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# The Impact of Involvement in the Organisation- Public Relationship: Measuring the Mediating Role of Involvement between Organisation Behavior and Perceived Relationship Quality

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# Applying Zaichowsky's involvement scales to the nonprofit organisation-volunteer relationship: Testing the mediating effect of involvement on cultivation strategies and relationship quality.

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## Abstract

*Stakeholder involvement has played a significant role in the evolution of public relations from a strategic communication function to one of relationship management. Despite encouragement to explore the impact involvement has on the organisation-public relationship, few scholars have examined this construct. This study measures involvement in the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship by using Zaichowsky's (1985) personal involvement inventory and examines its impact on relationship quality. New cultivation strategies, nurturance and instrumental aid, are identified. Results suggest that involvement plays a role in mediating the impact of cultivation strategies on the quality volunteers perceive in the non-profit organisation relationship.*

## Introduction

The public relations literature has begun to consider the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship by examining cultivation strategies that are most effective with volunteers (Bortree, 2008), the role that gender and inclusion play in the relationship (Bortree & Waters, 2008a), and the way individual relationship quality outcomes impact volunteers' overall assessment of the volunteer-non-profit relationship (Bortree & Waters, 2008b). The models tested for volunteer relationships mirror those proposed for other relationships (Ki & Hon, 2009; Waters, 2008).

In most cases, these models look at the impact of perceived organisational behavior

(cultivation strategies) on relationship quality; however, studies of relationships in interpersonal communication suggest that one's engagement or involvement in a relationship can predict the nature of that relationship and mediate the impact of partner behaviours (Cropley, 2004). Likely, the same tendencies are at work in the organisation-public relationship. Publics that are more involved with an organisation will experience cultivation strategies differently than those who are less involved, and this may lead to a greater impact on the perceived relationship quality.

The non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship provides an appropriate context for studying the role of involvement, particularly with the millennial generation. Recent reports document a steady increase in the amount of volunteering donated by teenagers and young adults. US government statistics show that nearly 16 million young people in that country volunteer each year with non-profit organisations (Bureau of Labor, 2009). High school and college students of the millennial generation are a third more likely to donate their time to non-profit organisations than are older generations (Howe, 2005). However, one in three volunteers discontinues his or her service to an organisation from year to year (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2005), suggesting that non-profits are not succeeding in keeping interested individuals involved with the organisation.

Despite their length of service, research has shown that volunteers who evaluate their relationship with non-profit organisations more positively are more likely to continue to volunteer in the future (Waters & Bortree,

2007). Given the impact of relationships on volunteerism, the purpose of this study is to better understand the characteristics that lead to higher quality in the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship with young adults by exploring new cultivation strategies derived from interpersonal communication and measuring one's

involvement with non-profit organisations. Two new cultivation strategies, nurturance and instrumental aid, are proposed and measured. The impact of cultivation on relationship quality is measured directly, and then the mediating role of involvement is identified (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Proposed model of the mediating role of involvement in the volunteer-non-profit organisation relationship**



### Literature Review

#### *The organisation-public relationship*

The examination of the organisation-public relationship was first proposed by Ferguson (1984) as a means of establishing the management function of public relations. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined the organisation-public relationship as “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, and political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 62). Seven years later Hung (2005) proposed a definition of organisation-public relationships that considered the reasons these relationships are formed. Based on a review of systems theory and a review of the concept of interdependence (meaning the way organisations and publics both need and rely on one another), she offered this definition: “OPRs arise when organizations and their strategic publics are interdependent, and this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage constantly” (Hung, 2005, p. 396).

It has been proposed that studying the interactions, transactions, exchanges, and linkages between an organisation and its publics would provide an understanding of the relationship (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000)

while others have suggested that the key to understanding the relationship focuses on the measurement of the evaluation of that relationship (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Ultimately, the combined approach—studying the cultivation strategies and the relationship outcomes—provides public relations scholars and practitioners alike with the knowledge necessary for maximising the impact of relationship management studies.

