The nonprofit case for corporate volunteering: A multi-level perspective

Abstract

This article argues that the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering is complex, requiring a multi-level perspective on the outcomes for nonprofit organizations (NPOs). To develop this perspective, we adopted an inductive research approach, conducting 39 exploratory semi-structured interviews with NPO staff. We argue that NPO scholars and practitioners should disentangle individual and organizational-level outcomes resulting from interactions between corporate volunteers and NPO staff, as such micro-dynamics ultimately affect NPO services. Moreover, these outcomes are subject to conditions at the organizational level (e.g., involvement of intermediaries), as well as at the individual level (e.g., type of assignment). Our study highlights the complexity that should be considered when addressing the fundamental question of whether corporate volunteering contributes to the ability of NPOs to provide their services, and under what conditions. We therefore propose that corporate volunteer management within NPOs is inherently, albeit contingently, intertwined with the services that these organizations provide.

Keywords: corporate volunteering, nonprofit case, qualitative, multi-level.

The need for a multi-level perspective on outcomes of corporate volunteering for nonprofit services

Nonprofit services are obviously influenced by public and private contributions. Corporate giving has become an increasingly popular way of making private contributions to nonprofit organizations (NPOs). One form of corporate giving that is increasing rapidly – at least in Western Europe and North America (see Pajo & Lee, 2011) – is corporate volunteering. Also referred to as "employee volunteering" or "employer-sponsored volunteering," corporate volunteering is defined as "employed individuals giving time [through a company initiative] during a planned activity for an external nonprofit or charitable group or organization" (Rodell, Breitsohl, Schroder & Keiting, 2015, p.4-5). The advance of corporate volunteering is posing challenges to NPOs with regard to their ability to provide services. The involvement of corporate volunteers adds a layer of complexity to partnerships between businesses and NPOs. Such partnerships have traditionally consisted of established relationships based on monetary donations (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a).

Traditional, financially based partnerships tend to be managed by NPO staff members and designated corporate representatives. In contrast, with partnerships involving corporate volunteers, external individuals (i.e., corporate volunteers) are introduced into the routine practices of the NPO. This creates new individual-level interactions between corporate volunteers and NPO staff members.[i] In contrast to volunteers from the community, corporate volunteers are recruited primarily through the workplace (e.g., by managers, co-workers), and not by NPOs or their beneficiaries (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs & Hustinx, 2010). Another challenge is that corporate volunteers are likely to interject a more business-oriented institutional logic into the NPOs in which they are active (see also Schiller & Almog-Bar, 2013).

Despite the fundamental challenges that corporate volunteering poses to the functioning of NPOs, previous studies have tended to focus on the business case for such activities (Allen, 2003). In other words, they address the outcomes of corporate volunteering for corporations and their employees (Rodell et al., 2015). In recent years, however, some scholars have begun to develop the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering (Allen, 2003; Samuel, Wolf & Schilling, 2013; Schiller & Almog-Bar, 2013) by exploring the reasons that NPOs have for being involved in corporate volunteering and the outcomes that they realize from such relationships. Existing research proceeds from the general assumption that corporate volunteering should contribute to realizing the NPO's mission and that the benefits should outweigh the costs (Allen, 2003; Harris, 2012). Such "bottom-line tests" (Allen, 2003, p.58) have proven highly complex, however, much more so than the usual general outcome assessments. The nonprofit case for corporate volunteering thus warrants further scrutiny.

In this study, we demonstrate that understanding the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering requires systematically disentangling outcomes at multiple levels (see also Rodell et al., 2015), paying additional attention to relationships between individual-level and organizational-level outcomes, and identifying particular characteristics that act as antecedents for these outcomes (see also the framework for the business case developed by Rodell et al., 2015, p. 9). A multi-level perspective on the antecedents to and outcomes of corporate volunteering could help NPOs to develop strategies for engaging corporate volunteers in ways that would maximize their own benefits (see Allen, 2003; Samuel et al., 2013). While many existing theories focus on organizations and partnerships between companies (or governments) and NPOs (see e.g., Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; 2012b), scholars have yet to explore individual-level conditions (or contingencies, see Brudney & Meijs, 2014) that could explain the emergence of particular outcomes.

A clear overview of program conditions for and planned outcomes of corporate volunteering could help NPOs to optimize the match between particular types of volunteers and specific tasks (Graff, 2006). The multi-level perspective advanced in this article is particularly relevant, given the pressure that donors often place on NPOs to involve corporate volunteers (Allen, 2003; Samuel et al., 2013).

In this article, we refine and expand existing literature on the NPO case for corporate volunteering by presenting insight into the multi-level outcomes of corporate volunteering. We thus take the first step toward building a more complex, comprehensive theoretical understanding of the implications of involving corporate volunteers in NPOs. We draw on qualitative research data obtained from 39 semi-structured interviews. Consistent with previous research (i.e., Allen, 2003; Samuel et al., 2013), we conducted interviews with NPO staff members responsible for corporate volunteering within their organizations, addressing their perceptions and reflections on individual-level and organizational-level outcomes of involving corporate volunteers. Our respondents included staff members who are directly involved in such encounters. After describing our methods, we present results from our exploratory study. We conclude by discussing the implications of our results for the literature on the involvement of corporate volunteers in NPOs and suggesting directions for future research.

Corporate volunteering: From "aspired state" to "achieved reality"

Corporate volunteering has the potential to evolve into highly structured collaborative projects or programs that include specific objectives, timeframes, and exchanges of financial and other assets to both businesses and NPOs (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). As mentioned in the introduction, researchers have developed a strong business case for corporate volunteering, and it has been widely implemented by businesses (Pajo & Lee, 2011). The

positive business outcomes of employee participation in corporate volunteering and the favorable perceptions of corporate volunteer programs (including with regard to employee attitudes, external perceptions, company performance, work behaviors, and employee wellbeing) have been well documented (for recent reviews, see Liket & Simaens, 2015; Rodell et al., 2015).

