A Study of the Relationships Between Volunteers' Commitments to Organizations and Beneficiaries and Turnover Intentions

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We used the three-component model of commitment that includes affective, normative, and continuance components to study the commitment of volunteer workers to their organisation and beneficiaries, and examine how these components independently and jointly related to volunteers' turnover intentions. Based on a sample of 343 volunteers from various organisations, we found affective and normative organisational commitment and normative commitment to beneficiaries to be uniquely related to turnover intentions. In addition, we found two statistically significant cross-foci interactions among the components. Namely, affective and normative commitments to beneficiaries were more strongly related to turnover intentions when affective organisational commitment was low. The implications of these findings for future research on volunteers' multiple commitments are discussed.

Keywords: volunteer, commitment, organisation, beneficiaries, turnover intentions

Volunteer attitudes and behaviours have attracted increased research attention during the last few years (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dawley, Stephens, & Stephens, 2005; van Vuuren, de Jong, & Seydel, 2008). Current figures report that 44% of the adult population in the United States volunteers, for an overall estimated dollar value of $239 billion, representing the equivalent of 9 million full-time employees (Independent Sector, 2009). Volunteering represents a distinctive form of contribution to work compared with paid work: Volunteers are individuals who give their time, skills, and expertise without financial compensation nor obligation to do so (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996), and often deliver services to strangers within a formal organisational context (Penner, 2002). As volunteers freely decide to help others within an organisational context, we need to know whether constructs elaborated for understanding the psychology of paid workers apply to volunteering. Moreover, as volunteer organisations need to attract and retain volunteers, and as volunteers wish to gain satisfaction from their activities, notions such as organisational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries may be important.

Past research has shown that the extent to which volunteers' motivations are met (Omoto & Snyder, 1995) and whether volunteering serves basic human functions (Clary et al., 1998) contribute to intentions to pursue volunteering and service duration. Similarly, research has also emphasised the importance of role identities as potential predictors of sustained volunteerism (Penner, 2002). It has been found that both general role identity as a volunteer and organisation-specific role identity are significant predictors of service duration and intention to leave (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Grube & Piliavin, 2000).

Our primary purpose in this paper is to look at volunteers' turnover intentions through the lens of organisational commitment theory. Organisational commitment is a strong predictor of turnover among paid workers (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Mowday, 1998), and commitment theory has established the relevance of different components that all contribute to employee retention (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, recent theoretical (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) and empirical (Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Vandenberghe, 2002; Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004) work has demonstrated that forms and targets of commitment can combine to better explain turnover. Following this perspective, findings confirmed that stronger affective commitment is associated with reduced withdrawal tendencies among volunteers (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dailey, 1986; Laczo & Hanisch, 1999; Miller, Powell, & Seltzer, 1990; van Vuuren et al., 2008; Vecina, Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2011), persistence in volunteering activities (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Vecina Jiménez, Chacon, & Sueiro, 2010), and more role fulfillment (Dawley et al., 2005) and performance (Preston & Brown, 2004; Stephens, Dawley, & Stephens, 2004).

Research has established that commitment can take different forms and that each form may have unique associations with work outcomes. The most elaborated model of commitment is known as the three-component model (Meyer & Allen, 1991), which is comprised of affective commitment (AC; i.e., an emotional bond

to the organisation based on identification with the organisation's values), normative commitment (NC; i.e., a sense of loyalty based on perceived obligation to the organisation), and continuance commitment (CC; i.e., a sense of attachment based on the costs associated with leaving). The application of the model to volunteers has been controversial, however, as some scholars questioned the relevance of some of the components to the reality of volunteering (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; van Vuuren et al., 2008).

Still, the application of the three-component model in the context of volunteering needs more attention. First, it has been shown that volunteers develop a general role identity as volunteers as well as an identification and involvement with their actual organisation (Chacon et al., 2007; Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Vecina Jiménez et al., 2010). Volunteers also receive indirect benefits from volunteering through enhanced learning, networking, increased visibility, as well as development of professional and interpersonal skills (Clary et al., 1998; Dawley et al., 2005; Ross, 1997; Wilson, 2000). These rewards may not only strengthen AC but also CC and NC. Second, Wilson (2000) noted that one must not confound volunteers' commitment to the volunteer role and their commitment to a particular organisation. The former rests on volunteers' concern for others (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998), perceived obligation to meet beneficiaries' needs, and emotional attachment to them (Wuthnow, 1998), while the latter represents a dedication to acting to produce a "public" good that is promoted by the volunteer organisation itself (Wilson, 2000).

The present study has two goals. First, we examine the relevance of the three-component model of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) for depicting volunteers' commitment to the volunteer organisation and commitment to beneficiaries, and predicting volunteers' turnover intentions. Second, expanding on recent work in the multiple commitments domain that has reported foci of commitment to interact in the prediction of intentions and behaviour (Snape, Chan, & Redman, 2006; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009), we examine interactions between volunteers' organisational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries.

Applying the Three-Component Model to Volunteering

Organisational Commitment

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), organisational commitment represents a global psychological state that characterizes the relationship between employees and organisations and has implications for membership decisions. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) later theorized that "commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets" (p. 301) and that the mind-set associated with that force was one of *desire* for AC, *perceived obligation* for NC, and *perceived cost* for CC. As such, the three forms provide different reasons for individuals deciding to stay with their organisation. Accordingly, evidence from a meta-analysis suggests that the three forms are negatively related to turnover intentions and actual turnover (Meyer et al., 2002).

