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VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT:
ROLE-IDENTITY AND INTENT TO LEAVE

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VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT:
ROLE IDENTITY AND INTENT TO LEAVE

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BY

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“No matter what accomplishments you make, somebody helped you.”

-Althea Gibson

Thank you to all of my “somebodys.”
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Many non-profit organizations depend heavily on participation and efforts from volunteers (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). “About 61.2 million people volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2005 and September 2006” (United States Department of Labor, 2007). This represents a significant potential labor force for non-profit agencies, which often depend on this resource instead of paid employees to meet their mission (Miller, Powell, & Seltzer, 1990). As with paid employees, turnover among effective volunteers can lead to a disruption in work processes and thus is often viewed as a liability for the organization (Hellman, 1997). Thus, non-profit organizations which utilize volunteers need to understand why the volunteers become engaged and what influences the decision to leave the organization. Two important factors to this issue include the extent to which the individual identifies as a volunteer in general or to a specific cause and their intent to leave a non-profit organization with whom they serve.

Role identity has been shown to be a strong predictor of behavior in blood donors (Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987). That is, to the extent an individual views himself or herself as a blood donor, he or she is more likely to sustain the behavior of donating blood. When these behaviors are repeated over time, other people begin to view the person as a blood donor, thus reinforcing the role identity (Piliavin & Callero, 1991).

Compared to attitudes, research has shown that an individual’s intention to act in a certain manner is the mediating predictor of his or her future behavior (Ajzen &
Intention serves as the link between theory and behavior. The precursor of intention is attitude (Ajzen, n.d.). To the extent an individual has control over a given situation, and assuming a favorable attitude about performing the behavior, the individual can be expected to perform the behavior based on intention (Ajzen, 2006). “That is, the stronger individuals’ intentions, the more likely they will engage in the specified behaviors” (Hellman, Hoppes, & Ellison, 2006, p. 30).

From this, it can be argued that one’s identity as a volunteer can influence his or her intent to leave a volunteer organization. Moreover, once a behavior is incorporated into one’s self-identity, or role identity, the identity influences future behavior (Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005). Indeed role identity and past behavior predicts future activities (Callero, 1985). It is reasonable to think that, when role identity and past behavior are combined with intention, we can better understand an individual’s reasons for volunteering.

The term affective commitment is used in the literature to refer to the emotional attachment an individual develops with organizations in a society (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Hellman & Williams-Miller, 2005). Foote (1951) theorized that, as individuals develop this commitment, they simultaneously define their social roles by incorporating new identities. Burke and Reitzes (1991) demonstrated that students with high levels of affective commitment are likely to give increased amounts of energy to their respective institutions because of their role identities. “Indeed, affective commitment is postulated to exist within a reciprocal relationship that binds the student to the institution and the institution to the student” (Hellman & Williams-
Miller, 2005, p. 22). Thus, it is logical to think that volunteers could develop the same type of reciprocal relationship because of their identity as a volunteer.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between role identity and the intent to remain engaged in the volunteer role in a sample of volunteers. A theoretical model delineating the relationship of role identity on intent to leave will be examined. The following specific research questions will be addressed: Is there a significant relationship between role identity and intent to leave among volunteers? To what extent does role identity and affective commitment contribute to significant amounts of variance in volunteers’ decisions to perpetuate a given role?

**Significance of Problem**

Although many people would like to donate time and energy to volunteer organizations, the demands of life often lead to conflict between the volunteer role and other roles with which the individual identifies. When this occurs, an individual with little emotional attachment to the organization could decide to stop volunteering. Therefore, non-profit leaders could benefit from understanding the extent to which individuals allow their role as a volunteer to be a priority when allocating time. This level of commitment influences the individual’s decision to continue to invest his or her time with a specific organization. An implication of this study could help volunteer coordinators develop programs (e.g. training and meaningful reward structures) designed to strengthen affective commitment among the volunteers.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

With over 60 million people engaged in volunteer work in the United States, it is difficult to formulate an all-encompassing definition that accommodates all types of volunteers. Nevertheless, two distinct categories have emerged, informal helping behaviors versus formal volunteering. Each type is explained below.

*Informal helping*, also called *spontaneous helping*, are those behaviors in which the time commitment is limited to a single, isolated event with no plans of sustained support in the future (Bensson, Dehority, Garman, et al., 1980). In these situations, the decision to help is made spontaneously, as a reaction to an event, and usually from a sense of obligation to help another person. An example would be an individual providing the Heimlich maneuver to a choking victim at a restaurant.

The term *prosocial behavior* is used extensively in the literature on helping. This term is applied to a vast category of behaviors sharing the common link of providing benefits to other people. Prosocial behavior is similar to *informal helping* in that it often stems from an individual’s sense of obligation to help (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Formal volunteerism incorporates prosocial behavior in an organized context, is typically planned, and maintained for an extended period of time (Penner, 2002).

Formal volunteerism, also known as nonspontaneous help, is a more structured type of serving in that it is typically a conscious decision made ahead of time by the individual. “Volunteering is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause” (Wilson, 2000, p. 215). In the same article, Wilson continues to
say that “. . . volunteerism is typically proactive rather than reactive and entails some commitment of time and effort” (p. 216). Thus, volunteerism in general can be considered a pro-social behavior in that the act of volunteering is seen as a benefit to others.

