Three Essays on the Individual, Task-, and Context-related Factors Influencing the Organizational Behaviour of Volunteers

by

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Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources
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Abstract

This dissertation examines how various individual, task-, and context-related factors influence important volunteering outcomes. Using data sourced from a large international aid and development agency in the United Kingdom, the three studies that follow explore the organizational behaviour of volunteers and highlight several initiatives that nonprofit organizations can introduce in order to motivate and retain their volunteers.

In the first chapter, I present a moderated mediation model where I show that prosocially motivated volunteers dedicate more time to volunteering. The study results further show that volunteer engagement fully mediates the relationship between the value motive and volunteer time, and that the strength of the mediated effect varies as a function of volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries. These findings provide a new perspective on the link between volunteers’ motivation and active participation in volunteer activities.

The second chapter presents a framework for understanding the processes through which volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries influences their turnover intentions and time spent volunteering. The results show that volunteers who perceive that their work
impacts beneficiaries (1) report lower intentions to leave their volunteer organization due to their commitment to that organization; and (2) dedicate more time to volunteering because they are committed to the beneficiaries of their work. These findings make a significant contribution to volunteering research by uncovering two different mechanisms that explain how the positive consequences of perceived impact on beneficiaries may unfold.

Finally, the third chapter presents a mediation model that explains how an organizational support framework promotes organizational commitment in volunteers. Specifically, the results show that training and paid staff support promote higher levels of volunteers’ organizational commitment due to increases in volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity and self-efficacy. Importantly, this study illustrates how volunteer managers can use two management practices that are under their control to maximize the commitment of volunteers.
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Introduction

Snyder and Omoto (2008) defined volunteering as “freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time, are engaged in without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations, and that are performed on behalf of causes or individuals who desire assistance” (p. 3). This definition highlights six defining features of volunteerism. First, volunteer actions must be voluntary, performed without obligation or coercion. During the course of volunteering, individuals may develop feelings of obligation to the organization or beneficiaries, but the initial impetus for volunteering is rooted in free will. Second, volunteering refers to deliberate acts, not to reflexive or emergency helping behaviour. Third, volunteering extends over a period of time and does not include activities that are anticipated to take place on one occasion only. Fourth, volunteer activities are engaged in without the expectation of remuneration. While volunteering likely involves motives that extend beyond altruism, volunteers do not contribute to volunteering organizations in order to receive pay or avoid punishment or censure. Fifth, volunteering involves activities that serve causes or people who desire assistance. In other words, these activities are typically sought out or welcomed by the beneficiaries. Finally, volunteering does not refer to informal helping, but to activities that are carried out on behalf of people or causes, typically within an organizational setting (Snyder & Omoto, 2008).

Whether focused on facilitating social change or providing immediate assistance to individuals, volunteerism is the backbone of a vibrant civil society (United Nations Volunteers, 2011). According to most recent Canadian estimates, in 2010 alone, over 13.3 million individuals in Canada volunteered their time, which accounts for 47 percent of all
Canadians 15 years old and over. These individuals devoted over two billion hours to volunteering, which is comparable to about 1.1 million full-time jobs (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). In comparison, in the European Union, only about 23 percent of Europeans aged over 15 years engage in volunteer work, though there is significant variation among countries. In fact, most Western European states have much higher levels of volunteering compared to other member states, with countries like Austria, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (UK) reporting volunteer participation rates above 40 percent (European Commission, 2010).

The number of volunteers in Canada has grown faster than the general population, yet the total amount of time committed to volunteer activities has reached a plateau in recent years. This means that, on average, volunteers today devote less time to their service than they did in the past. In addition, a small proportion of volunteers carry out most of the volunteer work, with 10 percent of volunteers accounting for 53 percent of volunteer hours committed to volunteer activities (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). Similar trends can be observed in other Western countries (Hall, Barr, Easwaramoorthy, Sokolowski, & Salamon, 2005). This illustrates the so-called “unreliability problem”, which refers to volunteers’ ability to limit their efforts or leave the organization at will (Pearce, 1993). Due to the uncertainty of volunteer roles and less powerful incentives available to volunteer organizations, volunteers are less likely to integrate as fully into the organizational system as employees do and often cannot be relied upon to perform consistently (Pearce, 1993). This issue, combined with volunteer managers who lack the formal authority awarded to them in the paid employment context, makes volunteer behaviour exceedingly difficult to manage, which highlights the theoretical and practical importance of studying the organizational behaviour of volunteers.
In their review of volunteering research, Snyder and Omoto (2008) identified two main questions about volunteerism: “Why do people volunteer? And, what sustains people in their volunteer work?” (p. 7). The first question has garnered most of the attention among researchers, as the field has been dominated by research on individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits, motives, needs) that drive volunteers to give their time in the first place (see Wilson, 2012). However, a much more salient issue that nonprofit organizations face today is that volunteering has become increasingly episodic, with individuals volunteering for shorter periods of time and frequently switching between volunteer organizations (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Therefore, studying factors that promote active and sustained volunteering is particularly relevant for the smooth functioning of these organizations. In other words, in order to find ways to increase volunteer effort and improve retention, we should explore factors that keep individuals volunteering, in addition to those factors that drive them to start volunteering in the first place.

The studies that follow develop and test three models that show how individual and organizational factors increase volunteers’ commitment levels, their intentions to remain with the organization, and the time that they dedicate to their service. Furthermore, they uncover the underlying processes that help explain these relationships. Specifically, the first study shows how prosocially motivated volunteers dedicate more time to their service because they are engaged with their volunteer work and that this effect is stronger for volunteers who develop an emotional attachment to their beneficiaries. The second study is the first to explore the concept of perceived impact on beneficiaries in the context of volunteering. The results show that volunteers who perceive that they have an impact on the beneficiaries of their actions report lower turnover intentions because they are committed to
the organization, and devote more time to volunteering because they are committed to the
beneficiaries of their work. The third study shows how two organizational support efforts
(i.e., training and paid staff support) promote volunteers’ organizational commitment by
increasing their perceptions of role clarity and self-efficacy. Taken together, the three studies
contribute to our understanding of the organizational behaviour of volunteers and have the
potential to positively impact nonprofit organizations’ policies and practices.

The data used in this work was sourced from a large nonprofit organization in the UK
involved in international relief and development efforts. The findings presented here,
however, are not necessarily limited to this context. Due to important similarities in legal
frameworks and volunteer participation rates, the nonprofit and voluntary sector in the UK is
often grouped together with Australia, Canada, and the United States into the “Anglo-Saxon
cluster” (Hall et al., 2005). Moreover, the UK also shares important characteristics with the
“Welfare Partnership cluster”, which represents Western European countries where nonprofit
organizations enjoy a high level of government funding and have a very strong service
orientation (Hall et al., 2005). However, this does not mean that culture is not an important
consideration in volunteering research. On the contrary, studies have illustrated significant
variation in the meanings and expressions of volunteerism across cultures. Much of this
variation, though, corresponds to differences in individualism and collectivism across
cultures and world regions (see Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Therefore, while the present
findings are most representative of the nonprofit and voluntary sector in the UK, they may be
tentatively generalized to other countries with similar characteristics. Nevertheless, future
studies should explore the phenomena studied here in cross-cultural contexts.
Though each of the following three studies has several important theoretical and practical implications for the field of volunteerism, these can be distilled into three major contributions. First, the main focus of the three studies is on the factors that sustain active volunteering, rather than on factors that drive people to initiate volunteering. With the increase in episodic volunteering, it is important to shift our focus to factors that promote longevity of service and increased effort on the part of volunteers. Second, the three studies presented here identify and empirically examine mechanisms through which different individual and organizational factors exert their influence on volunteering outcomes. This focus on mediators is rare in the volunteering literature, where most studies focus primarily on direct effects. The studies that follow contribute to the literature by identifying volunteers’ engagement, commitment, and efficacy and role clarity perceptions as important mediators in the context of volunteering. Third, the studies highlight the important role that different organizational interventions can play in volunteering. Surprisingly, organizational influences have remained largely unexplored in the field of volunteering (see Wilson, 2012), despite the fact that formal volunteering is constrained to organizational contexts. The present work helps address this gap in the literature by suggesting a variety of practices (e.g., training, paid staff support, contact with beneficiaries, job descriptions) that volunteer managers can employ in order to more effectively manage their volunteers. This has considerable practical implications, as it is arguably more straightforward for nonprofit organizations to implement such practices than tailor their efforts to individuals’ specific needs, motivations, or other personal characteristics. Taken together, then, the three studies that follow contribute significantly to the science and practice of volunteering.
1 References


Volunteerism plays a critical role in addressing community, national and global issues. Volunteerism not only enables the smooth functioning of many organizations, it also contributes to the maintenance of social cohesion (Synder & Omoto, 2008). Hence, there has been increasing interest in understanding the factors that drive and sustain active and long-term volunteer participation (Craig-Lees, Harris, & Lau, 2008). Although there have been considerable advances in identifying the various motives that drive volunteer behaviour (e.g., Clary et al., 1998), we know less about the complex array of factors that sustain active volunteer participation (e.g., Davis, Hall, & Meyer, 2003; Finkelstein, 2008; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). The present study contributes to this growing body of knowledge by developing and testing a holistic model that explains sustained volunteering.

The most distal predictor in the proposed model is also one of the most important individual-level motivators of volunteer behaviour, that is, altruistic or humanitarian values (e.g., Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Chacon, Perez, Flores, & Vecina, 2011; Clary et al., 1998). Although past research has found a positive relationship between the value motive and the time that volunteers devote to their volunteer work (e.g., Allison et al., 2002; Finkelstein, 2008; Greenslade & White, 2005; Okun, 1994), few studies have investigated

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the mediating and moderating processes through which the positive consequences of the value motive unfold.

The first aim of the present study is to investigate why volunteers who are motivated by altruistic values persist in their volunteer activities. I propose that such individuals are more engaged with their volunteer activities, thereby leading them to dedicate more time to the volunteer cause. It is surprising that engagement has surfaced in the volunteer literature only once (Vecina, Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2012), since it may have particular relevance to understanding volunteerism. This is because engagement implies involving one’s preferred self-image in tasks or activities, and given that volunteer work is freely chosen, volunteers likely choose work that enables the expression of their preferred self. Moreover, there are conceptual ties between role identity theory (Stryker, 1980) and engagement theory (Kahn, 1990), where the former has been identified as a plausible theoretical link in explaining sustained volunteer behaviour (e.g., Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Penner, 2002). The present study is the first to consider engagement as a mediator of the relationship between the value motive and the time that volunteers devote to their service.

The second aim of the present study is to examine the extent to which the strength of one’s commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering impacts time spent volunteering. Commitment to beneficiaries refers to the emotional concern for and dedication to the beneficiaries of one’s work (Grant, 2007), and may interact with volunteers’ engagement to explain the amount of time spent on volunteering. Specifically, I suggest that the relationship between engagement with one’s volunteer work and time spent volunteering is strengthened when there is a high level of commitment to those who benefit from the volunteer activities.
Support for this hypothesis is derived from work in the paid employment context (e.g., Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013; Grant, 2007; Grant et al., 2007). The present study contributes to knowledge of sustained volunteer behaviour by addressing this previously unexplored variable in the context of volunteer work.

In summary, the present study develops and tests a model to explain the relationship between the value motive and the time that volunteers dedicate to their volunteer activities. Specifically, the model proposes that the positive relationship between the value motive and time spent volunteering is mediated by engagement and that the strength of the mediated effect varies as a function of volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries.

