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THE COMMITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS IN COMMUNITY-BASED SPORT: A RESEARCH REVIEW AND AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

Third-sector organisations depend heavily on volunteers for their operations and very existence. Of these organisations, non-profit community-based sport organisations traditionally rely on a committed volunteer workforce. Significant social and policy changes are, however, influencing volunteers' attitudes and behaviour. As these changes continue to unfold, it becomes critical to understand and foster volunteer commitment to their organisations. This paper examines commitment and its specific significance for such a volunteer labour force. Commitment frameworks and research, particularly in volunteer settings, are reviewed. The discussion then addresses how the nature of these environmental changes may affect the nature of volunteers' commitment, and how, in turn, commitment may impact on key outcomes such as retention and performance. Finally, research avenues and practical suggestions for volunteer managers are presented.

KEYWORDS: commitment; volunteers; community-based sport; non-profit

INTRODUCTION

The Third Sector is comprised of organisations where groups of people provide, amongst other things, a service for themselves or others (ABS 1999). Sporting and recreation clubs, organisations and associations, particularly those that work at the community or 'grassroots' level, are typical examples. They are said to 'constitute the fabric of local communities' (ABS 1999: 1). One of the key distinguishing features of non-profit organisations is that the great majority rely on the unpaid (or voluntary) labour of their members, supporters and directors. Hence, the importance of understanding the nature of volunteers' relationships with their organisations cannot be overstated.

Australia is characterised by a strong tradition of volunteering: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2001) figures show that 4.4 million people volunteered during the year 2000. Sport and recreation organisations attract,

after the community-welfare sector, the largest numbers of volunteers (Cuskelly, Harrington, & Stebbins 2003): 1.1 million persons aged 18 years and over (8.2% of the adult population) undertook voluntary work for sport and physical recreation organisations in the year 2000. The significance of volunteering in the sport sector is noteworthy. This is highlighted by the fact that of all 'highly committed volunteers' (those who contribute more than 300 hours per year or an average of 6 hours per week) nearly 53% volunteer in sport organisations (Lyons & Hocking 2000).

Despite this significant volunteer contribution, increased levels of participation in organised sport are overreaching the current human resource capacity of these organisations (Cuskelly 2004). Further, Cuskelly's analysis of trends indicates that whilst participation continues to increase, volunteer numbers are declining. At a fundamental level, as Cuskelly states that three things could be done: make greater efforts to recruit more volunteers, increase the number of hours volunteers currently work, or improve the retention of existing volunteers. In the longer term, management will be more concerned with retention (Hibbert, Piacentini & Al Dajani 2003).

As previously mentioned, of the many issues organisations face, a significant issue is the decline in volunteer numbers. Globally, the sporting sector as a whole is experiencing a set of pressures that reflect changes in the nature of society and organisations. Of these, the need for volunteers with specialist skills, people having less available after work time to volunteer, and the increasing professionalisation of the voluntary-sector sport are key pressures. In some cases this leads to the hiring of paid staff to work alongside volunteers.

The changing nature of the Third Sector has also led to tighter legal requirements, specifically monitoring, evaluation and funding procedures. Governance issues, such as volunteer board performance in non-profit sporting organisations, are also a topic of concern (Hoye & Auld 2001). Arguably, such pressures have a profound impact on the attitudes and behaviour of volunteers (Nicholset al. 2005).

As these challenges continue to unfold, it becomes critical to understand and foster the commitment of volunteers. The commitment of volunteers is recognised as central to the effective management of community-based sport organisations in Australia and other countries because of its link to positive outcomes (Chelladurai 1999, Cuskelly et al. 2003, Cuskelly, McIntyre, & Boag 1998). Committed individuals are more likely to remain in their respective organisations and exert effort for those organisations.

Moreover, commitment was also found to influence other positive outcomes, including organisational citizenship and general performance (Meyer et al. 2002) across a variety of settings, including the non-profit sector (Goulet & Frank 2002).

Given the nature of the above discussion, this paper begins by outlining various commitment frameworks and reviewing research conducted in volunteer-staffed settings (both sport and non-sport). It then addresses how the changing nature of volunteering affects the nature of commitment and, in turn, how commitment may affect key outcomes such as retention and performance. Finally, it suggests avenues for further research and offers practical suggestions for volunteer managers.