Work by Benson et al. (1980) helped define the characteristics of nonspontaneous help, which “. . . calls for considerably more planning, sorting out of priorities, and matching of personal capabilities and interests with the type of intervention” (p. 89). For the purpose of this study, volunteerism will be defined in congruence with the definition proposed by Dutta-Bergman. “Volunteerism is a formalized, public, and proactive choice to donate one’s time and energy freely to benefit another person, group, or organization” (Dutta-Bergman, 2004, p. 355). Based on work by Penner (2002), the additional criterion of long-term behavior is added to the operational definition of the present study.

The definition of volunteerism outlined for this study includes only formalized acts of volunteering. Those acts categorized as informal, or spontaneous, (e.g. helping a choking victim or attending a weekly religious service) do not meet the criteria of volunteerism as set forth for the purpose of this study.

To date, the literature regarding volunteerism has been heavily focused on the exploration of why individuals initially volunteer and the way they decide which causes and/or organizations receive their time. Omoto and Snyder (1995) categorized the non-obligatory form of volunteerism by writing “. . . volunteers typically do not know those whom they help in advance, often being matched with recipients by service
organizations, and volunteers are under no obligation to enter into helping relationships” (p. 672).

The literature regarding volunteerism is influenced by the theory of unified responsibility. Dutta-Bergman (2004) demonstrates that individuals who perpetuate responsible roles in their personal lives are also likely to engage in responsible social actions. Thus, it is logical to infer that volunteering would be included in the category of responsible social actions.

**Role Identity**

Role theory has many components and subtle variations. At its basic level, a role is a set of meanings that are formed from particular situations and have shared meanings (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Charng, Piliavin, & Callero, 1988). Role theory postulates that because people function within a society, certain expectations regarding behaviors (both for one’s self and others) are communicated. Further, people typically hold collective expectations for behavior based on role, both for themselves as well as the behavior of others (Biddle, 1986).

Callero (1994) illustrates the example of a golfer. In our society, we share an expectation that a golfer is someone who physically engages in the game of golf on a regular basis. Because the behavior (playing the game) is repeated, the individual would most likely add the role of golfer to his or her self identity. The individual’s friends and family would also assign the role of golfer to this person because they are aware of the individual’s enjoyment of the game. Thus, this individual would be expected to spend a significant amount of time on a golf course compared to someone who does not identify themselves as a golfer.
Role theory builds on symbolic interactionism by linking *symbols* with *roles*. “In this usage, positions are symbols for the kinds of persons it is possible to be in society: rich man, poor man, thief, fool, teacher, sergeant, intellectual, rebel, president, and so on and on” (Stryker, 1980, p. 57). Stryker (1980) elaborated on earlier work by George Herbert Mead in the area of symbolic interactionism. Symbols are important components of social activities, such as volunteering. Stryker writes “Symbols enable people to predict their own and other’s behavior and to anticipate the future course of interaction” (1980, p. 37). Thus, an individual may add the role of volunteer to his or her definition of self.

Further, Stryker illustrates the way in which these symbolic positions can help us understand behavior. “Like other symbolic categories, positions serve to cue behavior and so act as predictors of the behavior of persons who are placed into a category” (1980, p. 57). Because a *position* can easily be labeled, and positional labels have certain behaviors attached to them, Stryker confirms the use of the term *role* to describe certain aspects of one’s self (1980).

Several perspectives have been introduced as to the proper definition of role. When a role is sustained over time, it may become a part of an individual’s role identity (Reich, 2000). Previous work by Callero, Howard and Piliavin (1987) suggests that predictions of future behavior can be made based on the extent an individual has merged a given role with his or her definition of self. Therefore, if an individual associates a high level of importance with being a volunteer, he or she can reasonably be expected to continue volunteering.
The structural perspective embraces the traditional view of role-playing. “Roles are viewed as the behavioral expectations that are associated with, and emerge from, identifiable positions in social structure” (Callero, 1994, p. 229). That is, a role carries certain expectations for behaviors that must be met before one can claim the role. Callero (1994) illustrates the example of a college professor. If an individual engages in the behaviors of preparing lectures, grading papers, conducting research, and advising students, among other things, he or she can claim the role of professor. Others who observe this individual performing these behaviors would also attach the role of professor to the individual because of the shared meaning in our society – generally, everyone understands the behaviors associated with a professor.

The role identity model of volunteering suggests “. . . individuals begin to develop a volunteer identity as they do their volunteer work. The strength of this identity is related to the amount of time they will spend volunteering and their commitment to future volunteer work” (Taylor & Pancer, 2007, p. 322). Grube and Piliavin (2000) found that volunteers who had developed a stronger volunteer role identity spent greater amounts of time engaged in volunteer work.

An individual can have multiple role-identities (Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999; Stryker, 1980). For example, a mother could be heavily invested in her family and her career, as well as an active volunteer in the community. Thus, three distinct roles would be present, family role, occupational role and the role of a volunteer. There is variation in the extent to which an individual prioritizes his or her role identities.
Callero (1985) explains:

. . . Some role-identities are more a part of the self than others and consequently have a variable effect on the self-concept. Thus, for one person the occupational role identity may be the dominant aspect of the self, taking precedence over other role-identities and affecting general self-perceptions and actions. For another person, however, the family role identity may be more important and concerns of family will come before those of work. (p. 203)

A study conducted by Lee, Piliavin, and Call (1999) suggests that role identity and past behavior are the most important predictors of intention for a person to donate time in a volunteer role. “. . . Past behavior is more important for giving blood than for giving time, while role identity is more important for giving time than money” (p. 287). Because the current study is primarily concerned with the donation of time, as opposed to blood, role identity was used as an independent variable.