1 Theoretical background and hypotheses

1.1 The value motive and engagement with volunteer work

The value motive for volunteering includes expressions of values related to altruistic or humanitarian beliefs (Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Although several inventories to assess volunteering motivations have been developed (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Ouellette, Cassel, Maslanka, & Wong, 1995; Reeder, McLane Davison, Gipson, & Hesson-McInnis, 2001), the motivation to express personal values, including humanitarian or altruistic values, is common to all of them (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Moreover, the value motive is most often endorsed by volunteers (e.g., Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Okun & Schultz, 2003; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Two qualitative studies employing open-ended questions found that volunteers tend to mention no more than two
motives on average when asked why they volunteer; the value motive is mentioned the most frequently and is the most important to volunteers (Allison et al., 2002; Chacon et al., 2011).

A burgeoning literature has shown that the value motive is an important correlate of the time and intensity that volunteers invest in their service. For instance, volunteers who are driven by altruistic/humanitarian motivations attend their shifts more regularly (Harrison, 1995; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998), engage in more formal (Plummer et al., 2008) and informal volunteer activities (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007), provide more help to beneficiaries (Clary & Orenstein, 1991), and devote more time to volunteer work (e.g., Allison et al., 2002; Finkelstein, 2008; Greenslade & White, 2005; Okun, 1994).

While prior research generally supports the notion that the value motive is positively associated with the time that volunteers dedicate to volunteer activities, there are few studies that have examined the mechanism to explain this relationship and, to my knowledge, none that have established a mediator. The present study identifies and tests a theoretically-derived mediator, namely, engagement. Kahn (1990) originally introduced engagement as an expression of an individual’s full self, whereby individuals choose to simultaneously channel their physical, cognitive, and affective energies into role performances, thus representing a holistic investment of the self into one’s role. In the only study to date that has examined engagement in the context of volunteering, Vecina et al. (2012) found that engagement is a determinant of an employee’s intention to continue volunteering. The present study responds to Vecina et al.’s (2012) call for research that further explores the role of engagement in the voluntary sector. It does so by situating engagement within a nomological net to explain why value-oriented volunteers dedicate more of their time to their volunteer service.
Volunteers who are motivated by altruism or humanitarian beliefs are likely to be engaged with their volunteer activities because such activities lead them to express their preferred self. A value-oriented volunteer is likely to become immersed in his or her role activities and to gain a positive sense of self from the work that is done. For volunteers with a high value motive, it is likely that volunteer work enables them to employ their true self, and to be authentic (Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990, p. 700) argued that doing so “yields behaviours that bring alive the relation of self to role” and leads to the exertion of personal energies in the role. He stated that “people become physically involved in tasks, whether alone or with others, cognitively vigilant, and empathetically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing in ways that display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connection to others” (p. 700). Hence, volunteers who are motivated by altruistic or humanitarian values may dedicate more time to volunteer activities because the activities enable them to express their preferred self.

Support for this hypothesis can be gleaned from role identity theory (Stryker, 1980), which has been leveraged in the volunteering literature to explain sustained volunteering (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). Research has found that the extent to which a person identifies with the role of a volunteer, and internalizes it so that it forms part of a person’s self-concept, is positively related to the time that volunteers devote to their service (Finkelstein, 2008; Finkelstein et al., 2005; Grube & Piliavin, 2000), length of service with the organization (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007), intent to continue volunteering (Grube & Piliavin, 2000), informal volunteer activity (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007), and the enactment of citizenship behaviour (Finkelstein, 2006; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004). Hence, I hypothesize that volunteers who are motivated by altruism or humanitarian beliefs are more likely to be
engaged with their tasks, and that engagement with volunteer work mediates the relationship between prosocial values and the time that volunteers dedicate to the cause.

*Hypothesis 1: Engagement mediates the positive relationship between the value motive and time spent volunteering.*

### 1.2 Commitment to beneficiaries

Volunteer organizations suggest that part of the success of their work is determined by the quality of the relationships between volunteers and beneficiaries (Bainbridge, Tuck, & Bowen, 2008; BOND, 2006). It is believed that volunteers who are committed to benefiting others as a result of their activities are likely to devote significant amounts of time to volunteering.

Commitment to beneficiaries has recently been explored in the context of paid (Grant, 2007) and volunteer (Valeau, Mignonac, Vandenbergh, & Gatignon Turnau, 2013) work. Grant (2007) stated that commitment to beneficiaries refers to “emotional concern for and dedication to the people and groups of people impacted by one’s work” (p. 401), and it has the potential to energize a person to make a prosocial difference. Evidence suggests that when employees are provided with opportunities to interact with and impact beneficiaries, thereby increasing their commitment towards them, employees display greater motivation and performance.

Several field and laboratory experiments have found that commitment-inducing experimental manipulations had a positive impact on employee behaviour (e.g., Grant, 2008; Grant et al., 2007). The samples used in these studies were fundraising call centre agents whose job entailed calling university alumni to solicit donations. Their fundraising activities
provided scholarships that enabled underprivileged students to attend university. Half of the sample participants met one scholarship student who benefited from their work. One month later, the callers in the experimental condition had more than doubled the number of calls they made, the amount of time on the phone, and the amount of donation money raised. Callers in the control group did not change on these measures. Another study confirmed that a person’s affective commitment to beneficiaries was positively associated with their prosocial motivation at work (Grant et al., 2007). These results show that employees who are committed to the beneficiaries of their work have the potential to influence important outcomes in organizations. Despite these promising findings in the paid employment context, little research has been conducted that focuses on volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries. A notable exception is a study by Valeau et al. (2013), where the authors found that commitment to beneficiaries was inversely related to turnover intentions from a volunteer organization.

The present study asserts that commitment to beneficiaries strengthens the relationship between engagement and sustained volunteering. Kahn (1990) originally defined engagement as the channeling of physical, cognitive, and emotional energies into one’s work role and being empathetically connected to others. However, engagement research to date has omitted the latter element, and has focused solely on the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of engagement with work tasks. Kahn (1990, 1992) stated that when individuals are engaged with work, they become accessible to other people, and experience a sense of giving and receiving in relating with others. Engagement in the absence of this personal connection with others may produce less positive outcomes for both the individual and the organization. This is because engagement implies the integration of multiple facets of
the self, so that individuals experience physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement with
the task, as well as a personal connection to those who benefit from its completion.

Although Kahn’s (1990, 1992) theoretical work meshed engagement with tasks with
social connections to others, the present study teases these constructs apart to examine the
role of connections with others (i.e., commitment to beneficiaries) in the relationship
between engagement and sustained volunteering. Although engagement with volunteering
tasks may have a direct positive effect on sustained volunteering, the effect is likely to be
stronger when a volunteer feels that he or she has a connection to others, thereby promoting
dignity, self-appreciation, and a sense of worthwhileness (Kahn, 1990). Specifically, the
relationship between engagement with one’s volunteering work and sustained volunteering
may be strengthened by a commitment to those who benefit from volunteering.

Further support for the moderating hypothesis can be gleaned from a study by Alfes
et al. (2013) that investigated the conditions under which engagement results in positive
behaviours in the paid employment context. Specifically, they found that the relationship
between engagement and performance was stronger for employees who had positive and
strong relationships with others at work. Similarly, I propose that volunteers who are
committed to the beneficiaries of their actions will exert even more energies into their role as
a consequence of engagement, compared to those who are less committed.

Hypothesis 2: The positive relationship between engagement and time spent volunteering is
strengthened by commitment to beneficiaries.
1.3 A moderated mediation model

The first two study hypotheses form a moderated mediation model. I propose that the strength of the indirect effect of the value motive on time spent volunteering through volunteer engagement is moderated by volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries. A diagram of the proposed moderated mediation model is depicted in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 3: Commitment to beneficiaries moderates the strength of the indirect effect of the value motive on time spent volunteering via engagement, such that the mediated relationship between the value motive and volunteer time is strengthened by commitment to beneficiaries.

2 Method

2.1 Sample and procedure

The sample was drawn from a large international aid and development agency in the United Kingdom. The survey was distributed electronically to 2,500 individuals who were on the organization’s volunteer list. In the electronic message, recipients were informed that the purpose of the study was to provide the organization with feedback on volunteer engagement and that individual responses would be kept anonymous. A reminder e-mail was sent two weeks after the initial message.

From this sample, 647 volunteers completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 25.9 percent. Respondents who had not volunteered in the 12 months prior to the survey were excluded from the sample, bringing the usable sample to 534 volunteers. This method
of separating active volunteers from non-active volunteers is consistent with prior research in the volunteering literature that looks at volunteers’ active participation levels (e.g., Penner, 2002). The average age of the respondents was 56.2 years and women accounted for 66.1 percent of the sample. In terms of their working status, 27.2 percent of the respondents were employed on a full-time basis, 23.2 percent on a part-time basis, 34.3 percent were retired, while the remaining 15.3 percent of the responders fell in the “other” category. The respondents were volunteers and did not have any formal employment ties with the organization where the research was conducted.

2.2 Measures

All items were measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”), unless otherwise noted.

2.2.1 Value motive

The value motive was measured with a 4-item scale adapted from Clary et al. (1998). A sample item was, “I feel compassion toward people in need.” Cronbach’s alpha was .81.

2.2.2 Volunteering engagement

Rich, LePine, and Crawford (2010)’s work engagement scale was adapted to develop a 10-item volunteering engagement scale; in most cases, the word ‘volunteer’ was inserted into the statement designed by Rich et al. (2010). The scale assessed three facets of engagement – physical engagement (e.g., “I exert a lot of energy when I volunteer”), emotional engagement (e.g., “I feel enthusiastic about my volunteering experiences”), and cognitive engagement (e.g., “When I volunteer, my mind is focused on my volunteering...
In the present paper, the three facets were combined into one factor to assess the volunteers’ overall levels of engagement. Cronbach’s alpha was .94.

2.2.3 Commitment to beneficiaries

Commitment to beneficiaries was measured with a 5-item scale adapted from the affective commitment scales developed by Meyer and Allen (1984, 1990) and Grant et al. (2007). A sample item was, “I am strongly committed to the beneficiaries of my volunteering activities.” Cronbach’s alpha was .79.

2.2.4 Time spent volunteering

The present study focuses on time spent volunteering as the dependent measure. It has been argued that volunteer time is the closest measure of volunteer participation levels, as it is much less likely to be biased by socio-demographic variables than, for example, length of service with the organization (Craig-Lees et al., 2008). Participants were asked to report the number of hours, by month, that they volunteered in the preceding 12 months. These figures were summed to create the variable used in the analyses. Volunteering time was positively skewed; it was normalized by taking its log transformation in order to conduct parametric tests without violating assumptions of normality (Osborne, 2002).

2.2.5 Control variables

Age, gender (1=female, 0=male), and working status (containing dummy variables for full-time, part-time, retired, and other, where other was used as the comparison group) were entered in all regression models. This is because women tend to report more involvement in volunteer activities than men (e.g., Clary et al., 1996; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005), age influences a person’s volunteer activity (e.g., Clary et al.,
and motivation for volunteering (e.g., Okun & Schultz, 2003; Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000), and working status influences time spent volunteering (e.g., Independent Sector, 2002; Reed & Selbee, 2000) and motivation for volunteering (e.g., Clary et al., 1996; Snyder & Omoto, 2009).

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics

Scale reliabilities, means and standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables are presented in Table 1.

