

3-2013

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## **The Revolving Door: A Closer Look at Major Factors in Volunteers' Intention to Quit**

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### Abstract

In non-profit organizations, volunteer coordinators deal with high rates of volunteer turnover due, in part, to increased levels of volunteer burnout. This study sought to identify how burnout can help explain volunteers' intention to quit and identify two potential antecedents of burnout, voice and role ambiguity. Specifically, it is hypothesized that volunteer voice and role ambiguity impact volunteers' intention to quit through their relationship with volunteer burnout. Data were obtained from volunteers working in an animal welfare organization in the western United States (N=151). An online survey was administered to volunteers who responded to a variety of questions and scales concerning their experiences as volunteers in an animal welfare organization. Structural equation modeling was used to test the mediation hypotheses. The findings provide tentative support that volunteer burnout mediates the relationship between two potential predictors of burnout (e.g. perception of voice and role ambiguity) and intention to quit. Consistent with conservation of resources theory, volunteers who are drained of their cognitive resources through dealing with a lack of voice and ambiguous volunteer role situations experience increased burnout. The practical and theoretical significance of these findings are discussed.

**Keywords** – Burnout, Volunteer Turnover, Intention to Quit, Role Ambiguity, Voice

## **The Revolving Door: A Closer Look at Major Factors in Volunteers' Intention to Quit**

Volunteerism is the voluntary giving of time and talents to deliver services or perform tasks with no direct financial compensations expected (Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005). With roughly 62.8 million Americans volunteering at least once between Septembers 2009 and 2010 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), volunteer work continues to be an important part of a productive society and economy. Volunteers provided services valued at nearly \$173 billion and devoted 8.1 billion hours to communities around the United States in 2010 (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2011). Without the help of those individuals, non-profit organizations would be unsuccessful in achieving their goals, as volunteers provide essential services that assist employees with many of the day-to-day tasks of the organization.

Unfortunately, one problem that non-profit organizations face is volunteer turnover (Garner & Garner, 2011). Volunteer turnover occurs when volunteers leave an organization and need to be replaced (Skoglund, 2006). Volunteer turnover is a byproduct of having a volunteer workforce, but high rates of turnover can be detrimental to the organization by hindering the chance to provide quality services. In order to counteract the effects of turnover, an organization must know the sources of turnover. One of the immediate antecedents to volunteer turnover, which is the focus of this study, is volunteers' intention to quit (Elangovan, 2001).

There is a considerable amount of research supporting the notion that intention to quit is one of the most important antecedents of turnover (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Jaros 1997). Intention to quit is defined as the cognitive manifestation of the behavioral decision to quit (Elangovan, 2001). Steel and Orvalle (1984) found that the intentions of individuals tend to be good predictors of their actual behavior. Based on this statement, if an individual placed a good amount of thought into quitting his or her position, that individual typically leaves the

organization. Because of the high costs associated with replacing individuals (i.e. time, money, and finding the right person for the position), a lot of effort has been put into understanding why individuals quit their jobs (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000).

With much of the research focusing on employees, there have been a number of conceptual models developed to explain the turnover process. Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) proposed that satisfaction with different facets of the job contributed to intentions to quit. Others focused on job involvement (Kanungo, 1979) and organizational commitment (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Jaros, 1997) as predictors of turnover and intention to quit. Newer studies have shown that job performance, through negative feedback during performance appraisals, impacts employee intentions to quit (Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009), as well as adverse working conditions (Böckerman & Ilmakunnas, 2009). These models, while useful, only focus on paid employees. There are few studies that deal with intentions to quit in volunteers, and none of the aforementioned models have been tested to see if they apply to volunteers in non-profit organizations.

This study seeks to begin to fill this gap in the literature by proposing burnout as an antecedent to intentions to quit. We argue that burnout can help explain volunteers' intention to quit and identify two potential antecedents of burnout typically associated with for-profit jobs that may meaningfully relate to volunteer positions (Hustinx, 2008). Additionally, we identify an important theoretical framework (i.e. conservation of resources theory) for understanding why and how burnout can lead to intentions to quit among volunteers.

### Burnout and Intention to Quit

Burnout is the occupational stress that results from demanding work related tasks and relationships (Maslach and Schaufeli, 1993). According to Maslach and Jackson (1986), burnout

is typically characterized by three factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is a source of occupational stress which comes through the depletion of energy and draining of emotional resources (Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006). Depersonalization refers to general personal withdrawal or mental distancing that occurs as an individual's energy and resources are depleted and is indicative of an alteration in an individual's personality. Those who experience depersonalization begin to show signs of cynicism and indifference to others (Benevides-Pereira & Neves Alves, 2007). Personal Accomplishment refers to the tendency to evaluate one's own work positively, particularly with regard to one's work with recipients (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001). When this is diminished, feelings of insufficiency, low self-esteem, professional failure, and demotivation may occur, as a person's work is now viewed in a negative manner (Benevides-Pereira & Neves Alves, 2007).

