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THE BLACK ELDERLY VOLUNTEER

by

SANDRA E. GONZALES

A report submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER
in
SOCIAL WORK

Portland State University
1976

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty five years there has been a heightened awareness of the needs of a large segment of our population--the elderly. An expansion of services, research and training programs seeks to improve the living conditions of this long neglected age group. The aging process is a complex one, involving a variety of biological, psychological and social changes which the aging individual must adjust to. For example, the aging American may be confronted with loss of the work role in retirement, a reduction in income, impaired sensory functioning, more frequent illness, death of a spouse or friend and an overall isolation from the mainstream of society. The ability of individuals to adapt to these changes is dependent upon their cultural, social, physical and psychological background. These factors also affect their mode of adjustment.

The black elderly, with a cultural background and a history of discrimination and extreme deprivation unlike that of other elderly, have a unique pattern of adjustment to the aging process. Only recently has the need to study black elderly as a group separate from white elderly been recognized. Some recent research has been concerned with discovering the common aspects of aging among blacks and the distinctive characteristics of elderly blacks as compared to elderly whites. At the same time researchers have become aware of the danger of generalizing and viewing the black elderly as a homogeneous group. With regard to aged blacks, Kalish (1971) says:

We need constantly to remind ourselves and others that no ethnic community can be represented by any one group, unless that group is a well-selected sample of the entire community; we must focus not only on means and modes, but upon ranges and standard deviations, upon groups within groups and upon individuals within groups.

The present study represents an attempt to seek out one possible subgroup of the black elderly population--the volunteer. Black elderly volunteers are a puzzled about but largely unknown group. Very little systematic research has been done on this subject. Recently there has been an increased interest in volunteering among the elderly population as a whole, as social welfare planners seek new ways for the aged to find fulfillment and enjoyment. It is felt that volunteering can offer prestige, feelings of usefulness and other gratifications that may be lacking in the aged person's life.

On a national level, a Federal program called the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was established in 1971 as part of ACTION, the federal volunteer agency. The purpose of RSVP is to "create meaningful opportunities for persons of retirement age to participate more fully in the life of their communities...". On a local level RSVP works with agencies to develop volunteer jobs and recruits older persons to volunteer.

The present study originated with a request from the Portland RSVP. There were no minority volunteers at all in this program, and the director wanted to know why this was so, and how to successfully recruit aged blacks to volunteer. While a random or probability sampling of the elderly black population in Portland would have been most useful in exploring these questions, it was not feasible. In fact, limitations of time and resources necessitated limiting the focus of the research. With a desire to take a positive approach to this issue, the black older person

who volunteers was made the focus of the study. As little was known about black elderly volunteers in Portland, acquiring a sample presented difficulties. It was decided to use the church as an entry point through which the sample could be acquired.

The population of the research, then, was the black person 60 years of age or above who volunteers in the church. A major assumption was explored in the study - that the elderly black church volunteer is involved in volunteer activities in addition to the church. Other issues of concern were:

- the socio-economic background of the black elderly volunteer.
- where aged blacks volunteer - for black organizations, local clubs, schools or others.
- extent of volunteering done by black elderly volunteers prior to the age of 60.

This paper combines a review of the literature on the black elderly and on volunteering, an analysis of a small sample of black elderly church volunteers and a personal look at some successful volunteer programs involving aged blacks, to create a better understanding of the black elderly volunteer, especially in relation to the elderly black population as a whole. This information may be useful with regard to involving aged blacks in volunteer programs such as RSVP.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE BLACK ELDERLY - RESEARCH TRENDS

In the past, research pertaining to the black elderly has been negligible, producing data that are inconclusive and often contradictory. Much of the gerontological research has excluded aged black subjects, or failed to consider race as a factor for analysis in those studies including black elderly. The 1970's saw an upsurge in research and services directed toward the black elderly, and towards the aged population as a whole. Various factors contributed to this increased activity - the 1971 White House Conference on Aging, the organization of the National Caucus on the Black Aged (NCBA) and the availability of federal funds for research, training or services involving the black elderly. NCBA, established in 1970, serves as an advocate for aged blacks, exposing the imperative needs of this group, sponsoring conferences and workshops, promoting research and working with the political structure to effect change in social policy. Jacquelyne Jackson (1971), who for years has reviewed extensively the literature on the black aged concludes, "While it is no longer true that almost nothing is known about black aged, it is still true that we've got a long way to go!". As mentioned earlier, she and other researchers express concern with the tendency to generalize about the black aged population based on the limited data available. They see the identification of significant

subgroups within the black elderly population as a high priority research task.

As the research on the black elderly is so limited, this review of the literature has attempted to include all available recent research directly related to the subject and much of the research that is in some way relevant to the black elderly volunteer. It was discovered that this research is often contradictory in content, making it difficult to reach conclusions based on it. In addition, sample size is often small (e.g. Faulkner et al. 1975; Hearn, 1971; Heyman and Jeffers, 1964) or subject to methodological weaknesses (Calvert and McCaslin, 1975; Ehrlich, 1973). This review of the literature attempts to "make sense out of" the available research, gathering together data on several related subjects. It includes an overview of the socio-economic background of the black aged in the United States, studies done on their morale, their participation in voluntary associations and their involvement in the church. It also includes a review of the research on the voluntary association memberships of blacks, the volunteering patterns of Americans today and the limited research on volunteering and the elderly.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The following demographic information was taken from three sources: Jacquelyne Jackson's (1973) article, the NCBA Technical Bulletin Series (1975a, 1975b) and a report by the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging (U.S. Congress, 1971). These authors base their findings almost entirely on 1970 statistics from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

With the double jeopardy of being both old and a minority, the black elderly fare much worse than most other persons in our country with

regard to social and living conditions. Lindsay (1971) sums this up in

The Multiple Hazards of Age and Race:

The majority of Negroes over 65 are less well educated, have less adequate income, suffer more illnesses and earlier death, have poorer quality housing and less choice as to where they live and where they work, and in general, have a less satisfying quality of life.

There are approximately 1,670,000 blacks age 65 or over in the United States. Of these the majority (61 percent) reside in the South, almost 19 percent in the North East, about 16 percent in the North Central and 5 percent in the West. Most are urban (about 77 percent). A trend of decreasing rural residence continues, as aging and aged blacks continue to move to metropolitan areas, with concentration in the central cities. Census data of 1970 indicate that 56 percent of the black population reside in central city areas, as compared to 25 percent of the whites. Females comprise 57 percent of the aged black population.

Income

While the elderly population in general contains a high incidence of poverty, the blacks appear to be the hardest hit. In 1973, 37 percent of all blacks 65 years and over were in poverty, 2.5 times greater than the proportion of elderly whites in poverty. This statistic is based on Census Bureau data which used \$2,119 or less a year as the poverty level for a single person--an amount which barely covers survival needs. Using \$3,000 as the poverty level income for a single person, the majority (about 66 percent) of blacks age 65 and over fall below this figure, compared to one third of the white elderly. Even more revealing is the gap between the income of aged black females and males. The mean income of black females age 65 and over in 1969 was

only 60 percent as much as that of their male counterparts. Figures for 1973 show 40.5 percent of aged black females in poverty compared to 32.4 percent of aged black males. While the income situation has improved in the past fifteen years, changes have been incremental, and the gap between the mean income of elderly whites and elderly blacks has widened rather than narrowed.

Employment

In 1970, 23.5 percent of black aged males and 13.2 percent of black aged females were within the labor force. Jackson (1973) points out the diversity of this population, indicating that while over half of the employed aged females were household domestics, 15 percent were in white collar (non-manual) employment. Fourteen percent of the males were also in white-collar work. Elderly black males show about the same participation in the labor force as elderly white males, while the participation rate of white females is slightly lower than that of black females. However, the unemployment rates for the black elderly remain consistently higher than for elderly whites.

Education

A 1973 population report indicates that of black males age 65 and over, only 10 percent completed high school, compared to 12.6 percent for black females. Proportionately, there are three times as many white elderly with at least a high school education as black elderly. Census data of 1970 place the median educational level in years for the black elderly as between five and seven years. While the proportion of blacks age 65 and over with no formal education is greater than those

with education beyond high school, Jackson (1973) points out that there is some educational diversity. In 1970, 33,272 elderly blacks had some years of college or a college degree, 37 percent of whom were male.