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The study of organisational commitment began in the 1950s, guided by concerns about individuals and their relationships with their organisations. Early conceptions of commitment, such as those of Kelman (1958), Etzioni (1961), and Kanter (1968), derive from organisational and sociological theories that sought to explain involvement in social organisations (Cuskelly & Boag 2001). In Kelman's view, three different processes guide an individual's behaviour: compliance, identification and internalisation. These processes may lead to the same behaviour, which in the case of volunteering could be deciding to become one or to continue to be one. For example, Cuskelly et al. (1998) suggest that an individual may decide to volunteer as a sport administrator on the expectation of gaining approval from others on the board or committee (compliance), but continue to volunteer because of the development of a sense of identification with other board members. Motives for continuing to volunteer are fluid: Cuskelly et al. (2003) found that sport volunteers' reasons for continuing to volunteer changed over time, and, as their motivations changed, so did their commitment.

Etzioni (1961) believes that organisations exert control over their members, control that is dependent upon the nature of the individual's involvement. This involvement can be of low or high intensity and of positive or negative nature. Etzioni refers to positive involvement as 'commitment' and to negative involvement as 'alienation'. This conceptualisation can be applied to voluntary organisations. A moral orientation is based on internalisation and identification, a calculative orientation is based on inducements that match individual contributions, with an alienated orientation denoting an intensive negative feeling.

A distinction can also be made between attitudinal and behavioural commitment (Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982). The former is an attachment that individuals have for their organisation, which involves three factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of organisational goals and values; a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation; and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation.

In contrast, behavioural commitment is defined in terms of 'sunken costs' tying the individual to a particular organisation. This approach derives from the work of Becker (1960), who posits that commitment rests on the perceived importance of the costs associated with discontinuing a line of activity, such as employment or organisational membership. A more recent and widely used framework was proposed by Meyer and Allen (e.g., Allen & Meyer 1990, Meyer & Allen 1991, 1997). In proposing their framework, these authors state that commitment has a core essence that distinguishes it from other organisation related attitudes or motivations. Commitment can lead individuals to behave in certain ways that are independent of other motives and attitudes.

Meyer and Allen's framework builds upon earlier conceptualisations and has the following components. First there is affective commitment, which denotes an individual's emotional attachment to and identification with the organisation. This individual *wants* to remain in the organisation. Second, continuance commitment, which represents an individual's decision to remain with the organisation because of the costs associated with leaving it or because other employment (or volunteering) alternates are not available. This individual *needs* to remain in the organisation. Finally, normative commitment reflects an individual's feeling that he or she should remain with the organisation because of a sense of duty or obligation. This individual feels he or she *ought* to remain with the organisation. Research examining this framework has been extensive, generally supporting the various dimensions described and is documented in several reviews including Mathieu and Zajac (1990), Meyer and Allen (1997), and Meyer et al. (2002).

Although a variety of factors were found to contribute to the development of these three dimensions of commitment, the strongest influence is arguably exerted by situational or 'work experiences' factors (Meyer, Allen & Topolnytsky 1998). As such, affective commitment is shaped by work experiences that contribute to individuals' self-worth, their sense of competence, and 'comfort' (such as good interpersonal relations). A number of situational factors affect continuance commitment. The environment (in particular, the supply and demand for labour), the benefits and rewards

available through organisational membership, and the perception of whether one's own expertise and knowledge are valuable in the current organisation (or elsewhere) all affect continuance commitment.

Finally, different norms affect normative commitment. These include: cultural or societal norms (for example, norms that value volunteering as a leisure choice); norms that emphasise the importance and appropriateness of continuing to serve in such organisations; and the normative, implicit obligation to reciprocate for what the organisation gave the individual (such as training, experience, or the opportunity to put something back into the sport). The last normative element, also known as the psychological contract (Liao-Troth 2001) between the volunteer and the organisation, may be of key salience.

According to Reichers (1985), organisational commitment can be more accurately understood as a collection of multiple commitments to various entities that comprise the organisation. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) incorporated Reichers work in their conceptualisation of a multi-target approach. This work addressed the question of 'to what' the employee/volunteer is attached. It also allows a more precise link between commitment and outcomes of interest such as retention in a specific role or job. Furthermore, distinctions between volunteers seemingly equally committed to the organisation, although they may hold different commitments to organisational targets or entities, are possible.