3.2 Measurement models

As the measures of the value motive, volunteering engagement, commitment to beneficiaries, and time spent volunteering were collected from a single source, a series of confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to establish the discriminant validity of the scales. First, a full measurement model was tested, in which the three facets of volunteer engagement loaded onto a general engagement factor and all indicators for the value motive and commitment to beneficiaries were allowed to load onto their respective factors. Time spent volunteering was included in the model as a single-item measure. All factors were allowed to correlate. The fit of this five-factor model to the data was reasonably good (Table 2): the \( \chi^2/df \) value was less than 5.0, indicating an acceptable fit (Arbuckle, 2006). The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) values were at least .95, representing a good model fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1995), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Square
Residual (SRMR) values were less than .08, indicating an acceptable model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

The full measurement model was compared to alternative nested models as described in Table 2. None of these alternative models yielded an acceptable model fit (all at $p < .001$). The results indicate that the constructs are distinct from one another and that common method bias did not unduly influence the results. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results, because of the problems commonly associated with self-reported measures (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

### 3.3 Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 proposed that engagement mediates the relationship between the value motive and time spent volunteering. To establish mediation, I first followed the steps outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). Table 3 reveals that the value motive was significantly and positively related to volunteering hours and engagement, satisfying the first two conditions for mediation. Moreover, the results show that engagement remained a significant predictor of volunteering hours after controlling for the value motive (which dropped from significance), indicating that engagement mediated the relationship between the value motive and volunteer time. The results of the Sobel test (1982) showed that the indirect effect of the value motive on volunteering time through engagement was statistically significant ($z = 6.26, p < .001$). Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hierarchical moderated regression was employed to test Hypothesis 2, which proposed that the relationship between engagement and time spent volunteering is strengthened by commitment to beneficiaries. The independent variables were standardized
(Aiken & West, 1991). Table 4 shows that commitment to beneficiaries strengthens the link between engagement and time spent volunteering. This interaction is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that with increasing levels of engagement, volunteers dedicate more time to their volunteering work. This relationship is stronger (i.e., the slope is steeper) for those who are highly committed to the beneficiaries of volunteer actions, compared to those who reported less commitment to beneficiaries. At high levels of engagement, those who are strongly committed to beneficiaries report spending more time in volunteer activities than those with lower levels of commitment to beneficiaries. The figure shows a cross-over interaction, such that at low levels of engagement, it appears that volunteers with low levels of commitment to beneficiaries may spend more time volunteering than individuals with high levels of commitment to beneficiaries. To examine the extent to which the data show this non-intuitive finding, I computed the crossing point of the interaction ($-b_1/b_3 = -4.6$). The results show that the regression lines cross at 4.6 standard deviations below the mean of commitment to beneficiaries. Although, statistically, there is a cross-over effect, the meaningfulness of this effect is slight, as a volunteer would have to show an enormous lack of commitment to beneficiaries (4.6 standard deviations below the mean) for him or her to have higher levels of volunteering hours at low levels of engagement. Overall, Table 4 and Figure 2 indicate that commitment to beneficiaries strengthens the relationship between engagement and the amount of time volunteers dedicate to their cause. Hypothesis 2 was thus supported.

Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes’s (2007) analytical procedures were used to formally assess moderated mediation. Four conditions must be satisfied to establish moderated mediation (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005; Preacher et al., 2007). The first three conditions
have been reported: (1) the value motive is associated with time spent volunteering (Table 3); (2) the interaction between commitment to beneficiaries and engagement is significant (Table 4); and (3) engagement is significantly related to time spent volunteering (Table 3). The final condition is to show that the magnitude of the indirect effect through the mediator varies as a function of the moderator. Preacher et al.’s (2007) SPSS macro was used to estimate the coefficients of a moderated mediation model. The strength of the indirect effect of the value motive on volunteering time through engagement was examined at high (one standard deviation above the mean) versus low (one standard deviation below the mean) levels of commitment to beneficiaries. The estimates, standard errors, z statistics, and significance values of the conditional indirect effects are provided in Table 5.

The results in Table 5 show that the conditional indirect effect is positive and different from zero at both high and low levels of commitment, but that the effect is stronger at high levels of commitment to beneficiaries. To show that the conditional indirect effects differ from each other across a range of values of the moderator variable and thereby establish moderated mediation, an interactive tool for creating confidence intervals for indirect effects provided by Selig and Preacher (2008), which employs the Monte Carlo method, was used. The obtained 95% confidence interval [0.0007, 0.1357] did not contain 0; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hypothesis 3 is thus supported.

4 Discussion

The present study examined the way in which individuals who are motivated by values spend more time on volunteering activities. The centrepiece of the model was a
relatively neglected construct in the volunteer literature, that is, engagement. The present study showed that individuals who are motivated by prosocial values are more likely to be engaged with their volunteer work and, as a result, dedicate more time to volunteering. Moreover, the relationship between engagement and time spent volunteering was bolstered by high levels of commitment toward those who benefit from volunteer activities.

Although past research has found strong support for the direct relationship between the value motive and time spent volunteering, the present study is the first to uncover the underlying explanatory mechanism. Kahn’s (1990) theory of engagement was leveraged to explain that volunteers who are motivated by prosocial values are more likely to be engaged with volunteer work because it allows them to be authentic and express their preferred self, and, as a result, they dedicate more time to their service. Although engagement has surfaced in the volunteering literature only once (Vecina et al., 2012), the present study shows that it has the potential to contribute to understanding the factors that sustain active volunteering. Therefore, I encourage future studies to employ engagement as a mechanism through which prosocial values exert their influence on volunteering outcomes.

A second contribution is the finding that volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries moderates the relationship between engagement and the amount of time that volunteers dedicate to their service. This is a significant contribution to the engagement and the volunteering literature. It provides additional support for the notion that the link between engagement and positive behaviour is not as straightforward as one might assume (Alfes et al., 2013; Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011; Parker & Griffin, 2011). Even highly engaged individuals do not necessarily behave uniformly, as the expression of engagement can be moderated by contextual or individual difference factors (Parker & Griffin, 2011). The
results of the present study show that commitment to beneficiaries is one important factor that may alter the way engaged individuals behave. In the context of volunteering, this finding adds support to the belief that interpersonal relationships that develop between volunteers and the beneficiaries of their actions facilitate volunteers’ active service (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). More research is needed to identify contextual factors (e.g., human resource management practices) that may strengthen the link between engagement and volunteering outcomes.

4.1 Practical implications

Volunteer engagement needs to be at the centre of attention for those who manage volunteers. This is because volunteers who are emotionally, cognitively, and physically connected to their work are more likely to dedicate more time to their volunteer cause. In a paid employment context, Rich et al. (2010) proposed that instead of allotting valuable resources to different practices aimed at improving a variety of motivations and attitudes, organizations should focus primarily on interventions that facilitate engagement. In this regard, research in the for-profit sector has shown that practitioners can take several steps to build and promote engagement among their members. Such interventions should occur both at the individual and the organizational level (Bakker, 2009). For instance, one approach is to design tailor-made interventions where the aim is to increase job resources (e.g., autonomy, feedback, coaching) and decrease job demands (e.g., pressure, emotional demands), a method that enhances engagement and subsequent performance (Bakker 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Once efforts are in place to increase volunteers’ engagement, organizations should promote positive and strong relationships among their volunteers and the beneficiaries of
their actions. Increasing the commitment that volunteers feel towards the beneficiaries of their volunteer work should be seen as a second priority for managers, given that at low levels of engagement, commitment to beneficiaries did not influence the time the volunteers spent on volunteer activities. In his model of relational job design, Grant (2007) argued that increasing the frequency, duration, physical proximity, breadth, and depth of contact with beneficiaries would strengthens individuals’ commitment to them. Interventions that provide highly engaged volunteers with an opportunity to interact with beneficiaries or to see the direct impact of their work could greatly enhance the time that these volunteers choose to dedicate to volunteer activities.

4.2 Study limitations

The cross-sectional nature of the data limits any inferences that I could make with regard to causality. While study hypotheses were based on a strong theoretical foundation, it should be noted that alternative causal ordering is a possibility. Testing the proposed model in an experimental setting or employing a longitudinal research design would help address this limitation. In addition, the sample used in the present study was composed of mainly older volunteers, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Another limitation that should be addressed is that all variables employed in the analyses were derived from self-report measures. This may have inflated reported levels of volunteer activity, so future studies should attempt to complement self-report measures with measures from other sources, such as organizational records or supervisory evaluations. The self-report nature of the data also raises concerns of common method variance. However, I followed established recommendations for controlling for the influence of common method bias, such as the use of established scales, guaranteed anonymity, and a clear explanation of
procedures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In addition, statistical analyses revealed that common method variance was not a major issue and that the variables in the analyses were distinct from one another.

5 Conclusion

The present study developed and tested a moderated mediation model to explain the effect of volunteers’ prosocial motivation on the time that they dedicate to volunteering. The results showed that the indirect effect of the value motive on volunteering time, via engagement, was moderated by volunteers’ commitment to beneficiaries. The present study puts forth a new framework for understanding why and under what conditions volunteers dedicate their time to their chosen cause. In doing so, I propose initiatives that volunteer organizations can introduce in order to engage their volunteers and promote their active participation.
6 References


and volunteerism: Principles, policies and practices (pp. 3-26). Kowloon, HK: City University of Hong Kong Press.


## Tables

### 7.1 Table 1: Descriptive statistics

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities*

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>.15***</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>.46***</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Volunteering hours(^a)</td>
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<td>.16***</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.36***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
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Note: N=534.
\(^a\)Log-transformed (ln).

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
### 7.2 Table 2: Fit statistics

**Fit Statistics from Measurement Model Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>$X^2 (df)$</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>$\chi^2_{diff}$</th>
<th>$df_{diff}$</th>
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<td>.063</td>
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<td>.754</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>3***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model B&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.828</td>
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<td>.105</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>3***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model C&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.833</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>3***</td>
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<td>Model D&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.133</td>
<td>689</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model E&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.833</td>
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<td>4***</td>
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<td>Model F&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>.650</td>
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<td>.185</td>
<td>1031</td>
<td>5***</td>
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(Harman’s single-factor test)

**Notes:** N = 534, ***p<.001; $\chi^2$=chi-square discrepancy, df=degrees of freedom; GFI=Goodness of Fit Index; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; $\chi^2_{diff}$=difference in chi-square, $df_{diff}$=difference in degrees of freedom; in all measurement models, error terms were free to covary between two pairs of commitment items to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992). All models are compared to the full measurement model.

<sup>a</sup>=Value motive and volunteering engagement combined into one factor
<sup>b</sup>=Value motive and commitment to beneficiaries combined into one factor
<sup>c</sup>=Volunteering engagement and commitment to beneficiaries combined into one factor
<sup>d</sup>=Value motive, volunteering engagement and hours spent volunteering combined into one factor
<sup>e</sup>=Volunteering engagement, commitment to beneficiaries and hours spent volunteering combined into one factor
<sup>f</sup>=All constructs combined into one factor
### 7.3 Table 3: Mediation results

*Regression Results for Testing Mediation*

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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
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<th>Time spent volunteering</th>
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<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
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<td>.03***</td>
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<td>-.46**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.36*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.13</td>
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<td>.17</td>
<td>-.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
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<td>-.50**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.49**</td>
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<td>Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² (Adj. R²)</td>
<td>.15 (.14)</td>
<td>.06 (.05)</td>
<td>.18 (.17)</td>
<td>.18 (.17)</td>
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</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
### Table 4: Moderation results

*Hierarchical Regression Results for Testing Moderation*

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<td>.16</td>
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<td>-.47**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.44*</td>
<td>.17</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.46***</td>
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<td>Commitment to beneficiaries</td>
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<td>.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement X Commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

| R² (Adj. R²) Sig ΔR²        | .06 (.05)*** | .18 (.17)*** | .19 (.18)* |

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
### Table 5: Moderated mediation results

*Moderated Mediation Results for the Indirect Effect of the Value Motive on Time Spent Volunteering, via Engagement, across Levels of Commitment to Beneficiaries*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Moderator</th>
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<th>Conditional indirect effect</th>
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<td>.25</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</table>
8 Figures

8.1 Figure 1: Hypothesized model

Hypothesized relationships between the value motive, engagement, commitment to beneficiaries, and time spent volunteering.
8.2 Figure 2: Moderating effect of commitment to beneficiaries

Commitment to beneficiaries strengthens the relationship between engagement and time spent volunteering.
Chapter 2
Committed to Whom: Unraveling How Volunteers’ Perceived Impact on Beneficiaries Influences Their Turnover Intentions and Volunteer Time

Volunteering is ultimately about making an impact on those who benefit from volunteer efforts. It is about facilitating social change, discovering and executing solutions to social, environmental, economic, and/or political problems, and providing direct assistance to individuals in need. Volunteers who believe that they impact those who benefit from their volunteering work are able to make a connection between their actions and the resulting positive consequences in other people’s lives (c.f. Grant, 2007). Despite the evidence that volunteers are driven by a desire to help others and are concerned about other people’s welfare (e.g., Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Chacon, Perez, Flores, & Vecina, 2011; Clary et al., 1998), we know little about what happens when volunteers are aware of the positive impact that they make on those who benefit from their actions. Hence, the first goal of the present study is to examine the influence of perceived impact on beneficiaries on two important outcomes for volunteer organizations, namely, turnover intentions and the time that volunteers dedicate to their service (e.g., Cnaan & Cascio, 1999; Craig-Lees, Harris, & Lau, 2008; Hustinx, 2010).

