A photograph of two volunteers working on a construction site. They are wearing orange shirts and hard hats. The volunteer on the left is wearing a red hard hat and is smiling while working. The volunteer on the right is wearing a red and yellow hard hat with safety glasses and is looking towards the camera. They are surrounded by construction materials and debris.

Retaining Volunteers: Creative Options from the Literature

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Emergency
preparedness

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE



Community
well-being
promotion

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1.1 Introduction

1.2 Portland NET Comes Alive



2. A Brief Look at the Literature

2.1 Literature Highlights

(Shields, 2009)

Volunteer retention rates are also influenced by several factors perceived by the individual. Specifically, volunteers express high levels of connectedness (feeling part of a group to which one feels they share goals, values, respect, and trust), uniqueness (feeling that one has a unique combination of talents and personality to contribute to the organization), and power (feeling that one can make a difference)

young adults have been identified as an under-represented age group in volunteering . The image of volunteering may need to be altered to reflect positive and relevant images to accommodate the needs of young adults. A large proportion of young people perceive volunteering as not being socially or personally attractive . Many young adults perceive volunteering as being boring and involving older people who will not appreciate their skills. Perceptions such as this need to be overcome as young people represent an attractive source of volunteers for nonprofit organizations and, thus, are an important focus for nonprofits' recruitment efforts . Recognition should be given to the fact that the three most common barriers to volunteering are lack of time, lack of interest, and ill health . Young adults would be particularly vulnerable to the first two barriers, thus representing a special recruiting challenge.

Decisive research on why people volunteer discovered that volunteers were motivated by both altruistic and egoistic motives. A widely quoted attempt to categorize volunteering motivation resulted in six motives for volunteering. Two of the six motives were related to career and personal enhancement, two were personal development (protective and understanding), and two dealt with relationships with others (social and values)

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Peterson (2004) found that younger volunteers were motivated by financial and career success and older volunteers were motivated by social responsibilities and a greater . This study found age to be the best criteria for selection of recruitment strategies. Australian researchers, however, concluded that motivations for volunteering did not differ by age, and that generic promotional and recruitment messages would be equally effective for all age groups of volunteers

Callow (2004) recognized the advantages of identifying different promotional appeals for targeting the retiree volunteer segment. Instead of highlighting the similarities within the retiree segment, Callow advocated future fragmenting the cluster into subgroups.

It has already been noted that individuals are often motivated to volunteer because of egoistic reasons. Young adults are more likely to volunteer to benefit their own self-interests and concern for their own personal advancement

What promotional appeals for volunteering experiences will subgroups of young adults find desirable? What are the most appropriate targeting appeals for this segment? Do the motivations of young adult volunteers differ from retiree volunteers significantly enough to warrant separate appeals? How likely and when are young adults to volunteer? Can young adults with particular desirable traits be recruited with the generic appeals?

An eight-item scale by Raskin and Terry (1988) was used to measure the degree to which one views oneself as a leader and desires to have influence over others

were more likely to volunteer out of egoism (less altruistic) self-interest, a measure of concern for personal advancement included was one of four components of vanity. Achievement concern was measured by Netemeyer, Burton and Lichtenstein's (1995) five-item scale. This variable was included to capture a sense of personal enhancement and achievement.

Deeming positive attitudes towards working in a team and cooperative behavior toward others as desirable traits for volunteers, Oliver and Anderson's (1994) five-item acceptance (team-work/cooperation) scale was included in the study.

Three components of mentoring, ability, and willingness (rapport ability, support willingness, and relational willingness) were considered admirable traits for potential volunteers and were measured by Pullins et al.'s (1996) 15-item scale.

The promotional appeals that Callow identified for targeting potential retiree volunteers proved to be effective for segmenting the young adult market, as well. The four different appeals, based on high and low humanitarian and social motivations, proved to be attractive to the students in the study

By appealing to and targeting subgroups with different motivations individually, the maximum

marketing efficiency can be reached within the overall segment. Recruitment communications by nonprofit organizations directed to young adults should highlight and emphasize the following types of themes and positioning strategies, for instance: When you volunteer at XYZ nonprofit organization... ...you will actively participate in important activities that make a difference. ...you will have the opportunity to better yourself personally and professionally. ...you will make a difference in the lives of others. ...you will make connections with others.

The volunteer market, in general, and regardless of life-stage, appears to be motivated by a combination of humanitarianism and social factors. Thus appeals to the young adult segment should emphasize these distinct themes in a format that addresses the specific interests of the cohort groups such as self-advancement and personal development, since efforts should be made to accommodate the preferences and imperatives of young people to be most effective

Given that almost a third of the segment indicated that they are very likely to volunteer in the future, a carefully executed marketing strategy can be instrumental in attracting and recruiting the energetic and talented young adult segment who currently believe they will volunteer in the future. With targeted appeals, the opportunity to increase volunteerism and capture the energies of the young adult volunteer segment exists.