This shift of focus to other organisational targets and entities of commitment is well established in both paid-employee and sport settings. Results from a number of studies have found that individuals make distinctions between commitment to the organisation and commitment to various targets. In the mainstream literature, targets studied include supervisors/leaders (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber 2004), the work group or team (Baruch & Winkelmann-Gleed 2002), occupational/professional commitment (Meyer, Allen & Smith 1993), the coaching profession (Turner & Chelladurai 2005) and job involvement (e.g., Blau & Boal 1989). Research on targets of commitment in volunteer organisations is still new. In the case of sport, however, new foci on the association to which the club belongs, the act of volunteering itself, the specific role undertaken (such as committee member, coach), and the team of volunteers are required.

For example, research by Engelberg, Skinner, and Zakus (2005) explored two targets of volunteer commitment. Based on Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) 'multiple targets of commitment' framework, these authors examined

the commitment of volunteers in a junior sport organisation (Little Athletics centres) to three organisational targets: the organisation (the centre), the team of volunteers and the volunteer role held. They found that volunteers held distinctive commitments to these three targets (with commitment to the team strongest, followed by organisational commitment, then commitment to the role). They also found these commitments differed in their relations with antecedent conditions (e.g., age, sex, parenthood). For example, older volunteers, those over 55 years of age, held the strongest commitment to the team. Committee members were found to have stronger commitment to the role undertaken than other volunteers (such as coaches or officials). This study indicates that the examination of volunteer commitment to targets other than the organisation as a whole is warranted. The findings are consistent with previous research that shows the suitability of team commitment as a focus of study (e.g. Vandenberghe et al. 2004).

In sum, it is now generally accepted that commitment is a multidimensional attitude that can be directed at various organisational targets or entities. The strength of multidimensional frameworks (such as Meyer & Allen 1997) and multi-target frameworks (such as Meyer & Herscovitch 2001) is that they acknowledge that commitment is complex. It is more than emotional attachment, internalisation processes, perceived costs or moral obligation with relation to an organisation as a whole. An examination of the specific issues relating to the sport volunteer experience may shed light on whether the affective, continuance and normative dimensions should be retained. In addition, which targets of commitment central to the volunteer experience can be identified?

THE ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Research on the organisational commitment of volunteers is still emerging. Studies examining volunteers in diverse roles are available. These include volunteers as fundraising workers (Dailey 1986), technical army personnel (Dornstein & Matalon 1989), crisis centre workers (Brown & Zahrlly 1990), church volunteers (Keyton, Wilson & Geiger 1990) and board members of non-profit organisations, mainly in chambers of commerce (e.g., Dawley, Stephens & Stephens 2005, Preston & Brown 2004, Stephens, Dawley, & Stephens 2004). In sport specific contexts the commitment of volunteer sport administrators was the subject of work by Cuskelly and his colleagues (e.g., Cuskelly 2004, Cuskelly et al. 1998, Cuskelly, Boag & McIntyre 1999, Cuskelly & Boag 2001) and by Engelberg et al. (2005).

Although the findings noted above have application to the volunteer experience, it must be stressed that the volunteers' situation differs from

that that of paid workers in many different ways. For example, volunteers' behaviour is less likely to be subject to coercive power (Etzioni 1961, Pearce 1993) as they are not dependent on organisational rewards. Pearce (1993) suggests that this creates conditions of normative uncertainty, where social expectations and organisational values are less defined as they are for the remunerated worker. This allows volunteers a degree of individual independence and freedom, where their own psychological states have a greater influence on their behaviour.

This provides further reason for a closer examination of organisational commitment in volunteer settings. As Pearce (1993: 93) notes:

Volunteers' commitment to their organisations is a reflection of the complexity of their organisational experiences. Volunteers usually are assumed to be very committed, since they are not compelled to work by financial need as are most employees. That is, in the absence of compelling external explanations, society, as well as volunteers, attributes high levels of commitment to organisational volunteers.

