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CULTIVATING AND RETAINING COMMITED VOLUNTEERS: AN ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
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the Degree of Master of Arts

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT
CULTIVATING AND RETAINING COMMITED VOLUNTEERS:
AN ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION
IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Nora Beth Pilak, B.A.

Marquette University, 2012

With nonprofit organizations expanding due to a weakened economy and a growing population, there is an increased need for volunteers to staff and support these organizations. Since most nonprofits operate with limited finances, these organizations have to generate and retain a group of effective and committed unpaid organizational members. In this study, I argue that the best way for nonprofits to cultivate efficient and dedicated volunteers is to use communication tactics that encourage members to identify with the organization. I also argue that if volunteers strongly identify with an organization, they are more likely to continue contributing their time and effort to the organization, leading to lower volunteer turnover rates and stronger relationships between the organization and volunteers.

In order to discover the ways in which volunteers express identification, I conducted in-depth interviews with volunteers from a Midwestern animal welfare organization. From the interviews, three major themes emerged, including: ways in which participants expressed organizational identification, the organizational struggles participants encountered, the organizational challenges facing identification, and within this final theme, the impact of organizational communication on identification. The results present interesting findings because participants expressed being so identified with the Midwestern Animal Society that they expect to receive information and responsibilities typically given to employees and desire to have personal relationships with employees so as to receive more communication and maintain a more intimate relationship with the organization.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS……..i

I. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION……1

A. Overview of the Research on Organizational Identification in Nonprofits……....1

B. Rationale for this Study…….2

C. Preview of the Thesis……...14

II. CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK……6

A. Statement of Problem and Present Status…….6

B. Review of Literature…….8

i. The Growing Nonprofit Sector……...8

ii. Volunteers in the Nonprofit Sector……12

C. Theoretical Framework……..16

i. Organizational Identity……16

ii. Organizational Identification……..19

iii. Volunteer Identification in Nonprofit Organizations……24

iv. How Organizations Build Identification……26

D. Summary……28

E. Statement of Research Question…….28

III. CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY……..29

A. Participants and Context…….29

B. Procedures……...32

i. Participation Procedures……..32

ii. In-Depth Interviews……32

iii. Data Analysis…….36

IV. CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS…….39

A. Theme One: Volunteers Expressed
Organizational Identification…….….40

i. Shared Organizational Value……...40

ii. Identified Decision-Making……...43

iii. Continued Organizational Commitment……...56

iv. Respect and Admiration for the Organization
and Employees……...48

v. Internalization of the Organization's Mission……...51

B. Theme Two: Organizational Struggles Perceived
by Participants……...53

i. Participants Struggle with Public Confusion About the
Organization's Mission…….54

ii. A Desire for More Responsibilities
and Information…….57

C. Theme Three: Organizational Challenges
Facing Identification…….61

i. Participants View the Organization as
Departmentalized and Divided……..61

ii. Departmentalization Creates a Division of
Information in the Organization……...66

iii. Bureaucratic Changes Affect Organizational
Emotionality……..71

iv. Departmentalization Leads to Limited
Organizational Communication……73

v. Organizational Communication is Efficient
Yet Impersonal……76

vi. Lack of Open Upward Communication
Hinders Volunteer Identification……79

vii. Participants Desire Personal Relationships
with Employees……...84

V. CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
AND CONCLUSIONS……...90

A. Summary of Findings……91

B. Theoretical Implications……91

i. Cultivating Organizational Identification
in Volunteers……92

ii. Identification and Communication……..94

iii. Employees are Key in Influencing Identification……...97

iv. Organizational Disidentification: Impact of
Organizational Restrictions……..99

C. Pragmatic Applications……..101

i. Providing More Information and
Opportunities for Volunteers……102

ii. Encourage Open Two-Way Communication Between
the Organization and Volunteers……104

D. Limitations……107

E. Areas of Future Research……...108

VI. REFERENCES……112

VII. APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE……121

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Research on Organizational Identification in Nonprofits

The purpose of my study is to examine how volunteers identify with the organization they serve. I build upon previous research regarding how nonprofits can influence greater identification with its volunteer base to help achieve its goals. I explore how volunteers express identification, what organizational factors affect identification, the affects of organizational communication on volunteer identification, and how identification impacts volunteers' commitment and connection to the organization. The findings of this study add to the existing knowledge of volunteer identification and the ways nonprofits can impact the identification that is so essential to helping nonprofits live their values and achieve their missions. Since most nonprofits operate on limited finances and rely on unpaid volunteers as part, if not the majority of their workforce, it is essential for these organizations to learn how volunteer identification can increase organizational effectiveness and improve organizational morale. Given that there has been limited research done on volunteer identification, this study is important to the organizational communication field, particularly in the realm of how communication from the organization affects member identification. It is vital nonprofit organizations best understand how to communicate effectively with its most important stakeholders in order to achieve its goals.

Rationale for this Study

Most of the current research approaches organizational identification from a bureaucratic perspective that focuses on paid employees in for-profit organizations while there is little research regarding how unpaid volunteers identify with an organization. Recently, qualitative researchers have become increasingly interested in how nontraditional organizations such as nonprofits function (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010) and my study will shed light on how volunteers identify with and view nonprofits.

Almost all nonprofits depend of volunteers to exist and achieve their goals due to limited financial resources and a finite paid employee base (Independent Sector, 2001). Organizations that rely primarily on voluntary labor have a strong need to understand how its organizational members express organizational identification since volunteers, unlike employees, freely give their time and efforts to an organization. Organizational identification is defined as the sense of interconnectedness or oneness members feel with an organization leading them to make decisions with the organization's best interests in mind (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987) and as the alignment of organizational and individual values (Pratt, 1998).

Cheney argues that organizations must influence identification in its stakeholders in order to progress their operations (Pratt, 1998) and in this study I argue that the main way organizations affect identification is by communicating with organizational members. According to Bartels, Peters, de Jong, Pruyn, & van der Molen, (2010), open communication from the organization gives members information to identify with, providing another reason for nonprofit organizations to understand how communication influences identification. In this study I argue that open and consistent communication

from organizational members influences and strengthens volunteer identification. I also argue that if volunteers strongly identify with an organization, they are more likely to continue contributing their time and effort to the organization, leading to stronger relationships between volunteers and the organization and more efficient organizational practices.

Preview of the Thesis

Through the donation of their time and efforts, volunteers play an important role in helping nonprofits reach their goals. Since volunteers give their time freely and are not mandated to work a specific amount of hours unlike employees, it is imperative organizations that rely voluntary labor execute cost-effective ways to retain committed and satisfied volunteers. One accepted and economical way to ensure that organizational members have the best interest of the organization in mind and are working towards the same goals as the organization is for organizations to influence identification in its organizational members. Research on organizational identification indicates that organizational communication plays a role in affecting identification and this study strives to examine the impact organizational communication has on how volunteers in a nonprofit animal welfare organization express identification. Since the majority of research conducted on organizational communication and identification has examined employees in for-profit settings, this study on volunteer identification is particularly important in the realm of organizational communication.

The following chapters of this study introduce the essential concepts relating to the nonprofit industry; the theoretical framework of organizational identity, identification, and communication; and methodology of in-depth interviews that guide my analysis of the data and lead to the results and conclusion of the study. The literature review highlights research on the nonprofit sector, the impact of volunteers on the nonprofit sector, and the need for more studies on volunteers. Following the literature review, a construction of the theoretical framework on organizational identity and organizational identification will be presented. After the theoretical framework is laid, a

discussion of the data analysis process, which includes in-depth interviews and constant comparative methods, will be introduced. Following the discussion of the methods utilized for this study, I discuss the findings and results from the interviews I conducted with volunteers at a Midwestern animal welfare organization. When analyzing the interviews, I primarily focus on how volunteers identify with the organization and what communication techniques the organization uses to promote identification. To conclude the study, I demonstrate what the results suggest for voluntary based organizations and propose suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nonprofit organizations play a significant role in the U.S. economy by fulfilling societal needs not fulfilled by the for-profit sector. Nonprofits generally operate with limited budgets and many rely on voluntary labor to provide services and achieve their goals. This chapter discusses the aforementioned current economic and labor challenges facing nonprofit organizations and how these barriers affect volunteer identification. In order to give a current status of the problems plaguing nonprofit organizations and volunteer identification, a review of the literature on nonprofit organizations and volunteers is necessary to provide a foundation for this study. In addition to the research on nonprofit organizations and volunteers, an examination of the theoretical framework of organizational identity and identification are needed to lay the groundwork for my examination of identification in volunteers.

Statement of Problem and Present Status

According to Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008), "volunteers are the backbone of civil society and voluntary organizations" (p. 68). The U.S. Department of Labor (2010) estimates that 62.8 million Americans, or 26 percent of the population, volunteered between September 2009 and 2010, and, given this statistic, it is surprising that more attention has not been given to researching how volunteers identify with nonprofits. Although U.S. nonprofits account for 1.8 million officially registered organizations, very little attention has been given to researching volunteers and the nonprofit sector (Lewis, 2005). Almost all nonprofits depend on volunteers to exist and achieve their goals due to limited financial resources and a finite paid employee base (Independent Sector, 2001).

Volunteers are vital to the nonprofit sector and essential to delivering effective services to the organization's audiences and volunteering provides personal benefits to individuals as well as to the community and economy (Independent Sector, 2001; Houle, et al. 2005). With the current weakened economy, organizations are relying on more support from volunteers and unpaid organizational members to help fulfill missions by reaching goals and objectives. Therefore, it is essential researchers pay attention to nonprofits and gain a deeper understanding of how these organizations can increase identification amongst volunteers and retain voluntary workforces that are vital to the existence of these organizations.

Organizations strive to build identification with members so that they will take the organization's identity as their own and make decisions that are advantageous for the organization (Cheney, 1983). From the research, there have been numerous studies regarding how paid employees identify with the organization they work for. However, there has been little research conducted regarding how unpaid volunteers identify with the organization they serve and how this identification leads to greater commitment amongst volunteers. Much of the past research on organizational identification has been conducted on paid employees but with the growth of nonprofits and the fact that many nonprofits rely on voluntary labor, it is important researchers begin to discover how organizations communicate with volunteers and how they can use communication to build identification with this workforce. The purpose of my study is to gain insight into how volunteers express identification with the organizations they serve; in particular, this study seeks to understand how nonprofit organizations can use communication to influence identification and retain committed volunteers.

Review of Literature

In order to best understand how nonprofits communicate with organizational members and how this communication impacts volunteer identification, it is important to discuss research conducted on the nonprofit sector and volunteers. Although volunteers in the nonprofit industry have not been studied extensively, there is enough research in this field to provide a solid base to the analysis of volunteer identification in subsequent chapters of this study. This section will present an examination of the growth of the nonprofit industry and the important role volunteers play in this continued advancement so as to lay the framework for discussion of the theories of organizational identification and organizational identity.

The Growing Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit sector is one of the fastest growing organizational categories across the world due to a progressive and influential amount of stakeholders, wealth, services rendered, and outright numbers (Lewis, 2005). In the U.S. alone nonprofits grew by 68 percent between 1993 and 2003 (NCNA, 2006). According to the National Council of Nonprofit Associations (NCNA) (2006), there were close to a million registered charitable nonprofits in the U.S. in 2003, excluding religious assemblies and foundations, and that number continues to grow. Not only are nonprofit organizations expanding, organizational assets are growing as well. With $1.76 trillion in total assets in 2003, the nonprofit sector of the U.S. economy is bigger than the whole economies of Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Russia, and South Korea (NCNA, 2006). Although the nonprofit sector continues to evolve and grow, it still remains a "glaring blind spot in academic research" (Salamon, 2001, p. 17). My study on how nonprofits build organizational

identification through communication will to add to the limited amount of academic research on the challenges facing nonprofits and lay additional groundwork for future research on volunteers.

The importance of nonprofits has been documented since the 19th century when Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that the future of America relied on its "extensive network of voluntary associations" (Smith, 2003, p. 37). According to Tocqueville, these voluntary associations allow citizens with shared interests to create organizations and collectively voice their opinions, giving individuals a democratic outlet where they can self-organize and debate publicly (Smith, 2003). In addition, Putnam (2000) argues that voluntary associations are essential in enhancing social capital, or "the networks of cooperation and collaboration that exists in a community or region" (Smith, 2003, p. 37). Social capital is created when individuals voluntarily assemble to achieve a goal whether it be for a mutual cause or simply to enjoy a hobby (Putnam, 2000). Social capital influences positive outcomes in society including increased trust and understanding among individuals, instilling shared mission and values within citizens, as well as bringing about change through social movements (Hall, 1987; Lewis, 2005). Other defining characteristics of nonprofits include an independent organizational model, a mission that does not include a need to gain a profit, and utilizing a volunteer labor force (Salamon & Anheier, 1994).

Nonprofits vary in size and range as they serve different needs and populations within society (Tsay & Turpen, 2011) by providing a service (charities), expressing an ideology (religious organizations), or even behaving as pseudo for-profit organizations (like healthcare or health insurance networks) (Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Nonprofit

organizations often fill the civil needs not acknowledged by the public or private sector and have a large impact on a nation's economy, making it essential to understand the impact these organizations have on society (Laverie & McDonald, 2007).

Although nonprofits share similarities with for-profit and governmental organizations, these organizations deserve to be studied separately (Lewis, 2005). O'Neil and Young (1988) argue that nonprofit organizations are unique from other organizations due to governance, legal limitations, income sources, and variety of personnel. In addition, Frumkin (2002) states that nonprofit organizations are characterized by three unique aspects: first, nonprofits do not force participation, meaning they primarily rely on freely and voluntarily given labor; secondly, they exist without giving profits to stakeholders and use surplus funds to achieve goals and objectives; and finally nonprofit organizations operate without clear ownership or liability (Frumkin, 2002, Tsay & Turpen, 2011). According to Kanter and Summers (1987), nonprofits do not measure success in financial terms such as for-profit organizations; they measure success in terms of how much they have accomplished in connection with the organization's mission or the amount and quality of the services they offer. For the aforementioned reasons, it is important the nonprofit sector be studied separate from the private and governmental sectors.

Although all nonprofits desire to reach organizational goals and objectives, they are a diverse category of organizations and should not be managed in exactly similar fashions due to having widespread missions (Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Since nonprofits strive to meet a variety of goals and objectives with limited resources, most nonprofits depend on the dedication and perseverance of a complex network of stakeholders such as

paid employees, board members, volunteers, and donors (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Along with the element of uncertainty in the organizational culture (Lewis et al., 2001), nonprofits typically operate with high levels of ambiguity due to lack of in-depth training of organizational members on job functions, organizational mission statements, and goals due to limited resources, which impacts the familiarity volunteers have with the organization's identity and may affect how clear the collective organizational culture is to its members (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). Stakeholders are generally driven to support nonprofit organizations because of a passion they feel for the organization's mission, which creates high expectations for the organization's personnel (Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Since nonprofits rely heavily on stakeholder support, these organizations must create an atmosphere of honesty and trust because both financial and nonfinancial support can be lost if trust is broken between the nonprofit and its stakeholders (Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Thus, in the nonprofit landscape, volunteers, supervisors, managers, and board members must not only be seen as competent leaders but also as open, honest representatives of the organization to maintain the confidence and contributions from stakeholders (Tsay & Turpen, 2011).

Although a variety of nonprofits exist, all voluntary based organizations must understand the same basic need to build identification with stakeholders in order to help reach organizational goals. Nonprofits must be receptive to their stakeholders since they exist "in turbulent environments, marked by economic and political uncertainty and inconsistent social support for their missions" (Lewis et al. 2001, p. 7). As this section has demonstrated, nonprofits are continuously confronted by critical challenges to organizational survival and prosperity (Eadie, 1997) and, given the large and growing

amount of nonprofit organizations, it is crucial for these voluntary organizations to have a loyal body of committed volunteers who are willing to dedicate their time and energy (Laverie & McDonald, 2007) so as to progress and fulfill the missions of the organizations (Grube & Piliavin, 2000).

Volunteers are essential to the advancement of nonprofit organizations and deserve to be studied so organizations can best understand how to gain and retain identified individuals. The more effective nonprofit organizations are at gaining, developing, and maintaining a dedicated, committed, and highly identified voluntary workforce, the more likely nonprofit organizations will succeed in achieving organizational missions and have a more significant influence on the economy (Laverie & McDonald, 2007). The next section will review the literature on volunteers and examine the important role they play in helping organizations prosper and succeed.

Volunteers in the Nonprofit Sector

Only in the past decade have scholars begun to research volunteering in the nonprofit sector (Stirling & Bull, 2011), leaving the subject generally unexamined (Colman, 1998; Stirling & Bull, 2011). In order for voluntary based organizations to flourish, organizational members must understand how vital volunteers are in order to plan effectively and give priority to the critical work done by unpaid organizational members (Colman, 1998).

Volunteering is described as a proactive activity where time and effort is given willingly to help another individual, group, or organization (Lewis, 2005). Some individuals volunteer for the same organization, in the same role, for years and treat volunteering like a career as they come to identify with the organization's goals and

values (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). According to Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008), "volunteers are the backbone of civil society and voluntary organizations" (p. 68). The U.S. Department of Labor (2010) estimates that 62.8 million Americans, or 26 percent of the population, volunteered between September 2009 and 2010, giving a total of 8 billion hours of service. Since almost all nonprofits depend on volunteers to exist and achieve goals due to limited financial resources and a finite paid employee base, volunteers are able to contribute whatever time and talents they have to commit to helping organizations achieve organizational goals (Independent Sector, 2001; Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005). As the research on volunteering presents, volunteers are vital to the nonprofit sector and essential to delivering effective services to the community (Independent Sector, 2001; Houle, et al. 2005), which makes this study important in understanding how volunteers identify with the nonprofits they serve.