Scholars have examined many different organisational relationships established with a variety of stakeholder groups. Though the approaches to examining the relationships have differed, scholars routinely have examined the levels of trust, commitment, and satisfaction in the relationship. Power dynamics, sometimes called control mutuality, have also been examined to capture the relationships’ dimensions. Despite deriving these relationship dimensions from interpersonal communication and applying them to organisations at the suggestion of Hon and Grunig (1999), public relations literature has largely ignored another relationship dimension, admiration. According to interpersonal communication scholars, this dimension is vital to understanding relationship dynamics.

### *Admiration*

In the literature, admiration is defined as the degree to which relationship partners respect and value one another (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). Holladay and Kerns (1999) included the approval of a partner's behaviour as a key component of admiration. Interestingly, this construct has rarely been explored in relation to institutional relationships despite the growing demand for organisations to become good community citizens. Marketing scholars have actively explored the role of admiration in its relationship to brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999), environmentally friendly, or green, purchases (Follows & Jobber, 2000), and hiring practices embracing diversity (Cherrier, 2008).

Given the impact admiration has had in related settings, public relations scholarship should embrace the admiration outcome given its relation to corporate social responsibility. Ultimately organisations adopt environmentally friendly policies and embrace diversity programmes within their organisations to become admired by their stakeholders. Additionally, admiration comes from the provision of quality products and services as well as fiscal wellbeing and innovation. *Fortune* annually produces a list of the most admired companies by evaluating sentiments on a wide range of categories influenced by investor relations, community relations, and consumer relations activities.

However, public relations scholars have largely ignored the concept. Bortree and Waters (2008b) first explored the role of admiration in the organisation-public relationship and found that the construct played a significant role in predicting whether adults would continue volunteering at non-profit organisations. This study examines the role of admiration in the volunteer relationship with a younger stakeholder group to examine its impact in their relationship with non-profit organisations. To gauge the presence of admiration and the four relationship outcomes proposed by Hon and Grunig (1999), the study's first research question asked:

RQ1: How do volunteers assess the overall quality of the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship?

### *Relationship cultivation strategies*

Prior studies have examined the impact of cultivation strategies on the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship with youth volunteers and found that cultivation strategies have a strong predictive relationship on relationship quality (Bortree, 2008). Studies of youth relationships in the interpersonal communication literature suggest two other strategies—instrumental aid and nurturance—may be useful in assessing relationship quality in the organisation-public relationship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Buhrmester & Furman, 1990; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Previous public relations studies have neglected the examination of these cultivation strategies; this exclusion may be due to the continued examination of relationships with adult stakeholder groups. However, the two relationship strategies of nurturance and instrumental aid are proposed to have a significant positive impact on the perceived quality of a volunteer-non-profit relationship.

### *Nurturance*

Nurturance has been widely studied in interpersonal relationships and has been important for understanding the relationship between parents and children (Demo & Cox, 2000), between siblings (Seginer, 1998), between grandmothers and granddaughters (Kostelecky & Bass, 2004), and between same-sex domestic partners (Collins, 2004). As defined by interpersonal scholars, the concept of nurturance includes aspects of care taking of another person. At first glance, this definition may not seem applicable to the organisation-public relationship; however, when considering younger stakeholders, this cultivation strategy becomes critical to the development of lasting institutional relationships.

Teenagers and young adults often begin volunteering with non-profits as a civic participation requirement for graduation without having any particular attachments to an organisation. Often, they volunteer at non-

profits without knowing anyone but their friends who are also volunteering (Sundeen & Raskoff, 2000). It is up to volunteer management to engage these young volunteers and get them involved in the organisation (Haski-Leventhal & Cnaan, 2009). Though not explicitly tied to the interpersonal conceptualisation of nurturance, Bortree and Waters (2008b) found that non-profit managers who actively introduced the individual to other organisational volunteers, invited the individual into departmental and organisational meetings, and requested the participation of the individual in decision-making, were more likely to see the volunteer continue to be involved with the organisation past the required service. This study proposes that this cultivation strategy is one that must be considered in the organisation-public relationship, especially with young stakeholders.