Marital Status

While census data comparing the marital status of black and white elderly was not obtained, the available data do indicate that the majority of all black males age 65 and over are married and living with their spouse. At the same time, the majority of black elderly females are widowed. Among families headed by persons 65 years of age or over, 66 percent are husband and wife, 26 percent female headed and 7 percent other-male headed. Also, the majority of all black families with heads age 65 or above contain only two persons, rather than any type of extended family arrangement. Almost all aged blacks reside in households - they are rarely institutionalized. (Jackson, 1973)

Health

Although there has been a significant increase in life expectancies for blacks, their death or mortality rate continues to be disproportionately high in comparison to whites. At birth, the life expectancy of black males is lower than that of white males and the life expectancy of black females lower than that of the white female. The white female has the highest life expectancy and the black male the lowest. However, an interesting trend has existed - blacks in their later years of life have a longer life expectancy than whites of the same age. This racial crossover presently occurs at age 69. In other words, of the black and white elderly over age 69, the blacks have a longer life expectancy. The most common explanation for this crossover is "the elimination

through neglect and discrimination of those non whites who were highly susceptible to various diseases so that the aged survivors represented a selected group biologically superior in adapting to their circumstances and environment" (Calloway, 1972).

Housing

Census data indicate the deplorable housing conditions in which elderly blacks live--conditions much worse than those of their white counterparts. Nationally, two thirds of all housing owned and occupied by the aged blacks was valued at less than \$10,000 in 1970, compared to just over one third of housing owned by aged whites. Elderly black renters fare even worse, with three fourths of them paying a gross rent of less than \$100, compared with 53.9 percent of white elderly renters. In general, 19 percent of all housing owned by blacks was dilapidated (severely rundown or lacking some or all plumbing facilities) and 25 percent of black renters lived in dilapidated housing, according to 1970 data. These figures represent more than twice the proportion of whites owning or renting dilapidated housing. By far the worst housing conditions for elderly blacks exist in the rural South.

MORALE

In light of the data revealing the extremely oppressive conditions in which the black elderly have lived, many researchers have been concerned with the morale or self-esteem of these aged blacks. Earlier research on the black population as a whole has stressed the low self-esteem, identity crises and disorganized personality of blacks--a "pathological" approach. Other authors however, present opposing findings.

McCarthy and Yancey (1971) review some of the literature on this subject and go on to propose that "lower class blacks will manifest higher self-esteem than lower class whites, and middle class blacks will manifest lower self-esteem than middle class whites." This view is based on their theory which states that there are differences in the nature of the frustrations felt by white as compared to black lower class and white and black middle class.

Current research done on the black elderly as a population reveals that the morale of this group is just as high and often higher than that of their white counterparts. Messer (1968) in a study of black and white elderly occupying public housing found elderly blacks scored higher on morale measures and were less likely to deny their actual age status than whites. Messer concludes that race accounts for differences in attitudinal dimensions more than do other variables such as age, sex, or health. One explanation he offers is that the morale of blacks may change with age, with aged blacks enjoying their older years, having "lived through the worst of it."

The extensive research done by Kent and Hirsch (1971) on low income black and white elderly reveals that black respondents compared to whites, younger respondents compared to older ones and males as compared to females rank higher on morale scores, with significant differences in all three cases. This study used a morale scale representing six components: surgency, attitude toward own aging, acceptance of status quo, agitation, easy going optimism and lonely dissatisfaction. Comparing the morale scores of black and white respondents when controls for age are introduced, there is a significant difference only in the middle grouping (age 75-84) with whites ranking lower in morale. In the younger age

group (65-74) there is a slight, non-significant difference between blacks and whites, with whites ranking lower in morale. The over 85 age group contained only a small number and indicated whites scoring higher in morale than blacks. Using further regression analysis to examine the data, Clemente and Sauer (1974) conclude that race is an inefficient predictor of morale. They also conclude that research does not indicate that elderly blacks have suffered psychologically as a result of their position in our society.

Rubenstein's (1971) nationwide study of black and white elderly is concerned with the morale of those aged living alone as compared to the morale of those living with others. He uses two morale factors: transient response to external events and degree of sustained unhappiness. Rubenstein finds no significant difference in the morale scores of these black and white aged, in both the group living alone and those living with others. He concludes that blacks are no more alone and isolated and their emotional state of well being no different than white elderly.

In research containing an all black sample Faulkner et al. (1975) studied a small group of poor, inner city black elderly and found the majority to have a positive self concept and to compare themselves favorably with others their age. Hearer (1971) reports similar findings for his sample of middle aged to elderly blacks, as do Swanson and Harter (1971).

In summary, the studies done on the morale of the black aged tend to indicate that although this group experienced the hardships of a minority in a prejudiced world, with limited opportunities for betterment, they do not exhibit a lower morale than white aged. Yancey and McCarthy (1971) offer a theory for this phenomenon in relation to the

black population as a whole and other researchers speculate that the black aged may be enjoying their later years, not having to work so hard and having survived through hardships. Clemente and Sauer (1974) conclude that race is not an efficient predictor of morale for the elderly.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

In reviewing the literature, no research was found that analyzed black and white volunteering patterns considering the variables of age and socio-economic status. On the other hand, voluntary association membership has been the subject of extensive sociological research. Findings with regard to the membership and participation of blacks as compared to whites are quite revealing and shall be reviewed below. It is felt that voluntary association membership and volunteering are closely related, in that much volunteering is done as part of membership in a voluntary association.

Substantial research over the years has produced consistent findings relating socio-economic status and voluntary association membership. Hyman and Wright (1971), Curtis (1971) and Babchuk and Booth (1969) are a few who indicate the direct, positive relationship between education, occupation, income and voluntary association membership.

Figures on the extent of membership in the United States vary from study to study, some including unions as voluntary associations and others excluding them. Hyman and Wright (1971) found that 43 percent of their national probability sample belonged to at least one voluntary organization. Curtis's (1971) study shows 50 percent have non-union memberships and Babchuk and Booth (1969) indicate that 80 percent of their statewide probability sample are affiliated with one or more

voluntary associations.

In relation to age, the research indicates a peak in membership and participation in the middle years (Curtis 1971, Babchuk and Booth 1969). Although there is not an agreement on the exact age of this peak, it centers around ages 45 to 55, with a drop occurring at age 60. Older individuals continue to participate but not to as great a degree. Babchuk and Booth (1969) for example, show 74 percent of those age 60 and over affiliated as compared to a peak of 89 percent affiliation during the middle years.

Black and White Membership Rates

While some research has indicated that the rate of voluntary association membership is less for blacks than for whites, these studies have not taken into account the generally lower socio-economic status (SES) of the black population and the effect of this status on their membership. A number of recent studies however, take this into account and show that when SES variables are controlled the situation is reversed, with black membership and participation greater than that of whites.

Babchuk and Thompson in 1972 using a sample of 120 blacks compared to a previous study of whites support the contention that blacks have a higher rate of membership than whites. They find this to be true for blacks at all social class levels, especially the lower class, with two-thirds of the lower class blacks in their sample belonging to one or more voluntary associations (not including church or union affiliations). Orum (1966) examines data from research done in Detroit, Chicago and Washington D.C. Without controlling for socio-economic status the white respondents show a higher membership rate than the blacks. With controls for SES, the lower class blacks were shown to be more likely affiliated

with organizations than the lower class whites. For the medium SES groups, some studies showed a higher membership rate for whites while others indicated no significant difference. For the higher SES groups the whites were more likely to belong to voluntary associations than the blacks. Orum concludes from these data that the relationship between social class and membership in associations is not nearly as pronounced for blacks as it is for whites. An additional finding is that with regard to active participation in voluntary associations, blacks at all socio-economic levels are more likely to be active than their white counterparts.

Olsen's findings in 1970 are more conclusive, measuring the social and political participation of blacks and whites using nine variables, such as voluntary association participation, political discussion, church participation, and voting. With SES variables held constant, the adjusted participation rates for blacks were higher than for whites in all nine measures and at all socio-economic levels. Examining earlier data Olsen points to the existence of a time trend, with blacks presently participating in more social and political activities than they did in the past. More recently Williams et al. (1973) examined the voluntary association memberships of primarily low income whites, blacks and Mexican Americans. He discovered that while socio-economic factors appear to be the cause of a lower participation rate for the Mexican Americans as compared to the blacks and whites in the sample, the blacks show a significantly higher rate of participation in associations than the whites or Mexican Americans, both with and without the controlling of certain variables such as education, occupation, home ownership, or age.