More recently, scholars have begun to develop the nonprofit or social case (see Allen, 2003) for corporate volunteering. In practice, NPO managers engage corporate volunteers in order to realize activities that would not otherwise be possible and to provide a point of entry for potential donations (Samuel et al., 2013; Allen, 2003). The involvement of corporate volunteers also introduces new human resources to NPOs, enhances the capacity of NPO staff, creates opportunities to educate outsiders about the issues with which NPOs work (Caligiuri, Mencin & Jiang, 2013), and increases the possibility of influencing corporate behavior (Allen, 2003). The expected benefits of involving corporate volunteers do not always outweigh the costs, however, and some NPOs are not convinced that corporate volunteering could ever realize its potential (Allen, 2003; Samuel et al., 2013). This is partly because companies are often unwilling to compensate NPOs for the additional expenses incurred while facilitating corporate volunteers (Allen, 2003; Samuel et al., 2013). Other effects could include mission drift, as NPOs seek to satisfy their corporate partners, possibly feeling exploited by them as well (Allen, 2003). To date, however, theory development has largely ignored approaches or conditions that influence these outcomes (for a more general opinion on this point, see Brudney & Meijs, 2014).

Many NPOs lack the clear rationale and management tools needed in order to exploit the advantages of corporate volunteering (a form of business–nonprofit collaboration; see Samuel et al., 2013). They might therefore be unable to act strategically with regard to this type of volunteering. To help NPOs move from the “aspired state” to “achieved realities” (see

Samuel et al. 2013; p. 175) in these types of partnerships, it is important to identify conditions under which particular benefits and challenges arise. The conditions and benefits of corporate volunteering may depend on the willingness of companies to facilitate such programs, as well as on the manner in which they are organized. The benefits of and conditions for NPOs are therefore likely to depend upon the conditions that companies set for having their employees engage in corporate volunteering.

Corporate volunteering can be either facilitated or impeded by work context and corporate policies. Work context determines the perceived behavioral control of employees (i.e., their perceptions of their ability to perform given behaviors), which plays an essential role in the decision to participate in volunteering activities (Roza, 2016). For example, the option to split a shift (relative to a regular day at work) increases the likelihood of volunteering, as such flexibility could make it easier for employees to fit volunteering into their routines (Gomez & Gunderson, 2003). Companies are increasingly formalizing their involvement in volunteering through program design (Van der Voort, Glac & Meijs, 2009), selection of causes and assignments, and extent of customization, thereby allowing varying levels of choice on the part of employees who participate (Van der Voort, et al., 2009). Volunteer opportunities offered by companies vary from turnkey (i.e., general assignments organized for the masses) to customized activities (individually designed assignments suited to individual preferences; Raffaelli & Glynn, 2014). An example of a turnkey activity could involve employees volunteering to paint classrooms and plant flowers at a local elementary school (Marquis, Rangan & Comings, 2009). An illustration of customized volunteering is provided by IBM, which offers its employees the option of taking overseas sabbaticals to apply their business skills to advance technological capabilities in the countries they visit (Marquis & Kanter, 2010). Most companies have programs that combine these options, in order to cater the preferences of various groups of employees (Van der Voort et al., 2009).

The volunteer opportunities offered by companies can be limited by the causes that companies are and are not willing to support. Work context and corporate policies (including formal volunteering programs) can pose additional restrictions, which could affect both the persistence and intensity of the volunteer efforts of employees (Rodell et al., 2015). They can also limit the ability of NPO volunteer managers to customize volunteer assignments to the needs of individual volunteers (see also Brudney & Meijs, 2009) or to the needs of the NPO (Samuel et al., 2013). For example, NPOs that support autistic children might not benefit from one-off volunteers, as their beneficiaries simply do not benefit from such short-term interactions.

Given the challenges that NPOs face with regard to including corporate volunteers, and given the current state of literature, the remainder of this article focuses on two empirical questions: 1) What are the multi-level outcomes of corporate volunteering for NPOs? 2) Which conditions affect these outcomes?

Methods

Our inductive, qualitative study is aimed at characterizing and mapping corporate volunteering, a phenomenon that has yet to be described sufficiently in literature (Neuman, 1994). We conducted 39 interviews with 43 professionals having at least some experience with corporate volunteering in 39 NPOs in the Netherlands and Belgium (i.e. four of the interviews were with two interviewees). Of the interviews, 21 were conducted in the Netherlands, and 18 were conducted in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium). The two geographical areas share the same language (Dutch) and have similar nonprofit regimes (i.e., corporatist; see Salamon & Anheier, 1998). Corporate involvement in the community has traditionally been low in both countries, given the high level of government social-welfare spending and the relatively large scale of the nonprofit sector. In recent decades, however,

government involvement in social welfare has decreased in the two countries, and companies are increasingly becoming involved in the community (Hustinx, De Waele & Delcour, 2015; Schuyt, 2017).

The NPOs included in this study were selected in order to achieve maximum variation (Patton, 2005) in terms of size, scope (i.e., activity at the local, regional, or national level), organizational structure, funding sources, target group, and mission. This strategy was intended to capture the breadth of corporate volunteering opportunities within NPOs and the breadth of the potential outcomes. Of the NPOs included, 17 were active in social services and 9 were active in education and youth development; 5 were public advocacy organizations, and 8 were intermediary organizations that match companies and NPOs. We also included intermediary organizations, as they facilitate and organize corporate volunteering for companies and NPOs, and they are often present during the implementation of programs and projects. They can therefore be regarded as third parties that observe the interactions between companies and NPOs, and between NPO staff and corporate volunteers. The particular characteristics of the intermediary perspective were taken into account in the analysis.

Most of the respondents were volunteer coordinators, managers, or corporate relations workers, all of whom were responsible for corporate volunteering initiatives. We deliberately selected key figures within the organizations, as their positions were likely to allow the most comprehensive overview of corporate volunteering in their organizations. All respondents from intermediary organizations were directors. They provided their perspectives on facilitating partnerships between companies and NPOs that involve corporate volunteers. Our arguments are thus based on the perceptions of these key figures, and not on the perceptions of other NPO staff members who may have had intensive interactions with corporate volunteers. Although such staff members would be likely to provide additional information on outcomes, our respondents' experiences with coordinating and organizing programs and

designing the context of interaction between NPO staff and corporate volunteers gave them a broader overview of the outcomes and associated conditions.