#### *Instrumental aid*

Instrumental aid, by contrast, incorporates the concept of helping another person accomplish something. Instrumental aid, often referred to as guidance, plays a key role in relationship building. Rogers (1993) found that a student's success is inherently tied to the relationship between the student and the teacher. Without sincere attempts at developing a bond, lessons taught by a teacher are largely wasted. The same was found for mentoring as Collins (1993) found that merely being assigned and meeting with a mentor did little to foster long-term successes; the true benefits came when the mentor-mentee relationship became less formal and more guiding.

For non-profit organisations, volunteers ultimately must be trained to assist in carrying out the organisation's programmes and services. The close relationship between a supervisor in charge of training and the volunteers can make a lasting difference in retention and in the encouragement of others to volunteer with the organisation (Lysakowski, 2005). Volunteer coordinators, however, are not solely seeking to develop the relationship with volunteers for selfish purposes. Reflecting a mutually beneficial relationship, coordinators also must work to ensure that volunteers are

benefiting from their experiences. Most non-profit organisations interview volunteers before accepting them into the organisation. During this time, screeners frequently ask questions to determine an individual's underlying motivation for wanting to volunteer. Personal reasons, such as skill development and improvement, are not reasons for rejecting an applicant. Instead, they are often welcomed by organisations because of the strength of the instrumental aid cultivation. Individuals who learn new skills or strengthen existing ones during a volunteer experience are more likely to give back to the organisation in the future, whether that contribution is in the form of volunteer work or a charitable donation (Clary & Snyder, 1999).

Although Hon and Grunig (1999) proposed a litany of possible cultivation strategies from interpersonal communication that could be used to strengthen the organisation-public relationship, results have been mixed on the success and relevance of these strategies in organisational settings. Given that this study explores the relationship non-profits have with youth volunteers, the researchers felt that a closer examination of instrumental aid and nurturance might provide insights into institutional relationships with this demographic group. Therefore a second research question was proposed:

RQ2: To what degree do young adults perceive cultivation strategies of instrumental aid and nurturance in their volunteer-non-profit organisation relationship?

#### *Involvement*

Involvement has long been viewed as an important variable in public relations scholarship. Involvement is a key component in determining an individual's classification in the situational theory of publics. Additionally, involvement has been found to be a mediating factor in how organisational communication is processed (Heath & Douglas, 1990), in the development of tolerance for potential risk (Nathan, Heath & Douglas, 1992), and how people become further engaged on organisation's websites (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Despite encouragement from Ledingham and

Bruning (1998), few studies have attempted to quantify an individual's level of involvement in the organisation-public relationship. This study uses Zaichkowsky's (1985) scale to measure this concept.

Zaichkowsky's scale has been used to measure an individual's actual involvement with healthcare services (Celuch & Taylor, 1999), to assess purchase decisions of financial services (Foxall & Pallister, 1998), and to measure consumer behaviour (Smith & Carsky, 1996). However, the scale has also been used outside consumer-oriented settings, such as sports fanaticism (Shank & Beasley, 1998), news consumption (Wojdyski, 2009), and brand loyalty (Park, 1996). Given the scale's reliability and validity in non-consumer purchasing settings, the scale may provide insights into the organisation-public relationship as well.

Items in the scale are related to three areas that affect an individual's level of involvement: personal, inherent interests that motivate the individual; physical, characteristics that cause differentiation and interest; and situational, something that temporarily increases the relevance of the item being examined. These dimensions have routinely been discussed in public relations settings. For example, Hallahan (2000) reiterated the role of personal involvement in relation to inactive publics that public relations practitioners largely ignore, while others have examined the importance of physical space in relation to involvement with organisational involvement (e.g., Howcroft, Hamilton, & Hewer, 2007; Henderson, Neff, Sharpe, Greaney, Royce, & Ainsworth, 2001). Finally, situational involvement has been shown to play a significant role in how publics react to organisational messages (Hallahan, 1999; Augusto de Matos & Veiga, 2005).