Theory

As mentioned earlier, a superficial look at data on voluntary association membership indicates that blacks are less likely to belong than whites. This finding is supported by an "isolation" theory related to blacks and persons of a low socio-economic status. The basic assumption is that blacks are not integrated into society and lack the social skills to participate in organizations and politics. They remain isolated from civic affairs, sometimes due to discrimination. In contrast to this point of view, as far back as 1944 Myrdal (Orum, 1966) introduced the idea that blacks participate and belong to more voluntary associations than other Americans. He felt that because blacks were kept out of most organized social and political activities in our society, they compensated by forming and participating in a great number of voluntary associations among themselves. While Myrdal stresses the "pathological" nature of this phenomenon, other researchers have supported the basic content of this "compensatory" theory (Orum, 1966; Babchuk and Thompson, 1962).

In 1972 Olsen posited another theory regarding the social and political participation of blacks which he terms the "ethnic community" thesis. Rooted in the Marxian concept of class consciousness, this theory states that members of an ethnic minority form a very cohesive community which serves as a reference group for them. They follow closely the norms of their community and act collectively to improve shared social conditions. For example, the activism of the 1960's represents a changing norm. Olsen (1972) and later Williams (1973) stress the complementary relationship between the compensatory and ethnic community theories, both having validity and offering insight with regard

to the social participation of blacks in the United States today.

Elderly Membership in Voluntary Associations

As none of the above research included age as a variable for analysis it provides no information on the extent of voluntary association participation of aged blacks as compared to aged whites. Only a few studies have been done on this subject, the most extensive one being Kent and Hirsch's Philadelphia study of black and white low income elderly (1972). With a probability sample of 1,022 individuals (762 black, 260 white) the actual membership in voluntary associations and the frequency of attendance were examined. Clemente et al. (1974) examine this data and report a statistically significant difference between the mean participation of blacks and whites. The mean number of memberships of blacks is .356, the mean of whites .200. Of the black respondents 22 percent hold memberships as compared to 11 percent of the whites. These findings are consistent with the research described earlier comparing the membership and participation of blacks and whites of comparable socio-economic status. However, Clemente et al. (1974) point out that Rubenstein's analysis of a national sample of black and white aged (1971) shows aged blacks belonging to formal associations at a lower rate than aged whites. This conflict in findings may be due to the fact that Kent and Hirsch's study (1972) compares black and white elderly of comparably low socio-economic status, while Rubenstein's sample shows a sharp difference in the education, occupation and incomes of the black and white respondents, with the blacks indicating a lower socio-economic background. As Rubenstein's published work does not include his analysis of voluntary association memberships, only specula-

tions can be made regarding it. Clemente mentions that Rubenstein uses a tabular analysis as opposed to the regression analysis used in examining the Kent and Hirsch Study. It appears that further research is needed on the voluntary association membership rates of aged blacks and whites.

Lambing (1972) offers some additional insight in her study of the social class living patterns of retired blacks in Florida using a sample of 101 black respondents. Dividing her sample into three social class levels--professional, blue collar and public assistance, she finds differences in voluntary association membership. The public assistance group have .82 memberships, the blue collar group shows 1.80 memberships, and the professionals have a mean of 2.87. Her study also shows the higher social class more likely to be active church members and hold office compared with a lower social class. Faulkner's (1975) small sample of low-income blacks report no club type activities and Hearn's (1971) all black sample indicates similar findings.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE UNITED STATES

A survey conducted by the Census Bureau for ACTION in 1974 provides some information on the volunteering patterns of Americans today. According to the study nearly one out of every four Americans over age 13 does some form of volunteer work. The volunteering rate for whites is nearly twice the rate for non-whites - 25 percent for whites as compared to 13 percent non-whites. It appears that the same variables affect volunteering rates as affect rates of voluntary association membership. The survey shows that the more education an individual has the higher his or her rate of volunteerism. The range goes from a rate

of 15 percent for those with less than four years of high school up to a rate of 43 percent for those with four or more years of college. The same relationship exists between family income and rate of volunteering. Americans with an income of \$20,000 or more volunteer at a rate of 37 percent. As income declines, the rate of volunteering declines, down to a rate of 12 percent for those with an income of less than \$4,000.

In contrast to their membership in voluntary associations (Booth, 1972), women are more likely to volunteer than men, with a rate of 26 percent as compared to 20 percent. In relation to age, adults between the ages of 25 and 44 have the highest volunteering rate--30 percent. Of the six age groups (teen-ager, young adult, adult, older adult, seniors, and the elderly), the elderly or those age 65 and over are the least likely to volunteer, with a rate of 14 percent.

The survey took a look at what types of work volunteers do by asking questions in regard to a one week period in 1974 - April 7 to 13. The study indicates that 50 percent of the volunteers were involved in religion-related activities during this week. After religion, education and health were the second most popular volunteer activities, with 15 percent of those who volunteered involved in each area. The type of volunteer work done was also related to age. The elderly were most likely to be involved in religious, health and social welfare activities, and not likely to be volunteering in education or recreation. In fact, of all the age groups, they had the highest rates of volunteering in three areas. The data shows 58 percent of the elderly volunteering in religion, 22 percent in health and 14 percent in social welfare. In addition, 31 percent of the elderly did only religious volunteering during the previous year, as compared to a mean of 18 percent for all age

groups.

The survey also reveals an interesting relationship between religious volunteering, income and education. Again, based on the activities of volunteers during a one week period in April, figures show that the lower the yearly income, the higher the rate of volunteering in religious activities. Those volunteers with an income of less than \$4,000 a year show a rate of 58 percent religious volunteering, with a gradual rate decrease as income increases, to 42 percent for those with an income of \$20,000 a year or more. A similar pattern exists with education and religious volunteering. The less education an individual has, the more likely he or she is to be involved in religious volunteering.

Although non-whites in general indicate a lower rate of volunteering than whites, those that do volunteer are more likely to be involved in religious and civic/community action activities. The study shows a rate of 54 percent for non-whites as compared to 50 percent for whites in the area of religion, and 21 percent for non-whites, 14 percent for whites in civic and community action activities.

In order to discover why Americans volunteer, the Census Survey included a question on the volunteers' reasons for the doing the first non-religious volunteer work they had ever done. Choosing as many answers as applied from of list of eight, the most frequently chosen answer was "wanted to help other people". The second most popular was "enjoyed volunteer work". Of the volunteers age 65 and over, 62 percent chose "wanted to help people" and 46 percent chose "enjoy volunteer work", at the highest rates for all age groups. In addition, 34 percent of the elderly said "had a sense of duty" and 15 percent said "could not refuse when asked".

THE ELDERLY VOLUNTEER

In addition to studies cited, some recent research has been done on the elderly volunteer. One major concern of this research has been the differences between elderly volunteers and non-volunteers. A number of authors indicate no difference between older volunteers and non-volunteers with regard to life satisfaction or morale (Carp, 1968; Dye et al., 1973; Bull and AuCoin, 1975). Although research has shown the direct relationship between socio-economic factors and volunteering, specific data on the socio-economic backgrounds of elderly volunteers is not available. Cryns and Monk (1974) list six variables affecting voluntaristic intent among the elderly: education, age, home ownership, range of social interest, belief in being able to make a contribution and expressed interest in organized senior citizen activities. Dye et al. (1973) find no differences in demographic backgrounds comparing a sample of aged volunteers and non-volunteers, except for sex, with 88 percent of the volunteers female. However, they do find a difference in past membership in service organizations, with the volunteers indicating more attendance of these meetings and greater enjoyment from them than the non-volunteers. Faulkner (1975) reports similar findings with regard to a project attempting to recruit aged blacks to volunteer. In this project the black elderly who became active volunteers tended to be those who had been previously involved in giving service, either informally or formally through organized groups.

This research indicates that although only a small proportion of the elderly population volunteers (ACTION, 1974) those who do are simply continuing an already established pattern of volunteering. As with voluntary association memberships (Babchuk and Booth, 1969; Curtis,

sidered.

The idea of volunteering was introduced to the Staten Island older population in a carefully planned, gradual manner. Almost all volunteering was done in a group, with individuals giving each other support in their new experience. All initial volunteer jobs were activities with which the volunteer was already familiar. Transportation was provided, mainly through the use of a school bus. Weekly group meetings were held in which volunteers shared experiences and some training was provided. This group approach appeared to be essential to the program's success (Babic, 1972).