The second goal of the present study is to explore why perceived impact on beneficiaries is related to volunteers’ turnover intentions and time spent volunteering. The theoretical model identifies affective commitment as the factor that explains this underlying process because perceived impact on beneficiaries is an event of affective significance.
(Sonnentag & Grant, 2012) which has the potential to drive important behavioural outcomes (e.g., Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Importantly, the present study differentiates between two foci of affective commitment. Specifically, the model includes affective organizational commitment, defined as a positive emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and affective commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering, defined as dedication to the people who are impacted by volunteering efforts (Grant, 2007). Drawing from the multiple foci of commitment literature (Becker, 1992; Reichers, 1985), the present theoretical model posits that the negative relationship between perceived impact on beneficiaries and turnover intentions is mediated by volunteers’ affective organizational commitment, while the positive link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and time spent volunteering is mediated by volunteers’ affective commitment to beneficiaries. A diagram of the theoretical model is depicted in Figure 1.

The present study contributes to the literature in at least two ways. First, it is the first study, to my knowledge, to examine the extent to which volunteers’ perceptions of their impact on beneficiaries influences turnover intentions and time spent volunteering. Much of the past research on drivers of volunteer behaviour has emphasized volunteer motives (e.g., Clary et al., 1998), needs (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009), and traits (e.g., Davis, 2005). This study draws from the theory of relational job design (Grant, 2007), a budding area of research in the paid employment context, to examine an unexplored antecedent of volunteer behaviour, that is, perceived impact on beneficiaries. This also has important practical implications for the management of volunteers, as it is arguably more straightforward for organizations to design jobs to increase volunteers’ perceptions of their impact on those
whom they benefit, compared to orchestrating the design of volunteer roles so that they meet
the motives, needs, and/or traits of volunteers.

Second, the present study contributes to the literature on multiple foci of commitment
by showing the unique mediating effects of affective commitment directed toward the
organization versus toward those who benefit from volunteering efforts. Importantly, this
chapter theorizes and shows that the two mediators are not interchangeable. Doing so lays
the groundwork for developing a comprehensive and useful theory of volunteer motivation
and retention for volunteering research and practice.

1 Theoretical framework and hypotheses

1.1 Volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries

Perceived impact on beneficiaries enables volunteers to make a connection between
their actions and the positive outcomes in other people’s lives. For example, volunteers of
anti-poverty organizations may be aware of their impact on the economic growth of the poor;
volunteers of environmental organizations may be attuned to the positive impact they make
on wildlife; and volunteers at a local primary school may be aware of the impact they make
on children’s love of literature. However, according to relational job design theory, perceived
impact goes beyond a state of awareness. It also encompasses “a state of subjective meaning,
a way of experiencing one’s work as significant and purposeful through its connection to the
welfare of other people” (Grant, 2007, p. 399). When volunteers perceive that they impact
the beneficiaries of their efforts, they are aware that their actions have consequences for
them; hence, volunteers’ actions are seen as meaningfully connected to those who benefit from them (Grant, 2007).

Perceived impact on beneficiaries is likely to lead to positive outcomes because, according to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), individuals are motivated when they believe that their efforts will lead to higher levels of performance, which will in turn result in valuable rewards. In the context of volunteering, volunteers who believe that they make an impact on the recipients of their activities are more likely to report positive outcomes because they are able to see a clear link between their actions and the outcomes of their actions; in essence, perceiving their actions as impactful on beneficiaries is a valued reward for volunteers. Therefore, they are likely to remain with the volunteer organization and commit more time to their volunteering work because they see the instrumentality of their volunteering activities in terms of impacting others.

Although research has yet to examine perceived impact on beneficiaries in the context of volunteering, there is a small body of research that supports relational job design theory in the paid employment context. For instance, research has shown that paid employees who feel that they make an impact on others persist more at work (Grant et al., 2007) and exhibit greater job dedication, helping behaviour (Grant, 2008), and job performance (Grant, 2012). For volunteer organizations, intentions to turnover and time spent volunteering are arguably two of the most important volunteering outcomes (Hustinx, 2010). Although no research has yet examined the impact of perceived impact on beneficiaries on these two outcomes, the theory of relational job design (Grant, 2007), expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), and empirical work in the paid context suggest that it may have positive consequences. Thus, I hypothesize:
Hypothesis 1: Volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries is negatively related to turnover intentions from the volunteer organization.

Hypothesis 2: Volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries is positively related to time spent volunteering.

1.2 The mediating role of commitment: Two foci, two paths

Meyer, Becker, and Van Dick (2006) defined commitment as a force that connects an individual to a target and to a course of action that is pertinent to the target. This definition has at least two important implications for the present study. First, it recognizes that individuals may become committed to various foci (Reichers, 1985). Indeed, research has established that commitment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), top management, co-workers (Becker, 1992), supervisors (Becker, 1992; Stinglhamber & Vandenbergh, 2003), a union (Gordon & Ladd, 1990), one’s occupation (Ellemers, de Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993), the work itself (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009), employment agencies (Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003), and customers (Reichers, 1986; Siders, George, & Dharwadkar, 2001) appear to be distinct and predict various outcomes to differing degrees. Second, the definition reflects that an individual’s bond with a target commits the person to behaviours that are relevant to that target (see Becker & Kernan, 2003; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenbergh, 2004; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

The present study examines two foci of commitment, namely, commitment to the organization and commitment to beneficiaries of volunteering activities. Although volunteers develop attachments to both parties, I propose that the foci will differ in their impact on
work-related outcomes. This is because, according to the principle of compatibility, the relationship between an attitude and other attitudes or behaviours is based on the extent to which the attitudes and behaviours have the same target (Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

Research shows that the focus of commitment matches the outcome variable in question. For instance, Cheng, Jiang, and Riley (2003) found that organizational commitment was better suited to explain organization-relevant outcomes (e.g., turnover intentions), while commitment to one’s supervisor was better able to explain leader-relevant outcomes (e.g., job performance). Becker, Billings, Eveleth, and Gilbert (1996) found that supervisory commitment was a better predictor of supervisory ratings of job performance than organizational commitment. Siders et al. (2002) found that commitment to the organization and supervisor were more strongly related to organizationally-rewarded job performance, whereas commitment to the customer was more strongly related to performance measures that are relevant to and rewarded by customers. In a meta-analysis comparing organizational versus team commitment, Riketta and Van Dick (2005) showed that team-related variables were more closely related to commitment toward the team, compared to commitment toward the organization, and organizational commitment was more strongly related to variables that are more closely related to the organization as a whole, compared to team-level commitment.

Based on the principle of compatibility (Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), and the above empirical work that supports it, volunteers’ commitment to their volunteer organization is expected to be related to lower turnover intentions, while volunteers’ commitment to the beneficiaries of their actions is expected to be associated with increased
time spent volunteering among volunteers. In the following sections, I elaborate on these hypotheses.

1.2.1 The mediating role of organizational commitment

Volunteers who are aware of the impact that their actions have on beneficiaries may be more strongly committed to their volunteer organization. This is because, through their volunteering, they are able to directly observe how the organization is helping others, which strengthens their affective commitment to the organization. Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2008) found that employees who donated to charitable employer-sponsored causes reported higher levels of affective commitment toward the organization because the employer’s sponsorship of the charitable cause sent a signal to the employees that the organization was caring.

Similarly, volunteers who view their work as impactful on those who benefit from their volunteering activities report heightened levels of affective organizational commitment because they perceive that the organization truly cares about those it supports. Volunteers operate within the scope of their volunteering organization’s mission (Nelson, Pratt, Carpenter, & Walter, 1995) and are able to observe firsthand how their work through the organization is helping beneficiaries. Furthermore, it is the volunteering organization’s infrastructure that provides volunteers with the opportunity to improve the welfare of beneficiaries in the first place. As a result, the perception that their actions have a positive impact enables volunteers to see their volunteering organization as caring, thereby strengthening their affective commitment to the organization (Grant et al., 2008).

Moreover, commitment to the organization leads volunteers to desire to remain volunteering for the organization. There is a wealth of evidence showing that affective
organizational commitment is positively related to intentions to remain with the organization in the paid context (e.g., Meyer et al., 2002) and research has also found that volunteers who are committed to their volunteer organization are less likely to quit volunteering for that organization (e.g., Cuskelley & Boag, 2001; Miller, Powell, & Seltzer, 1990; Valeau, Mignonac, Vandenberghhe, & Gatignon Turnau, 2013). In summary, I propose that volunteers who perceive that their work has an impact on the beneficiaries of their volunteering efforts report lower intentions to turnover because they are more affectively committed to the organization.

_Hypothesis 3: Organizational commitment mediates the link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and turnover intentions._

### 1.2.2 The mediating role of commitment to beneficiaries

Volunteers who perceive that they make an impact on those who benefit from their actions are likely to feel more committed to them. This is because, when making a decision about how one thinks or feels about a target, people, in part, infer these beliefs from their own overt behaviour (Bem, 1972). Research has revealed that people who help others are inclined to justify their own helping behaviour by convincing themselves that the receiver is attractive, likeable, and worthy of commitment (e.g., Flynn & Brockner, 2003; Jecker & Landy, 1969). When individuals care for others, they are more likely to become committed to those who receive their care. Hence, when volunteers see the positive impact that their work has on beneficiaries’ welfare, they infer that they value and like the beneficiaries, which fosters emotional attachments (Bem, 1972; Grant et al., 2008; Jecker & Landy, 1969). I therefore hypothesize that volunteers’ awareness of their positive impact on beneficiaries strengthens their affective commitment to these individuals.
Moreover, commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering leads volunteers to dedicate more of their time to volunteering. This is because feeling committed to the beneficiaries of one’s activities leads to a sense of attachment and relatedness to the beneficiaries (Meyer et al., 2004). Volunteers have a need to be related to others and, through spending time on volunteering, that need is satiated (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Commitment to beneficiaries therefore ignites a desire in volunteers to invest increasing amounts of time in their volunteering efforts (Grant, 2007). In summary, I hypothesize that volunteers who are aware of the positive impact that they have on the welfare of the beneficiaries of their activities spend more time engaging with such activities because they are more strongly committed to those who benefit from them.

*Hypothesis 4: Commitment to beneficiaries mediates the link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and time spent volunteering.*

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Sample and procedure

The present study employed the same sample as this dissertation’s first study (see Section 2.1 of Chapter 1).