Expanding on previous work by Callero, Howard, and Piliavin (1987), the present study separated the construct of role identity into two distinct categories. Volunteer role identity was measured generally using five items that omitted the specific name of the volunteer agency used in the sample. Four of those items were duplicated, with the subtle variation of including the name of the volunteer agency. This allowed for specific role identity to be assessed.

Affective Commitment

A third construct of interest to the present study is that of affective commitment. Allen and Meyer define affective commitment as “. . . employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization” (1990, p. 1). Affective
commitment is linked with turnover in that individuals with high levels of commitment towards an organization tend to remain with said organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Tyler (1999) adds:

. . .such values have an important influence on cooperative behavior because, when people feel obligated to, committed to and/or identified with an organization, they are more likely to follow organizational rules, help the organization, and stay in the organization because they hold values that lead such behaviors to be intrinsically desirable. (p. 210)

In a longitudinal study, Blau and Holladay (2006) demonstrated a negative relationship between affective commitment and withdrawal intentions among a sample of medical technologists. That is, higher scores of affective commitment resulted in lower reported intentions to leave the organization among that sample. Additionally, Mohamed, Taylor, and Hassan (2006) demonstrated a negative relationship between affective commitment and intent to quit among a sample of correctional officers in the Mid-South region of the United States.

Extrapolating from the above definition and empirical support, it is logical to assume that one’s satisfaction with past experiences with a particular organization contributes to his or her level of affective commitment towards that organization. Macon, Muilenburg and Hellman (2007) found that high levels of satisfaction account for significant variance in the intent to remain among a sample of volunteers serving hospice patients.

Employees with high levels of commitment have been found to remain engaged with the organizations in which they participate (Stumpf & Harman, 1984). Steers and
Mowday (1981) suggested that intention to quit was directly influenced by economic conditions and the current labor market. This does not directly apply to the current study as the subjects were unpaid volunteers. However, an indirect influence could mean that the individuals may potentially investigate additional opportunities to volunteer with other organizations.

**Intent to Leave**

The intent to leave is an important outcome variable of this study. With the assumption that human beings are rational and thus behave in a consistent manner, Ajzen (1991) proposed the theory of planned behavior. This theory views a person’s intention as a sufficient predictor of behavior, assuming the individual has volitional control of the situation.

However, human intention need not be completely rational; people often act upon intentions, rational or not (Gilliland, James, Roberts, and Bowman, 1984). Volunteers may make irrational decisions to stop volunteering. Even though leaders of non-profit organizations may not be able to control for these irrational behaviors, they should nonetheless be cognizant of the potential negative impact to the organization.

Mobely, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979) illustrated that intention to leave is a precursor of turnover. A meta-analysis by Steel and Ovalle (1984), in which 34 studies were analyzed, demonstrated that intentions were a significant predictor of turnover. Another meta-analysis taken from the industrial/organizational literature demonstrates that organizational commitment has a negative correlation with turnover (intention to quit) for paid employees (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The authors reviewed
124 published studies and found a small, negative correlation ($r = -0.277$) for this relationship.

The empirical literature regarding turnover as it relates to volunteerism is somewhat limited. A study by Miller, Powell & Seltzer (1990) found that intention served as a mediator when relating attitudes with turnover for a sample of hospital volunteers. Omoto and Snyder (1995) demonstrated a positive correlation between length of service and volunteer satisfaction among a sample of AIDS volunteers. Grube and Piliavin (2000) found role identity to be the most important variable for predicting turnover intention among a sample of volunteers with the American Cancer Society.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, attitude is a precursor to intention. A study by Greenslade and White (2005) found that attitudes, taken with subjective norms and self-efficacy, accounted for 75% of variance in the intention to volunteer among a sample of volunteers in Australia. In the context of volunteerism, it can be said that the extent to which an individual feels committed to an organization, he or she will likely have positive intentions concerning volunteerism, and thus remain engaged in a volunteer role.

*Theoretical Model*

As illustrated in Figure 1, intent to leave was specified as the dependent variable. Based on the literature, both general and specific role identities were believed to be mediated by affective commitment. Job satisfaction is the extent to which an individual perceives his or her expectations are congruent with what he or she is actually receiving (Cherns & Davis, 1975; Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). Thus, the
extent to which the volunteer was satisfied with a given organization, combined with one’s level of role identity, may influence his or her intent to leave the organization.

Figure 1
Theoretical Model

Hypotheses

From the literature presented here, the following hypotheses were established.

H_{1}: High general role identity as a volunteer will have a negative correlation with intent to leave the organization with which they volunteer.

H_{2}: High specific role identity will have a negative correlation with intent to leave the organization with which they volunteer.
H₃: High affective commitment will have a negative correlation with intent to leave the organization among volunteers.

H₄: The relationship between specific role identity and general role identity with intent to leave will also be partially mediated by affective commitment to the organization with which they volunteer.
Chapter 3

Method

Subjects

The sample for this study included 230 active volunteers within a nationally-recognized, city-sponsored community service agency in the Midwest United States. Volunteers of this organization are on-call to respond in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. When deployed, the volunteers serve in a variety of roles until professional responders (i.e., police, fire, medical) arrive on the scene. Although formal training is required for all volunteers to remain active, the anticipated time commitment associated with volunteering is essentially unknown until a disaster warrants action. Unlike other voluntary participation with an organization or agency, there is no predictable schedule or formal organization of tasks. Therefore, this is a unique volunteer population with respect to the development of one’s identity as a volunteer.

