, described tagging along with her father to his various philanthropic endeavors:

> I grew up with a father who was a great philanthropist, and he always took me around with him. I started volunteering at a very early age. My father used to work in an adoption home, and he had meetings every Sunday morning. And I would go with him. I just grew up with it. It's a part of my life.

For these participants, their pathways were fostered at an early age by their parents, who acted as role models for community service and helping others. As a result, volunteer work became ingrained into their everyday lives, and it is now a part of who they are. John, 85, articulated the kind of impact that parents can have on their children with regards to giving back:

> I saw people like my mother doing all kinds of volunteer activity. And it was quite natural. I think more is achieved by a parent through personal example, rather than lecturing. Children absorb by osmosis what is happening around them. If you sit around the dining room table and you have parents boasting about how they got away with cheating on their income tax, then you get the feeling it's okay. If instead you sit around, and you hear your mom talk about how the National Institute for the Blind has bought her this machine called a "brailler" so she can translate college texts into braille for blind people. Then you get the picture that this is something your mother gets a kick out of doing. Everybody in my family has always looked for volunteer activities.

Whether they were inspired by their parents at a young age or not, most of these life-long volunteers' early experiences began within the Jewish community, with many

holding several roles over the years. Some examples include volunteering on the ritual committee or the board of their synagogue, visiting residents at the local Jewish residential care facility, fundraising with the Jewish federation, or assisting with programs at the Jewish community centre. Some also traced this back to a very young age; the Jewish community, similar to other organized religions, typically offers several ways for young people to become involved, with organizations such as United Synagogue Youth, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBG and AZA), and Young Judea, among others. An interesting trend among the female participants interviewed was the expectation in their young adulthood to join and participate in traditional Jewish Women's groups. These include Hadassah-Wizo, a volunteer fundraising organization for community and health programs in Israel; the National Council of Jewish Women, a service organization that provides help and assistance in local communities, and Sisterhood groups, which are formed at local synagogues and take on various tasks such as fundraising, organizing social events, and educating young children. It was through such groups that these women were able to pursue social and leadership opportunities, often as newlyweds and young mothers, outside of their home and family, and ultimately begin their volunteer journey. Gloria, 81, described the important outlet volunteering became for her as a younger wife and mother, stating,

> When my children were young, because I had them very close, I had the four of them in five years....and I didn't have help, and I didn't want help, I wanted to bring them up myself. So, and my husband was very helpful, in that he supported me joining these groups...I joined Hadassah, B'nai Brith, I was president of everything. And I was president of the Sisterhood at the temple...everything. Because it was an adult outlet for me. Because I spent all of my time with the kids, and this was to be with adults.

Another participant, Shirley, 79, had a similar experience of becoming involved as a young woman with children at home:

> I was very lucky, because I started off with the Hadassah-Witzo. And I was a bride at the time, well I started going when I had small children. But it was a social thing at that time, and getting involved in the organization, and they had a phenomenal leadership courses and seminars, and this kind go thing. And this is what developed as I went along.

For participants in this study, volunteer experiences began as a result of examples set by authority figures, as well as social expectations set by the community. The significant influence that other people can have on one's decision to become a volunteer will also be discussed in the next section.

5.1.2. Expectations from Others: "I Was Asked, So I Got Involved"

The second theme in this category is the experience of "being asked." When drawing on the events leading up to their current role, or previous roles as a volunteer, participants recalled being recruited or called upon by other members of the Jewish community to participate in a cause, join a group, or dedicate their skills and interests to a worthy organization. Rather than having to seek out a volunteer opportunity for themselves, participants were approached by others to help out. This phenomenon also allowed participants to move from one volunteer role to another over the years, with new opportunities frequently being presented to them. This common experience, with one volunteer role often begetting another, reflects the idea that by being involved in a tight community with high social capital, one will likely be exposed to opportunities that are not made available to others. For example, one participant, Robert, 71, experienced being approached to volunteer shortly after arriving in Vancouver from eastern Canada. He recalled how after attending a community event put on by a local volunteer organization for seniors, he was approached by the president emeritus of the organization:

> There is one very dynamic individual….the founder and president of the organization, and also the president emeritus. He met me at one of their outreach programs, and he says to me, 'We need you, please come talk to me.' Before I knew what happened, I was asked to be on the board of directors, two weeks later I was on the executive, and three weeks later I was taking the volunteer training course. And there was no looking back for me.

Another participant, Walter, 74, had a similar story to tell when recalling the events that led to his current volunteer role in the Jewish community. Several years ago, after organizing a musical act for a Holocaust Remembrance Day event, he was introduced to the executive director of the Holocaust Education Centre. Following the performance, the director approached him with an idea:

> Well Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) comes up once a year, and the Holocaust Education Centre asked me to have the choir sing. And the first year we were there, we sang, and then afterward we sat around and listened to survivor speakers. And we learnt about what was going on at the center. And then one day, the executive director there called me up and asked 'how would you like to come in and be a volunteer?' And I said, 'that's the greatest thing that I would love to do.'

As indicated by these examples, membership in the Jewish community can often lead to further involvement, as individuals are made more aware of the needs of the community, and thus opportunities to help out.

5.2. Category 2: Motivations to Begin and to Continue Volunteering for Older Adult Volunteer Participants

All participants in this study were committed to regular volunteer roles in the Jewish community, with the majority having been committed to volunteer roles for many years or even decades. In addition to understanding the pathways and events leading up to these volunteer roles, another concept I explored during the interviews was the motivation surrounding these volunteers; why exactly, did volunteers choose these volunteer roles in particular, and what brought them back each week? Three substantive themes related to motivation and volunteer commitment will be described in this section*: volunteering is personally rewarding, Generativity and volunteering as a part of Jewish life.*

5.2.1. Volunteering is Personally Rewarding

Participants described the various benefits that volunteering had brought to their lives. For some, volunteering made them feel like they were doing something meaningful for others, had accomplished something important, or had given them feelings of purpose. Several volunteers described how volunteering allowed them to keep busy and productive, fulfilling their desire to try and learn new things following their retirement. Many also described the value of mental stimulation in older age, and how volunteering allowed them to keep their minds active. These extrinsic motives to volunteer, that is, a

desire to volunteer in order to continue obtaining some kind of outcome, will be discussed in the next section.

"When I Do Something for Somebody Else, I Feel Better About Me"

For many participants, the reason they continued in their volunteer role was simple: It made them feel good about themselves. Providing support or help to others, elicited feelings of "satisfaction," "fulfillment," "gratification," "pleasure," "meaning," "accomplishment," "enrichment," "respect," and general enjoyment from participants. For most of the participants interviewed, their volunteer role involved working with recipients face-to-face, rather than a more "behind-the-scenes" type of role, allowing them to see improvements and their impact first hand, potentially contributing to such positive and rewarding feelings. For example, one participant, John, 85, recalled an instance when he was volunteering with a local police force. He had received a call from a worried, frantic family of a man with Alzheimer's, who had wandered away from home and was now missing. With the help of other volunteers, John located the man and was able to bring him home to his family. Being able to provide such a remarkable act of service made John feel good about himself: "And off he goes home, and his family felt good. So we felt good. We did something. So sometimes it was….great stuff. And I did that for a long time." Participants described similar rewarding experiences in their volunteer roles, giving them personal gratification and motivating them to continue. Another participant, Gary, 71, described the feelings of satisfaction he gained from leading a weekly card game for older men at the local community center twice a week, stating,

> At times if I am feeling down or doubting myself, or my worth so to speak in life, I think to this volunteering experience and it makes me feel that I am making a significant contribution, and it makes me feel really good.

Karen, who took it upon herself to organize social and community events for her synagogue, reflected on her experience in a similar way, stating, "and you feel…you feel really good about doing something for the community…because I try and keep everyone connected….you know…I try…it's very hard yeah, but I think…I just love the people, and I just love the feeling of doing something positive." Indeed, it seemed that the opportunity to have a part in, and to witness such results allowed participants to feel good about themselves. As Linda, 72, who provided peer support to five vulnerable older adults in the community, described: "When you see the results….you can't stop."

Volunteering Keeps Me Busy and Productive

Another personal benefit participants associated with volunteering was that it gave individuals "something to do." The vast majority of participants in this study were retired from their careers and thus no longer worked full-time or part-time. For many older adults, this stage of life can feel challenging and lacking in the kind of structure that one's career typically provides. This notion of "having time" and the various freedoms provided by retirement was articulated by participants during interviews: "It was only when I retired that I realized I could do anything." (Barbara, 81). However, having ample free time on their hands did not mean participants were ready to slow down. Participants described the importance of, and their desire to keep busy and productive in older age, and how volunteering provides them with the opportunity to do so. Volunteering is something that requires their regular participation, time, and energy, allowing them to keep active and involved in their communities. As another participant, Charles, 75, described:

> Everything depends on health. And when you get older, it gets more precarious. Given that I am healthy, it is important to be active and out there. My wife, for her part, plays bridge three times a week and goes to the gym as well. And it all results in meeting people. And so if you meet a senior that lives at home, it's not a good thing. I think it is very important to be 'out there.' No matter who you are, or what you are doing. To sit at home is not a good thing. And the older you are, the easier it is to do. I think that would be the number one thing. People got to be out there, and they have to have a certain amount of responsibility.

Similarly, Barbara, 81, described the intense need she felt to keep herself and her husband busy and active following their move to a new city after their retirement. For both of them, volunteering was a way to accomplish this:

> I had said to my husband, each of us has to jump in and volunteer, or we won't meet people. We go to synagogue and you meet people, but there is not necessarily…there is a kinship, but not necessarily a friendship. Although some of them have become friends. But basically I wanted to be busy, be active, and see what I could do.

In addition to "keeping busy," participants felt that regular volunteering kept them grounded and provided a needed structure and discipline to their lives. Gary, 71, who volunteered twice weekly with older adults at a community center, explained how this commitment gave him a feeling of structure similar to what he felt when he was working:

> And the other aspect is, being retired as it is…it's not like I am at a loss of things to do, because I have tons of interests. So…retirement is great for me. But along with going to the gym on a regular basis, and doing this volunteer work, it gives me a certain structure in my life, to kind of build my other activities around. So it kind of keeps me grounded, and to some degree…not that I miss work, I enjoyed my job…it just gives me that structure, that work life kind of structure.

Keeping a productive and structured lifestyle can also help contribute to improved mental health. This concept will be discussed in the next section.

"It Keeps My Head Going:" Volunteering and Mental Health

In addition to keeping busy and staying physically active, participants felt that volunteering kept their minds active. Volunteering was described by participants as being mentally stimulating, or "good for the mind," as it often required taking on new challenges and stepping out of one's comfort zone. As John, a life-long volunteer, explained: "Well it keeps my…you asked my age. I'm 85. Obviously my mind has not gone yet. And maybe it won't. But one of the things that keeps it from getting dull is challenges, doing things." Following his retirement, another participant, Joseph, 83, began attending a local continuing education program for older adults with lectures on a wide variety of topics. When he could no longer attend the sessions, he began organizing and conducting his own lectures and discussion groups within the community. Part of the appeal of taking on such a role for Joseph was the fact that it required researching, studying, and preparation on his part: "You can't just show up," he explained. Joseph also felt it kept his mind sharp in older age: "It keeps my head going, and you know, I have managed to reach eighty-four without going totally senile, so it must be working." William, 78, who led a weekly Torah study for adult members of his synagogue, expressed a similar feeling with regards to his volunteer role. He felt that the responsibility of reading and presenting the Torah portion each week was beneficial, as it kept him involved and engaged with the material compared to if he was just an attendee. He also described how teaching the material to others, stating: 'Well it's like if

you have to teach it. If you have to teach it, you have to think about it a little more. In a different way. So that's good for me, I know that's good for me."