As Maslach and colleagues developed their ideas and theories concerning burnout, Pines and Aronson (1988) proposed that burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion (Pines & Aronson, 1988). According to Pines and Aronson (1988), physical exhaustion is typified by low energy, chronic fatigue, and weakness. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment. Mental exhaustion involves the development of negative attitudes towards one's self or work. Burnout can occur through long-term, emotionally demanding situations (Pines & Aronson, 1988; Kulik, 2006). Pines also assumes that burnout can occur in any occupational field, as well as those that do not fit the typical role of an occupation (i.e. students, couples, and political activists) (Enzmann, Schaufeli, Janssen, & Rozeman, 1998). Thus, burnout is likely experienced by volunteers in

nonprofit organizations as they engage in work-related roles without monetary compensation (Kulik, 2006).

Conservation of resources theory provides a useful framework for understanding the onset of volunteer burnout as well as the relationship between burnout and intention to quit. Conservation of resources theory is a comprehensive theory of stress based on the tenet that people strive to attain, build, and protect what they value (e.g., resources). That is, individuals acquire personal resources that allow them to accommodate, withstand, and overcome stressful events and threats to their well-being. According to Hobfoll (1989), psychological stress occurs when “(a) a resource is threatened to be lost, (b) a resource is lost, or (c) a resource is not replenished” (p. 516). Perceived and actual losses of resources can produce stress. Resources are defined as those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions or energies (i.e., mastery, self-esteem, learned resourcefulness, etc.) (Hobfoll, 1989). For example, individuals accumulate personal resources such as self-esteem, objects or material resources such as money, desirable goods, or services, and condition resources such as social support or mentors. Although this model is often applied to employees, volunteers accumulate resources that may be depleted depending on the situations in which they are placed.

A loss of important resources that are needed to continue volunteering (i.e. energy) can cause burnout. Van der Zee, Bakker, and Buunk (2001) note that emotionally charged relationships between caregivers and their recipients can lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion faster than those in other positions. These relationships can become even more demanding based on the health of the patient. If the patient’s health declines, the emotional resources of the caregiver (i.e. happiness or other positive emotions) can start to diminish (Van

der Zee et al., 2001). Thus, following the conservation of resources theory, the demand on the caregiver to provide positive interactions reduces resources, resulting in burnout.

When volunteers become burned out, they face a tough decision concerning their involvement with the organization and people they serve. For some, finding support among those who are going through the same thing may be enough to keep them in the program (Moreno-Jimenez & Hidalgo Villodres, 2010). For others, quitting is a viable and relatively easy option, as those who are overwhelmed by stresses are likely to reach a breaking point that cannot be tolerated anymore (Weisberg & Sagie, 1999). A volunteer who is burned out will think about quitting the volunteer organization, especially if it is a high intensity situation (Ross, Greenfield, & Bennett, 1999). However, not everyone who becomes burned out actually quits or leaves the organization. Burnout can also lead to conflicts, such as those between family life and volunteer work, which can leave individuals drained and make the volunteer think about quitting (Kulik, 2006). These thoughts can lead to intentions to quit, thus suggesting the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Volunteers feelings of burnout are positively related to their intentions to quit.*

#### Major Predictors of Burnout

Research on burnout provides evidence of various antecedents to the phenomena, both among volunteers and paid employees. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) and Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) focused on the stressors of excessive workload, emotionally demanding interactions with patients, and lack of control or participation in decisions that affect an individual's environment. These stressors led to lower productivity and effectiveness at work, as well as decreased job satisfaction and reduced commitment to the organization (Maslach et al., 2001). Others have looked at other factors in work situations, such as work state, time spent near

people, work conflicts, and job motivation, all of which lead to burnout (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Garner & Garner, 2011). In the volunteer realm, researchers have looked at personality factors (Bakker, Van der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006), intensity of the work (Nesbitt, Ross, Sunderland, & Shelp, 1996), and gender and employment status (Kulik, 2006) as antecedents to burnout. With the exception of workload and intensity (Maslach et al., 2001; Nesbitt et al., 1996), few studies of volunteer burnout have looked at antecedents previously discovered in paid-employment settings (for an exception see Nelson, Pratt, Carpenter, & Walter, 1995). For this study, we focus on voice and role ambiguity as potential antecedents to burnout as they have been studied in traditional employee samples and are particularly salient for volunteers (Van den Bos et al., 2010; Fisher & Schaffer, 1993).