Research by Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) has provided evidence that volunteers may experience a sense of emotional attachment to (AC), and feel responsible to stay with (NC), the volunteering organisation. Using the social-identity-based model of

cooperation with the organisation (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2000) as a framework, they reported pride in being a member of the volunteering organisation and respect from the volunteer organisation to be statistically significant positive predictors of AC and NC. In addition, they found perceived importance of volunteer work and task- and emotion-oriented support to be predictors of pride and respect, respectively. These findings suggest volunteering organisations instill transcending values that facilitate volunteers' organisational identification, which is a basis for AC (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and can develop respectful and supportive practices that, in the end, encourage a sense of reciprocity among volunteers, which is the basis for NC (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

In contrast to organisational AC and NC, the relevance of CC to volunteers has been more frequently debated in the literature. Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) made the argument that because CC is calculative in nature and because volunteers work without financial inducements, they cannot become instrumentally involved with their organisation. Similar conclusions have been defended by Stephens et al. (2004) and Dawley et al. (2005). Still, in a comparative study of volunteers and paid workers from the same nonprofit organisation, van Vuuren et al. (2008) found that the levels of CC did not differ across the two groups. This can happen because a variety of binding mechanisms are involved in the development of CC. For example, the quality of social relationships and intrinsic aspects of the job can contribute to build CC. These binding sources may be relevant for paid workers and volunteers alike.

Commitment to Beneficiaries

As Wilson (2000) suggested, a distinction should be made between commitment to the volunteer role and commitment to the volunteer organisation. Commitment to the volunteer organisation implies some level of commitment toward acting to produce a "public" good that benefits the society at large. Within the terms of the three-component model, such commitment may reflect, alternatively, a *desire*, a *perceived obligation*, or a *perceived cost* associated with producing "goods and services at below market rate" (Wilson, 2000, p. 216). Such commitment does not necessarily include the desire to help *specific others* (see Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). One should thus distinguish commitment to the volunteer organisation's formalized mission and goals from commitment to the beneficiaries of services.

The three-component model provides a general framework that can be used to theorize the content of commitment forms as applied to relationships of volunteers with beneficiaries (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). According to the logic of the three-component model, one could expect that the nature and strength of volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries will determine whether they will stay with their organisation or not. As illustrated in the volunteering literature, one of the strongest motives that can be related to the volunteer role is an emotional attachment to clients (Wuthnow, 1998). Just as it has been found in the service literature that contact employees may want to meet the goals and expectations of customers (Siders, George, & Dharwadkar, 2001; Vandenberghe et al., 2007), volunteers may develop a sense of liking toward beneficiaries and wish to serve beneficiaries' best interests. Such AC to beneficiaries may originate in volunteers' dispositional other-oriented empathy, which research has shown to result in enhanced

satisfaction with the volunteering experience (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998).

Similarly, Wilson (2000) argues that "a volunteer might feel good about doing the right thing . . . because she thinks she ought to have done it" (p. 222). In other words, volunteers may experience a sense of obligation toward beneficiaries. That feeling taps into the content domain of NC and might be labelled NC to beneficiaries. According to the definition of NC, it also encompasses the notion of feeling responsible for others' welfare (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Finally, we advocate that CC can be applied to volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries as well.

CC to beneficiaries can be viewed as being based on the *perceived cost* of failing to pursue a course of action of relevance to beneficiaries, such as meeting their expectations. The mind-set accompanying CC to beneficiaries would thus be one of providing services of at least minimal quality to prevent them from being unsatisfied.

To summarise, we predict that the three components (AC, NC, and CC) of volunteers' commitment to the organisation (i.e., referring to commitment to the organisation's overall mission) will be empirically distinguishable from, yet correlated with, the three components (AC, NC, and CC) of commitment to beneficiaries (i.e., reflecting commitment to beneficiaries' needs and expectations). According to the general principles of commitment theory (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), the *bases* and *foci* of commitment should relate negatively to turnover intentions. Moreover, following research on multifoci commitments (e.g., Becker, 1992; Stinglhamber et al., 2002; Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009), we expect commitment to beneficiaries to explain unique variance in turnover intentions over and above organisational commitment. These predictions are summarised in the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Volunteers' organisational commitment comprises three components (AC, NC, and CC) and volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries comprises three components (AC, NC, and CC) that are distinguishable from one another.

Hypothesis 2: The components of volunteers' organisational commitment (AC, NC, and CC) and of volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries (AC, NC and CC) are negatively associated with turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 3: The components of volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries (AC, NC and CC) explain incremental variance in turnover intentions over and above the variance explained by the components of volunteers' organisational commitment (AC, NC, and CC).