Of those responding, 106 were female (57.3%) and 79 were male (42.7%). Forty-five respondents did not identify their sex. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49 (n = 60) and 50 and 59 (n = 60), or 32.8% for each category. Thirty-seven individuals (20.2%) reported being age 60 or above. Five (2.7%) were between 18 and 29 and the remaining 21 individuals (11.5%) were between 30 and 39. Forty-seven respondents did not indicate their age.

Respondents were also asked to identify their race or ethnicity. Of those responding, 76.9% were Caucasian (n = 140), 7.7% were Multi-Race (n = 14), 5.5% were Native American (n = 10), 5.5% were African American (n = 10), and 4.4% were Hispanic (n = 8). Forty-eight respondents did not answer this item.
Employment status was also included in the demographic section of the questionnaire. Of those responding to this item, 77.4% (n = 137) reported full-time employment, 8.5% (n = 15) self-employment, 6.8% unemployed (n = 12), 4.5% part-time employment (n=8) and 1.1% (n = 2) identified as other. Fifty-six respondents did not indicate employment.

One hundred thirty-five respondents identified their average length of volunteer service with this agency. The median was 31.99 months, SD = 18.62 months. A median-split was performed on this variable. Sixty-eight individuals (50.3%) indicated 0 to 27 months of service. Of these 135, the remaining 67 respondents (49.6%) reported service beyond 27 months.

Thus, the typical respondent is a Caucasian female. The volunteer is between the ages of 40 and 59 and employed full-time. This volunteer has been with this volunteer agency 24 months or more.

*Procedures*

Approval from the University of Oklahoma Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted on July 20, 2006. An amendment to the original IRB application was approved on August 28, 2006. This amendment granted permission to collect and retain the names of the respondents for a follow-up survey. This change removed the anonymity of the responses; therefore, it was important to work with IRB to ensure proper ethics were in place and that the rights of the respondents were still protected. Copies of both IRB approval letters are included in Appendix A of this document.

All volunteers (N = 1,791) received a postcard, sent by the volunteer agency, via the United States Postal Service inviting them to participate in the study. The postcard
served two purposes: (1) to inform the volunteers of the study and (2) to show the collaboration between the agency and the university. Potential respondents, who had a valid email address on file with the agency (n = 1,358), were informed by postcard they would receive an email containing a link to the survey website. Those volunteers without email addresses (n = 433) were informed the survey would arrive via the United States Postal Service. The researcher also provided a phone number the potential respondents could contact if they needed additional information.

An informed consent letter accompanied each survey type (paper and electronic) to inform the respondents that, although names were collected, their responses would remain confidential. Volunteers without internet access (n = 433) received a copy of the informed consent letter, along with a paper version of the survey, through the United States Postal Service. In this instance, respondents were told that by returning a completed survey using the self addressed, postage paid envelope provided, they were indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Thirty paper based surveys (13.04%) were returned to the university.

The internet-based survey was administered to all volunteers who were identified by the agency’s database as having Internet access and valid email accounts (n = 1,358). Of those responding electronically, 200 (86.96%) agreed to participate by clicking a button that acknowledged his or her receipt of the informed consent. (An additional 24 respondents did not agree to take part and were redirected to the volunteer agency’s website as opposed to being presented with the survey).

Regardless of the format (electronic or paper), the informed consent letter invited volunteers to participate in the research study, informed them of the purpose of
the study, and reiterated their participation was voluntary and confidential. Copies of both versions of the informed consent letters are included in Appendix B and Appendix C. Individual responses collected from volunteers were not accessible to anyone within the community service volunteer agency. That is, only the research team had access to the identifying data. Regardless of the format in which it was delivered, the survey was designed to be completed in approximately 30 minutes or less.

Follow-up reminders were sent via email only to participants with internet access. Non-respondents received up to four follow-up requests via email to complete the survey. The on-line survey was accessible to the volunteers for a period of four weeks. Paper versions of the survey were received within the same four week time period.

Responses were received from 230 individuals; of these, 165 responses, representing roughly 9.21% of the sample contacted, produced usable data.

**Measures**

Data presented in this study reflect a larger study designed to evaluate volunteer engagement. Thus, the larger survey consisted of 63 items taken from previously published measures. Constructs pertaining to this study included role identity (9 items), affective commitment (6 items), and intent to leave (1 item).

The nine items pertaining to role identity ($\bar{x} = 46.60; \text{SD} = 9.10$) were adapted from Callero, Howard and Piliavin (1987). Using a 7-point, Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree), respondents indicated their level of agreement to statements such as, *I would feel a loss if I were forced to give up volunteering*. High scores reflect high levels of role identity. Cronbach’s alpha of .81
was reported for the original scale scores (Callero, Howard and Piliavin, 1987). For the current sample, a combined alpha of .85 was obtained. The first five items in this section addressed volunteering in general ($\alpha = .76$). The final four items referred specifically to volunteering with the agency from which the sample was taken ($\alpha = .83$).

As mentioned, six items were included from the affective commitment scale ($\bar{x} = 27.32; \text{SD} = 7.48$) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Using a 7-point scale ($1 =$ Strongly Disagree to $7 =$ Strongly Agree), respondents indicated their level of agreement to items such as *I feel like a part of the family at the agency*. High scores reflect high levels of affective commitment. The estimate of internal consistency reliability has been reported as .87 (Allen and Meyer, 1990) with a sample of paid employees. For the current sample, an alpha of .92 was obtained.