As well as providing communal and economic benefits, volunteering also provides personal benefits to individuals (Independent Sector, 2001; Houle, et al. 2005). Volunteers contribute their time and service to organizations for numerous reasons. In order to best understand how volunteers identify with the organizations they serve and how they stay committed to volunteering for an organization, it is key to understand why individuals begin volunteering and what motivates them to continue. Each and every volunteer has different reasons and purposes for volunteering which means that there are a variety of motivations to volunteer. It is beneficial for organizations to understand why individuals are motivated to volunteer so nonprofits can best communicate with volunteers and affect organizational identification. Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) discovered that motivations for volunteering were expressed from participants during the

initial phase of volunteering and included altruistic desires to make positive changes in society; aspirations for additional social outlets; a desire to work with the clients the organization serves; and a way to demonstrate ethics and beliefs. Furthermore, a study administered by Anderson and Moore (1978) found that over 70% of respondents volunteer in order to serve others.

Clary and several associates (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Clary et al. 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1990) studied volunteer motivation and found results connecting motivations to volunteer retention. Clary et al. (1998) categorized six volunteerism functions to best understand the many motivations individuals have when it comes to volunteering and found that individuals may volunteer for more than one reason and volunteers within the same organization may have different motivations to donate their time (Houle et al., 2005). In addition, motivation to volunteer may be different for each activity the volunteer engages in (Houle et al., 2005). After examining the research, it is fair to say that many scholars found that the majority of individuals expressed multiple motivations for volunteering, which illustrates the point that volunteer motivation changes over time and is a multi-layered issue (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). When nonprofits understand why individuals are driven to donate their time, organizations can communicate and train them in a way that is meaningful and motivational to each volunteer. This study attempts to discover how organizational communication influences how volunteers share organizational identification.

Nonprofit organizations face tremendous adversity when it comes to training and supervising voluntary workforces, which increases the need for nonprofits to influence organizational identification in volunteers so organizations can feel comfortable knowing

that volunteers will continuously make decisions that are advantageous for the organization. It is difficult for many volunteer-based organizations to adequately train their volunteers due to insufficient resources, which leaves volunteers without defined roles, especially since they are not mandated to work specific hours or perform designated tasks (Farmer & Fedor, 2001). Many nonprofits also struggle to provide adequate supervision for volunteers due to limited budgets, which leaves few organizational members to enforce work standards (Farmer & Fedor, 2001). It remains difficult for nonprofits to increase and sustain voluntary workforces since many lack the resources to manage the growing number of volunteers, and although volunteers do not earn wages, the organization must pay for the recruiting, screening, training, and managing of volunteers (Handy & Srinivasan, 2005). Since nonprofits struggle to train, supervise, and maintain a dedicated volunteer base, building identification with volunteers is essential to ensure they will act with the organization's best interests in mind, even when they are not being directed.

The past two sections provided a review of the literature on nonprofit organizations and the individuals who volunteer for these organizations. The growing nonprofit sector continues to positively impact the U.S. economy and attract individuals who are willing to donate their time to help organizations achieve their missions. In addition to understanding the challenges nonprofit organizations face and what motivates individuals to volunteer their time, it is important for organizations to discover why individuals donate time to a specific organization and cause. Each organization has an identity, or characteristics that members believe make them unique, which can help to attract volunteers and keep them committed. Organizations must be aware of how

members see the institution they serve in order to tailor communication strategies to build and increase identification. The concepts of organizational identity and identification and their purpose in and benefits to organizations will be discussed further in the next section.

Theoretical Framework

To answer questions regarding how volunteers commit to and why they continue volunteering for a nonprofit, an understanding of organizational identity and organizational identification is essential. Organizational identity and organizational identification are inextricably linked as an organization's identity determines how members will see the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; 2004), and organizational identification determines how members see themselves in relation to the organization (Pratt, 1998). Accordingly, it is essential to analyze organizational identity in order to understand its impact on how individuals identify with an organization. What follows is an analysis of the theories of organizational identity and organizational identification as well as volunteer identification and organizational factors affecting identification.

Organizational Identity

Communication influences organizational members to understand their participation, or role, within an organization. For-profit and nonprofit organizations strive to create and reinforce identities to define themselves amongst competitors and to communicate a specific image to members. When members ask about their organization's identity, they are asking, "Who are we?" since organizational identity is defined as the prevailing characteristics of an organization that reinforce its individuality, distinctiveness, and uniqueness (Albert & Whetten, 1985, 2004). Organizations deliberately create organizational identities, or how they want to be perceived, by

interacting and communicating with members regarding organizational values, goals, and member expectations (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998).

According to scholars (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dhalla, 2007; Gioia et al., 2000; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), organizational identity remains generally stable but some aspects are more flexible, which makes it possible for an organization to strategically change who they are over time. Whetten and Godfrey (1998) contend that organizational identity is constantly evolving and progressing as internal and external stakeholders communicate and negotiate what they believe the organization to be. Along with understanding the environment, organizational identity motivates members to support the organization's goals and mission (Gioia et al., 2000). The more organizational members perceive the organization to have unique features and characteristics, the more likely they are to be convinced of the organization's traits and attributes and believe in them (Labianca et al., 2001). Organizations can have multiple identities (Albert & Whetten, 2004), which makes building a solid, singular identity for all members to identify with a complicated and difficult task for managers and directors who have the most influence on how the organization is seen (Petrick et al., 1999).

Organizational identity helps members find meaning in the organization, understand what they do in relation to what the organization stands for, and develop a collective identity for all organizational members to understand themselves and the organization as a whole (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Members recognize and substantiate organizational identity through the communication, artifacts, routines, systems, processes, rituals, structures, and decision making of the organization (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2003). Scott and Lane (2000) argue that

organizational identity is created by the interactions between managers and stakeholders as managers conceptualize images of the organization to guide employees' perceptions and give workers an understanding of what the organization does and stands for. In order to manage organizational identity and persuade stakeholders to view the organization in a positive manner, organizations communicate internally and externally to stakeholders through official collateral and documents such as brochures, press releases, social media, etc. (Dhalla, 2007).

Individuals develop a specific identification associated to a particular organization due to their experiences with the organization, communication with the organization, and what they know and believe about the organization (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). Stryker (1980) contends that extensive organizational commitment promotes identification as the more an individual sees their identity as aligning with the organization's identity, the more connected and identified they will be with the organization's mission and goals (Laverie & McDonald, 2007). Organizational identity gives meaning to the culture of the organization and provides cues as to how members should understand and interpret the environment (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Individuals spend a great deal of time communicating with the organization they are involved with and gain a better understanding of the organization's identity through their experiences in the organization's culture (Schrodt, 2002). Since research states a correlation between organizational culture and organizational identity, it is important to review the ways in which culture influences identity.

Scholars are increasingly interested about the impact organizational culture has on organizational identity (Schrodt, 2002), however researchers have yet to reach a

consensus as to what exactly the term organizational culture embodies as it is complex and evolving (Gamble & Gibson, 1999; Martin, 1992; Schein, 1990; Schrodt, 2002). According to Ravasi and Schultz (2006), culture is comprised of the assumptions, beliefs, and unstated rules governing the organization. Schein (1990) describes culture as the fundamental methods used, designed, or employed by a group of people as a way of learning to cope together for a period of time. Ravasi and Schultz (2006) define organizational culture as an array of accepted assumptions regarding how to think and act in various organizational situations and affects how individuals identify with the organization (Schrodt, 2002). Although culture provides the standards for organizational behavior and influences how members view their organization's identity, identification allows individuals to understand themselves in relation to the organization's identity (Dhalla, 2007). An overview of organizational identification will be discussed to lay a theoretical foundation for the research questions that guide my study.

Organizational Identification

Cheney's (1983) theory of organizational identification provides an explanation to understand how an organization's identity influences its members to adopt the organization's traits and goals as their own and develop feelings of organizational commitment. Organizational identification, a central concept in organizational research and management studies (Chaput et al., 2011), is defined as the internalization of the organization's features or identity, leading members to have a sense of interconnectedness with an organization (Prati, McMillan-Capehart, & Karriker, 2009).

As people living in a diverse society, individuals have many different outlets to identify with, giving organizations more reasons to feel the need to build identification

with members (Cheney, 1983). Organizations use various communication methods to create a sense of belonging and encourage members to believe in organizational values and make them their own (Cheney, 1983; Tompkins & Cheney, 1987). Value congruence, or the organization and individual sharing similar values, is also considered important in promoting organizational identification (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). If the individual sees the organization as having similar values to their own, they are more likely to be committed to the organization because they see it as an extension of themselves (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). Identified individuals internalize the culture of the organization into their job roles and perform their job tasks in accordance with the organization's goals and mission; members define their identity based on what they believe to be true about the organization they are a part of (Pratt, 1998). If organizational identity can be perceived with the question, "Who are we?" (Albert & Whetten, 1985; 2004), organizational identification is best understood with the question, "How do I come to know who I am in relation to you?" (Pratt, 1998).

Organizations can benefit immensely by fostering identification with members because it ensures members will make decisions with the organization's best interests in mind (Cheney, 1982, 1983; Pratt, 1998). By cultivating identification, organizations are able to retain authority over members who are satisfied with their work and committed to the organization (Cheney, 1982, 1983; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999; Pratt, 1998). Although an individual can instinctively identify with an organization, the identification process is usually instigated by the organization's communication of its values, goals, mission statement, and other knowledge in hopes to guide the organizational members' decision making processes (Chaput, Brummans, Cooren, 2011; Cheney, 1982, 1983). Social

interactions within the organization influence identification and affect how organizational members associate themselves within the organization (Schrodt, 2002). Not only is there a correlation between organizational socialization and identification, there is also a correlation between organizational commitment and identification.

The first concept that relates to organizational identification is organizational commitment. Cheney and Tompkins (1987) contend that although identification and commitment are two separate concepts, they are interconnected. Organizational identification is different from organizational commitment in that it involves an emotional connection with the organization and illustrates how the organizational member views the relationship in association to their own self-image (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, Relyea, & Beu, 2006; Pratt, 1998). Organizational commitment is defined as the psychological alliance that an individual forms with the organization they are employed by (Pratt, 1998). Pratt (1998) contends that organizational identification is essential for the organizational commitment process, and Buchanan (1974) suggests that identification is one of the three parts of commitment, along with loyalty and job involvement. When an individual identifies with an organization, they take the mission, goals, and objectives and integrate them into their own value and belief systems and, consequently, become committed to the organization (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987).

Although employees commit to organizations through employment, this does not necessarily mean that they fully identify with the organization (Schrodt, 2002). Managers not only want employees to commit to the organization; they prefer employees identify with the organization (Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson, 2000). According to scholars (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Miller, Allen, Casey, &

Johnson, 2000), employees who are committed to an organization believe the organization is a good place to work, are not looking for employment at another organization, and have positive feelings towards the organization. In comparison, employees who identify with an organization see themselves as having the same image and values as the organization and, hence, feel like an integral part of the organization (Cheney, 1983; Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson, 2000; and Tompkins & Cheney, 1983, 1985). Although Stryker (1980) found that intense commitment to an organization cultivates role identification, more studies are needed to understand the relationship between identification and commitment as there is no definite proof that the two concepts are interrelated. Not only is there a link between commitment and identification, there is also a connection between socialization and identification.

Bullis and Bach (1989) maintain that organizational socialization and organization identification are essentially affiliated because it has been hypothesized that socialization lays the foundation for identification. Berger et al. (2006) suggest that socialization is important not only for employees to build identification with the organization; it is essential for individuals to develop their own self-concept in relation to the organization. Organizational socialization is the adoption of the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and acceptable behavior needed to become a full-fledged member of the organization (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). In addition, new members make sense of the new environment by collecting social cues and communicating with other organizational members to become more comfortable with the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The socialization process is necessary for both the new member and the organization "since it assures the sustainability of the values, culture and norms of the

organization and increases the newcomer's commitment to the organization" (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008, p. 69). A major outcome of organizational socialization is the commitment the new member develops over time to the organization (Cable & Parsons, 2001) and is expressed by the member's dedication to stay and work hard for the organization as well as their identification with the organization's goals and values (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). According to Ostroff and Kozlowki (1993), organizational socialization improves identification, an understanding of job tasks and acceptable behavior, and how the organization operates. As research shows, organizational socialization lays the foundation for member identification because it shows what values and characteristics are important to the organization and influences individuals to adopt and identify with the organization's traits.

The research presents a correlation between organizational commitment as well as identification and socialization and identification. The correlation researchers have found between organizational commitment and identification is that individuals who identify with an organization are more likely to commit to that organization (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Scholars have also discovered a link between organizational socialization and identification; organizational socialization influences identification because it enables individuals to become acquainted and feel a sense of interconnectedness with the organization due to the information they receive through communication from seasoned members (Bullis & Bach, 1989).

Although there are many similarities between paid employee identification and volunteer identification, there are also many differences and both groups deserve to be studied separately. Since my study is interested in how volunteers identify with the

nonprofit they serve, it is important to examine research on volunteer identification to learn how this group of unpaid workers function within their organizations. The next section will examine research on volunteer identification.

Volunteer Identification in Nonprofit Organizations

Organizations desire for their members to identify with the mission, goals, and objectives so they work hard for the organization and remain dedicated members (Barker & Tompkins, 1994, p. 239). According to Lewis (2005), nonprofit researchers have come to a general consensus that an organization's mission is imperative to establishing an organizational identity as well as directing administration and influencing organizational performance and identification. Since nonprofits generally encompass strong social values that affect the organizational culture, new members of the organization are expected to accept these values and assimilate them into their own personal values (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). In fact, Farmer and Fedor (2001) found that individuals are more likely to volunteer for an organization if they see their core values matching up with the core values of the organization, which may make it easier for organizations to build identification with their volunteer base since a large portion of the identification process is getting organizational members to identify with the organization's values. In addition to the findings on organizational values, Farmer and Fedor (2001) suggest that volunteers identify more highly with an organization the longer they volunteer for an organization and the more they socialize and interact with other organizational members. Although most individuals do not volunteer as their main careers, many volunteers cultivate high commitment to the organizations they volunteer for (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999) which can be measured by "the frequency and length of

volunteering, as well as aspirations to stay in the volunteer organization in the future" (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008, p. 69).

Although volunteers are not financially compensated for their work such like paid employees, both serve as representatives for the organizations in which they work. However, volunteers typically do not feel as identified with the organization as paid employees do (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). A possible reason for the detachment volunteers feel to an organization is that organizations do not know what incentives to use to motivate volunteers. The two most evident incentives for paid employees to work for an organization, compensation and job stability, are often unimportant to volunteers (Grube & Piliavin, 2000), making it difficult for organizations to find ways to motivate volunteers and make them feel important. According to Pearce (1993), volunteers feel they are not valued as much as paid employees because their work is more fragmented and trivial, relationships with organizational members are not as strong as paid employees, and organizational feedback is restricted and sometimes lacking; all factors that may affect how volunteers express organizational identification. In addition, Ashcraft and Kedrowicz (2002) found that volunteers receive limited job training, are given little or no direction for development in anticipation of high turnover, and are sometimes required to work alone since nonprofits generally lack finances to supervise all individuals; volunteers are generally left to fend for themselves (Farmer & Fedor, 2001). From the aforementioned findings on volunteer identification, there are many factors that affect organizational identification in volunteers. Since most nonprofits operate with limited funds, it is beneficial for nonprofit organizations to cultivate highly identified

volunteers because they will make decisions with the organization's best interest in mind, require less supervision, and therefore become cost-effective organizational members.

From the research on volunteer identification, identified organizational members share the values and mission of the organization, are dedicated to helping the organization achieve its goals, and come to understand who they are in relation to the organization. According to Berger et al. (2006), organizational identification can lead to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and positive work affiliated behaviors like higher retention and greater task related effort. Identified organizational members stand out from unidentified members as they act as organizational representatives to nonmembers (Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson, 2000).

Following the analysis on volunteer identification, it is important to give insight into what factors organizations use to build identification in members. Since my study is concerned with how volunteers discuss identification and argues that organizational communication influences identification, the next section will provide an examination of how organizations use communication to build identification in organizational members.

How Organizations Build Identification

Although there are many factors that influence organizational identification, my study focuses on organization communication and its impact on organizational identification in volunteers. Organizational communication is an integral component to building organizational identification in volunteers. The organization communicates its goals, values, mission, and information to members in hopes that members will take the organization's identity as their own and make decisions that are advantageous for the organization (Cheney, 1983).

Organizations use many means to communicate their features, values, and mission to influence member organizational identification. Disanza and Bullis (1999) found that organizational collateral such as newsletters, press releases, and memos served as important communication tools that build and reinforce organizational identification among organizational members. Burton (2006) contends that organizational communication impacts member decisions to leave or stay with an organization. Tompkins and Cheney (1985) argue that organizations must adapt communication styles to the members' assumptions in order to increase organizational identification. Over 80 percent of U.S. and U.K. employees surveyed stated employee communication as having a major influence on their drive to continue working for an organization (Burton, 2006). Smidts, Pruyn, and van Riel (2001) maintain that strong and effective internal communication with employees intensifies organizational identification, contributing to the advancement and prosperity of an organization. A study from Prati et al. (2009) found that managers have an impact on how highly their employees identify with the organization because they control a great amount of downward communication, are seen as the face of the organization, and can manipulate how employees view the company. In fact, Myers and Kassing (1998) found that organizational identification rose when employees found their supervisors to be qualified communicators and prime organizational representatives. Research regarding the influence of organizational communication on organizational identification shows that communication from the organization is instrumental in making individuals feel like integral organizational members. Communication on the features, values, and mission of the organization allows

members to come to understand the organization, find who they are in relation to the organization, and build identification with the organization.

Summary

A review of the literature proposes that nonprofit organizations are expanding due to a weakened economy and a growing population, which increases the need for services and goods. A growing nonprofit sector means a heightened need for volunteers to staff and support the organizations. With an increased need for individuals to volunteer and organizations operating with limited finances, nonprofits have to generate and retain a group of effective and committed volunteers. In this study, I argue that the best way for nonprofit organizations to cultivate efficient and dedicated volunteers is to use communication tactics that encourage members to identify with the organization. I also argue that if volunteers strongly identify with an organization, they are more likely to continue contributing their time and effort to the organization, leading to lower volunteer turnover rates and stronger relationships between the organization and volunteers. The goal of this study is to learn how volunteers express identification with the nonprofit they serve and how organizations communicate with their members in ways that intensify organizational identification. Therefore, I raise questions that have yet to be answered:

RQ 1: How do organizations build identification in their volunteers?