The semi-structured interviews were based on open-ended questions, using an interview guide as a tracking tool (Babbie, 2008). We developed a guideline in order to ensure consistency across interviews and the inclusion of all topics of interest. The guideline included an introductory section clarifying the conditions (e.g., confidentiality guarantee and background of the research), followed by key questions. Topics addressed in the interviews include the development of corporate volunteering programs in the respondents' organizations, their motivation for facilitating corporate volunteering, the management of corporate volunteers, and the perceptions of staff and clients concerning the involvement of corporate volunteers. Interesting responses were followed up with probes for deeper information.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure reliability, the transcripts were analyzed by two authors. Coding software (Atlas-Ti) was used to screen and sort textual material before interpreting the data. This provided a structured mechanism for identifying relevant text fragments for detailed interpretation (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003). To analyze the qualitative data, we adopted an inductive (i.e., grounded-theory) approach, avoiding the use of preconceived categories and instead allowing the categories to flow from the data and allowing new insights to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 2002).

Data analysis began with repeated readings of the full transcripts to generate familiarity with the content of the data (Tesch, 1990). We then highlighted words and phrases that appeared to represent key thoughts of the respondents. These initial codes were grouped and recoded into broader categories, which were used to create meaningful clusters (see Patton, 2005). This process revealed two general topics: 1) multi-level outcomes for NPOs

due to interactions between corporate and NPO staff, 2) conditions under which these outcomes emerged. The results of the analysis were discussed by all authors in order to construct the most suitable interpretative framework. The NPOs from the Netherlands are identified by numbers, while those from Belgium are identified by letters. References to intermediaries are identified by "INT_," in addition to the basic identification of letters and numbers. The original text fragments appearing throughout this article were translated into English by the authors.

The existing literature has identified a wide array of business-nonprofit collaborations at the organizational level, ranging from more structural and long-term cooperation to more occasional forms of collaborations (Austin & Seitanidi 2012a, 2012b). It is important to note that our respondents tended to frame and illustrate corporate volunteering at the individual level, focusing on volunteers who had no ongoing commitment to the NPO (cf. episodic volunteering; Cnaan & Handy, 2005). Data from our maximum-variation sample suggest that, in the countries under investigation, the actual involvement of corporate volunteers resembles that of episodic, non-structural commitment. No representative data are available with which to verify this preliminary observation. Although it is important to acknowledge the context-specific limitation of the scope of our findings, the predominance of corporate volunteering as a non-structural, episodic engagement has been confirmed in other countries as well. For example, Low and colleagues (2007) report that 76% of all corporate volunteering activities in the UK are either occasional or one-off activities.

Results

Multi-level outcomes of interactions between corporate volunteers and NPO staff

This section concerns the ways in which respondents from NPOs perceived the outcomes of involving corporate volunteers for their organizations. Our findings suggest two models of the

nonprofit case. The first model concerns organizational-level consequences, and the second model concerns the organizational-level consequences of individual-level outcomes of corporate volunteer involvement. The outcomes have been classified as either favorable or harmful to individuals and organizations, and conditions at both the individual and organizational level have been specified for each of the models.

Favorable organizational-level consequences of involving corporate volunteers

For many of the organizations included in our study, corporate volunteering serves as a starting point for broader business–nonprofit collaboration. Consistent with previous conceptual research (e.g., Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a), the involvement of corporate volunteers deepens and strengthens the connection between the two organizations. Corporate volunteering allows NPOs to obtain resources they need in order to achieve their missions, while increasing their capacity.

Various forms of financial and nonfinancial support provided by companies constitute one way of building capacity in NPOs. One of our respondents suggested that many NPOs tend to see companies as "cash cows" (NPO_K), with abundant – or even unlimited – financial resources. In contrast, others referred to the variety of resources provided by companies: "This way, we [the NPO] can bring aboard a lot of additional money, volunteers, and means and allocate them to various projects" (NPO_2). Partner companies can also introduce NPOs to groups and organizations in other networks (e.g., consumers, other companies). Communications regarding joint efforts between companies and NPOs can help to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of an NPO among current and prospective donors, potential funders (e.g., governmental organizations and private foundations), and other stakeholders. As a result, "…companies are [seen as] the springboard toward new [individual] donors" (NPO_14).

A second way in which corporate involvement can increase the organizational capacity of NPOs is by enhancing the ability of NPOs to recruit and retain volunteers (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010). As observed by several interviewees, the involvement of corporate volunteers can introduce these employees to volunteering in general, as well as to specific NPOs and their causes, thereby possibly attracting new regular and corporate volunteers. As stated by one interviewee, "by collaborating with these large companies, we [the NPO] were able to build a large network of potential volunteers…" (NPO_5). Interviewees told us that several of their corporate volunteers had indeed continued their involvement, in order to "… find out the activities so that they [corporate volunteers] could connect to us [NPO] and help the organization in a more private way" (NPO_N). They expressed a desire to be involved "not just as corporate volunteers, but as regular volunteers" (NPO_10).

A third way in which corporate involvement can enhance the capacity of NPOs is by broadening their base of legitimacy. According to Suchman (1995), legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are socially desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, value, beliefs and definitions" (p. 574), taking pragmatic, moral, and cognitive forms. Our data suggest that corporate volunteering can increase various forms of legitimacy for the NPO among its stakeholders (e.g., private donors, governments, and the public). Pragmatic legitimacy can be enhanced by offering corporate partners an avenue for resource exchange (e.g., employee time through corporate volunteering). Moral legitimacy can be enhanced as corporate volunteers improve their understanding of the importance of the work of NPOs. For example, the NPO can use "the company … [as] a platform through which we can reach a large group of people … who are telling others about the importance of the [beneficiaries]" (NPO_6). In this respect, business–nonprofit collaboration is used to create brand awareness for particular NPOS, as well as with regard to the broader social issues that they address. Finally, cognitive

legitimacy can be enhanced as the NPO becomes an integral part of the corporate partner's vision, operations, and identity.