### 2.2 Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all items were measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Where appropriate, the language used in the scales was adapted to reflect the volunteering context of the study.
2.2.1 Perceived impact on beneficiaries

Volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries was measured with a 4-item scale based on Grant et al. (2007). A sample item was “Through my volunteering work, I substantially improve the welfare of [the volunteer organization’s] beneficiaries.” Cronbach’s alpha was .81.

2.2.2 Affective organizational commitment

Affective commitment to the organization was measured with a 6-item scale adapted from Meyer and Allen (1984; 1990). A sample item was “I feel a strong sense of belonging to [the volunteer organization].” Cronbach’s alpha was .91.

2.2.3 Affective commitment to beneficiaries

Meyer and Allen’s (1984; 1990) and Grant et al.’s (2007) affective commitment scales were adapted to develop a 5-item affective commitment to beneficiaries scale. A sample item was “I am strongly committed to the beneficiaries of my volunteering activities.” Cronbach’s alpha was .79.

2.2.4 Turnover intentions

I employed a 3-item turnover intentions scale based on Boroff and Lewin (1997). A sample item was “I am seriously considering quitting volunteering at [the volunteer organization].” Cronbach’s alpha was .72.

2.2.5 Time spent volunteering

To measure volunteer time, participants were asked to report (by month) the number of hours they had volunteered in the preceding 12 months. The sum of these figures was used to create the volunteer time variable employed in the analyses. Volunteer time was positively
skewed; in order to conduct parametric tests without violating normality assumptions, I normalized the variable by taking its log transformation (Osborne, 2002).

2.2.6 Control variables

Gender (1=female, 0=male), age, and working status (dummy variables for full-time, part-time, retired, and other, where the “other” category was used as the comparison group) were entered in the analyses as controls. They were included because two reviews of the volunteering literature showed that women and men differ in the intensity and longevity of their volunteering efforts, age and related life stages play an important role in volunteers’ attitudes and behaviours, and working status influences the time that volunteers devote to their service (Wilson, 2000, 2012).

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics and tests of discriminant validity

Scale reliabilities, means and standard deviations, and correlations of the variables employed in the study are presented in Table 1.

As all measures in the present study were collected from a single source, a series of confirmatory factor analyses was conducted to assess the potential influence of common method bias and to establish the discriminant validity of the scales. A full measurement model was initially tested, in which all indicators loaded onto their respective factors. All factors were allowed to correlate. In all measurement models, error terms were free to covary between one pair of affective organizational commitment items and two pairs of affective
commitment to beneficiaries items to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992). Five fit indices were calculated to determine how the model fitted the data (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009). For the $\chi^2$/df, values less than 2.5 indicate a good fit and values around 5.0 an acceptable fit (Arbuckle, 2006). For the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), values above .90 are recommended as an indication of acceptable model fit (Bentler, 1990; Bentler & Bonett, 1980). For the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), values less than .06 indicate a good model fit and values less than .08 an acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1998). The five-factor model showed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 528; \text{df} = 140; \text{CFI} = .93; \text{TLI} = .91; \text{RMSEA} = .072; \text{SRMR} = .079$). Next, sequential $\chi^2$ difference tests were carried out. Specifically, the full measurement model was compared to eight alternative nested models, as shown in Table 2. Results of the measurement model comparison revealed that the model fit of the alternative models was significantly worse compared to the full measurement model (all at $p < .001$). This suggests that the variables in this study are distinct.

### 3.2 Test of hypotheses

I employed Hayes’s (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS, which uses an analytical framework based on ordinary least squares to estimate direct and indirect effects, to test my hypotheses. This is a versatile modeling tool because it allows for the testing of multiple mediators for one dependent variable at a time. PROCESS also quantifies indirect effects and uses a single inferential test to test for mediation. In addition, PROCESS employs bootstrapping when generating confidence intervals for indirect effects. Statistical
methodologists consider bootstrapping one of the better methods for testing mediation hypotheses (see Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that perceived impact on beneficiaries is negatively related to volunteers’ turnover intentions and Hypothesis 3 predicted that affective commitment to the organization mediates this relationship. Table 3 reveals that perceived impact on beneficiaries was significantly and negatively related to turnover intentions (total effect or \( \text{path } c \)), lending support to Hypothesis 1. The results showed that the size of the indirect effect of perceived impact on beneficiaries on turnover intentions, transmitted through affective organizational commitment, was -1.17. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval \([-0.2541, -0.1066]\) did not contain 0, indicating that the indirect effect was different from zero. Hypothesis 3 was thus supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that perceived impact on beneficiaries is positively related to volunteer hours and Hypothesis 4 predicted that affective commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering mediates this relationship. Results in Table 4 reveal that perceived impact on beneficiaries was significantly and positively related to volunteer time (total effect or path \( c \)); Hypothesis 2 was therefore supported. The results further revealed that the size of the indirect effect of perceived impact on beneficiaries on volunteer time, transmitted through affective commitment to beneficiaries, was .05. While the size of this effect was fairly small, the indirect effect was statistically significant, as the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval \([0.0071, 0.1049]\) did not contain 0. Hypothesis 4 was thus also supported.

The present study also examined whether commitment to the organization mediated the relationship between perceived impact on beneficiaries and time spent volunteering, and
whether commitment to beneficiaries mediated the relationship between perceived impact on beneficiaries and turnover intentions, thereby testing whether the two mediators were interchangeable. I tested this in two ways. I first ran two mediation models where I individually tested whether the two mediators could be switched without considerably altering the results. The results showed that affective commitment to the organization did not mediate the link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and time spent volunteering, as the indirect effect \((ab)\) was not statistically significant \((ab = .03; 95\% \ CI [-.0131, .0773])\). Similarly, the indirect effect of volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries on turnover intentions, transmitted through affective commitment to beneficiaries, was not statistically significant \((ab = -.01; 95\% \ CI [-.0522, .0400])\). These analyses illustrated that, when considered individually, the two mediators were not interchangeable.

Second, I included both foci of commitment variables into the model simultaneously for each dependent variable. The results showed that only affective commitment to beneficiaries mediated the relationship between perceived impact on beneficiaries and volunteer time, as the indirect effect through affective commitment to the organization was not statistically significant \((ab = .01; 95\% \ CI [-.0419, .0626])\). The indirect effect of perceived impact on beneficiaries on turnover intentions, transmitted through affective commitment to beneficiaries, was weak, yet statistically significant \((ab = .06; 95\% \ CI [.0087, .1060])\); however, the effect was in the opposite direction than the indirect effect transmitted through affective organizational commitment and opposite of what one would expect. These results, while not formally hypothesized, add support to the main study findings, as they further validate the theoretical model that distinguishes between the foci of the two mediators and proposes two different paths to volunteering outcomes.
4 Discussion

The results of the present study revealed a positive relationship between volunteers’ perceived impact on beneficiaries and (1) their intention to remain volunteering with the volunteer organization and (2) the time that they dedicate to their volunteering activities. The theoretical model uncovered two mechanisms that explain how the positive consequences of perceived impact on beneficiaries unfold. Specifically, the model and its empirical tests show that volunteers are less likely to leave their volunteer organization due to their affective commitment to that organization. Moreover, they devote more time to their service because they are affectively committed to the beneficiaries of their volunteer work.

The present study contributes to the volunteering literature in at least two ways. First, the findings show that perceived impact on beneficiaries is an important driver of volunteer attitudes and behaviour. Identifying factors that motivate volunteers to dedicate their time to volunteering is arguably one of the most researched topics in the volunteering literature (Snyder & Omoto, 2008). While studies have repeatedly shown that the most frequently endorsed motive for volunteering is the value motive, which encompasses volunteers’ desire to improve the welfare of others (e.g., Allison et al., 2002; Chacon et al., 2011; Clary et al., 1998), scant attention has been paid to the outcomes of perceived impact on beneficiaries. This is surprising given that this concept is particularly well-suited to the domain of volunteering, as it speaks to the essence of volunteer work. This finding is important because it suggests that volunteer organizations should design volunteer positions such that they provide volunteers with the opportunity to see the impact of their work on those who benefit from it.
Second, the present study makes a significant contribution to both the volunteering literature and the literature on multiple foci of commitment by uncovering two distinct foci of commitment that explain the links between perceived impact on beneficiaries and turnover intentions and time spent volunteering, respectively. In line with the principle of compatibility (Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), the results of this study show that volunteers’ affective commitment to the organization is better able to explain the link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and turnover intentions (an organization-relevant outcome), while volunteers’ affective commitment to those who benefit from their work is better suited to explain the link between perceived impact on beneficiaries and the time that volunteers devote to their service (a beneficiary-relevant outcome). These findings contribute to the multiple foci of commitment literature, as they illustrate the value of matching the foci of the variables under study (Becker, 1992). They also contribute to the volunteering literature by advancing commitment to beneficiaries as an important focus of commitment, thereby highlighting the value in studying and extending research models developed in the paid employment context to the volunteering context (Dailey, 1986).

4.1 Practical implications

In the absence of material rewards that play a central role in paid employment relations, volunteer organizations need to find other ways of encouraging volunteers to expend effort and remain with the organization. The present findings provide organizations with some practical tools that they can use to achieve those goals. First, due to the important role that perceived impact on beneficiaries plays in volunteering, volunteer organizations should focus their efforts on showing their volunteers how their work impacts the welfare of their beneficiaries (Kinsbergen, Tolsma, & Ruiter, 2013). One straightforward way of
conveying this would be through the volunteer organization’s electronic newsletter or other means of communication. Moreover, contact with beneficiaries has been shown to increase employees’ perceptions that they have an impact on others (e.g., Grant, 2012; Grant et al., 2007), which has important implications for volunteering. Due to the nature of volunteer work, beneficiary contact often features prominently in volunteers’ day-to-day activities. However, when this is not the case and when geographic distance is not an issue, volunteer organizations may benefit from organizing informal meetings between volunteers and their beneficiaries, so that the volunteers can learn first-hand how their service impacts upon the beneficiaries of their actions.

The present study also highlights the important role of affective organizational commitment in lowering volunteers’ turnover intentions, which is in line with previous findings in the volunteering literature (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dawley, Stephens, & Stephens, 2005; Van Vuuren, de Jong, & Seydel, 2008). In addition to helping their volunteers become aware of the impact they have on their beneficiaries, volunteer organizations should thus also implement strategies to increase volunteers’ organizational commitment levels and thereby lower turnover intentions. For instance, Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) showed that inducing pride and respect for the volunteer organization in volunteers helps shape volunteers’ organizational commitment levels. First, pride can be induced by showing volunteers that their work is important. Second, volunteer organizations can induce feelings of respect by creating a supportive environment for their volunteers (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007).
4.2 Study limitations and directions for future research

The cross-sectional nature of the data limits my ability to make causality claims. However, I used a strong theoretical foundation to establish temporal precedence, showing that the predictors occur before the proposed effects; I obtained evidence of concomitant variation, where the study variables covary significantly and in the expected direction; and I attempted to eliminate spurious covariation by including control variables in the two mediation models (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Nevertheless, replicating this study using longitudinal data or employing an experimental study design would help alleviate these concerns further and provide more conclusive results. Furthermore, as the sample in this study consisted mostly of older volunteers, future studies should employ a sample more demographically similar to the general population and thereby expand the generalizability of these findings.

An additional limitation of the present study is that all the variables used in the analyses were derived from self-report measures, which raises common method bias concerns. In order to alleviate this concern, I employed established scales, guaranteed anonymity to the respondents, and provided participants with a clear explanation of study procedures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Moreover, analytical procedures revealed that common method bias was not a particular concern and provided support for the discriminant validity of the study variables.