RQ 1a: What organizational structures and practices affect identification?

RQ 2: How do volunteers express organizational identification?

RQ2a: How does organizational communication affect identification?

RQ2b: How do volunteers struggle with identification?

RQ2c: What organizational challenges affect identification?

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand volunteer identification in a nonprofit organization, it is critical to explore individuals' viewpoints and responses regarding how they feel about and identify with the organization. Therefore, I conducted ethnographic interviews to examine the ways in which volunteers identify with the nonprofit they serve and the communication tactics the organization employs to encourage identification. In this portion of the study, I describe the nonprofit organization and the participants as well as the process I followed to gather the information. In explaining the procedures used in the study, I provide a definition of ethnographic interviews and the interview guide I followed as well as the data method analysis.

Participants and Context

I conducted research with volunteers from a long-standing Midwestern animal welfare organization that I will refer to as the "Midwestern Animal Society." The private nonprofit animal association, whose main facility is located in a mid-size Midwestern city, dedicates itself to cultivating a compassionate community where animals are respected and valued and the goal is to find each animal a loving home. In addition to the Midwestern Animal Society's metropolitan location, there is an additional campus that is located 25 miles outside of the city and can house as many as 150 dogs, cats, and a variety of small animals.

There are multiple departments and programs within the Midwestern Animal Society. The organization houses both a domestics department that rescues, treats and places hundreds of cats, dogs, and other domesticated animals into loving, forever homes

each year and a wildlife department that rescues, rehabilitates, and releases wild animals back into their natural habitat. In addition to the organization's adoption program, the Midwestern Animal Society also has an educational program to provide behavioral resources and various community outreach assistance programs. Within these outreach programs, the organization provides numerous services such as rescuing, treating, and rehabilitating domesticated and wild animals, an adoption program for companion animals, a spay and neuter clinic, help lines, and educational classes for both humans and animals. The Midwestern Animal Society employs approximately 100 employees between the two locations and has over 1200 volunteers in its database.

Participants for my study were chosen based on their involvement as a volunteer with the Midwestern Animal Society. All volunteers at the animal welfare association were equally eligible to participate no matter their tenure as a volunteer or what department, program, or position they fill. The participant demographic is comprised of 13 females and two males with an average tenure of 7.3 years, ranging from one year of service up to 17 years of service volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society. The volunteers who participated in the study have over 110 years of collective volunteering experience for the organization. Participants ranged in age from 24 years to 72 years and all volunteered at the main metropolitan location.

Ultimately, the individuals I interviewed represented volunteers from both the domestics and wildlife departments at Midwestern Animal Society, with four volunteers from the wildlife department and 11 from the domestics department. Volunteers shared a variety of experiences as they held multiple positions in the organization and discussed experiences from roles in special events, as cat and small animal socializers, dog walkers,

facility greeters, wildlife rehabilitators, wildlife maintenance, adoption services, and veterinarian technicians. Outside of volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society, participants worked in the medical industry, financial industry, advertising industry, in the public sector, and four participants were retired from their careers.

NAME	DEPARTMENT/POSITION(S)	VOLUNTEER TENURE (IN YEARS)
Cindy	Domestics/Teammate & dog trainer	2
Denise	Domestics/Docent, dog walker, special events, cat socializer, vet services	13
Dina	Domestics/Rabbit socializer	11
Edgar	Wildlife/Maintenance & photographer	10
Gary	Domestics/Shop attendant & dog walker	10
Gayle	Wildlife/Vet services	7
Hannah	Domestics/Dog walker	3
Lenore	Wildlife/Animal foster	17
Megan	Wildlife/Vet services & wildlife rescue	3
Nancy	Domestics/Dog walker & socializer	2
Peg	Domestics/Cat socializer & special events	7
Renee	Domestics/Animal foster & cat socializer	10
Therese	Domestics/Teammate, greeter & special events	2
Vanessa	Domestics/Teammate & special events	1
Wynona	Domestics/Vet services & animal foster	12

Procedures

In order to understand how volunteers express identification, I felt it would be best to allow participants to provide a narrative of their experiences through in-depth interviews. To describe the specific procedures I used to collect and analyze the data, I begin this section with the procedures I followed to obtain and interview participants followed by an analysis of in-depth interviews and a clarification of the methods I employed to analyze the data.

Participation Procedures

An email was sent to all volunteers in the Midwestern Animal Society database summarizing the study and inviting them to participate in the voluntary research. Overall, 46 volunteers responded to the email and stated they would be interested in participating and although I originally planned to interview 12 volunteers, due to the overwhelming response I received, I decided to increase my sample size to 15. The first 15 volunteers who responded to my email participated in the study by engaging in a single one-on-one in-depth interview. Due to space restrictions at the Midwestern Animal Society, interviews were conducted outside of the facility. I gave participants the option of choosing the location of the interview to make it comfortable and familiar for the participant and close in proximity to their work or home. In order to meet the needs and schedules of participants, the interviews took place in local coffee shops and homes of volunteers.

In-Depth Interviews

To gain a deeper understanding of the effects of communication on organizational identification, I chose to conduct the study from a qualitative communication approach

grounded in an interpretive perspective based on the argument that organizations are cultures whose social circumstances can be interpreted (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Qualitative communication research methods allow scholars to gain a deeper understanding of a current social phenomena and is the most appropriate method to utilize since my study is concerned with how volunteers identify with the nonprofit they serve. Although the qualitative research method will not allow for a generalization of the results to encompass all nonprofit volunteers, it will give a more in-depth, detailed, and rich perspective on how a specific group of volunteers identify with the Midwestern Animal Society by analyzing a smaller, personal sample (Stake, 1978).

By using an interpretive approach, my goal is to gain an understanding of how volunteers identify with the animal shelter they serve by asking them to share their stories and opinions regarding the values and routines of the organization (Deetz, 2001). Organizations are regarded as communities or cultures in themselves and members are expected to adhere to the policies and mission of the organization in the same way that members of a culture are expected to adhere to the norms and values of the culture (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Since organizations are regarded as cultures, it is imperative to gain a subjective and firsthand account of how the organization operates so as to see the realities from the point of view of the volunteers who live within that culture (Deetz, 2001). Interpretive perspective contends that researchers gain the most knowledge and understanding of a social phenomenon when they are in contact with individuals within the culture being studied and allows researchers to be open to interpretations that occur during the data collection process so the study remains flexible and able to evolve (Deetz, 2001).

To discover how volunteers express organizational identification with the Midwestern Animal Society, I utilized in-depth interviews as the research method for my analysis. The in-depth interview allows researchers to gain the perspective of the participants they are studying and get first hand information regarding a subject because it permits each participant to share his/her own social reality (Lindlof, 1995), or how they view the organization and their role in it. By using interviews to gain information, I am not looking to piece together an objective reality of the Midwestern Animal Society; I am hoping to gain a variety of introspective outlooks to understand the experiences of organizational members who exist in the animal welfare organization.

The goal of in-depth interviews are to hold a conversation with subjects to understand their point of view and analyze how they construct their existence (Lindlof, 1995). In order to understand the relationship the interviewee has with the organization, including other organizational members and the organizational environment, grand tour questions allow participants to give the interviewer vivid, thick descriptions of their experiences (Lindlof, 1995). Without actually being a member of the organization, in-depth interviews are one of the best ways for researchers to gain an internal glimpse of how members feel about their daily routines in the organization (Lindlof, 1995).

Although in-depth interviews should be flexible so that participants are comfortable discussing whatever they feel is meaningful, I designed an interview guide to ensure all important and relevant topics were discussed. I used Cheney's (1983) Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ) as an example of what type of questions to ask as well as the literature on organizational identification to design my questions. Cheney's (1983) OIQ includes 25 Likert-type statements to measure an

employee's level of organizational identification by analyzing three dimensions: membership (e.g., "I am proud to be a member of Midwestern Animal Society"), similarity (e.g., "In general, I view the Midwestern Animal Society's successes as my successes"), and loyalty (e.g., "I would be very willing to spend the rest of my career with Midwestern Animal Society") (Schrodt, 2002). In order to keep the in-depth interviews on task, I created an interview guide (see Appendix) to direct topics of discussion. Since participants interjected additional topics, the interview guide was created as a list of topics to discuss and not as an exact, rigid form to follow. The interview guide focused on acquiring information regarding volunteer experience, training and orientation, organizational communication, and volunteer identification. More specifically, I probed participants further with questions regarding their personal information and history as a volunteer, their knowledge and feelings about the organization and the mission statement, their experiences with employees, other volunteers, and appreciation events, etc., to find out how volunteers express organizational identification.

After I finished designing the interview guide, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 Midwestern Animal Society volunteers. Before the interview, each participant signed an informed consent form and was reminded that their participation is completely voluntary and that they may end the conversation at any time, skip any questions, and leave if they feel uncomfortable without any penalty. The participants were also informed that interviews will be digitally audio recorded in order to be transcribed following the interview and that I will be taking notes during the interview. The interviewees were also reminded that their identities and information will remain

confidential throughout the study. Each Midwestern Animal Society volunteer participated in one interview that lasted between 63 minutes and 105 minutes with an average of 80 minutes per interview.

Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, I transcribed them in order to analyze the data. When transcribing the interviews, I focused solely on translating the narratives into recorded words to focus specifically on the substance of the stories. Since I am not analyzing the conversation itself, I felt it unnecessary to transcribe all the pauses, emphasis, non-verbal noises, and pronunciations (Green & Thorogood, 2004). I did, however, precisely record each word said by the interviewee including jargon, slang terms, and hesitations to ensure the accuracy of the conversations (Green & Thorogood, 2004). After transcribing all 15 interviews, I was left with 212 pages of single spaced typed, raw data.

Once I finished transcribing the interviews, I used the constant comparative analysis method influenced by grounded theory to analyze the data (Charmaz, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Instead of using theory to guide the data analysis, I wanted to uncover theory by examining the data and allow new theories to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). In order to not force an existing theory to support the findings from the data and to generate new theories that are more applicable to the data, I used the constant comparative analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Since the study seeks to understand the subjective experience of volunteers in a nonprofit organization, comparing the personal accounts allows for a clearer picture of the nonprofit culture to emerge and the realities of each participant to surface. The constant comparative analysis

method involves comparing data from participants and searching for patterns between the experiences, viewpoints, and situations of interviewees, which are then grouped into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A main premise of constant comparative analysis method is that by comparing data to other data, a theory will materialize to help identify and understand the themes (Patton, 1990). Throughout the analysis, data were constantly compared to the emerging theory and logical and organized categories were created to manage recurring themes. As the analysis progressed, categories were added and developed to account for all the themes that came forth from the data.

When analyzing the data, I read through the interview transcripts in their entirety to recognize themes and recurring issues. While reading through the transcripts, I made notes in a new word document when I noticed important insights from participants and identified and analyzed themes as they related to my research question. In order to analyze the data, I compared all the participants' narratives to identify important issues that were discussed frequently in order to recognize the meanings volunteers assign to their experiences. By using an open coding process, I was able to pull themes from the raw data and create functional categories that helped to provide a framework for analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1999). Although I initially identified 23 general themes, the categories were constantly evolving throughout the analysis and I ended with three specific themes. After I recognized the three main themes, I gave each category a specific color so that I could go through and highlight portions of the interview transcripts that I felt supported the themes in their respective colors. While analyzing the themes, I looked for relationships that extend across categories including how similar and different the various themes are. Following this analysis, I streamlined the categories one last time and began

compiling the results. When I analyzed the data, I searched for emerging themes and topics and compared them to the theoretical perspective and research question that guided my study. The following results are a discussion of how volunteers at the Midwestern Animal Society express identification with the organization and what communication strategies encourage and strengthen organizational identification.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

In this chapter, I address answers to the research questions initially asked in this study. My analysis produced three themes of organizational identification in volunteers: how volunteers shared their organizational identification, what organizational struggles participants experience as volunteers, the organizational challenges facing volunteers, and, within this final theme, the impact personal communication has on organizational identification. First, I address how participants express their identification to the organization by sharing the organizational values, making decisions based on the best interests of the organization, having a continued commitment to the organization, respecting the organization's professionalism and knowledge, and having internalized the organization's mission. Second, I address the struggles participants expressed such as feeling conflicted about the mission statement and feeling tension due to their role as volunteers and wanting more organizational responsibilities and information. Third, I address the organizational challenges facing volunteers such as the departmentalization of the organization, which restricts the unification of the organization, creates division between staff members and volunteers, and restricts the communication between organizational members. Within this last theme, I address the desire participants expressed for personal communication from the organization and the impact personal communication has on building organizational identification amongst volunteers, an important finding that emerged from this study and has not been researched previously in organizational literature. Participants in this study expressed a level of identification parallel to that of employees from previous studies, which leaves volunteers with

heightened organizational expectations and proves to be an organizational challenge since the organization may not be able to meet the expectations of volunteers. If organizations cannot meet the demands of their members, tensions occur which can impact how identified members are with the organization.

Theme One: Volunteers Expressed Organizational identification

The first theme that emerged from the data is the expression of organizational identification from participants. Within the stories, participants shared ways in which they identified with the organization. In this section, I discuss evidence of organizational identification in volunteers from the Midwestern Animal Society when participants described sharing values with the organization, making decisions in the best interest of the organization, respecting the professionalism and knowledge of the staff, and having internalized the organization's mission.

Shared Organizational Values

All of the participants stated they began volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society after donating and/or adopting from the organization as the participants all spoke of being animal lovers. By having volunteers who already share the values of the organization when they begin volunteering, nonprofit organizations may find building organizational identification easier than for-profit organization since a large part of the identification process is encouraging organizational members to identify with the organization's values. By sharing the same values as the organization, participants are expressing cognitive and affective forms of identification, meaning their identification is internally motivated.

Each participant I interviewed expressed having values that are parallel with Midwestern Animal Society and have internalized the values of the organization. The values of the Midwestern Animal Society are encompassed in its mission statement and reiterated throughout organizational collateral and from organizational members. All the participants expressed a desire to help animals, which is the main value and function of the Midwestern Animal Society. By sharing values and a common goal with the volunteers, it makes it easier and more natural for the organization to increase identification. Some nonprofits have a committed volunteer base but the volunteers do not share the organization's values, which can lead to conflict and internal disconnect between the volunteers and the organization.

Each participant in this study described their passion for animals and animal welfare throughout the interviews, which leads me to believe the participants have values that are extremely inline with Midwestern Animal Society's values. Gayle expressed having her own mission statement and believes the organizational values are the same as her own personal values: "The organization's values are totally aligned with my values. I have my own mission statement and it's pretty aligned with what Midwestern Animal is trying to accomplish." Peg also echoed the same sentiment as Gayle. Peg said: "My values are absolutely aligned. You're not getting paid so there has to be a reason to be doing this. You have an opportunity to promote the values. You don't just share them, you promote them." Peg said that she not only has the same values as the organization, she tells individuals outside of the organization about the values they share. Participants used statements that show that they feel they are extension of the organization. Renee also said she shares the same values as the organization: "Our values are aligned. I

wouldn't be there as long as I have if they weren't in line. I think it's all based on compassion and I think most people value compassion in their personal lives."

Participants believed the values of the Midwestern Animal Society are in line with their own personal values. Grube and Piliavin (2000) argue that if an individual sees the organization as having similar values as their own, they are more likely to be committed to the organization because they see it as an extension of themselves. In this study, participants expressed seeing the organization as a part of their own identities, which leads me to believe that volunteers are committed and identified with the organization. Employees who identify with an organization see themselves as having the same image and values as the organization and thus feel like an integral part of the organization, findings that are also consistent with what participants expressed during the interviews (Cheney, 1983; Miller, Allen, Casey, & Johnson, 2000; and Tompkins & Cheney, 1983, 1985). Farmer and Fedor (2001) found that individuals are more likely to volunteer for an organization if they see their core values matching up with the core values of the organization, which, from the interview data, is true for the participants of this study because they shared having a love for animals before volunteering for the organization. Therese stated the necessity of volunteers being animal lovers because the organization values animals and animal welfare:

> You absolutely have to be an animal lover. I see them as pretty much being in alignment with my own personal values. I probably love animals more than I love people. We all have our little niche and this happens to be mine.

Participants discussed sharing the same values as the organization, which encourages identification as volunteers begin to see the organization as an extension of their identities. By sharing values with an organization, the efforts of volunteers are

sustained. However, aligned values are not a strong enough factor alone to prolong identification throughout the volunteer's tenure; a culmination of other factors need to work together to encourage and instigate stronger organizational identification as it is a complex and evolving process. I argue that another way participants expressed organizational identification is that they make decisions that are advantageous to the organization; this behavioral dimension of organizational identification will be discussed in the next section.

Identified Decision-Making

When identified volunteers are not volunteering for the organization, they still act as knowledgeable representatives of the organization and educate outside publics even when they are not making a conscious effort to represent the organization. By acting in the best interest of the organization, participants are exuding identification from a behavioral dimension. Identified volunteers tell individuals outside of the organization what the organization does, what the mission is, and educates individuals on welfare issues that the organization is involved in because they are so affiliated with the mission, cause, and organization itself. Participants expressed telling individuals outside of the organization to make choices that are consistent with the organization's mission. For example, Peg said she always keeps a dog harness in her car so when she sees an animal pulling on a leash, she can educate the owners about using a harness like the Midwestern Animal Society advocates. Peg said:

> I see a lot of people with choke collars and I emailed the advocacy lady and asked if there was something I could give these young men I see. And she emailed back a week later with something by the Colorado humane society. And so I printed out a pile of those and put them in my car and then I can give that to a young man who is abusing his dog.

Peg stated that she gives advice that is consistent with the mission of the Midwestern Animal Society and promotes the organization's interest of creating a community that promotes animal welfare. Since Peg is not required to promote the values of the organization when she is not volunteering, she is acting on her own accord to behave in a fashion that is consistent with the values of the organization, displaying a high level of identification.