Another participant, Diane, 70, whose role involved creating original programming for a weekly day program for older adults, described how her volunteer role allowed her to focus on others rather than herself:

> Well like I said…I need a purpose, and to feel like I am doing something for other people. And so it's rewarding in that respect. And I don't…you know it gets my mind off of myself, you know, it isn't a good think to think about yourself so much.

5.2.2. "Because it Did Not Exist": Generative Motives to Volunteer

Feelings of generativity, the desire to give back and turn one's focus to lives of others and away from oneself, is often cited as a reason for volunteering in middle and older age. As explained by McAdams and St. Aubin (1992), "in generativity, the adult nurtures, teaches, leads, and promotes the next generation while generating life products and outcomes that benefit the social system and promote its continuity from one generation to the next" (pg. 1003).

In this study, several volunteers were involved with causes and organizations with the intention of bettering the community and servicing the next generation. Such generative volunteer roles included working with organizations like the Jewish museum and archives, where volunteers could transcribe interviews of prominent members of the Jewish community, and preserve important documents and photographs related to Jewish history in British Columbia, as well as working with children in educational settings. While interviewing participants involved in archival-based volunteer work, many of them spoke to the importance of preserving Jewish culture and heritage, and how they were able to accomplish this through their volunteer efforts. One participant, Betty, 74, whose main tasks as a volunteer involved copying biographies from the Jewish community into the archives, described the importance of commemorating the lives of these individuals for the sake of the knowledge that may be utilized by future generations:

> Oh I think what I am doing is important. It contributes to the knowledge of future generations if they have an interest. And I think the people who have died…. I

> believe that recording them is very important, to know these people lived and died, and had a life here. So they should be acknowledged.

Another participant, Barbara, 81, described her experiences working with a group of older adults in the Jewish community to write their personal memoirs as the “biggest accomplishment” in all her years as a volunteer. She emphasized the importance of the effort for the families and descendants of those involved in the project, stating:

> If we didn’t interview these people, we don’t have their stories. And some of them couldn’t wait to tell us their stories, and so it died with them.” She further described this project by saying: “I have to tell you that at least twelve of these people have passed on, maybe fifteen, and we have their stories. And their families would never have got those stories if we hadn’t held the workshop.

Performing such generative acts can work to cement the outcome of your volunteer activities for years to come. David, 73, who once occupied a volunteer role in which oversaw the reconstruction and renovation of a local community center, expressed the immeasurable pride and satisfaction he felt when he visits the facility today:

> But I have to say that seeing the center now, what it is, what it has become, has been the most gratifying of volunteer work I have ever done. When I was there yesterday, I was just sort of blown away as to how busy it was, I was delighted. Old people, young people, all those mothers sitting there in the café with their little babies.

As indicated by these volunteer experiences, taking on these kinds of positions as a volunteer implies feelings of generativity, a desire to provide for and to leave a legacy for the next generation. Indeed, several of the participants working in such roles spoke of this impulse, which often inspired them to start their volunteer initiative many years ago, or that pushes them to continue in their role today. As a volunteer at the Holocaust Education Centre, Walter, 74, described the overarching goal of the organization to educate local school children about what happened to Jewish people during the Second World War, and to dispel rumors of those who claim the Holocaust never occurred. He explained to me how some children, particularly those with immigrant parents or who were born outside of Canada, have little to no idea of what the Holocaust is, and how the center has the ability the provide this kind of education to them. Another participant,

William, 78, described how he, along with other academic colleagues, had previously worked to form a group to support students at a local university following reports of anti-Semitic activity on campus:

> In the early 2000's, is when we started to see more anti-Semitic activity on campus. And people were starting to complain. And we had this sort of ad-hoc group that was brought together, and we worked together on some publicity, and just to let people know that there was a group around to support them.

In both of these cases, a generative volunteer act was performed, with the goal to support the next generation, by communicating the dangers of discrimination and the important role that education can play. Participants also described how their initial foray into volunteerism was to support their own children; to provide them with a type of program that didn't exist in the community at the time, or perhaps to ensure that they were having the best experience possible in their various activities or endeavors. For example, one participant, Karen, 57, described how she was first motivated to volunteer after reading about the benefits associated with parents playing an active role in their child's educational experience, stating:

> I never really volunteered in my home country...I don't think so, it was mostly when I came here, and then the schools, they always need volunteer parents. And I loved to volunteer with my kids, because I read that if you volunteer with your kids and you do stuff you kids, your kids do better at school. So that was one of my first initial motivations, to get my kids a better experience.

Richard, 89, described his feelings when his children were growing up of needing to provide a sense of Jewish community life that did not exist in their hometown in the 1950's. This desire to provide for his children eventually motivated him to establish a synagogue for the surrounding Jewish community:

> Being Jewish, I thought it was very important for me, to give a Jewish background to my children. And the only way I could do that is to volunteer, and create organizations, and I did. In order to supplement what did not exist, in that community. So if something that I detected was important to me, and I found that it was not available in that particular community, I would start it. And I did. I am the founder of a synagogue in the city. In 1957. Only because it did not exist. We

had just moved to a new area, and it had to be there for the children to get their background, their education, a sense of being Jewish. And I was one of the ones who started it. I realized there was a need for it.

The Importance of Helping Others

A concept related to feelings of generativity is that of altruism, the selfless concern for the well-being of others (Milton, 2012). While participants felt motivated to volunteer because of the personal satisfaction and rewards it brought to them, many also had selfless, altruistic motives behind their volunteerism. Participants frequently stated their desire to help the community and those in need, for various reasons. When asked about his decision to volunteer for an organization that provides peer counselling and visiting services for vulnerable older adults, James, 68, expressed the compassion he had for those less fortunate, and how this organization worked to serve them, stating, "There are some people in this world who are disadvantaged, and they support those kind of people. And sometimes people are in a tough spot. And it's not their fault, and those people should be helped." Robert, 71, who volunteered for the same organization, explained his inherent feelings of compassion for other human beings, and how he hoped that others would extend the same kindness to him if he were ever to need it, stating:

> I can't imagine a world where somebody who is in need, cannot have a reasonable expectation of some help from a fellow earthling. Really. I just…and a lot of people are very cynical. And say nobody cares…and maybe a lot of people don't care. But not nobody. Not nobody. And I hope that one of the somebodies is around when I need help. It's not any more complicated than that.

When describing their motivation to volunteer, participants explained how they believed in the importance of volunteerism in society; simply, that somebody, anybody, needs to step in and help out. When asked about the volunteer role he had chosen, James, 68, explained, "oh well it's like, coming back to the thing that…we have an obligation to make the world a better place. And this is how I do my part. And make that happen."

David, 73, who had recently returned to volunteering following his retirement, felt a similar way about giving back, stating:

> I think that volunteerism is extremely important. Some people back away from it because they feel it is going to be too much of a demand on their time. But of all the demands on your time, this is a good one to have.

Several volunteers described how the various needs they saw existing in society motivated them to volunteer. They felt that if they did not step up to the task, then nobody else would. One participant, Linda, 72, described the challenging and time-consuming nature of her volunteer role as a peer counsellor to vulnerable older adults. She often wondered if it was time to scale back her volunteer commitments and take more time for herself. However, her concern regarding whether others, like herself, will be up to the task, prevented her from doing so. Another participant, John, 85, in spite of his numerous volunteer contributions over the years, played down his impact, instead describing the instrumental value of giving back to one's community:

> I am not entitled to a medal, I didn't do anything great. But there is one society…not part of my own culture, but their motto is, "Far better to light the candle than to curse the darkness." So I am not trying to solve the world's problems. But if I can do one thing….you're not excused from trying.

Participants felt obliged to give back to an organization that had helped them during a challenging point in their own lives. Gloria, 81, who volunteers as a programmer for a weekly seniors' activity group, described how the organization supported her when she became a widow. This kind of help motivated her to give back as a volunteer for the same organization:

> They were helping me, more after the death of my husband, right? And it was a real social outlet for me, and it helped me through all that time. And so in that sense, they were giving back to me...they were giving to me. So now, I give my volunteered time.

5.2.3. "Part of our DNA": Volunteering and Jewish Life

While volunteering is not a specific component of Judaism, the responsibility of providing help to those less fortunate and to one's community is rooted in Jewish tradition and is evident in modern Jewish life. The Jewish community is widely known for having established numerous volunteer, charitable, and philanthropic organizations around the world, embodying these teachings by supporting members of the Jewish community and beyond in various ways. When asked why volunteering and giving back to their communities was important to them, participants in this study stated that their volunteer efforts satisfied the "Jewish ethic of giving back." One participant described volunteering and helping people in need as being part of the Jewish "schtick," and a part of "our DNA." Indeed, many felt that giving back and supporting one's community were inherent, Jewish characteristics. One participant, Janet, 84, explained:

> I think that on the whole, Jewish people are very empathetic, very involved with other people, I mean I feel, rightly or wrongly, that it is a Jewish trait. I mean my parents always helped other people, whether they were poor, my mother would go to the grocer and make up parcels for people who didn't have enough food. It is very prevalent among Jewish people to do that kind of thing.

William, 78, a regular volunteer at his synagogue, described how those in the Jewish faith are raised to believe the importance in giving back to one's community. Being taught such lessons as a young person might make an individual more inclined to volunteer in later life: "It is not unusual in the Jewish community. Because most people are raised, even if they are very secular, there is this business about charity. About supporting the needy in some way." Indeed, when discussing this aspect of the Jewish faith, volunteers described a sense of responsibility they felt as a Jewish person to volunteer, and how it was "the Jewish way of life," to do so. John, 85, a lifelong volunteer in the Jewish and wider community, described his own belief in the concept of *Tzedakah* (a Hebrew phrase meaning justice, righteousness) and how its deeper meaning goes far beyond just monetary aid, stating:

> One of the commandments, is something called Tzedakah. And people…they mistranslate it. It doesn't mean charity. The easiest thing in the world is to write a cheque. You should give to charity….but unless you are giving of yourself, unless

> you are doing something, not necessarily within the Jewish community, but in the wide community you live in, then It is not Tzedakah. It is not adequate to just give money. That is the way I was brought up, and that is the life I have lived.

Another participant, Linda, 72, also explained:

> I think it is just the way I have grown up, giving back. The Jewish way of you know….if I say Tzedakah, you know what I mean. So it's just….it's the Jewish way of giving back, Tikun Olam, making the world a better place. I think it's something we both grew up with, it's in our blood, we have always been involved in it.

William, 78, who served regularly on the ritual committee for his synagogue, a role in which he works to ensure the adherence to Jewish law during services and other spiritual activities, described the inclusion of Tzedakah in Jewish upbringing:

> If you read Torah, it's there. And there are some families that practice it assiduously, and teach their children right from the beginning. For example, they'll have what's called a Tzedakah box in their house. It's a foundation, and people are raised thinking that. So I said, it's sort of in our DNA to do it.