Despite this premise, commitment to the organisation cannot be assumed to be high for all volunteers (Pearce 1993). Drawing on Knoke and Prensky (1984), Pearce suggests that volunteers may be strongly committed to organisational goals but have weaker ties to the institution itself. For example, parents who volunteer for a junior sporting club, because they want to help their own children, might find alternative ways of helping, such as by taking them to training sessions. In multiple commitment terms, volunteers may develop commitments other than that to the organisation itself. The behavioural implications of these attachments are discussed below.

An attitudinal approach to volunteer commitment may be more appropriate (Cuskelly & Boag 2001). Events and committee meetings notwithstanding, volunteers often perform their work when and how it suits them and are not subject to the same constraints paid employees have (e.g., keeping hours). Volunteers' attitudes, unlike their behaviour, are not as situationally constrained.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

As stated earlier, commitment to the organisation is determined to a large extent by environmental or situational factors and experiences. Research conducted with volunteer populations supported this assertion and also that the individuals' *perceptions* of these experiences have a strong impact. The feelings of personal importance, 'being wanted and needed' and

perceiving that individual contributions are appreciated appear to foster organisational commitment in volunteers. Latham and Lichtman (1984) found that these feelings explained the largest variance in commitment levels of volunteers working in a church setting. Pearce (1993) found a similar link amongst volunteers in a volunteer-run newspaper.

The opportunity to engage in social interaction was also found to play a key role (Cuskelly 1995, Knoke 1981, Latham & Lichtman 1984). In a longitudinal study of volunteer sport administrators spanning a 12-month period, Cuskelly et al. (1998) found that perceived committee functioning was related to organisational commitment, supporting the findings of an earlier cross-sectional study conducted by Cuskelly (1995). Cuskelly et al.'s study also included various other variables, such as socio-demographics, behavioural commitment and perceived benefits of volunteering. The authors found further support for the link between social interaction and organisational commitment.

The role of general involvement was also examined in sport volunteer settings. Cuskelly et al. (1999) note the differences between involvement in an activity, such as sport, and organisational commitment, where an individual can become involved without being tied to a particular organisation. It is possible for a volunteer to donate efforts to an organisation, to put something back into the sport; to pass on their expertise to others, reasons that underlie the motives of 'career volunteers' (Cuskelly et al. 2003); or because of a moral imperative, such as perceiving that the organisation needs volunteers to function effectively (more akin to 'marginal volunteering', following Cuskelly et al.'s classification). These underlying reasons may also account for differences in commitment between volunteers such as those who undertake administrative/management roles and those who take other roles; although this premise has not yet been investigated.

In summary, the available research in various volunteer settings indicates that the key determinants of organisational commitment include the following. First, volunteer perceptions, such as feelings of personal importance to the organisation and of being wanted and needed (Pearce 1993), are required. Second, and specifically for volunteer board/committee members, the perceptions of committee functioning (e.g., Cuskelly 1995, Cuskelly et al. 1998) must be high. Third, opportunities for decision-making and for participation (e.g., Knoke 1981) must be permitted. And finally, opportunities for social interaction (e.g., Cuskelly 1995, Knoke 1981) are significant in fostering higher levels of commitment. Such findings provide foundation knowledge that could be used by sport organisations to meet the perceived needs of their volunteers in various roles.

CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

As volunteer retention is one of the main concerns in non-profit organisations (Cuskelly 2004, Cuskelly & Boag 2001), the relation between organisational commitment and volunteer turnover has been examined. Cuskelly and Boag (2001) conducted a longitudinal study where they assessed the organisational commitment at several points during a sports season, as well as perceived committee functioning, to predict volunteer turnover. The strength of this study was in its longitudinal design. This permitted the researchers to better understand causal effects, which took advantage of the clear time frames that a sport season provides. The authors found that organisational commitment was a predictor of turnover. Also, they found a temporal relationship indicating that commitment measured close to the turnover event was a stronger predictor.

Cuskelly and Boag's (2001) conclusions, consistent with findings of research in paid settings, found that organisational commitment has utility as an explanatory construct in turnover behaviour of sport volunteers. Despite this, the authors warn that organisational commitment, as a predictor of turnover, accounted for a relatively small proportion of turnover behaviour. As discussed earlier, volunteers are normally not bound by the same constraints that tie employees to their organisations.