Harmful organizational-level consequences of involving corporate volunteers

In addition to opportunities, our interviewees identified various challenges and less favorable consequences of corporate volunteering. For example, corporate volunteering can place NPOs at risk of reputational damage. As recounted by one respondent from a youth-development program:

> We obviously don't want our organization to be associated with companies that produce alcohol or tobacco, that are involve in child labor or gambling, and I've probably forgotten a few…This is not only with regard to people [companies] with whom we collaborate for the content of our program [e.g. volunteers], but also to the people [organizations] who support us financially (NPO_5).

Respondents were aware of the reputation hazards of collaborating with such companies: "…because we work with children. We don't want them to develop a sweet tooth or use alcohol or tobacco" (NPO_5). Indirect costs resulting from reputation damage could decrease their ability to raise funds from individual donors. Previous research has suggested that NPOs are more vulnerable to reputation damage than their corporate partners are (Wymer & Samu 2003), and such risks could ultimately threaten their sustainability.

Corporate volunteering can generate transaction costs for NPOs. Transaction costs consist of expenses associated with coordination and production. In many cases, NPOs adapt their regular tasks to suit the willingness, capability, and availability of corporate volunteers and their companies. For example, some NPOs create delineated tasks, organize one-day events, design enjoyable team-building projects, and adjust their schedules to suit those of

participating companies and/or corporate volunteers. Interestingly, however, they rarely make such adjustments for their regular volunteers.

Some interviewees referred to the expenses that NPOs incur through corporate volunteer projects. Some companies donate only their time. In such cases, the NPO must bear direct material costs (e.g., supplies, refreshments), in addition to the costs of coordination and the investment of human resources. Although NPOs obviously aim to ensure that the corporate volunteers have a positive experience (in the hope of building longer and broader relationships with corporate partners), they often decide against corporate volunteering with companies that do not cover these costs.

In some cases, the services provided by corporate volunteers may not meet the level of quality needed by the NPO. Several of our respondents even suggested that working with corporate volunteers could be harmful to beneficiaries: "Some of our employees indicate that [involving corporate volunteers] might be too intense for our beneficiaries; they [beneficiaries] just need peace and quiet sometimes …" (NPO_4), although others indicated that "it is often the [NPO] employees who see this as an obstacle rather than the clients themselves" (NPO_10). Although corporate volunteers are assumed to have valuable skills, their skills might not match the needs of the NPO. For example, companies wishing to perform service in the form of gardening, maintenance, or similar activities are usually not specialized in these tasks, and not every volunteer has the skills needed to perform them well. Similarly, because specific skills are required for working with people with mental or physical challenges, the potential damage associated with corporate volunteering in such contexts might outweigh any potential benefits (Samuel, Roza & Meijs, 2016).

Organizational-level conditions that influence the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering

Analysis of the data revealed three organizational level conditions that influence the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering. These conditions also affect the likelihood that corporate volunteering will enhance nonprofit services. Each of these conditions can have either a positive or a negative influence on the consequences for the NPO.

One condition that influences outcomes at the organizational level is power imbalance. According to resource dependence theory, resources form the basis of power, such that the organization with the greatest resources will have the most power in partnerships (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). In many cases, the power balance in business–nonprofit partnerships favors the company: the NPO is usually dependent on the company's resources, while the company does not depend on the NPO in any crucial way. As indicated by several interviewees, many NPO employees "are grateful that there are indeed companies that come to us" (NPO_E).

Power imbalances may also emerge through the proliferation of corporate managerial techniques in the nonprofit sector (cf. Roberts, Jones & Frohlich, 2005), which could cause the corporate logic to become dominant within the nonprofit world. Evidence from our interviews suggests that intermediary organizations actively promote the dominance of corporate logic in the nonprofit sector and that NPOs are increasingly adopting it on their own:

> [Our organization is] run on very entrepreneurial principles with quality checks, with a board, […]with sound financial principles and systems that are put in place, going after the sponsors, aggressive fundraising. Yes, I see it as a company. And I hope that more and more nonprofits will evolve into more social enterprises instead of simply depending on government grants (NPO_M).

As noted by our interviewees, although such perceived power imbalances may have effects that are convenient for NPOs (see Schiller & Almog-Bar, 2013), they often do not help NPOs achieve their actual missions. In many cases, these effects have no bearing on the goals of the NPO, and organizations would do well to question the wisdom of engaging with companies on these terms.

In contrast, NPOs that are less dependent on the resources of partner companies are less likely to perceive power imbalances. In such contexts, NPOs are able to request exactly what they want from companies and to specify the conditions under which companies can engage. This approach often results in corporate support that has a direct and effective impact on the resources of the NPO.

A second condition that influences the opportunities and challenges of corporate volunteering has to do with the collaborative mindset of NPOs; in other words, the manner in which they approach companies. Those that take the initiative in establishing new relationships with companies or other third parties (e.g., schools) are convinced of the benefits that they have to offer, and they are often able to organize corporate volunteering on their own terms. Proactive NPOs are thus likely to receive resources that actually support their own organizational goals:

> NPOs should not be hesitant to dialogue [with companies]. You should know what sponsors want as return of investment within the boundaries of what fits your organization (NPO_J).

In contrast, reactive organizations are more dependent upon what companies would like to share with them. One interviewee noted that companies "…actually have to come to us… [and] we are grateful that these organizations do come to us" (NPO_E). This makes the design of corporate volunteering heavily dependent on the preferences of the company. One of our

interviewees recounted the following strategy: “Come by, and we’ll see, what you [company] want, and we just adapted to that” (NPO_11). It is important to note, however, that such attitudes often evolve over time. Organizations that have only recently started engaging corporate volunteers tend to be reactive, while those with many years of experience tend to be more proactive.