Despite its conceptual presence in public relations theories, scholars have yet to create a scale to measure involvement. Therefore, this study used the Zaichkowsky scale in an exploratory manner to gauge its reliability and validity in a public relations setting. This scale consists of semantic differentials, such as needed and not needed, essential and inessential, and relevant and irrelevant. A third

research question was created to test the applicability of the personal inventory involvement in the organisation-public relationship:

RQ3: Does an individual's level of involvement impact how the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship is evaluated?

Public relations scholars have found that relationship cultivation strategies have a direct impact on how publics evaluate relationships with non-profit organisations (e.g., Waters, 2009). Others have proposed that the incorporation of cultivation strategies impacts an individual's level of involvement, which in turn influences relationship evaluation (Rhee, 2005). To gauge the relationship between cultivation strategies, involvement, and relationship outcomes, a final research question was created:

RQ4: To what extent do cultivation strategies and involvement impact how individuals evaluate the relationship with the non-profit organisations where they volunteer?

## Method

To measure the volunteer relationship among the fastest-growing group of volunteers (youth), surveys were administered to 401 undergraduate public relations students in three classes at a large university in the southeastern United States.

### *Procedures.*

Students in participating classes were notified in advance that they would be given extra credit to participate in a research study. Surveys were administered during a class period, and students were given the opportunity to complete a comparable activity to earn the extra credit if they chose not to participate in the study.

### *Sample.*

A total of 332 completed the survey, indicating that they were currently volunteering or had been a volunteer in the prior 12 months, for an 83 percent completion rate.

### *Measures.*

The survey used scales previously examined in the literature: Hon and Grunig's (1999) scales of relationship quality were used to measure trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality. Furman and Buhrmester's (1985; 1992) scales for instrumental aid and nurturance were used to measure cultivation strategies, and their scale for admiration was used to measure a relationship quality. Zaichkowsky's (1985) scale measured involvement in this study. For consistency, a modified 9-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9) was used for all relationship quality and cultivation strategy measures. Involvement was measured using an abbreviated version of the original scale. Demographic information was anonymously collected as well.

All measures used in the study yielded moderate to high reliability with Cronbach alpha scores ranging from .59 to .89 (trust = .81, control mutuality = .87, satisfaction = .82, and commitment = .89, admiration = .71, instrumental aid = .59, nurturance = .69 and involvement = .89). The lower than desirable alpha values for instrumental aid and nurturance are not uncommon for new scales.

### *Analysis.*

To explore the research questions, ANOVA and structural equation modelling were used on the data. Results were calculated using SPSS 16.0 and AMOS 6.0.

## **Results**

Reflecting current trends in volunteering, the majority of the participants who indicated a volunteer relationship were female (73 percent). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 27 with a mean age of 20.02. The majority of the participants were Caucasian (71 percent), followed by Hispanic/Latino (15

percent), African-American/Black (7 percent), Asian (4 percent), and other (3 percent).

To assess the quality of the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship, mean scores were calculated for the relationship dimensions. Of the five relationship quality outcomes (trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, and admiration), volunteers ranked their relationships with non-profits highest in satisfaction ( $m = 7.37$ ,  $sd = 1.38$ ) and trust ( $m = 7.14$ ,  $sd = 1.34$ ). The volunteers were also generally committed ( $m = 6.95$ ,  $sd = 1.74$ ) to the relationship, felt that power was distributed equally between the non-profits and the volunteers ( $m = 6.59$ ,  $sd = 1.74$ ), and admired the organisation ( $m = 6.53$ ,  $sd = 1.85$ ). Of the two new dimensions examined in this study, volunteers evaluated nurturance ( $m = 5.56$ ,  $sd = 2.10$ ) more highly than instrumental aid ( $m = 5.01$ ,  $sd = 1.91$ ). However, both were evaluated at or above the neutral point on the 9-point scale.