Anti-Semitism: Planting the Seeds of Volunteerism

In addition to the spiritual practice of Tzedakah, other aspects of Jewish life were found to influence participant decisions to volunteer. The experience of anti-Semitism, the persecution or discrimination against those of Jewish faith, was brought up during several interviews. Participants recalled growing up during a time when anti-Semitism was more pervasive in Canada. Often community organizations would not allow Jewish people to become members or to participate in various groups or activities, and as a result, new organizations would have to be formed, often under Jewish volunteer initiative. Robert, 71, who in addition to regularly giving his time to a community organization that reaches out to isolated seniors, had recently taken on volunteer role within a Jewish branch of the Royal Canadian Legion in Vancouver. He described how when legions were being formed in Canada shortly after the first World War, many

employed restrictive, anti-Semitic policies and would not allow Jewish people to become members. Jewish veterans had to start their own initiatives as a result, organizations that are still running to this day. Another participant, Sharon, recalled how when she was a child, her father worked to establish a local golf and country club:

> I don't know how familiar you are with the background of the city…but it was all closed to Jews. All the golf courses….and my father started the golf course. You know…he was on the original group of ten men that got together and said, well, if they don't let us play golf here, we'll start our own. So that is what I grew up with.

Shirley, 79, also described how her own anti-Semitic experiences as a child resulted in increased involvement with youth-oriented Jewish volunteer organizations, initiating her involvement with Jewish service organizations that continues to this day, stating:

> This was around 48', or 49'….there was a lot of anti-Semitism around that time, and as a child, I just didn't understand. So eventually, my parents, who were Russian, saw to it that I joined the B'nai B'rith Youth organization, and Young Judea….and so my identity...oh and I went to night school at Talmud Torah. So in a community which was 800 families, they really pushed so that I could identify with the Jewish community as well.

For others, personal experiences with anti-Semitism were found to shape the kinds of volunteer roles they chose to take on. Walter, 74, described how the persecution and eventual deaths of his family members in the Holocaust inspired a life-long fascination with the history and events of the second World War, and ultimately, his current position as a volunteer at the Holocaust Education Centre in Vancouver:

> I have such a tremendous interest in the Holocaust, and one of the main reasons was that my father's whole family was wiped out in Lithuania in 1941. And we knew nothing about it at the time….my sister who lives in London discovered more about it, and she gave me the information, and we followed through. So it's still…can I say a pet love, it is part of my life. And if they ask me to do a class every week, I will do it.

With his vast knowledge and factual information on the subject, the role has allowed Walter the opportunity to educate school children about the history of the Holocaust and

oppression of the Jewish people and other minority groups, and the responsibility of future generations to prevent such atrocities from occurring again:

> Their goal is to keep people informed of what happened during the war, and what the Holocaust was all about. And dispelling any myths that the Holocaust didn't exist. In addition to that, our goal is to educate school children in the history of the Holocaust.

In a similar experience, John, 85, whose primary volunteer role is working with Holocaust survivors, explained how his long-standing role at the Holocaust Education Centre, as well as volunteering with the Jewish Family Service Association (JFSA) stems largely from his late wife's childhood experiences as a "hidden child," during the second World War:

> Well you may or may not be familiar with the fact that Canada turned away a ship full of refugees, all of whom went back to concentration camps and died. The question was asked: How many refugees would you let in? And the answer was, none is too many. Canada relented in 1947 and let in 1000 orphans. My late wife was one of them. And so my looking for volunteer activities at the Holocaust Centre flows quite naturally from that.

The findings in this category demonstrate that participants are motivated to better their own lives as well as the lives of others through volunteering. In the next section, themes related to the actual experience of volunteering will be discussed.

5.3. Category 3: Volunteer Experiences Amongst Older Adult Volunteers

Over the course of the interview, participants were given the chance to reflect on their volunteer experiences over the years, and the ways in which community involvement has contributed to their lives. In this section, the four substantive themes related to the volunteer experiences of participants are presented: *Connections, seniors caring for seniors, leadership,* and *pursuing interests and skills.*

5.3.1. Connections

"We Just Kind of Clicked": Connections with Other Volunteers

Volunteering can provide individuals the opportunity to meet new people, bond with others over common interests, causes, and goals, and to expand their social network beyond close friends and family. All participants involved in this study described volunteering as a positive social experience; many spoke of the friendships they had made as a result of their volunteer role, others talked of acquaintanceships. For some, these relationships remained largely within the formal context of their volunteer role. That is, the duties of the position itself perhaps would involve talking with, getting to know, and socializing with others, but the relationship had not extended meeting up with one another outside of that particular space. However, for the majority of participants, examples were given of friendships they had formed and maintained through their volunteer role that eventually transcended that context and into their lives outside of volunteering. For some, this meant having somebody to meet up with for coffee or chat. Diane, 70, described an unexpected connection that formed between her and a fellow volunteer:

> We just kind of clicked. Even though, I guess, she is ten years older than me, I knew who her family was, you know, there is always a connection somewhere right? But she is single, and she is a widow, and I'll meet with her by myself, or our other volunteer friend, we'll meet for lunch and coffee. Which is nice right. Friends are for different reasons.

Susan, 73, a longtime volunteer at her synagogue, described how her volunteer role gave her the opportunity to create various friendships and share interests of hers:

> Well I would say that all of my friends now…somehow or other are through the synagogue. One of the gals who was an accountant there for years….we have become very good friends. I have taught her how to quilt. And so it's very nice. She is a very nice gal who I probably would not have met any other way. I volunteered there for a year, in the office.

Establishing friendships through one's volunteer role can happen quite naturally for some individuals, as it can mean coming together with people who share similar interests, beliefs, and values to your own. Indeed, participants described their volunteer roles in some cases as opportunities to come together with like-minded individuals, allowing for a sense of bonding and comradery to occur. Shirley, 79, described her experience moving to Vancouver following the death of her husband. Her challenges during that period inspired her to form a friendship group at the local JCC, where single women, widows, or new Vancouverites could gather with one another and socialize. Having such challenging experiences in common with other members of the group allowed these women to easily bond with one another, form friendships and establish social networks beyond the confines of the bi-monthly group meetings:

> It just took off. And it is the only…as far as we know, it's the only organization in the community, where women can get together. And there was no affiliation of a charitable organization, it was just people who wanted to meet other people, and that was the whole idea. To bring women together, who would find common interests among themselves, and who could go to a concert together, who could travel together, who would like to form a book club, or whatever. And that was the whole philosophy of it.

While volunteering can be an opportunity for individuals to share commons experiences and interests, participants also reflected on how their volunteer roles actually brought them to people who they otherwise never would have had the chance to meet, from vastly different backgrounds and walks of life from their own. Linda, 72, described how she was paired off with a fellow volunteer at a training event, with whom she has remained friends with to this day:

> When we first were paired off at our very first meeting, to introduce one another, I was paired with a lady who was wearing a hijab, who was Muslim, and within half an hour we had become friends. We still are.

Connections Made to the Jewish Community

In addition to fostering social connections, the connections made between participants and the Jewish community were also explored. All participants interviewed in this study had chosen and committed to volunteer roles within the Jewish community

of Vancouver, often dedicating several hours a week and many years of their lives to a Jewish cause. Participants described how volunteering facilitated the building of relationships with others in the Jewish community, allowing them to feel a closer sense of connection to the community overall. When asked about feeling connected to the community, those who felt their connection had increased most often described their feelings of closeness being linked to the fact that they had met new people and established new friendships. One participant, Richard, 89, explained: "It connects me, of course. There is no question about it. Because if you work with various organizations, at the board level, or at the executive level, within the community, it brings you closer to many people." When explaining his feelings of connection to the Jewish community, Gary, 71, stated:

> For many years it kind of lapsed, but now I'm back, and especially being there frequently at the JCC for many years now, and so you get to know different people, and they know you, and you know….you are part of the group, part of the community.

For some participants, volunteering resulted in further participation in the Jewish community, also increasing connection. Examples of increased participation included attending synagogue more often, going to the gym at the JCC, attending educational programs, and going to events such as the Jewish film festival.

5.3.2. Seniors Caring for Seniors

An interesting pattern among participants' volunteer experiences was the gravitation towards helping out or assisting fellow older adults, the majority of whom were currently living in a more fragile or vulnerable state than their volunteer counterparts. Indeed, many participants (15, or approximately 70%) chose to work with organizations that aimed to serve older adults in the community. Volunteer roles in this area included peer counselling, home visits, regular telephone calls, legal assistance, and the facilitation of recreation/leisure programs for older adults, in particular for those who would otherwise be homebound or isolated. One participant, Robert, 71, volunteered as a peer counsellor, making home visits to 5-6 assigned elderly clients every week. During his interview, he described the various challenges faced by these individuals:

> Some of them are totally isolated, housebound, some of them are quite mobile but have other issues…two of them are females….I had three, one of them died last month. One of them is visually impaired…so I have quite the selection.

Other examples of participants who worked with older adults included John, 85, who for the past seventeen years has met one-on-one with Holocaust survivors, and prior to that, volunteered with a local seniors network to provide information regarding services for seniors; Richard, 89, who founded and serves as the president emeritus of an organization that matches vulnerable older adults in the community with trained support workers; Janet, 84, who made regular visits as a volunteer to a local assisted living facility, and Gloria, 81; Diane, 70; Judith, 81, and Gary, 71, all of whom volunteered in helping to facilitate recreational programs for older adults at risk of social isolation, among many others. James, 68, who volunteered on the board for an organization providing peer support and educational resources for older adults, described the admiration he felt and continued to develop for the initiative, and the essential role he felt it was playing in assisting older adults who could no long help themselves:

> You know, there are seniors in the community, and they have a tough time. And it's not their fault. Sometimes circumstances happen, and when you are a senior it is hard to rebound from that. You are not as agile physically….and the world kind of closes in on you a bit. And it is hard to push back on a bad situation.

Robert, 71, who volunteered in a more hands-on role for the same organization, articulated the notion of the "forgotten" older adults, who face the risk of social isolation and minimal contact with others as their family and friends inevitably begin to pass away:

> We are there to empower people that find themselves alone, isolated, with any kind of physical impediment. They find that once they are out of the social loop, they lose all contact with friends, with family, and some die off. They go into a state of depression, which can lead to other problems. And my role is to do whatever it takes to keep these people buoyant that really is what it is all about.

Working with older adults also meant that volunteers were often exposed to the harsh realities of age-related chronic illness. Gary, 71, who led a weekly recreational activity for senior men, described the challenge and sadness he experienced when one of his regular participants developed Alzheimer's disease. Due to increasingly aggressive behavior, Gary decided to work with the player's spouse to find a better environment for her husband to participate in recreational activities and socialize with others. Linda, 72, a volunteer who visited five older adult clients, described how after meeting with these individuals on a weekly basis for several years, they had become "like family." Robert, 71, who held a similar position, explained how it was difficult for individuals who did not possess such a strong bond to truly help and relate to older adults in need:

> Look, you know, I have seen some really good social workers, and I have seen them finish with a client and say, 'have nice day,' and pat them on the back…but they are not relating. And it's not their fault. They can't relate, it is not their fault. No matter how much they want to…we are peer counsellors. And the operative word is peer. Nobody can really….but there are things I could talk to you, and relate to you, I can say….I was born in 46', and I can talk about the 50's and 60's…if you weren't there, it's hard to relate. It was very special times, very, very, different times. Lots of social change.

In having personally experienced similar historical events and being part of a similar age cohort as his recipients, Robert felt he was able to connect to these individuals in a deep, meaningful way. In some cases, the close emotional bonds formed between volunteer and recipient transcended the volunteer role, with participants becoming concerned with the older adult's health and well-being. Often, these individuals did not have family close by to take care of them, and as a result, the volunteer would take on this responsibility themselves, checking in on them periodically, or demonstrating concern if something went wrong or if they needed help. In one such instance, Gary, 71, became concerned when one of his regular attendees did not show up at their weekly meeting after experiencing health issues:

> I was concerned because he usually called me on the day of our game to ask if we had enough players. And a few times…his answering machine seemed to be piling up, and he wasn't calling me or answering my calls, and he didn't show up.