The main construct measured for this study was the individual’s intent to remain (i.e., continue to serve as a volunteer) ($\bar{x} = 2.12; \text{SD} = 1.08$) with the organization. The measure of intent to remain among volunteers was based on work by Grube and Piliavin (2000). Agency volunteers were asked *how often do you give serious consideration to stop volunteering for the agency?* Response options ranged from *never* (1) to *very often* (5). Because this was a negatively worded item, low scores indicate intent to remain with the organization. Because this was a single item measure, score reliability could not be assessed.
Chapter 4

Results

In order to test the hypotheses for this study, a series of multiple regressions were computed. However, prior to discussing these findings it is appropriate to test the statistical assumptions of regression (Ethington, Thomas, & Pike, 2002; Pedhazur, 1997). To test the assumption of linearity, scatter plots were computed between the dependent and independent variables suggesting positive linear distributions. After examining scatter plots of scores for the independent and dependent variables it was determined the assumption of linearity was not violated. Score reliability estimates for each scale resulted in coefficient alpha’s ranging from a low of .76 to a high of .92 suggesting relatively acceptable levels of measurement error. Mean independence was verified by converting raw scores into z-scores. The mean of the z-scores was 0.0 with a standard deviation of 0.99, again suggesting this assumption has not been violated.

Tests of Assumptions

Homoscedasticity is the assumption that the variance surrounding the regression line is constant. Standardized scatter plots of predicted and residual values were used to assess homoscedasticity. As illustrated in the Figure 2, the data are fairly homoscedastic. The points were clustered relatively close to the regression line, suggesting that variance of errors is relatively constant.

The scatter plot shown in Figure 2 also illustrates how the residuals of the data meet the assumptions of homoscedasticity, linearity, and normality. Because the data portray an overall oval shape, with each line having a majority of the residuals fairly
close to the center, the assumptions of linearity and normality can be considered fairly satisfied (Data and Statistical Services, 2006).

Figure 2

Overlay Scatter Plot Showing Residual from Each Path

A spherical pattern was observed with a slight linear trend at the extreme residual of +3.0. This finding suggests noncorrelation of error. An outlier search was performed using standardized scores for each variable. Because the maximum scores did not exceed the absolute value of 3.0, it was determined that no outliers were present for this data. With the above tests considered as a whole, the assumptions for correlation and regression have not been significantly violated.
Distribution Characteristics

The mean of the distribution of the dependent variable was 2.12 (SD = 1.08; SE = .078). The distribution was positively skewed (.782; SE = .174) with kurtosis = -.032 (SE = .346). Although skewed, the regression is robust given that other assumptions were not violated. Thus, no transformations were performed. The distribution of the dependent variable is illustrated graphically in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Distribution of Dependent Variable
Tests of Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses stated in this study, a series of zero-order correlations were examined in combination with the results of multiple regressions (Cohen, 1990; Courville & Thompson, 2001; Hoyt, Leierer, & Millington, 2006). Table 1 displays the zero-order correlation matrix for the variables of interest in the current study. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha) scores are reported on the diagonal.

Table 1
Zero-Order Correlation Matrix [n = 165]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th># of Items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General Role Identity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.83</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Specific Role Identity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.38</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Affective Commitment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.60</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intent to Leave</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability reported on the diagonal. $r + \text{ or } - \geq .16; p < .05$

The first hypothesis stated *high general role identity as a volunteer will have a negative correlation with intent to leave the organization with which they volunteer.* There was a small (Cohen, 1992), negative correlation between general role identity and intent to leave ($r = -.12; p < .05$). This correlation was not statistically significant. As seen in Table 2, the standardized beta coefficient for general volunteer role identity ($\beta = -.046; p < .05$) was not statistically significant with regards to the context of the sample and variables involved in this study. The amount of variance explained by the
full model was 3% \( R^2 = .033; F(3, 161) = 1.815; p > .05 \) and is not statistically significant. Although the beta did not account for statistically significant variability in the context of this study, the small effect size for this sample was meaningful. Thus, partial support of \( H_1 \) is demonstrated.

Table 2
Regression Coefficients for Intent to Leave \([n = 164]\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE Beta</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>Sig. T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.813</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>5.684</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>1.010</td>
<td>.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Volunteer Role Identity</td>
<td>-.010</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>-.477</td>
<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Volunteer Role Identity</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>-.216</td>
<td>-1.673</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( R^2 = .033, F(3, 161) = 1.815; p > .05 \) Adjusted \( R^2 = .015 \)

The second hypothesis stated high specific role identity will have a negative correlation with intent to leave the organization with which they volunteer. There was a statistically significant, small, negative correlation between specific role identity and intent to leave \( (r = -.16; p < .05) \). Again, as seen in Table 2, the standardized beta was not statistically significant \( (\beta = -.216; p > .05) \) with regards to the context of the sample and variables involved in this study. Although the correlation was small using Cohen’s effect size index, it was negative, thus \( H_2 \) is partially supported.

The third hypothesis involved in this study stated high scores relating to affective commitment will have a negative correlation with intent to leave. A
meaningless correlation was observed between affective commitment and intent to leave \((r = -.07; p > .05)\). As seen in Table 2, the standardized beta was not statistically significant \((\beta = .116; p > .05)\) with regards to the context of the sample and variables involved in this study. Thus, H₃ was not supported.