Interactions Among Commitment Components Across Foci

In recent years, researchers have been concerned by the interplay among commitment components. For example, CC was found to moderate the relationship of either of the other two components with turnover intentions (e.g., Cheng & Stockdale, 2003; Jaros, 1997; Snape & Redman, 2003). The study of interactions among components *across foci* may be particularly relevant to investigate. However, such interactions have been largely under-researched (for recent exceptions, see Snape et al., 2006; Vandenberghe &

Bentein, 2009). In particular, we contend that commitment to lower order foci (e.g., supervisors, workgroups, or clients) may be more strongly related to organisational outcomes when commitment to the higher order organisational entity is low. In fact, commitment to lower order foci may *substitute for* commitment to the global organisation. In support of that view, Vandenberghe and Bentein (2009) found that AC to supervisors was more strongly related to intended and actual turnover when AC to the organisation was low. Low organisational commitment may occur when there are major changes under way in the organisation or when the organisation is too large and distant from the employee. In such contexts, local entities (e.g., supervisors, workgroups, or clients) may represent valuable substitutes that provide employees with a greater sense of control over their environment (Mueller & Lawler, 1999). That situation may apply to volunteering. Indeed, as it has been stated that volunteers are not exposed to the organisation's influence to the same extent as paid employees, they may find it more rewarding to commit themselves to beneficiaries (Dailey, 1986; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Therefore, we expect that the relationship of commitment to beneficiaries to turnover intentions will be stronger when the link with the organisation is weak. As organisational AC is the strongest commitment correlate of turnover intentions and turnover (Meyer et al., 2002), it is primarily when this form of commitment is low that the importance of commitment forms targeted toward beneficiaries will emerge as relevant predictors of turnover intentions. This leads to the following, final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Volunteers' organisational AC will moderate the relationships between (a) AC, (b) NC, and (c) CC to beneficiaries and turnover intentions such that these relationships will be stronger when organisational AC is low.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited in two ways. First, we mailed questionnaires to a random sample of 455 volunteers located in a large city in France (Sample 1). Addresses were extracted from the volunteers' database of a local volunteer organisation, which serves as a clearinghouse that recruits volunteers prior to sending them to work for other nonprofit organisations. The beneficiaries of the affiliated nonprofit organisations were composed of homeless, handicapped, and sick persons, as well as the elderly, children, families, and drug or alcohol addicts and ex-convicts. The clearinghouse's role is to select potential volunteers for the affiliated organisations based on the following criteria: (a) the job description, including required skills and competencies, duration of the "contract," number of hours to be worked, and location of the job; and (b) the aspirations of the volunteers, including type of activities, type of beneficiaries, expected duration of the contract, and number of hours the person can offer per week. Based on these criteria, the clearinghouse assigns the volunteers to a given affiliated organisation that appears to be a good fit. A total of 133 participants returned questionnaires, of which 121 (26.6%) were usable and complete.

Second, two undergraduate human resources management classes in a French university offered extra credit for distributing

questionnaires to volunteers from several local charitable organisations dedicated to serving the needy (Sample 2). This sample was composed of 35 nonprofit organisations randomly selected from the database of organisations affiliated with the Chamber of Social Economy, France, using the same criterion as for the first sample (i.e., working with "needy" beneficiaries). As in Sample 1, the organisations offered services to a large variety of needy people: children with learning difficulties, teenagers, women, the elderly, the unemployed, and alcoholics. All organisations from Sample 2 recruited their volunteers directly. Our discussion with the participating organisations revealed that many criteria other than volunteers' desire for working with particular client groups were used during the selection process (e.g., skills and competencies, physical distance between volunteers' home and location of work, and nature of work). Based on the list of volunteers' names provided by the participating organisations, a total of 425 questionnaires were distributed by undergraduate students. A total of 232 completed questionnaires were collected, representing a response rate of 54.5%. The number of responses per organisation varied from 1 to 29, with an average of 6.6.

Data from the two samples were combined ($N = 343$) to increase the statistical power of our hypothesis tests. To determine whether this decision was appropriate, we compared means of demographic and study variables across the two samples with one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVAs revealed only significant differences in age, $F(1, 329) = 31.47$, $p < .001$, and tenure, $F(1, 324) = 14.84$, $p < .001$, between the two samples. The field-distributed survey sample was younger ($M = 37.5$ vs. 46.7 years) and had more organisational tenure (i.e., number of years serving the organisation as a volunteer) than the mailed-survey sample ($M = 2.47$ vs. 4.34 years). Age and tenure were thus controlled for in regression analyses (see Table 3). Additionally, we tested for equality of the covariance matrices. A nonsignificant Box's M statistic was obtained, indicating that the covariance matrices were not different and that combining the data was permissible (see Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). The mean age for the combined sample was 40.78 years ($SD = 14.93$), and the mean number of years volunteering for the organisation was 3.69 years ($SD = 4.31$). Among participants, 52.2% were women and 27.4% held paid jobs in addition to working as a volunteer.

Measures

All measures consisted of existing scales that were already available in French. When necessary, items were adjusted to be more appropriate to volunteer work (see Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Tidwell, 2005). Unless otherwise specified, all responses were assessed on 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) for all scales with more than two items. Confidence intervals (CIs) for alpha coefficients were computed based on Fan and Thompson's (2001) guidelines.