> I ended up going to his apartment and calling the police…he lived alone, and didn't have many friends. As it turned out he was in the hospital.

Similarly, another participant, Judith, 81, described how at times, the older adult participants of the weekly activity group she volunteered for would miss certain weeks due to illness or heath appointments, but she would be sure to keep in touch with them to make sure they were okay, explaining, "The only thing is, there are a lot of people that are sick now, but I still phone them to see how they are doing, and I hope they will come out to the next program."

While clearly recognizing the various challenges faced by older adult recipients, and the amount of work that remained, participants still felt as though that roles and organizations were contributing, even in a small way, to helping older adults in the community. In particular, volunteers felt that organizations gave recipients an outlet to become engaged with their community, and a reason to venture outside of their homes and meet with people on a regular basis. Diane, 70, who volunteered weekly at a seniors' lunch and educational program, described how the initiative allowed older adults to socialize and avoid being homebound and isolated:

> Oh I think it is great for the seniors, I mean...not just because I am in the programs, but just to get out, and be with other people, instead of being isolated, right...it's so important, for your mind, and they...you know they socialize, they have a lunch, and it's excellent for them.

Gloria, 81, who volunteered for the same organization, echoed these sentiments: "They have a sense of belonging because a lot of them are lonely, and isolated. And we try and get them out of that isolation, because that is very, very bad. And our organization is really helpful for that." Gary, 71, who had formed very close relationships with the older adults he volunteered for, described their weekly card game as one of the few social outings available to these individuals:

> Some of them as seniors can tend to be a little lonely, can be a little isolated, even though sometimes their families are doing a lot, taking them out for

occasions and stuff, but it really gives them an outlet, to socialize and be active, and so it gives me a great feeling of satisfaction.

5.3.3. "If I Have an Idea I Like to Start it:" Leadership in Volunteer Roles

After being provided with detailed accounts of participants' volunteer roles, it became clear that the majority had not chosen "easy" positions, or ones that required minimal effort or commitment. Rather, many volunteers had settled into leadership roles, assuming significant responsibilities on behalf of an organization, and taking on high level duties, including serving on boards, running meetings, and creating various initiatives to benefit the organization. One participant, William, 78, described how his interest in adult education, which he had previously explored through other volunteer roles, led to him to establish a Torah study program for the adult members of his synagogue. The program involves a discussion regarding the weekly portion of the Torah text, as well as finding the relevance of particular themes to modern life. He described how before he started this program, there had been a "big hole in our experience," at the synagogue, but he also understood that the Rabbi had too many other responsibilities to take the initiatives on himself. Despite having no formal training in Talmudic study, he decided that if he wanted to get it done he would have to do it himself: "No I like to start things...if I have an idea I like to start it."

In addition to providing the synagogue members with an important service, he also expressed the ways in which taking responsibility for this program and getting it started had benefited him: "By doing it, contributing to it, it happened. And then you...I benefited from what it was."

For Shirley, 79, a life-long volunteer with Jewish women's groups, two personal experiences of widowhood and recent relocation to Vancouver caused her to reflect on a pervasive, largely unattended need within the Jewish community: a support and social group for women experiencing widowhood, bereavement, divorce, relocation, etc. After years of volunteer work in the Jewish community, she began her own initiative, a bi-monthly meeting of women going through such aforementioned life transitions, where they could meet other women with common experiences, socialize, and create friendships. The group has flourished since, spawning close relationships between

participants and meetings outside the context of the group. She described the success of the group, stating:

> You know, after I was widowed, I realized how many people out there were widowed, or alone, or very lonely. Newcomers to the city. And I really felt there was a need to sort of bring people together. At first I thought maybe it would be a widow's group, but then I sort of expanded it to anybody who really wanted to get together.

Another participant, Richard, 89, explained how the collapse of one volunteer organization dedicated to seniors issues motivated him to begin his own service dedicated to older adults. As his own parents were aging, he became interested in advocacy for seniors and joined a local advisory committee in the Jewish community. When the group was forced to disband 15 years ago, he had become aware of the numerous challenges faced by older adults living at home in the community, in particular, loneliness, isolation, and lack of companionship. This knowledge and awareness inspired him to establish an organization that provides peer support service to vulnerable older adults in the community, as well as volunteer and education opportunities for other community members, including older adults. For other participants, a long-standing commitment to a volunteer role meant that eventually, they would naturally move into a position of leadership or significant responsibility. Gary, 71, began participating in a weekly card game after learning of the program at an event in the Jewish community. After several years of playing, the group became slightly smaller in size, and the players increasingly elderly and more in need of assistance. By this time, Gary had become attached to and friendly with most of the players, and he took it upon himself to take charge of the weekly sessions, setting up the game and making sure that players knew when to arrive, even calling players when they did not show up unexpectedly to make sure they were okay. He describes how his role "naturally progressed" from player to leader:

> I enjoyed playing as well….it's something I enjoy doing and it gives me structure in my life, and I think it somehow gradually evolved that I just help run it, so…I have the phone numbers of the different players, they would have mine….and they would call me if they were sick and couldn't make it….or I would call the players if I didn't feel like we had enough players for a game on a given

> day….and I would arrange…you know usually lay out the different sets of cards, and the different cups, and containers that we use…so it just kind of evolved. And the previous seniors coordinator, she possibly asked me to help out….but it was just a natural progression.

In another case, Joseph, 83, who, after attending a volunteer-run lecture series for many years, was forced to give it up after moving to a new area of the city. He soon decided that he would create his own lecture and discussion series, and today prepares and conducts weekly sessions at synagogues and community centers around Vancouver. Similarly, James, 68, an avid card player, described how he moved from player, to secretary of the board, to in-league commissioner:

> Someone has to help make the wheels go around. And I think everybody should kind of take a turn. So I was on the board….I think you are on the board for two years, and so I took two terms, so I was on the board for four years.

Following this experience, he decided to initiate weekly games at his synagogue, an event he felt benefited both the older adults who come out to play, as well as the synagogue, for which it is a fundraiser and a way for to bring the community together.

5.3.4. Exploring Interests and Utilizing Skills

Participants expressed their continuing desire to learn and try new things in older age and described how volunteering gave them the opportunity to explore new interests, as well as long-held passions or hobbies. The majority of participants were retired from their careers, and many discussed the challenges that accompany this transitionary period, including the notion of suddenly having free time, and how to fill it in a meaningful way: “And what am I going to do? I've worked all my life, I've worked hard all my life. I don't know how to do anything but work.” (Joseph, 83). Volunteering gave participants the opportunity to pursue their hobbies, interests, or passions in a meaningful, productive way following retirement. Barbara, 81, described two occasions in which she was able to foster her personal hobby of gardening and horticulture through volunteerism. Prior to moving to Vancouver, Barbara regularly volunteered to garden once or twice weekly. She recalled one particular season during which she and other volunteers helped to create a “white garden,” a specially designed garden including

plants that bloom in various shades of white, a challenging but rewarding feat. Following her move to Vancouver, she volunteered as a gardener at the local community center, helping to purchase, plan, and eventually cultivate and plant balcony gardens for members and participants to nurture and enjoy throughout the year. In describing her volunteer experiences post retirement, she mused: “Well, I spent so much of my working life wishing I had more time to read, and more time to garden, and it’s all happened.”

For Walter, 74, two major volunteer commitments in the Jewish community have allowed him to pursue two of his greatest passions: singing, and Holocaust history and education. As a new immigrant to Canada, he began looking for opportunities to continue with the singing career he had left behind in his native country. After forming a relationship with a local cantor (a clergy member who among duties, helps to run synagogue music programs), he was asked to help establish a men’s choral group in Vancouver, which he helped to organize and ran for many years. After stepping down from this role, his lifelong interest in the history of the Holocaust and the Second World War led him to his current role as a volunteer at the Holocaust Education Centre. He explained:

> My interest in the Holocaust goes back to a time when I was about fourteen years old. Where I saw a book, next to my dad's bed. On Auschwitz. And I read it, and I got very interested. And in school, my favourite subject was history. So I graduated to learning a huge amount about the second world war and whatever materials that I could get hold of, I read.

In addition to giving volunteers time to devote themselves to a passion or interest, a volunteer role can also allow one to share their pastimes with others. Indeed, Linda, 72, who regularly visited with five homebound older adults as a part of a peer counselling program, volunteering became an opportunity to teach and explore her interest in art. In order to deepen her connection with and provide stimulus to her elderly clients, some of whom she described as being artistic themselves, she decided to try to bring the activity back into their lives during her weekly visits. She described the various successes and challenges she had with her clients after encouraging them to try painting:

> Well the one is painting regularly, she is a very good watercolourist. The fellow in the wheelchair, is a phenomenal artist, he was a student at Emily Carr, and has multiple strokes, and he still paints. I have some pictures of some of his work, he...struggles now because he was right-handed, now he uses his left hand, and he struggles to do everything. But he is still doing a bit of art. And the other lady no longer does any art, she was a sculptress, she did bronzes, busts, and of course she can't do that now, she did paint as well. And I've got some very nice experiences with her.

For others, volunteering gave them the opportunity to continue performing and utilizing their career skills for a good cause. Following his retirement, John, 85, chose to dedicate a significant portion of his time assisting Holocaust survivors using what he had learned during his career. Using his skills from his former day job and a related master's degree, James performed financial duties for a local organization that supports the homebound elderly:

> I was approached, and they asked if I would like to be the treasurer. Their current treasurer was going to step down, because of health reasons, and they were looking for someone to step in and do that. I am not an accountant, I am not a book keeper, I really wondered if it was a good fit. But the thing is, is that the job…my day job when I was in the workforce, I was using spreadsheets all the time. I am really comfortable with excel and making the numbers dance around the screen. It doesn't faze me, I can do that. And that is what the treasurer does a lot of, is numbers dancing around the screen. So I said, yes okay, I can help you with the numbers.

Another example of this trend was William, 78, who formerly worked as a medical doctor and university professor, a career that had included the responsibility of educating others, a component he enjoyed greatly. Following his retirement, he sought out several volunteer experiences that would allow him to continue in this role, including organizing and leading Torah study at his synagogue, helping to bring an adult education initiative to the Vancouver Jewish community, and creating a local men's discussion group and lecture series. In describing the importance of passion and interest within one's volunteer role, William explained,

> This is the age in life, I don't want to do anything that I am not interested in, that's number one, but if it's certainly not something that I believe in, strongly, I don't think I would bother doing it, I just wouldn't. I'm pretty selfish about that. I am. I know that most of what I do is stuff that really interests me and that I want to know more about.

5.4. Interviews with Paid Volunteer Staff

In addition to interviewing 21 older adults about their volunteer roles in the Jewish community, I also sat down with 2 individuals working as supervisors for older adult volunteers. The purpose of these interviews was to provide further understanding regarding the volunteer opportunities and experiences within the Jewish community in Vancouver. With these participants I discussed various aspects of the volunteer roles available to older adults at their respective organizations, including the recruitment process, forms of volunteer recognition, and why they feel volunteering is beneficial to older adults. Their insight is presented in the following section.