The third condition affecting the outcomes of corporate volunteering for NPOs involves the decision to work with intermediary organizations (i.e., “matchmakers”), which connect the interests of companies to those of NPOs. Such organizations are convenient for NPOs that have no network of companies or experience with organizing ad-hoc projects and longer-term programs. Intermediary organizations help to educate less-experienced NPOs on the organization of corporate volunteering, in addition to providing them with networks for future collaboration. As noted by one interviewee from an NPO, “more than half of our initial connections with companies stemmed from the matchmaking organization” (NPO_E). Despite the initial relevance of intermediary organizations, however, NPOs eventually “work almost independently of the intermediary organization” [NPO_E], remaining engaged with “companies that were initially were introduced by the intermediary, but those companies adopted a sort of patronage with our organization because they sympathize with our organization” (NPO_E). Relationships with intermediaries thus appear to be short-lived, as NPOs prefer to save the funds that intermediaries charge, using them instead to facilitate relationships with companies to further their own goals. Furthermore, the process of working through an intermediary is time-consuming, given the indirect communication between parties. In addition, NPOs are better able to design programs for their own organizations, given their knowledge of what is most suitable for their beneficiaries. As one interviewee explained:

> When we started, I always referred the companies who called me to the broker […] Nowadays I do not [...] We just see what we can do for each other […] I think that we are now better able to connect companies and our volunteer initiatives (NPO_10).

Our study thus suggests that organizational-level consequences are subject to three conditions: perceived power imbalances between companies and NPOs, the collaborative mindset of the NPO and the involvement of an intermediary. The findings are summarized in Figure 1.

*** Insert Figure 1 about here ***

Figure 1: Organizational-level consequences of the nonprofit case for corporate volunteer involvement in NPOs.

Favorable individual-level consequences with organizational-level implications

As described by one interviewee, NPO staff members can "learn from the people from the business sector" (NPO_1), thus reflecting both single-loop and double-loop learning (see Argyris, 1976). Corporate volunteers support NPOs through single-loop learning by contributing specific resources (e.g., experience, knowledge, and skills). The knowledge of corporate volunteers can be of direct benefit to the NPO (e.g., a corporate volunteer with a background in IT could teach NPO staff to build a new website), even without questioning current organizational policies and practices.

According to one respondent, corporate volunteers "… come from a completely different world" (NPO_A). In other words, their institutional logics differ from those of the NPO. For this reason, interactions with corporate volunteers could provide NPO staff members with insight into alternative organizational practices and generate new ideas for their own organizations. For example, "…because they are accustomed to working with targets,

you might have to work a bit harder once in a while. They have a different work ethos, they have a different drive" (NPO_1). Such experiences result in double-loop learning by facilitating the transfer and embedding of knowledge within the organization. This may call the standard practices of the NPO into question. As illustrated by one respondent, "You suddenly start to wonder, 'Why are we actually here? What do we want?'" (NPO_11). This could ultimately lead to changes (e.g., in organizational culture and management practices):

> Due to the changing dynamics in our healthcare sector [in the Netherlands], we are seeing a need for more professionalization, for different behavior. Although this didn't matter much to our organization in the past, it's now a necessity. We [NPO staff members] have gradually come to realize this [through the interaction with corporate employees] (NPO_13).

Interactions between corporate volunteers and NPO staff members can also enhance employee satisfaction in the NPO by generating appreciation and recognition for their efforts:

> Collaboration with external parties results in personal growth for our [NPO] staff … [Corporate volunteers] tell my staff, "… what you're doing is great …" [and] that their work is not being taking for granted (NPO_11).

This is further exemplified by the potentially converse effects of the lack of corporate volunteer involvement:

> [Corporate volunteers say to NPO staff:] You wouldn't be able to do this job unless it were your calling. You [NPO employee] must have an explicit reason for performing this job. You don't just become a group leader; you couldn't keep it up … [As such,] group leaders also grow when they receive compliments…

> [Without corporate volunteers], I think it would take some of the wind out of their sails…that would affect our staff as well (NPO_20).

Corporate volunteers can also help to relieve NPO staff of some of their workload and/or enable them to provide additional services to their clients. For example, corporate volunteers can help to improve both the quantity and quality of services by increasing the ratio of caregivers to beneficiaries. Several of our interviewees reported using corporate volunteers to provide "... an additional gift …" (NPO_11) to their beneficiaries. Time donated by corporate volunteers can be used to supplement the regular programs of NPOs, thus helping to fulfill specific needs that would otherwise remain unaddressed. One interviewee was particularly pleased with this possibility, "[…] because we [the NPO] usually don't offer activities on weekends" (NPO_11). Corporate volunteers can also support the daily routines of NPO staff, and they can even take over some tasks. As observed by several interviewees, corporate volunteers support NPO staff by providing "support in the day-to-day work of regular staff" (NPO_1). As one respondents recalls:

> [Company] signed up with us and was looking for a short-term project. They came and performed all kinds of tasks. Basically, they prepared … our annual festival in September. We always invest a week of our time doing the preparations ourselves, but now they [corporate volunteers] did it (NPO_R).

Additional services and work relief can enhance service delivery.

Harmful multi-level consequences of corporate volunteer involvement

In addition to its favorable outcomes, the introduction of corporate volunteers can have harmful outcomes for NPO staff and their organizations. First, staff dissatisfaction might result from the fear of replacement and "cherry-picking" (e.g., assigning all of the enjoyable

activities to corporate volunteers). Some of our respondents reported increasingly using corporate volunteers to compensate for budget deficits. From the organizational perspective, this could be interpreted as an innovative way of responding to changes in resource availability. From the perspective of NPO staff, however, the involvement of corporate volunteers could signal a threat of replacement. As explained by one interviewee:

> Suppose we were to say, "Let's involve corporate volunteers in the community together with our regular [ongoing] volunteers." It's not inconceivable that they [regular volunteers] would feel a bit threatened in their volunteering/voluntary jobs" (NPO_B).

Because corporate volunteers are usually less expensive than paid staff, members of the paid staff in an NPO might perceive such volunteers as threatening their positions. As one interviewee clearly acknowledged, "They [corporate volunteers] perform tasks that would otherwise have been done by our regular staff" (NPO_7). Another respondent explained that the unions were closely monitoring corporate volunteering in their organization, in order to ensure that they were not being used to replace paid staff.