### *Perception of Voice*

Building off of recent research and theoretical implications furthered by Garner and Garner (2011), we assert that one organizational phenomenon that may lead to volunteer burnout is a general lack of voice for the volunteers in the decisions that affect them. Voice is known as the opportunity to provide input in decision-making processes (De Crèmer, Cornelis, & van Hiel, 2008). In order for voice to occur, a volunteer has to believe that he or she will be able to share ideas or input about their work and that those ideas will be heard and respected. Research on voice has shown that there are many other positive effects in allowing voice besides feeling respected (Tyler & Lind, 1992). Those who are allowed a fair amount of voice appear to have better decision making skills, set ambitious goals, make positive evaluations of authority figures, experience increased cooperation (De Crèmer et al., 2008), and increased job satisfaction (Bane, 1999). When there is a lack of voice, volunteers feel like rejected members of the organization

and do not experience respect (Van den Bos et al., 2010). This lack of voice can lead to feelings of despair as well as a perceived sense of unfairness in the organization (Bane, 1999).

Consistent with conservation of resources theory, as these feelings of despair continue to develop, volunteers may become increasingly vulnerable to other negative stresses (Hobfoll, 2001). Volunteers will likely use cognitive and emotional resources as they cope with the lack of voice opportunities in their organizations. This continual drain, left unchecked, may lead to burnout, especially when other organizational demands also tax their personal resources. In other words, volunteers who feel that they have no voice in the important decisions in their volunteer organization may experience burnout more than those who do have voice. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2:* Perception of voice (i.e. higher ratings suggest more voice) is negatively related to volunteers' feelings of burnout.

### *Role Ambiguity*

Another organizational phenomenon that may lead to volunteer burnout is role ambiguity. Role ambiguity is defined as the uncertainty that can arise when a worker does not know what is required of him or her, how these demands will be satisfied, and how he or she is expected to behave at work (Papastylianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009). Previous research using paid-employee samples shows that role ambiguity is negatively related with autonomy, job tenure, and job performance (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). These factors can have an unfavorable influence on the mental health of employees, as employees get satisfaction from the role that they play in their professions (Freiderikou & Tserouli-Folerou, 1991). Additionally, role ambiguity can result in increased stress, decreased performance, and impaired efficiency (Lambert & Lambert, 2001). When employees do not know their roles, they may seek

information about their roles. Because it takes time and energy to do this, personal resources are used and they may experience burnout more readily (Leiter & Durup, 1994).

As stated in conservation of resources theory, these negative influences and reactions to role ambiguity drain resources that are important to individuals' well-being. In terms of volunteers, Fisher and Schaffer (1993) found that they may experience ambiguity resulting from a discrepancy between their own ideology and goals and those of the organization. This can have a negative influence on satisfaction (Papastylianou, Kaila, & Polychronopoulos, 2009) and can also lead individuals to avoid their work or limit their output (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983, Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Further, when volunteers are uncertain of their responsibilities, they will use their personal resources to cope with the ambiguity and seek out additional information. Using resources in this way rather on goal-directed work tasks will likely result in increased burnout. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 3: Role ambiguity is positively related to volunteers' feelings of burnout.*

#### Burnout as a Mediator

As the forgoing hypotheses indicate, it is believed that a lack of voice and role ambiguity will relate to burnout and that burnout will relate to intentions to quit. This series of hypotheses suggests the possibility of a mediating effect of burnout. That is, a lack of voice and role ambiguity may also be related to volunteers' intentions to quit, but only through their relationship to burnout. This full mediation model is consistent with our ongoing discussion of conservation of resources theory. Specifically, having a lack of voice and substantial role ambiguity will require both cognitive and emotional resources on the part of the volunteer to compensate and attempt to carry out goal-directed behavior. It is this reduction of overall resources that promotes increased burnout among volunteers. If the benefits of volunteering in

the form of recognition, awards, and other resources do not compensate for the continual drain on resources, the chronic feelings of burnout may eventually lead to both intentions to quit.

Thus, the following full mediation model is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 4a:* Burnout will fully mediate the relationship between a lack of voice and volunteers' intention to quit.

*Hypothesis 4b:* Burnout will fully mediate the relationship between a role ambiguity and volunteers' intention to quit.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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## Methods

### *Sample*

The research sample was comprised of 151 volunteers working in an animal shelter in the western United States. Of the volunteers, 90% were women and most were between the ages of 41 and 50 (35%). Participants' were also highly educated (93% had some college or more) and more than half were employed (53%). Only 15% of those who responded considered themselves to be inactive volunteers suggesting that the sample was comprised mostly of active volunteers.