In terms of involvement, the participants expressed that they were fairly active in the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship ( $m = 7.33$ ,  $sd = 1.37$ ). To address the impact of involvement on relationship quality, the sample was divided into three roughly equal groups based on their overall mean scores. Then, an ANOVA was conducted to analyse group differences between the high, medium, and low-involvement groups using SPSS 16.0. Table 1 presents the impact of involvement as a predictor of the health of the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship. A Bonferri test indicated that the differences were statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level for all three group combinations (e.g., low, medium, and high-level involvement) except for the difference between the low and medium level groups on the two cultivation strategies, which were statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

**Table 1: Impact of involvement on the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship assessment**

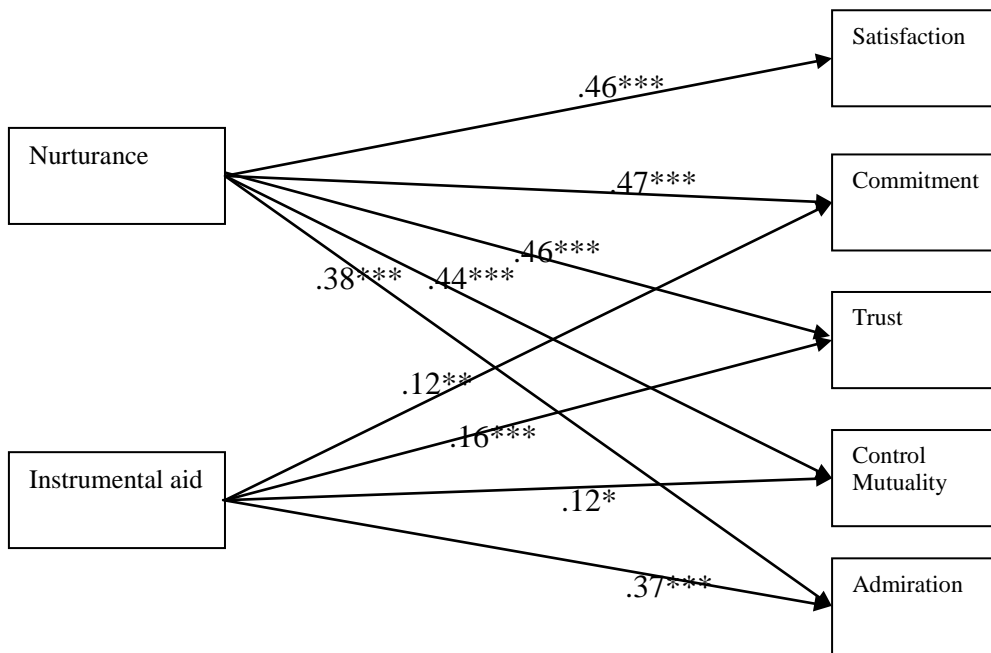
Relationship dimension	Involvement groupings		
	Low involvement Mean (std dev)	Medium involvement Mean (std dev)	High involvement Mean (std dev)
Admiration	5.61 (1.80)	6.62 (1.69)	<b>7.49 (1.55)</b>
Commitment	5.81 (1.80)	7.09 (1.31)	<b>8.13 (1.03)</b>
Control mutuality	5.68 (1.74)	6.70 (1.39)	<b>7.54 (1.30)</b>
Satisfaction	6.44 (1.46)	7.53 (1.01)	<b>8.29 (0.78)</b>
Trust	6.35 (1.39)	7.24 (1.02)	<b>7.96 (0.95)</b>
Cultivation strategy			
Instrumental aid	4.29 (1.80)	4.93 (1.77)	<b>5.87 (1.85)</b>
Nurturance	<b>4.70 (1.96)</b>	<b>5.46 (1.83)</b>	<b>6.57 (2.07)</b>