Even when participants are not volunteering at the Midwestern Animal Society, they still tell people about the shelter, advocate for animal welfare, and show they are members of the organization through their hobbies and articles of clothing; volunteers want to make it known that they are proud to be organizational members. Megan said everyone in her life knows about her volunteering for Midwestern Animal Society and that she is always telling her friends and family stories about the wildlife department:

> And now I have such a connection to the wildlife there and the staff is amazing there … All my friends and family know. And my husband's friends … I tell people all the time the wildlife side is the best kept secret around … I always tell my daughters, Victor, and my mom and dad. And my mom always asks about Midwestern Animal Society.

Megan's knowledge and passion for the Midwestern Animal Society is shared with her outside network and she always acts as an organizational representative even outside of volunteering for the organization. Therese is so involved in the organization that she influenced her daughter to be an animal welfare activist and includes that she is a Midwestern Animal Society volunteer in the signature of her personal email. She said:

> I tell people very often, it's even in my email! I have that I'm an Midwestern Animal Society volunteer in my email signature … My daughter saw what I was doing and now she's pushing for street vaccinations and spay neuter … I feel with the information I've learned if I can share it with someone else it helps them make good decisions when it comes to owning an animal.

Therese's statement about giving people advice regarding animals with the information she has received from volunteering shows that she is making decisions on what advice to give based on what she has learned from the Midwestern Animal Society.

Denise said she wears clothing and jewelry adorned with the Midwestern Animal Society logo, which exemplifies high organizational identification. By wearing the organization's logo and promoting the organization's mission to the public, Denise acts like a representative of the organization and shows that she is making decisions that are in the best interest of the Midwestern Animal Society. She said:

> I have so much Midwestern Animal Society wear. All my friends know but I don't hesitate to tell people. We went to see this play at the theatre called Sylvia, which was about a dog, and they had a booth there all about rescues, including Midwestern Animal Society. And, of course, I was wearing my Midwestern Animals Society sweatshirt so everyone kept coming up to me asking me about Midwestern Animal Society. I ended up talking about it constantly. You kind of do it and you don't even know you do it.

Denise said she promotes the organization without even knowing it, which shows that the Midwestern Animal Society is so much a part of who she is, she does not even need to think about advocating for the organization; it is second nature.

Participants spoke of making decisions on what to tell others based on what promotes the mission of the organization, which is aligned with the findings from Cheney (1982, 1983) and Pratt (1998) as to what actions show identification in organizational members. Participants discussed acting like representatives of the organization to non-organizational members, which exemplifies their identification and is consistent with the findings on employee identification from Miller, Allen, Casey, and Johnson (2000). Another way volunteers shared organizational identification is by discussing their continued commitment to the organization. In the next section, I argue that participants'

desire to continue volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society exemplifies a high level of not only organizational commitment, but also organizational identification.

Continued Organizational Commitment

The interview data shows that the majority of participants are highly committed and do not see an end in sight to their volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society. Participants spoke of other animal welfare organizations in the community but stated a desire to continue volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society, which demonstrates a deep organizational connection and commitment. Although this desire to continue volunteering for Midwestern Animal Society exemplifies the commitment volunteers feel to the organization and the mission, it also shows how identified volunteers are with the organization because they could easily end their tenure at the Midwestern Animal Society and begin volunteering for another organization with similar values. If participants were not identified with the Midwestern Animal Society and their mission, they could transition to another animal welfare organization without feeling a great deal of internal dissonance or tension.

There are numerous other animal welfare organizations in the community so if volunteers felt a wide disconnect between themselves and the organization, volunteers could stop volunteering with Midwestern Animal Society and begin volunteering for another organization. Therese stated she does not anticipate discontinuing her service to the organization: “I anticipating volunteering with Midwestern Animal Society, certainly I don’t see an end in sight.” Dina also echoed the same sentiment as Therese: “I’ll volunteer for them indefinitely.” Peg stated she plans to volunteer for the organization as long as possible and find more roles, which will allow her to become more

knowledgeable about the organization and therefore become more identified. She said: "As long as I can. I have no reason to quit. I'd like to find more things I can do." Gary said he believes in the organization and their mission and has no qualms in volunteering at another organization if he did not identify with the Midwestern Animal Society as much as he does: "I think its an effective, well run organization. I wouldn't keep on volunteering if I didn't think so. Life is short, you can go elsewhere and do other things." Edgar stated he never thought of the end of volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society, which shows he is highly committed to and identified with the specific goals and mission of the organization: "I never thought of it like that. I never even thought of an end. I didn't know it ended. Until it doesn't exist or I don't exist." Hannah, a participant who started volunteering with Midwestern Animal Society because a coworker, Miranda, did not want to volunteer alone, said she would still volunteer for the organization even if Miranda were to stop volunteering. Hannah expressed a high level of commitment and identification to the Midwestern Animal Society when she said: "If I had another day to give, I would … If Miranda were to stop volunteering, I would continue to volunteer with Midwestern Animal Society."

Participants stated they never considered ending their volunteer commitment for the Midwestern Animal Society and expressed that they would continue volunteering indefinitely, which is consistent with the findings of Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) who argue that the frequency, length, and aspirations to stay with an organization are ways of measuring identification. Participants shared findings in line with results from Laverie and McDonald's (2007) research which show that extensive organizational commitment promotes identification as the more an individual sees their identity in

alignment with the organization's identity, the more connected and identified they will be with the organization's mission and goals. Participants not only discussed their commitment to the organization, they also expressed positive feelings about the organization and the mission statement, which will be discussed in the next section.

Respect and Admiration for the Organization and Employees

The interview data show that participants believe in the values of the Midwestern Animal Society and that the organization has the most qualified organizational members and resources to fulfill the mission statement. Participants described care and compassion for animals as the main value and core competency of the organization and although the majority of the participants could not recite the mission statement word for word, all participants knew the general content of the mission statement. Participants could also describe the main values of the organization and believe the programs and actions of the organization truly embody the mission. All participants discussed reading and hearing organizational members recite and explain the mission statement at some point during their volunteer tenure but most could not recite exactly what is states. When I read aloud the Midwestern Animal Society's mission statement, 'The mission is to build a community where people value animals and treat them with respect and kindness. Our goal is to save lives,' all participants agreed that it embodies exactly what the organization does. Participants stated that they feel organizational members are united to help animals and fulfill the mission.

The mission statement guides the actions of the organizational members, and from the narratives of participants, the organization, from an internal standpoint, lives and breathes the mission. Participants expressed believing that the organization and its

members value animals and strive towards the goal of building a compassionate community and feel proud talking about the organization's mission. Therese said she believes the compassion Midwestern Animal Society has for animals is central to its mission: "They absolutely care for the well being of the animals and have the best interest of the animal at heart." Lenore echoed the same sentiments as Therese. Lenore stated: "I think they are committed, they are really there to help out the animals. It's not just window dressing. They go the extra mile." In addition, Hannah stated she believes the organization puts the animal's welfare as central to the adoption process:

> They are very animal oriented. I have heard them interviewing people and they are very adamant about meeting all the people in the household and any other animals to learn about them. They are really worried about the animal, they don't let them go to just anybody.

Megan discussed the compassion organizational members have for the animals at the Midwestern Animal Society:

> I can see it because it shows in how they handle the animals, so gentle, you feel them caring for the animal. You sense they really love their work. They treat these animals like they're gold. It's just amazing to me. Oh and you should see James he has such a way with these animals. They would never, never hurt an animal. And the food they get, man!

Tsay and Turpen (2011) argue that stakeholders are generally driven to support nonprofit organizations because of a passion they feel for the organization's mission, which is consistent with what participants expressed. This passion for the mission creates high expectations for the organization's personnel and volunteers, supervisors, managers, and board members must not only be seen as competent leaders but also as open, honest representatives of the organization (Tsay & Turpen, 2011). Participants described the staff members of the Midwestern Animal Society as being very organized, knowledgeable, and professional which is in-line with Myers and Kassing's (1998)

findings that organizational identification rose when employees found their supervisors to be qualified communicators and prime representatives of the organization. Peg stated that staff members are incredibly professional: "I've met Maria before. She speaks on a professional level to her volunteers … And she treats everyone, and so does the staff, very professionally … They're very organized and the routine is set." Gayle boasted about the knowledge of the staff as being one of the main reasons she began volunteering for and continues volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society:

> I've had volunteers, I worked with interns, and they've been like, this is so professionally run … Like James is like way smart about this stuff it's unbelievable. They're a wealth of information … I would say Midwestern Animal Society is so well run, the place looks like a veterinarian hospital.

Edgar said he believes the staff is united in achieving the organization's goals and dedicated to the mission:

> I think the staff is united with a common benevolent goal which a lot of companies are lacking. Their goal isn't to increase the shareholders price, there are a lot of company to exist to make the comp larger. That's not their goal. I think everybody in wildlife firmly believes in their goal … Everyone there is really involved in achieving their goals.

Peg sees the organization as a respected community asset because of their professionalism and dedication to animal welfare:

> I view them as a valuable community asset, an extremely professional organization. I think we're very lucky to have them. I think they're a major player in this community as far as what they provide. Very positive feelings … They clearly understand their mission and they are clear about following their mission and communicating their mission and, it appears the administration, at least from the standpoint we see, is very organized, very professional. If people ask me about it, I just say, 'oh it's a great organization.'

Megan stated that the organization is extremely organized and helpful and that the wildlife department is extremely dedicated to animal welfare. She said:

> Very organized, very organized. Management is excellent I think. They follow through on everything. It's amazing how organized they are … Everything is labeled really well. Very explicit directions. And even if you forget you can ask staff and they won't get irritated. They're always willing to help.

Although participants said they believe the staff members could use better training on how to communicate with volunteers, participants do believe the employees are well informed and dedicated to animal welfare and fulfilling the mission. The lack of communication from employees will be discussed further in upcoming sections as well as the implications of the rigidity of the Midwestern Animal Society. The professionalism and knowledge of the staff increases how volunteers perceive the organization and since the participants admire the competencies of the staff and trust in their abilities, participants discussed seeing the organization as being trustworthy and committed to animals and the community. If participants had shared less positive feelings about the dedication and commitment of the organization and its members, there would potentially be more disconnect between volunteers and the organization, which could negatively affect organizational identification. Participants not only shared a deep respect and admiration for the organization and organizational members, they also expressed being identified with the mission of the organization.

Internalization of the Organization's Mission

Participants discussed the organization using a sense of we and referred to the organization as an extensive of themselves. Participants expressed how involved they are with the organization by referring to the organization as "we" throughout the interviews, which exemplifies that they feel as though they are a part of the organization and the organization is a part of them. Gayle stated a few times during her interview, "There is no "I," it's a "we." Gayle's statement exemplified her feeling that achieving the

organization's mission is a collective effort and that she feels an intimate connection to the organization and its members. Peg expressed a heavy involvement with the organization by referring to the organization as "we" throughout the interview. She said:

> I do tend to refer to them as "us." I say "we "a lot so you know, I guess I feel, even though I'm a volunteer I feel a part of the organization. "We're having a program." The volunteers I know think of it the same way. They think of it as "us" too.

Peg is so identified that she does not see a separation between herself and the organization. Gary also referred to the organization as "we" throughout the interview, making statements such as, "Well, with the distemper outbreak, we've had…" By referring to the organization as a "we" instead of "they," participants show that they feel very close to the organization and have integrated the values and beliefs of the organization as their own. Identified participants feel pride in the organization and make decisions that are advantageous for the organization like telling those outside of the organization about the mission and the programs at Midwestern Animal Society. By referring to the organization as an extension of their self, participants express an identification with the organization's mission, goals, and values and have made them their own, which is consistent with the argument from Cheney and Tompkins (1987). The accounts from participants show that they have internalized the organization's identity, and, in accordance with the findings from Prati, McMillan-Capehart, and Karriker, (2009), participants shared a sense of interconnectedness with the organization.

According to Cheney (1982, 1983), identification is comprised of three intertwined facets: first, a membership or sense of belonging to the organization; second, support or loyalty to the organization and its goals; and finally, perceived shared interests between the individual and the organization. In this section, I addressed how participants

expressed their identification to the organization by sharing the organizational values, making decisions based on the best interests of the organization, having a continued commitment to the organization, respecting the organization's professionalism and knowledge, and having internalized the organization's mission. The responses in this section reflected the ways in which participants identify with the organization. In the next section I address the struggles participants discussed with dispelling misconceptions the public has regarding the mission statement and the tension participants expressed as a result of being volunteers but wanting responsibilities and information given to employees. Participants desire to be treated like employees because of their identification to the organization, which creates heightened expectations of the organization that may be impossible for the organization to meet. In the next section, I will show how the aforementioned struggles affect participants' identification to the Midwestern Animal Society.

Theme Two: Organizational Struggles Perceived by Participants

Although participants expressed a strong identification with the Midwestern Animal Society, they also expressed a few struggles facing them as volunteers. First, participants discussed the tension they feel when individuals outside of the organization misconstrue the mission statement because volunteers feel identified with the organizational goals and values and due to this identification, participants feel a need to dispel any confusion regarding the organization. Second, participants expressed wanting the responsibilities and information employees receive from the organization because they feel heavily identified to the organization and want to do all they can to help the organization achieve its mission. The level of identification expressed by participants

creates tension between volunteers and the organization because participants have higher expectations of the organization but because of their role as volunteers, they are restricted in the information and communication they receive. Participants desire responsibilities and information that has previously been given to employees due to a high level of involvement and identification with the organization, which can create friction between volunteers and the organization. Although it is necessary for volunteers to be identified with the organization so as to help the organization achieve its goals, the organization must clearly define the roles of volunteers so they are not given responsibilities or information meant for employees. I will first examine the struggles participants expressed when they dispel inaccuracies outside publics have regarding the mission and how this affects organizational identification.

Participants Struggle with Public Confusion About the Organization's Mission

The mission statement communicates the values and goals of the organization and is broad enough to encompass all facets of the organization but it serves as a source of conflict for volunteers since they discussed feeling a need to dispel any confusion the public might have regarding the goals of the Midwestern Animal Society. Participants expressed a strong identification to the organization's mission and feel such a strong connection with the organizational values that they want those outside the organization to feel as strongly about the organization as they do.

Although participants believe the organization is fulfilling its mission by participating in actions that are consistent with their mission and living the values they espouse, participants are conflicted when individuals outside of the organization misconstrue the mission and actions of the organization. Participants reiterated

throughout the interviews that the organization will only euthanize animals as a last resort if an animal is extremely old, if the animal is ill, and/or if the animal is in pain, and also stated that the majority of the public is unaware of these exclusions. According to participants, the public may also believe that the Midwestern Animal Society will take in all stray animals but due to the organization's limited space and resources, the organization can only accept certain stray animals. During the interviews, participants spoke of how this conflict between what the public believes the organization does versus what the organization actually does causes tension and many participants have made it a priority to change the public perceptions regarding the organization by participating in programs and events that educate the public on the mission. A contradiction between what volunteers believe and what the public believes causes tension in participants and impacts how identified volunteers become or remain.

Participants discussed feeling uncomfortable having to defend the mission of the Midwestern Animal Society because they truly believe the organization is doing the best that they can for each animal and for the community but also know they cannot change the perceptions the public has regarding the organization. The ambiguous mission statement and lack of outward communication to dispel misconceptions about the mission statement make participants feel conflicted in their roles and could impact organizational identification as volunteers may begin to feel helpless and overwhelmed in affecting how the public views the organization. Participants take the comments made by the public personally because the organizational mission is the same as their personal mission and when the public does not understand the mission of the organization, participants feel personally attacked. Participants spoke of a desire for the Midwestern Animal Society to

communicate outwardly to the public regarding the realistic limitations the organization faces in accomplishing its mission. Dina said:

> It's totally spot on, building a community where animals and people thrive. I think they should display their mission. It comes from our hearts … But I think there's a lot of public misconception with Midwestern Animal Society, like with taking in strays and that the organization will kill animals they receive, which isn't true. There's a lot of confusion so it would be helpful if people knew the truth.

The misconceptions the public has regarding the mission statement is taken personally by participants because as Dina said, the mission "comes from our hearts." Participants who feel as though the mission statement is a reflection of their own personal mission feel personally affected when the public confuses what the mission statement actually encompasses. Denise said:

> I think sometimes people don't understand the last part of that because … people ask you, is Midwestern Animal Society a no kill shelter? You can't say that it is a no kill shelter because there is euthanasia there for animals that are not adoptable. But they truly give those animals so many chances … So the save lives thing, I mean the goal is to save thousands of lives but they can't save every life. And I think that statement gets misinterpreted. And that affects how we can achieve the mission.

Denise stated that the way the public interprets the mission statement affects how organizational members achieve the organization's goals especially if volunteers feel resistance and challenged from the public. Public misconceptions create tension in participants as participants expressed frustrations in not being able to change the opinions of individuals outside of the organization.

Participants take the public's misconceptions regarding the mission statement to heart but believe the organization is being rational and treating the animals with respect and kindness by using euthanasia as a last resort. The volunteers I interviewed said they feel very passionate about the mission of the Midwestern Animal Society and believe the

organization is doing all they can do fulfill the mission but are realistically limited because of space and resources and the health and age of the animals they rescue. Participants share the values of the organization and expressed taking the external criticism personally due to their identification with the organization and the mission, which causes friction between volunteers and the organization (Koschmann & Laster, 2011). Along with feeling personally responsible for how individuals outside of the organization view the mission, participants are so identified with the organization that they expect to be given the same responsibilities and information employees receive. An organizational paradox is created here as the organization wants volunteers to fill the gaps not filled by employees but do not want to give the volunteers the training or information to do so (Koschmann & Laster, 2011). I will discuss the tensions and paradoxes volunteers expressed and the effect on organizational identification in the next section.