### *Procedure*

Data was collected using an internet-based survey tool. A link to the online survey was sent to the non-profit organization's volunteer coordinator who then sent the link to the organization's volunteers (N = 692). The volunteers were asked to complete the survey within a two week period. A total of 36% of the volunteers (n = 249) clicked on the link to complete the survey. Surveys that were missing 20% or more responses were not included in the final sample. The final sample consisted of 151 volunteers for an overall response rate of 21%.

Because the response rate was lower than desired, it seemed appropriate to investigate and provide evidence that nonresponse bias was mitigated in the current sample (Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007). Following methodological recommendations by Rogelberg and Stanton (2007), several steps were taken to address the issue of nonresponse bias. First, a wave analysis was conducted where early respondents were compared to later respondents. Early respondents did not differ from later respondents (submitted after the imposed deadline) on the variables assessed on the survey. Second, an interest-level analysis was conducted comparing those who volunteered regularly versus those who volunteered less frequently (i.e. less than once every six months). It was assumed that those who volunteered more frequently were more interested in the topic and may be more motivated to take the survey. If interest level is related to participants' standing on the topics that make up the survey (e.g. if interested individuals are less burned out), the survey results may be susceptible to bias as more interested individuals tend to respond more readily (Rogelberg & Stanton, 2007). Results indicate that the means and standard deviations on the focal variables were nearly identical across these groups providing further evidence that nonresponse bias was not present in this data. Third, sample demographic parameters (e.g. education, gender, and age) were nearly identical to what was known about the overall population (i.e. compared to other volunteer groups in other published studies). Based on these analyses, nonresponse bias does not appear to be present.

### *Measures*

*Voice.* Voice was measured using four items from a scale developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998). This assessed how volunteers perceived their voice to be heard in their organization (e.g., “the organization I volunteer at gives me a chance to express my concerns on

volunteer related issues”). Responses were based on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Role ambiguity.* This consisted of three items from Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman’s (1970) scale on role ambiguity. Volunteers were asked to gauge their feelings on how the organization assigned tasks and how clearly they understood their assignments (e.g., “I have clear planned goals and objectives for my volunteer assignment”). Responses were based on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Burnout.* Burnout was measured using five items from an adapted scale developed by Pines and Aronson (1988). Volunteers were asked about their feelings about their volunteer work (e.g., “I feel that volunteering is a strain”). Responses were based on a five point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

*Intention to quit.* Intention to quit was measured using three items adapted from scales developed by Hom and Griffeth (1991) and Jaros (1997). This assessed whether or not volunteers thought about staying with or leaving their current organization (e.g., “I often think of ending my volunteer work at this organization”). Responses were based on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Means, standard deviations, internal reliabilities, and intercorrelations among the variables used in this study are reported in Table 1. Of the potential demographic control variables in the data set, none showed significant correlations to the predictors, mediator, or outcome variables, so we chose not to include them in subsequent model testing (Becker, 2005).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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*Discriminant Validity of the Constructs*

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to examine the distinctiveness of the four focal variables. The model fit for each of the nested models was compared ranging from a single-factor model to a four-factor model (e.g. Rahim & Magner, 1995; Lance & Vandenberg, 2002).

Table 2 shows the results of these analyses.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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When looking at each of the fit statistics, the four-factor model showed the best overall fit. The four-factored model showed a better chi-square statistic (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 1982) and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA: Browne & Cudeck, 1993) and had both comparative fit index (CFI: Bentler, 1990) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI: Tucker & Lewis, 1973) values above their recommended cutoffs of .90. Factor loadings for individual items are shown in Appendix A.

*Proposed Model and Hypotheses*

Figure 2 shows the standardized path coefficients estimated by LISREL 8.80 for the proposed full-mediation model. Two other models were tested as comparison points for assessing the efficiency of the proposed model in explaining the relationships hypothesized: a direct effects model and a partial mediation model (see Table 3).

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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Insert Table 3 about here

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*Hypothesis 1.* Hypothesis 1 proposed that burnout was positively related to intentions to quit. For this part of the model, the path coefficient was significant ( $\beta = .65, p < .05$ ). In addition, burnout had a significant positive correlation with intentions to quit ( $r = .50, p < .05$ ).

*Hypothesis 2.* Hypothesis 2 proposed that perception of voice is negatively related to volunteers' feelings of burnout. For the part of the model predicting burnout, the path coefficient was significant. Perception of voice had a significant negative relation with burnout ( $\beta = -.36, p < .05$ ). In addition, perception of voice had a significant negative correlation with burnout ( $r = -.45, p < .05$ ). These results provide support for Hypothesis 2.