Based on the extensive work of SERVE, not only on Staten Island but in other parts of New York and in Jamaica, Kallan et al. (1973) conclude that

...older people are not necessarily locked into a predestined course. If they are given alternatives they are frequently able to use them to increase activity and involvement, and expand their social life-space...personal growth is possible in the elderly and volunteer and other programs have potential for providing this.

RELIGION AND THE BLACK ELDERLY

In her most recent review of the literature relating to the black aged, Jackson (1971b) says, "The bulk of this literature continues, however, to show greater frequency of church attendance and higher religious involvement for Negroes than for whites." The Kent and Hirsch (1972) study illustrates this, showing the black respondents more likely to attend religious programs and pray regularly than the white respondents. Of the black respondents, 50 percent attend services regularly or often as compared to 43 percent of the whites, and 54 percent of the blacks regularly attend religious programs as compared to 16 percent of the

white respondents. Overall, the data show the black female to be most religious, while the black male approximates the behavior of the white female and white male lags far behind. Lambing's (1971) study of retired blacks of various socio-economic backgrounds shows 70 percent of her sample as active church members, many of these holding office. In Messer's (1968) study of elderly public housing residents 44 percent of the black respondents said religion is the most important thing in their life, as compared to seven percent of white respondents.

In regard to voluntary association memberships, Kent and Hirsch (1971) indicate 46 percent of the black respondents have memberships in religious groups as compared to 28 percent of the whites who have memberships. This is congruent with the research done on the voluntary association memberships of the black population. These studies reveal that blacks are more likely to belong to and participate in religious organizations than whites (Williams et al., 1973; Olsen, 1972).

We also know that blacks are more likely to volunteer in religious activities than whites and that the elderly volunteer for religious activities much more than for any other type, at a rate of 58 percent (ACTION, 1974). In addition, 31 percent of the elderly volunteers are involved only in religious volunteering. Considering all these findings, one might conclude that the majority of the black elderly who volunteer are involved in religious activities.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND: PORTLAND BLACK ELDERLY

According to recent population reports (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972) in 1970 the black population of Portland totalled 21,572 or 5.6 percent of the total population. Within the black population there were 2,345 persons age 60 and over, and only 1,470 persons age 65 and over. The black elderly population of Portland was unusual in that the number of males was almost equal to the number of females. There were 1,168 black males age 60 and above and 1,177 females. Of those age 65 and above, 727 were males and 743 were females. According to the 1970 Census data, one third of the black elderly individuals in Portland had an income below the poverty level. The majority of Portland's black population resides in the lower North-Northeast part of the city. For example, over half of the black population resides in seven adjoining census tracts, in an area of less than two square miles. Within this two mile area one also finds over half of the black elderly age 60 and over (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972)

With an original focus of the black elderly volunteer, an attempt was made to discover where the black elderly in Portland were volunteering. Inquiring with organizations such as Senior Centers and Loaves and Fishes programs in the black community met with only limited success-- a handful of black elderly were volunteering in these programs.

Considering this general lack of information regarding aged black volunteers in Portland, it was decided that going through the churches would be the most efficient way to acquire a sample of volunteers. This decision was based on the research showing the black elderly to be very active in the church, and a further tentative assumption that the church volunteers would also be volunteering for community organizations.

ACQUIRING THE SAMPLE

It was assumed that the church would be an accessible and co-operative vehicle to use to get in touch with elderly black volunteers. A list of ten black or predominantly black churches was obtained, which included the five largest black churches in Portland. It was discovered, however, that it was extremely difficult to make contact with the ministers of the churches. Not anticipating difficulties, telephone contacts were attempted rather than letters or personal visits, and met with limited success. Focusing on the larger churches, contacts with the three churches from which the sample was drawn were finally successfully made. These three churches are all located in the Northeast section of the city where most of the black population resides, and all contain almost totally black congregations. In fact, they are among the five largest black churches in Portland. They represent three denominations - Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Christ Methodist Episcopal (CME). It was assumed that the large congregations of these churches and their denominational diversity would provide a cross section of the black elderly church volunteer in Portland.

It was hoped that the names of elderly church volunteers could be

randomly selected from within each church but this did not turn out to be feasible. Instead, in two of the three churches the ministers gave a list of names which he selected. In the remaining church, the minister would not reveal names but made a referral to someone else in the church who suggested attending a meeting of the church "over-55" club. Upon attending the meeting, the names of three persons present who volunteered were acquired. These in turn gave the names of others.

Based on the estimations of the three ministers, the total sample of 24 represents a 10 to 15 percent sampling of the elderly church volunteers from each church. The total number of black elderly church volunteers in Portland is unknown. However, one might attempt an estimate using the established volunteering rates of the elderly (ACTION, 1974). To do this one takes 58 percent (the elderly religious volunteering rate) of 14 percent (the elderly volunteering rate) of 2,345 (total black population age 60+), which is 190. Using this figure of 190 black elderly church volunteers, the sample represents 12.6 percent of this population.

There was a refusal rate of 35 percent for the sample, with little difference in the refusal rates of the three churches. Male and female refusal rates were almost identical. Reasons for refusal were illness, "no time available" and "not interested". It was felt that some of those who said they were too busy simply did not want to be interviewed.

Sample Biases

Although it was hoped that a random sample of black aged church volunteers could be obtained, it turned out that many biases affected the selection of the sample. The size and diversity of the churches offered

a cross section of elderly church volunteers. However, the selection of individuals from within each church was subject to a number of biases, one of the most significant being the ministers' bias. It is possible that the two ministers who selected the names of their church members tended to choose individuals who were more active in the church or community and who were friendly persons most likely willing to be interviewed. They may also have attempted to choose a variety of individuals—younger and older, male and female, church oriented and community oriented. On the other hand, the sample from the third church was subject to quite different biases. It is likely that the sample of this church, chosen from those attending a church club meeting who made subsequent referrals, represents only one circle of the elderly volunteers within the church. This sample bias is evident in the fact that only 29 percent of the respondents from this church volunteered outside of the church, as compared to rates of 78 percent and 75 percent for the other two churches. In addition, although the age, health, education and income of the respondents from this church were not different from the other respondents, their occupational background was much lower. Most likely these apparent differences indicate that the sample from this church was biased and not representative, rather than indicating that the elderly volunteers in this church are different from the elderly volunteers in the other two churches.

The combined effect of the sample biases can only be speculated. Perhaps the effects of the ministers' biases were countered by the biases of the third church's sample. For example, the high rates of outside volunteering in the two churches were balanced by the very low rate of the third church. The refusals do not appear to have introduced

interpreted and of limited value. Upon examining the data received from the interviews, it became evident that certain additional questions should have been included in the interview. For example, questions concerning the physical location of the respondents' volunteer activities (how far away, in what neighborhood), and information on past volunteer activities (what kind, for how long, why discontinued). In summary, although certain gaps and weaknesses in design were evident in the interview schedule, it proved to be an efficient and manageable means of obtaining the desired information.

THE INTERVIEWS

Initial telephone contacts were made with the volunteers in order to set up appointments for personal interviews. All interviews took place in the respondents' homes. An interview schedule was used and the responses were written by the interviewer. Responses to open-ended questions were recorded verbatim. Neutral probes were used in order to elicit further responses in the open-ended questions. The length of the interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1.5 hours, with a mean of about 45 minutes.

It was felt that a flexible style of interviewing was necessary in order to put the respondent at ease and establish some kind of trust or rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. This was a major concern, in light of the evident disparity between the respondents and the interviewer--elderly black individuals and a 23 year old white woman, who conducted all of the interviews. Another concern was that the respondents would say only what they thought was "acceptable", or what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear, a problem in some

research. It was felt that through interaction and giving some feedback, a trusting and comfortable exchange could be developed, reducing the likelihood of the above. The possibility of bias introduced by the interviewer was of course acknowledged.