As such, situational aspects may predict volunteer turnover better than attitudinal aspects. For example, a parent may decide to volunteer to help his or her child during the training season but leave once it is over, or they leave because of other competing obligations. It is not unusual to find that women facilitate the sport participation of their children and partners as part of their regular household duties (Thompson 1999). In the absence of other ties to the organisation, if the involvement of children and partners ceases, then women may cease their volunteer work. This has consequences for volunteer retention rates in a period of declining volunteerism (Cuskelly 2004).

Other possible consequences of organisational commitment have received less attention. As Pearce (1993) argues, volunteers' work may entail activities that take place during discretionary time (e.g., compiling a club roster at home). If an individual experiences competing obligations, such as work obligations, these have precedence over volunteer work.

Despite this, volunteer performance, as noted earlier, is increasingly becoming a matter of concern due to the pressures of professionalisation. These pressures led to task complexity, formalisation of the working environment, and a further emphasis on volunteer performance (Nichols et al. 2005).

Volunteer performance is a concern in many sport organisations, especially those receiving government funding. The instigation of managerialist processes is evident in third sector organisations when first and second sector support is sought. Further, as Pearce (1993: 84) points out, 'complaints about work performance of volunteers are frequent enough that the matter deserves serious attention'. The need to professionally run sport organisations sits uncomfortably with established sport cultures.

Although the link between organisational commitment and performance was not consistently strong (Ricketta 2002), it nevertheless is recognised that even a modest increase in performance could translate into significant benefits for the organisation. Two recent studies assessed the impact of organisational commitment and performance in non-profit organisations. In a study of volunteer board members of 38 social service organisations, Preston and Brown (2004) found that affective organisational commitment was strongly related to three measures of job performance. The relationship of normative commitment were also significant but weaker.

Similarly, Stephens et al. (2004) conducted a study of board directors of chambers of commerce and examined the relation between directors' commitment to the board and self-reported measures of performance. Affective commitment was significantly related to self-reported performance, followed by normative commitment. Continuance commitment was unrelated to performance.

In a study of junior sport organisation, Engelberg, Zakus and Skinner (2006) found a significant relationship between organisational commitment and self-assessed performance. The authors assessed performance on eight indicators previously identified as essential for the effective running of junior sport (including attendance at events, knowledge of club procedures, and role-specific knowledge, among others). Significant positive relations were found between organisational commitment and each performance indicator.

Altogether, these findings suggest that the examination of the commitment-performance relation is a fruitful avenue for research. However, specifying targets of commitment and their link to related outcomes is a topic that needs to be addressed. Recall Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) proposition that certain behavioural consequences of commitment are broader than specific acts such as 'staying with the organisation' (which is the focal behaviour assessed in traditional organisational commitment research). Performance, for example, can depend on various discretionary behaviours, such as embracing a new policy, attending professional development courses, or

undertaking team tasks. The undertaking of such behaviours may be shaped by a multiplicity of commitments to targets other than the organisation itself. Assessing organisational commitment alone may not be sufficient.

To summarise, research on the consequences of volunteer commitment is limited. Most of this research focused on the issue of retention, which is a growing concern in sport organisations. Although some links between organisational commitment and subsequent turnover were found (e.g., Cuskelly & Boag 2001) it is recognised that behaviour is situationally constrained for volunteers (Pearce 1993).

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Research on the organisational commitment of volunteers is guided by the same concerns as that conducted on paid-employee settings, namely the need to tease out antecedent, correlate and consequence variables. In contrast, however, research on volunteer populations is limited. Although the findings on the whole mirror those of the commitment of paid workers, more research needs to be conducted to better understand the issues that are peculiar to volunteer settings generally and to sport settings specifically. We address some of the areas that merit further exploration, in relation to the changes and pressures facing sporting organisations, in the section that follows.