*Hypothesis 3.* Hypothesis 3 proposed that role ambiguity is positively related to volunteers' feelings of burnout. For the part of the model predicting burnout, the path coefficient was significant. Role ambiguity had a significant positive relation with burnout ( $\beta = .22, p < .05$ ). In addition, role ambiguity had a significant negative correlation with burnout ( $r = -.43, p < .05$ ). These results provide support for Hypothesis 3.

*Hypothesis 4a and 4b.* Structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.80 was used to test the hypothesized model presented in Figure 1. The proposed full-mediation model showed good fit  $\chi^2(86) = 183.04, p < .05$ ; RMSEA = .08, TLI = .96, CFI = .96. To test the mediation hypotheses, the steps described by Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger (1998) were followed. To show support for this regarding burnout as a mediator, perception of voice and role ambiguity were related to burnout. Also, burnout was related to volunteer intentions to quit. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the proposed model with these significant paths shown.

The last step in the Kenny et al. mediation process is calculation of the indirect relationship of the independent variables (i.e. voice and role ambiguity) with the outcome variable (i.e. intentions to quit) through the mediator (i.e. burnout). The most commonly used

statistic for showing the statistical significance of these indirect relationships is the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982). Using this test, both mediated relationships showed a significant indirect relationship. That is, voice related to intentions to quit through burnout ( $\beta = -.23, z = -2.86, p < .05$ ) and role ambiguity related to intentions to quit through burnout ( $\beta = .14, z = 2.06, p < .05$ ).

As an alternative test of the proposed model, a partial mediation model was tested in which direct paths from voice to intentions to quit and from role ambiguity to intentions to quit were added. Neither of these additional paths were significant and the approximate fit indices (i.e. CFI, TLI, and RMSEA) for this partial mediation model were basically the same as the full mediation model. Since the partial mediation model is nested within the full mediation model, the chi-square difference test is an appropriate statistic for comparing these two models. This test showed a non-significant reduction in the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2(2) \text{ difference} = 5.59, p > .05$ ), suggesting that the partial mediation model does not represent the data better than the full mediation model. Given that the full mediation model has adequate fit with fewer paths estimated and that the additional paths in the partial mediation model are non-significant, the full mediation model is accepted. These results provide support for Hypothesis 4.

### Discussion

The present study focused on the development of a known cause of intention to quit, burnout, and how volunteers may experience this through a lack of voice and role ambiguity. Our findings appear to support our hypotheses. Perception of voice is negatively related to burnout. Directly interpreted, this means that as volunteers' perception of voice increases, they experience less burnout. Additionally, we found that role ambiguity is positively related to burnout. This suggests that when volunteers are unclear about their tasks while volunteering, they are more likely to develop feelings of frustration that may lead to burnout. According to our

findings, burnout fully mediated the relationship between perception of voice and intentions to quit as well as between role ambiguity and intentions to quit. This finding appears to confirm the usefulness of applying conservation of resources theory to volunteers' experiences at their volunteer organization. Specifically, this finding suggests that rather than directly impacting volunteers' intentions to quit, a lack of voice and role ambiguity appear to increase feelings of burnout through depleting volunteers' cognitive and emotional resources.

#### *Implications for Theory/Research*

Our findings provide several implications for theory and research. First, the present study contributes to the burnout literature by further illustrating that burnout exists in both employees and volunteers and that the antecedents and outcomes of burnout among volunteers are similar to those experienced by employees (Nelson et al., 1995). Much of previous research on burnout and intentions to quit focused heavily on employee samples (e.g. Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). However, given our findings, the research on burnout among employee samples may have direct implications for future research on volunteer burnout. For example, like the work by Nelson and colleagues (1995) also suggests, perhaps other traditional antecedents to burnout (e.g. job attitudes, workload, job characteristics, etc.) found among employees may also be present among volunteers. Although it should not be assumed that employee research on burnout is a good proxy for such research among a volunteer sample, future research should consider this as an important and necessary starting point.

Second, the study contributes to literature concerning conservation of resources theory. This study uses conservation of resources theory as a framework for why these two antecedents (perception of voice and role ambiguity) lead to burnout. It is believed that a lack of voice and role ambiguity drains valuable resources (i.e. work conditions and energies) from the volunteer.

Our findings appear to confirm this and suggest that conservation of resources theory, which typically applies to the for-profit sector, can be applied to the non-profit sector (i.e. volunteer samples) as well. Future research should look at other resource draining mechanisms in volunteering and apply the conservation of resources framework to those situations as well.