A Desire for More Responsibilities and Information

Participants expressed a desire to have as much timely information about the organization as employees because they are so identified with the organization and the mission and want to educate the public on the Midwestern Animal Society. Participants expressed a need for more organizational information so they can effectively talk to the public about the organization and promote the animal welfare values promoted by the organization. Cindy discussed her frustrations of not knowing information, especially when potential adopters and donors come into the shelter and ask her questions:

> You sign them in to look at the animals and answer any questions they have but you're not trained to know the answers to the questions so it's a lot of on-the-job learning and now they have the Wish List thing going on and they don't ever tell you that, they don't tell you what it is and all of a sudden there are people coming

> in asking to make donations. And so you don't always project the most knowledgeable but the way they present the training for being a greeter is that you don't need to know anything, just stand here and sign people in and direct them. They don't think you need to know anything but you're actually the face of the place when people come in. I want the information they have.

Cindy said she received very little information from the organization regarding her role and feels like she cannot represent the organization with the limited information she has. She previously worked for an animal welfare organization in another Midwestern state and expressed wanting the information she previously had as an employee. The desire to receive the information employees have presents a paradox for the organization where volunteers are so identified with the organization and given responsibilities held by employees that they want the information and communication employees have. The Midwestern Animal Society expect volunteers to perform tasks typically given to employees, but do not want to give the volunteers information typically reserved for employees, which is consistent with the findings on organizational paradoxes from Koschmann and Laster (2011).

Although participants discussed wanting the information given to employees due to their identification and intense admiration for the organization's mission, it seems the organization is trying to limit the information and responsibilities volunteers receive because volunteers are in a limited role and are not employees. Edgar discussed being frustrated because he has been given the responsibilities and information typically given to employees although he is in a volunteer role: "I do anything they need me to do in wildlife … I struggle with not being an employee." Edgar's role in the wildlife department requires him to communicate with high level managers and executives and do tasks that are above the level of a typical volunteer. With his added responsibility, Edgar

struggles with being only a volunteer and not an employee because he expressed a strong desire to do all he can to support the organization and receive information typically given to employees.

Nancy spoke of being frustrated with not receiving information about special events she has worked on and feels that the Midwestern Animal Society would benefit by giving volunteers more information about the programs and organization:

> They ask for volunteers to go to various sites around town where they have a table and nobody ever briefs you on what to say to these people. I stand there and make it up. If I knew more about more specialized programs, I could talk more about them too … Nobody give you a cheat sheet … I need more information.

Participants spoke of wanting more information and communication from the organization and wanting more responsibilities like staff members have. I believe this desire for more information and responsibilities is mostly due to the organizational identification participants shared during the interviews. Participants feel very connected to the organization and want to do all they possibly can to help the organization achieve its mission. While some participants spoke of wanting more information and responsibilities, others expressed struggling with having too many responsibilities from the organization.

Participants discussed the high expectations placed on them from the organization and expressed how this has caused tension between them and the organization. The Midwestern Animal Society has not found a balance between giving volunteers too much responsibilities and not giving volunteers enough responsibilities. There is not a line drawn between what volunteers are expected to do and what employees are expected to do, which makes some participants yearn to have responsibilities of the staff and others feel burdened with too many responsibilities. Although certain positions have defined

tasks and restrictions as to what volunteers can do and say, some volunteers are given extra responsibilities and are treated almost as employees. Denise struggles with the fact that she is sometimes treated as an employee rather than a volunteer:

> Since I train volunteers in vet services I have to deal with some sensitive issues. There was a volunteer who would incorporate their own procedures and wouldn't follow protocol and it seemed like Angi and Sandy wanted me to deal with it. They kind of avoid those sensitive issues.

Denise had been asked to deal with sensitive issues that she felt were the responsibilities of the staff because employees are expected to supervise volunteers as the paid organizational members. Although she helps to train volunteers in vet services, Denise expressed discomfort being considered the bridge between the behavior staff and the volunteer coordinators and having responsibilities that are typically held by employees. Her comment about employees avoiding sensitive issues struck me as problematic since volunteers are not paid organizational members and therefore should not be expected to hold supervisory roles that employees are trained to fill. Volunteers put in fewer hours per week than employees and are not trained to be liaisons between employees. There is a fine line between how much information and responsibilities should be given to volunteers to make them productive members of the organization but to not overwhelm them and give them responsibilities typically reserved for employees.

In this section, I addressed the struggles participants expressed as volunteers such as feeling conflicted about the mission statement and the want for more organizational responsibilities and information and how these struggles affect organizational identification. The Midwestern Animal Society faces the challenge of making sure volunteers feel like essential members of the organization but are not burdened with too much information or responsibilities. Not only did participants express struggles within

their roles as volunteers, they also discussed organizational challenges and obstacles and how the fragmentation of the organization affects the relationships volunteers have with employees.

Theme Three: Organizational Challenges Facing Identification

Although participants view the Midwestern Animal Society as reputable, organized, well managed and professional, they also discussed feeling frustrated with organizational obstacles such as the division, rigidity, departmentalization, and impersonal atmosphere of the organization. The next few sections will examine the challenges participants expressed regarding organizational departmentalization and communication as well as highlight the need for employees to establish personal relationships with volunteers so as to increase personal communication and encourage volunteers to feel like important organizational members.

Participants View the Organization as Departmentalized and Divided

Participants expressed that the physical fragmented and departmentalized of the organization has led to divided information and communication, which has created an emotionally and physically fragmented staff and volunteer force. The organization is extremely divided and departmentalized as wildlife and domestics are treated as separate entities and due to this division, volunteers are restricted as to what areas within the facility they can access. I will first address the departmentalization and physical division participants feel at the Midwestern Animal Society and how this makes participants feel restricted in their roles. Then I will discuss how the organizational division affects the information and communication volunteers receive.

Participants describe the Midwestern Animal Society as very departmentalized, divided, and rigid. The positions and procedures are so streamlined that participants describe the roles as being very rigid and inflexible, as Cindy described:

> Everything is very boxed off and segmented. You have to be satisfied to go in and do the same thing repeatedly. You have to create the variety like I am by changing jobs. You don't come in as part of a fluid moving thing where they teach you as you go along, that doesn't happen … I don't like that the volunteer areas are so restrictive at this [organization], I don't like that. …It's hard especially with the dogs. When I go in on Friday as the behavior person, I don't even go into look at the dogs because access is restricted.

Since there are not enough staff members to supervise and train volunteers, volunteers are boxed into their roles and given few chances to change positions. Although the organization wants volunteers to be flexible as to what roles they fill initially, participants expressed feeling that there is no room for deviation or flexibility in each role. The procedures are laid out so that volunteers do not add their own personal touches for liability reasons but also for organizational control. Cindy mentions that the rigidity of the roles leaves no room for flexibility so that if and when variables enter the role, volunteers do not know how to react. Participants expressed feeling limited as to areas they can access in the organization, which makes them feel untrustworthy and limits how much information they have regarding the organization.

Participants discussed Midwestern Animal Society as having an "us and them" type of atmosphere due to the physical restrictions and limitations in personal communication from staff members. These restrictions affect identification as it creates a barrier between the organization and the volunteers. Megan said she felt extremely divided from the organization when she wanted to give a domestics volunteer and when

her mother and daughter tours of the wildlife department to show them where she volunteers every week:

> I get the liability issue but I brought my mom and daughter in. And then this one gal I did the Wish List with … I could sense they did not want us there … They gave me a really dirty look when I walked this gal from domestics through … My mom always asks about what's going on there … I want to show her what I do. We didn't touch anything and it's 5 minutes at the most … They're very standoffish. But they're really big on liability. Very procedure oriented.

The staff members are very rigid and inflexible about deviating from the departmental restrictions imposed on volunteers, even when it is to briefly give other volunteers and family members a tour of the facility. Megan said she felt tension from the staff when she walked her mother, daughter, and a volunteer from the domestics department through the wildlife department, which demonstrates the division between the departments and the rigid structure of the organization. The staff members do not want volunteers to deviate from the procedures set in place and frown on having non-department volunteers take a tour through restricted areas. Although there is no written protocol for giving tours to non-department volunteers, it is looked down upon from the staff members and demonstrates how divided the departments are.

Wynona stated she understands the limitations facing volunteers but does not understand why dispensing the medicines has become so streamlined and why more and more physical restrictions have been put in place:

> They made more rules for us like we can't go certain places now, there's a way back area where we aren't allowed. And we used to go everywhere but now they started making these rules. So now they'll put our pills together for us. I think because as the years went by they've begun to dumb it down and put it together for you. Maybe they had some errors or something. So now they put everything together for us and we just hand it out. I don't know the reason why they changed.

The organization has become more concerned with liabilities and preventing bottlenecks, which, participants feel, has made the organization more divided and restrictive. Many participants like Megan and Wynona spoke of the physical role and task restrictions at the Midwestern Animal Society and how these boundaries make them feel less welcome, less trustworthy, and less useful in their positions. Volunteers understand that for liability reasons they cannot go everywhere in the building or help out with certain tasks but the restrictions still create a division between the volunteers and the organization because participants feel as though the organization does not trust them.

Not only do volunteers feel physically restricted, they also feel restricted with what information they can give to the public, and expressed that the Midwestern Animal Society also prohibits what volunteers can say to the public. Along with feeling restricted physically in her role, Cindy stated she feels restricted in what she can do or say to the public and potential adopters:

> I wish I felt like I have the freedom to help people and give them more information.

Participants discussed feeling restricted and boxed into their roles when they yearn to be able to divulge more information to the public and access more departments in the facility, especially when they have extensive experience with animals. Many of the participants have had extensive training with animals and want to feel trusted to give information and advice to individuals outside of the organization. Lenore also feels trapped in what she can say and do as a rabbit foster volunteer and trainer:

> I learned from trial and error and research … We have different ideas about some things because I've been doing this for so long. There are some things I want them to implement but they're still thinking about it. I've been doing this, it works better I swear. It just takes them longer … So there's a little friction there with

> that. They just changed something I had been telling them about for years. It's like, ok, it took you how many years to do this?

Lenore has received resistance from Midwestern Animal Society with the improvements she is trying to make with the rabbit fostering procedures. Although she understands the liabilities the organization faces and the roadblocks associated with changing long-standing protocol, since she has 17 years of experience as a rabbit foster volunteer, Lenore is an expertise in the rabbit fostering field and does not like being restricted in what advice she can give to new foster volunteers. Lenore discussed conducting her own research through trial and error and feels that she can provide new foster volunteers with the best information to make fostering a success but cannot give this information because of restrictions from the organization. She discussed feeling frustrated with not being able to give information and advice that she has tested extensively and feels the organization does not trust her.

In this section, I discussed the organizational challenges participants perceived. Participants feel extremely restricted in what areas they can access inside the organization and what information they can give to individuals outside of the organization. The findings are consistent with research from Stirling and Bull (2011) who found that divisions and restrictions stemming from a hierarchical organizational structure can affect organizational identification. Due to these restrictions, participants feel like un-trusted organizational members and as if they are not capable of giving information to individuals outside of the organization. Participants provided a wealth of information that could help streamline and improve the processes the organization currently follows but due to the restrictions in place at Midwestern Animal Society, it takes longer for the organization to consider the ideas and for feedback to get into the right hands, which will

be discussed further in my study. In the next section, I continue to address organizational challenges perceived by participants as well as discuss how the departmentalization has created a division of information in the organization.

Departmentalization Creates a Division of Information in the Organization

With the access limitations and restrictions within the facility, volunteers feel physically restricted as to where they can go, which creates a physiological division between volunteers and the organization. The physical division in the organization leads participants to feel that the organization is also withholding information from them and only gives limited information to volunteers depending on their roles. Participants expressed that there is a clear division of information between the two departments. They believe this affects what the organization communicates to them and stated they feel they are only given information regarding changes and programs in the organization that directly affect them and not given information about other roles, programs, or even departments. During the interviews, participants referred to the departments separately which exemplifies the division between the domestics and wildlife departments and demonstrates that the participants do not perceive the Midwestern Animal Society as a unified organization. Edgar said he appreciates the newsletter communication from the wildlife staff as it gives quality information about important organizational news:

> I did not have a good understanding of the standing of the distemper issue before the wildlife newsletter from Francine but that's because I'm not a domestics volunteer.

Edward's statement about not knowing anything about the distemper outbreak since it happened in the domestics department reflects on the division that exists between the domestics and wildlife departments.

Participants appreciate receiving information from other departments because although there are many different facets to the organization, they are all striving for the same mission and are a part of the Midwestern Animal Society. Although Edward received information regarding the distemper outbreak through a newsletter, Therese, a greeter, did not receive information regarding the distemper outbreak from the organization and instead learned about it through the news. Therese expressed frustration and feeling deceived by the organization when she did not receive information regarding the distemper crisis from the organization:

> They expect a lot of us. I'm fine with that. I understand that it's a business but to depend so much on your volunteers and not to let them know what's really going on. I really, really resented that. It was hurtful. We give them our hearts and our time and it was kind of a little bit of a slap in the face just letting us find out on the news what's going on.

Therese discussed feeling betrayed because she did not receive information about an organizational crisis because the organization has high expectations for its volunteers to help achieve the mission, a sentiment that was discussed in a previous section. Tensions and paradoxes discussed by participants' impact identification because they affect how integral members feel with the organization. Members will become stressed and eventually burnout if they feel dissonance regarding their roles and contradictory organizational expectations (Tracy, 2004).

Participants described the organization as having high expectations for its volunteers and due to these high expectations participants feel they should receive comprehensive and transparent organizational communication and information. Nancy said she believes there is a division in the organization and that the division prevents

departments from exchanging valuable information and communicating this information to volunteers:

> I don't know how the staff communicates, how management communicates with the staff. So I don't know when those people exchange ideas or if they ever do or if anyone ever talks to each other … I don't doubt that there is division. I'm sure there is … If you treat your volunteers professionally like they do then you need to tell them the truth and be honest. If it's run like a business, you need to divulge correct information. Whether it's a good thing or bad thing but you still have to be upfront.

Nancy made an analogy between the Midwestern Animal Society and a business where the organization is also departmentalized. Information is divided between the departments and unless an individual works in a certain department, it is unlikely he/she will receive that department specific information. Since organizational information is departmentalized, it gives participants the impression that the organization is not being open and honest with its volunteers and that vital information is not being communicated to organizational members.

The physical departmentalization of the Midwestern Animal Society divides the information participants receive as domestics volunteers only receive information regarding domestics and wildlife volunteers only receive information pertaining to the wildlife department. There is not an opportunity for volunteers to receive information regarding another department because the information volunteers receive depends on what department they volunteer for. Participants like Therese and Nancy both described the organization as being more businesslike in the past few years, which participants believe has made the organization more rigid, unemotional, and departmentalized. Cindy stated she feels like information from the organization is extremely limited and restricted:

> As a greeter you feel responsible for the perception everybody has and that's why it's so frustrating to now know the answers to the questions because you look like

> you don't know anything and I am totally embarrassed about it. I don't know anything about the wildlife side or intake so when people come in and ask questions they have to call and talk to them … I don't have time to run through this place to find the information. I don't know what I even need to find out!

Cindy expressed frustration not knowing the answers to the questions the public has, especially when individuals have questions regarding the wildlife department. As a greeter, Cindy feels like she is the face of the organization and is frustrated because she cannot provide the public with the most accurate information regarding wildlife since she is not given the information from the organization. Cindy's sentiment is consistent with what other participants stated as they feel volunteers only receive departmentalized information and are not given other important organization wide information. Although she is not specifically a wildlife volunteer, Cindy represents the entire organization to individuals that enter the facility and speaks to the public regarding both departments. Peg also discussed the information as being departmentalized:

> If they have a special inservice about the dogs, I wouldn't get invited to it. It's very departmentalized. Whenever they have something new to tell everyone, they offer inservice sessions to let everyone know. But it's only for each department.

Participants want additional information regarding the organization but feel limited in their role because they do not know what is going on outside of their respective departments. The departmentalization of the organization restricts information to certain departments and therefore certain organizational members. If an event were to happen in a specific department, it is unlikely that information would make its way to other parts of the Midwestern Animal Society since the departmentalization also restricts communication. The departmentalization of information contributes to the restrictive atmosphere of the organization and makes participants feel as though the organization is not being upfront and honest with volunteers. The departmentalization restricts not only

information but also restricts organizational members from learning about other positions. Gayle stated she noticed a division between the organizational members and offered a solution of allowing volunteers to try out different roles in order to build more of a collaborative atmosphere:

> I think there's a really big demarcation between the staff. I think with the programs. I think just having more open communication between them would be beneficial. Something completely internal. You know, maybe tell the volunteers, you wanna get an idea of wildlife? Maybe have one day a month where whoever wants to do it sign up.

Gayle's idea of allowing volunteers to switch departments demonstrates that she has thought about the departmentalization of the organization enough to come up with a solution to help organizational members see how other departments operate as well as open communication channels between the staff members.

Since participants discussed concerns regarding the departmentalization of the organization and how they believe it is affecting what information they receive, I argue the departmentalization of the organization is limiting organizational identification since it restricts the flow of information and impacts the trust volunteers have in the organization. The rigid structure of the organization affects organizational identification and creates barriers not only between departments, but also between members (Stirling & Bull, 2011). If volunteers believe the Midwestern Animal Society is hiding information from them, they will begin to distrust the organization and therefore begin to distance themselves from the organization, impacting organizational identification. In addition to the departmentalization of information from the organization, the Midwestern Animal Society has become more bureaucratic and lost most of its emotionality, which will be discussed in the next section.

Bureaucratic Changes Affect Organizational Emotionality

In addition to the departmentalization creating a division in the organization, the bureaucratic changes within the organization have affected the emotionality of the organization. According to the participants, the organization has become more businesslike and bureaucratic in the past few years due to a change in executive management and these changes have also made the organization less emotional and more robotic. Typical nonprofits strive on providing an emotional experience that draws volunteers in but with all the bureaucratic changes, Midwestern Animal Society has lost the emotion they once had. Participants shared an emotional attachment to animals and to the organization's mission but due to the rigid structure of the organization, there is no longer room for participants to express their emotionality when they are volunteering, which was a main reason why many of the participants initially began volunteering for the organization.