Commitment to the volunteer organisation. We assessed volunteers' commitment to the volunteer organisation using a revised version, validated in French (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Stinglhamber, 2005), of the Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) scales that was adapted for international contexts. We replaced the word "organisation" with "volunteer organisation" in all items. Affective and normative forms of commitment were measured via six items (e.g., "I really feel that I belong in this volunteer organisation" and "I think I would be guilty if I left my current volunteer organisation now," respectively; $\alpha = .73$, 95% CI [.68, .78], and $\alpha = .86$, 95% CI [.84, .89], respectively). The high-sacrifice subdimension of the continuance form was captured by three items (e.g., "I would not leave this volunteer organisation because of what I would stand to lose"; $\alpha = .78$, 95% CI [.72, .81]).

Commitment to beneficiaries. We measured volunteers' commitment to beneficiaries using the scales developed by Stinglhamber et al. (2002). We replaced the word "customers" with "beneficiaries" in all items (see the Appendix for a complete list of items). Affective and normative forms of commitment were captured by six items ("In general, I have a liking for the beneficiaries of this organisation" and "I think I am morally responsible for meeting the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation"; $\alpha = .78$, 95% CI [.66, .77], and $\alpha = .80$, 95% CI [.79, .86], respectively). CC was measured via five items ("I have expended so much effort to get to know the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation that it would not be advantageous for me to quit my activity as a volunteer"; $\alpha = .78$, 95% CI = [.72, .81]).

Turnover intentions. We measured turnover intentions with the two-item scale used by Boezeman and Ellemers (2007; e.g., "How likely is it that you will quit your work as a volunteer in this organisation within the next 6 months?" (1 = *very unlikely*, 5 = *very likely*). The Pearson correlation (r) between these two items was .55 ($p < .001$).

Control variables. Age, gender, and organisational tenure were controlled for as factors that could influence commitment and turnover intentions (see Jaros, 1997; Meyer et al., 2002). We also controlled for sample by creating a dummy-coded variable (0 = Sample 1; 1 = Sample 2).

Data Analysis

To Test Hypothesis 1, we performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) and the maximum likelihood method of estimation. We compared the fit of several nested models, ranging from the hypothesised six-factor model to a one-factor model of commitment variables. Several fit indices were used: the nonnormed fit index (NNFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), for which values of .95 or higher indicate a good fit, and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), for which values of .08 and .06, respectively, or lower, indicate satisfactory fit (see Hu & Bentler, 1999). Chi-square difference tests were used to compare the hypothesised model with alternative models (Kline, 1998). CFAs were performed using the method of random parceling (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000). Item parcels reduce the sample size to parameter ratio (low ratios can adversely impact the standard errors and stability of the estimates). Item parcels were formed to create three indicators for all constructs measured by more than three items. As our data were self-reported, the findings could, in part, be attributed to common method bias. To address this concern, we examined common method variance following the procedure recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003; see Results section).

While Hypothesis 2 was tested using a correlational analysis, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were examined via a series of moderated regression analyses. Control variables were introduced first (Model 1) and organisational commitment forms were entered in the second step (Model 2). In order to examine whether commitment to beneficiaries contributed statistically significant variance in turnover intentions above that explained by organisational commitment (Hypothesis 3), we entered the three forms of commitment to beneficiaries in a third step (Model 3). The three hypothesised interaction terms were included in the fourth step (Hypothesis 4) along with the six other possible cross-foci interaction terms used as controls (Model 4). To minimise multicollinearity, all independent variables were mean-centered and the interaction terms were computed using these centered scores (Aiken & West, 1991).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Results of the CFAs are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the hypothesised six-factor model, comprising the three dimensions of organisational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries, yielded a good fit to the data, χ^2 (120) = 280.97, $p < .01$, NNFI = .96, CFI = .97, SRMR = .058, RMSEA = .065. As revealed by the chi-square difference tests reported in Table 1, this model improved significantly over any more parsimonious model ($p < .01$).

Latent correlations among commitment components, as obtained from the six-factor model, are reported above the diagonal in Table 2. These *latent* correlations varied from a low of .33 to a high of .73. Only three latent correlations exceeded .70: $r = .73$ between CC to organisation and CC to beneficiaries, and between AC to beneficiaries and NC to beneficiaries, and $r = .72$ between AC to organisation and AC to beneficiaries. Although these correlations are high, they are not so high as to suggest pure redundancy among the constructs in question—note that the corresponding bivariate correlations are lower than .65 (see Table 2). In addition, although not reported in tables, all items from the six-factor model had sizable and statistically significant ($p < .01$)

loadings on their intended construct (these results are available upon request). Altogether, these findings attest to the robustness of the six-factor model and are supportive of Hypothesis 1.

To test for the presence of common method variance, we first tested a baseline seven-factor model including all the study constructs (i.e., the three dimensions of organisational commitment, the three dimensions of commitment to beneficiaries, and turnover intentions). This model yielded a good fit to the data, χ^2 (149) = 372.94, $p < .01$, NNFI = .96, CFI = .97, SRMR = .060, RMSEA = .069. Next, we expanded the baseline seven-factor model by adding an orthogonal method factor (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). All items were allowed to load on their theoretical construct as well as on the common method variance factor. The model that included the common method factor resulted in a good fit, χ^2 (129) = 135.80, $p < .01$, NNFI = .97, CFI = .98; SRMR = .037, RMSEA = .052, and outperformed the baseline model with no method factor, $\Delta\chi^2$ (20) = 237.14, $p < .01$. Further analyses of factor loadings revealed that only 20.5% of items' variance was accounted for by the method factor. Moreover, items' loadings on their substantive factors remained largely unchanged (and statistically significant). Although these results attest to the existence of a method effect, the proportion of variance in the items accounted for by the method factor was lower than the median amount of method variance (25%) reported in studies of self-reported perceptions at work (Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989). This suggests that common method variance did not significantly affect our ability to test study hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables. As can be seen, the six commitment components were significantly negatively related to turnover intentions. Indeed, organisational AC, NC, and CC (rs = −.57, −.46, and −.27, $p < .01$, respectively), on the one hand, and AC, NC, and CC to beneficiaries (rs = −.45, −.48, and −.31, $p < .01$, respectively), on the other hand, were negatively associated with these intentions. These findings are supportive of Hypothesis 2. Among demographics, only age and tenure had statistically significant