Third, the current study shows the usefulness of studying perception of voice among volunteers. No other study had focused on the effect that perception of voice (or a lack of voice) had on volunteer burnout. Garner and Garner (2011) appear to be the first to suggest the importance of voice in dealing with issues of volunteer retention, thus this study pulls from their implications and discovers some of the psychological impact of a lack of voice among volunteers. Further, Wilkinson, Dundon, Marchington, & Ackers (2004) noted that the simple existence of voice systems and practices were not enough for individuals to believe in those mechanisms. Thus, simply having an “open-door” policy or a suggestion box may not be enough to promote a perception that volunteers’ or employees’ voice is considered. Although our findings suggest that a lack of voice leads to burnout, it does not clarify how that voice perception is or even could be generated by managers in the organization. Thus, future research needs to first, recognize the importance of considering voice as an important antecedent to burnout and second, focus on mechanisms that develop and enhance the perception of voice.

#### *Implications for Practice/Managerial Implications*

The current findings illustrate several implications for managers. First, managers may want to find ways to promote the sharing of opinions, ideas, and thoughts from volunteers thus increasing voice. One opportunity to promote voice is through volunteers evaluations. Research has found that when both parties work together to evaluate performance and provide solutions for shortcomings, the individual will perceive the evaluation to be fair (Landy, Barnes, &

Murphy, 1978; Bane 1999). This perception of fairness can go a long way in making the volunteer believe that they have voice in the organization. Another opportunity to promote voice is through weekly or monthly volunteer team meetings. Meetings are important because they can involve a lot of important elements, such as resolving conflicts, solving problems, generating innovative ideas, decision making, and building commitment for the organization (Perkins, 2009). They can be used as a time for volunteers to voice their concerns or as a training session for new rules or ways of doing things. If the manager is uncomfortable leading these meetings, a volunteer could act as the meeting administrator, who would control the flow of information in the meeting and assist in the decision making process (Niederman & Volkema, 1999). This would give volunteers a chance to voice their opinions and feel more connected to the organization.

Second, managers should engage in processes to reduce role ambiguity among volunteers and make sure that volunteer assignments are laid out clearly. One way to accomplish this would be developing a volunteer manual (e.g. McFarland, 2005). The formulation of written guidelines outlining the role and scope of a volunteer's role in a manual may lessen the potential for role ambiguity (Merrell, 2000). The manual should contain guidelines for their specific tasks and provide additional references for clarifying their duties. Job descriptions in the manual should include a job title, describe the purpose of the position, discuss specifically how it helps the organization, identify their direct supervisor, and specify the qualifications, physical requirements, duties and responsibilities, training requirements, and so on (McFarland, 2005). A well developed volunteer manual coupled with adequate training would ensure that volunteers experience minimal role ambiguity and can use their energies/resources for more goal-directed tasks and hopefully strengthen their commitment to the organization generally.

Third, managers should be aware that the relationship between the organization and their volunteers may be similar, in some ways, to the relationship between the organization and their employees. That is, while volunteers and employees may not do the same kinds of tasks in an organization or get compensated in the same ways, they should not always be treated in different ways. As previously mentioned, burnout exists among employees (Maslach et al., 2001) and volunteers (Kulik, 2006; Bakker et al., 2006). So too does perception of voice, role ambiguity, and intention to quit (De Crèmer et al., 2008; Van den Bos et al., 2010; Papastylianou et al., 2009; Fisher & Schaffer, 1993; Leiter et al., 2009; Ross et al., 1999). By extension, other observed relationships in the paid employee research (e.g. job satisfaction and organizational commitment) may also be present in volunteers (e.g. volunteer work satisfaction and organizational commitment). Thus, managers should take ideas found among their employee surveys and consider applying similar practices/principles among their volunteer workforce.

#### *Limitations/Future Directions*

Though this study is an important step in understanding volunteer burnout and intentions to quit, several limitations exist as well as opportunities for future research. One limitation is that the study used a cross-sectional design, so any causal inferences are tentative and should be tested using a different research design (e.g. experiments, quasi-experiments, or longitudinal designs). Future research should consider using experimental or longitudinal designs to test our hypotheses and see if the causal relationships inferred continue to hold. For example, one could create a lab environment that would vary the amount of perception of voice and role ambiguity that volunteers experience. This could be done by having them engage in a task with or without directions for completing the task (i.e. role ambiguity) and provide or not provide directions when asked (i.e. voice).