To further test the relationships between the strategies, involvement and relational quality outcomes, as proposed by the fourth research question, structural equation modelling was conducted using Amos 6.0. To test the predictive powers of the cultivation strategies and the role of involvement on the relationship evaluation, two models were tested. The first model predicted the direct relationships between cultivation strategies and relationship quality, and the second predicted the mediating effect of involvement between strategies and outcomes. The two models were tested using

Amos 6.0. Parameters for a successful model were set at the following levels: (1) a Chi-square score equal or greater than .05, (2) a non-significant Chi-square, (3) a ratio of Chi-square to degrees of freedom of equal or less than 3, (4) a comparative fit analysis (CFI) greater than or equal to .90, (5) a goodness of fit index (GFI) score of greater than or equal to .90, (6) a normed fit index (NFI) score of greater than or equal to .90, and (7) root mean squared error approximation (RMSEA) of less than or equal to .08 (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2000).

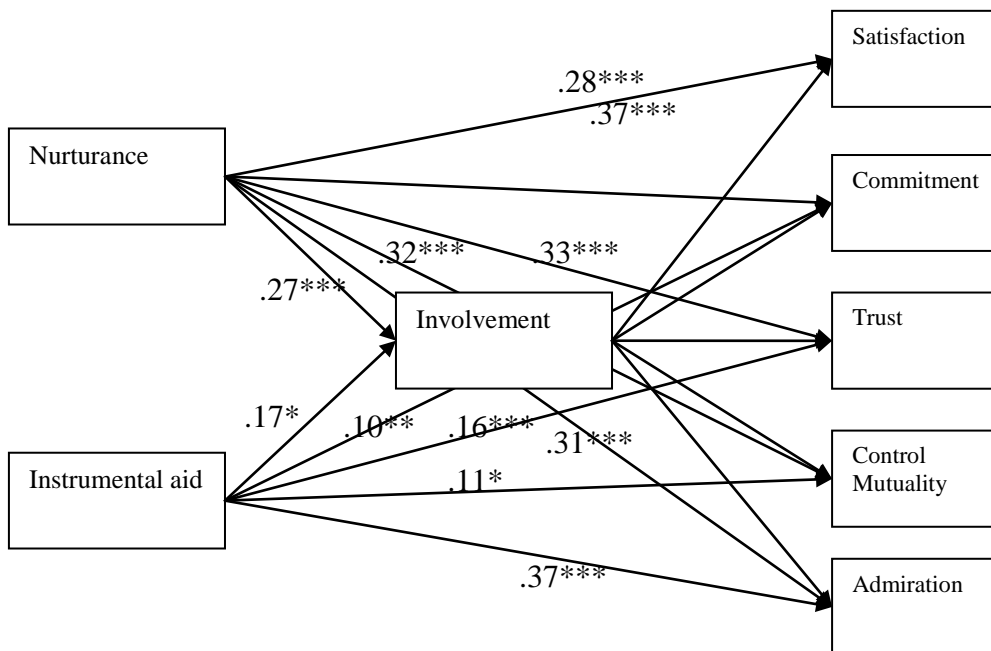


**Figure 2: Fitted model of the volunteer-non-profit OPR for cultivation strategies and relationship quality outcomes**



\*p≤.05 \*\*p≤.01 \*\*\*p≤.001

**Figure 3: Fitted model of the volunteer-non-profit OPR with involvement**



\*p≤.05 \*\*p≤.01 \*\*\*p≤.001

An initial test of the models fell short of the parameters. Slight modifications were made to the models based on suggestions from the modification indices in Amos 6.0. With the modification, both models of the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship met all minimum requirements for a good model fit (Figures 2 & 3). As shown in Figure 3, the final accepted model suggests that involvement acts as a partial mediating variable between nurturance and the five relationship outcomes, but it mediates little of the relationship between instrumental aid and relationship quality. The standardised regression weights between instrumental aid and the five relationship

outcomes remain almost unchanged when involvement is introduced as a mediating variable. However, substantial changes are noted in the direct paths between nurturance and the five quality outcomes due to the mediating effects of involvement.