It appeared that apparent differences between interviewer and interviewee were successfully dealt with, as most of the respondents were friendly and receptive to the interview process. For some this was their original response, while others gradually became at ease as the interview progressed. Some respondents appeared uncomfortable or objected to the income question but all replied. One woman refused to give her age. Overall however, the respondents seemed to enjoy talking about volunteering and their church and other activities, and the interviews progressed smoothly.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The sample contained a total of 24 respondents, 15 (62.5 percent) females and nine (32.5 percent) males. They were drawn almost evenly from the three churches - nine (six females, three males) from the Baptist church, seven (five females, two males) from the AME church and eight (four females, four males) from the CME church. Their ages ranged from 61 to 83, with a mean and median of 70. The mean age of the males, 69, was lower but not significantly different when population differences are considered, from the mean of the females, which was 71. The median age of the males, however, was somewhat lower--66, as compared to a median of 70 for the females. Three-fourths of the sample were married and one-fourth were widowed. All of those widowed were women.

EDUCATION

The education of the respondents ranged from 5th grade to a college degree (Table 1). While the sample in general shows a higher educational attainment than that of black elderly on a national scale, the education of the respondents is distributed almost evenly within the range of five to 16 years. For example, 33 percent of the sample have an eighth grade education or less, 29 percent have some high school and 38 percent have a high school degree or above. The mean years of education for the sample is 10.

TABLE I
LAST YEAR OF SCHOOL COMPLETED OF TOTAL SAMPLE
BY NUMBER AND PERCENT

YEAR OF SCHOOL	NUMBER	PERCENT
Grades 5 to 8	8	33
Grades 9 to 11	7	29
High School Degree-Grade 12	6	25
College - 1 to 3 years	1	13
College Degree-4 years	<u>2</u>	<u>13</u>
Column Total	24	100

INCOME

Income data was categorized in the interview schedule into four levels: A) \$1,000-\$2,599, B) \$2,600-\$4,999, C) \$5,000-\$7,999, and D) \$8,000 and over. Category A represents a poverty income based on the current figure of \$2,600 as the poverty level for an individual. As mentioned earlier, faulty question design and confusion in the interview produced income data that is incomplete and difficult to analyze, as some individuals gave their single income while others gave a combined income figure. The 58 percent of the sample who stated their single income level had a median income level in B range. The remaining respondents had a median combined income in the C range. Two of the respondents stating single incomes were below the poverty level. Of the respondents giving a single income of D) \$8,000 or more, all but one were males working full time.

Although analysis of the income data is not really possible, the data does illustrate the range of incomes and tells us that the median income for 58 percent of the respondents is from \$2,600 to \$4,999 and

that the other 42 percent of the sample have an income combined with their spouse which centers around \$5,000 to \$7,999. As for employment, 29 percent of the sample was currently employed, 16.5 percent full time and 12.5 percent part time. While 55 percent of the males were employed, only 13 percent of the females were employed.

OCCUPATION

Like the educational levels, the former occupations of the respondents showed some variety but did not differ greatly from known norms of the black elderly population. Based on information regarding the kind of work they did the longest in their adult life, 46 percent of the respondents had been employed in service work or manual labor, 13 percent in semi-skilled positions, 25 percent in skilled positions, 8 percent in professional/management and 8 percent as housewives. While almost half of the females had been employed as domestics, the management professional group were all females (Table II). Two of the males had worked for the railroad and in addition five (or one third) of the females mentioned that their husbands had worked for the railroad.

Most of the respondents had worked at their stated occupation for a number of years. The males indicated a mean of 25 years working in their stated occupations. The mean number of years for the females was 17, not including two respondents who worked off and on in domestic work. This figure does not include employment in other occupations; it does indicate the stable employment background of the respondents.

TABLE II
OCCUPATION OF MALES AND FEMALES BY
NUMBER AND PERCENT

MAJOR JOB	NUMBER			PERCENT TOTAL
	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL	
Professional or Management	0	2	2	8
Skilled	4	2	6	25
Semi-Skilled	2	1	3	13
Service or Manual Labor	3	8	11	46
None	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>8</u>
Column Total	9	15	24	100

HEALTH

Concerning the present state of their health, 16 percent of the respondents said their health was "very good", 42 percent said "good" and 42 percent said "fair". None of the respondents said his or her health was poor or very poor. When asked if they have had any major ills or physical difficulties in the past two years, 20 percent of the respondents replied affirmatively, all but one of these also stated their health as "fair". The respondents stating their health as fair mentioned ailments such as diabetes, arthritis, heart conditions and recent major surgery.

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

Voluntary association membership was high for this sample--a rate of 87 percent. While over half of the sample belonged from one to three voluntary associations, another third had four or more memberships and three of these belonged to six or more associations. Types of member-

ships varied, and will be described in part in the section on volunteer activities. A direct relationship between voluntary association membership and community volunteering was evident. Those respondents who did not hold voluntary association memberships also did not volunteer outside of the church. Of those respondents who held memberships, 71 percent volunteered outside of the church. In addition, 67 percent of all the outside volunteering done was in connection with membership in a voluntary association.

VOLUNTEERING PATTERNS

This was a sample of black older persons who volunteer in their church. One of the major questions of this research was whether these black elderly volunteer for organizations in addition to the church, and the extent and nature of this outside volunteering. The data indicates that 62.5 percent of the sample volunteered outside of their church, with 37.5 percent volunteering only for their church. A detailed analysis of the differences between these two groups will be presented.

The respondents were an active group of individuals, volunteering in a variety of capacities within their church, many volunteering for a number of other organizations and almost all belonging to at least one voluntary association. They had been pursuing an active life style their entire lives and age, in most cases, had not decreased their activity. In fact, 34 percent of the respondents said they were more active with their church since the age 60, 58 percent said they were about as active and only 8 percent said they were less active with their church since age 60. This in agreement with the

ministers of the three churches, who stated that their older church members are the most active of all age groups, and that those members who are active continue this pattern into the older years, until they are physically unable to continue.

As for volunteering outside of the church, 60 percent of those respondents who do outside volunteer work said they volunteer more since age 60, 20 percent "about the same" and 20 percent less. This indicates that church volunteering is more stable than outside volunteering, i.e. not as affected by age. In measuring the number of years an individual has participated in a specific volunteer activity, church volunteering showed a mean of 15 years and a median of 16 years for all church volunteer activities, with a range of three to 65 years. Outside volunteering had a mean of 11 years of involvement, in contrast to a median of seven years. The range was one to 40 years. It appears that a number of outside volunteers had initiated new volunteer activities in the past 10 years, accounting for the lower mean length of involvement. Again, it appears that church volunteer activities have a more stable history.

With regard to transportation method used to get to and from volunteer activities, 67 percent of the sample drive as their primary means of transporting, 37.5 percent rely on relatives or friends, 12.5 percent take a cab occasionally and only one respondent mentioned the bus.

Church Volunteering

As the church is essentially run by volunteers, there are a variety of functions an individual can perform for their church. Each church has an organizational structure which may include boards, circles,

classes, societies and other group structures. In this sample, the mean number of groups within their church that the respondents volunteered for is two. (This does not include prayer groups or social groups where no volunteering is done). Within these groups a variety of volunteer work is done. For example, one important position that many of the respondents held in their church is membership on the Steward/Stewardess Board (in the Episcopal churches) and Deacon/Deaconess Board (in the Baptist church). Both positions have basically the same duties and functions but are called different names in Episcopal and Baptist churches. Seventy-one percent of the sample are either a steward(ess) or a deacon(ess). The steward(ess) or deacon(ess) is a primary assistant to the pastor, setting up the communion table for Sunday services, visiting the sick, administering the Sacrament to the infirmed and in general helping the pastor see to the needs of the church in any way possible.

In addition, the respondents were involved in volunteer activities such as teaching Sunday school, singing in the choir, ushering and serving on the Finance Board. They also organize fund-raisers, cook all the meals for fund raising dinners, sew lap robes for nursing homes, send get-well and condolence cards, make food baskets for needy families and regularly check on church members to see how they are doing. In summary, the respondents were largely involved in fund-raising and providing direct services for the church or church members. The boards and other groups meet once or twice a month, but respondents were involved weekly or more often in their volunteer activities.