The present results may lead to future research on the influence of perceived impact on beneficiaries on important outcomes for volunteer organizations. To develop this theoretical area, future research should consider the national, organizational, task, and individual contextual factors that may moderate the relationship between perceived impact
on beneficiaries and relevant volunteering outcomes. For instance, the type of volunteer role may moderate the extent to which perceived impact on beneficiaries leads to retention; a volunteer role that allows the incumbent to interact face-to-face with the beneficiaries will likely have a stronger impact-outcome relationship than volunteers who carry out jobs that do not allow them to interact closely with those who benefit from their service.

5 Conclusion

I developed and tested a theoretical model that explored how perceived impact on beneficiaries resulted in lower turnover intentions and increased time spent volunteering. Specifically, the results showed that volunteers have lower intentions to leave the organization when they are more strongly committed to that organization, and are more willing to devote more time to their volunteering efforts when they are more strongly committed to the beneficiaries of their actions. At a time when governments increasingly rely on volunteer organizations and their volunteers to fill gaps in services to individuals and communities, promoting active and prolonged volunteer service is of chief importance. The findings of the present study highlight important new pathways that volunteer organizations can target and thereby more effectively manage their volunteers.
6 References


### Table 1: Descriptive statistics

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>56.20</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Perceived impact on beneficiaries</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Organizational commitment</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Commitment to beneficiaries</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Turnover intentions</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>-.35***</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Volunteering hours*</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N=534.*

*a*Log-transformed (ln).

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
### 7.2 Table 2: Fit statistics

**Fit Statistics from Measurement Model Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>X² (df)</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>ΔΧ²</th>
<th>Δdf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full measurement model</td>
<td>528 (140)</td>
<td>.928</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model A&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1205 (144)</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model B&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1056 (144)</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model C&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>908 (144)</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model D&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1550 (147)</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>1022</td>
<td>7***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>551 (143)</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model F&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>924 (146)</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>6***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model G&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1352 (148)</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.743</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>8***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model H&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1974 (149)</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>9***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Harman’s Single Factor Test)

Notes: ***p<.001; X²=chi-square discrepancy, df=degrees of freedom; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; TLI=Tucker-Lewis Coefficient; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR= Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; ΔΧ² =difference in chi-square, Δdf =difference in degrees of freedom. All models are compared to the full measurement model.

<sup>a</sup>=Perceived impact on beneficiaries and organizational commitment combined into a single factor
<sup>b</sup>=Perceived impact on beneficiaries and commitment to beneficiaries combined into a single factor
<sup>c</sup>=Organizational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries combined into a single factor
<sup>d</sup>=Perceived impact on beneficiaries, organizational commitment, and commitment to beneficiaries combined into a single factor
<sup>e</sup>=Turnover intentions and volunteering hours combined into a single factor
<sup>f</sup>=Organizational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries combined into one factor; turnover intentions and volunteering hours combined into a second factor
<sup>g</sup>=Organizational commitment, commitment to beneficiaries, turnover intentions, and volunteering hours combined into a single factor
<sup>h</sup>=All factors combined into a single factor
### Table 3: Mediation results (organizational commitment)

*Mediation Results (Organizational Commitment as Mediator)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bootstrapping results for indirect effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effect of PIB on turnover intentions through org. commitment</td>
<td>-0.17***</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI (95%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>[-0.25; -0.11]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct and total effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIB on organizational commitment (path a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44***</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commitment on turnover intentions (path b)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.39***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total effect of PIB on turnover intentions (path c)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.33***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct effect of PIB on turnover intentions (path c1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.22***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Control variables in all models: age, gender, working status. PIB = perceived impact on beneficiaries. CI = confidence interval. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Path $a$ denotes the link between the predictor and the mediator; path $b$ the link between the mediator and the outcome variable; path $c$ the link between the predictor and the outcome variable when the mediator is not included in the model (i.e., total effect); and path $c1$ the link between the predictor and the outcome variable when the mediator is included in the model (i.e., direct effect).
### 7.4 Table 4: Mediation results (commitment to beneficiaries)

**Mediation Results (Commitment to Beneficiaries as Mediator)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<td><strong>Bootstrapping results for indirect effects</strong></td>
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<td>Indirect effect of PIB on volunteer time through commitment to beneficiaries</td>
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*Note: Control variables in all models: age, gender, working status. PIB = perceived impact on beneficiaries. CI = confidence interval. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.*

Path $a$ denotes the link between the predictor and the mediator; path $b$ the link between the mediator and the outcome variable; path $c$ the link between the predictor and the outcome variable when the mediator is not included in the model (i.e., total effect); and path $c1$ the link between the predictor and the outcome variable when the mediator is included in the model (i.e., direct effect).
8 Figures

8.1 Figure 1: Hypothesized model

Hypothesized relationships between perceived impact on beneficiaries (predictor) and turnover intentions and time spent volunteering (outcome variables), mediated by organizational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries, respectively.
Chapter 3
Active Management of Volunteers: How Training and Staff Support Promote the Organizational Commitment of Volunteers

Two important trends in governmental policy, particularly in the Western world, have deeply affected the role that nonprofit organizations play in public life and the way they are expected to manage their workforce, including their volunteers. The first is government retrenchment, where, due to heightened economic pressures, governments around the world have been cutting their programs and services. This has led to an increased reliance on nonprofit organizations and their volunteers to fill this void in public life. The second is the encroachment of private sector management into the public sector and the underlying belief in the transferability of private sector management practices (Adcroft & Willis, 2002). Because the majority of nonprofit organizations rely heavily on government funding, this focus on managerialism has spilled over into the third sector. Indeed, the professionalization of the management of volunteers, with an emphasis on adopting the efficiencies of management developed in the private sector (Cuskelley, Taylor, Hoye, & Darcy, 2006; Nichols et al., 2005), now appears to be well underway (Hager & Brudney, 2004).

The management of volunteers, however, is not well-understood in theory, as we know relatively little about the effectiveness of private sector management practices in this context (Cuskelley et al., 2006). The belief in the transferability of management practices across sectors assumes that practices that are effective in the paid employment context are also applicable to the management of volunteers. Research has shown, however, that there are significant differences between employees and volunteers, including differences in
motivation, expected rewards, and commitments (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999). Perhaps the most important difference, though, is the so-called “unreliability problem”, which refers to volunteers’ ability to limit their efforts or leave the organization at will, stemming from the uncertainty of volunteer roles and less powerful incentives (Pearce, 1993). This, coupled with managers of volunteers who lack the formal authority awarded to them in the context of paid employment, makes the behaviour of volunteers difficult to mandate and highlights the importance of uncovering instruments that are also effective in this context (Jager, Kreutzer, & Beyes, 2009; Pearce, 1993).

The literature on volunteering has been dominated by research on volunteers’ subjective dispositions, such as personality traits, motives, and values (see Wilson, 2012), and the experiences of volunteering (see Snyder & Omoto, 2008). In contrast, we know little about how the organizational treatment of volunteers might affect volunteering outcomes (Haski-Leventhal & Cnaan, 2009; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Wilson, 2012). Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to show how volunteer organizations can use two management practices, namely, training and paid staff support, to increase volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity and self-efficacy, which in turn foster volunteers’ organizational commitment.

The present study makes two contributions to the science and practice of volunteer management. First, it adds support to the relatively small body of literature showing that volunteer training and paid staff support have a positive impact on volunteers’ organizational commitment levels (e.g., Hager & Brudney, 2004; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009; Tang, Choi, & Morrow-Howell, 2010). By focusing on organizational factors, rather than motives, dispositions, or volunteers’ socio-demographic characteristics, this study explores how an
active volunteer management approach can result in positive volunteering outcomes. Second, by introducing role clarity and self-efficacy perceptions into the model, the present study identifies two mechanisms that explain the relationships between training and staff support (predictors) and volunteers’ commitment to their organization (outcome). This not only adds to our understanding of the organizational behaviour of volunteers, but also provides nonprofit organizations with additional tools that they can use to more effectively manage their volunteers.

1 Theoretical background and hypotheses

1.1 Promoting organizational commitment through training and staff support

The impact that the organizational context has on volunteering remains one of the most underdeveloped and least understood issues in volunteering research (Haski-Leventhal & Cnaan, 2009; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Wilson, 2012). This is despite the fact that formal volunteering is constrained to organizational contexts and volunteers often work for the same volunteer organization and in the same role over extended periods of time (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). In this type of context, nonprofit organizations may benefit greatly from investing resources in organizational support efforts that extend beyond merely providing support to paid staff. The present study focuses on the impact that volunteer training and paid staff support have on volunteers’ organizational commitment levels.

Volunteers’ commitment to their volunteer organization was chosen as the outcome of interest for two reasons. First, a volunteer’s attitude toward an object, such as the
volunteer organization, may result in a number of behavioural responses (Laczo & Hanisch, 1999). Indeed, volunteers’ organizational commitment has been shown to influence their involvement (e.g., Preston & Brown, 2004), role fulfillment (e.g., Dawley, Stephens, & Stephens, 2005), and decision to leave the organization (e.g., Vecina, Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2012). Second, unlike paid employees, volunteers are not dependent on the organization to provide them with a paycheck or other benefits, so they are free to join and leave the volunteer organization at will (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999). On the other hand, previous research has demonstrated that volunteers’ organizational commitment depends to a large extent on their organizational experiences (Wilson, 2012). It seems, then, that volunteer organizations have a great degree of control over this outcome and should invest in practices that help promote it.

The adoption of volunteer management practices is not widespread in nonprofit organizations (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2005). A study of volunteer management practices in U.S. charities found that volunteer training is particularly rare (Hager & Brudney, 2004). This is surprising, because volunteers at a nonprofit organization typically do not share a common body of knowledge or skills (Zischka & Jones, 1988), which makes training particularly relevant. Moreover, training has been shown to predict the amount of time volunteers dedicate to their service (Tang et al., 2010). It is also positively associated with retention (e.g., Hager & Brudney, 2004; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009), satisfaction (e.g., Jamison, 2003), and the emotional and mental well-being of volunteers (Tang et al., 2010). The relationship between volunteer training and organizational commitment has garnered less attention, though findings from the paid employment context show that training tends to
have a positive impact on individuals’ organizational commitment levels (e.g., Meyer & Smith, 2000; Saks, 1995).

In contrast to the training of volunteers, paid staff support has received scant attention in the volunteering literature. Nevertheless, studies looking at constructs conceptually related to staff support have shown promising results. For instance, ongoing organizational support, a concept closely related to staff support, has been shown to promote intentions to remain (e.g., Farmer and Fedor, 1999; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009) and improved mental health (Tang et al., 2010) among volunteers. Farmer and Fedor (1999) argued that perceptions of organizational support are even more important in the context of volunteering than in paid employment, because volunteers typically do not receive any remuneration or tangible benefits from their organization. Organizational support thus serves as a form of recognition. Moreover, Adams and Shepherd (1996) suggested that the quality of the relationships between volunteers and paid staff plays an important role in the overall quality of volunteers’ experiences. Similarly, Hobson, Rominger, Malec, Hobson, and Evans (1996) suggested that the degree to which paid staff was helpful and appreciative of volunteers’ efforts has a positive impact on volunteers’ organizational commitment. The present study tests this proposition by exploring the extent to which paid staff support is related to volunteers’ commitment to their organization.

**Hypothesis 1. Training of volunteers is positively related to volunteers’ organizational commitment.**

**Hypothesis 2. Support provided to volunteers by paid staff is positively related to volunteers’ organizational commitment.**
1.2 Why do organizational support efforts work?