The Multidimensionality of Organisational Commitment

There is a need for existing frameworks to be tested in volunteer settings. Most of the research conducted with volunteers has used variations of the Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) organisational commitment instrument, but relatively few have used any variations of the Meyer and Allen (e.g., 1997) multidimensional model (with the exceptions of, among others, Dawley et al. 2005, Engelberg et al. 2005, Preston & Brown 2004, Stephens et al. 2004). Dawley et al. found that a model of organisational commitment, where the calculative dimension was based on 'low alternatives' alone, rather than perceived costs of leaving the organisation, was better suited to volunteer settings. Dawley et al.'s work needs to be tested in other contexts to assess its broader applicability (i.e., other than chamber of commerce board members). The continuance/calculative dimension needs to be further understood. Although volunteers may not suffer economic hardships on leaving their organisations, certain types of volunteers, such as 'career volunteers' (Cuskelly et al. 2003) or young people using volunteering as a career-furthering experience, may perceive that they stand to lose benefits by ceasing to volunteer.

Targets and Outcomes of Commitment

As stated earlier, commitment of volunteers to specific organisational targets also remains largely unexplored with the exception of Engelberg et al.'s (2005) work. There are several organisational targets to which volunteers can be committed. Identifying and assessing suitable targets of commitment would add to the understanding of the commitment of volunteers, much in the way it helped understand the complexities of commitment in paid-worker settings, most specifically to the prediction of specific outcomes. Recall that, following Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), when the target of commitment is a course of action, the behavioural implications are quite specific. For example, take the outcome 'staying in the organisation'. If the measures assess attachment to the organisation explicitly, as most organisational commitment measures do (i.e., with the question 'I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation'), then the accuracy of the prediction of staying in the organisation is increased. If an outcome is more specific, such as the case of remaining in a specific volunteer role (such as coaching), general organisational commitment may not be sufficient, or indeed, necessary. Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) general model of commitment provides a useful framework for this research agenda as it takes into account the complexities of individuals' relationship to their organisations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT IN SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

The community-based sporting sector faces not only a decline in volunteer human resources but also increasing pressures to perform to more stringent standards due to trends towards professionalisation and the imposition of managerialism. These changes are altering the relationship between volunteers and their organisations.

Of greatest concern, volunteers who once had 'ownership' of their organisations are increasingly 'disempowered and frequently relegated to the role of foot soldier' (Cuskelly 2004: 62). Volunteers and managers alike recognise that commitment can fluctuate according to evaluation of the volunteer experience (Cuskelly et al. 2003: 193); hence the importance of an active management of the volunteer experience by managers or coordinators. These should take into account that the volunteer's perception of environmental change plays an important role in their motivation and commitment.

Pearce's (1993) assertion that service-related motives and goal-oriented motives may lose their appeal with the passing of time and may signal a shift toward an attachment to the people in the organisation. Commitment

to the *people* in the organisation may instead become the central focus. An awareness of the nature of psychological contracts may also be useful. If a manager is unaware of volunteers' psychological contracts, then they may unintentionally violate these, with negative consequences for the organisation (Liao-Troth 2001).

A better understanding of the nature of commitment and its consequences can inform sport managers as to what type of commitment to foster. Do sport managers want to increase affective commitment (highlighting the belongingness, identification and goal congruence) or normative commitment (the sense of obligation to the organisation and its aims)? Fostering the latter is commonplace in appeals for volunteer retention in youth clubs where parental involvement is essential for effective functioning (Engelberg et al. 2005).

A better understanding of volunteer commitment can educate volunteer managers about the importance of considering key organisational aims as precisely as possible (e.g., retention in a particular role, performance as a volunteer team, and so forth) and then to match these aims to the actions required to achieve them. It may be necessary, depending on the case, for volunteer managers to focus their efforts on increasing (or decreasing) commitment to the organisation as a whole or to specific targets (such as the work team). An understanding of the multidimensional nature of commitment may also provide guidelines concerning the development of policies to achieve desired outcomes. In this respect, if the wrong type of commitment is fostered (for example, increasing continuance commitment by providing material rewards), organisational performance may decline as volunteers only exert effort conditional upon further rewards.

These are some of the potential questions and concerns that volunteer managers in sport organisations have to address. It can no longer be assumed that volunteers are committed by virtue of just being volunteers. There is a pressing need for managers in community-based sport to understand that the nature of the relationship between volunteers and their organisations is quite complex and it is undergoing dramatic change. Commitment is recognised as having positive links to desired outcomes in the Third Sector and will continue to be a lively and fertile area for research.

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