Table 1
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)	NNFI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
1. Six-factor (AC-O, NC-O, CC-O, AC-B, NC-B, CC-B)	280.97 (120)	—	.96	.97	.058	.065
2. Five-factor: combining AC-O and NC-O	513.61 (125)	232.64 (5)	.92	.93	.088	.100
3. Five-factor: combining AC-B and NC-B	391.55 (125)	110.58 (5)	.94	.95	.068	.082
4. Five-factor: combining AC-O and AC-B	377.50 (125)	96.53 (5)	.94	.95	.066	.080
5. Five-factor: combining NC-O and NC-B	793.64 (125)	512.67 (5)	.88	.90	.100	.131
6. Five-factor: combining CC-O and CC-B	348.77 (125)	67.80 (5)	.95	.96	.062	.076
7. Four-factor: combining (a) AC-O and NC-O, and (b) AC-B and NC-B	606.67 (129)	325.70 (9)	.91	.92	.093	.109
8. Three-factor: combining (a) AC-O and NC-O, (b) AC-B and NC-B, and (c) CC-O and CC-B	666.08 (132)	385.11 (12)	.90	.91	.096	.114
9. Two-factor: combining commitment forms within foci	1320.19 (134)	1039.22 (14)	.82	.84	.129	.168
10. One-factor	1659.35 (135)	1378.38 (15)	.78	.80	.121	.190

Note. The $\Delta\chi^2$ column reports contrasts between the target model and the theorized six-factor model. All χ^2 and $\Delta\chi^2$ values are significant at $p < .01$. AC = affective commitment; B = beneficiaries target; CC = continuance commitment; CFI = comparative fit index; NC = normative commitment; NNFI = non-normed fit index; O = volunteer organization target; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for the Study Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	40.78	14.93	—								
2. Tenure (years)	3.69	4.31	.23**	—							
3. Affective commitment: organization	3.84	0.86	.05	.24**	—	.52**	.45**	.72**	.47**	.41**	
4. Normative commitment: organization	2.99	1.24	.13*	.14*	.44**	—	.59**	.45**	.48**	.53**	
5. Continuance commitment: organization	2.53	1.12	−.17**	−.09	.35**	.52**	—	.37**	.28**	.73**	
6. Affective commitment: beneficiaries	3.58	0.95	.08	.13*	.51**	.35**	.29**	—	.73**	.51**	
7. Normative commitment: beneficiaries	3.70	0.96	.11*	.05	.35**	.40**	.25**	.58**	—	.37**	
8. Continuance commitment: beneficiaries	2.60	1.06	−.09	−.05	.31**	.48**	.64**	.37**	.28**	—	
9. Turnover intentions	2.50	1.06	−.18**	−.21**	−.57**	−.46**	−.27**	−.45**	−.48**	−.31**	—

Note. Ns = 329 to 341. Latent correlations among substantive variables (as obtained from the six-factor model, excluding turnover intentions) are reported above the diagonal, while raw correlations are presented below the diagonal.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

associations with some of our substantive variables. Age was significantly linked to organisational NC ($r = .13$, $p < .05$) and CC ($r = −.17$, $p < .01$), NC to beneficiaries ($r = .11$, $p < .05$), and turnover intentions ($r = −.18$, $p < .01$). Tenure was significantly related to organisational AC ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) and NC ($r = .14$, $p < .05$), AC to beneficiaries ($r = .13$, $p < .05$), and turnover intentions ($r = −.21$, $p < .01$). There were no differences on substantive variables between men and women.

Moderated Regression Analyses

The results of the moderated regression analyses for volunteers' turnover intentions are reported in Table 3. Model 3 provides partial support for Hypothesis 3, as commitment to beneficiaries contributed significant variance in turnover intentions over and above that explained by organisational commitment, $\Delta R^2 = .07$, $p < .001$. Of interest, only NC to beneficiaries was significantly

Table 3
Results of Moderated Multiple Regression Analyses for Turnover Intentions