5.4.1. Volunteer Recruitment

Key to a successful volunteer organization is effective recruitment and retention of volunteers. Interestingly, recruitment was not a significant concern for either of the staff member participants interviewed; both described the organic nature in which older adults typically discovered and eventually came to volunteer for their organizations. While each organization had formal means to recruit volunteers, including employing individuals who took on volunteer coordination responsibilities, and advertising in various community publications, it was revealed that the majority of older adults just "came to them" if they were interested in volunteering. Often, volunteers would find out about the organization through their friends, or through basic knowledge of the community, or would simply just ask if they could work as volunteer. Indeed, one staff member described how because of their center's location, which shares property with several other Jewish organizations, prospective volunteers would often wander into their office and simply ask, "What are you doing?" Thanks to consistent interest, both staff members stated that they typically have enough volunteers to run the program effectively, and that they rarely have to "actively recruit." Both staff members described their older adult

volunteers as community-oriented individuals, typically having prior volunteer experience before coming to their organization. Furthermore, while both organizations were open to volunteers of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the majority of individuals who volunteered, as described by the staff members, were indeed Jewish. Due to the fact that both organizations utilize spaces within the Jewish community to host their programs, it may be less likely for non-Jewish individuals to learn about the opportunity and participate as a volunteer.

5.4.2. The Future of Volunteering

Despite steady volunteer numbers at time of the interview, one of the staff participants expressed some concern for the future of volunteer participation. She described what she perceived as "the changing definition of a senior," meaning that the adults today approaching age 65 have very different wants and needs compared to their parents' generation. As she described, these individuals are still working later in life, and are often healthier and more active than the persons for whom the seniors activity program was designed for. As a result, a typical "seniors" program may hold little interest and appeal for them, both as a participant and a volunteer:

> Like years ago, you hit 65, and everyone retired, and then you know...you did programs like this. But in this day and age, especially in this city, people are healthier, they live longer, it's very expensive to live in this particular city, so a lot of people work longer. And so the hardest part is, it people just don't see themselves as seniors.

By contrast, no concerns of this nature were expressed by the other staff member, perhaps due to the difference in the volunteer roles offered at their particular organization. While one organization was more oriented towards "seniors" and "older adults" (the staff member described it as being a "senior driven" program), the other catered to volunteers of all ages. While many of its volunteers were indeed older adults, it did not describe itself as being a volunteer opportunity for seniors. Furthermore, the organization offered volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills, such learning to use computer software, as well as increased knowledge of community history. There were also a number of opportunities within the center to choose from, allowing volunteers to decide which role was best for them. Such aspects of a volunteer role might be more

appealing to the new generation of increasingly active and healthier older adults who wish to remain involved after retirement.

5.4.3. Volunteering as a Social Experience for Older Adults

Both staff members felt that their volunteer organizations provided an opportunity for older adults to socialize in various ways. Within one of the organizations, volunteers could socialize with fellow volunteers, with the attendees of the program, and with the program staff. The staff member at this organization described how she witnessed various friendships form among the volunteers, with some regularly meeting for coffee together, or taking the bus to and from the program together. Within the other, because only 2-3 volunteers were able to work together at one time, there were less opportunities to socialize. The staff member at this organization described how the social needs tended to vary among volunteers, with some taking the time to have social time with other volunteers, as well as becoming friendly with the other staff members, stopping to talk with them before and after their shift, or bringing in their favourite snacks. While others came specifically to do the work, with little time for socializing. Due to the fact that the social opportunities and interaction between volunteers were limited for this organization, staff organized an annual recognition event, allowing some volunteers to meet and interact with one another for the first time:

> So every year in December we do a luncheon for everyone. For the people who come in every week to transcribe, the board members, committee members, we have number of people who work on the interviews on our behalf, they are all volunteers as well. So it is a nice time for everyone to come in and just have lunch.

Each staff member was asked to articulate their thoughts regarding volunteering as an effective way for older adults to meet new people and expand their social network. While both agreed that volunteering could provide this opportunity, one of the staff members felt the small size of their organization would limit this prospect. The other staff member explained how many of the volunteers and participants in the program would be at risk for social isolation if such opportunities to get of the house did not exist. She described their volunteer opportunities as giving older adults something to commit to, a sense of importance, a way to meet new people, and a “reason to get up in the morning.”

Overall, the interviews with paid volunteer staff helped me to gain an alternative perspective on the volunteer experiences of older adults within the Jewish community, in particular, how these volunteers are perceived by those who work with and supervise them. Furthermore, I was able to further understand other aspects of volunteering, including recruitment, recognition, socialization, and the need to potentially adapt volunteer opportunities to the specific needs of current and future generations of older adults.

Chapter 6. Discussion

The aim of this exploratory study was to examine the volunteer pathways, motivations, and experiences of older Jewish adults in Vancouver. Qualitative interviews with 21 volunteers and 2 paid volunteer staff were conducted in order to help answer the proposed research questions, and to allow participants to elaborate and reflect on their volunteer roles in the Jewish community. Results provide a distinct contribution to current knowledge and research on volunteering among older adults, in particular, those who belong to one ethnocultural minority community. This chapter begins with a summary of the qualitative findings related to volunteer pathways, motivations, and experiences, then discusses how these relate to the theoretical concepts used to guide this research, including social capital theory, generativity, and the life course perspective. Finally, limitations of the study and implications for the future research are discussed.

6.1. Pathways to Volunteering

The first category to be discussed is that of pathways to volunteering. Two substantial themes emerged within this category: Life-long trajectories of volunteering and being asked and expected to volunteer by fellow members of the Jewish community. Participants described how they had been volunteering since early adulthood, or even childhood. For some, initial inspiration to volunteer came from their parents or other family members, who set early examples of community-minded behavior and actions. Another significant early pathway to volunteerism for female participants was the common experiences of joining a Jewish women's group following marriage. These findings add to the well-established area of volunteer literature (mostly quantitative) indicating that volunteer rates typically remain stable over the life course, particularly for dedicated, long-time volunteers (Butricia, Johnson, & Zedlewski, 2009**;** Hietanen et al., 2016**;** Greenfield & Moorman, 2018; Lancee & Radl, 2014). These findings also complement more recent research findings regarding the relationships between early life volunteer participation and later life volunteerism (Greenfield & Moorman, 2018**;** McCulloch, 2014). Using 50 years of data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS), Greenfield and Moorman (2018) found that rates of volunteering in religious groups, unions, sports teams, and other organizations were consistently higher among those

who had greater voluntary participation rates in high school, compared to those with less volunteer or no volunteer roles in high school. Such research supports the idea that individuals who are "joiners," may demonstrate this behavior throughout their lifetime, as was found in the present study. For individuals that have been volunteering for many years, potentially since childhood, it might feel easier or more natural for them to volunteer in mid to late life. This finding can be linked to one the theoretical perspectives used to guide this study: the life course perspective on aging. From this perspective, one's volunteer behaviour in older age can be understood as a product of experiences and decisions made earlier in life. Common decisions and experiences of participants in this study included being raised and influenced by community minded, involved parents and family members, being raised in the community-oriented Jewish community, and deciding to volunteer at an early age. According to the life course perspective, participants' life-long volunteer trajectories can be linked to these early life experiences and decisions.

"Being asked" to volunteer by fellow members of the community was the second prominent theme that emerged within this category. When discussing their volunteer origins, participants described how they were approached or encouraged by their peers to begin volunteering. These findings were also reflected during the interviews conducted with staff participants. When asked about volunteer recruitment, staff participants described how often formal recruitment means were typically not necessary for their organizations. This was due to the fact that many of their older adult volunteers learned about their organization and volunteer opportunities in other ways, including through their friends or basic knowledge of community initiatives. Instead of being recruited, volunteers would simply come to them and ask if they could help out. Several research studies have documented the relationship between strong community ties and the likelihood of being asked to volunteer, as well as having exposure to a wide variety of volunteer opportunities (Merino, 2013; Paarlberg et al., 2015; Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2010). A few studies in this area have also focused specifically on religious, cultural, and ethnic minority communities (Peucker & Ceylan, 2016; McClure, 2017), however the present study is the first we are aware of to focus specifically on older Jewish adults and the level of social connectivity within the Jewish community and its role in facilitating volunteerism. The theme of being asked and expected to volunteer within the Jewish community can be linked to the theory of social capital, another theory

used to guide this study. The high level of connectivity between members of the Jewish community, indicated by participants being exposed to and presented with opportunities to volunteer and become involved, is demonstrative of social capital. As a result of this social capital, further social capital is then generated as individuals take on various volunteer roles and become increasingly connected to their community and to one another.

When considering these pathways to volunteering, it is also important to consider the various *social pressures* that existed within the Jewish community at the time, particularly for Jewish women. In the years following the first and second world wars, women in the Vancouver Jewish community took it upon themselves to establish chapters of Jewish non-profit organizations, including Hadassah Wizo, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Pioneer Women (Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia, 2013). At their peak (1930's-1970's), these organizations provided women with professional volunteer experiences outside of the home. However, involvement with such organizations was often not a matter of personal choice, as Jewish women often felt significant social pressure to become members. As described by participants in Tuchfeld's 1976 study (as cited in Davidman & Tenenbaum, 1996) on women who volunteered within the Jewish community, "You'd be a social outcast if you don't belong to Hadassah" (pg. 151). Organizations such as Hadassah Wizo were considered to be extensions of the prescribed roles of Jewish women, who were to be benevolent nurturers of their families and communities, defined by self-sacrifice and serving others (Wenger, 1989). For participants in the present study, it is possible that such societal expectations and pressures to become involved served as alternate pathways to volunteerism in the Jewish community.

6.2. Motivations to Volunteer

Data analysis revealed that participants felt being a volunteer had brought several benefits to their lives, including feelings related to meaning, purpose, and accomplishment. The desire to keep busy and productive was especially pervasive among participants, the vast majority of whom had exited the work force. Volunteering was a way for these individuals to maintain a work-like structure to their lives, to stimulate their minds, and often learn new skills, similar to starting a new job. Indeed, participants did not seek out just any volunteer opportunity. Rather, they wanted roles

that would challenge them, put them to work, and allow them to pursue and maintain the busy active, healthy lifestyles that they desired. Recent literature on best practices for the recruitment and retention of older adult volunteers has confirmed the importance of providing opportunities that not only allow older adults to volunteer, but to grow as individuals (Sellon, 2014). In a review of the literature, Sellon (2014) describes how opportunities that are personally meaningful, provide social interaction, allow for flexibility and the selection of activities of interest, among other factors, are more likely to attract and retain older adult volunteers. In describing their volunteer experiences, many study participants in fact revealed that their roles allowed them to pursue their specific hobbies and interests, as well as to incorporate and utilize skills from their careers prior to retirement. The "busy ethic," a term used to describe the emphasis individuals place on being busy and productive in retirement (Ekerdt, 1986), has been used in research to describe older adult volunteers. By ensuring regular commitment to a volunteer activity, older adults can give definition and a a needed work-like structure to their retirement role (Katz, 2000; Morrow-Howell, 2010).

Another finding related to the expression of interests and skills was the gravitation of participants in this study towards leadership roles. Instead of participating in a passive role as a volunteer, participants chose roles that came with greater responsibility and duties. Indeed, most participants had established their own volunteer organizations or had taken on a top leadership position (president, executive chairperson, etc.) at some point in their volunteering career. Assuming a leadership role typically arose for participants in a predictable manner. In several cases, volunteers recognized an unaddressed need in the community, and decided to take it upon themselves to start their own initiative to fill the gap, demonstrating inherent leadership qualities. Such initiative may occur following years of commitment in a related volunteer role, or for some, it could be an entirely new endeavor. For others, leadership roles came following many years of volunteer participation, or even general participation in a volunteer-run organization, after which they were elected or encouraged to take on a position of greater influence. Participants were willing to take such initiative because the cause in question was one they were passionate about, and they felt it was their duty to ensure that it continued forward into the future, or in some cases, came to be entirely. This finding is yet another example of the importance of offering older adult volunteers

with opportunities that are meaningful, valuable, and allow them to exercise their full potential and capabilities.