Midwestern Animal Society has streamlined the processes for volunteers so much so that the organization is run extremely efficiently but with this increased efficiency, the organization has lost the emotionality and individuality it once had. Cindy expressed how these bureaucratic changes have affected how the organization operates:

> When Maria came in she started having staff meetings and showing them stuff the staff should know like about running the business and they had never known any of that before … It's become very restricted … Like being very rigid or not trusting or creative at all. What I've seen is that they've so streamlined the task oriented aspect of everything that they've left no room for individuality. And they've tried to have an almost assembly line process and it doesn't work for the reason that people come to volunteer…It's like the Disney world of humane societies, like at Disney World where it looks all perfect but all the work is done underground. What you don't see is the emotional, dirty stuff which I really like being a part of all of it. So it's sort of plastic.

By teaching the employees to treat the Midwestern Animal Society as a business, employees have streamlined the procedures and processes to make the organization more efficient. From the viewpoint of participants, this efficiency has made the organization more rigid and contributed to a loss of emotionality in the organization. The analogy between the Midwestern Animal Society and Disney World exemplifies the sentiment that the organization has become more plastic and does not allow organizational members to experience the raw emotion typical animal shelters thrive on. Therese discussed the organization's businesslike atmosphere and the lack of an emotional outlet other animal welfare organizations possess:

> They are a well-run business. There are over 1000 volunteers and last I heard about 100 employees. They do operate very efficiently but after you've volunteer there for a while you are very much aware this is a business…With the other animal organization I volunteer with, you feel it's more of an emotional experience.

The rigid structure of the Midwestern Animal Society does not allow for participants to have the emotional experience many of them desire with volunteering for an animal welfare organization. Participants described the organization as having a businesslike feel and not the gritty feel of a typical nonprofit. Participants began volunteering for the organization because of an emotional attachment and desire to help animals and the restrictive atmosphere of the Midwestern Animal Society prohibits volunteers from having the emotional experience they crave when they volunteer.

Along with inhibiting the emotional experience participants yearn for, the physical division of the organization and bureaucratic policies have lead to fragmented communication from employees to volunteers. After analyzing the interview data, I noticed a correlation between the lack of personal communication and interaction

between volunteers and employees and the fact that the organization itself is very divided and departmentalized. Employees may feel restricted in what they can communicate to the volunteers because of the physical division of the facility and the bureaucratic changes that have taken place. The majority of the participants stated that staff members rarely interact with them and talked of feeling isolated and lonely. In the next few sections I address how the departmentalization affects communication between staff members and volunteers and how this lack of communication can contribute to volunteers' feeling of isolation and detachment from the organization.

Departmentalization Leads to Limited Organizational Communication

The lack of information and communication participants receive from the Midwestern Animal Society stems from the physical division in place at the organization. Through communication, organizational members know what their roles and tasks are, what is expected of them, and how they can accomplish their goals. Communication also allows for organizational members to learn about what the organization stands for and create their own meaning of the organization through socialization with other members. Participants spoke of receiving little to no communication from employees regarding training, their roles and responsibilities, and information regarding general organizational news. Initial socialization for volunteers is lacking and sometimes nonexistent because volunteers expressed having to go out of their way to learn information and to initiate conversations with other organizational members. Where organizational socialization does exist, it is department specific and provides volunteers only with information regarding the department they work in. Along with receiving limited organizational communication during their training, participants also expressed only receiving

communication from employees within their department, and, thus, only receiving department specific information. Lenore said Francine, a staff member in wildlife, is great about sending out weekly emails containing information about the wildlife department. The constant, timely communication helps Lenore feel informed on current events and knowledgeable about what is going on in the wildlife department, but leaves her with no information regarding other departments. She stated:

> Francine actually sends out weekly emails to the volunteers. She lets us know what is going on, things we should know about or things we should be careful about. She's really good about putting out this weekly email. Updates on everything. Emails really helped. Before there was a memo on the board but if you don't look at the board you don't know. But if it's something we need to know about they'll put big notes on the charts of the animals.

Communication from employees in the wildlife department is timely and helpful in keeping volunteers informed. Megan echoed the same sentiments regarding communication from the wildlife department:

> The newsletter is a really great tool for communicating. They just started the wildlife newsletter three or four months ago so it's very new. It's excellent. I even told James, 'that newsletter is awesome.' They did a really really good job. It's just the goings on in wildlife, the new releases. It's very nice. Pretty nice because it had my anniversary in it!

During the interview, Megan and Lenore only spoke about information they received from their departments, which exemplifies the effects departmentalization of the organization has on communication from employees.

Wildlife participants described having closer, more personal relationships with staff members and they expressed feeling more comfortable giving input due to their close ties to the staff members and ability to participate in decision making processes within the department. Wildlife participants also discussed being invited to participate more in high level processes and therefore feel more useful and important because they

constantly exchange dialogue with staff members. From the interview data, wildlife staff members personally know the wildlife volunteers because volunteers are in direct contact with the staff and feel comfortable talking with them. Domestics is more fragmented and the larger size of the department does not allow for personal relationships to naturally develop between staff and volunteers. Edgar described having personal relationships with high level wildlife staff members due to the constant and direct communication he has with these employees:

> I'm interacting with the high level wildlife staff and there's a camaraderie between them and I feel a part of this when I'm there. I feel comfortable saying whatever I felt like to James, or Francine or anybody else. Nobody's ever asked me because I'm always telling them.

Edgar said he feels comfortable telling the staff members his ideas because they have such close and amiable relationships and regularly communicate. This communication shows a high level of trust between Edgar and the wildlife staff members because he is constantly giving feedback and providing ideas to improve the wildlife department.

Gayle discussed having complete respect for the wildlife staff because of their expertise and professionalism and has forged intimate relationships with wildlife staff members:

> Midwestern Animal Society is different because James's there and Francine, they're wonderful. I mean, we've all known each other like seven years and develop a tight relationship and stuff like that. I think of those guys like family in a lot of ways. Everyone feels comfortable with James and talking to him … He constantly makes a point of learning people's names … Like when people leave, he always says, thank you so much for giving your time, always … I don't know how they do it on domestics side.

Gayle made a point of saying she does not know how they do things in the domestics department, which shows there is a division in the organization. Wildlife participants like

Gayle discussed how wildlife staff members have become like family to them, something that participants in the domestics department did not express.

The high level of trust brings wildlife volunteers and staff together and creates a team atmosphere that allows individuals in wildlife to exchange information freely but only within their department. Wildlife participants made a point of saying they do not know how things are done on the domestics side when talking about their experiences, which demonstrates a division of information between the wildlife and domestics departments. Exchanging of organization wide information through communication is minimal to nonexistent according to participants as communication is extremely departmentalized. Along with departmentalized communication, participants in the domestics department expressed receiving only impersonal communication from the organization and had limited direct communication from employees, which will be addressed in the next section.

Organizational Communication is Efficient Yet Impersonal

A main implication of the organization being departmentalized and divided is that the communication from the organization is restricted to departments and the communication is described as cold and mostly given electronically. What I found interesting was the majority of participants who expressed receiving only impersonal communication volunteered in the domestics department. Participants spoke of gaining information regarding the organization's mission, events, and programs mostly through emails from employees and from browsing the organization's website. As participants described it, the organization's communication, although efficient and timely, is lacking emotionality, which is imperative for any organization to build identification. It is

especially necessary with an organization like the Midwestern Animal Society that relies on an emotional connection with animals to raise funds and build awareness. Cindy yearns for emotional and personal communication from the organization instead of dry and rigid communication through emails. She stated that the lack of personal communication does not make her feel a part of the organization:

> When I go in and if I don't read the general updates on the website to the general public, then I don't know anything. Now I don't think they should have to spend a lot of time telling volunteers here's what we're doing this month, but I think volunteers need to know. For me I don't feel like I'm a part of the organization … And the way they do that a lot of times is very dry like here's an email, here's the facts you need to know. And volunteering at an [an animal welfare organization] is an emotion based decision. I'm very analytical and I need the facts. But the people that want to come in and donate they want to connect with you on an emotional basis. They're coming in because they're emotional. And you can't do that when all you have is dry facts.

Cindy and other participants spoke of wanting more personal communication from the organization because although they need the facts, they also desire an emotional connection to the organization.

Since there are over 1000 volunteers at the Midwestern Animal Society, emails from the organization are the most efficient means of communicating the same news to all volunteers. Signs and memos on communication boards and charts on cages are also used to communicate information as well as newsletters that are emailed to volunteers. Peg discussed the organization's main means of communicating:

> They have their email newsletter. And if they have any issue that goes on, they will email you about it immediately, whether it be volunteer opportunity or a special event like a speaker. I get an email from Midwestern Animal Society at least once a week if not more. I think the Bark! newsletter is once a month. And then there's advocacy stuff because I'm on the advocacy list. But that's pretty much it. It's mostly electronic.

From Peg's account, the organizational communication is consistent and provides timely information but it is mostly through emails, which is efficient but participants feel it is not appropriate for all information such as procedure changes or sensitive issues such as organizational crises. A couple participants spoke of receiving emails regarding sensitive issues that they felt should have been communicated personally from the staff members. Denise said:

> When we did the cat refresher thing in 2010, we were told the changes and then we were told to write down our suggestions or concerns. We were all there to talk about the changes together. Now it's an email that's right as it's happening or after the fact … Felinality, when that changed, you might have volunteers who have been in a certain position for a long time but now that position doesn't exist and that's a really sensitive thing and those kind of situations, I don't know if email is the best way to do that. If you have a small group of people you might as well bring them in for a get together and explain why we don't. The vet staff tells me a lot of stuff and then I tell Sandy and Angi, so I've been kind of a liason … If they are going to change something about the positions, if they could let us know before the fact.

Denise said she wished the staff would not handle program and position changes through email but instead have a meeting or a number of meetings so volunteers can attend and actually learn the changes in person and have a discussion. By sending sensitive changes out by email, the organization is distancing themselves from volunteers and those affected by the changes and not allowing for a two-way conversation between the organization and volunteers. Volunteers are not invited to give feedback, which may create a distance between volunteers and the organization itself.

Although volunteers receive timely and efficient communication in the form of emails and collateral from Midwestern Animal Society, the emotional connection factor is missing between participants and the organization. The volunteers receive pertinent and factual information from the organization but they do not receive the emotionality,

which many of the volunteers crave from volunteering for a nonprofit. Consistent with prior research, organizational collateral such as newsletters, press releases, and memos served as important communication tools from the Midwestern Animal Society that build and reinforce organizational identification among participants (Disanza & Bullis, 1999). However, according to participants, organizational communication is only the foundation to informing volunteers and involving them in the organization. Participants described the information from Midwestern Animal Society as accurate and factual, which is essential for both the volunteers and the organization to be on the same page, but not enough to make them feel as essential members the organization. Participants expressed that personal interaction with organization members as being a main factor in feeling involved in the organization and essential to constructing relationships between volunteers and staff members. Personal communication from staff members will be discussed further in the study. In the next section, I will address how the lack of invited feedback from volunteers creates a space between volunteers and the organization and how this distance affects organizational identification.

Lack of Open Upward Communication Hinders Volunteer Identification

Due to the departmentalization of the organization and restricted information, communication between the staff and volunteers is also restricted. Participants do not feel like they can give feedback or participate as far as improving the procedures or programs because many have not built a personal rapport with the employees. Participants stated they believe that what they say or suggest is disregarded and their input is not used or even considered by the organization. There is no formal way for volunteers to provide feedback or ideas and participants said when they have tried to give input, employees

either disregard what they have to say or do not follow up with volunteers. The wildlife department has an anonymous suggestion box, but with suggestions being anonymous the organization does not have to follow-up with volunteers. By only inviting anonymous feedback, employees can ignore ideas, act as if they never received them, and not initiate personal communication with volunteers. Due to the fact that many jobs are independent and volunteers rarely interact with staff members, volunteers do not receive feedback on jobs or tasks and are left wondering if they are doing their jobs right.

Cindy talked about employees having rigid and confined roles just like the volunteers and do not have the time or energy to use feedback from volunteers:

> I think if you make a comment, someone should want to take that comment and write it down. I've heard adoption counselors say, oh that's a great idea, but then they don't take it anywhere. I think that's because they have their job and they don't think that's part of their job … There's not a place for me to go and say anything. I wouldn't even know who to talk to.

Wynona expressed frustration with the changes have been made to the medicine dispensing procedures without getting any input from volunteers who actually do the tasks:

> I think they could make better changes with the way they hand out meds. I don't know who is coming up with this stuff but they aren't trying it out before they put the policy in place. So that was kinda frustrating. They don't try it themselves or get any input … I've emailed them once when I saw one of these things online, a puppy cam. So I emailed them this would be a great way to spread the word for Midwestern Animal Society … People could watch it at work. I never heard back from them on that.

Participants said they felt that when they try to give feedback, the information does not go to the right person or they never hear about the idea again. Therese said she does not think the organization is too concerned with what volunteers have to say:

> I don't think they're too interested in what we have to say. They appreciate us but just assume we kept quiet and stick to the volunteer work.

Participants expressed a desire to be a part of organizational changes because they are so identified with the mission. Effective, two-way communication allows members to participate in the decision-making processes and therefore increase their confidence in their abilities and power to affect positive change on the organization. Currently, participants feel as though communication from the organization is directed downward, is unfriendly, and does not encourage participation and feedback from volunteers. The participants feel the Midwestern Animal Society is constantly changing and improving, and appreciate the fact that the organization is evolving and progressing but would love to give their input to make the organization even more productive. Volunteers are the eyes and ears of the organization and notice the most trends that are happening inside and outside the organization. Participants also discussed how personal communication from staff members affects how involved they feel with the organization.

Participants described that although the communication from Midwestern Animal Society provides a wealth of efficient, timely information, it is also distant and unemotional. Since the organization has over 1000 volunteers and employees have heavy workloads, it is difficult for staff to communicate personally to volunteers on their shifts. The lack of personal communication from organizational members affects how involved participants feel with the organization and leads participants to feel isolated within the organization.

With the increased physical division between departments, participants have increased feelings of isolation due to the lack of communicating and interaction with employees and other volunteers as many volunteers are left to work independently for most, if not all, of their shifts. In fact, the division and fragmentation between the staff

and volunteers leads participants to feel isolated and ignored by the organization. Nancy stated she feels very isolated from the staff members:

> That's a part of them ignoring you … As far as I can tell you better be satisfied with that at the shelter because they kinda don't know you're there. You're on your own … No one to check in with or ask what's new. The way they communicate is you look for the sign on the cages … It's very impersonal but efficient. I doubt they know my name besides that it's on my badge. It's a fragmented organization … I walk in with a smile on my face and they look past you … I've been there long enough for people to know.

Nancy's feelings of isolation and loneliness stem from the independence the organization gives to the volunteers and the lack of personal interaction from staff members. The communication from the organization is very efficient yet impersonal and rigid. By not engaging with volunteers, staff members give the impression that volunteers are beneath them and unimportant to the organization. Peg echoed the sentiment of being overlooked by the staff:

> I don't actually report to anyone. Nobody knows I've been there except with the fact that I punch in.

Participants shared that the Midwestern Animal Society struggles to provide adequate supervision and personal communication with volunteers, which is in accordance with the findings from Farmer and Fedor (2001) who argue that the limited budgets of nonprofits leave few organizational members to enforce work standards and interact with volunteers.

Although participants described the communication from the organization as efficient and timely, they described the communication from the staff members as being very impersonal and unfriendly. Participants believe that although the staff members are professional and have the best interests of the animals in mind, they are also overworked,

underpaid, and need more training with how to communicate and manage volunteers. Cindy said:

> To me it seems like a time constraint, like they have so much to do. Then it's like, I don't have time to talk to you because I have this and this to do …It's lonely … It's really an inconvenience for an underpaid over-stressed staff to deal with volunteers … At first I thought a lot of them didn't want to be bothered but I really just think they're focused on their tasks … But it's inconvenient because they have to teach them what to do and try and keep them there. And I know the volunteers have a ton of questions but the staff doesn't want to take the time to answer all the questions. And so they do the little box training so you won't ask the questions.

Although Cindy realizes the stress placed on the staff, she feels lonely and unappreciated due to the lack of personal communication from the staff. Participants believe that staff members are so focused on their jobs that they forget to communicate and interact with volunteers. Many participants expressed that they believe the Midwestern Animal Society appreciates the efforts of volunteers but also mentioned the majority staff are not very warm or friendly and therefore do not convey their appreciation on a consistent basis.

In addition to wanting increased communication from the organization, participants expressed a strong desire for more personal communication from organizational members. The lack of personal communication from employees impacts volunteer-employee relationships as participants stated they believed that employees should be the ones initiating conversation since they are paid organizational representatives in supervisory roles. Participants expressed a need to establish personal relationships with employees in order to gain more organizational information and have a platform to socialize with organizational members. They also stated a desire for staff members to make it a priority to interact with them on a daily basis so as to build personal relationships and make volunteers feel like necessary and important members of

the organization. The next section will examine the participants' desire for more personal relationships with employees and how these relationships affect organizational identification.

Participants Desire Personal Relationships with Employees

A new theme not discussed in previous research that emerged from this study is the impact personal relationships amongst organizational members has on organizational identification. The impact of personal communication from staff members has not been researched before in terms of how it affects organizational identification in volunteers. The participants who have personal relationships with staff members positively reflected on the quality of their organizational relationships and expressed feeling more involved in the organization. Personal connection and communication from the staff allows volunteers to feel like important and essential parts of the organization. Participants in more social roles, like those in special events and those that deal with adopters, have more interaction and communication from employees and other volunteers, and therefore feel more connected to the organization. Vanessa discussed having established personal relationships with the other volunteers and staff members on her shift due to her role as a greeter in the organization. She said:

> We are in constant communication with the adoption counselors and I think someone like a dog walker might walk in and leave without talking to anyone. It's pretty relaxed. You almost feel like one of their co-workers. Very relaxed and chit chat … It doesn't feel like work. They always say thank you. I always get like a dozen 'thank you's' every time I volunteer. Genuine and sincerely appreciate us. They are very happy we're there, you can just tell. In another word, awesome.