Previous findings in the volunteering literature lend some evidence to the notion that training and paid staff support promote volunteers’ organizational commitment. However, to my knowledge, researchers have not looked at the underlying mechanism(s) that might help explain these relationships. The present study advances that both practices are related to volunteers’ organizational commitment because the organization equips the volunteers with the means necessary to perform their work and function more effectively as organizational members. In other words, training and paid staff support help volunteers adjust to organizational life and this adjustment, in turn, promotes volunteers’ commitment to their organization. Role clarity and self-efficacy, two concepts believed to be crucial to employee adjustment in the paid employment context (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007), explain the links between organizational support efforts and volunteers’ organizational commitment. In the paid employment context, uncertainty with regard to a role and one’s ability to perform this role mostly affects newcomers to the organization, but volunteers often experience uncertainty throughout their tenure (Kramer, Meisenbach, & Hansen, 2013). Thus, finding ways to manage this uncertainty can help volunteer organizations improve important volunteering outcomes.

1.2.1 The mediating effect of role clarity

Role ambiguity, or the absence of role clarity, refers to a lack of information regarding what is required to perform one’s role (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Role ambiguity and its detrimental effects on workplace outcomes have been studied extensively in the context of paid employment (e.g., Abramis, 1994; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Tubre & Collins, 2000) and some research has shown its relevance in the nonprofit sector (Doherty &
Hoye, 2011). For instance, role ambiguity reduces satisfaction with volunteer activities (Kulik, 2007; Sakires, Doherty, & Misener, 2009) and volunteer effort and performance (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Sakires et al., 2009; Wright & Millesen, 2008). It also causes volunteers to feel uneasy and distressed (Merrell, 2000) and increases burnout (Allen & Mueller, 2013).

Broadly speaking, the purpose of training is to foster learning among organizational members. It is provided to organizational members to increase their knowledge of the organization, their role, and how best to facilitate the organization’s goals. Moreover, training enables members to adjust to new ways of working. In this way, training provides the needed clarity for organizational members to understand their role and contribute to the organization (e.g., Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Merrell, 2000; Wright & Millesen, 2008).

Support from paid staff also increases role clarity. Feeling supported by paid staff implies that volunteers can discuss their role with paid organizational members, ask questions if needed, and keep up-to-date on relevant initiatives or changes to their role or the organization at large. The notion that support from paid staff increases role clarity is supported by a qualitative study of airport volunteers. The results showed that staff support from the volunteer organization’s paid staff led to reduced anxiety and increased task mastery among volunteers (McComb, 1995). Individuals typically perceive that role ambiguity is controllable by the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), so attempts by organizational staff to help volunteers with problems related to their role increases role clarity.
Role clarity that results from training and paid staff support leads to higher levels of organizational commitment. This is because volunteers who have clarity about their role are more likely to be committed to organizational values and find their contributions to be meaningful (Doherty & Hoye, 2011). Indeed, research in both the paid employment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and volunteering contexts (Haski-Leventhal & Cnaan, 2009; Nelson, Pratt, Carpenter, & Walter, 1995; Sakires et al., 2009) has shown that role clarity is positively associated with organizational commitment. Taken together, when a nonprofit organization invests in activities that help volunteers understand their role, such as training and paid staff support, this leads to higher levels of organizational commitment among volunteers.

Hypothesis 3. Volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity mediate the link between training and volunteers’ organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 4. Volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity mediate the link between paid staff support and volunteers’ organizational commitment.

1.2.2 The mediating effect of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Despite the important role that self-efficacy plays in organizational research, this concept has remained almost entirely neglected in the context of volunteering (for exceptions, see Eden & Kinnar, 1991; Lindenmeier, 2008). This is surprising given that volunteers tend to be unsure about their ability to successfully perform their role and tend to experience low confidence and feelings of being unprepared (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2011).
New information that individuals obtain through training has been shown to be particularly effective in changing self-efficacy beliefs among paid employees (e.g., Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Saks, 1995). In a similar vein, support from organizational staff has also been proposed to increase individuals’ perceptions of self-efficacy (e.g., Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Drawing on these findings from the paid employment literature, the present study proposes that organizational tactics that help volunteers increase positive beliefs in their ability to perform their role and improve their control over the environment, such as training and paid staff support, should be especially effective in influencing volunteers’ self-efficacy perceptions.

When the organization engages in activities that help volunteers gain confidence in their ability to perform their role, volunteers respond by strengthening their commitment to the volunteer organization. While past research has focused mostly on the link between efficacy expectations and task performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), perceptions of self-efficacy also increase organizational commitment, because an increase in one’s belief in their ability to complete tasks fosters an attachment to the organization’s mission (Van Vuuren, de Jong, & Seydel, 2008). Accordingly, Van Vuuren et al. (2008) found that employees’ self-efficacy perceptions predicted their levels of emotional attachment to the organization. Hence, I propose that:

Hypothesis 5. Volunteers’ perceptions of self-efficacy mediate the link between training and volunteers’ organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 6. Volunteers’ perceptions of self-efficacy mediate the link between paid staff support and volunteers’ organizational commitment.
1.3 A framework of organizational support

The present study develops and tests a model showing how an organizational support framework, consisting of training and paid staff support, promotes positive volunteering outcomes. Specifically, the model predicts that volunteer training and paid staff support foster higher levels of organizational commitment in volunteers. Moreover, it explores the underlying psychological mechanisms of these relationships by proposing that volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity and self-efficacy mediate the links between the two organizational support activities (i.e., training and paid staff support) and volunteers’ commitment to their organization.

2 Method

2.1 Sample and procedure

Data collection took place in a large nonprofit organization in the United Kingdom involved in international relief and development efforts. Two thousand and five hundred volunteers were invited to participate in an electronic survey; 647 questionnaires were returned, constituting a response rate of 25.9 percent. The final study sample was 36.2 percent male and the average age of the respondents was 56.2 years.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Training

The measure for training was developed for this study based on previous work by Meyer and Smith (2000). The measure included four items referring to the satisfaction with training (e.g., “I am satisfied with the amount of training provided by [Organization].”) and
the sufficiency of training received (e.g., “I need more training to carry out my volunteering activities,” reverse-coded). The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was .70.

2.2.2 Paid staff support

Three items based on Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) were used and adapted to reflect paid staff support efforts in the context of volunteering. A sample item was, “Paid staff at [Organization] are supportive when I have a problem related to my volunteering.” The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

2.2.3 Role clarity

Role clarity was measured with four items based on a scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). The items were adapted to measure clarity of the volunteering role. A sample item was, “I know exactly what is expected of me as a volunteer.” The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

2.2.4 Self-efficacy

General self-efficacy was measured with the eight-item scale developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001). A sample item was, “When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.” The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was .92.

2.2.5 Organizational commitment

Affective commitment to the organization was measured with six items based on Meyer and Allen (1991). A sample item was, “[Organization] has a great deal of personal
meaning for me.” The response scale ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was .92.

3 Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics and tests of discriminant validity

Scale reliabilities, the means and standard deviations for each scale, and inter-scale correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1.

As all the variables were collected from a single source, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) was carried out to assess the potential influence of common method variance and to establish discriminant validity of the scales (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). I initially tested a full measurement model, in which all items loaded onto their respective factors. The five factors were allowed to correlate. Error terms were free to covary between one pair of training, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment items, respectively, to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992). Five fit indices were used to establish the goodness of fit of the model. When it comes to the $\chi^2$/df, values less than 2.5 indicate a good model fit and values around 5.0 an acceptable fit (Arbuckle, 2006). For the Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), values greater than .95 represent a good model fit and values greater than .90 an acceptable fit (Bentler, 1990). Finally, for the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), values below .08 indicate an acceptable model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1998).
The five-factor model showed an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 1019; \text{df} = 262; \text{TLI} = .92; \text{CFI} = .93; \text{RMSEA} = .068; \text{SRMR} = .061$). Next, sequential $\chi^2$ difference tests were carried out. Specifically, the full measurement model was compared to five alternative nested models, as shown in Table 2. Results comparing the measurement models reveal that the model fit of the alternative models was significantly worse compared to the full measurement model (all at $p<.001$). Finally, I introduced an unmeasured latent methods factor to the original measurement model, allowing all items to load onto their theoretical constructs, as well as onto the latent methods factor. I assessed the change in CFI and RMSEA values between both models as an indicator of significance. The changes of CFI and RMSEA values, comparing both models, were 0.023 and 0.009, which is below the suggested rule of thumb of 0.05 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1990). These results indicate that the constructs in the present study are distinct and that common method bias did not unduly influence the results.

3.2 Test of hypotheses

Latent variable structural equation modeling using AMOS 19.0 (Arbuckle, 2006) was employed to test the theoretical model. To examine whether role clarity and self-efficacy mediated the relationships between training and paid staff support and organizational commitment, I followed the steps outlined by Mathieu and Taylor (2006). The procedure compared three alternative models: saturated, direct effects, and indirect effects models. For the saturated model, paths were estimated from each independent variable to role clarity, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment, and direct paths from role clarity and self-efficacy to organizational commitment. The saturated model provided an acceptable fit for the data ($\chi^2 = 1021; \text{df} = 263; \text{TLI} = .92; \text{CFI} = .93; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{SRMR} = .06$).
For the direct effects model, direct paths were estimated from each independent variable (i.e., training and paid staff support) to the outcome variable (i.e., organizational commitment), whereas no paths were leading to or stemming from the mediators (i.e., role clarity and self-efficacy). The indirect effects model estimated direct paths from each independent variable to the two mediator variables and direct paths from the mediator variables to the outcome variable, with no direct effects between the independent variables and the outcome variable. Both the direct effects and the indirect effects models were nested within the saturated model, which enabled me to use $\chi^2$ difference tests to compare the statistical fit of the three models. Specifically, the differences in chi-square between the direct effects model and the saturated model, as well as between the indirect effects model and the saturated model, were tested for significance while accounting for the change in degrees of freedom between the models. The results are shown in Table 3.

The direct effects model showed a relatively weak model fit ($\chi^2 = 1320; \text{df} = 269; \text{TLI} = .89; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{RMSEA} = .08; \text{SRMR} = .16$) and differed significantly from the saturated model ($\Delta \chi^2(6) = 299, p < .001$). This indicates that at least one independent variable has a significant direct relationship with role clarity or self-efficacy, or that role clarity or self-efficacy are significantly related to organizational commitment, which lends further support to the importance of the mediator variables. The indirect effects model showed a better model fit ($\chi^2 = 1131; \text{df} = 265; \text{TLI} = .91; \text{CFI} = .92; \text{RMSEA} = .07; \text{SRMR} = .08$), but, again, differed significantly from the saturated model ($\Delta \chi^2(2) = 110, p < .001$). This difference of fit indicates that one or both of the independent variables have a direct relationship with the outcome variable.
In a next step, I used the indirect effects model as a base and subsequently added direct paths between the independent variables and the outcome variable. I kept paths in the model if they were significant and if adding them resulted in a significant improvement of the overall model fit. The fit statistics for the final model are presented in Table 3 and the standardized estimates of the final model are presented in Figure 1.