Building off the former limitation, the study also suffers from the Procrustean nature of using structural equation modeling with cross sectional data (Schumaker & Lomax, 2004). Although structural equation modeling is useful for testing causal hypotheses, any interpretation of the findings must be performed with caution. Specifically, the fit of the proposed model supports the proposed theory, however, further analyses and ordering of the variables could lead to good fitting models that could support other theoretically meaningful relationships. Thus, future research needs to use alternative methods that further establish the causal ordering of the data thereby limiting the number of viable alternative models and theories for explaining the proposed relationships.

Another limitation involves the sample of the data. This study only focused on one type of non-profit organizations (i.e. animal shelters) and only assessed the focal variables in a single organization. This narrow sampling frame reduces the generalizability of the study to other volunteer organizations, and does not fully reflect the population of volunteers in non-profit organizations. Future research can benefit by using a broader sample from a host of other non-profit organizations as well as across multiple organizations within those areas. Additionally, this sample was a U.S. sample which limits the cultural implications for the study. Future research could benefit from comparing these findings to samples from other countries/cultures and looking to see if volunteering is viewed similarly and has the same effects on volunteers in these different settings. For example, cross-cultural studies could show whether the relationships found in this study that appear to hold true in individualistic culture (i.e. United States) would persist in a collectivistic culture (e.g. China).

Another limitation of the study was that of common method bias. Common method bias, or common method variance, is the variance that is attributable to the measurement method

rather than to the constructs the measures represent (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), common method bias causes the error variances of measures assessed using the same method to correlate; thus, potentially inflating the observed correlations. However, recent research and thinking concerning this bias suggests that it is overstated and researchers can proactively deal with this issue by providing evidence of measurement validity (i.e. discriminant validity) and follow good research design to mitigate this concern (Conway & Lance, 2010). Following recommendations by Conway and Lance (2010), we provided evidence of discriminant validity using confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 2). If common method bias was a serious issue in this study, the best fitting factor structure for our measurement model would be a single factor. However, the four factor structure clearly had the best fit suggesting that common method bias may be mitigated. Additionally, we followed additional recommendations in the data gathering process (e.g. protecting anonymity, using a variety of rating scales, etc.) to further mitigate this bias. However, future research should consider using multiple time points to gather data which is an additional process that mitigates concerns of common method bias.

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Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of all Measures

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Role Ambiguity	4.19	.78	(.89)						
2. Perception of Voice	3.47	.88	.58*	(.88)					
3. Burnout	1.64	.67	-.43*	-.45*	(.91)				
4. Intentions to Quit	1.93	.85	-.37*	-.39*	.50*	(.75)			
5. Age	4.09	1.43	-.08	.01	-.04	-.14	-		
6. Gender	1.10	.30	-.05	.12	.05	.03	.13	-	
7. Education	4.29	1.33	.02	-.13	.11	.02	.36*	-.02	-

Note: N = 151. Diagonal values are the internal consistency estimates for each scale.

\* =  $p < .01$  (2-tailed)

TABLE 2: Confirmatory Factor Analyses for Discriminatory Measures

Model	CFI	TLI	$\chi^2$	df	Difference	RMSEA
One-factor	.79	.75	889.24	90		.24
Two-factor	.86	.83	513.63*	89	375.61*	.18
Three-factor	.95	.94	253.91*	87	259.72*	.11
Four-factor	.97	.96	171.33*	84	82.58*	.08

*Note.*  $N = 151$ . The one-factor model includes all measures combined. The two-factor model separates perception of voice (POV) into Factor 1 and role ambiguity (RA), burnout (BO), and intentions to quit (ITQ) into Factor 2. The three-factor model separates POV into Factor 1, RA into Factor 2, and BO and ITQ into Factor 3. The four-factor model separates each measure into distinct factors. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; Difference = difference in chi-square from the next model; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation. \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 3: Fit indices and standardized path coefficients for theoretical models

Measures	Direct Model	Full Mediation Model	Partial Mediation Model
Fit Indices			
Chi-squared	171.33	183.04	177.45
<i>df</i>	84	86	84
CFI	.97	.96	.96
TLI	.96	.96	.96
RMSEA	.08	.08	.09
Direct Effects on Intentions to Quit			
Perception of Voice	-.19	-	-.19
Role Ambiguity	.15	-	.15
Burnout	.49*	.65*	.49*
Direct Effects on Burnout			
Perception of Voice	-	-.36*	-.36*
Role Ambiguity	-	.22*	.20*

Note. N = 151. \* $p < .05$ .