Volunteering Out of the Church

As mentioned earlier, 62.5 percent of the sample volunteered for organizations other than their church. This includes religious volunteering for organizations other than the respondent's church. These 15 respondents volunteered for a total of 31 different agencies and performed a total of 42 different volunteer jobs, making an average of three volunteer jobs. By far the most common type of outside volunteer work was social welfare, 40 percent, followed by civic community action, 19 percent. In addition, 12 percent of the outside volunteering was done in the area of health, 12 percent in religion, 10 percent in education, five percent in recreation and two percent in the political arena. In a closer look at the functions performed by the volunteers, 62.5 percent served on boards or advisory councils of agencies such as the Urban League, the Senior Adult Service Center, NAACP and Portland Development Commission. Almost all of the outside volunteers performed some kind of direct service such as driving, visiting the sick, collecting money, tutoring, organizing and campaigning. At least 40 percent were involved in fund raising for individuals or organizations, by holding dinners, coffees, raffles, selling handmade goods or recruiting new memberships.

The question remains as to the nature of the organizations in which the outside volunteers worked. Appendix B illustrates the number and variety of these organizations. As mentioned earlier, the majority, 67 percent of all outside volunteering was in connection with membership in a voluntary association. In addition, 17 percent of the outside volunteering was for Social Service agencies, primarily as board members. Another 16 percent was for various health fund drives (e.g.

March of Dimes, Multiple Sclerosis), schools and a political candidate.

In a closer examination of volunteering done in connection with voluntary association membership, the majority (61 percent) of these memberships were social or fraternal, such as the Masons, Eastern Star, LaFemmes and Women in Community Service (WICS). The remaining were civic/community action groups (17 percent), religious groups (17 percent) and miscellaneous (5 percent).

An original assumption for this research was that the black elderly volunteer within the black community, that is, for organizations with predominantly black members and black recipients of services. Unfortunately, complete information on the location and nature of participants of the volunteer activities was not obtained. The data does indicate that 45 percent of the organizations for which the volunteers work are national organizations, and that 13 percent are designated as black organizations. It is speculated that even though some organizations may be national, the local chapters where these elderly are volunteering are most likely black. In closely examining the data, it is estimated that at least 74 percent of all the volunteer work is done primarily for black recipients and that these volunteers are working primarily with other blacks.

Comparison of Outside Volunteers and Church-Only Volunteers

The data reveals some significant differences between those respondents who volunteered outside of the church and those who volunteered only for the church. These differences are in the areas of education and occupation and indicate that these socio-economic factors are directly related to volunteering outside of the church. With regard to

education, 53 percent of the outside volunteers have a high school degree or above, as compared to 11 percent of the church-only volunteers. As for former occupations, 67 percent of the respondents volunteering outside of the church had worked at semi-skilled jobs or above while only 11 percent of the church-only volunteer respondents had semi-skilled jobs or better. At the same time, the available income data revealed no significant differences between the incomes of outside and church-only volunteers.

With regard to transportation mode used for volunteer activities, 80 percent of the outside volunteers drive as their primary means, as compared to 44 percent of the church-only volunteers who drive. As for variables of age and health, no differences between the two groups were revealed. It may be speculated that church-only volunteers would be more likely to give religious reasons for volunteering. In fact, the corresponding question in the interview schedule reveals only 21 percent of the total sample mentioned religious reasons for enjoying volunteering. While the church-only volunteers were more likely to give religious related answers than the outside volunteers, the difference was only slight.

In summary, education and occupation are the major variables shown to be directly related to volunteering outside of the church in this sample of church volunteers. Respondents formerly employed in semi-skilled occupations or above were more than twice as likely to volunteer outside of the church as respondents who had been unskilled workers. Similarly, the respondents with a high school degree or above had an outside volunteering rate almost double that of the respondents with less than a high school degree.

MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES

Some differing characteristics of the males and females were found. However, their volunteering patterns appeared to be similar. The males were younger, with a mean age of 69 as compared to 71 for the females. They also indicated better health, with the majority (78 percent) describing their health as "good" or "very good", while only 47 percent of the females see their health as "good" or "very good". Their educational background appeared to be the same, both males and females indicating a median of some years of high school. However, with regard to former occupations, two-thirds of the males were employed in semi-skilled jobs or above as compared to only one-third of the females. As for volunteering, the males and females showed no difference in rate of volunteering outside of the church or rate of voluntary association membership. Changes in volunteering activities since age 60 were similar for the males and females.

CHURCH DIFFERENCES

A limited analysis of the differences between the respondents from the three churches was undertaken. The most striking difference revealed was with regard to the outside volunteering rate of the AME church, which was 29 percent as compared to 75 percent and 78 percent for the other two churches. This may be partially explained by the fact that the occupational backgrounds of the respondents from the AME church were much lower than those of the remainder of the sample. All of the AME respondents were formerly employed in unskilled labor, while 75 percent of the CME respondents and 55.5 percent of the Baptist respondents were formerly

employed in semi-skilled jobs or above. The area of education, however, revealed no differences among the three churches. Again, the income data was too confusing to be of value. No differences were revealed in the ages of the respondents from the three churches. In health however, the Baptist church indicated a median of fair health for their respondents, while the other two churches both showed a median of good health.

ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ON VOLUNTEERING

Respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions in order to explore their feelings about various aspects of volunteering, including a question on the RSVP program. This information is useful for social planners and provides insight into the motivations, desires and satisfactions of the elderly black volunteer.

Benefits of Volunteering

When asked what they like about volunteering, two-thirds of the respondents gave inner-directed responses stressing the enjoyment and good feelings they get from volunteering, while one-third stressed outer-directed reasons, i.e. the desire to help other people, the needs of others. However, 87.5 percent of the respondents gave a response which combined these inner and outer-directed facets of volunteering. What they liked about volunteering centered around the theme of "the enjoyment of helping others" or joy in giving. All of these respondents enjoyed volunteering, and their enjoyment was directly related to helping others. Typical reactions were, "I like to be helpful to people", "I get a joy out of it--when I see someone else happy, it makes me happy." and "I'm a lover of people and any time I can do something to

help someone it gives me a bit of pleasure, enjoyment." The remaining 12.5 percent of the respondents also said that they enjoyed volunteering, but stressed other reasons for this enjoyment.

Twenty-one percent of the sample also gave religious related reasons why they like volunteering. These respondents mentioned helping the church, serving the Lord and working towards salvation. In addition, 29 percent of the total mentioned getting new ideas and stimulation by being with different people as a reason why they liked volunteering. Other miscellaneous responses given were: liking youngsters; getting results you can see; adaptability of volunteering to individual time schedules; and gaining self-awareness through volunteering.

In summary, when asked what they like about volunteering, the respondents' answers were quite similar, typically stressing the enjoyment derived from helping others.

Value of Volunteering for the Elderly

A related question was worded in the following manner: "In general, how important or valuable do you think it is for most older persons to volunteer? Very valuable, somewhat valuable, not very valuable or not at all valuable. Why?" While all the respondents said "very valuable", many responding even before the categories were read, some misunderstood the question. In explaining their answers, it became evident that some thought the question referred to the value for an older person to receive volunteer services, rather than the value for an older person to do volunteering. When necessary, the question was re-worded for clarification. In response to the intended meaning of the question, 29 percent of the sample said that volunteering is valuable because it keeps the

older person in touch with others, keeping his or her mind active and improving mental health. These responses included: "good mental therapy for them...gets them to get out and get their minds mixed up with others instead of sitting there and going crazy." and "it gives you a longer life...more active in thinking, getting new ideas--keeps you on your toes." and "It gives you a chance to keep in touch with your surroundings, with people in general, which you know is a very vital thing."

In addition, 21 percent of the sample said volunteering makes the older person feel needed, useful, giving responses such as "it kind of settles your mind...you feel like you're doing something to help someone"; "makes them feel like they're still making a contribution"; "when you get to the place where no one needs you, you can just go some place and cave in." Another 21 percent simply said that volunteering is valuable because it gives the older person something to do. Other miscellaneous responses were: prevents bad habits such as drinking; keeps you from feeling lonely; makes you feel thankful you're well; its enjoyable.

Many of the respondents indirectly answered this question of the value of volunteering in their response to previous questions regarding what they like about volunteering and why some older persons volunteer and others don't. In general, the responses to the present question emphasized the importance of volunteering in keeping an older person mentally (and physically) active through contact with others.

Why Some Elderly Don't Volunteer

Another open-ended question explored the opinions of these black elderly volunteers on why some older persons volunteers and others don't.

While a great number and variety of responses were given to this question, two predominant themes emerge. Seventy-one percent of the sample said some older people do not volunteer because of individual faults or negative characteristics and 62.5 percent said differing capacities and interests among older persons lead them to volunteer or not.