The final hypothesis stated the relationship between specific role identity and general role identity with intent to leave will also be mediated by affective commitment to the organization with which they volunteer. A medium sized, statistically significant, positive correlation was observed between specific role identity and affective commitment \((r = .41; p < .05)\). Likewise, a large, statistically significant, positive correlation was found between specific role identity and affective commitment \((r = .73; p < .05)\). As seen in Table 3, the standardized beta was statistically significant \((\beta = .147; p < .05)\) with regards to the context of the sample and variables involved in this study. The amount of variance explained by the regression model was 55% \([R^2 = .555; F(2, 166) = 103.674; p < .05]\). Thus, H₄ was partially supported in that a relationship was found between general role identity, specific role identity, and affective commitment. However, affective commitment was not found to be a mediator in this study.
# Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Affective Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE Beta</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>Sig. T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>6.993</td>
<td>2.140</td>
<td>3.268</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Volunteer Role Identity</td>
<td>-.063</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-.676</td>
<td>.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Volunteer Role Identity</td>
<td>1.150</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.770</td>
<td>12.015</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² = .555, F(2, 166) = 103.67; p < .05  Adjusted R² = .550
Chapter 5

Discussion

The primary goal of the current study was to investigate the relationship between role identity, affective commitment and the intent to remain engaged among a sample of volunteers on-call to respond in the event of disaster. Based upon the available literature, four hypotheses were tested using correlations and a series of multiple regressions. Prior to computing the correlations and regression analyses, statistical assumptions for regression were tested and it was determined that these assumptions had not been significantly violated.

The first two hypotheses were only partially supported with regards to the context of the sample and variables involved in this study. This conclusion is based upon the recommendations of Courville and Thompson (2001) who specify that β-weight interpretation is “. . . dependent on having an exactly correctly specified model, because adding or deleting a single predictor could radically alter all the weights and thus all the interpretations resulting from them” (p. 231). Nevertheless, given the variables included in the study, the correlations were significant—meaningful—even when the beta coefficients were not.

Cohen (1992) defined effect size as the degree to which H₀ is false and/or the degree to which \( r \neq 0 \). Further, Cohen delineated the operational definitions of small, medium, and large effect sizes. For product moment correlations, the values of the effect size index are .10, .30, and .50 for small, medium, and large effect sizes respectively.
Small, negative correlations were found between role identity, both general (H₁) and specific (H₂), and intent to leave. Thus, higher scores on general identity were associated (albeit slightly) with lower scores on intent to leave. The third hypothesis was not supported; a meaningless, negative correlation found in this sample. Although none of these three correlations were statistically significant at the .05 level, the direction for each was as expected.

The fourth hypothesis was partially supported in the context of the sample and variables involved with this study. Affective commitment was not found to be a mediator as expected; however, a large, statistically significant correlation (r = .73) was found to link specific role identity with affective commitment. A medium, statistically significant correlation (r = .41) was found between general role identity and affective commitment. Specific volunteer role identity accounted for the majority of variance, 77%, with affective commitment. The present study found a positive correlation between role identity (both general and specific) and affective commitment. That is, when an individual has a high level of identification with a particular agency, he or she will also have greater levels of affective commitment towards that agency.

Overall, the respondents had low levels of intent to leave. Furthermore, there was not a great deal of variability among the responses. Thus, it might be difficult to detect differences, even if they exist, due to the homogeneity of the sample.

Partial support of the hypotheses in this study was somewhat surprising. Role identity theory has been used to help explain a vast array of human behaviors (Grube & Piliavin, 2000). Thus, its application for use in examining volunteerism is reasonable. Lee, Piliavin, and Call (1999) found that role identity was a strong predictor of
intentions to volunteer as well as donate money to charitable organizations. From the perspective of volunteers donating resources, the current results suggest the development of one’s identity with a volunteer organization will result in increased commitment. Surprisingly, this study did not find a link between identity and intent to leave which is inconsistent with the available literature. It is also surprising that affective commitment was not related to the intent to leave. From the available literature, it is widely accepted that affective commitment is a key to reducing voluntary turnover (Mohamed, Taylor, & Hassan, 2006). However, both of these findings could be the result of the sample involved in this study.

As illustrated in chapter 2, demographic analysis revealed that 99% of these volunteers had served the current organization for at least 12 months. Because they were not novice volunteers, and the organization involved in this study is seen as somewhat prestigious in the community, it is possible this sample provided atypical data. Volunteers who leave an organization before 12 months may feel differently. Further, the nature of the volunteer work performed by this sample is quite unique. These volunteers are generally on-call to respond in the event of a disaster. Therefore, they do not have a traditional time commitment, which may have influenced their affective commitment and/or intent to leave.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Although the results presented here do not support the relationship between role identity and intent to leave, this remains an important concern given the number of people who volunteer their time and energy. Turnover among effective volunteers could have a harmful impact on the level of service provided by the organizations to
those they serve. If a volunteer develops a strong role identity with an organization, a stronger sense of importance to the organization also develops. From this, an increased level of commitment to the organization can be reasonably expected (Skoglund, 2006).