Considering that professionally employed, college-educated individuals tend to volunteer in higher numbers than other segments (Wymer, 2003), the fact that the majority of the respondents had volunteered during their college experience and felt the need to list volunteering on their resume is not surprising. Motivation for volunteering is often employment-related.

It would seem young adults can best be recruited by nonprofit organizations if initial approaches are made, and relationships developed, while the segment is still in college. The identified humanitarianism/social motivations appear to apply to multiple life-stages. These appeals combined with the motivation to start, and establish, a career should prove effective for recruitment efforts.

2.2 Literature Summary



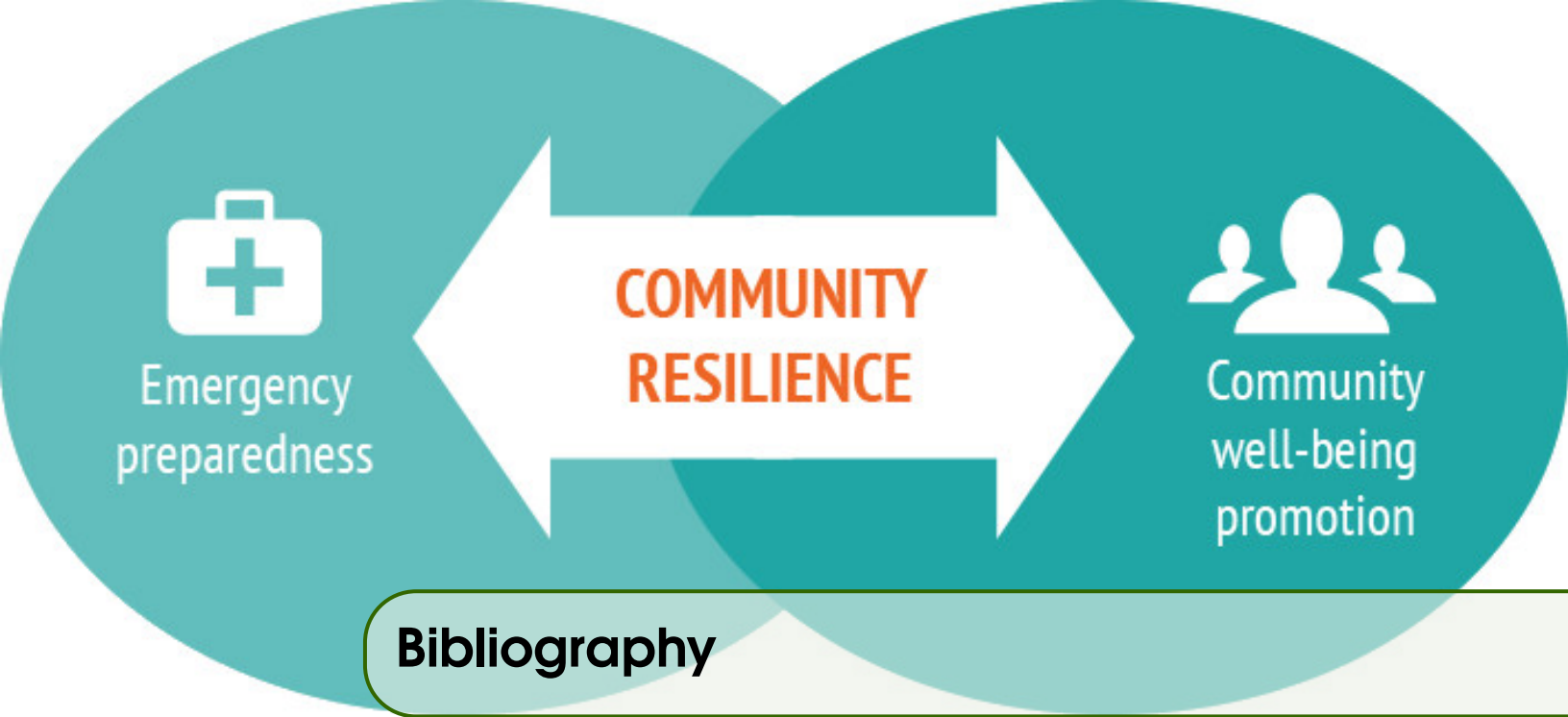
3.1 Program Highlights

3.2 Summary



4.1 A Brief List of Creative Options

4.2 Final Recommendations



Shields, P. O. (2009, June). Young Adult Volunteers: Recruitment Appeals and Other Marketing Considerations. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21(2), 139–159.