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Controls				
Age	−.16**	−.10*	−.07	−.07
Gender	.02	.03	.08	.08
Tenure	−.11	−.11*	.00	.00
Sample	−.02	.06	.07	.09
Commitment to organization				
Affective (AC-O)		−.55***	−.49***	−.51***
Normative (NC-O)		−.23***	−.13*	−.14*
Continuance (CC-O)		.01	.06	.06
Commitment to beneficiaries				
Affective (AC-B)			.05	.05
Normative (NC-B)			−.29***	−.25***
Continuance (CC-B)			−.06	−.08
Cross-foci interactions				
AC-O × AC-B				.25**
AC-O × NC-B				.19*
AC-O × CC-B				.04
NC-O × AC-B				.04
NC-O × NC-B				.03
NC-O × CC-B				−.02
CC-O × AC-B				.08
CC-O × NC-B				−.01
CC-O × CC-B				−.08
R^2	.05	.47	.54	.57
Adjusted R^2	.03	.46	.52	.54
ΔR^2	.05	.42	.07	.03
$F(df1, df2)$	3.71** (4, 309)	38.53*** (7, 306)	35.59*** (10, 303)	20.15*** (19, 224)
ΔF	3.71**	81.12***	15.74***	1.92*

Note. AC = affective commitment; B = beneficiaries target; CC = continuance commitment; NC = normative commitment; O = volunteer organization target. All beta coefficients reported are standardized.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

related to turnover intentions, $\beta = -.29$, $p < .001$ (Table 3, Model 3). Finally, Hypothesis 4 stated that the relationships between (a) AC, (b) NC, and (c) CC to beneficiaries and turnover intentions would be stronger when AC to the volunteer organisation is low. Results can be found in Table 3 (Model 4). Taken together, interaction terms explained a significant portion of the variance of turnover intentions, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .05$. The interactions between organisational AC and AC to beneficiaries and between organisational AC and NC to beneficiaries were significant, $\beta = .25$, $p < .01$, and $\beta = .19$, $p < .05$, respectively. To understand the form of these interactions, we plotted the regression lines of turnover intentions on AC and NC to beneficiaries at 1 SD below and 1 SD above the mean of organisational AC (see Aiken & West, 1991).

Regression lines for AC and NC to beneficiaries on turnover intentions were significantly negative under conditions of low AC to the volunteer organisation, $t(293) = -2.61$, $p < .01$, and $t(293) = -5.50$, $p < .001$, respectively, and statistically nonsignificant under conditions of high AC to the volunteer organisation, $t(293) = 1.72$, ns, and $t(293) = -1.29$, ns. Post hoc probing of these interactions (see Aiken & West, 1991, pp. 19–21) showed that the slopes of the regression lines of AC and NC to beneficiaries on turnover intentions differed significantly across low versus high AC to the volunteer organisation conditions, $t(293) = 3.22$, $p < .05$, and $t(293) = 2.99$, $p < .05$, respectively. Overall, these findings are consistent with the predictions formulated in Hypothesis 4(a) and 4(b). In contrast, as the interaction between organisational AC and CC to beneficiaries was not statistically significant, $\beta = .04$, ns (see Table 3, Model 4), Hypothesis 4(c) was not supported. Figures 1 and 2 provide graphic depictions of the interactions of organisational AC with AC and NC to beneficiaries, respectively, on turnover intentions.

We conducted supplementary analyses to determine whether the main and interactive effects of the commitment forms and foci varied across samples. Following the procedure used by Tepper et al. (2009), we created interaction terms consisting of cross-products between the dummy-coded sample variable and the three forms of commitment to organisation, the three forms of commitment to beneficiaries, and the cross-foci interactions. We then entered the six two-way interaction terms (e.g., Sample × AC-O)
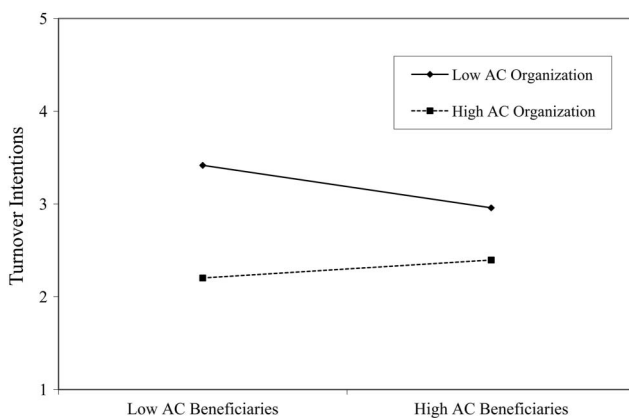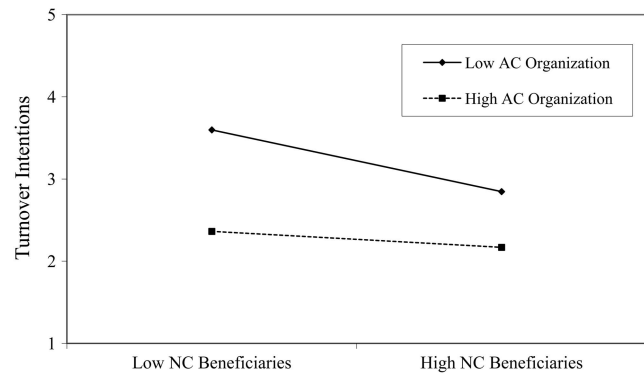

Figure 2. Interaction between normative commitment to beneficiaries and affective organisational commitment in predicting volunteers' turnover intentions.

in a fifth regression step, and we entered the nine three-way interaction terms (e.g., Sample × AC-O × AC-B) in a sixth regression step. At Steps 5 and 6, there was no change in the variance explained by the model and no interaction was statistically significant, thus suggesting no evidence of sample variation associated with the main and interactive effects of the commitment forms and foci.