> …it's something that the union is monitoring. …[W]hen we started with [corporate] volunteering, [the union] was quite suspicious of what they [corporate volunteers] were going to do, and whether they were going to replace us [NPO staff] at work. So we had a good conversation with the union about this… If it [involving corporate volunteers] were to be on a more regular basis, I think we would have a problem with our union. (NPO_H).

The type of relationship between NPO staff and corporate volunteers depends heavily upon the organization's tradition of volunteer involvement. Many NPOs in our sample that have traditionally been dominated by paid staff are increasingly implementing corporate

volunteering programs. Given the relative novelty of such programs in these organizations, they are unable to draw on any long tradition of volunteering (corporate or otherwise). This could spark conflicts between NPO staff members and corporate volunteers. For example, tensions could arise if staff members were to perceive some corporate volunteers as having more experience or better skills.

Other interviewees indicated that they sometimes opt to satisfy corporate volunteers at the expense of their own staff, as corporate volunteers bring additional resources. This creates dissatisfaction due to cherry-picking and similar practices. For example, corporate volunteers are often called upon to carry out annual outings with beneficiaries, because their companies reimburse all expenses. As one volunteering coordinator mentioned, "Those [corporate] volunteers are cherry-pickers. They're doing all the fun stuff" (NPO_11). Dissatisfaction with basic working conditions can lead to overall employee dissatisfaction, or at least to a resistant attitude toward involving corporate volunteers. The involvement of corporate volunteers in NPOs could thus generate employee dissatisfaction.

As suggested by several respondents, a second harmful consequence of working with corporate volunteers is that it might detract from the quality of services provided to beneficiaries if NPO staff members are forced to compensate for corporate volunteers who lack the appropriate skills (see earlier in this article). Instead of providing work relief, corporate volunteers could potentially increase the workload of NPO staff. For example, the involvement of large numbers of episodic volunteers could impose excessive burdens: "The [operational staff]… don't always have the time for that [corporate volunteer projects], particularly given the increasing demand from companies wanting to be involved" (NPO_7). As argued by another respondent: "…you also have to invest enough of our own [staff] hours to organize those projects [for corporate volunteers], to prepare well…" (NPO_C). In addition, although corporate volunteers could provide additional services at times when there

are usually no activities (see earlier in this article), some respondents also expressed feeling forced to adapt to corporate schedules, applying the principle of "you ask, we serve."

Conditions affecting individual level consequences

In addition to identifying conditions that influence the organizational-level consequences of corporate volunteering, we identified three factors that facilitate outcomes for NPOs at the individual level.

The first condition emerging from the data is the volunteer persistence (see Rodell et al., 2015) of corporate volunteers, which affects outcomes for NPO staff. Episodic interactions can offer short-term task relief and enhance additional services, in addition to cultivating appreciation for the work of NPO staff. As argued previously, corporate volunteers can increase the beneficiary–caretaker ratio, and the temporary character of such arrangements might diminish the fear of replacement (unless corporate volunteers perform low-skilled activities that could easily be performed by anyone). One challenge related to the temporary character of corporate volunteering is that it often leads to cherry-picking, as NPOs attempt to ensure that corporate volunteers have a good experience, even if their involvement is short-term.

The outcomes of corporate volunteering are also affected by the type of involvement of corporate volunteers. Similar to the organization of traditional volunteering, many NPOs adopt various combinations of corporate volunteering. Some corporate volunteers are used for routine tasks (e.g., routine care of clients, financial counseling, and physical maintenance). Others are used for programs and projects outside of the regular tasks of NPO staff. In such cases, anything that corporate volunteers do is supplementary to the regular services of the NPO. The integration of corporate volunteers into the routine tasks of a NPO is likely to increase the fear of replacement. Nevertheless, the support of corporate volunteers can

provide work relief for NPO staff. Such contexts are also more likely to cultivate appreciation on the part of corporate volunteers, as they actually experience the routine work of NPO staff. In contrast, the use of corporate volunteers for additional programs can damage motivation by leaving NPO volunteers to perform necessary, albeit less desirable tasks.

Another influential factor involves the assignment of corporate volunteers to either skill-based or hands-on tasks. Skill-based assignments draw upon the professional knowledge, expertise, and skills of corporate volunteers (e.g., developing marketing pitches, improving the NPO's newsletter, management and/or beneficiary counseling). In contrast, hands-on assignments tend to involve social or maintenance activities (e.g., outings with NPO staff and beneficiaries; renovation). Skill-based involvement increases the transferability of skills, knowledge, and expertise toward NPO staff. It can also introduce NPO staff members to different organizational practices, possibly increasing their effectiveness. Challenges associated with this type of involvement include the increased likelihood that NPO staff members will feel threatened by the corporate volunteers. As observed by one respondent, working with highly skilled corporate volunteers "… also demands skills from your own staff..." (NPO_L).

Hands-on assignments allow corporate volunteers to see what NPO staff members do for their beneficiaries, thus possibly enhancing various motivating factors. For example, corporate volunteers who realize the difficulty and complexity of working with certain types of beneficiaries are more likely to develop appreciation for such work. Assisting during activities also provides additional task relief for NPO staff. Despite these benefits, however, the use of corporate volunteers to perform hands-on activities (particularly low-skilled activities) is likely to exacerbate the fear of replacement. Furthermore, hands-on corporate volunteers could generate resentment and demotivation if NPO staff members perceive that corporate volunteers are cherry-picking.

Our study thus suggests that certain program characteristics of corporate volunteering should be regarded as structural conditions affecting individual-level interactions among corporate volunteers and NPO staff. They also have important individual-level outcomes with organizational-level implications. Figure 2 provides an overview of individual-level outcomes with organizational-level implications.

*** Insert Figure 2 about here ***

Figure 2: Individual-level model with organizational-level consequences of the nonprofit case for corporate volunteer involvement in NPOs.