Included in the first group are 21 percent of the respondents who said that some people are "selfish" and "just don't care about others." Another 21 percent said that people don't volunteer because they don't have the true Christian spirit--they have fallen away from the church. Seventeen percent of the sample said that some older people are "just lazy".

In the second group of 62.5 percent of the sample, the respondents all seemed to be saying "people are different" without placing blame. Many of these responses stressed differing capabilities and experience. For example: "Some people have never been too active in anything outside their home. Some say they can't read, write, understand, and they're always left out because of this"; "...maybe they never did these kinds of things."; "A lot of people just don't know how to meet the public."; "Some people can do things and others can't...". Other respondents stressed differing interests, saying, "Like in the church for example, some people are just not interested in what I'm doing but will do something else"; and "the difference is just in the human make-up"; or "Everybody has something they likes to do no matter how old they are...some like to work in clubs, some in the church."

In addition, 25 percent of the respondents expressed that many persons go into a shell with age. They say: "Some people decide after they get 60 they just sit down and say, 'I'm too old'. They just

deteriorate and die."; and "When they get older they get in a shell--it might be self-pity." Surprisingly only 17 percent of the sample gave physical health as reasons some older persons do not volunteer, and only eight percent mentioned lack of transportation. In addition, 17 percent said that some older persons don't volunteer because no one personally asks them to. Two of the respondents mentioned the dangers involved in being out in the streets.

Opinions on RSVP

As the original concern for this research was the reasons why the black elderly were not participating in the Portland RSVP program, a final question attempted to explore the respondents' feelings on this subject. While some respondents said that they had heard of RSVP, none of them knew anything at all about the program. Anticipating this, a brief description of the program was included in this part of the interview. The original question regarding RSVP was: "Presently the Portland RSVP has only a few black volunteers. A) Why do think this is? B) What do you think RSVP can do to become more succussful in recruiting black older persons to volunteer?"

With 29 percent of the interviews completed, it was decided to delete the word "black" where it appeared in the question. It was felt that valuable responses could be elicited without relating the question to black elderly only, and the respondents (and interviewer) would feel more comfortable with the question. In comparing the responses of before and after the deletion, it appears that the original question elicited a higher rate of race-related responses while the altered question elicited more generalized answers. As the responses regarding the

original question are few, the analysis will include only the remaining 71 percent of the sample.

In general, the responses to this question were limited, often vague and required probing. Some were not sufficiently probed and remain vague. The two main reasons given as to why there are not more RSVP volunteers are: 1) people don't know about the program and 2) they don't have transportation, both responses at a rate of 41 percent. In addition, 29 percent of the respondents mentioned some negative aspect of volunteering for such a program. For example, "they put demands on you that are too much...if I was to do more volunteering I would want to do it on my own basis, with no restrictions." Another woman said that "people like to do things kinda on their own--without being told." One man offered the following insight:

A lot of people see these programs where the money is spent and not on the volunteers who are doing the work. They get disillusioned about that. There are programs financed by the federal government but the money is spent on administration, not the folks that's doin' the work.

In an indirect manner both positive and negative feelings about programs such as RSVP were revealed. A few of the respondents said they knew of people who were already involved in such a program; a few others said that people "just don't want to be involved in it".

Suggestions for getting more older people involved in the RSVP program were also limited. As mentioned earlier, providing transportation and letting the people know about the program are the two areas most stressed. Eighteen percent of the respondents mentioned the importance of personal contacts. They said: "If you just see an advertisement you think, well they don't need me. A lot of people need their ego recognized--get their names, invite them--say 'we need you'; and 'get

out and talk to people, tell 'em why it'd be beneficial for them and the agency...educate people". In addition, 23 percent of the sample mentioned advertising in general, saying, "explain it--give them the facts.. we don't know about it". Other suggestions offered were:

- get people who don't belong to churches or other organizations
- appeal to the churches
- bring things down to a person's level so that they can understand what is expected of them.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research has been concerned with the "who", "what", "when", "where" and "why" of the black elderly volunteer. Previous research gave little help with regard to these questions. As a result, an understanding of this sub-group of the black elderly population lies only in speculations and theories which have not been proven by systematic research. A prevalent theory with regard to volunteering and the black elderly is that volunteering is a white, middle-class phenomenon alien to aged blacks. It is felt that many of these elderly are still concerned with survival needs such as adequate housing and food, and are not likely to be volunteering. The words of one articulate respondent in this study sum up the thoughts expressed by many individuals who work with the black elderly or are in close contact with them: He says, "It has been a case where, they have had to scuffle and scratch...it's been such a chore for them just to exist--they don't have time to volunteer. You have very few of them that will volunteer." It is felt that those blacks who are retired have worked long and hard and want to take it easy during their retirement years. Those aged blacks who do volunteer do so in the church or on a neighbor to neighbor basis.

This view is supported by evidence that socio-economic background is related to volunteering, with individuals of low socio-economic status not as likely to volunteer as those of a higher SES (ACTION, 1974). The generally low socio-economic status of aged blacks has been

indicated. In addition, the elderly population as a whole has a very low volunteering rate, and the black population has a low rate compared to whites.

While the above view contains insight on the black elderly, it is an injustice to think that it holds true for all aged blacks. One must keep in mind that both similarities and differences exist among members of the aged black population. Various sub-groups exist, each with a unique pattern of aging and adjusting to circumstances. The individuals within these sub-groups also show dissimilarities along with their similarities.

WHO

Black elderly volunteers can be viewed as one of these sub-groups--the "do-ers" of their community who continue their active participation in church and community affairs into later years of life. As sociological research points out, blacks have a high rate of joining and participating in church and community groups as compared to whites of comparable socio-economic status, and the present study points to a close relationship between volunteering and voluntary association membership. Research also supports the fact that elderly volunteers are individuals with a long-established history of volunteering (Dye et al, 1973; Faulkner, 1975). The respondents in this study had all been volunteering for many years, and indicated a mean length of 15 years involvement in their present church activities. The study also showed an unusual finding, that many of the respondents were doing more volunteering since age 60, rather than an expected decrease in activities with age, illustrated by voluntary association membership trends.

The data indicated that aged black volunteers are likely to have a higher educational and occupational status than non-volunteers, revealed also in Lambing's (1972) study. Although a comparison between volunteers and non-volunteers was not undertaken in this study, census data on the national population of black elderly is used for comparison. At the same time this sample of volunteers showed a diversity of backgrounds, with education widely scattered from 5th grade to a college degree, and former occupations ranging from 46 percent in unskilled labor to the professional/management level.

In addition the data indicated that education and occupation are directly related to volunteering outside of the church. However, although 88 percent of those respondents with a high school degree or above volunteered outside of the church, almost half (47 percent) of those with less than a high school degree did outside volunteering. In other words, black aged from all socio-economic backgrounds may be volunteering in their community, but those with a higher socio-economic status are more likely to do so. This is in agreement with Orum's (1966) findings that the relationship between social class and membership in voluntary associations is not as pronounced for blacks as it is for whites.

In examining the black elderly volunteer, one must also take into consideration the extensive research done on the SERVE project (Sainer and Zander 1971; Babic 1972; Kallan, Sainer and Zander 1973). This research indicates that even those elderly whose social conditioning has not included the role of volunteering can become successful participants in a volunteer program--through the use of appropriate program techniques and skilled staff.

While this sub-group of black elderly we have been examining are out-going individuals with a history of involvement in voluntary associations, church and often community affairs, there remain a great many aged blacks with very little formal education who do not belong to any voluntary organizations. Sainer and Zander (1971) point to the difficulty often experienced by these elderly in finding ways to fulfill their needs to feel useful, needed and in touch with other people. A volunteer program such as SERVE is one way these needs can be fulfilled.

The Washington, D.C. RSVP indicates the success of such a program with elderly blacks. Eighty percent of the senior volunteers in this program are black, and the director describes them as coming from lower to middle class backgrounds, with 25-35 percent of the volunteers receiving Public Assistance. The director indicates that the low income black elderly become involved in the program through steady encouragement and support from staff, often by convincing them that they have something to offer.

WHERE

As described in the review of the literature, a variety of research points to the active role of the church in the lives of aged blacks. Although there is little data relating specifically to aged black volunteers, we do know that the elderly population as a whole volunteers for religious activities at a very high rate (ACTION, 1974). Considering these findings it appears very likely that those black elderly who volunteer are often involved in religious activities, a certain percentage of them volunteering only for the church.