Discussion

This study is one among a few investigations that have examined the relevance of multiple commitments in the context of volunteering (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dawley et al., 2005; van Vuuren et al., 2008) and the first, to our knowledge, that has considered multiple *bases* and *foci* of commitment to predict volunteers' attitudes or intentions. Drawing on work in the sociology of volunteering (Wilson, 2000), we argued that volunteers differentiate between (a) their commitment to the volunteer organisation's formalized mission of producing services and goods that serve our society's needy people, and (b) their commitment to the beneficiaries of volunteering. Accordingly, we found evidence that Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model of commitment applies to volunteering both in terms of commitment to the volunteer organisation and commitment to beneficiaries. Both foci of commitment contributed uniquely to the prediction of volunteers' turnover intentions. Our study also found that organisational AC moderated the relationships of the commitment to beneficiaries' components with turnover intentions.

An important controversy that has surrounded research on volunteer commitment has been whether Meyer and Allen's (1991) AC, NC, and CC trilogy is entirely applicable to volunteering. Although the motives of *desire*, *perceived obligation*, and *cost* are assumed to represent core mind-sets that generalise across targets (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), some authors have questioned whether CC and NC make sense in the context of volunteering (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2007; Dawley et al., 2005; Stephens et al., 2004; van Vuuren et al., 2008). This position rests on the notion that volunteer organisations do not offer monetary compensation for the services volunteers provide. The absence of economic ties with the organisation is assumed to reduce the cost of leaving (Laczo & Hanisch, 1999), hence CC, and to make it

Figure 1. Interaction between affective commitment to beneficiaries and affective organisational commitment in predicting volunteers' turnover intentions.

difficult for the organisation to invest in its volunteers with the hope of building an obligation to reciprocate (van Vuuren et al., 2008). As was shown in the present study, however, AC, NC, and CC were all negatively associated with turnover intentions. As Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) suggest, the noble and transcending mission of volunteer organisations allows them to instill a sense of pride and respect among employees that is the basis for both AC and NC. Similarly, CC should not be considered as exclusively calculative or instrumental in nature. CC (or its high-sacrifice subcomponent) subsumes a variety of ties with the organisation, such as possessing a challenging job and valuable perks, or having attractive promotional opportunities (Vandenberghe et al., 2007). These notions represent *sacrifices* to be made in case of voluntary exit (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Similarly, research has reported that volunteers receive benefits via their organisational membership, such as opportunities for learning, networking, and for developing professional or interpersonal skills (Dawley et al., 2005; Ross, 1997; Wilson, 2000). These aspects contribute to CC and may explain why the latter was not dramatically low in this study ($M = 2.53$) and was associated with fewer turnover intentions.

The present study found that commitment to beneficiaries explains unique variance in turnover intentions over and above organisational commitment. In our final regression model, NC was the sole component of commitment to beneficiaries to emerge as a statistically significant predictor of turnover intentions. This suggests that volunteers' sense of obligation to meet clients' needs contributes uniquely to reduce exit intentions. In other words, while the emotional ties formed with beneficiaries (AC) do not appear to uniquely drive turnover intentions (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Wuthnow, 1998), the sense that serving beneficiaries is the right thing to do (NC) was a statistically significant driver of them. Therefore, it might be that NC to beneficiaries represents an important motive associated with the volunteer's role.

We are aware of only two studies that assessed paid employees' commitment to the organisation and clients using the three-component model (Stinglhamber et al., 2002; Vandenberghe et al., 2007). These studies used the same (French) scales as those used in the present study. Interestingly, some of the correlations among the components in this study differed substantially from those reported in these prior studies. For example, in the present study, CC to beneficiaries correlated .64 ($p < .01$) with CC to the organisation, while in Stinglhamber et al. (2002) and Vandenberghe et al. (2007), this correlation ranged from .13 to .31. In other words, the cost-based attachment motive that underlies relationships with beneficiaries appears to be particularly congruent with the cost associated with membership in the volunteer organisation. Future research should examine which cost-based ties underlie CC to organisations and beneficiaries and how this may affect volunteers' behaviour.

While researchers have begun exploring how commitment components interact in predicting work outcomes (e.g., Cheng & Stockdale, 2003; Jaros, 1997; Snape & Redman, 2003), little work has examined interactions across *foci* of commitment (for exceptions, see Snape et al., 2006, and Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009). We made the argument that beneficiaries represent lower order foci whose influence on turnover intentions would be stronger when commitment to the higher order and more encompassing organisational entity is weak. As suggested by Vandenberghe and Bentein (2009), it is likely that more immediate and closer entities substitute for the weakness of relationships with more distant constituencies. Moreover, close entities (e.g., supervisors, workgroups or clients) provide employees with a greater sense of control over their environment (Mueller & Lawler, 1999). This may be particularly the case among volunteers, as they are primarily in contact with clients and are less exposed to rewards stemming from actions of the organisation itself (Dailey, 1986; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Based on the recurrent finding that organisational AC has been found to be the strongest predictor of turnover intentions (Meyer et al., 2002), we expected the commitment components targeted toward beneficiaries to display stronger relationships with turnover intentions when organisational AC is concurrently low. This was true for AC and NC but not for CC to beneficiaries. The absence of an interaction with CC to beneficiaries may be due to the fact that CC does not tap into the affective grounding that is shared by AC and NC. At any rate, we invite more research on interactions across nested foci of commitment, as this may help identify the conditions under which local commitments exert their strongest influence on behaviour.