Discussion and conclusion

As observed by Allen (2003), although the business rationale for corporate volunteering has become well established and widely accepted, "there has been no corresponding nonprofit case, no rationale developed from the NGO/NPO perspective" (p.57). More recently, Harris (2012) observes a lack of NPO perspectives on business-nonprofit collaboration: "We need to understand… [to what] extent those benefits are achieved in practice" (p. 897). Samuel and colleagues (2013) confirm these concerns, observing a lack of clear rationales, strategic behavior, and adequate management tools among NPOs collaborating with companies through corporate volunteering. The "business case" clearly prevails (Harris, 2012). To date, most authors have suggested that NPOs should engage in such collaborations by defining organizational goals and clarifying expectations with partners at the beginning of each project, subsequently implementing strategies, measuring/evaluating the outcomes of assignments, and providing feedback to corporate partners (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; 2012b; Samuel et al., 2013).

Our study – the first to propose a multi-level perspective on the outcomes of corporate volunteering for NPOs – highlights the complexity underlying such a generic approach. Our

findings identify multiple levels and dimensions that should be considered in order to provide satisfactory answers to the fundamental question of whether corporate volunteering contributes to the mission of NPOs (Allen, 2003). Our exploratory inductive modeling (cf. Figure 1 and 2) resembles the framework developed by Rodell and colleagues (2015) with regard to multi-level antecedents and consequences, based on a literature review of corporate volunteering from the business perspective. Although our exploratory study does not provide an exhaustive overview of all possible conditions and outcomes, it highlights the necessity of disentangling antecedents and outcomes at multiple levels in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the NPO case for corporate volunteering. General formulations of the benefits of corporate volunteering in terms of "helping to achieve the organization's mission" (Allen, 2003) should be broken down into complex micro-dynamics with multiple individual and organizational-level outcomes.

The results of our study yield four additional lessons for nonprofit scholars and professionals. First, as concluded by Rodell and colleagues (2015) from the corporate perspective, the benefits of corporate volunteering for NPOs relate to both NPO performance and individual work behavior. Building a successful nonprofit case thus requires considering both dimensions. Second, borrowing insights from Herzberg's two-factor theory (1964), our study indicates that corporate volunteering should be regarded as a workplace factor that alters both the job environment and job characteristics of NPO staff. As argued by Herzberg (1964), certain factors in the workplace cause employee satisfaction, while other factors cause dissatisfaction. In particular, motivating factors are largely related to the nature of the work (e.g., recognition, the job itself), whereas factors leading to dissatisfaction are largely situated in the job environment (e.g., pay, working conditions). For this reason, Herzberg refers to these factors as "hygiene" factors, related to "maintenance." According to our results, corporate volunteering introduces additional motivating and hygiene factors into the

workplace, thereby influencing both employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Third, and following from the previous point, because corporate volunteering can be regarded as a workplace characteristic for nonprofit employees, the implementation and management of corporate volunteering programs cannot be separated from the practices of NPOs with regard to human resources and volunteer management. Finally, our study emphasizes the importance of the nature and design of corporate volunteering programs in the generation of certain outcomes (cf. Allen, 2003). According to our results, the nonprofit case is subject to conditions, and outcomes should be considered in light of these conditions, as they could have both positive and harmful implications for the provision of services by NPOs.

More generally, the outcomes of this study raise questions regarding the differences between the management of corporate volunteers and other types of volunteers, particularly when these volunteers result from third-party interventions (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010). Corporate volunteering is only one of several contemporary forms of volunteer involvement. Other examples include educational programs combining community service with specific learning goals (Roza & Meijs, 2014). These forms of volunteering have clear implications regarding the management of the common pool of volunteer energy within society as a whole (Brudney & Meijs, 2009), as well as within specific NPOs. Our multi-level perspective on corporate volunteering is also relevant to other types of third-party involvement in volunteering (e.g., service learning). The conditions that we have identified (i.e., volunteer persistence, type of involvement, and type of assignment) could easily be translated into service learning contexts. As demonstrated in previous studies, issues raised by service learning programs (e.g., the quest to design effective and sustainable programs; see Grant, 2012; Pajo & Lee, 2011) resemble those that we have demonstrated in the context of corporate volunteering (Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008). Nevertheless, corporate volunteers also differ from individuals who are involved in

educational volunteering programs, particularly with regard to the imbalance of transferable resources between companies and NPOs. The experience and skills of corporate volunteers are likely to exceed those of students, and companies are more likely than educational institutions are to include other resources (e.g., resources and funding) in their cooperative projects. The experiences and skills of corporate volunteers can pose challenges in the personal relationships between NPO employees and corporate volunteers, particularly if the latter are used to replace the former.

Our findings suggest several directions for future research. First, following Rodell and colleagues (2015), we encourage researchers to elaborate our initial multi-level perspective into a framework for future research on corporate volunteering from the NPO perspective. In addition, the program conditions that we have identified should probably be seen as only one condition. Future research should also consider characteristics of NPOs, other workplace characteristics, and individual factors. Further refinement and more systematic research on contingencies is needed (see also Brudney & Meijs, 2014). Second, the analytical dimensions of the outcome level in our model would benefit from further refinement, given the contextual limitations of our research and the general interpretation of the respondents regarding their views on corporate volunteering. Third, a central limitation of our exploratory study was its focus on one specific class of actors – NPO professionals – in this multi-actor collaboration. Additional studies could examine additional actors, particularly beneficiaries, who have received less research attention than have corporate actors (for a recent exception, see Samuel et al., 2016). The nonprofit case for corporate volunteering will remain incomplete until we understand how it affects the beneficiaries of NPOs. Fourth, in many NPOs, the primary concern associated with involving volunteers is balancing efforts to attract and manage them against the benefits that they bring to the organization (Brudney & Meijs, 2009). Corporate volunteering, which offers an increasing potential source of volunteers (Haski-Leventhal et

al., 2010), introduces many aspects that affect both sides of this aspired equilibrium. We therefore encourage researchers to develop an approach to corporate volunteer management that does not treat corporate volunteering as a separate activity, but as one that inherently affects broader organizational processes as a workplace characteristic, thus changing the job environment and the nature of the job for both NPO staff (both paid and unpaid). Finally, the role of intermediary organizations, which are widely used in practice, has thus far received only limited scholarly attention. Their role in NPO–business collaborations could offer a particularly interesting avenue for further exploration.