Given the results presented here, the inference that any of these variables (general and specific role identity and affective commitment) affects intent to leave is not justifiable within the context of this study. As this was an exploratory study, future research in this area should focus on replication with various samples, in various types of volunteer agencies. Specifically, researchers might examine the relationship between affective commitment and intent to leave to see if other hidden variables are present, or if the relationship might be context specific. For example, the volunteers in the current study have a primary goal to serve the community in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. Other volunteers might have more frequent contact with clients and thus develop a stronger tie between role identity and turnover intentions. Also, the demands of volunteers serving in more structured formats may lead to increased role conflict and ultimately increased turnover among the volunteers.

Limitations

As with all studies, it is important to disclose the limitations for this exploratory study. Sampling bias was present as this was primarily an online survey. Those without access to the internet were required to take additional steps such as returning the paper survey via the US Postal Service. Further, the data was obtained from self-reported measures. Thus, it would be easy for respondents to succumb to social desirability without any checks or balances. Another significant limitation to this study was the use of a single item for the dependent variable. Also, a single item meant that neither
reliability analysis nor scale scores could be analyzed for this variable. Among other things, this resulted in complications when attempting to construct scatter plots to illustrate the relationship with the other variables, all multi-item measures.

As Mitchell (1985) writes, “. . . external validity reflects the extent to which the inference drawn from any particular experiment can be generalized to or across times, settings and persons” (p. 194). Despite multiple efforts to follow up with non-respondents, a low response rate, 12.84%, means that the non-response bias was quite high. Because of a high non-response bias, and the use of a cross-sectional design, it is not appropriate to generalize these results to any group other than the 165 participants. Hence, a fourth limitation of this study is lack of external validity.

Conclusion

Two specific research questions were delineated in the Purpose of Study section in chapter 1. *Is there a significant relationship between role identity and intent to leave among volunteers?* Taken as a whole, the results from this study do not lend support for this question. Significant relationships were found between role identity and affective commitment; however, the data do not support the extension of this relationship to the intention to leave. To what extent does role identity and affective commitment contribute to significant amounts of variance in volunteers’ decisions to perpetuate a given role? The data from this study account for significant variance, 77%, between specific role identity and affective commitment. However, no justifiable link was found for the extension of intent to leave. More work is needed to understand why volunteers are willing to remain engaged in their altruistic behaviors.
References


http://www.people.umass.edu/aizen/index.html


http://www.people.umass.edu/aizen/index.html


Appendices
Appendix A

University of Oklahoma Internal Review Board Letters of Approval

The University of Oklahoma
OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 11395
Category: 2
Approval Date: July 20, 2005

July 21, 2006

Randy Macon
Human Relations-OU Tulsa
4502 East 41st Street, SCH-TUL
Tulsa, OK 74135

Dear Mr. Macon:

RE: Volunteer Engagement at Tulsa Citizen Corp

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research project and determined that it meets the criteria in 45 CFR 46, as amended, for exemption from IRB review. You may proceed with the research as proposed. Please note that any changes in the protocol will need to be submitted to the IRB for review as changes could affect this determination of exempt status. Also note that you should notify the IRB office when this project is completed, so we can remove it from our files.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Sincerely,

E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
IRB Number: 11395
Amendment Approval Date: August 28, 2006

August 29, 2006

Randy Macon
Human Relations-OU Tulsa
4502 East 41st Street, SCH-TUL
Tulsa, OK 74135

RE: IRB No. 11395: Volunteer Engagement at Tulsa Citizen Corp

Dear Mr. Macon:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed your protocol modification form. It is my judgement that this modification allows for the rights and welfare of the research subjects to be respected. Further, it has been determined that the study will continue to be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended, and that the potential benefits to subjects and others warrant the risks subjects may choose to incur.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described in:
Amend Form Dated: August 22, 2006

Amendment Summary:
Respondent names to be retained to administer a second survey in 6 months.
Addition of Dr. Jody Worley as co-investigator to the research team.
Revised survey

This letter covers only the approval of the above referenced modification. All other conditions, including the original expiration date, from the approval granted July 20, 2006 are still effective.

If consent form revisions are a part of this modification, you will be provided with a new stamped copy of your consent form. Please use this stamped copy for all future consent documentation. Please discontinue use of all outdated versions of this consent form.

If you have any questions about these procedures or need additional assistance, please do not hesitate to call the IRB office at (405) 325-6110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Sincerely,

Enairella Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter – Electronic Version

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CONSENT
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Tulsa Citizen Corp Volunteer,

My name is Randy Macon, and I am a graduate student in Human Relations at the University of Oklahoma. I am requesting that you volunteer to participate in a research study titled Volunteer Engagement at Tulsa Citizen Corp. This study is being conducted by the University of Oklahoma at the request of the City of Tulsa. You were selected as a possible participant because of your affiliation with Tulsa Citizen Corp. Please read this information sheet and contact me to ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose of the Research Study: The purpose of this study is to measure the perceived level of volunteer engagement at Tulsa Citizen Corp.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: respond to a 21-item survey either via telephone or internet. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: There is no degree of risk associated with participation in this study. There are no compensatory benefits for participating in this study.

Compensation: You will not be compensated for your time and participation in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private and your supervisor will not have access to your responses. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Research records will be stored securely on computer servers operated by a third party provider. The survey will be administered online by an independent company, Survey Monkey. Individual responses by volunteers will not be accessible by anyone within Tulsa Citizen Corp. Only the research team will have access to the data.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at 918-663-3485 or ronny.k.macon-1@ou.edu. You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OUNCIRB) at 405-325-0116 or irb@ou.edu.