When considering how future generations of older adults might be recruited to volunteer, as well as to how best engage older adults in volunteer roles, such findings might prove extremely useful. All of the participants interviewed in this study were dedicated, committed volunteers, and had been serving in their various roles for many years, some for decades. A likely factor behind this commitment and retention was the fact that these roles reflected participants' interests; they were activities they truly *enjoyed* doing. Volunteering was not a chore to them. Rather, it was something they had given careful thought and consideration to, resulting in a good match. These findings indicate the importance of developing volunteer opportunities that suit the specific needs, interests, and preferences of older adults. These findings will become even more relevant as the number of Canadians over the age of 65 continues to increase. In a 2010 report on volunteering, the National Seniors Council of Canada describe the distinct volunteer needs and preferences of the Baby Boomer generation, who will eventually take the place of today's older adult volunteers. As described in this report, the priorities of this group, who see themselves as more "youthful" and "dynamic" then their parent's generation, include volunteer opportunities that allow them to utilize their professional skills, and have identifiable outcomes and are personally meaningful and challenging (National Seniors Council, 2010).

Participants in this study were frequently motivated to volunteer by the prospect of supporting their own children, helping the community at large, and leaving a legacy for future generations. These motives can be strongly linked to the concept of generativity, the desire to leave a legacy and provide for future generations, taking the focus away from oneself (Son & Wilson, 2015). While explicit questions were not raised about generativity or legacy, participants were encouraged to speak openly about their volunteer pathways, motivations, and experiences. Regardless, data analysis revealed that generativity, and in many cases, the subcategory of *cultural generativity* emerged as a significant factor of volunteer motivation for participants. In the present study, a sense of cultural generativity as motivation to volunteer emerged in the findings in numerous ways. Participants described how in seeking to bring a sense of Jewish life and community to their children, they helped to establish new synagogues in their community that did not exist before. Participants held volunteer positions that required them to

preserve and pass on Jewish history and culture to the next generation and the surrounding community, including educating school children and the general public at a Holocaust Education Centre, transcribing interviews and writing biographies for prominent members of the Vancouver Jewish community, and helping older members of the Jewish community write their memoirs, among other endeavors. In these ways, volunteerism was found to be a vehicle through which participants were able to carry the traditions, values, and knowledge of Jewish culture and heritage forward to the community and future generations. Several research studies in this area have also confirmed volunteering to be an effective method for cultural values to be shared between volunteers to recipients (Hunter & Rowles, 2005; Warburton & McLaughlin, 2007; Warburton & Warburton, 2010).

In addition to cultural traditions and values, religious beliefs and practices might also be passed down and modelled through volunteerism. In his 1984 work "Outliving in the Self," in which the term cultural generativity is described for the first time, author John Kotre describes culture as "an integrated set of symbols interpreting existence and giving a sense of meaning and place to members of a perduring collectivity" (pg. 14), which can also include both ethnic and religious traditions (Kotre, 1984). When describing their motivations to volunteer within the Jewish community, some participants discussed the theme of giving back to the community as being an important part of Judaism. Some participants struggled to put this process into words, but in several cases, it was simply summarized as *Tzedakah*, a Hebrew phrase meaning justice or righteousness, but often used to signify charity, giving aid, assistance, or money to the poor and needy, and other worthy causes. True to its meaning of righteousness and justice, Tzedakah is an obligation and a responsibility of all Jewish people. In Judaism, giving time or financial assistance to those in need is not viewed as a generous or benevolent act. Rather, it is an act of justice, righteousness, and fairness; an obligation of all those who are able to do so or "the correct thing to do." Tzedakah is viewed as something that benefits both those in need, the giver, and the entire world (Roos, 2014). This desire to pass on religious beliefs and teachings to the community and the next generation might be considered *religious generativit*y, a concept that has not been described or elaborated on in previous research. While several research studies have explored the connection between religiosity and the desire to serve others (generativity) (Black, Hannum, Rubinstein, & De Medeiros, 2016; Melia, 1999; St. Aubin, Adams &

Kim, 2003), to our knowledge, none have explored religious generativity, or passing down religious tradition through generative acts, specifically. In addition to adhering to the teachings of Tzedakah, other examples of religious generativity in this study included participants who chose to lead Torah study at their synagogue, assist on their synagogue ritual committees, and help to establish new synagogues in their communities, thus ensuring the maintenance and future of the Vancouver Jewish community.

Another component of this theme was the number of references made by participants to the experience of anti-Semitism. Indeed, previous encounters with exclusion and oppression because of their religious beliefs appeared to have influenced participants' decisions to volunteer. Presently, there has been little to no research regarding the potential influence of religious and ethnic discrimination on the act of turning inward to support one's community. However, there are several historical examples of Jewish community leaders coming together in the face of anti-Semitism to establish prominent Jewish organizations in order to strengthen community ties and bring individuals together, while also fighting anti-Semitism. A famous example being the revitalization and growth of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), a lobby group for the Jewish community in Canada following the rise of anti-Semitic behavior in Canada and overseas (Lipinksy, 2011). In this study, the desire to support the Jewish community through experiences of hardship came through during participant interviews. In some cases, volunteers described how experiences with oppression or exclusion motivated them to become involved with the Jewish community as a volunteer, often at a young age. This finding can also be linked to the life course perspective of aging, which describes how the pathways we follow in life can be a product of our unique place in history and of our place in the social structures of the world (Wister & McPherson, 2014). Many of the participants in this study grew up during a time when discrimination against Jewish people was acceptable in mainstream society. Indeed, several participants recounted experiences of torment from their peers, and recalled when universities, community centres, and other organizations placed limitations on or even banned Jewish people from entering. For these participants, who brought up such experiences of anti-Semitism when describing their motivation to volunteer, it is possible that the impact these experiences of discrimination had on their lives eventually contributed to their desire to give back and support the Jewish community through volunteerism.

6.3. Volunteer Experiences

Volunteerism has been frequently cited as having the capacity to facilitate positive social experiences for older adults (Chen 2016; Morrow-Howell, Lee, McCrary, & McBride, 2014; Morrow-Howell, Hong & Tang, 2009). The findings in the present study support such research. Participants described how their volunteer roles allowed them to feel more connected to others through acquaintanceships and friendships, as well as to the community as a whole. The theme of social and community connections being formed through volunteerism can also be linked to the concept of social capital. The Jewish community contains a high level of social capital (Burstein, 2007) perhaps best indicated by the multitude of Jewish organizations present within the community (including Vancouver) which aim to bring individuals together, aid those in need, and to better the community as a whole. Such organizations, as well as the volunteering opportunities and experiences they provide for older adults, can be thought of the "cooperation for mutual benefit" that arises from a foundation of networks, norms, and social trust. Further, findings from this study provide some indication as to how further social capital can be created through volunteering. Participants described the ways in which their volunteer roles allowed them to form friendships with like-minded individuals, bonds with persons they otherwise would not have met, and connect with the Jewish community as a whole. Paid staff participants also indicated the importance of volunteering as a way for older adults to socialize and avoid experiences of social isolation and loneliness.

A theme in the present study with regards to volunteer experiences was the number of volunteer roles that involved working with fellow older adults in the community. Examples of volunteer roles in this area included weekly visits to individual's homes or residential care facilities, friendly phone calls, peer-counselling, facilitating recreational activities, and serving on boards of various organizations catered to older adults, such as adult day centres. Participants in this study were in good health, mobile, and remained independent in most aspects of their lives. Such traits were in stark contrast to the older adults they served, who, while generally not much older than the volunteers themselves, were often experiencing challenges, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease, loneliness and social isolation, mobility impairment, among other challenges of older age. While volunteers were not experiencing such challenges

personally, it became clear that in working with and assisting these individuals, they were able to have the chance to recognize and reflect upon the issues affecting older adults in their community, and how their needs are often ignored or "fall through the cracks," of society. Older adults, such as the volunteers in this study, may be better suited to volunteer with fellow older adults than younger volunteers. Such individuals might perhaps express more patience and understanding towards other adults compared to younger volunteers. In the present study, as a result of their volunteer roles, participants formed close emotional bonds and expressed compassion towards older adult recipients. The existing literature on peer support indeed suggests that individuals who have been through similar experiences and have faced similar adversities in life can offer support, guidance, and hope to others in similar situations (Chapin et al., 2013; Davidson et al., 2006; Greenwood et al., 2013).

Research studies that document the experiences of older adults volunteering to care for and assist their peers have often described the occurrence of a "mutual understanding" that can arise between volunteers and recipients, due in part to their closeness in age, shared historical events, and common life experiences (Butler, 2006; O'Shea, 2006). A study by O'Shea (2006), evaluated the Senior Help Line, a confidential telephone listening service for socially isolated older adults that is operated by older adult volunteers (age 65+) in Ireland. In addition to helping to combat loneliness, as well as giving callers the opportunity to discuss difficulties and problems in their lives, volunteers in this study described the benefit of the peer-to-peer empathy that typically arose between themselves and the caller. They felt that in having the opportunity to converse with somebody close to their own age, the callers were made to feel more wanted and respected as individuals, and thus found improvements in their self-esteem and confidence (O'Shea, 2006). In a similar study by Butler (2006), an initiative called the Senior Companion Program (SCP), which pairs older adults age 60 and older with frail, potentially isolated older adults in the community was evaluated. Findings from this study indicated that older adult clients benefited from being matched with individuals close in age, with the theme of "companionship" being especially prominent, and participants describing their companions as "peers" and "friends" with many shared interests and things in common (Butler, 2006).

6.4. Limitations

This research study has limitations that must be acknowledged. The restriction of the study sample and location to the Vancouver Jewish community may potentially limit the generalization of study findings to other older Jewish adults who volunteer in other cities and communities in Canada and in other countries. For example, volunteer experiences in Vancouver may differ from experiences of individuals living in cities with larger Jewish populations and more extensive Jewish community resources (ie: Toronto, Montreal). In cities such as these, factors such as religiosity, cultural lifestyle, and overall feelings of community engagement may be heightened, potentially leading to different interpretations of the volunteer experience. A comparison study to explore how experiences may differ across various communities is needed, as well as research that examines volunteerism within the Jewish community on a national scale (ie: across Canada).

A further limitation of this study was the lack of insight regarding how long study participants had been living in Vancouver. The length of residency in Vancouver may affect participant motivation to volunteer, as well as volunteer experiences. Individuals who have lived in Vancouver for many years might feel more integrated within the Vancouver Jewish community, and thus might feel more comfortable pursuing a volunteer role. Their motivation to volunteer would likely differ from individuals who have recently moved to the city, who might be inclined to volunteer to become more familiar with the community and to meet new people. Future studies should consider how the length of one's residency in a particular place might affect volunteer behaviour.

The present study was able to capture a number of unique, individual volunteer experiences. A wide range of ages, from the young-old (ie: age 57) to the oldest old (ie: age 89) were represented in this study. Participants, while all identifying as Jewish, came from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Further, study participants were not recruited from a single volunteer organization, but from the community itself. As a result, a wide range of volunteer roles were represented and documented in this study. Each participant came with their own personal narratives and experience of volunteering, and as a result; no two were exactly alike. The qualitative methods used in this study helped to propel these unique narratives forward. However, future studies in this area might consider utilizing quantitative methods as well, to provide additional empirical data.