Our model has implications for practitioners in the nonprofit sector. As emphasized by Harris (2012), NPO managers "…need research evidence to enable them to make informed choices about cross-boundary initiatives" (p. 899). Such evidence could stimulate NPO managers who are seeking to involve corporate volunteers to consider what they wish to achieve from corporate volunteer involvement, even if no straightforward line can be drawn between project objectives, program characteristics, and outcomes. In addition to the intended goals and direct results of the corporate project, contingent outcomes result from the unavoidable influence of corporate volunteering on workplace characteristics. Such projects introduce new organizational roles and practices that interfere with NPO staff members, and the nature of interactions between corporate volunteers and NPO staff remains unclear. Given the complexity of implementing particular types of corporate volunteering programs in particular nonprofit workplaces, the development of best-practice scenarios for collaborating with corporate partners through corporate volunteering should clearly go beyond a general assessment of the needs of the NPO.

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Endnote

[1] In this paper, we use the term "NPO staff members" to refer to all individuals working for an NPO on a regular basis, according to some type of contract (e.g., economic or psychological).

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Figures

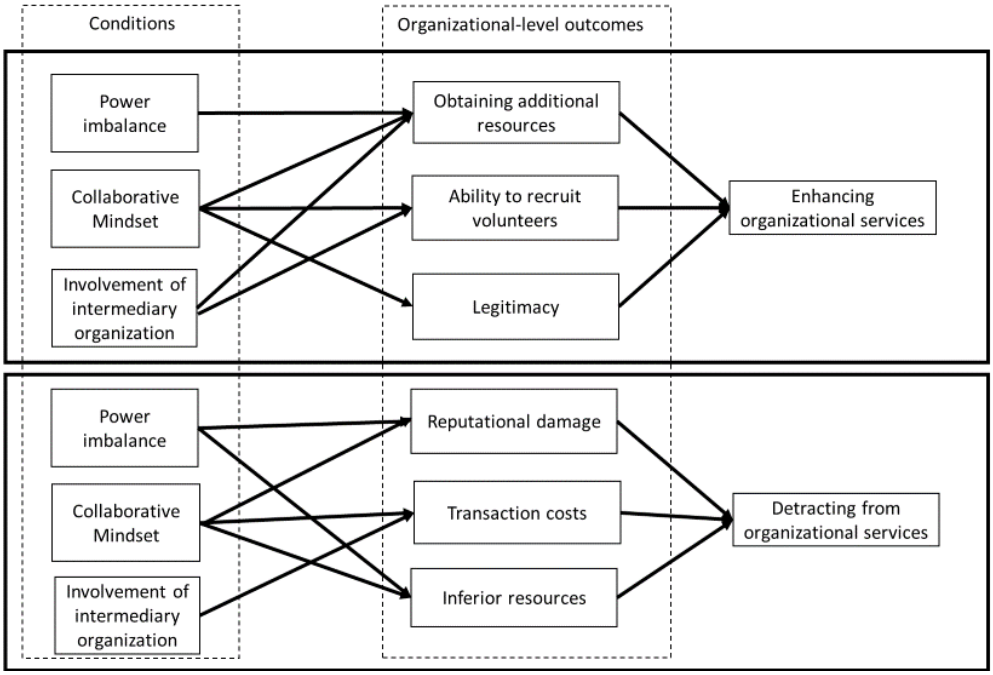

Figure 1: Organizational-level model of the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering

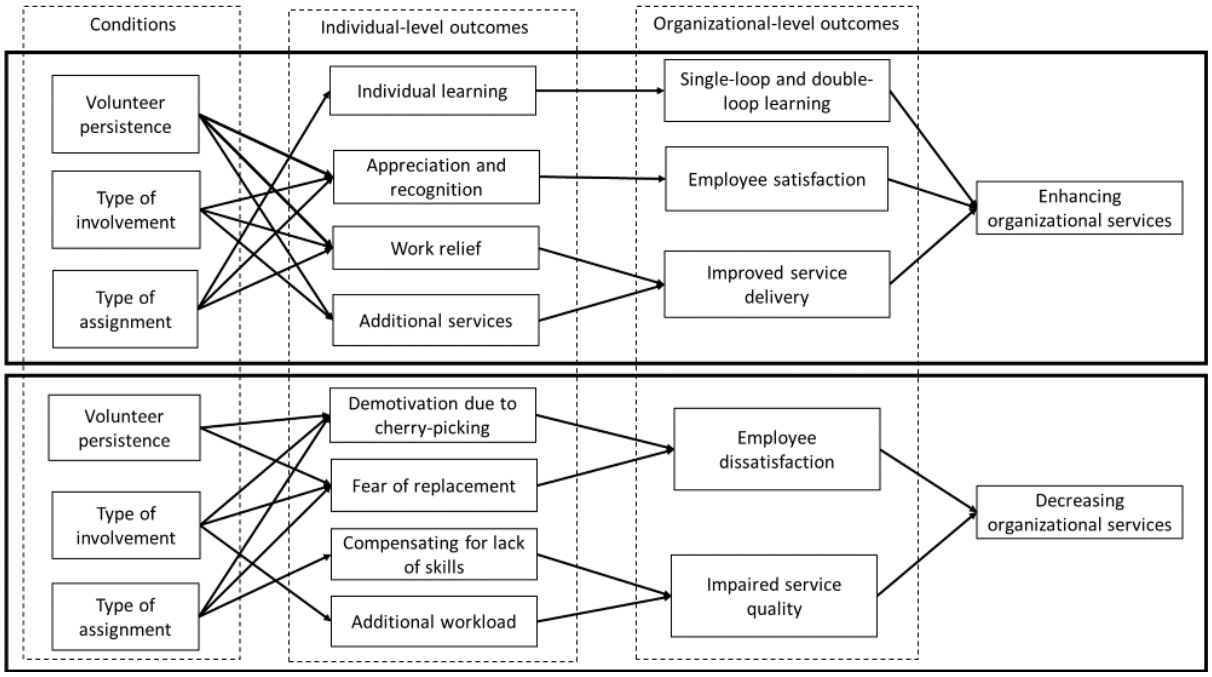

Figure 2: Individual-level model of the nonprofit case for corporate volunteering