Vanessa interacts with staff members on her shifts and receives constant appreciation, which impacts how she feels about the organization. Megan said she is in constant

communication with the wildlife staff and values how appreciative they are towards the volunteers:

> If we have any questions we'll talk to the staff … There's definitely trust. They are just so wonderful. They'll say well thanks so much for asking. James is a really really nice man … He's really really wonderful. And so are Sam and Becky, too. They're really nice people. I can't say enough about them … And they're sincere, too, they're not fake. If it wasn't managed well I would probably have less of a good feeling about it. I think they're really good at making sure it works … So grateful when you're there and helping.

Establishing personal relationships allows volunteers to feel constantly appreciated and like they are making a positive impact on the organization. Megan referred to the wildlife department as "we," which demonstrates a high level of identification because she feels like an integral part of the organization. Lenore said she also established many personal relationships with the staff members in wildlife:

> Francine hamster sits for me when we go out of town. I can go to James and I know I can email administrative people. Anybody there I'm comfortable talking to…I get animals and medication and formula from them. If I need an antibiotic or anything for the animals, they will give them to me. They are very supportive and cooperative that way. And all the staff people know me so if I ever have a question or problem whoever I talk to is helpful.

In this study, foster participants seem to be more connected and involved with staff members than non-foster participants because they have to directly communicate with staff and have tighter relationships with them because of the communication. Renee discussed feeling more connected with the organization because she is also in constant communication with the staff because of her role as a foster volunteer:

> I feel connected because of the work. I feel more connected as a foster because I have to communicate more with the staff. I have more connection to the organization because I'm interacting with the staff more.

Personal interaction allows volunteers to establish relationships with staff members, which makes volunteers feel like vital members of the organization and

increases organizational identification because volunteers form a more intimate bond with the organization. However, a few of the participants spoke of how they feel ignored and isolated from staff members and, consequently, from the organization. Renee, who socialized cats before she began fostering cats, said there is not much of an opportunity to interact with staff when she would go into the shelter to play with the cats. Now that her role requires more communication, she said she has begun to establish more personal relationships with the staff: "There isn't a lot of opportunity to interact. There isn't much socializing with the staff. More now than before because I foster. But before we rarely interacted." Wynona said she rarely interacts with the staff due to the nature of her position since she works in the back of the facility. This lack of socialization hinders her connection to the staff and the organization: "I never see the staff. We don't socialize too much. I'm usually the only who is there in my area except the dog walkers. No one really talks to me when I'm there."

The lack of appreciative and friendly communication from the staff members to the volunteers obstructs organizational identification because it creates a division between the volunteers and the organization. Participants who spoke of having personal communication and relationships with staff members expressed more positive feelings about the organization and spoke in terms of "we" when discussing the organization. Those with personal relationships with organizational members, especially staff members, are more involved with the organization and feel like integral members to the organization who can provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes. Cindy expressed not feeling connected to the organization because she does not have many personal relationships with the staff. She talked about events at a past organization

that she worked for and said special events that allowed employees to socialize and get to know each other made her more connected to the organization:

> Very impersonal. People do ask me that and that's the first thing I say. There's not an open welcoming anywhere. I'm friendly and have a good rapport with all the volunteer counselors but not really Angi, she's a volunteer coordinator but she walks right past and is not friendly. I'm very social so when I come in I say hi to people and they've gotten more social with me. I don't know if they know my name but they've gotten warmer to me as I've extended myself. It took about a year. I still don't feel very connected … But Kim will come out and ask me if I'm going to the next seminar and that makes me feel connected to her.

Wynona said she would feel more a part of the organization if she staff personally connected with her:

> I think if people personally tried to connect with me I think I'd feel more a part of the organization. I think I would have more personable interaction between the volunteer coordinators and the volunteers, so they at least know who you are and know your name.

Renee expressed not feeling connected to the organization when she works as a cat socializer because she feels very isolated from the organization:

> When I'm a cat socializer, I didn't feel as connected because I'd go in and out without interacting with anyone … There should be more training with the staff on appreciating the volunteers. Sometimes you can feel invisible as a volunteer to the staff. I'm not going there to be social but maybe a little less invisible. Maybe they save their energy for the public … The new director isn't very visible to me. Erica knew people, she'd be there all the time, working different positions. She knew people that way. When I'd come in on Sunday, she'd recognize me. If I saw Maria I don't think I would even recognize her.

A few of the long-term volunteers stated that they rarely see Maria, the executive director, which is a large contrast from the previous director, Erica, who was very visible and friendly to the volunteers. Nancy said she feels ignored by the staff but has met the current executive director and stated that she felt appreciated by Maria and wishes the appreciation would trickle down to employees:

> It's that the staff walk down the aisle and they walk past you without even looking at you. And the aisle is only this wide. So the woman who is now the president I met her briefly and before I knew she was the new president she was giving me profuse thanks … But she's the only one. There are two volunteer managers that you can kind of go to but in regards to mapping out the organization and telling you that if you have this kind of problem you can go to this person, they don't. You're kind of on your own … If it was a little more welcoming I would volunteer more hours. I feel kind of indifferent, kind of taken for granted. They've got an attractive product there so they can sit back and there's always going to be an animal lover showing up at their door to help … I just need more personal feedback. That's pretty much it. There aren't 1000 volunteers at one time.

Dina discussed having a personal relationship with the executive director and said she wishes the staff would be grateful and appreciative towards the volunteers by cultivating personal relationships and learning the volunteers names:

> I think there's a little bit of a competition. I feel that less so but I think there's some that might resent us, may feel as though we're doing their jobs. We get in their way, they get in our way. We have a little space to work there. Some are friendly but not overly so. I actually have suggested to Maria that they all wear their name tags because they don't. Because with our tags they can greet us by name. Sandy and Angi are really great about making the volunteers feel appreciated but I can't really remember a time where a staff member has greeted me by name. And I think that's really important. Maria and I talked about it again … I'm very tuned in to people skills and that involves eye contact and calling people by their names.

The lack of personal communication from the staff members makes volunteers feel unwelcome and like burdens on the organization. Personal interaction allows volunteers to establish relationships with staff members and other volunteers which makes them feel more welcome and increases organizational identification because volunteers form a stronger emotional bond with the organization.

Volunteers who have personal relationships with staff members are more identified than those who do no have those personal connections because they receive more personal communication from the organization, which is a topic in organizational

identification that has not been discussed in previous studies. Volunteers who are in multiple organizational roles are more identified than those with one role or minimal roles because they receive more communication from the organization and have established personal relationships with more employees. Special events, docents, and remote volunteers have the most knowledge about the organization and feel the most connected to the organization because they are in personal contact with a variety staff members and have established relationships with numerous employees. From the results of this study, there appears to be a relationship between personal relationships of volunteers and staff members and organizational identification.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to discover how volunteers identify with the nonprofit organizations that they serve. Specifically, this study analyzes nonprofit volunteers in an animal welfare organization. The findings of this study exemplify the ways in which participants identify with the nonprofit they serve as well as the struggles and challenges facing volunteers in regards to organizational identification. Taken separately, there are three major themes that emerged from the interview data: ways in which participants expressed organizational identification, the organizational struggles participants encountered, and the organizational challenges limiting identification. As a whole, the results are interesting because participants shared being so identified with the Midwestern Animal Society that they expect to receive information and responsibilities typically given to employees. Participants also desire to have personal relationships with employees so as to receive more communication and maintain a more intimate relationship with the organization.

In this final chapter, I review the findings of the study and discuss the ways in which participants expressed their identification as well as the struggles and challenges facing organizational identification. Then I analyze the ways in which the findings add to existing literature on organizational identification, identify the pragmatic applications of this study, and finally, I conclude this chapter by addressing the study's limitations and offering suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

The research I conducted has uncovered several significant issues that impact how volunteers identify with the nonprofit organization they serve. In general, I uncovered the ways in which participants shared organizational identification as well as the struggles and obstacles they discussed in regards to identifying with the organization and the mission. Participants discussed being so identified with the organization that they struggle with not having the same responsibilities and information as employees. In the next two sections, I summarize the theoretical implications and pragmatic applications the study uncovered. First, I discuss the theoretical implications that emerged from this study regarding value congruence and the identification of volunteers in nonprofit organizations. Second, I examine the impact organizational communication has on the theory of organizational identification. Third, I examine the impact personal relationships with organizational employees have on the organizational identification of volunteers. Finally, I examine the ways in which space and role restrictions influence organizational disidentification, or the hindering of identification. Following the section on theoretical implications, I discuss the pragmatic applications the results of this study propose for the Midwestern Animal Society, including the need for more organizational information and opportunities and a culture that encourages open two-way communication between volunteers and employees.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study present implications for the theory of organizational identification as they provide a snapshot of how volunteers shared their organizational identification. The four themes that emerged from this study as being associated with

organizational identification are value congruence, organizational communication, personal relationships, and organizational restrictions.

Cultivating Organizational Identification in Volunteers

The first major finding of this study that affects the theory of organizational identification is the important role value congruence plays in building identification in volunteers. The participants in this study espoused the same animal welfare values as the Midwestern Animal Society before they began volunteering and described themselves as being attracted to volunteering for the organization because of having common values. By sharing similar values, the organization does not need to work as intensively to initially instigate organizational identification in its volunteers because volunteers are attracted to serving the organization because they see themselves in the organization's identity. Since participants in this study expressed that the organization's values were the main reason they initially began volunteering for the Midwestern Animal Society, they are consistent with the findings from Farmer and Fedor (2001) who found that individuals are more likely to volunteer for an organization if they see their core values matching up with the core values of the organization. According to Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008), because nonprofits generally incorporate strong social values that affect the organizational culture, new members of the organization are expected to accept these values and assimilate them into their own personal values. Since participants in this study discussed sharing the values of the organization before they began volunteering, they came into the organization already feeling an intimate connection with the organization's mission. I found that nonprofits may have an easier time influencing identification in volunteers who already have similar values as the organization because a large part of the

identification process is using various communication methods to encourage organizational members to identify with the organization's values. If organizational members enter into the organization already feeling a connection with the organization's values and mission, the organization does not need to put effort into influencing identification; instead, the organization can put its efforts and resources into influencing organizational identification and making stronger connections with members.

My analysis shows that value congruence is an important platform for cultivating volunteer identification because identified volunteers see themselves as extensions of the organization and have an internal motivation to donate their time and energy to a cause they feel strongly about. If volunteers do not feel a strong internal motivation to help the organization achieve its mission, they will most likely burn out and no longer feel a drive to dedicate their time and resources to the organization. Inconsistencies between the organization's values and the values of the volunteers create cognitive dissonance for the volunteers which in turn creates distance between volunteers and the organization because organizational members may no longer see themselves as integral members of the organization. Participants in this study, however, expressed having long-term commitments to the organization and did not see an end to their volunteering in sight because the Midwestern Animal Society shares their values and allows volunteers to positively contribute to animal welfare in the community.

Participants expressed an internalization of the Midwestern Animal Society's mission and discussed a sincere love and appreciation for the organization's values. By attracting individuals who already share and believe in the organization's values, nonprofits can more easily affect organizational identification and will have an easier

time retaining volunteers because individuals already have an internalization of the values before they even began volunteering. Although the values of the volunteers are congruent with the organization, leading to cognitive and affective identification, there are many other factors that can hinder or disrupt this identification, factors that were presented in the results portion of this study. The lack of information, the division and departmentalization of the organization, and a lack of personal communication amongst organizational members all affect organizational identification and can outweigh the impact of value congruence on identification. The role of communication in influencing organizational identification will be discussed further in the next section as the theme consistently emerged throughout the study.

Identification and Communication

A dominant overarching theme in this study is the impact communication has on organizational identification. The narratives participants gave exemplify a connection between the amount of personal communication they receive from employees and the strength of their identification with the organization. Participants expressed wanting more communication from organizational members on events and news from the organization because they wanted to become more involved. Organizations use various communication methods to create a sense of belonging and encourage members to believe in organizational values and make them their own (Cheney, 1983; Tompkins & Cheney, 1987) and the most persuasive form of communication in this study was personal communication from staff members. Consistent with the results of this study, Cheney and Tompkins (1987) argue that communication is integral to the identification process as participants who discussed receiving consistent communication personally

from employees also expressed feeling more involved with the organization and referred to the organization as an extension of themselves.

Participants expressed a need to gain more information, responsibilities, and communication from employees because they think of themselves as being on the same level as employees. The results of this study on volunteer identification are consistent with the findings on employee identification from Smidts, Pruyn, and van Riel (2001) who maintain that strong and effective internal communication with employees intensifies organizational identification, which contributes to the advancement and prosperity of an organization. Ashcraft, Kuhn, and Cooren (2009) state that organizations would not exist without communication because communication allows individuals to exchange ideas in order to work towards accomplishing a common goal, which is in accordance with the findings of this study. Participants shared appreciation for the information that is communicated to them by organizational members and spoke of a desire to learn even more so they can participate in the organization's decision making processes and become more instrumental members of the organization.

As my study and previous studies have suggested, communication is an integral component of promoting organizational identification. Nordin, Halib, and Ghazali (2011) argue that communication is the basis to productive and efficient organizations as their studies on organizational communication have shown a relationship between internal communication amongst organizational members and organizational productivity and efficiency. This link between internal organizational communication and organizational effectiveness is consistent with the findings of this study and exemplify the need for organizations to personally interact with members on a consistent and continuous basis in

order to intensify organizational identification (Nordin et al, 2011). Although Disanza and Bullis (1999) found that organizational collateral such as newsletters, press releases, memos, and emails served as important communication tools that build and reinforce organizational identification, participants shared feeling more connected to the organization when they described the personal communication from employees. Impersonal forms of communication are important to spread organizational information in a timely manner, but from what participants discussed, it does not have as big of an impact on organizational identification as personal communication from employees.

In accordance with the findings of Ravasi & Schultz (2006), participants stated that supervisors and managers have the most impact on providing clear and consistent communication regarding the organization's identity. Personal communication from employees has a profound effect on how identified participants expressed to be with the organization as it instigates personal relationships between volunteers and employees, makes volunteers feel like important assets to the organization, and creates a friendly atmosphere where volunteers feel like they can participate.

The results of this study have implications for the theory of organizational identification and the effect personal communication from the organization has on how identified volunteers are with the organization. The more personal communication volunteers receive, the more intimate a connection they feel to the staff members and the more identified they express to be with the organization. Organizational communication not only helps organizational members understand the organization and the mission, it helps them to understand themselves as members within the organization. Although an individual can instinctively identify with an organization, the identification process is

usually instigated by the organization's communication of the values, goals, mission, and other knowledge in hopes to guide the organizational members' decision making processes (Cheney, 1982, 1983). Participants discussed organizational communication as being the main factor in how they gain knowledge on the organization and the mission and a way of deepening their connection to the organization. Communication from employees intensifies employee/volunteer relationships, which participants discussed as being a major factor in how close they feel to the organization. The next section will examine how instrumental staff members are in influencing identification in volunteers.

Employees are Key in Influencing Identification

The third theoretical implication this study uncovered is the major role staff and employees play in affecting organizational identification in volunteers. When participants described the organization, they constantly mentioned the professionalism and dedication of the staff as an influencer as to why they continue to volunteer for the organization. Prati et al. (2009) argue that managers have an impact on how highly their employees identify with the organization because they control a great amount of downward communication, are seen as the face of the organization, and can manipulate how employees view the company. Although the Prati et al. (2009) study focused on employee identification, it is consistent with what participants discussed regarding staff members and the desire for personal relationships with employees. Myers and Kassing (1998) found that organizational identification rose when employees found their supervisors to be qualified communicators and prime representatives of the organization, which is consistent with the findings of my study.

Although electronic communication is the most efficient and cost effective means of communication information to a large group of organizational members, it should not take the place of personal and direct communication. Personal communication from the organization should compliment the electronic communication as the emails, newsletter, and memos are essential to communicating changes in the organization, reminders, and to communicate protocol and procedures. Although it will take more time and effort on the part of the organization to build strong, personal relationships with the volunteers, the volunteers will become more involved with the organization, have a more emotional connection to the staff, will feel more identified with the organization, and be more productive and passionate organizational members. Since most nonprofits operate on limited budgets, finding the resources to properly train and socialize volunteers into the organization is difficult. Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) argue,

> In spite of their central roles in these organizations, when examining the way volunteers are socialized into their roles, we realize they are faced with much ambiguity regarding their task expectations. They lack formal training and much of their socialization and induction into the organizational culture and technology is done on the job. Striving to learn their roles, skills and expected attitudes, volunteers may turn to informal sources, such as peers, their own social circles, trial and error, and feedback from clients (p. 68).

Haski-Leventhal and Bargal (2008) also state the need for employees to play a central role in the socialization of volunteers in order to give them the most important information, provide in-depth training, and continue to personally communicate and build relationships with volunteers in order to affect organizational identification. Participants spoke of it being vital for staff members to create personal relationships with them so as to establish an emotional bond between the volunteers and the staff who are direct representatives of the organization and create a more intimate connection between

volunteers and the organization. However, in order to build identification amongst the volunteers, it is necessary for staff members to overcome time and space barriers and for the organization to make building personal relationships a priority.

By establishing personal relationships, volunteers will be encouraged to give more time and put more energy into volunteering, which in turn will save the staff time and energy so they can focus on other tasks and achieve more as an organization. By cultivating highly identified volunteers, Midwestern Animal Society can feel confident that its volunteers are portraying the organization in the most accurate and positive light. Since Lee and Jablin (1995) propose that superior-subordinate relationships are crucial to many organizational socialization outcomes and participants in this study expressed looking to paid staff for social cues and how to behave in the organization, it would be beneficial for future research to examine how volunteer-staff interactions influence organizational identification in volunteers. Although participants expressed organizational identification, they also described feeling disconnected from the organization due to the restrictions in place at the facility. The impact organizational restrictions have on how participants share identification will be described in the next section.