Future research should also consider how the type of volunteer role chosen may impact experiences and outcomes for participants. For example, older adults who volunteer by assisting other older adults in the community may have a different relationship to their volunteer role when compared to individuals who volunteer to serve on an organization committee or board. Further, the separation of participants into specific age cohorts (ie: 55-64, 65-74, 75-84, etc.) could help to elucidate how volunteer experiences for older adults might differ based on their age and life experiences.

Potential biases in this study include selection bias associated with non-random, purposeful sampling, as well as potential personal biases of the volunteer participants. Individuals who agreed to participate in this study were potentially healthier, had higher volunteer participation, and were more willing to share their volunteer experiences than those who did not agree to participate. Further, the quality of participants' responses may be affected by social desirability to please the researcher. It should be noted; however, every attempt was made to allow participants to feel they could be open and honest about their volunteering experiences. This would then ensure that I could understand participants' reality as they experienced it, the goal of qualitative research (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016).

The use of only two paid volunteer staff in this study can also be considered a limitation. The purpose of including these individuals in this study was to incorporate an alternative perspective on volunteerism among older adults in the Jewish community. However, with such a small sample of individuals, such insight was difficult to capture. Further, findings from these participants (related to recruitment of volunteers, the future of volunteering, and social experiences of volunteering) mostly confirmed the responses from volunteer participants in this study. In future studies, paid volunteer staff may be utilized as participants more effectively by recruiting a larger study sample, and by exploring topics with more relevance to their expertise as paid volunteer staff. This might include insight into the number and variety of volunteer roles for older adults present in the community, for example.

Another limitation to be considered is the personal interest of the researcher in the study population. My interest in studying this group stems from my own Jewish background and experiences within the Jewish community of Vancouver. Over the course of my life, I have participated in programs within the Jewish community,

volunteered in various capacities, and have worked at the JCCGV in various roles. For this reason, however, I made a conscious effort throughout the study to remain as reflexive and objective as possible. To achieve this, I made use of a reflective journal through the entire course of the data collection and analysis, recording and carefully considering any personal beliefs or preconceived notions I held regarding the Jewish community and the Jewish volunteer experience. My familiarity with this population likely also resulted in a certain positive bias with regards to volunteering. That is, because I had interacted with several older adult volunteers in the Jewish community prior to this study, I assumed volunteering to be a positive experience for participants. In order to achieve more well-rounded results however, an effort should have also be made to explore the potential negative aspects and experiences of volunteering for older adults as well.

6.5. Implications and Future Research

The findings from this study hold potential to inspire further study in this relatively unexplored area of volunteer research, and for individuals and communities who wish to provide volunteer opportunities for older adults. By providing an increased understanding of why and how older adults volunteer, this study can assist with volunteer recruitment and retention of older adults, as well as the provision of a high-quality volunteer experience for older adults. Findings from this study indicate that older adults remain committed to volunteer roles that are meaningful, are reflective of their interests and skills, and provide opportunities for new challenges and learning. Findings also indicate that older adults can and will step into leadership roles if the opportunity is there. Finally, experience of making friends and connecting with the community was found to be an important aspect of the volunteer experience. Therefore, it is essential that volunteer opportunities aimed at older adults do their best to offer social, friendly environments.

This study provides increased understanding of the importance of diversity in volunteering. Older adults are a heterogeneous population, and each individual will have different ideas about what they hope to gain from volunteering. Further, while this study is only based on one particular ethnocultural group, it suggests that culture can play an important role when it comes to the types of volunteer roles people are exposed to, as well as how they choose and experience them. For Jewish older adults, specifically, a focus on providing opportunities that allow for the passing on of Jewish heritage and

culture (cultural generativity) and reflect the Jewish ethic of helping and giving to others are likely to engage volunteers, based on findings from this study. Other ethnocultural minority and religious groups may have other values and traditions related to volunteerism that would be important to consider if attempting to recruit and retain such populations. Indeed, other volunteer organizations outside of the Jewish community could benefit from this research by increasing their awareness of the various ethnic minority populations in their community and providing programs and opportunities that best suit these individuals. Ultimately, it is important for individuals working in volunteer recruitment, coordination, and support to remember that one size does not fit all when it comes to older adult volunteers. In order for older adults to truly engage with and benefit from volunteering, efforts must be put in place to provide diverse and culturally sensitive volunteer opportunities.

To support increased understanding of ethnocultural volunteer experiences of older adults, as well as the creation of culturally sensitive volunteer opportunities, further research in this area is needed. Future studies should work to explore the volunteer experiences of additional ethnocultural minority and subcultural groups (eg., LGBTQ individuals) of older adults, and perhaps compare and contrast their experiences to one another and to those who volunteer within the general community. In the present study, participants described anti-Semitism as a motivating factor behind their decision to volunteer and to become involved in community organizations. Future research should consider the potential impact that experiences of cultural oppression and discrimination can have on decisions related to volunteering and giving back to one's community. For my PhD work, I have proposed a multi-methods study examining volunteerism among older adults belonging to four prominent visible minority groups in Vancouver, BC. Through this research I hope to promote understanding of the cultural, and specifically religious, differences present in volunteer patterns, motivations, and experiences for older adults in Canada. To further elucidate the influence of culture, religion, and heritage on older Jewish volunteers, specifically, research studies that compare the experiences of Jewish older adults who volunteer within the community to those who volunteer within the general community, or who do not volunteer at all, should be conducted.

Similar to other research on volunteering, this study highlights the numerous benefits of community engagement for older adults, including establishing connections

with others and the community, and filling a desire to be busy and productive in retirement. However, the vast majority of participants in this study were in good health, with high levels of support from friends and family and active social lives. Future research in this area should explore the benefits of volunteering for more vulnerable older adults, including individuals who are socially isolated, lonely, chronically ill, and those who have small support networks, as such individuals might benefit the most from becoming volunteers. Future research should determine how to best target such individuals, so they can be exposed to volunteering opportunities. One possibility might include encouraging the recipients of various volunteer initiatives (e.g., isolated older adults in the community who receive peer counselling or weekly visits from volunteers) to become volunteers themselves. This study also highlighted the significant connections formed between volunteer participants and volunteer recipients. Participants spoke of the compassion they felt towards their volunteer recipients, and how they felt the work they were doing truly made a difference in their lives. To fully capture this impact, future research should incorporate both the perspectives of the volunteer and the volunteer recipients.

6.6. Conclusion

The primary goal of this thesis was to explore the pathways, motivations, and experiences of older Jewish adults who volunteer within the Jewish community of Vancouver. The results of this study provide insight into the nuanced ways in which culture can expose individuals to volunteering, motivate them to continue, and influence their experience. More generally speaking, by providing insight into a previously over-looked ethnocultural minority group, this research represents a step forward in gerontological volunteer research. Findings from this study show that older adults in the Jewish community are often life-long volunteers and are often exposed to volunteer opportunities thanks to their peers and connections within the Jewish community. They are motivated to volunteer for reasons related to self-improvement, generativity, and Jewish values. Common experiences of volunteering for this group included forming connections with other people and the community, working to serve other older adults, leadership, and the pursuit of personal interests and skills. These findings are significant, as they indicate the influence that culture can have on the volunteer experience of older adults. Furthermore, the findings highlight the number of ways in which volunteering can

enrich the lives of older adults, provide opportunities for social and community engagement, help form bonds and trust within one's community, explore new interests and hone long-held passions, and lead and influence the lives of others.

As the population of Canada and the world continues to age rapidly, it is important to prioritize ways in which the capabilities, strengths, and potential of older adults are fostered and encouraged, rather than assuming only dependency and challenges. Volunteering is a highly productive way for older adults to increase their level of activity, foster their interests, help others, and continue to be social and connected to their communities. As Canada continues to diversify in terms of ethnic composition, volunteering opportunities must be made accessible to and inclusive of older adults from all backgrounds. To achieve this, it is imperative that future research in this area encompasses the experiences and stories of older adults themselves.

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APPENDIX A: Older Adult Volunteer Background Questionnaire and Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. I would like to tell you a few things about my research project before we begin with the questions. I am a graduate student in the faculty of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University, and I am interested in learning about the experiences of volunteers within the Jewish community of Vancouver. I am particularly interested in how your volunteer experience has impacted you in terms of your social relationships, feelings towards your community, and your identity as a Jewish person.

It is important for you to know that there are no wrong answers to these questions, and that your role is to simply participate and answer each question the best that you can. You do not have to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with, and your participation is completely voluntary.

Please let me know if you have any questions before we begin.

Volunteer Background Questionnaire

1.) What is your gender?

2.) What is your age?

3.) Were you born in Canada? If yes, skip to #5.

4.) If not, what is you country of birth?

5.) Year of immigration (if applicable)?

6.) What ethnic group do you primarily self-identify with?

7.) What is your main activity/occupation (working full-time, part-time, unemployed, homemaker, retired)?

8.) What is your highest level of education (high school, post-secondary, doctoral, etc)?

9.) What income category reflects your total family income? Income categories:

a.) No income

b.) < $20,000,

c.) $20,000-$39,999

d.) $40,000-$59,999

e.) $60,000-$79,999

f.) $80,000 or more

10.) What is your current marital status (married, single, divorced, separated, widowed, etc)?

11.) How many living children do you have?

12.) For approximately how many years have you been a volunteer?

13.) What part of Metro Vancouver do you currently reside in?

14.) How far do you live from the JCC?

15.) Do you hold a driver's license?

16.) How many hours a week do you drive?

17.) Are you currently living with a disability? If so, describe...

18.) Self rated health/Self assessed health measure: In general, would you say that your health is:

a.) Excellent?

b.) Very Good?

c.) Good?

d.) Fair?

e.) Poor?

(Canadian Community Health Survey- Healthy Aging, 2010)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. You may now move on to the in-depth interview portion (Part 2)

Volunteer Qualitative Interview Guide

Section 1: Background information

1.) Please tell me about yourself. Where do you live, what do you like to do, what is your volunteer role, and how long have you been volunteering?

Section 2: Volunteering over the life course

2.) Please tell me how you first became a volunteer for this organization (within the Jewish community)

3.) What motivates you to continue your role as a volunteer here? (probes: What sorts of things make you want to come back? What do you enjoy most about volunteering here?)

4.) What has been your experience over your lifetime with regards to volunteering? (Probes: how old were you volunteered for the first time? Where did you volunteer?

What were some of your initial motivations to begin volunteering? Did you ever stop volunteering for a long period?)

5.) Can you describe your experience with volunteering opportunities outside of the Jewish community?

6.) What would you say are some of the greatest challenges associated with volunteering?

7.) In your own words, why is volunteering important to you?

(Can you tell me more about that?)

Section 3: Volunteering and social capital

8.) What kind of social relationships have you formed as a result of volunteering? (Probes: have you made friends? Acquaintances? Relationships with volunteer recipients?)

9.) What has been your experience in helping other Jewish people through your volunteer efforts?

10.) In what ways has volunteering impacted your relationship to the Jewish community of Vancouver? (Probes: Do you feel more connected to this community? Do you feel less connected? Has volunteering led to further participation in this community?)

Section 4: Wider impact of volunteering

11.) In what ways do you feel that you have benefited the Vancouver Jewish community through your volunteer efforts? (probes: Can you describe specific examples of how individuals or the community has benefited? Is it important for you to give back to this community?)