As shown in Table 2, the two cultivation strategies predict the level of involvement and they directly impact relationship quality outcomes as well, with the exception of instruction aid which has no direct relationship with the outcome satisfaction. The strongest paths between variables exist between involvement and commitment and between involvement and satisfaction.

**Table 2: Model paths for fitted model of the volunteer-non-profit OPR with involvement**

Model Paths		Estimate
Involvement	<--- Nurturance	.27 (.04)***
Involvement	<--- Instrumental Aid	.17(.05)*
Trust	<--- Involvement	.33(.04)***
Control Mutuality	<--- Involvement	.32(.06)***
Commitment	<--- Involvement	.41(.06)***
Satisfaction	<--- Involvement	.48(.05)***
Admiration	<--- Involvement	.18(.06)***
Admiration	<--- Nurturance	.31(.05)***
Admiration	<--- Instrumental Aid	.37(.05)***
Trust	<--- Instrumental Aid	.16(.03)***
Commitment	<--- Nurturance	.32(.04)***
Commitment	<--- Instrumental Aid	.10(.04)**
Control Mutuality	<--- Nurturance	.32(.05)***
Control Mutuality	<--- Instrumental Aid	.11(.04)*
Trust	<--- Nurturance	.33(.04)***
Satisfaction	<--- Nurturance	.28(.03)***

\*p<=.05 \*\*p<=.01 \*\*\*p<=.001

## Discussion

This study found that the non-profit organisation-volunteer relationship was evaluated positively overall by the participants and that instrumental aid, nurturance, and one's

level of involvement were predictors of the degree to which volunteers valued their relationships with non-profit organisations. This study highlights the importance of involvement in the organisation-public

relationship. Despite its prominence in other aspects of public relations, this construct has been discussed conceptually but rarely examined by relationship management scholars.

Involvement appears to act as a mediating variable between the organisation's cultivation behaviours and the assessed quality of the relationship that exists between an organisation and a volunteer. This emerges primarily in the relationship between nurturance and relationship quality. The degree to which volunteers feel involved in the organisation explains some of the impact of nurturance on relationship quality. However, in the case of both instrumental aid and nurturance, these organisational strategies impact the degree to which volunteers feel involved in the organisation, which leads to greater quality in the relationship. As organisations offer more instrumental aid and nurturance to their volunteers, the volunteers feel more involved in the organisation, which leads to higher relationship quality. The final fitted model of the volunteer-non-profit relationship shows that these two cultivation strategies directly impact relationship outcomes as well, indicating that engaging cultivation strategies has positive outcomes for organisations.

Though this study focused on volunteerism, the interdependence surely exists in relationships with other stakeholder groups, including investors, donors, and media, among others. Organisations must strive to get different publics involved in a variety of methods. Smith (2005) highlights that organisations can use organisational-site tactics, such as open houses and tours, or audience-site strategies, such as community programmes, petition drives, and participating in community events, to spark involvement with stakeholders.

After the initial interaction, organisations have a variety of strategies to continue the involvement, including stewardship and increased communication about mutual concerns. Studies on relationship management have indicated a variety of cultivation strategies that organisations can use to increase involvement with the organisation. Instrumental aid and nurturance—two concepts found in interpersonal communication—were found to

be evaluated more positively by highly involved volunteers. Hon and Grunig (1999) outlined how several strategies, such as being open and transparent when communicating, working together to resolve mutual concerns, and being positive with stakeholders, can build lasting relationships with publics.

Though involvement was found to impact the volunteer relationships of the participants in this study, the findings should not be generalised to all organisation-public relationships. Individuals who give up their time for an organisation may have skewed the impact of involvement on the organisation-public relationship. Future studies should examine relationships with other stakeholders to gauge the value of the Zaichkowsky scale to public relations.