Organizational Disidentification: Impact of Organizational Restrictions

The challenge I present that affects the theory of organizational identification is the impact organizational restrictions play in hindering organizational identification. Participants described being restricted in their roles, what areas of the shelter they can access, and the inability to give information regarding animal welfare to the public. From what participants expressed, the organization became more hierarchical when the current

executive director joined the organization a few years ago and implemented more rigid policies and procedures that make volunteers feel confined in rigid roles. Participants expressed feeling isolated while volunteering because the organization is very departmentalized, which makes participants feel restricted physically as far as what areas they can enter and also what organizational members they can interact with. The nature of the jobs can be very independent and participants discussed a need for employees to socialize with them while they are doing their jobs. Participants spoke of how they feel ignored and isolated from staff members and as if they are visitors in the organization and not integral organizational members, which creates a distance between volunteers and the organization and impacts how indentified participants expressed to be.

Not only do participants feel restricted in their roles, they also feel limited in what they can communicate to the organization and what information they can give to the public regarding animal welfare and the organization. Along with describing the organization as being bureaucratic and businesslike, participants discussed difficulties in participating and giving feedback to aid in organizational changes. In accordance with the findings of Stirling and Bull (2011), the increased hierarchical atmosphere of the organization cause volunteers to feel excluded from decision making and giving input to the organization. The power structure leaves volunteers feeling like unimportant organizational members who have very little influence on the direction of the organization, which has created a distance between the volunteers and the organization and has affected how identified participants feel with the organizational. The hierarchical and business-like structure of the organization leads to departmentalization and restricts the flow of information between departments and between members. Participants

discussed wanting to volunteer for an organization that appreciates them and trusts them to perform tasks and divulge information; many participants expressed that if the Midwestern Animal Society does not begin trusting them with information and giving them more role flexibility, the volunteers will begin to distance themselves from the organization and find other organizations to serve. The interview data showed that participants yearn for trust from the organization so they have the ability to give information to the public and access more areas in the facility. Space and role restrictions within organizations is an area that has been given little attention but due to the results of this study, I believe the field of organizational communication would benefit greatly from studying the effects organizational restrictions have on organizational members.

The three themes that emerged from this study as influencing organizational identification are organizational communication, value congruence, and organizational restrictions. After analyzing the implications communication and value congruence have on organizational identification and how the space and role restrictions at the Midwestern Animal Society affect organizational disidentification in volunteers, I will next examine the pragmatic applications the results of this study have for the Midwestern Animal Society and other nonprofit organizations.

Pragmatic Applications

As well as providing theoretical implications for organizational communication scholars, this study also presents more insight into how volunteers share organizational identification as well as what methods and techniques impact organizational identification in volunteers. Prior research demonstrates that value congruence, personal communication and socialization, and organizational culture influence the level of

identification in organizational members. Results of my study offer support for past research on organizational identification and offers practical suggestions for nonprofits to influence and promote identification in volunteers. In this section, I offer recommendations as to how organizations that rely on a voluntary workforce can increase identification amongst volunteers, which will in turn create more committed, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic organizational members. First, I will discuss participants' desire for additional information and organizational opportunities. Second, I will discuss the need for organizations to encourage open, two-way communication between volunteers and employees to encourage participation and feedback from volunteers.

Provide More Information and Opportunities for Volunteers

The first pragmatic application the findings of this study uncovered is the need for nonprofit organizations to provide more information and opportunities for volunteers. Participants shared a strong desire for more information and responsibilities from the organization as a way to feel more integral to the organization. However, there must be a balance between giving too little and too much information and responsibilities to volunteers since their roles are more limited than employees as they are not paid for their services or bound by contract to serve the organization. Participants shared feeling as identified as employees, which makes it imperative for the organization to establish specific roles for volunteers otherwise volunteers will continue to yearn for responsibilities that are typically given to employees. Consistent with the findings from my study on volunteers, Foehrenbach and Rosenberg (1982) found that employees become more satisfied as downward communication increases because they desire to

learn organizational news and other information about the future plans of the organization from the top management. Although participants stated they understand that they will not receive the same information as employees due to confidentiality reasons, they expressed disappointment in the lack of information they receive from the organization. Not being involved in the transmission of information alienates volunteers and leads them to feel disconnected from the organization. A few participants shared feeling like outsiders when they learned of an organizational crisis through the media and not from the organization, which led to hurt feeling and hesitancy to trust the organization by volunteers.

Similar to the findings from Handy and Srinivasan (2005), participants discussed feeling as though employees were standoffish with volunteers and hesitant to give them information because staff members view volunteers as their possible replacements. This volunteer-employee division impacts identification because it pits employees against volunteers and reduces the amount of information employees will want to give to volunteers. Nonprofit executives and management must make employees feel secure in their positions so that staff members will be more welcoming to volunteers and see them as integral members of the organization who provide additional support and not as replacements.

If volunteers want more information regarding other positions and programs, they should be able to attend services and programs and be able to access the information. The organization should strive to give all the volunteers the same information as employees since the majority of volunteers are adult professionals and can be trusted with sensitive information. By communicating information to volunteers, the organization can create knowledgeable organizational ambassadors who can educate and give the public a more

accurate image of the Midwestern Animal Society. If volunteers have factual and timely information regarding the programs at the organization, they can personally present the information to the public and people they know outside of the organization and create a personal connection with outside stakeholders.

With a crisis situation or a health issue like the distemper outbreak, the Midwestern Animal Society should be calling volunteers, especially those in the domestics department and letting them know the facts, sending out informative, timely, and transparent emails, and also scheduling a meeting for volunteers who want more information to create an open discussion. Volunteers are a bridge between the organization and the community and can pass along factual information from the organization to the public but can only do that if they are aware of the situation and receive open and honest communication from the organization. Along with cultivating strong relationships between paid organizational members and unpaid volunteers, keeping clear and open communication channels between these two groups of individuals is necessary to affecting organizational identification.

Encourage Open Two-Way Communication Between the Organization and Volunteers

The second pragmatic application that this study uncovered is the need for the organization to encourage open communication between volunteers and employees as well as upward communication from volunteers in order to affect organizational identification in volunteers. Tompkins and Cheney (1985) argue that organizations must adapt communication styles to employees' assumptions in order to increase organizational identification. As the results of my study have shown, it is not only important nonprofits adjust communication styles to employee assumptions, they must

also adjust communication styles to the assumptions of volunteers because volunteers are integral members of the organization and many are as closely identified with the organization as employees. Participants shared a need for more personal communication from employees so as to create relationships that invite an open dialogue between volunteers and employees. Participants respect the staff and see organizational members as professional and knowledgeable, but also feel the staff is very unfriendly and overworked and that they do not have the time or energy to extend themselves to volunteers. Although it may be financially impossible to hire enough staff members to supervise and continuously work with volunteers, it is important staff members personally interact with volunteers on a consistent basis so they feel like fundamental components of the organization.

The organization must promote an open exchange of communication so as to encourage staff and volunteers to personally communicate with one another in order to foster strong personal relationships between organizational members. By encouraging communication and interaction between volunteers and employees, volunteers will develop personal relationships with staff members and become more identified with the organization. If volunteers are made to feel like a nuisance from organization members for giving feedback and wanting to participate more, they will be less likely to give feedback in the future and the communication will become more closed off and rigid, which will inevitably lead to volunteers disidentifying from the organization.

Volunteers need more emotional resources and outlets to form stronger and more personal bonds with staff members that will, in turn, benefit the organization by having employees communicate and interact with each volunteer during their shifts so as to

answer any questions regarding their roles, policies, and procedures. These personal relationships between volunteers and employees will create an atmosphere that values collaboration and open two-way communication which will influence volunteers to feel like important members of the organization. Staff members should make it a priority to interact with volunteers during their shifts to tell them what is new in the organization to keep them informed and to also establish personal relationships. By encouraging feedback and participation, the organization creates an atmosphere of open communication and volunteers will begin feeling comfortable telling staff members what is occurring and that they would like to switch roles and/or try a new position, which will create more identified volunteers who feel like beneficial organizational members.

Organizations benefit from open communication because volunteers will give more insight into what is happening within the organization that employees might miss since many of the jobs are done or supported by volunteers. Volunteers can provide insightful ideas and recommendations to improve procedures and policies. Since the organization may not be able to hire additional employees to supervise volunteers, encouraging volunteers to give feedback and provide insight into what is occurring on their shifts, staff members can learn about what is happening in the organization and allow volunteers to feel more powerful, important, and vital to the organization.

In summary, the results of this study are consistent with the findings from Pearce (1993) in that participants, like the volunteers in Pearce's study, feel they are not valued as much as paid employees because their work is more fragmented and trivial, relationships with paid employees are weak, and organizational feedback from both the volunteers and the organization is restricted and lacking. In addition, the results from my

study are in accordance with the findings from Ashcraft and Kedrowicz (2002) and Farmer and Fedor (2001) who found that volunteers receive limited job training, are given little or no direction for development in anticipation of high turnover, and are sometimes required to work alone since they generally lack finances to supervise all individuals; all factors that leave volunteers to fend for themselves and can increase organizational disidentification. The findings provide theoretical and pragmatic implications that uncover the need for future research to analyze nonprofit organizational communication and volunteer identification so that nonprofits can maximize resources. Although this study provides a wealth of information for the field of organizational identification as well as nonprofit organizations, the next section will present a few limitations that readers should be aware of.

Limitations

My study has three distinguishable limitations. First, this study analyzed the ways in which volunteers identify with the organization they serve specifically by studying the volunteers at a nonprofit animal shelter in a city in the Midwest. The results of this study are a subjective snap shot of a specific nonprofit organization in time, does not reflect other nonprofit organizations or volunteer opinions, and only encompasses the opinions of the participants from the Midwestern Animal Society. My study only examined one type of nonprofit and there can be variations when examining different types of organizations.

Second, the study is limited because participants were asked to recount past experiences and stories as well as discuss present organizational situations and

conditions. By having participants discuss past experiences and events in addition to present processes, this study is based mainly on reflective accounts.

Third, while the study is comprised of participants from both domestics and wildlife departments, in a variety of positions and volunteer tenure, and spread across age groups and genders, organizational staff members were not included. Staff and board members were not included in the study as I was only concerned with the outlook of volunteers regarding organizational identification. Therefore, this study does not focus on the perspective and practices of the organization and is instead interested in how participants shared organizational identification. I also acknowledge that the volunteers who agreed to participate in this study might be more identified with the organization as unidentified volunteers may not be as willing to participate in a study regarding volunteering and their experiences with the Midwestern Animal Society. However, I feel this study is a fair representation of the experiences of 15 volunteers.

Areas of Future Research

Contributing to the current research on volunteer organizational identification, my study presents a number of compelling findings regarding how volunteers identify with the nonprofit they serve. Taken as a whole, the analysis sheds light on the lack of research on organizational identification in volunteers and the need for future research to learn more about how volunteers identify with the nonprofit they serve so organizations can best utilize, engage, and retain volunteers.

Current and past research on organizational identification has focused on employee identification in for profit organizations and ignores the need to understand how volunteers identify with the nonprofit organizations they serve. The literature on

volunteer organizational identification is lacking and as the U.S. nonprofit sector continues to grow and more organizations rely on unpaid labor to prosper, future research on volunteer identification is essential (Lewis, 2005). Since there is only a small pool of research regarding volunteer identification, the results of this study with volunteers from the Midwestern Animal Society will be mostly compared to research conducted in the for-profit sector. Although many of the participants felt their roles and efforts were on par with that of the staff, employee identification and volunteer identification research are not completely interchangeable as volunteers and employees have different roles and responsibilities within an organization. Therefore, volunteers are a group of organizational members who deserve to be studied separately from employees in future research.

In striving to recognize the ways in which organizational communication affects organizational identification, the qualitative research unveils numerous topics of interest affecting Midwestern Animal Society volunteers including how organizational division impacts identification as well as the influence organizational communication and personal relationships have on identification. The results of this study mainly highlight the importance of organizational communication in influencing identification. As we look to the future, it is important for scholars to continue to probe into the impact organizational communication has on identification since research has not examined how communication in nonprofit organizations impact how identified volunteers are with the organization. Participants expressed a desire for more personal communication from staff members to gain more organizational information and have more roles within the organization. Furthermore, since many participants expressed feeling a deeper sense of

organizational identification due to the personal relationships they have with staff members, it is essential future research delve deeper into the effect personal relationships have on organizational identification. Participants shared organizational identification as well as struggles and obstacles facing identification and highlighted the impact communication and personal relationships with staff members has on how intimate a connection they feel with the organization.

The results of my study reveal that it is not one single factor that influences organizational identification; it is instead a myriad of factors and organizational practices that influence how identified volunteers' express to be. There still is not a consensus of what an identified individual is as the term is constantly evolving with each additional study. Scholars have discovered elements that shape organizational identification but due to the culmination of many different organizational influencers and factors that have emerged in previous studies, it is imperative organizational identification be studied further so that organizations can understand what actions, policies, and organizational factors influence identification in organizational members.

In addition to contributing to the growing pool of research on organizational identification, this research provides much needed insight into how volunteers identify with the nonprofit they serve. Scholars and practitioners can benefit from the results of my study as it enriches the current theoretical understanding of organizational identification and has practical implications for the organizational practices of nonprofit organizations. As more organizations rely on unpaid labor to achieve organizational missions, it is important scholars continue to research the ways in which volunteers identify with the organizations they donate their time to and focus on how the

communication practices of the organizations contribute to organizational identification, as well as the role relationships play in the process of identification. As we become more sensitive to the impact organizational identification has on the ability for organizations to achieve missions and succeed, scholars must continue to research the dynamic relationship between communication and identification as well as study additional ways in which organizations can increase organizational identification to best utilize resources and build organizational loyalty.

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APPENDIX:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Cultivating and Retaining Committed Volunteers: An Analysis of Volunteer Identification in Nonprofit Organizations

Nora Beth Pilak
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1. Individual Background

a. Tell me about yourself.
b. Where are you from? What do you do?
    i. Jobs?
    ii. School?
    iii. Other activities?
c. How would you describe yourself to others?
    i. What do you value?
    ii. What's important to you?
d. How do you think others would describe you?

2. Volunteer History

a. How long have you volunteered for _____ (organization)?
b. How often do you volunteer for _____ organization? How many hours per volunteer session?
c. How long do you anticipate volunteering for _____ organization?
d. Why did you begin volunteering for this organization?
e. Why do you continue to volunteer at _____ (organization) rather than another organization with similar goals/mission?
    i. What keeps you volunteering here?
    ii. How long do you think you'll be here?
f. Do you volunteer with any other organizations?
g. Have you volunteered for any other organizations, past or present?
    i. If so, where?
    ii. How long?
h. What motivates you to continue volunteering in general?
    i. Do you have particular goals?

3. Volunteer Experience

a. In what area of the organization do you volunteer?
b. What does a typical shift look like?
    i. What sort of jobs/tasks do you do in a typical shift?
c. How would you describe what it's like to volunteer for _____ (the organization) to someone who knows little or nothing about the organization?
d. Who do you report to regarding volunteer tasks?

e. How would you describe your interaction with your supervisors, the volunteer coordinator or other fulltime staff at the organization?
f. How does the organization feel about its volunteers?
    i. How do you know that?
g. What kinds of things are important to the volunteers who work here?
h. What kinds of things are important to the employees who work here?

4. Training and Orientation

a. How did you learn about volunteer opportunities with _____ (organization)?
    i. Another volunteer?
    ii. The website?
    iii. A friend/family member?
b. What is the process becoming a volunteer?
    i. Who did you talk to?
c. How were you trained as a volunteer?
    i. What was the most beneficial part?
    ii. What would you change?
d. How would you describe your relationship with other volunteers?
    i. Who do you talk to?
    ii. Do you talk outside of work?

5. Organizational Communication

a. How would you describe the organization?
b. How do you describe the organization to other people who aren't involved in the organization?
c. How does the organization, ie: directors, managers, department heads, communicate with you?
d. How do other volunteers communicate with you?
e. How does the organization encourage volunteer participation and feedback?
f. If you had a question about the organization, what would you do?
g. If you had an idea regarding the organization, who would you tell?
h. If something were to happen in the organization, how would you find out about it?

6. Organizational Identification

a. How do you view the _____(organization)?
b. How do you feel about the _____(organization)?
d. How would you describe the mission statement/principles/goals/values of the organization?
e. Has the organization addressed its mission statement/principles/goals/values to you?
    i. If so, when?
    ii. If not, why do you think the organization has not?
f. How does the organization display their mission/principles/values/goals to volunteers?

g. The mission statement says _____ (organization's mission statement). How do you feel about this?
h. What does the mission statement mean to you as a volunteer?
    i. When you think about the mission statement, to what extent do you agree with what it says?
        a. If you don't agree with it, why not?
i. How do you see _____ (the organization) fulfilling their mission statement?
    i. How do you see the mission statement valued by the organization?
j. How would you describe the values of _____ (the organization) in comparison to your personal values?
k. To what extent do you think you can make a difference in helping _____ (the organization) achieve its mission?
l. To what extent do you consider the mission and values of this organization when you are required to perform jobs and perhaps make decisions? .
m. To what extent are the other volunteers at _____ (the organization) working towards the same goals?
n. When you are volunteering, to what extent do you think about the implications of your work or efforts on the organization as a whole?
o. Are there any additional comments/suggestions you'd like to make regarding the mission statement/goals of the organization?
p. What changes would you make to the organization?

7. Volunteer Identification

a. Has the organization ever made any changes to the volunteering policies?
    i. What did you do?
    ii. How did you feel about them?
    iii. Did you tell anybody?
b. As a volunteer, how connected do you feel towards the organization?
c. How often do you tell people you volunteer for the organization?
d. How responsible do you feel for the success of the organization as a volunteer?
e. Have you ever had anyone ask why you volunteer for the organization?
    i. If yes, what do you tell them?
f. Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know?
g. Are there any other things you think I should know about your volunteering? Anything I may have missed?