Census data shows 67 percent of elderly volunteers in the U.S. to

be volunteering in activities other than religious. In the present study, 62.5 percent of these elderly church volunteers also volunteered outside of the church. The majority of the outside volunteering was done in connection with membership in a voluntary association, usually a social, fraternal group, followed by civic/community action groups. By far the most popular type of volunteering done was in the area of social welfare, followed by civic/community action and health. National volunteering statistics (ACTION, 1974) show a similar trend for elderly volunteers in the U.S., listing first health, then social welfare and civic or community action as their most common areas for volunteering (not including religion).

An important issue concerning the black elderly volunteer is whether they focus their volunteering in the black community and for black organizations. The data indicated that 19 percent of the volunteering done was in connection with a designated black organization. However, although the respondents were not asked detailed questions regarding the organizations and their location, it is speculated that the majority of the volunteering was done for black recipients and involved working with other blacks. This is based on the fact that the schools mentioned were in the black community. Local neighborhood organizations were mentioned, as were social service agencies located in the black community, a number of small, social clubs and national fraternal associations which most likely have local community chapters.

RATE OF VOLUNTEERING

A question that requires further investigation is the extent of volunteering done by black elderly, or their volunteering rate--

especially in comparison with white aged. The present study indicates that a group of black elderly who volunteer both in the church and the community does exist in Portland, a fact not known prior to the study. The diversity in the respondents' backgrounds, the large number and variety of organizations through which they volunteer and the estimations of the ministers from the three churches all indicate that there are a number of black elderly volunteering in Portland in addition to those included in the sample. Research and census data tell us nothing about black elderly volunteering rates as compared to white elderly. Although we know that non-whites have a lower volunteering rate than whites, no comparisons are made controlling for socio-economic status. The need for such testing is illustrated by the fact that although blacks have a lower rate of membership and participation in voluntary associations than whites, when controls for socio-economic status are introduced, blacks indicate a higher rate of membership and participation than whites of comparable SES. This holds true for aged blacks also (Kent and Hirsch, 1972). It appears then that further research is needed on the volunteering rates of blacks and whites, considering variables of age and socio-economic status, in order to determine the extent of volunteering done by black elderly as compared to white elderly.

IMPLICATIONS

This study has examined a group of black elderly individuals who volunteer in their church and often in the community. For these individuals, volunteering or helping others through an organized activity is a way of life. For some this may mean teaching Sunday school,

assisting at church services or visiting a sick member of the congregation. In addition to helping out in the church, others may be answering phones at the NAACP, serving as board members for social service agencies or collecting money for health fund drives. Many of these elderly volunteers indicated that they are doing more volunteering since the age of 60; all of the respondents appeared to have successfully adjusted to their aging experience, expressing the fulfillment and enjoyment derived from their volunteer activities. The existence of a subgroup of elderly black volunteers is supported by sociological research showing blacks to have a high rate of joining and participating in voluntary associations. The majority of the volunteering done by the respondents was in connection with membership in a voluntary association. Another important finding of this research is that, although it was confirmed that education and occupational status are related to volunteering outside of the church, individuals with a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds were found to be volunteering outside of their church.

This research indicates that the needs of the black elderly population lie with those aged blacks who have not established fulfilling roles for themselves in the church, the community or elsewhere. Sainer and Zander (1971) feel that this is the type of population that benefits most from volunteer programs such as SERVE. It is of significance that all the aged black respondents in this study felt that volunteering is a highly valuable activity for older persons, making them feel useful and improving their mental health.

The potential of volunteering to provide satisfaction and enjoyment for elderly blacks has been illustrated--by the present study, the

Washington, D.C. RSVP program and the SERVE project in New York and Jamaica (Sainer and Zander, 1971; Sainer and Kallan, 1972), among others. At the same time, the many difficulties involved in recruiting aged blacks to volunteer must be attended to. The respondents pointed to the following barriers which keep the elderly from volunteering: lack of experience, inability to read or write, the tendency of the elderly to isolate themselves, physical health, differing interests or simply no interest in volunteering. Researchers refer to the restricting nature of the social conditioning of low income elderly which limits their activities. A variety of sources offer suggestions and techniques for dealing with such issues (Sainer and Zander, 1971; Babic, 1972; Roth and Orme, 1973). The suggestions offered by the respondents bring up some crucial program elements with regard to the elderly, such as the provision of transportation, the use of support and encouragement by staff to give the elderly person a "push", and the importance of appealing directly to the individual rather than advertising for volunteers. Another basic issue regarding black elderly volunteers is the necessity of working in co-operation with organizations in the black community, especially the church (Hager-Sharp Associates, 1973).

While some black elderly have been volunteering their entire lives, the use of appropriate programming can enable many other aged blacks to develop a new, fulfilling role for themselves as volunteers.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What church do you attend?
2. Since age 60, have you become more active with your church, less active, or about the same? Why is that?
3. Do you belong to any social clubs, church groups, lodges or other organizations? For how long?
4. What organizations are you doing volunteer work for now?
What kind of things are you doing there?
How often?
How long have you been doing this?
5. Since age 60, do you do more volunteering, less volunteering or about the same? Why is that?
6. How do you usually get to and from your volunteer activities?
7. What have you liked the most about volunteering? What else have you liked?
8. Why is it, do you think, that some older people volunteer and others don't?
9. In general, how important or valuable do you think it is for most older persons to volunteer?
Very valuable, somewhat valuable, not very valuable, not at all valuable. Why?
10. Have you ever heard of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program?
(If yes) What do you know about it?

I have a few questions on RSVP so I'm going to read a brief description of the program for you. RSVP is a nationwide program established a few years ago. The purpose of RSVP is to recruit elderly persons to do volunteer work. In Portland RSVP volunteers work in agencies such as the V.A. Hospital, Goodwill, the State Employment Office and various senior centers. They do things like friendly visiting the sick, clerical work, driving, tutoring and hospital aides. Some transportation is provided along with the cost for a meal, usually lunch.

11. Presently the Portland RSVP does not have many volunteers. Why do you think this is? What do you think RSVP can do to become more successful in recruiting older persons to volunteer?

To finish up I need some background information so that I can compare the responses of persons from various backgrounds and be sure to get an accurate representation.

12. Concerning your health now, would you say it is very good, good, fair, poor or very poor? Have you had any major illnesses or physical difficulties in the past two years?

13. What is the last year of school that you completed?

Have you had any other special training?

14. Are you married, divorced, separated, widowed or never married?

15. In which of these categories does your income of last year fall?

- A) \$1,000-2,599
- B) \$2,600-4,999
- C) \$5,000-7,999
- D) \$8,000 and above

What is the source of your income?

16. What is your age?

17. Finally, are you presently employed?

(If no) When were you last employed?

What did you do then?

What kind of work did you do the longest?

For how long?

(If yes) What do you do?

Full time or part time?

What kind of work have you done the longest?

For how long?

18. Sex - Male

Female

APPENDIX B

ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH WHICH OUTSIDE VOLUNTEERING OCCURRED, BY TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
<u>Social and Fraternal Clubs</u>	
Masons	2
Albina Lions Auxiliary	1
American Legion Auxiliary	1
Eastern Star	1
Women In Community Service	2
National Council of Negro Women	2
Fleur de Lis	2
La Femmes	1
Delta Mothers and Patrons Club	1
Twenty Matrons Progressive Club	1
Railroad Retirement Club	<u>1</u>
	15
<u>Civic and Community Action Groups</u>	
NAACP	4
Neighborhood Organization	2
Urban League	1
Portland Development Commission	<u>1</u>
	8
<u>Health</u>	
Cancer Society	2
Multiple Sclerosis Fund	1
March of Dimes	1
County Health Council	<u>1</u>
	5
<u>Religious</u>	
Portland Usher's Union	3
American Baptists of Oregon	1
Alaska-Pacific Conference Lay Board	<u>1</u>
	5

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
<u>Social Welfare Agencies</u>	
Life Center	1
Senior Adult Service Center	1
Portland Metropolitan Steering Committee	<u>1</u>
	3
<u>Education</u>	
Boise Elementary School	1
Reading Tree ACLD	1
United Negro College Fund	<u>1</u>
	3
<u>Recreation</u>	
YWCA	1
4-H Club Council	<u>1</u>
	2
<u>Others</u>	
Political Campaign	1