The study's introduction of instrumental aid and nurturance also call for closer examination by relationship management scholars. Although interpersonal communication scholars have studied the two separately, an argument can be made for combining the two into one measure of responsiveness. Santos and Matthews (2001) defined responsiveness as the "willingness to help customers [or other stakeholders] and to provide prompt service including giving an impression of interest in the customer and showing a willingness to service, and to be concerned, sympathetic and patient towards the customer" (p. 280). Their conceptualisation of responsiveness consists of two aspects, personal assistance and demonstrations of concern.

Furman and Buhrmester (1985; 1992) test the same two dimensions in their investigations of instrumental aid and nurturance. As demonstrated by this study, these two cultivation strategies have an impact on how non-profits can strengthen relationships with youth volunteers. These two constructs, or a combined construct renamed responsiveness, could offer a potential avenue for exploring the relationship non-profits have with other significant publics (e.g., donors, clientele, community citizens). Perhaps even more important to the discipline's overall study of relationship management, responsiveness can be examined in other public relations contexts,

such as crisis or healthcare situations, which both incorporate guidance and care during difficult times.

While the structural equation modelling results demonstrate that cultivation strategies can increase an individual's involvement in the relationship, ultimately relationships cannot occur without an investment from both parties. Discussions of responsiveness in non-profit literature parallel the discussions of two-way communication in public relations literature. Without ongoing discussions between an organisation and stakeholder, the relationship will never strengthen. For volunteer managers, two-way communication is vital for volunteer recruitment and retention (Sunney & Brian, 2003). Without these conversations, volunteer coordinators are not able to determine whether volunteers understand their role in the organisation, if they are being challenged with their tasks, and if they are feeling comfortable working at the organisation. When volunteers are not satisfied with their place in an organisation, they are likely to leave. Coordinators must demonstrate concern about the personal and professional lives of volunteers as well as guiding them to activities and tasks appropriate for each individual. An organisation cannot succeed without making sure that all of its members are engaged and involved with social groups, work teams, and decision-making teams in that organisation (Mor Barak, 2005). Increasing the amount of responsiveness ultimately not only boosts an individual's involvement but also how that individual assesses the relationship with non-profit organisations.

### **Conclusion**

Volunteers provide an estimated \$301 billion dollars of work to non-profits to aid in carrying out their missions. Without the involvement of this stakeholder group, non-profits would not be able to provide their programmes and services to their communities. This study demonstrated the importance of involving volunteers in non-profits in a meaningful way. Non-profits must pursue long-term mutually beneficial relationships with volunteers to keep

volunteers involved so the organisation reaps the benefits of their involvement. They must also ensure that the assignments given to volunteers help meet their personal needs, ranging from developing new job skills and interacting with people to simply wanting to serve the community. This study provides insights into how non-profits can develop relationships with young volunteers, but it is important to point out a few of the studies limitations.

### **Limitations and future research**

The results of this study should not be generalised beyond the sampled college students. Even though trends in non-profit volunteering indicate that this audience is highly appropriate for scholarly investigation, the findings from the study would need to be replicated in an environment conducive to not only randomly sampled participants but also one with an expansive variety of non-profits to determine how cultivation strategies and involvement impact relationship evaluation differently. Comparing and contrasting how multiple non-profit agencies incorporate these strategies would be an effective way of exploring the impact of specific cultivation strategies.

Additionally, this study examined four constructs—admiration, instrumental aid, nurturance, and involvement—which have rarely been studied in public relations scholarship. While the involvement and admiration scales proved to be reliable based on the resulting Cronbach alpha value, the scores for instrumental aid and nurturance were only moderately reliable. This is the first attempt at converting these two constructs from interpersonal relationships to organisational relationships, so further testing and revisions to the scale may provide more accurate measures. The introduction of Zaichkowsky's (1985) involvement scale as well as the encouragement of future studies exploring newly proposed relationship dimensions of admiration and responsiveness will hopefully provide further insights into how any organisation can foster relationship growth with their stakeholders.

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