12.) How do you feel as though you have benefited the wider local community through your volunteer efforts? (How do you feel that your volunteer efforts spread beyond the Jewish community?)

13.) In what ways has your identity as a Jewish person changed since you began volunteering? (Probes: Has your identity been strengthened? Lessened? Stayed the same? Why do think this is?)

Section 5: Conclusion

This concludes the interview. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your participation and the information you have provided are extremely valuable. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or comments you would like to share.

APPENDIX B: Paid Volunteer Staff Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study. I would like to tell you a few things about my research project before we begin with the questions. I am a graduate student in the faculty of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University, and I am interested in learning about the experiences of volunteers within the Jewish community of Vancouver. I am particularly interested in what you have learned, and your various experiences with regards to working with older adult volunteers in the Jewish community.

It is important for you to know that there are no wrong answers to these questions, and that your role is to simply participate and answer each question the best that you can. You do not have to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with, and your participation is completely voluntary.

Please let me know if you have any questions before we begin.

Qualitative Interview Guide

Section 1: Background information

Please tell me about yourself. Where do you live, what do you like to do, what is your role within this organization, and how long have you been in this role?

Section 2: Working with older adult volunteers

2.) Please describe the recruitment process for volunteers at this organization.

3.) What are the challenges associated with recruiting older adult volunteers? Are there particular methods that you find encourage or motivate individuals to begin volunteering

4.) Are the older adults who volunteer typically “experienced” volunteers, or are they generally new to volunteering?

Section 3: Social interaction among volunteers

5.) Have you noticed social interaction amongst older adult volunteers, or between older adult volunteers and other individuals while volunteering? Please explain.

6.) Do you believe that volunteering is a method by which an older adult can increase his/her social interaction and network size? Please explain.

Section 4: Role of Jewish culture

7.) How does being a Jewish organization influence those who choose to volunteer? (probes: Are most of those who volunteer for this organization Jewish? Does this organization promote values related to Judaism?)

Section 5: Conclusion

This concludes the interview. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your participation and the information you have provided are extremely valuable. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or comments you would like to share.

APPENDIX C: Participant Information and Informed Consent

AN EXPLORATION OF VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES AMONG OLDER JEWISH ADULTS IN VANCOUVER

Who is conducting this study?

Principal Investigator: Eireann O'Dea, MA Candidate

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Dept. of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Andrew Wister, PhD

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Dept. of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and experiences of older Jewish adults who volunteer for formalized volunteer organizations in the Vancouver Jewish community. This research will partially fill the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Gerontology in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Simon Fraser University, and will be published as a thesis. Your participation in this project will include one interview, in which you will be asked to speak about your life experiences as a volunteer; your current volunteer role and your experiences; your Jewish identity and how this may be impacted by your volunteer role; how volunteering has impacted your social life, and the overall impact of your volunteer efforts.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to take part in this research because you are a volunteer within the Jewish community of Vancouver, or you currently occupy a leadership role within a volunteer organization based in the Jewish community of Vancouver.

The data collected in this study will be categorized, coded, and thematically analyzed in order to develop a greater understanding of volunteer experiences within the Jewish community of Vancouver. Background questionnaires will be conducted with each participant to ensure that individuals a.) Meet eligibility criteria, and b.) Represent a diverse sample of the older adult Jewish population (with regards to age, gender, address, etc). Participants will not be categorized in anyway according to race or ethnicity, and the data collected will not be analyzed or presented in such a way that unfair stereotypes will be drawn or created.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation. You may withdraw from this research project at any time, without penalty or consequence. You may also refuse any questions during the interview process.

What happens if you decide to participate in the study?

If you decide that you would like to participate in the study, you will be asked to schedule and participate in one in-depth interview, which includes a background questionnaire and a series of questions related to your volunteer experiences. The interview will be conducted at a private location of your choice, such as your home, and will last for approximately 30-60 minutes. All interviews will be recorded using a recording device and will then be transcribed by the principal investigator. Audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription.

Are there any potential risks to participating in the study?

This study is considered to be "minimal risk," and there are no foreseeable risks in participating. However, it is possible that participation in this study may trigger sensitive or personal aspects of your life history, potentially resulting in emotional or psychological responses. If this occurs, please let the principal investigator know if you have any concerns. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with, and you may stop your participation at any time. If needed, the principal investigator will assist you with locating community resources, such as a counsellor, specific to your needs and location. Examples of such resources include:

Jewish Family Service Agency Therapy Services through West Coast Wellness Group: 604-637-3309

Jericho Counseling: 604-537-4246

Vancouver Crisis Centre Senior's Distress line: 604-872-1234

Are there any benefits to participating in the study?

You may not benefit directly from participating in this research project.

Compensation

Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

Confidentiality: how will your privacy be maintained?

Your confidentiality will be respected. In order to protect the identity of research participants, following the completion of the interview, audio recordings will be transferred to a password protected laptop computer, and deleted from the recording device. This password protected laptop computer will be stored in a locked drawer in the locked home office of the PI. Only the principal investigator will have access the audio recordings.

Your name will not be attached to any data. Instead, a unique participant identifier (ie: A randomly generated number) will be used to maintain participant confidentiality, and will be used in transcription and all subsequent documentation. The link between the unique identifier and participant names will be kept in a separate location from the de-identified data, and will be kept track of by the PI using a printed out excel file, to be stored in a locked drawer in the locked home office of the PI. Transfer of data between the principal investigator and supervisor will occur using a password protected device (USB drive), which will be stored in a locked drawer in the locked home office of the PI. Audio recordings will be destroyed following interview transcription; there are no plans for secondary use of the audio recordings following the completion of this study. All other data relating to the project will be safely destroyed after 5 years.

How will the results of this study be used?

The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis. At the end of the study, if you would like a copy of the thesis, a digital copy will be available to you upon request.

Who can you contact is you have questions about this study?

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact either the principal investigator or the faculty supervisor:

Principal Investigator: Eireann O'Dea, MA Candidate

[….]sfu.ca | 778-[…]

Dept. of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University

Faculty Supervisor: Andrew Wister, PhD

[.....}@sfu.ca | 778-[…]

Dept. of Gerontology, Simon Fraser University

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about this study?

If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics jtoward@sfu.ca or 778-782-6593.

Future use of participant data

There are no plans for future use of participant data.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read and understood the information and consent form.

Yes___ No___

I have had sufficient time to consider the information provided and to ask for advice if necessary.

Yes___ No___

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had satisfactory responses to my questions.

Yes___ No___

I understand that all of the information collected will be kept confidential where possible and that the results will only be used for the research objectives.

Yes___ No___

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and that I have the right to refuse being audio recorded.

Yes___ No___

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am completely free to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

Yes___ No___

I understand that I am not waiving any of my legal rights as a result of signing this consent form.

Yes___ No___

I understand that there is no guarantee that this research will provide any benefits to me.

Yes___ No___

I have read this form and I freely consent to participate in this research.

Yes___ No___

I have been told that I will receive a dated and signed copy of this form.

Yes___ No__

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Signatures

---------- ----------

Participant Signature Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

Printed Name of Participant

---------- ----------

Researcher Signature Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

APPENDIX D: Recruitment Flyer

AN EXPLORATION OF VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES AMONG OLDER JEWISH ADULTS IN VANCOUVER

Principal Investigator: Eireann O'Dea, Masters Candidate

We are conducting a research project to explore the volunteer experiences of older Jewish adults who volunteer within the Jewish community of Vancouver. The primary aims of this study are to achieve a better understanding of why older Jewish adults are motivated to volunteer within their specific ethnocultural minority group, how their ethnocultural identity might be influenced by volunteer experiences, and finally, how volunteering can influence social interaction, social network size, and feelings of community integration for older adults.

If you:

- Are over the age of 55
- Identify as Jewish
- Currently volunteer for an organization within the Jewish community of Vancouver (ie: The Jewish Seniors Alliance, the Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver, the Kehila Society of Richmond, The Peretz Centre, L'Chaim Adult Day Centre, the Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia, your synagogue, etc.).

We would like to invite you participate in a one-time in-depth interview that will last up to 60 minutes. The interview can be arranged at a private location of your choice.

If you would like more information about the study, or if you would like to participate, please contact:

Eireann O'Dea, Masters Candidate, Simon Fraser University, Department of Gerontology

[…]@sfu.ca or 778-[…]

APPENDIX E: Senior Line Magazine Recruitment Advertisement

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APPENDIX F: Participant Volunteer Locations

The Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver (JCCGV)

The JCCGV is a recreational, cultural, and educational facility located in the Oakridge neighbourhood of Vancouver's West Side. The JCCGV hosts activities for all ages, including pre-school, summer day-camp, dance classes, Hebrew lessons, and live theatre. The center also houses a library, art gallery, swimming pool, and a fitness center. The JCCGV is a hub for local Jewish seniors, and offers several recreational activities, as well as many volunteer opportunities. Volunteer roles for older adults at the JCCGV include assisting at the adult day centre, serving on the seniors' advisory committee, helping in the library, and running various programs for seniors, among other roles.

The Jewish Seniors Alliance (JSA)

The JSA is a volunteer organization located in the Oakridge neighbourhood of Vancouver's West Side. The JSA provides outreach to frail and isolated seniors, educational events and seminars, advocacy, and research, as well as offering several volunteer opportunities for older adults, including peer counseling, friendly home visits, and friendly phone calls to help seniors in need. The JSA currently has 39 trained senior peer counselors, and 19 friendly visitors and telephone callers. All JSA activities are designed to reduce social isolation and to promote community involvement among older adults.

Sisterhood at Har El Congregation

The Sisterhood organization at Har El synagogue is a community of approximately 45 women who organize a variety of activities for the North Vancouver Jewish community, including family dinners, educational lectures, book clubs, and movies nights. The Har El sisterhood is a part of long standing tradition of Jewish sisterhood groups, which typically operate to serve their synagogue and communities by organizing social and fundraising events.

The Kehila Society of Richmond

The Kehila society of Richmond provides programming for seniors, run entirely by senior volunteers. Every Monday from September to June at Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Richmond, older adults can drop in and enjoy exercise classes, a three-course meal, and original programming. Older adult volunteers choose programs and help to run the weekly events for senior participants.

The Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia

The Jewish Museum and Archives of BC is dedicated to the collection and sharing of historical documents, photos, and oral histories showcasing Jewish life in British Columbia over the past 150 years. Volunteers for this program might assist with duties including organizing and sorting documents and photos and transcribing oral histories.

Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture

The Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture is a centre for individuals seeking secular Jewish culture and progressive, humanistic Judaism education in Vancouver. The centre offers several programs, including family education, Bar and Bat Mitzvah programs, lecture series, Jewish holiday celebrations, and lecture series. Volunteers for the Peretz centre help to organize programs, teach lecture series, cooking for special holiday events, and fundraising efforts.

Chabad of Richmond

Chabad of Richmond is a Jewish community center in Richmond, BC, offering programs for children, families, adults, and seniors guided by Chabad-Lubavitch teachings, one of the world's largest Orthodox Jewish movements. Volunteers for Chabad might assist with programs such as the bi-monthly "Smile on Seniors" kosher lunch program or serve on the board of the organization.

Shalom Branch #178 of the Royal Canadian Legion

The Shalom branch of the Royal Canadian Legion offers support to veterans, widows and dependents of veterans, and the community at large through various fundraising efforts and monthly social events. Volunteer roles include assisting with events and fundraising efforts, as well as increasing membership and outreach to the Jewish community and beyond.