Parameter estimates in Figure 1 show that training was significantly related to organizational commitment ($\beta = .19$), lending support to Hypothesis 1 and providing support for a partially mediated, rather than a fully mediated model. Similarly, paid staff support was also positively and significantly related to organizational commitment ($\beta = .38$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Moreover, training ($\beta = .44$) and paid staff support ($\beta = .27$) were both significantly related to role clarity, while only paid staff support was significantly related to self-efficacy ($\beta = .16$). Finally, role clarity ($\beta = .15$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .08$) were significantly related to organizational commitment. The final model therefore indicated that the paths between training and organizational commitment and paid staff support and organizational commitment were both partially mediated by role clarity, while the link between paid staff support and organizational commitment was partially mediated by self-efficacy only. Therefore, Hypotheses 3, 4, and 6 were partially supported. As the direct path from training to self-efficacy was not significant, the present study did not find support for Hypothesis 5, which predicted that self-efficacy would mediate the link between training and organizational commitment.
Discussion

Scholars have called for research that explores the factors that are associated with positive volunteering outcomes (e.g., Wilson, 2012) and have drawn special attention to the role that active volunteer management can play in enhancing volunteer attitudes and behaviours (e.g., Hager & Brudney, 2004; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). The present study contributes to this debate by examining the relationship between two organizational initiatives, namely, volunteer training and paid staff support, and volunteers’ organizational commitment levels. Specifically, the results of the present study show that providing training and ongoing staff support to volunteers increases their perceptions of role clarity, which in turn fosters their commitment to the volunteer organization. Moreover, the study found that volunteers’ perceptions of self-efficacy mediate the link between paid staff support and volunteers’ commitment levels, but there was no support for this for the link between volunteer training and organizational commitment.

These findings make several contributions to the literature. First, they add to the literature on volunteer management by showing that volunteer training and paid staff support are positively associated with volunteers’ organizational commitment levels. The results further demonstrate that the relationship between paid staff support and commitment is even stronger than the association between volunteer training and commitment. This is a particularly relevant finding, because volunteering research to date has largely neglected this important source of influence. While the majority of volunteering research has focused on individual characteristics in explaining volunteer attitudes and behaviours (see Wilson, 2012), the present study adopts a more active perspective on the management of volunteers. Volunteers’ commitment to their organization is, to a considerable extent, shaped by
organizational factors and research on volunteering needs to take both personal and organizational factors into account in order to provide a more holistic picture of volunteering outcomes.

Second, the present study provides an explanation for the mechanisms through which training and paid staff support influence volunteers’ organizational commitment. Specifically, it shows that both practices facilitate volunteers’ adjustment to their volunteering by reducing uncertainty regarding how their role should be carried out and increasing their belief in their ability to successfully perform this role, two issues that are common in the volunteering environment (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Kramer, 2011). The present results show that training and paid staff support increase volunteers’ perceptions of role clarity, which in turn foster volunteers’ commitment to the organization. The results also highlight the important role that self-efficacy, a construct previously neglected in the literature, can play in volunteering. Namely, this study shows that paid staff support is effective in promoting volunteers’ self-efficacy perceptions, which in turn bolster volunteers’ organizational commitment.

These results show a striking resemblance to research and theory on organizational socialization. Specifically, meta-analytical findings in the paid context reveal that employees who become an insider and feel part of the organization demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviours (Bauer et al., 2007). Similarly, the present study found that volunteers who feel competent about their role and position in the organization are likely to translate this confidence into higher levels of attachment to the organization. Applying the socialization perspective to volunteering research, the present study emphasizes that, in order to be a committed member of the organization, volunteers not only need to identify with the vision
and mission of the organization, which tend to be linked to individual motives and needs, but also with their role and the tasks they are required to perform in this role.

While the null finding for self-efficacy as the mediator between volunteer training and organizational commitment was unexpected, it is possible that my use of the general self-efficacy scale (Chen et al., 2001) may have accounted for this result. Training in the workplace is often specific to the tasks that employees have to perform in their role and has been shown to increase self-efficacy in employees by increasing their belief in their ability to perform those specific tasks (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). General self-efficacy, on the other hand, refers to individuals’ beliefs in their ability to perform well across a variety of different situations (Chen et al., 2001; Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998). Thus, it is possible that volunteer training is related to task-specific self-efficacy. In addition, training in the context of volunteering tends to be short and fairly informal (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009), whereas paid staff support is generally ongoing. General self-efficacy can be resistant to temporary or ephemeral influences (Chen et al., 2001), which could explain why paid staff support increased volunteers’ perceptions of self-efficacy, but training did not. Future studies should therefore look at task-specific self-efficacy as a potential mediator of the link between volunteer training and organizational commitment.

### 4.1 Implications for practice

These findings carry significant practical implications for nonprofit organizations relying on volunteer labour. At a time when volunteer organizations are struggling to retain their volunteers and attract new members (Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009), the present study highlights measures that managers can employ to ensure the ongoing commitment of their volunteers. First, volunteer organizations should invest in training by carrying out induction
programs to facilitate volunteers’ timely adjustment into their role. Moreover, training specific to the volunteer role should be conducted throughout a volunteer’s tenure with the organization. Training programs can include guidelines on how to successfully complete volunteer activities (e.g., campaigning), instructions on how to use certain tools (e.g., survey tools), or information about the context in which the organization is operating (e.g., information about the political or economic situation in developing countries). Second, managers can facilitate regular interactions between paid staff and volunteers to ensure that volunteers feel supported by the organization’s paid staff. This can be accomplished by forming project teams that consist of volunteers and paid staff, organizing gatherings where volunteers and paid staff can socialize, or assigning paid staff mentors to volunteers.

Finally, due to the importance of role clarity in the successful management of volunteers (Merrell, 2000; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013), volunteer managers should also consider other strategies for reducing role ambiguity. For instance, one method that has been endorsed in the volunteering literature is the greater formalization of roles through the use of job descriptions (Allen & Mueller, 2013; Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Merrell, 2000). Merrell (2000) suggested that nonprofit organizations should formulate written guidelines that outline the role and scope of a volunteer position, which should lessen the potential for role ambiguity. However, volunteer managers should be careful not to narrow the scope of volunteer roles too much. Many volunteers value the opportunity to apply their individual talents and experiences, so over-formalizing their role could be counterproductive, making volunteer work more like employment than volunteer activity (Merrell, 2000). Organizations should therefore aim for written guidelines that clarify volunteers’ responsibilities, but at the same time do not take away from the experience of volunteer work.
4.2 Study limitations

The present study contributes to the science and practice of volunteering, but there are certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the cross-sectional design of the study means that any causal inferences are tentative. Though the study hypotheses were based on a sound theoretical foundation and I obtained evidence of concomitant variation, testing these predictions using a longitudinal or an experimental design would provide more conclusive results. Second, the study sample consisted mostly of older volunteers from a nonprofit organization involved in international relief and development efforts, which limits the generalizability of the present findings to similar types of organizations with a comparable age profile. Future studies should thus look at other types of nonprofit organizations and employ samples that better reflect the demographics of the general volunteer population.

Third, the present study relied exclusively on self-report measures of the study variables. This raises the risk of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, following Conway and Lance (2010) and Podsakoff et al. (2003), I took proactive design steps to minimize this concern by explaining study procedures clearly and promoting participant anonymity and confidentiality of data. In addition, I employed scales from the organizational behaviour literature with established construct validity. Finally, confirmatory factor analyses provided evidence of discriminant validity (Conway & Lance, 2010). Taken together, these steps allow me to assert with some degree of confidence that common method variance did not unduly influence the results.
5 Conclusion

In light of increasing pressures for the greater professionalization of the third sector, finding ways to effectively adopt management practices developed in the private sector has become a major concern for volunteer managers. This study makes an important contribution to the volunteering literature by showing that organizational support efforts, such as training and paid staff support, increase role clarity and self-efficacy perceptions among volunteers, which in turn promote volunteers’ organizational commitment. At a time when the demand for nonprofit organizations’ services is on the rise, but the funds needed to run these operations are increasingly subjected to budget cuts, providing volunteer managers with cost-effective tools that they can use to manage their volunteers can contribute to the smooth functioning of their organizations.
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commitment in volunteer workers: Chamber of commerce board members and role


7 Tables

7.1 Table 1: Descriptive statistics

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Age</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Training</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Staff support</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.49***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Role clarity</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.17***</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Self-efficacy</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.52***</td>
<td>.44***</td>
<td>.17***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=647.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
7.2 Table 2: Fit statistics

Fit Statistics from Measurement Model Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>$\chi^2$(df)</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>$\chi^2_{\text{diff}}$</th>
<th>df$_{\text{diff}}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full measurement model</td>
<td>1019 (262)</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model A$^a$</td>
<td>1348 (266)</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model B$^b$</td>
<td>2924 (266)</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>4***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model C$^c$</td>
<td>4397 (271)</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>3378</td>
<td>9***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model D$^d$</td>
<td>4757 (269)</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>3738</td>
<td>7***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model E$^e$ (Harman’s single-factor test)</td>
<td>5545 (272)</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>4526</td>
<td>10***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N=647, ***p<.001; $\chi^2$=chi-square discrepancy; df=degrees of freedom; TLI=Tucker-Lewis coefficient; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR=Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}$=difference in chi-square; df$_{\text{diff}}$=difference in degrees of freedom; in all measurement models, error terms were free to covary between one pair of training, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment items, respectively, to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992). All models are compared to the full measurement model.

$^a$Training and staff support combined into one factor
$^b$Role clarity and self-efficacy combined into one factor
$^c$Training, staff support, role clarity, and self-efficacy combined into one factor
$^d$Role clarity, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment combined into one factor
$^e$All constructs combined into one factor
### 7.3 Table 3: Structural equation model comparison

**Structural equation model comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>1021 (263)</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects model</td>
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<td>.89</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effects model</td>
<td>1131 (265)</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final model</td>
<td>1022 (264)</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: N=647. Error terms were free to covary between one pair of training, self-efficacy, and organizational commitment items, respectively, to improve fit and help reduce bias in the estimated parameter values (Reddy, 1992).*
8 Figures

8.1 Figure 1: Standardized parameter estimates

Standardized parameter estimates of the final model.

*Figures*

8.1 Figure 1: Standardized parameter estimates

Standardized parameter estimates of the final model.

![Diagram showing the relationships between Training, Role Clarity, Paid Staff Support, Self-Efficacy, and Organizational Commitment with standardized parameter estimates and p-values.]

- Training: .44***
- Role Clarity: .19***
- Paid Staff Support: .27***
- Self-Efficacy: .16***
- Organizational Commitment: .38***

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. n.s. not significant."
Conclusion

The findings from the preceding three studies have several important implications for volunteering theory and nonprofit organizations’ volunteer management practices. The first study highlights the importance of promoting volunteers’ engagement with their work, a concept largely neglected in the volunteering literature. In addition, it suggests a number of interventions that volunteer managers can employ in order to facilitate volunteers’ engagement and prosocial behaviour. The second study is the first to introduce the concept of perceived impact on beneficiaries into the domain of volunteering and show how it influences volunteers’ turnover intentions and time spent volunteering. This study also underscores the importance of distinguishing between volunteers’ commitment to the organization versus commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering, and illustrates the value of matching the foci of the variables under study. Moreover, I propose several practical tools that volunteer managers can use to more effectively manage their volunteers, including strategies that promote beneficiary contact. Finally, the third study shows how nonprofit organizations can increase volunteers’ organizational commitment levels by clarifying and formalizing volunteer roles and boosting self-efficacy perceptions. Organizations can accomplish this by investing in volunteer training and paid staff support efforts, two practices that are under their control and can be applied widely throughout the organization.

On a broader level, promoting volunteerism and effective volunteer management practices should be considered a public policy matter of great importance. In addition to improving the welfare of the beneficiaries of volunteer efforts, volunteering also benefits the volunteers themselves, as it improves their emotional and physical well-being and creates
opportunities in different life domains. Moreover, volunteering benefits communities by strengthening ties, building trust, and servicing those in need and the marginalized. Finally, volunteering benefits society at large, as it represents the backbone of a functioning civil society. Despite these vital economic and social benefits, however, the efforts of nonprofit organizations and their volunteers are often constrained by public policy that neglects the needs of the third sector. To counteract the effects of the retrenchment of the welfare state, a comprehensive public policy framework promoting volunteerism should address the needs of individuals, nonprofit organizations, and the communities they serve, in order to improve the capacity of the third sector to meet societal challenges and thereby contribute to social cohesion.