Our findings also have broader implications for research on volunteering. First, the fact that commitment to the organisation (i.e., AC and NC) explains significant variance in turnover intentions suggests volunteers build linkages with their organisation just as paid workers do. Therefore, it would be worth investigating which management practices can be used to develop volunteers' commitment to the organisation. Second, as our findings reveal that AC and NC to beneficiaries can substitute for organisational commitment (i.e., AC), organisations may encourage the development of high-quality relationships between volunteers and beneficiaries, as this could help retaining volunteers. Third, although not explored in the present study, organisational commitment and commitment to beneficiaries, particularly via its affective dimension, may enhance volunteers' satisfaction with their work and, indirectly, their well-being. It has been shown that commitment, particularly AC, contributes to increase employee well-being by strengthening the meaning of work (Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009). The same process may be at stake among volunteers. Clearly, additional work about how commitment to various foci adds to volunteers' satisfaction and sense of meaning would be valuable.

Limitations

This study has limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of our study precludes one to draw causal inferences. Moreover, as the data were collected from the same source, common method variance could be an issue. Although our analyses using Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) recommendations suggest common method variance was not an important problem in this study, the results of this study must be replicated with longitudinal data. However, common method variance actually reduces the power to detect moderating effects (Evans, 1985), suggesting that the interactions reported in this study are unlikely to result from this bias. Second, we cannot rule out the possibility that some of the volunteers may have developed an overall commitment to volunteering prior to working as volunteers (Chacon et al., 2007; Grube & Piliavin, 2000). Additional work is thus needed to examine the determinants of commitment to beneficiaries and volunteering.

Third, we did not have comparative data that would have allowed comparing our volunteers' standing on the multiple bases and foci of commitment to that of paid employees. Although some preliminary evidence has been reported in this area (e.g., van Vuuren et al., 2008), additional work is needed to reach firmer conclusions regarding the nature and predictive power of bases and foci of commitment across the two groups. Similarly, it would be worth investigating how relationships among paid workers and volunteers (e.g., in hospitals) affect one another's commitment to the organisation (Laczo & Hanisch, 1999). In addition, there is a need to determine whether volunteers' multiple commitments also predict actual turnover (see Miller et al., 1990), and whether the magnitude of relationships among commitment components and turnover would be comparable across volunteers and the population of paid workers (cf. Meyer et al., 2002). Finally, we need to know which dimensions of commitment are important for predicting volunteers' job performance, an issue that remains neglected in volunteering research (for exceptions, see Preston & Brown, 2004; Stephens et al., 2004). In sum, given the increasing demand for volunteers in our society, there is a need to better understand the role of commitment in volunteers' behaviour in the workplace.

Résumé

Nous avons utilisé le modèle à trois composantes de l'engagement qui inclue les composantes affective, normative et de continuité afin d'étudier l'engagement de travailleurs volontaires envers leur organisation et leurs bénéficiaires, et afin d'examiner comment ces composantes sont liées indépendamment et communément aux intentions de renouvellement des volontaires. À partir d'un échantillon de 343 volontaires provenant de plusieurs organisations, nous avons trouvé que l'engagement organisationnel affectif et normatif ainsi que l'engagement normatif aux bénéficiaires étaient liés de façon unique aux intentions de renouvellement. De plus, nous avons trouvé deux interactions cross-focales statistiquement significatives entre les composantes. À savoir, les engagements affectif et normatif envers les bénéficiaires étaient plus fortement reliés aux intentions de renouvellement lorsque l'engagement organisationnel affectif était faible. Les implications de ces résultats pour la recherche future sur les multiples engagements des volontaires sont discutées.

Mots-clés : volontaire, engagement, bénéficiaires, intentions de renouvellement.

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Appendix

Survey Items for Volunteers' Commitment to Beneficiaries

Affective

1. I feel emotionally attached to the beneficiaries of this organization

2. In general, I have a liking for the beneficiaries of this organisation

3. The beneficiaries of this organisation mean a lot to me

4. I identify little with the expectations of the beneficiaries of this organisation (R)

5. I do not feel especially attached to the beneficiaries of this organisation (R)

6. I feel close to the beneficiaries of this organisation

Normative

1. I feel I have a moral obligation to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation

2. It would be wrong on my part to neglect the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation

3. I feel obligated to meet the expectations of the beneficiaries of this organisation

4. I would be reneging on my obligations if I ignored the beneficiaries of this organisation

5. I think I would be violating an implicit contract if I failed to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation

6. I think I am morally responsible for meeting the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation

Continuance

1. I have expended so much effort to get to know the needs of the beneficiaries of this organisation that it would not be advantageous for me to quit my activity as a volunteer

2. I have acquired so much knowledge concerning the expectations of the beneficiaries of this organisation that it would not be possible for me to change activity

3. I am so specialized in the services I provide to the beneficiaries of this organisation that I could not imagine doing anything else

4. It would be difficult for me, given the skills that I have acquired, to reinvest in working with other beneficiaries

5. Mastering the necessary skills for working with other beneficiaries would require me a great deal of time and energy

R = reverse coded