Please keep this information sheet for your records. By clicking the "I agree to participate button," I am agreeing to participate in this study. If you choose not to take part in this study, please click the "I do not wish to participate button" below. Thank you.

APPROVED

JUL 1 0 2008

OU NCIRB

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Appendix C

Informed Consent Letter – Paper Version

The University of Oklahoma

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

The Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps, in collaboration with the University of Oklahoma, requests that you complete the following questionnaire on volunteer engagement. This study is being conducted by the University of Oklahoma at the request of the City of Tulsa. Your selection as a participant in this survey is based on your affiliation with Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps. Please read this information sheet and contact me if you have any questions pertaining to your participation in this study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to measure the perceived level of volunteer engagement at Tulsa Citizen Corps.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following: respond to the enclosed 62-item survey. The survey should take less than 30 minutes to complete.

Risks and benefits of being in the study: There is no degree of risk associated with participation in this study. There are no compensatory benefits for participating in this study.

Compensation: You will not be compensated for your time and participation in this study.

Voluntary nature of the study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private and your supervisor will not have access to your responses. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you as a research participant. Research records will be stored securely on computer servers operated by a third party provider. Individual responses by volunteers will not be accessible by anyone within Tulsa Citizen Corps. Only the research team will have access to the data.

Contacts and questions: The researcher(s) conducting this study can be contacted at 918-660-3495 or molly_k.macon@ou.edu. You are encouraged to contact the researcher(s) if you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405.325.8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Please keep this information sheet for your records. By completing and returning the enclosed survey you are agreeing to participate in this study.

Thank you.

Jody A. Worley, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Human Relations
University of Oklahoma-Tulsa
Appendix D
Survey

Volunteer Engagement

For items 1 through 9, please darken the circled number to the right that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. Volunteering is something I rarely even think about.  
2. I would feel a loss if I were forced to give up volunteering.  
3. I really do not have any clear feelings about volunteering.  
4. For me, being a volunteer means more than just donating time.  
5. Volunteering is an important part of who I am.  
6. Volunteering with Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps is something I rarely even think about.  
7. I would feel a loss if I were forced to give up volunteering with Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
8. I really do not have any clear feelings about volunteering with Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
9. Volunteering with Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps is an important part of who I am.  

10. How often do you give serious consideration to stop volunteering for Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps?
   - Never
   - Seldom
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

11. Please indicate the number of training sessions you have attended in the last year for Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.

For items 12 through 16, please darken the circled number to the right that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

12. I am satisfied with the type of activities offered by Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
13. I am satisfied with the variety of activities offered by Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
14. I am satisfied with the frequency of activities offered by Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
15. Considering everything, I am satisfied with my participation in Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
16. I would be happy to continue volunteering with Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.  
17. I enjoy discussing Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps with people outside it.  
18. I feel like a part of the family at Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.

Survey Continues on Back
For items 19 through 21, please darken the circled number to the right that best reflects the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

19. I feel emotionally attached to Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.
20. Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
21. I feel a strong sense of belonging to Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps.

For items 22 through 36, please rate how important each of the motivations was in your initial decision to volunteer.

22. I volunteer because of my humanitarian obligation to others.
23. I volunteer because I enjoy helping other people.
24. I volunteer because I consider myself to be a loving and caring person.
25. I volunteer because people should do something about issues that are important to them.
26. I volunteer because of my personal values, convictions, and beliefs.
27. I volunteer to get to know people who are similar to myself.
28. I volunteer to meet new people and make new friends.
29. I volunteer to gain experience dealing with difficult topics.
30. I volunteer to challenge myself and test my skills.
31. I volunteer to learn about myself and my strengths and weaknesses.
32. I volunteer because of my sense of obligation to the community.
33. I volunteer because I consider myself an advocate for community issues.
34. I volunteer because of my concern and worry about the community.
35. I volunteer to get to know people in the community.
36. I volunteer to help members of the community.

Survey Continues on Next Page
43. Besides Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps, with how many other organizations/agencies are you currently volunteering? ______

44. Relative to other volunteer organizations, Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps enjoys a great deal of prestige in the community.___________

45. Due to volunteer-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.___________

46. The amount of time my volunteerism takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.___________

47. The demands of my volunteerism interfere with my home and family life.___________

48. The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with volunteer-related activities.___________

49. I limit what I volunteer to do because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner.___________

50. My home life interferes with my responsibilities as a volunteer.___________

51. The organization values my contribution to its well-being.___________

52. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.___________

53. The organization really cares about my well-being.___________

54. What additional training areas would you like to see offered? ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Survey continues on back
55. Are you interested in taking more of a leadership role with Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps?
   ○ Yes  ○ No

56. What can Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps do to make your experience more meaningful?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

57. Tulsa Mayor’s Citizen Corps will not receive your name in association with your responses. This information will
    be used to identify and follow-up with non-respondents.

   First Name ___________________________________ Last Name __________________________

58. What is your gender?
   ○ Female  ○ Male

59. What is your age?
   ○ 18-29  ○ 30-39  ○ 40-49  ○ 50-59  ○ 60 or over

60. What is your race/ethnicity?
   ○ Native American  ○ Caucasian  ○ African American  ○ Hispanic  ○ Asian  ○ Multi-Race

61. What is your current employment status?
   ○ Full Time  ○ Part Time  ○ Self-Employed  ○ Unemployed  ○ Student  ○ Other

62. Length of service with Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps?
   Years _________  Months _________

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey.
Please use the self-addressed, stamped envelope included to return your responses.