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Model

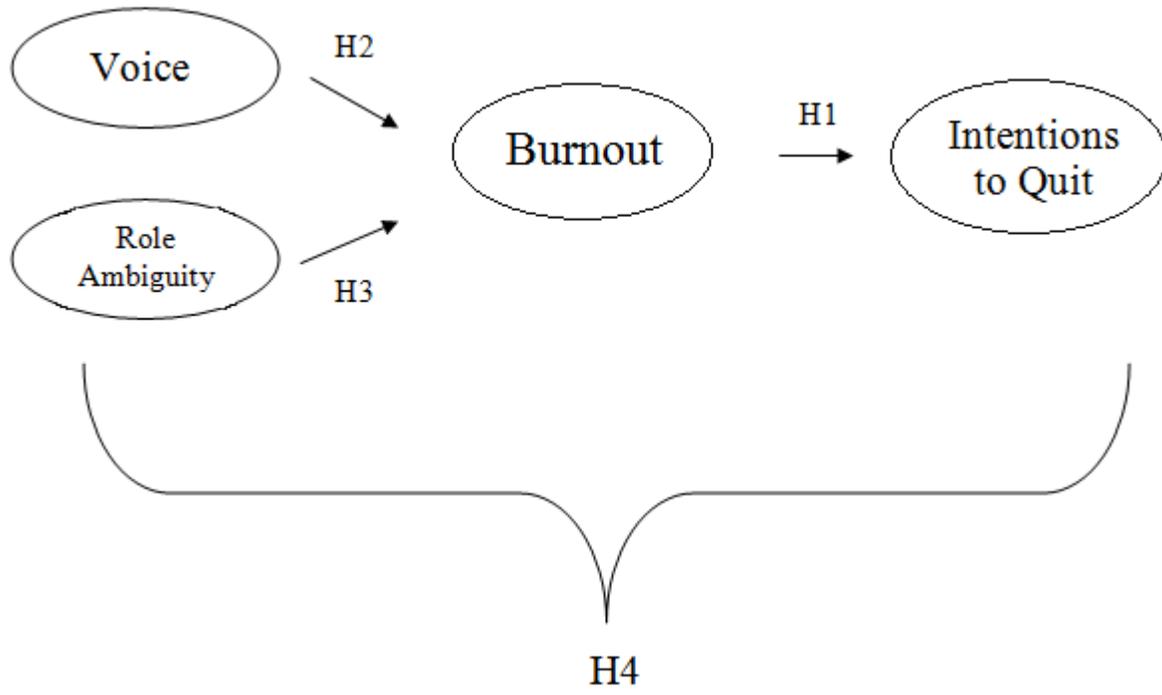
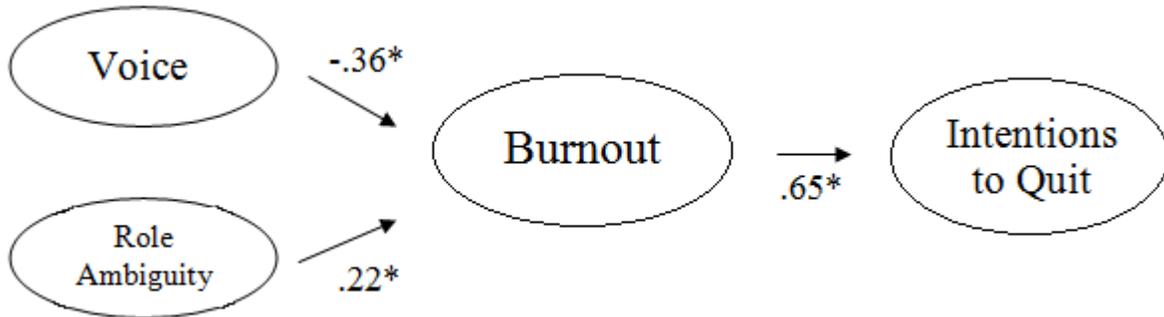


Figure 2: Proposed Model with Standardized Path Coefficients \*  $p < .05$ .



## Appendix A

*Primary Factor Loadings*


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1. POV1 - Input is valued at organization	.71
2. POV2 - Organization gives me change to express concerns	.82
3. POV3 - Organization listens to views before making decisions concerning me	.97
4. POV4 - Organization asks for my thoughts and ideas before making volunteer decisions	.82
5. RA1 - Clear planned goals and objectives for assignment*	.62
6. RA2 - Know what is expected of me*	.91
7. RA3 - Know what responsibilities are*	.71
8. BRO1 - Emotionally drained	.65
9. BRO2 - Used up at end of session	.71
10. BRO3 - Volunteering is a strain	.63
11. BRO4 - Burned out from work	.57
12. BRO5 - Frustrated by assignment	.62
13. ITQ1 - Think of ending volunteer work with organization	.81
14. ITQ2 - Intend to keep volunteering here	.63
15. ITQ3 - I may look for a new place to volunteer at	.71

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*Note.* \* indicates reverse-coded items.